

ADAPTING ANIME: TRANSNATIONAL MEDIA  
BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

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This dissertation examines Japanese animation, or anime, as an example of how a contemporary media product crosses national and cultural borders and becomes globalized. Bringing together the theories of Hiroki Azuma and Susan J. Napier, it develops a theory called the "database fantasyscape" as a way of discussing such transnational flows. In short, the "database" refers to how contemporary media products are assembled from a matrix of constituent elements into combinations that are simultaneously unique and familiar, while the "fantasyscape" element expands on Arjun Appadurai's concept of global flows in order to posit a way in which desire travels transnationally. The dissertation discusses how anime came to the United States and the role this had in anime's development in Japan by examining *Tetsuwan Atom (Astro Boy)*, the first half-hour television animation produced in Japan. It examines how anime has been adapted and distributed in overseas markets like the US by analyzing successful media franchises like *Robotech* and *Voltron*, as well as unsuccessful ones like *Warriors of the Wind*. It analyzes the complex and often fraught relationship between anime fans and producers / distributors and discusses the role played by fansubs (subtitled copies created by fans and often illegally distributed). Bringing in Matt Hills's concepts of cult texts, the dissertation discusses how in certain respects anime can be seen as cult and what this means with regard to transnational reception. Finally, it examines the relationship between anime and physical space, both in a temporally-limited fan-oriented

space like an anime convention as well as within the city of Tokyo, with anime-ic perspectives providing ways of perceiving and processing the city.

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## **Introduction – Laying the Groundwork for Anime Studies**

In the summer of 2007, on a whim I decided to rent the first DVD of the anime series *When They Cry* (*Higurashi no naku koro ni*, 2006, dir. Kon Chiaki). I had previously noticed that there were (illegal) fan-subtitled episodes of this series available for download on US anime fan websites, but it hadn't seemed like a show I would want to watch. However, I had recently noticed that a second season of the show was being broadcast on Japanese television, so I decided to give it a try. After watching the first five episodes, I became thoroughly engrossed in the events of the series and felt compelled to continue. However, the DVD I had rented was the only release available in the US at that time – the remainder of the series had yet to be released. I wanted to watch the rest of the series as soon as possible, so I began downloading them from anime fan sites. The structure of the series fascinated me—the show was not linear, but rather divided into separate arcs of around four episodes, most of which ended with the deaths of one or more of the main characters. But time in the series was circular and events kept repeating, and I became so interested in the characters and their predicaments that I continued watching and reading more about the series. As I became more thoroughly engrossed in *When They Cry*, I found out that it was originally based on a Japanese fan-produced computer game (technically it was a *visual novel*, which is similar to a game, but it requires a minimal amount of interactivity, and places greater emphasis on characters and telling a story) and the franchise had grown to include a number of associated manga series and novels as well. Once I worked my way through the first season of the anime, I immediately began watching the second season, again via fan sites that were subtitled the new episodes shortly after they were broadcast on Japanese television. As the stories

went along, the back stories of each character were revealed little by little. Even after I finished watching the second season, I wanted to know more, so I looked up details about the games, the manga, and followed fan discussions and speculations about the events in the series. Since the end of the second season, a third series of the anime was created (released straight-to-video, instead of broadcast on television), as were two live-action theatrical films, all of which adapt stories found in the original *When They Cry* game.

I have written the above account not only to illustrate my personal engagement with a particular anime series (just one of many in my years as an anime fan and scholar of Japanese popular culture), but rather to illustrate the myriad ways one can engage with contemporary media franchises. My experience with *When They Cry* is just one example of how a contemporary anime series is able to stretch into multiple media through primary emphasis on its characters. The series caters to anime fans and is constructed in such a way as to allow for a seemingly limitless addition of side stories and leaves the door open for additional fan interpretations.

This dissertation is an attempt to historicize the global flows of anime through a multitude of media forms. Through this project, I will use “anime” as an umbrella term to refer to a set of related cultural media products that include, but are not necessarily limited to, Japanese animation, comics, and video games. Too often discussions of globalization and media fall back on generalities in order to describe how the products move across borders and are interpreted and adapted. In such a process, anime becomes a hybrid media form, absorbing ideas, influences, and money from around the world. However, as Marwan Kraidy writes in his book *Hybridity or the Cultural Logic of Globalization*, “[H]ybridity is of dubious usefulness if employed as a broad conceptual

umbrella without concrete historical, geographical, and conceptual grounding” (2005: x). Therefore, as I discuss the globalization of anime I will attempt to ground it in as much detail as seems warranted. However, it should be noted that in discussing hybridity, we are not postulating an amalgam of what were previously “pure” forms. Even though a cultural or media product may originate in Japan and be “Japanese” in that sense, there is not any kind of essential “Japaneseness” that can be distilled from it. In this way, Japanese anime is an already-hybridized form, a product of a multitude of varied historical and cultural influences.

In the case of my specific experience with *When They Cry*, we can see how transnational networks of fandom and translation contributed to aspects of understanding and provided ways of accessing material when official channels were either too slow to accommodate fanish desire or unavailable. For example, when the series was initially released in the United States, only the first three DVDs came out before the company that acquired the rights, Geneon Entertainment, pulled out of the US anime market, leaving the fate of this and many other titles in limbo. However, as previously mentioned, there were other ways of accessing the show – English-speaking fans took the original Japanese-language shows, translated the dialogue, added subtitles, and released the episodes for free online. This type of fan response is not unusual. Many anime series are subtitled by fans (or fansubbed) shortly after they air on Japanese television or are released to the home video market. In the case of *When They Cry*, fan-subtitled versions of the series that were able to fill in the gaps until the remainder of the first season was released by FUNimation Entertainment. The popularity of the series led to US-based manga publisher Yen Press announcing in 2008 that they had acquired the rights to the

manga version of the series, which they would be releasing as *Higurashi: When They Cry*. Similarly, in 2009, a Netherlands-based company called MangaGamer released an English-language version of the original *Higurashi* game. The fact that the manga and the visual novels were licensed for a US release are signs either that the anime sold well or that the companies involved determined that the series' strong showing in online anime fan communities would translate into actual sales. However, these things also place the *When They Cry* anime in an indeterminate position since it is just one of many options available for engaging with the series' narrative and characters. This illustrates that since anime overlaps and intersects with so many other media—games, manga, novels—it can sometimes be difficult to draw a strong line between them all.

Other examples problematize the boundaries of anime in altogether different ways. Take, for example, the case of the animated sequence in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill, Vol. 1* (2003). In an homage to Asian cinema, Tarantino created a film containing countless allusions to kung fu, samurai, and yakuza (gangster) films, featuring a flashback presented in an anime style. Although the sequence was part of an American film by an American director, this sequence used a Japanese animation studio (Production I.G) and its entire creative staff (save Tarantino) was Japanese. So should this segment of the film be considered “anime,” even though it has American roots? And, although the segment was certainly an example of animation that was produced in Japan, it was stylistically distinct from much of which is classified as “anime” in the global market. Perhaps it is not even possible to draw a solid line between what is anime and what is not. A better metaphor might be that of an animation pencil test, sketchy and always moving.

The title of this dissertation, “Adapting Anime,” is indicative of what I feel to be one of the primary approaches necessary in tackling such a tricky subject. All of the examples discussed herein involve some form of adaptation, whether it is adapting a video game to an animated television series, adapting a word like “anime” for use in an English-language context, or adapting a physical space based on the techniques of perception gained from watching anime. Anime is situated in a very interesting position in the global mediascape due to its indeterminacy—it can be seen as both Japanese and not-Japanese, it is not a singular genre although it is often treated as such, and it cuts across cinematic, televisual, and online viewing practices and includes elements from across other media such as novels, comics, and video games. I believe that the movement of transnational transmedia anime can be made more comprehensible through a structure I call the “database fantasyscape,” a structure I will expand upon in this introduction as well as in subsequent chapters. This concept draws on the work of scholars Hiroki Azuma and Susan J. Napier and proposes that cultural products move transnationally through a process of selected importation based on what the viewers want to see. During the process of selection, the desired aspects of a product are drawn from a “database” of constituent elements, and a “fantasyscape” is fashioned through the process of the importers projecting their desires in a way that has cultural and economic impact.

### **Introducing Anime**

In spite of the growing body of literature on anime, very few people have examined what the term denotes. Most simply equate “anime” with “Japanese animation”; this is a relatively easy “out” in order to get past tricky questions of

definition, and one to which I must admit engaging in on occasion. For example, in *Stray Dog of Anime: The Films of Mamoru Oshii*, I wrote that “‘anime’ does not denote any particular style or content; it simply means animation from Japan” (Ruh 2004: 1). Carl Silvio has rightly criticized me for this overly simplistic statement, asserting that “Ruh offers us a definition [of anime] that is virtually invulnerable to refutation” (Silvio 2006: 135). This definition presents something of a problem because many fans would not consider all animation from Japan as anime. For example, when Yamamura Koji’s *Mt. Head (Atama-yama)* was up for an Academy Award for best animated short film in 2003, it was relatively ignored by “anime” fans. The film’s entry in the online encyclopedia on the Anime News Network website even states “Some people would not consider this as Anime [sic], but rather ‘Alternative Japanese Animation’” (“Mt. Head” 2007). This entry goes into no further detail and does not explain how “Alternative Japanese Animation” differs from “anime,” but it seems clear that some fans have drawn a line around the concept of anime that does not include all animation from Japan.

A useful tool for examining the definitional limbo of the term “anime” is Matt Hills’s (2002) study of fan cultures. In the book’s preface, Hills explicitly states that he is taking a “suspensionist” position in which he is “approaching the contradictions of fan cultures and cult media as *essential cultural negotiations* that can only be closed down at the cost of ignoring fandom’s cultural dynamics” (2002: xiii; italics in original). Like Hills, it is not my intention to try to arrive at a singular “expert” definition of anime, but to pursue how anime is discussed within fan and academic circles in order to explore how the meanings of such terms may change over time, sometimes taking on and discarding new connotations. However, even within this suspensionist viewpoint, “anime” cannot

mean just anything. In order for the term to be meaningful, it needs to be given structure, even if this structure does not point in the end to a singular definition.

Before “anime” came into widespread use in the late 1980s and early 1990s, such animation had often been called “Japanimation” in English. Anime historian Fred Patten traces the first use of the word Japanimation to around 1978, shortly after anime fandom became formalized with the establishment of the first US anime fan club, called the Cartoon / Fantasy Organization (CFO), in May 1977 (Patten 2004: 24-25). The term Japanimation began to fall from popularity nearly a decade later – one reason is that it was too easily twisted into a racially derogatory term by detractors (e.g. “Jap animation”). Most people now writing use the term “anime,” save a few. Japanese media scholar Toshiya Ueno, for instance, defends his use of the term Japanimation saying: “I use this term to emphasize both geography and the particularity of its characteristic styles, for these are quite different from animations in the general sense” (1999: 97). In this way such animation becomes territorially marked by the term Japanimation; “anime,” on the other hand, does not necessarily carry such connotations and seems to have the potential to be a much more fluid marker.

Some books on anime have introduced their topic of discussion in these ways: “Japanese cartoons (more properly, *anime*, which simply means “animation”)” (Patrick Drazen 2003: vii), “*anime* (Japanese animation)” (Antonia Levi 1996: ix), and “Japanese animation, or ‘anime,’ as it is now usually referred to in both Japan and the West” (Susan J. Napier 2005: 3). Drazen’s definition is somewhat more nuanced in that he explains the Japanese meaning of the term “anime” as well. Some writers take a different approach to examining anime. In his introduction to the edited collection *Cinema Anime*, Steven T.

Brown writes, “What is anime? Anime is so multifarious in its forms and genres, its styles and audiences, that one needs to pose the question differently: Where is the anime screen?” (Brown 2006: 2). Brown’s reformulated question suggests that the meaning of anime comes about through the process of viewing anime onscreen, wherever that may be, and, as such, the term “anime” is situationally dependent. In this way, anime may not necessarily denote animation from a specific country but rather indicates a way of positioning images and information onscreen and how viewers interact with them.

One might notice that all of these definitions of anime are relatively recent. This is due to the fact that academics did not begin paying attention to it until the mid-1990s. For example, of the 814 entries in the Online Bibliography of Anime and Manga Research, only 84 (or 10.3% of the total) were published before 2000, and only one of those was published before 1990 (Koulikov 2010). Thus, the English-language study of Japanese comics and animation is a relatively recent field, with the vast majority of the work being published in the last 10 years. This growth coincides with the development and popularity of anime in the United States. Some reasons why this popularity began to increase in the early 1990s include the form’s popularity in the wake of the popularity of *Akira* (1988, dir. Otomo Katsuhiro), the growth of fansubs (which began to be technically feasible in the late 1980s), the founding of US distribution companies like Animeigo and AD Vision (who were essentially anime fans who were able to become professionals) that were able to increase anime’s presence in retail stores and on rental shelves, and the increase in communication enabled by the Internet, which enabled anime fans who did not live in Japan to be more aware of the latest developments in anime programs, films, and culture.

The fact that such previously debased media forms began to receive serious scholarly attention in the 1990s was indicative not only of a change in the ways in which media scholars constructed objects of study, but of a new kind of Japanese power that was seen as cultural rather than military or economic (McGray 2002). There were almost no scholarly studies of Japanese animation before the 1990s, and the first in-depth book in English to look at Japanese animation was not published until 1993 (McCarthy 1993). Other works that came out around this time (Tanner 1994, Newitz 1995, Levi 1996 and 1998) also took Japanese popular culture as a site of serious academic inquiry, trying to figure out the reasons for its growing popularity. Some like Tanner use discourse that explicitly ties such pop culture imports directly to the events of World War II (“How Japan Really Won the War”), couching the popularity of such products in terms of a Japanese “victory” over the US. This rhetorical metaphor of popular culture flows as conflict is a device that continues to be employed in writing about anime. Others scholars like Annalee Newitz postulate that the content of Japanese pop culture is relatively conservative, and that US consumers have turned to Japanese products because they could not find such entertainment in their own “politically correct” culture. (Of course, this was written before a turn in the late-1990s of more “politically incorrect” entertainment; in the case of US animation, this is probably best represented by shows like *South Park* [1997-present] and *Family Guy* [1999-2002, 2005-present].) However, given that Newitz cites no audience reception studies in the conclusions she draws, such theories remain at the level of conjecture. She too worries about the influx of Japanese popular culture in terms of international conflict and that anime is just the advance guard of a possible invasion. She writes, “The American anime fan is deliberately choosing to

enjoy a foreign culture which—in this case—often ridicules and belittles his native culture.... American fans of Japanese animation might be said to engage, consciously or unconsciously, in an imperialist relationship where Japan is dominant” (Newitz 1995:12). Newitz’s article in *Film Quarterly* was one of the first academic articles to take anime and anime fans in the US seriously, although not without an imposition of her own ideological viewpoint. In a way, this line of reasoning is a reflection and continuation of the “yellow peril” discourse that has been taking place in Hollywood films since the early part of the twentieth century (Marchetti 1993). At the same time, these arguments must also be placed in historical context. In the early- to mid-1990s, Japan was still seen as an economic powerhouse, even though it had already begun its long and painful decline from the bursting of its bubble economy in the 1990s. Although it certainly does not excuse Newitz’s argument, it makes somewhat more sense coming off a decade when it seemed like Japan might eclipse the United States in both economic and cultural terms around the world.

Subsequent articles on anime have touched on other issues related to the form, from textual analysis to discussions of how it has become popular worldwide. However, as Rayna Denison points out in her examination of the anime markets in Japan, France, and the US with regard to the film *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi*, 2001, dir. Miyazaki Hayao), “Where studies of *anime* as a global phenomenon do exist, they tend to understand the globalization of anime as its Americanization” (2007: 308). Although this dissertation does focus on the relations between Japan and the United States as a way of understanding anime’s transnational attraction, Denison’s criticism is a reminder that we need to keep in mind that anime has traveled to many countries outside

of Japan and has relatively long histories in East Asia, Australia, and Europe, particularly in Italy (Pellitteri 2010). At the same time, though, we need to be aware that, as Azuma Hiroki puts it, “[t]he history of otaku culture is one of adaptation—of how to ‘domesticate’ American culture” (2009: 13). Therefore, although anime is global, it is important to pay particular attention to the cultural and economic exchanges between Japan and the United States in order to understand the form’s development.

### **Anime in a Global Framework**

It is often more complicated to talk about the nationality of an animated film or television program than it is of its live-action counterparts. It is not uncommon for the animation process, which can be very labor-intensive, to be outsourced to one or more countries in order to save on production costs. One of the reasons for the rapid growth of the postwar Japanese animation industry was that in the 1950s work on US cartoons was often outsourced to animators in Japan. Similarly, it is not uncommon today for American and Japanese productions to employ contract animators in South Korea. In response to these trends of globalizing production, some governmental agencies have tried to formulate ways of determining whether or not a particular animated program would be considered a domestic production. In one such case, writes David Hubka, “[T]he Canadian Radio and Television Commission (Canada’s broadcast regulator) devised a point system to evaluate qualifications for Canadian content.... A total of six points, as well as the key animation being done in Canada, would qualify a program as Canadian” (2002: 238-239). Although such a quantitative approach to determining nationality may satisfy government agencies that they are sufficiently protecting local

content, in terms of anime it seems more useful to examine how such television series and films are *perceived* in terms of their nationality because, as has been previously mentioned, anime is not a stable term but rather one whose definition or definitions emerge discursively.

It is the intersection of US and Japanese popular culture that seems to be driving much of anime's popularity. A related term that often comes up in discussions of anime is *mukokuseki*. Both Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) and Susan J. Napier (2005) reference the term in their respective studies of how Japanese popular culture flows transnationally, although each gives a slightly different interpretation of its meaning. Napier describes the term as "meaning 'stateless' or essentially without national identity" (2005: 24), while Iwabuchi writes that the term is used "to suggest the mixing of elements of multiple cultural origins, and to imply the erasure of visible ethnic and cultural characteristics" (2002: 71). Probably the most salient reference point for anime's *mukokuseki* nature is the physical appearance of many anime characters. Even when an anime series is supposed to take place in Japan, often many of the characters do not look "Japanese." This leads some critics to assert that anime is symptomatic of a general Japanese cultural inferiority vis-à-vis the United States (Sato 1999). Although it is true that such anime characters do not necessarily adhere to the usual Japanese phenotype, it would be false to infer that, because of this, such characters look "Western" or "Caucasian." Rather, the characters look nation-less, and are drawn as representations of the human body that can be more or less abstracted depending on the creator as well as narrative and genre tropes. (For example, Mizuki Takahashi chronicles the development of style in Japanese girls' comics and asserts that the large eyes found in such manga are used to portray emotions and to

elicit an emotional response from the reader [Takahashi 2008].) The use of such *mukokuseki* characters has two main results. One, according to Napier, is that *mukokuseki*-ness is a way for contemporary Japanese to playfully escape their own concepts of Japan and their own feelings of Japaneseness. That is to say, fantasized *mukokuseki* anime bodies can be free from the cultural and societal baggage of physical bodies; as I will explore, this characteristic works not only for Japanese consumers who wish to “try on” different identities but for non-Japanese viewers as well (some of whom may very well wish to play with the idea of having a Japanese identity). Iwabuchi sees Japan’s *mukokuseki* popular culture to have been stripped of elements identifying such products as Japanese. Because of this, he wonders if the newfound global appreciation of Japanese popular culture is in fact a yearning for “an animated, race-less and culture-less, virtual version of ‘Japan’” (2002: 33) and theorizes that “[w]hat is experienced through Japanese popular culture is actually a highly materialistic Japanese version of the American ‘original’” (2002: 35). Because, according to Iwabuchi, such popular culture goods lack a strong “cultural odor” marking them as Japanese, the current discourse in Japan and elsewhere celebrating Japan’s increasing global cultural power is somewhat misguided. The second, related result is that such programs in which the characters appear nationally and culturally unmarked are much easier to export to other countries, where they can be re-localized by the importer.

This brings up one of the main ironies regarding anime’s *mukokuseki* nature: its style allows it to travel transnationally with relative ease, while at the same time such “stateless” anime has become a symbol of Japan and has attracted fans outside of Japan to the study of Japanese language and culture. Returning to my introduction of Matt

Hills' "suspensionist" approach to fan studies, I think holding the contradictions inherent in *mukokuseki* anime in suspension without trying to make them resolve into a singular conclusion is a useful approach. Anime may not necessarily carry with it markers of an "authentic" Japan (however this may be construed), but in practice many people now associate these "stateless" anime programs with ideas of Japan, and in this way the culturally "unmarked" anime becomes "marked" as Japanese not because of necessary elements within the text, but because of how anime has become a part of popular discourse.

In order to see how anime became a hybrid *mukokuseki* media product, it is necessary to examine the historical roots of animation in Japan. Daisuke Miyao's article "Before Anime: Animation and the Pure Film Movement in Pre-war Japan" (2002) gives a brief account of anime's early antecedents, which are located in the Pure Film Movement, a trend in Japan in the 1910s and 1920s that tried to establish film as its own medium, as distinct from literature and live theatrical drama. This move was a rejection of previous "stagey" methods of Japanese cinematic communication in favor of American and European techniques. Much of the imported animation first shown in Japan in 1909 was from France and served as a model for subsequent Japanese experiments. Since efforts in animation were inherently non-theatrical, Miyao suggests that the early Japanese animators may have fulfilled the goals of the Pure Film Movement better than many of the live-action filmmakers (2002: 197-8). However, there were debates over the form and content of animation among some in the Movement due to the fact that one of its intended results was to bring Japanese film into line with other global cinema. Miyao writes that although some in the Movement "insisted on the necessity of

Japanese stories and landscapes in order to differentiate the Japanese product for the foreign market, many opted nonetheless for subjects and stories that would be comprehensible to audiences accustomed to Western films” (2002: 200). One can see even at this early stage of animation in Japan the tension between making a recognizably Japanese product and an easily exportable global one. This is because in order to be recognized as a Japanese film by the rest of the world, early Japanese cinema had to become less “Japanese,” or as Darrell William Davis puts it, “To become Japanese, Japanese cinema had to make overtures to foreign recognition as a prelude to the seduction of foreign markets. The films had to shed their provincial trappings and put on the ‘high class’ garb... of the universal commodity” (1996: 28). That is to say, Japanese cinema had to become more familiar and commodifiable to a global audience by incorporating the increasingly standardized language of cinema in order to be perceived as Japanese. In some ways this is exactly what happened with anime – in order to create a space for Japanese animation to thrive, it needed to secure its own marketplace niche by first becoming less Japanese and more “global.” It was only after that that the form could be recognized as Japanese.

The question then arises what this *mukokuseki*-ness means in terms of how anime has been received and interpreted outside of Japan. In Napier’s analysis, anime is “uncompromising” with regard to what it is willing to show and makes few accommodations for the non-Japanese viewer. In particular, she constructs a binary between anime and American cartoons, and the majority of commercial entertainment in general, as anime’s “complex story lines challenge the viewer used to the predictability of Disney (or of much of Hollywood fare overall, for that matter)” (2005: 9). However, this

faulty binary becomes telling when one takes into consideration the fact that many recent Disney animations, particularly the ones released directly to video, were created in part by animators in Japan. In other words, the *mukokuseki*-ness of Japanese animation enables such animation to effectively “blend in” with animated material from other countries. Therefore, the apprehension of *mukokuseki* anime as Japanese depends not only on the approach a viewer takes with regard to anime, but also on the context in which it is viewed. There is no one “correct” way in which to interpret the nature of *mukokuseki* anime – it can be seen as culturally specific, universal, or a combination of the two.

The interplay between similarities and dissimilarities of Japanese and American pop culture is useful when thinking about the reasons for the popularity of a media form like anime in the US. Although the culture of Japan and the United States may be very different, by thinking about the similarities between the countries in this way, we can begin to see some of the “multiple proximities” of genre and shared experience discussed by La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005). Generally speaking, the US and Japan are not culturally proximate and there are few linguistic commonalities between the two countries, yet there seems to be something in anime that viewers in the US find familiar. La Pastina and Straubhaar write that “Local values may more closely resemble values in other nations than the values represented in the core, television-producing centers of their own nation” (2005: 275). The consumption of anime in the US is too diffuse to be said to predominate in any one locality, but La Pastina and Straubhaar’s general idea may hold true – anime fans may be after a type of entertainment representing values they see as absent from domestically-produced television shows and films. However, part of the

argument put forth by La Pastina and Straubhaar seems to be founded on examples in which the viewer can tell the differences between a “local” and a “foreign” product. The *mukokuseki* nature of anime challenges such binaries because it can be perceived both as foreign and local at the same time depending on the reading strategies employed by the audience.

In addressing the issues that La Pastina and Straubhaar discuss, there is an additional point that is relevant—the degree to which economic systems may make countries or cultures proximate. For example, if one took an average American who knew no Japanese language and very little, if anything, about Japanese culture and put him or her in downtown Tokyo with some money, this person would still be able to perform such tasks as purchasing food and rudimentarily navigating the city. The reason for this is that the nature of such public transactions differs very little between the two cultures. Both the United States and Japan are heavily invested in the ideals of capitalism, and the daily lives of people in both countries revolve around this economic reality. In fact, as sociologist John Clammer puts it, one of the main forces of social change in Japan is “hyper-consumption, which is now the dominant mode of everyday life, the matrix in which almost all contemporary Japanese live out their existences and which in a sense comprises these existences” (2000: 204). In this way of thinking, the economic proximities between Japan and the United States that influence how people interact and develop their fantasies play a critical role in shaping culture that may far outweigh other cultural dissimilarities.

This is not to say the cultural differences entail a complete disjunction of ideals. Antonia Levi’s thoughts on heroes in anime are particularly useful in seeing the interplay

between the exotic and the familiar and in examining the values viewers in the US may find in anime imports. In her chapter “The New American Hero: Made in Japan” (1998), Levi asserts that the heroes found in contemporary Japanese popular culture are superior to those found in contemporary US popular culture. In contrast to what she sees as an overwhelming emphasis on masculine, “good guy” heroes in the US, Levi says that the heroes presented in Japanese comics and animation are much more complex and interesting, and as a consequence are easier to identify with. Part of this is due to genre. Unlike in American comics and animation, the superhero never became an overwhelming force in manga and anime. Also, since there is such a wide range of genres for manga (less so for anime, due to the production costs involved), the heroes are similarly drawn from a multitude of circumstances. Levi states that such wide-ranging heroes in manga and anime are “a needed addition to America’s limited store of mythic heroes. That is why, despite the cultural and linguistic problems present in even the best translations, their popularity with Americans continues to grow” (1998: 70). Although she does not explicitly mention the cultural proximity theory, one can see from Levi’s above statement a decreased emphasis on the necessity of cultural or linguistic similarities in order to make a media text easily communicable. Instead she focuses on shared ideals between Japan and the US. However, these supposed ideals may simply gesture to the wide array of choices for individual fantasy that develop in a capitalist environment in order to try to have products that will appeal to all tastes.

## The Database Fantasyscape

As we can see from the previous discussion of anime, to a certain extent it is relatively futile to force a singular definition of “anime.” We can analyze the discourse surrounding the term, as above, which can bring us toward an understanding of how anime has been conceptualized, but this still gets us no closer to a discussion of how something like anime moves transnationally. This is the main question on which I want to focus – the *how* rather than the *what* of media globalization. It is this kind of thought that will occupy us for the rest of the dissertation.

As mentioned above, the idea of *mukokuseki* explains in part how certain aspects of anime have allowed it to cross national boundaries by seeming culturally *unspecific*. However, the biggest problem with this way of thinking about global media is that it ignores the fact that nothing can ever really be nationless since, as mentioned above, nothing really has pure national characteristics. Even culturally ambiguous products carry with them markers of their origins. For example, I was once flipping through cable channels when I came across an old episode of the animated series *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* (1981-83). Since I have fond memories of the show from my childhood, I decided to watch it for a few minutes. I enjoyed the action onscreen, but something about what I was seeing reminded me of anime shows I have watched. I am unsure if it was the backgrounds, the layouts, or the ways in which the characters moved, but there was something unmistakably “anime” about the episode. Once the episode was over and I researched this issue, I discovered that the episodes in the second season (like the one I had watched) were indeed animated in Japan. I am sure that any resemblance of the show

to anime was not intentional – in the 1980s animation was still being outsourced to Japan but was not supposed to draw attention to its “foreignness.” Still, there was something I noticed in the animation that led me to its Japanese origins. In other words, even though the “cultural odor” of the supposedly *mukokuseki* animation had been thoroughly disguised, it still had the distinct whiff of Japan to the trained nose. To say, then, that a product does or does not have a cultural odor is rather misleading; cultural odor is not something a product objectively has or lacks. Rather, detecting these kinds of odors that one may associate with a particular culture can be a skill acquired through the cultivation of repeated exposure, much like the skills of an oenophile. Of course, one does never “smell” a culture, but rather detects elements they have come to associate with that culture. I wasn’t “smelling” Japan in my viewing of *Spider Man*, but rather picking up on subtle uses of color and movement that seemed similar to aspects of Japanese animation with which I was already familiar.

Thinking about a media product like anime in such a way sets the stage for our discussion of what enables the products of popular culture, like anime, to flow and flourish outside of their native (and ostensibly intended) viewing community. The framework I have developed for analyzing this transnational media movement is called the “database fantasyscape.” This framework melds two different ideas, by Azuma Hiroki and Susan Napier respectively, into an overall way of thinking about the flow of contemporary media. My analysis of anime is an example of a general trend in contemporary media that blurs the boundaries between different forms. In his book *Convergence Culture* (2006), Henry Jenkins discusses this phenomenon, which he calls “convergence,” at some length. By this term, he means “the flow of content across

multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (2006: 2). One of the results of media convergence is the growth in “transmedia storytelling,” in which individual (and sometimes self-contained) narratives are communicated in different ways through multiple media. These narratives all contribute to the overall story being told, though. According to Jenkins, this is “the art of world making. To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience” (2006: 21). In other words, transmedia storytelling is the idea of using multiple media to tell a single cohesive story through various means, be it film, television, comics, online websites, and the like, all of which contribute to the singular “fictional world.” These ideas of convergence and transmedia storytelling provide an important foundation for the work I will perform here and in later chapters. It should be noted that although Jenkins’s examples and the cases in Japan both involve a kind of storytelling across various media, there are some key differences. In the cases that Jenkins describes, which are primarily American and in English, elements from disparate media can be used to tell different aspects of a larger story in different ways. In contrast, in *When They Cry* (and many of the other titles I will be discussing later), each medium tells the story in its own way, but they cannot all be reconciled into a single narrative whole.

The “database” part of this concept comes from the writings of cultural theorist Azuma Hiroki on otaku media in which he theorizes the “shift from the supremacy of narrative to the supremacy of characters” (181). This focus on “characters” does not, however, mean more attention is being paid to characterization. In fact, it is just the opposite – instead of complex, well-rounded characters in stories, this shift toward “characters” signals an increased emphasis on affective elements like the way a character looks (such as wearing glasses or having twin pony tails), personality traits (like being *tsundere*, which describes a [usually female] character who is initially combative toward the main [usually male] character but becomes emotionally vulnerable once her outer shell is cracked), and other archetypes that can be easily recognized and transferred from medium to medium. As Azuma writes, “many of the otaku characters created in recent years are connected to many characters across individual works, rather than emerging from a single author or work” (2009: 49). Therefore, Azuma formulates the concept of what he calls “database consumption,” since to consume a modern anime product “is not simply to consume a work (a small narrative) or a worldview behind it (a grand narrative), nor to consume characters and settings (a grand nonnarrative). Rather, it is linked to consuming the database of otaku culture as a whole” (2009: 54). This type of consumption also influences how one reads contemporary anime texts. Thomas Lamarre has written that, “Limited animation [of the type commonly associate with anime]... shaped a new kind of viewing and consuming, one that entails scanning, re-reading, searching information, discerning technical innovation and so forth. In other words, one might say that *anime* generated a viewer experience that was very much like an experience of informatization itself” (2002: 337). Thus, in Lamarre’s perspective, how

we view and process media like anime have strongly influenced how we interact with and evaluate information in general.

The “fantasyscape” part of the “database fantasyscape” comes from Susan J. Napier’s (2007) discussion of the development and transnational flow of anime. In her formulation, what she calls the “fantasyscape” can be seen as a useful addition to Arjun Appadurai’s idea of the five global flows – the ethnoscape, financescape, technoscape, mediascape, and ideoscape. However, although Napier originated the concept of the “fantasyscape,” her book does not fully unpack the term. However, it is a useful tool that fits into Appadurai’s model and allows us to envision global flows in ways that might help us to see things clearly that may have been otherwise opaque.

The absence of a specific fantasy dimension to Appadurai’s theoretical framework is very interesting because he begins the personal narrative in the first chapter of *Modernity at Large* by sketching out the fantasies of his own youth. These fantasies came to Appadurai in various forms, including magazines, films, clothing, and even deodorant. In this short narrative, the reader can begin to sense the multifaceted ways in which a young Appadurai was confronted and enticed by these small things, none of which had critical importance in themselves, but which all contributed to feeling “modernity as embodied sensation” (Appadurai 1996: 2). Appadurai goes on to state the importance that imagination has in his work. Indeed, as in the imagined communities of Benedict Anderson (1983), Appadurai places a great deal of emphasis on the functioning of what he calls the “work of the imagination,” which is “neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern” (1996: 4).

However, one of the reasons there may not be a specific “fantasyscape” in Appadurai’s formulation is that he seems to take a relatively dim view of fantasy as compared to the imagination, and he makes distinctions between the functions of the two. He seems to consider fantasy as essentially impotent and inward-looking, while imagination is a catalyst for action and outward-looking. He writes that “the idea of fantasy carries with it the inescapable connotation of thought divorced from projects and actions, and it also has a private, even individualistic sound about it. . . . [it] can dissipate (because its logic is often so autotelic), but the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action” (7). In other words, the purpose of fantasy is fantasy itself, while the purpose of imagination is to conceive of how things could be better.

I am not going to dispute Appadurai’s division of mental labor between the fantasy and the imagination, but I do want to argue with the duties he extracts from them. Even if fantasy is inherently directed toward oneself, that certainly does not mean that it can be divorced from outward actions. I would argue that it was fantasy, not imagination, that provided Appadurai’s “embodied sensation” of modernity. In my own case, I had immersed myself in anime for many years before I began to take classes in Japanese language and culture and formally pursue media studies, but it was the fantasy I had of Japan that initially prompted me to go in this direction. It is the pull of fantasy that causes people to do many things; in the case of anime fans, this might include buying DVDs, reading manga, downloading programs online, learning Japanese, attending conventions, and even going on trips to Japan. In some cases, the fantasyscape may even impose itself on one’s perception of the physical world. For example, when I first experienced Japan as an undergraduate student studying abroad in 1998, I initially had difficulty processing my

sensory experiences. I had become so familiar with Japan through anime that the sights and (particularly) the sounds of the country were simultaneously familiar and foreign. Even though fantasy may be directed inward, it does have very real outward results that can be felt in social and economic ways. Therefore, how these fantasies travel around the world is an important consideration when thinking about Appadurai's theory of global flows.

Even if fantasy is important, though, one might wonder if Appadurai's model already takes such works of the mind into consideration. One of the useful and necessary points about Appadurai's model is that its "scapes" overlap. Take a generic case such as immigration, for example. The most obvious "scape" to which this relates is the ethnoscape (the distribution and movement of people), but immigration is not quite that simple. It often involves the movement of money, sometimes in order to facilitate the crossing (financescape); the movement of equipment, or the chance to work in a new industry (technoscape); communication with family and friends back home, as well as channels for immigrant news (mediascape); and new thoughts about religion and the ideals of daily life (ideoscape). In the process, though, we must acknowledge that in addition to the points above, every such immigrant carries with herself or himself a distinct fantasy of what life will be like in the new country. These fantasies may resemble reality to a greater or lesser degree, but they still started as individual variations on cultural conceptions of what a foreign land might be like. These fantasies may be constructed from many different pieces of fragmentary evidence, just as Appadurai pieced his fantasy of modernity together from novels, films, and deodorant. (I mention his reference to deodorant again specifically to point out that fantasies can involve all five

senses.) When we discuss fantasy and the media, it is easy to conflate the two and say that the mediascape is coterminous with the fantasyscape, but of course there are many things in the media that are not fantasy and, perhaps more importantly for my point here, there are many things in the fantasyscape that are not media. Additionally, in Napier's formulation, the fantasyscape has "two key aspects, action and setting. The action is play, and the setting is a world constructed for entertainment, a world of simulacra" (293). In Napier's view, Appadurai's mediascape places too little emphasis on how forms of play and fantasy might cross national borders and flow outside of what is customarily thought of as "media" to exert influence on other aspects of life.

Merging Azuma's database idea and the Napier's fantasyscape concept to examine the flow of media provides a useful way of thinking about how a media phenomenon like anime spreads. It is transmedia storytelling in a global context. If we can stretch the database metaphor, we might be able to think about the flow of anime, even within Japan, as similar to how data is transmitted via the Internet. Just as a web page or an email is broken into simpler parts, transmitted, and reconstituted at its endpoint (a drastic oversimplification, of course), an anime series is broken into smaller elements both textual and extratextual—characters, dialogue, scenes, episodes, DVDs, and so on—in order to make the journey. However, the reconstitution process for cultural products is much more variable than that of an email because these different parts do not necessarily all flow at the same rate, and, due to reasons both commercial and cultural, the final product often does not look the same as its initial formulation. The reason why some of the database elements flow and others do not depends to a not insignificant

degree on certain cultural norms, ideals, and fantasies, and how these individual and collective fantasies play out on multiple levels.

Information from the database (or databases) travel via fantasyscapes. Such fantasyscapes are the conduits that conduct certain of the database elements as well as how the pieces are understood. The database provides an immediate apprehension that may directly influence how we choose what we watch and how we watch it. Bringing my own experience to bear, there are many anime series and films that I don't watch because I can tell immediately from the art (character designs, backgrounds, style of animation, etc.) that it will not be to my taste. This isn't simply a bias against a type of design or animation; it allows for more successful navigation of animated "waters." The elements of animated art serve as stylistic shorthand that can communicate to the viewer certain aspects of what the show might be like. Of course, as with any form of shorthand, mistakes can be made and elements can be misread. But, in general, what happens when someone creates a new anime series or film is that s/he is not only trying to create something new, but is also engaging many decades of animated history that have given rise to certain taste formations within the anime-watching community. This large amount of history is the database that can be selectively referenced. The database is inescapable; even if a creator is not trying to reference previous anime or manga, the viewers may bring these database assumptions with them when engaging the works of the creator.

As an example of this, we can take Kon Satoshi's film *Perfect Blue* (1998). In this film, famed manga artist and anime director Otomo Katsuhiro is given credit as "special advisor" (*kikaku kyouryoku*, lit. planning cooperation). However, the characters in the film have a very Otomo-esque look to them, and it is hard to believe that this is

unintentional. Three people are given credit for character design – Kon, Eguchi Hisashi, and Hamazu Hideki. (Hamazu was also the director of animation.) Kon and Eguchi had previously worked together on the film *Roujin Z* (1991, dir. Kitakubo Hiroyuki), a film for which Otomo had written the script and worked on the mechanical designs, Kon had been responsible for the art design, while Eguchi had done the character design. In a way, we can see in the designs for *Perfect Blue* that Kon is in a way constructing Otomo in his absence. As a consequence, due to the database of influences and noted previous collaborations, it becomes easy for fans and critics to try to place *Perfect Blue* within Otomo's orbit.

This is particularly true when anime moves outside Japan's geographical confines. For example, *Perfect Blue* began a trend of Kon Satoshi's films of premiering outside of Japan. In 1997, *Perfect Blue* was first shown at the Fantasia Festival in Montreal where it won the audience award for best Asian film. In fact, all of Kon's films premiered first on the international circuit. In 2001, Kon also premiered *Millennium Actress* at the Fantasia Festival, while his *Tokyo Godfathers* premiered at the Big Apple Anime Festival in New York in 2003 and *Paprika* premiered at the 63rd Venice International Film Festival in Venice, Italy in 2006. This is not to say that these films were not intended for domestic consumption, but that they were not *only* intended to be seen by Japanese audiences. *The Science Fiction, Horror and Fantasy Film Review* says of the role Otomo has had in bringing anime to audiences outside of Japan, after the overseas success of *Akira*, "The attachment of Otomo's name to any project subsequently has been enough to carry it to the West.... Here [in *Perfect Blue*] Otomo's credit remains the rather nebulous title of 'Special Adviser', which nevertheless seems to be enough for

*Perfect Blue* to still be promoted as an Otomo film” (Scheib 2010). Indeed, in his review of the film in the *Austin Chronicle*, Marc Savlov writes of the film as being “[o]verseen by Katsuhiro Otomo” (Savlov 1999), leading one to question how much emphasis was being placed on Otomo’s contribution in the promotional materials that were being fed to the press reviewers. This tactic does make sense, though, as the connection to Otomo and his work on *Akira* would provide a familiar touchstone to many in the moviegoing public who might consider seeing *Perfect Blue*. Although he does not mention Otomo’s connection with *Perfect Blue*, in Richard Corliss’s *Time* magazine article on the top five anime films on DVD, he places Kon’s film in the same list with the Otomo films *Akira* and *Steamboy* (2004) (Corliss 2005). In this way, the allusion to the auteur becomes another way of selling a film, even when, in these cases, the auteur is not the one who is doing the directing.

In addition to these connections to Otomo, it should also be noted that another director is mentioned frequently in relation to *Perfect Blue*: Alfred Hitchcock (Napier 2006). In the promotional materials for the film, the publicists included a quote from director Roger Corman saying it was “A startling and powerful film. If Alfred Hitchcock partnered with Walt Disney they'd make a film like this.” This quote is also featured at the top of the video cover in the English-language edition. Such a prominent quote in effect primes the viewer for what to expect—in essence, what kinds of materials to mentally access from the database of film against which to compare *Perfect Blue*. Helen McCarthy, author of many books on anime, gave a talk at the Barbican Centre in London in January 2007 titled “Revealing the influence of Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* and Fincher’s

*Se7en* on Satoshi Kon's *Perfect Blue*" (Barbican 2007). As can be seen from the title of McCarthy's talk, Hitchcock is not the only auteur director with whom Kon is compared.

Liking a film such as *Perfect Blue* therefore works on a number of different levels of enjoyment. Some of the entertainment value comes from narrative pleasures. Some of it comes from database pleasures. Narrative pleasure is deriving enjoyment from what is taking place onscreen, in the story, the interactions of the characters, etc. Database pleasure is deriving enjoyment from knowing the references to other media, such as films and television shows that came before. The two types of pleasure are often connected because characters and aspects of the narrative often incorporate database elements. In the case of *Perfect Blue*, one may find pleasure in detecting the similarities between the confluences of dreams and reality from the films of Otomo and Oshii Mamoru and the knowledge that Kon has worked with each anime director. Another type of pleasure may be found in trying to build the film into a lineage of mystery films in the Hitchcockian vein and identifying the elements of *Perfect Blue* that would justify such an inclusion.

Not everyone experiences these pleasures in the same way. This may vary by individual, but part of the experience is cultural, too. Cultural fanstasyscapes at play help to shape what types of media and culture are imported from other parts of the world and how they are interpreted and integrated into the "native" culture, which often contains more "foreign" products than most people realize. In other words, the database allows the flow of images and characters suited to particular fantasies across national borders—something I will explore in more detail in subsequent chapters. In the case of *Perfect Blue*, the culture and system of pop idols may have parallels outside of Japan, but it's not exactly the same. A person familiar with the Japanese system may be able to derive a

particular pleasure from seeing what they think is an insightful skewering of contemporary pop idols in the film, and may wonder what a viewer without such knowledge would be able to derive from it. This is one type of pleasure, rooted in culture. However, someone from outside of Japanese culture may still be able to get a parallel pleasure by generalizing the film's object of critique as targeting a shallow consumer culture. These two pleasures do not necessarily co-exist, but may overlap. Additionally, the film can provide an element of fantasy to the foreign viewer in its depictions of contemporary (for the time) Tokyo. Even a mere ten years later, the film can function as a form of nostalgia for a time when cell phones were not ubiquitous and popular knowledge of tools like the Internet were still developing. (I know when I watched the film again recently I felt a small pang of nostalgia when I saw the fuzzy but still recognizable Netscape Navigator logo on the main character's computer.)

I should note that talking about the database fantasyscape in terms of anime may initially seem rather arbitrary. Since the database consists of component parts, and since the fantasyscape influences how these parts flow, it's a little misleading to keep talking about the database fantasyscape simply as a phenomenon of anime and anime fandom. Rather, it is decentralized, and anime is just one of the forms in which these pieces come together. In my particular case, I have chosen to use anime as my central point of reference, although it is conceivable that one could perform a similar exercise using manga or video games as the reference point.

The database fantasyscape is a component of Henry Jenkins's idea of media convergence, which, he writes, "represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content"

(2006: 3). In other words, Jenkins argues that contemporary media convergence owes in part to consumers taking in diverse media sources and piecing them together based on their own personal experiences. One might rightly wonder, though, how such “dispersed media content” came about in the first place. For example, in the case of an anime television program, why are viewers encouraged to read the manga and light novels (which may or may not have preceded the animation), play the video games, purchase the supplementary DVDs, and collect the PVC figurines? I believe the answer lies in the idea of the database fantasyscape and that ability of both producers and consumers to apportion a work into its component pieces, which are then free for reuse and movement into other media and across national borders.

### **Project Outline**

This project will consist of five main chapters in addition to this introduction and a conclusion. Although I will discuss historical elements of anime and the form’s spread from Japan to other parts of the world, I am not interested in providing a history of Japanese animation *per se*. Rather, each chapter will discuss a particular aspect of anime’s transnational flow and how this works into the overall framework of the database fantasyscape.

In Chapter One, I will discuss the movement of anime from Japan to the United States through an in-depth discussion of the beginnings of anime on television using the example of how *Tetsuwan Atomu*, the first half-hour animated television show in Japan, became *Astro Boy* to English-speaking audiences. From there, I will discuss the importance of transnational exchanges to the development of anime, highlighting the long

shadow cast by the *Star Wars* series of films. Along with the information presented in this introduction, the purpose of this chapter is to attempt to clarify some of our ideas of what constitutes anime and the fluidity encompassed by such a term. I will also show how the database elements have been interpreted and recontextualized in order to allow the elements to flow transnationally.

In Chapter Two, I explore the complex relationship “Japanese” anime has had with the United States in terms of adaptation and distribution. The malleability of the animated form allows for contents to be adjusted and adapted more easily than live-action entertainment, and the database nature of anime allows for a repurposing of particular anime aspects like characters in new cultural contexts. This exploration of such anime adaptations will focus on how and why such stories are changed, how this alters aspects of transmedia storytelling, and what this may mean to the fans who consume such products. Specifically, I will examine US creations like *Robotech* and *Voltron* that used Japanese anime as their source materials but took the stories and the franchise in different directions. In both cases I will examine the originals from the 1980s as well as their sequels and remakes, which demonstrate the increasing transnationalism of animation production. This chapter is another attempt to highlight the transnational aspects of anime from a different point of view. It illustrates the inherent instability (as pertains to nationality) of many of the database elements.

In Chapter Three, I will analyze the complex interactions between fans and content producers in the anime context. This will widen the franchise concepts discussed in Chapter Two to include fan-created and distributed content, especially anime that have been subtitled for fans by fans. This chapter will examine how anime transitioned from

being something that was seen in a theater and viewed on television to something that fans have begun to catalog and collect in various media formats. I will examine the rise of fansubs and early anime producers like AD Vision. The chapter will trace fansubs' transition from tapes that were traded among fans to online digital distribution, and the tensions between such fan products and commercial releases. I will end the chapter by examining the phenomenon of the DVD. In particular, I am interested in how "official" distribution channels respond to and acknowledge fan distribution and how this ties into the marketing of new products and fan experiences. As a case study, I will take the contemporary fan favorite *The Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi*. This chapter is an attempt to think about the relationships between the fantasyscapes created by fans and those created by companies that are attempting to profit from the generation and movement of fantasies.

In Chapter Four, I will explore the relationship between anime and cult media, beginning with a discussion of the latter. I will then analyze two specific case studies of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* as a critical turning point for anime in the mid-1990s, and *Ghost in the Shell* as a key example of a contemporary cult media franchise. By focusing on aspects of fandom and cult media, I am attempting to demonstrate how fantasyscapes are envisioned and constructed as well as how the various database elements make (or fail to make, depending on the element) the journey across national borders.

Finally, in Chapter Five I will examine the relation between anime and physical spaces. This chapter will examine the country of Japan (and particularly the city of Tokyo) as an anime space as well as how anime fans in the United States embody anime through their performances at conventions, creating another kind of anime space.

Through the move to discussing physical space in this chapter, I want the “-scape” part of fantasyscape to play a more prominent role, and to demonstrate the complex relationship that the 2-D world of screens has with our “real” three-dimensional world. The goal of this chapter is to examine how the database fantasyscape contributes to the anime-ization of space and may contribute to an understanding of the intersection of media and place, as well as the potential impact that such methods of perception may have for our way of thinking about and perceiving the world around us.

## **Chapter One – America’s Anime, Japan’s Anime: Locating Anime in Global Circulation**

Through the 1990s and early 2000s, Japanese television programs were increasingly being seen on television around the globe; today such products are increasingly available for download on the internet as well. As Koichi Iwabuchi (2004a) demonstrates, Japanese television is very popular throughout much of East and Southeast Asia. The international popularity of these programs outside of Asia is not, however, a new phenomenon. In this chapter I hope to historicize how the Japanese television industry responded to American popular culture, transformed it, and then exported it, not only back to America but to much of the world. Through these efforts, I hope to show how anime is not strictly “Japanese” but has arisen discursively through a series of cultural interactions that selectively pull from a database of concepts and styles. For a number of reasons, I will focus on the Japanese television program *Tetsuwan Atomu*, known in English as *Astro Boy*. First, *Astro Boy* was one of the first programs on US television originally from a non English-speaking country to gain wide acceptance, and it was the first Japanese television series to air in the United States (Schodt 2007: 83). As such, the example of *Astro Boy* opposes the familiar argument that the globalization of television and popular culture is necessarily a one-way flow from the United States to the rest of the world. Also, as the first half-hour anime television series, *Astro Boy* pioneered the development of the form, in terms of content (robots would come to dominate anime for years to come), the look and feel of the show (the skillful use of limited animation and the large eyes that have become one of anime’s signature characteristics), and the industrial practices of localizing Japanese animation for US broadcast. In this way,

*Tetsuwan Atomu* and *Astro Boy* set the stage for the anime database that was to come decades later. We can even see a proto-database at work both in terms of style and production. For example, the large eyes that Tezuka Osamu, the author of the original manga on which the *Tetsuwan Atomu* anime was based, gave to his creations were selectively derived from the stylized eyes in early Disney films such as *Bambi* (1942) and the *Betty Boop* (1930-9) cartoons of Max Fleischer, among others (Schodt 2007: 43-5). Additionally, in terms of production, Tezuka broke new ground by actually developing a database – he created a system of “banking” animation cels so they could be reused throughout multiple episodes (Schodt 2007: 72). In spite of these facts, however, there has not been much critical writing on the introduction of Japanese animation into the world of American television programming. I hope that this chapter does a small part to remedy this situation.

In order to be able to discuss anime in more depth, we need to be able to grasp what the term refers to, or at least the vagaries and complications surrounding it. Although I have previously touched on this in the introduction, it is interesting to note that no media form other than anime has such a descriptor that seemingly implies both format and nationality. Anime is far from a stable term, and in this chapter I argue that it does not coherently designate any one specific type, national style, or genre of animation. Rather, anime is a flexible concept that operates as a shorthand way of grouping animated films and television shows that seem to share certain familial traits. This is not a particularly radical idea – in his book on film noir, James Naremore asserts

*film noir* functions rather like big words such as *romantic* or *classic*. An ideological concept with a history all its own, it can be used to describe a period, a movement, and a recurrent style. Like all critical terminology, it tends to be reductive, and it sometimes works on behalf of unstated agendas. For these

reasons, and because its meaning changes over time, it ought to be examined as a discursive construct. It nevertheless has heuristic value, mobilizing specific themes that are worth further consideration (Naremore 2008: 6)

Similarly, a full understanding of how contemporary “anime” functions can only be determined by examining how the term is currently employed and how it came about historically. I argue, although Japanese and American conceptions of anime are necessarily related, there is an interesting disconnect between the two ideas through which we can examine the history of postwar US/Japanese relations and how a global cultural product like anime comes into being.

In our increasingly globalizing cultures and languages, we have become accustomed to using foreign “loanwords,” often without realizing it. This is complicated when a word might mean one thing in one cultural context and another in a different context. Of course, such freely flowing definitions are going to engender ambiguities and possible misunderstandings. In my own case, I realized firsthand the slipperiness of the term *anime* between Japanese and English when in 2004 I had the opportunity to conduct a phone interview with Oshii Mamoru, a Japanese director most famous for his animated works. I had written a book on him that had just come out a few weeks prior, but I hadn’t had the opportunity to speak with him while writing the book, so I was very excited to be able to do so now, even if it was for only ten minutes in a round of press interviews. My first question was about his then-new film *Innocence* (2004), which was screening in competition at the Cannes Film Festival. I knew that animated films had competed at Cannes in the past, so I asked Oshii how it felt to have the first anime film at Cannes. When I used the word “anime” in English, I was using it in the commonly accepted way of meaning “animation from Japan.” I did not clearly hear how the translator relayed my

question to Oshii, but since “anime” is from Japanese (a truncated form of the word “animation” rendered into Japanese phonetics), the translator probably left that word untouched. However, in Japanese “anime” is often understood to mean animation in general, not just Japanese animation. As a consequence, I had inadvertently muddied the conversational waters by using the term “anime,” which obviously meant a different thing to a native Japanese speaker like Oshii than it did to a native English speaker like me. Consequently, the response I received through the translator was that his was not the first animated film to compete at Cannes, and he proceeded to give me the background on animated film history he thought I lacked.

In spite of such occasional semantic confusion, the flow of various influences between countries like Japan and the United States has allowed a hybrid form like anime to come into being. In Marwan Kraidy’s book *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (2005), the author analyzes the term “hybridity,” a term generally used to describe a mixture of different elements, in detail, sifting through its multiple meanings in pursuit of a theoretically useful framework. One of the main points that Kraidy emphasizes is that when discussing hybridity, a term that can mean different things to different people, one needs to take specific cases into account. Since hybridity is neither a necessarily “posthegemonic” concept of freedom from control nor “tantamount to an effect of dominance” (2005: 148), Kraidy develops a more specific theory of globalization rooted in hybridity that he calls critical transculturalism. In this theory, Kraidy locates agency in social practices, rather than in individuals (cultural pluralism) or capitalist structures (cultural imperialism). In this theory, Kraidy tries to strike a balance between focusing on media structures and focusing on the reception of specific media

products. In this way he tries to work around the monolithic concept of cultural imperialism and some of the more “liberatory” types of reception studies that see resistance and agency in nearly every act of media consumption. One of Kraidy’s main points is that hybridity must be made “empirically intelligible”; in other words, general discussions of the hybridity concept must be anchored by concrete analyses (2005: viii).

Such analyses are particularly important when it comes to animation, since the nature of its production often makes the form transnational. It is not uncommon for the animation process, which can be very labor-intensive, to be outsourced to one or more countries in order to save on production costs. For example, John A. Lent (1998) discusses how animation production often takes place in multiple countries, complicating the concept of nationality when it comes to such productions. One of the reasons for the rapid growth of the postwar Japanese animation industry was that in the 1950s work on US cartoons was often outsourced to animators in Japan. Similarly, it is not uncommon today for American and Japanese productions to employ contract animators in South Korea or elsewhere in Asia. Because of the ways in which animation is produced, it is often more complicated to talk about the nationality of an animated film or television program than it is of live-action films or programs, although these too can be multinational productions. Would a US-based production be considered “anime” if it was animated in Japan? Would a Japan-based production cease to be “anime” if most of the animation work was outsourced to Korea? These are not so much objective questions for future thought, but guiding questions to keep the focus on the transnational aspects of anime. Throughout this dissertation, my endeavor will not be to try to arrive at a definitive answer to such questions, but rather to illustrate the database structure of

contemporary anime production. How one responds to such questions depends on how one approaches and interrogates this database.

### **The Beginnings of TV Anime – *Tetsuwan Atomu* becomes *Astro Boy***

The premiere episode of Japan's first half-hour animated television series, *Tetsuwan Atomu*, aired on Japanese television on January 1, 1963. It begins with the scene of a young boy named Tobio driving his flying car through a city, accompanied by background music and futuristic sound effects. However, he is soon fatally injured in a severe crash, although from what is shown onscreen, it is impossible to ascertain the precise cause of the accident. Tobio's scientist father, distraught over the loss of his son, decides to make a young robot to replace him. This is how Atom, the artificial boy who would later go on to become a crime-fighting robot in the course of the *Tetsuwan Atomu* series, was born.

The first episode of the animated television series *Astro Boy* was broadcast on US television on independent station WNEW in New York on September 7, 1963. Producer Fred Ladd, who adapted the series for US television, says that he was contacted in February 1963 about working on the show after a representative of NBC Enterprises happened to see the program in Tokyo (Ladd 2009: 9-10). This speaks to the fact that even in the early 1960s, US television producers were monitoring the television of other countries for new ideas they could adapt. NBC approached Ladd because he had already demonstrated he could successfully revise and adapt European animation for American audiences with a series called *Cartoon Classics* (Ladd 2009: 9, 29). Ladd quickly began working on what would become *Astro Boy*, and by March 1963 NBC had green-lit a

pilot, which was recorded in April. By the summer Ladd had been given clearance to dub and edit more episodes for broadcast in the fall (Ladd 2009: 16, 21, 22).

The first episode of the English-language adaptation of *Tetsuwan Atomu* is the same visually as the Japanese version – a young boy is driving his car and is killed in an accident – but the audio is very different. The most noticeable change is the presence of a nondiegetic narrator, who provides background detail about the action onscreen. Through the narrator, the viewer learns that the boy (whose name is Astor Boynton) is driving “his aerocar on the world’s safest road” and that he did not have to worry about steering because “the highway controlled his car automatically.... This was the highway of the future, as safe as man could make it.” The narrator gives no explicit explanation for the accident that kills Astor and prompts his father to create Astro (the name for Atom in the US version), but one can infer that it was somehow the fault of this “highway of the future.” In *Tetsuwan Atomu*, however, the same footage is accompanied by no narration, leading the viewer to infer that the young Tobio (Astor’s original Japanese character name) was potentially at fault. From the very outset of the story, US viewers are presented with a version of events tailored to fit their perceived cultural norms. Ladd explains the he made such changes because “It is difficult for Americans to sympathize with a reckless driver” but that “American audiences sympathize with innocent victims” (Ladd 2009: 14).

This small segment of *Tetsuwan Atomu* / *Astro Boy* provides an intriguing glimpse into how a television show changes as it becomes disseminated outside of its place of origin. Through the example of the differences in the opening episode as listed above, one can see that localizing a foreign media product is not just a matter of

translation, but rather a re-articulation of the signifier to produce a new signified. Thus, in the process of telling the story of how *Astro Boy* was created, the US version manages to create doubts about the reliability of technology (as seen through the malfunction of the highway system) that were not present in the original Japanese version of the show. Although the two shows are comparable, each is in fact responding to unique cultural and industrial pressures.

In the introduction to his book *Animation and America*, animation scholar Paul Wells identifies the “animated cartoon” as one of America’s “four major indigenous art forms” (Wells 2002: 1). Although animation of course exists in many other countries, it was in the United States that some of the earliest advances in the medium were made. The works of major American animators, especially those of Disney and the Fleischer brothers, have often been cited as formative and stylistic influences on the creators of Japanese comics and animation. Writes anime expert Helen McCarthy, “The American animated films of the period [before WWII] were not so far removed from the traditions of Japanese folk art, with their sense of the ridiculous, their gross exaggeration of physical characteristics for dramatic or comic purpose, their anthropomorphic animals and clean, simple lines, and their influences were readily absorbed” (McCarthy 1993: 11). As we will see throughout this dissertation, Japanese animation as a whole can be seen as the work of glocalization in action – animators from Japan took ideas and styles from abroad and created a product that reflects their own lifestyles and culture. In turn, the export of Japanese animation to other countries, especially the United States, shows how a product that has been glocalized in its creation can be re-glocalized upon reception in a new location or culture.

Japan is one of the world's leading producers of film and television animation. According to one source, anime has accounted for over half of the animated films shown worldwide (Yamazaki 2003: 14) and the anime market was at one time estimated to be worth \$4.2 billion in the United States alone (Reid 2004: 30). Part of the reason for anime's turn to global markets has been out of sheer necessity. For example, in order to try to be competitive and be able to produce an animated version of his manga, animator Tezuka Osamu kept the budget for *Tetsuwan Atom* as low as he could. Some would argue that this set the trend for Japanese animation to be produced as cheaply as possible, often with rather small budgets (Schodt 2007: 66-72). Consequently, often less than half of the cost of creating an anime series is covered through fees from broadcasters; companies generally rely on selling DVDs, branded merchandise, and overseas rights to compensate for this (Osaki 2003: 22). Toei Animation president Tsutomu Tomari has said that his company, which is Japan's largest animation producer, "gets almost 40% of its revenues from abroad, and the percentage is growing every year" (quoted in Osaki 2003: 23). The internationalization of Japanese animation is often perceived as a recent development. However, this is something that had been taking place since the beginning of the Japanese television animation industry in the 1960s, since "[b]y the 1980s, Japan had become a net exporter of programming, 56 percent of which was animation" (Stronach 1989: 128). In discussing a new incarnation of the *Astro Boy* television series that was being created in 2003 and partially funded by Sony Pictures Television in the US, one Japanese analyst mistakenly asserted that until "now all Japanese *anime* relied on money raised locally to support production budgets" (Yamazaki 2003: 14). In fact, the original 1960s *Astro Boy* animated series was able to increase the quality of its animation because

of an influx of money from NBC Enterprises in the United States. In a way, then, Japanese television animation has been international almost from the medium's inception. The Japanese television industry in general has grown from an importer of (mostly American) television shows to a net exporter of programming, while Japan has become "the only country, apart from the USA, where more than 95 per cent of television programmes are produced domestically" (Iwabuchi 2004b: 22).

### ***Tetsuwan Atomu* in Japan**

*Tetsuwan Atomu* (lit. *Iron-Arm Atom*) made its debut in 1951, twelve years before his first flight on television, in a *manga* (Japanese comic) written and drawn by Osamu Tezuka. Tezuka was a pioneer in the field of Japanese comics, and is responsible for much of the form's postwar development; for this reason he is often called "the god of manga." However, even though Tezuka's comic images are now considered iconically Japanese, at the time they seemed rather foreign. Writes manga scholar Frederik Schodt on the style of Tezuka's manga, "It was a look initially regarded sometimes as being *battā kusai*, or something that 'smells like butter' and is too 'foreign' in appearance. But soon it became the default style of nearly all manga in Japan, because so many younger manga artists in the fifties and early sixties idolized and imitated Tezuka" (Schodt 2007: 49). Although it is certainly an oversimplification, in general it could be said that many aspects of contemporary manga and anime styles can be traced back to Tezuka's particular artistic sensibilities.

Appropriately, it was Tezuka who began the boom in Japanese television animation in the early 1960s. He founded Mushi Productions, his animation studio, in

1961 and a little more than a year later his first television creation debuted. The *Tetsuwan Atomu* anime series premiered on New Year's Day in 1963, airing on Fuji TV at 6:15 p.m. Tuesdays. (Although this broadcast slot may seem a bit late in the viewing day, this is not uncommon for animated programs in Japan, "most of which are broadcast between 4:00 and 7:00 p.m. in order to catch the children between school and supper" [Stronach 1989: 151].) The program later changed channels, moving to public broadcaster NHK, or Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (Japan Broadcasting Association), which is a semi-independent government entity.

*Tetsuwan Atomu's* place in the development of Japanese television is significant because the show came about fairly early in the medium's history. Although there were experimental television broadcasts in the country prior to World War II, broadcasting on a regular basis did not begin until 1953, after the general US occupation of the country had ended. (However, the US continued to occupy and control the southern island of Okinawa until 1972 and maintains military bases in Japan to this day.) Media scholar Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto theorizes that postwar developments in television technology were actually hampered by the occupying American forces (Yoshimoto 1996: 127). Even so, the eventual development of the medium was heavily dependent upon both American technology and content. During the planning stage there were two competing ideas for standards of television broadcasts in Japan, with NHK advocating Japanese-devised technology based on European advancements and NTV (Nihon TV) advocating the use of American technology and standards (Yoshimoto 1996: 127). In arguing its case, "NHK publicized its competition with NTV as that of European high culture against American

consumerism” (Yoshimoto 1996: 127). However, postwar Japan had already had a longstanding relationship with American popular culture.

Shunya Yoshimi traces the Americanization of Japan and the popularity of American consumer culture to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, writing, “It is important to note that the flourishing Americanism in large Japanese cities after the late 1920s was not merely importing American culture but remaking it in Japan” (Yoshimi 2000: 205). This was a practice that thrived even during WWII since “In Japan, every kind of modern leisure and consumption pattern after the late Taisho [1912-1926] era tended to be called ‘Americanism’” (Yoshimi 2000: 205). Yoshimi postulates “a continuity of Americanism in Japan from the prewar to the postwar period” (Yoshimi 2000: 206). Because of this continuity, he argues, “the Japanese public had already begun to associate images of Disney’s film and land with ‘America’ as the symbol of ‘richness’ and ‘newness’” (Yoshimi 2000: 207). Given the country’s familiarity with American culture and consumerism, it was not terribly surprising that NTV’s American television standard came out on top as Japan’s national standard for television broadcasting. This technological relationship with US standards also led to the prevalence of American television programs on Japanese TV in the early days, since “the Japanese television industry did not have enough capacity or expertise to produce [their own] programs” (Yoshimoto 1996: 127).

Even though the American occupation of mainland Japan had ended by the time television broadcasting had commenced, US communication policy continued to cast a long shadow over the actions and the structure of the burgeoning industry. Before 1950, most radio broadcasting was non-commercial and was controlled by the Japanese

government. However, the Broadcast Law of 1950 explicitly provided for commercial broadcasting in Japan and paved the way for there to be commercial television from the outset. The organization that drafted the bill that later became the Broadcast Law was called the Radio Regulatory Agency and had been established in 1949 (*Broadcasting in Japan* 2002). The agency was “patterned after the Federal Communication Commission of the United States [and] was established to regulate, supervise, and enforce instructions for all broadcasting activities” (Kitatani 1988: 176). In spite of the culturally specific aspects of Japanese television programs, the overall structure under which the programs were produced remained solidly American.

There was also a great deal of American programming on Japanese television in the first ten years. Many different genres were available, including dramas, westerns, and detective shows, and at the height of this boom (the 1963-1964 season) there were fifty-four different US series on Japanese TV, including “fourteen dramas, fourteen comedies, and eighteen sports shows” (Stronach 1989: 138). *Tetsuwan Atomu*’s Japanese television debut came out during this peak of American television in Japan and forecast the growing position of domestic production of television programs within Japan. The ratings for the show averaged at around 25 percent, although they rose as high as 40.7 percent (Schodt 2007: 190). In addition, *Tetsuwan Atomu* came along at a time of great growth for the television industry in Japan. In the ten years between 1960 and 1970, the number of television sets in the country increased from 3 million to 22 million and the expenditures on television advertising increased from \$10 million to \$968 million (Kitatani 1988: 174). Ownership of sets increased significantly from the late 1950s through the early 1960s, as people in Japan tuned in to witness events such as the wedding of the crown

prince in 1959 and the Tokyo Olympics (the first time the Olympic Games had been held in an Asian country) in 1964.

It makes sense that, given Yoshimi's aforementioned assertion that postwar Japan connected "Disney's film and land with 'America' as the symbol of 'richness' and 'newness'" (Yoshimi 2000: 207), Japanese television would try to use animation to show off Japan's growing economic and industrial prowess. As anthropologist Anne Allison writes, Atom "served as a new type of hero through which a generation of war-weary Japanese could begin to re-envision their country: as one built on technology, energized through hard work and good will, and devoted to [a] new world order of machines and peace" (2000: 131). But the creation of *Tetsuwan Atomu* was not only important for what it represented on the television screen, but for what it represented in how it was produced – a newly strong Japan able to try to compete with the land of Disney on its own animated terms.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, US companies and advertising agencies producing animation for domestic consumption often outsourced such sequences to other countries, such as Japan or Spain, to save money (Barnouw 1990: 281). Even before the *Tetsuwan Atomu* series was created, though, Japan was not content to be the animator of the ideas of others, exporting its own full-length theatrical animated films in the late 1950s and early 1960s. *Hakujaden* (1958, dir. Yabushita Taiji and Okade Kazuhiko), one of the first mature examples of Japanese animation, received an award at the Venice Children's Film Festival a year after its release, and was distributed in the US in 1961 as *Panda and the Magic Serpent* (Clements and McCarthy 2001: 291). Another animated film from Japan released in the United States before *Astro Boy* was *Alakazam the Great!* (1960, dir.

Yabushita Taiji, Tezuka Osamu, and Shirakawa Daisaku). Originally titled *Saiyuki* in Japan, this film was also released in 1961 in the US and featured the voice talents of Frankie Avalon, Arnold Stang, and Jonathan Winters. Osamu Tezuka, one of the film's co-directors, was inspired by his work on *Saiyuki* and "the experience of making the film further inspired Tezuka to consider repeating the process for TV, indirectly giving birth to *Astro Boy*" (Clements and McCarthy 2001: 192).

Although the roots of Japanese animation are in the movie theater, with the success of *Tetsuwan Atomu*, animation would increasingly be experienced on the small screen at home. Following *Tetsuwan Atomu*'s debut in January 1963, there were six other animated series on television later that year, produced by three different studios; two years later the number of series would double (Bendazzi 1994: 412). In 1965, Osamu Tezuka made Japanese animation history yet again with *Jungle Taitei*, the first full-color anime series. Like the precedent set with *Tetsuwan Atomu*, *Jungle Taitei* flourished with the help of overseas capital; Tezuka's production company "drew the series in color specifically with foreign distribution in mind, as a domestic release alone would not have covered the high production costs" (Arnold 2004). As the production of Japanese television animation increased, it began to become even more popular outside of Japan in the 1970s, particularly in Europe. According to animation scholar Giannalberto Bendazzi, in the 1970s Japanese animation "became very successful on European television and gave way to a true Japanese invasion (less so in the United States of America, where the market is usually not as receptive to foreign films and television productions)" (Bendazzi 1994: 412). Indeed, while Japanese animation was booming in Europe in the 1970s, there were arguably no new programs from Japan shown on major broadcast outlets in the US

from the late 1960s until the late 1970s. In an interesting twist, it was the near-universal popularity of the film *Star Wars* (1977, dir. George Lucas) that changed Japanese animation on both sides of the Pacific. (See the next chapter for more details on the connection between *Star Wars* and anime. It is worth mentioning that *Star Wars* itself had been strongly influenced by Japanese popular entertainment, especially the samurai films of Kurosawa Akira.) In Japan, the film prompted a resurgence of theatrical animation while in the United States it led to increased production of animated programs from the late 1970s through the 1980s.

The *Tetsuwan Atomu* franchise continues to be a going concern in Japan. Although the program has since been eclipsed by other animated shows, it remains a touchstone of popular culture. In 2003, people around Japan celebrated the fictional birthday of Atom, who, according to Tezuka's story, was created on April 7 of that year. In trying to capture the program's spirit of peace and cooperation, the Takadanobaba area of Tokyo recently began issuing an alternative form of currency bearing the mark of Atom to reward volunteer and environmental efforts (*The Japan Times* 2004). The theme song of *Tetsuwan Atomu* has been familiar to generations of Japanese schoolchildren because it is "ritually played" at school sport competitions (Schodt 1988: 23). The influence of the show has even spread into the realm of hard science, as researchers in Japan have announced the formation of the Atom Project, named for Tezuka's fictional robot boy, which "aims to create a humanoid robot with the physical, intellectual and emotional capacity of a 5-year-old that would be able to think and move on its own" (*The Japan Times* 2003). Some in the popular press have even theorized that the popularity of the *Tetsuwan Atomu* television show is responsible for Japan's (in)famous affinity with

technology. An article that appeared in the Associated Press has quoted unnamed researchers as saying “the popularity of *Astro Boy* is one reason why Japan seems to accept domestic robots more readily than other nations do” (The Associated Press 2003)<sup>1</sup>. However, this is not to say that such influences led Japan to create products that would be wholly unfamiliar to the rest of the world. As we will see, *Astro Boy* was the first of many Japanese anime that would become popular abroad due to the hybrid and hybridizing nature of such animation.

### ***Astro Boy* in the United States**

Before *Astro Boy* can be analyzed in detail, the show needs to be placed in the context of the other animated fare on US television. The made-for-TV cartoon came about in the early 1950s with the debut of Jay Ward’s *Crusader Rabbit* (Hollis 2001: 6). In the mid-1950s, studios such as Terrytoons, Warner Brothers, and Paramount began releasing their film cartoons to the syndication market, and “[b]y the late 1950s, practically all of the major theatrical cartoon series had been syndicated to local stations.” (Hollis 2001: 7). In 1957, Hanna-Barbera released *Ruff and Reddy*, which was the first series from the studio and was made expressly for syndication; many other titles followed. These series were different from what had come before because they were complete half-hour episodes, rather than shorter segments that could be incorporated into a larger block of children’s programming (Hollis 2001: 9). Television animation had begun to be taken seriously in 1960 with the broadcast of Hanna-Barbera’s show *The Flintstones*. The show “won high ratings during 1961 and became a Friday night leader” and by the next year “it had established animation as a prime-time commodity” (Barnouw

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the presence of robots in Japanese society, both fictional and non-fictional, see Schodt 1988.

1990: 308). Based on the success of *The Flintstones*, in 1962 Hanna-Barbara launched *The Jetsons*, a show that played on similar comedic family themes despite its futuristic setting.

*Astro Boy* first aired on US television on September 7, 1963 on independent television station WNEW in New York. The rights to the show had been picked up by a division of NBC called NBC Enterprises, which had been designed to develop and provide content for syndication outside of the main NBC channel. The practice of television syndication ultimately had a significant impact on how anime was broadcast on television in the United States. Syndicated programs were those that were not broadcast regularly at a set time on the major networks, but were instead sold as packages to television stations around the country. The individual stations were the ones that often decided when and how the syndicated programs they purchased would air. As Derek Kompare writes:

As filmed programming came to dominate television at the end of the 1950s, the networks used their unparalleled powers to control the telefilm trade, gaining financial interest and syndication rights to virtually every prime time series they aired throughout the 1960s. When the government curtailed this power of the networks in the 1970s, the syndication market in off-network series fostered the development of nonnetwork stations and program distributors (2005: 131).

Although syndication would increase in the 1970s, with the example of *Astro Boy* we can see that the trend toward syndication was building in the 1960s because there was a growing market for such programming. One of the key reasons NBC was interested in *Astro Boy* was that importing such a program allowed them to acquire salable footage for relatively little money. Fred Ladd, who adapted the series for the US market, asserted “NBC Enterprises was thrilled because doing it this way cost a fraction of what Hanna-Barbara was doing in original production” (quoted in Greene 2004: 97).

*Astro Boy*'s time slot on WNEW was at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, a slot not generally reserved for children's programming. Indeed, other programs airing at the same time as *Astro Boy* in the New York area included two news programs, the western *Broken Arrow*, a mystery show called *Five Fingers*, and *Jeff's Collie* (which was the nom de syndication for *Lassie*). However, *Astro Boy* did fit more generally into WNEW's early evening children's lineup; the show was preceded by the live children's program *Sandy's Hour* and followed by the Hanna Barbera cartoon *Top Cat*. The *TV Guide* entry for the debut of *Astro Boy* read: "Half-hour cartoon series about a robot boy who flies through space and moves mountains" (1963: A-14). This description of the show places *Astro Boy* squarely within the realm of the superhero on the American cultural landscape. It is not surprising that the *TV Guide* entry makes no mention of the show's Japanese origins, as an emphasis on the cartoon's cultural differences may have held the show back from mainstream success. However, it is rather interesting in light of an entry that ran in the previous week's *TV Guide* that simply read, "Commentary on the importance of Japanese TV – fastest-growing in the world: NBC International will open a Tokyo office" (Stahl 1963: 3). Because of the ambiguous wording of this short statement, it is unclear whether NBC was setting up shop in Japan because it was interested in acquiring new programming or if it wanted to promote its own shows in Japan. As mentioned previously, *Tetsuwan Atomu* was discovered when an NBC representative happened to see its broadcast in Tokyo. Hence we know that, even before an official office was set up, the company was keeping an eye on overseas opportunities; American television companies certainly perceived the growing Japanese television market as a potentially lucrative opportunity for them.

One of the biggest obstacles to the localization of Japanese animation on US television was the amount of violence such shows often contained. Cartoons in general have often been singled out for criticism in this regard. For example, in his famous “vast wasteland” speech in 1961, FCC chairman Newton Minnow assessed the current state of television by saying, “There are some fine children’s shows, but they are drowned out in the massive doses of cartoons, violence, and more violence” (Minnow and LaMay 1995: 190). From this formulation, the animated medium is posited as one of television’s inherent problems with no redeeming features; cartoons seem to be synonymous with violence. This speech also situates the intrinsic nature of cartoons as being a medium for children (albeit a debased one).

In particular, the imported Japanese cartoons of the 1960s were often singled out for their depictions of violent acts. (This is somewhat ironic, given that Minnow himself has said that Japan has one of “the preeminent children’s television systems in the world” [Minnow and LaMay 1995: 154].) For example, all mentions of Japanese cartoons in Tim Hollis’s book on children’s television associate the form with violence (even *Astro Boy*, which is rather tame by today’s standards). Hollis writes that “Japanese cartoons were immediately identifiable because of their quite unusual drawing style and, in most cases, their surreal, sometimes frightening, subject matter. In future years, some of the Japanese series would be most harshly criticized by children’s TV activist groups, but in 1963 *Astro Boy* stood alone” (Hollis 2001: 12). Hollis also writes about the use of cartoons on the mostly live-action syndicated program *Romper Room*. There was some leeway given to broadcasters of the program, allowing for localization in markets across the country. Although the show’s creators and franchise rights holders did allow cartoons, “they were

diligent in making sure their content was appropriate to the format of the show. (*Gigantor* or *Astro Boy* would undoubtedly have been shown the exit)” (Hollis 2001: 16). In the late 1960s there was increased criticism of children’s fare, especially for the Saturday morning block, but “such Japanese-produced syndicated cartoons as *Gigantor*, *Astro Boy*, and *Speed Racer* were also fraught with monstrous images and mindless mayhem” (Hollis 2001: 20). However, Frederik Schodt writes that Tezuka found the attitudes toward cartoon violence he encountered in the United States rather perplexing as he saw cartoons like Popeye that were widely accepted yet contained even more violence than *Astro Boy* (Schodt 2007: 86-7). The difference, however, was in context – although *Astro Boy* had comedic moments, it was an adventure show that showed Astro combating a series of bad guys in a much more serious manner than most U.S. cartoons of the time.

This sense of difference was not solely an instance of xenophobia by American television viewers. The Japanese imports were in fact generally more violent than most American cartoons, even after some of the violence that had been in the original Japanese version had been cut. (Other content deemed not suitable for American audiences had to be excised from *Tetsuwan Atomu* as well, including “what appeared to be cruelty to animals, depictions of blacks, references to specific religions or to narcotics, and of course, nudity” [Schodt 2007: 84].) One account of the changes made to *Astro Boy* said that, “The American and Japanese series differed little during the first season, except that Tetsuan [sic] Atomu took a slightly more violent approach to solving problems than did the American *Astro Boy*” (Perry 2004: 98). Fred Ladd was even sent overseas to Tezuka’s studio in October 1964 to explain some of the problems *Astro Boy*’s American producers had with violence in the series, (Greene 2004: 99, 120; Schodt 2007: 84-5;

Ladd and Deneroff 2009: 30-40). Sometimes the violent scenes in *Astro Boy* could be salvaged by judicious trimming of certain scenes—which would “eliminate the threat of over-the-top violence by removing gunplay that, if left intact, was going too far”—or by recontextualizing the action through dialogue, such as stating that a character who had died in the Japanese version was instead in need of medical help and should be taken immediately to a hospital (Schodt 2007: 85; Ladd and Deneroff 2009: 33). Because of the pressure brought to bear on Mushi Productions, the level of onscreen violence the series portrayed was cut for the second season of the show.

Although a full list of the changes made to *Tetsuwan Atomu* in order to produce the Americanized *Astro Boy* is beyond the scope of this chapter, US producer Fred Ladd identified several issues with which he had to contend when attempting to localize shows like *Astro Boy* or *Gigantor*. One of the most noticeable was the specific cultural elements embedded in the shows; these had to be minimized as much as possible so that U.S. audiences would not be distracted by something unfamiliar or unreadable (Ladd 2002). In other words, the show had to be cleared of almost all references to its place of origin. However, with a show like *Gigantor*, one can see that some of the Japanese cultural elements – mainly the writing – had to inevitably seep into the finished product because certain shots had to be kept in order to retain narrative coherence. Scenes containing Japanese writing on signs and buildings often still had to be shown, in order to make the episode as a whole make sense. The U.S. producers found it tricky to adapt *Tetsuwan Atomu* into *Astro Boy* for different reasons. Tezuka had already tried to remove elements from the show that he thought would make it seem too Japanese, such as onscreen writing and allusions to Japanese religions. However, in an attempt to be more “international” he

then tried to use Christian references and images as well as English-language writing onscreen, with which the U.S. producers took issue because they did not want to offend anyone with religious allusions nor did they wish to alienate young pre-literate viewers. (Schodt 2007: 86). Thus, even when Tezuka tried to make a culturally odorless product by selecting from the database of what he thought would be acceptable images (drawing on his own version of the fantasyscape and envisioning a foreign audience), he still ended up marking *Tetsuwan Atomu* as foreign. This made some production decisions particularly troublesome for Ladd and the producers who would work on subsequent shows. In the commentary track to the US release of the show *Gigantor* on DVD, Ladd mentions that he didn't like the name of a character in the show, but was forced to use it because part of the name appeared (in English) at various times onscreen and it was not possible to edit around it. With *Astro Boy*, Ladd had an easier time because, as mentioned above, he was able to meet with the Japanese staff and make requests. Although he sometimes felt constrained by the source material, Ladd acknowledged that he was not able to make all of the changes to the show that he wanted to, saying, "[T]his happens when you acquire a series made abroad – you have certain cues onscreen that cannot be ignored. If you're seeing something onscreen, you've got to pay attention to it. You've got to respect it" (Ladd 2002).

In this way, early anime shows like *Astro Boy* and *Gigantor* serve as templates for the anime shows that are currently airing on US television. Many anime programs that aired in the 1970s and 1980s were heavily edited, and managed to attract many fans in spite of this (or perhaps because of it). The show *Battle of the Planets* (an adaptation of *Kagaku Ninjatai Gatchaman*), for example, was changed to include a robot narrator

named 7-Zark-7 and his robot dog sidekick named 1-Rover-1. (The artificial canine is perhaps a reference to the robot dog K-9, which first appeared in the British science fiction series *Doctor Who* in 1977.) This new footage was animated in the US specifically for the syndicated broadcast of the series. These additional characters structured each episode by filling in any needed exposition, adding some comedic banter, and acting as filler to compensate for any cuts made to the scenes from the Japan original. The only thing new about this practice, however, was the fact that the new footage was not created in Japan. According to Ladd, the production staff on *Gigantor* sometimes had the studio in Japan create new endings for the shows in order to make each episode a complete story arc. Another example of such practices is the show *Robotech*, which I will discuss in more depth in a later chapter; this show was actually created by editing three unrelated Japanese anime series into a loose storyline. A more recent example of the localization of Japanese animation can be seen in an article by Hirofumi Katsuno and Jeffrey Maret, in which they examine in detail the changes that were made to the anime television program *Pokemon*, asserting that due to the exclusion of several episodes and cuts or modifications made to many others, “The *Pokemon* TV series shown in the United States (and everywhere else in the world, outside of Asia) is not the same series that aired in Japan” (Katsuno and Maret 2004: 81). The most evident changes are references to Japanese customs and language (Katsuno and Maret 2004: 86), but there were images of violence and sexuality that were removed as well (Katsuno and Maret 2004: 90-4).

The changes made to *Astro Boy* for US broadcast allowed the series to more accurately reflect the prevailing attitudes in the United States in the early 1960s. According to Fred Ladd, he attempted to fashion *Astro Boy* into a show that would

resonate with US audiences: “My aim was not just to *dub* the show, but to *American-ize* it” (Ladd and Deneroff 2009: 25). It was fitting for the time that *Astro Boy* become both international in scope yet focused on America. In his book *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*, Eric Barnouw writes that “In the years 1964-66 telefilms turned more specifically to international struggles, with emphasis on clandestine warfare” (Barnouw 1990: 367). This was presumably because of the international Cold War conflicts raging between the United States and the Soviet Union at the time, and particularly the Vietnam War. Such an emphasis was not limited to the spy shows such as *Mission: Impossible*, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, or *I Spy*, since “international conspiracy dominated” even on shows for children (Barnouw 1990: 373). One example occurs in *Astro Boy*, where “an agent from the planet Xenon was recruiting brilliant earth children for some special mysterious tutoring” (Barnouw 1990: 374). To Barnouw it seems to matter little that shows such as *Astro Boy* were not produced in the United States – the fact that they were imported and thus contextualized situated them within a dialogue about other aspects of American culture at the time. In addition, the name “Astro Boy” resonates particularly well with other American cultural imperatives of the 1960s. Patrick Drazen wrote that the protagonist’s name change from Atom to Astro may have been motivated by global events: “For American audiences, who may have found the name ‘Atom’ a bit unnerving back when Civil Defense drills were common and nuclear holocaust seemed very real, the NBC network took a cue from the popularity of NASA’s space program and renamed the robot Astro Boy” (Drazen 2004: 26). Although this was certainly true, the actual invention of Astro’s name had closer ties to industrial animation production. Ladd came up with the name in a discussion with a coworker from NBC and

took the new moniker directly from a space whale named Astro in *Pinocchio in Outer Space* (1965), another animated film Ladd had been working on at the time (Greene 2004: 97). However, it also seems plausible that the reason for the change in name could have had something to do with the space race between the United States and the Soviet Union during the 1960s. A scant two years before *Astro Boy* premiered, President John F. Kennedy made the call for putting an American on the moon within the decade. Within this context, name change to Astro creates a vision that captures such goals and aspirations in a way that Atom could not. It also subtly misguides the viewer about the nature of the show – although he did sometimes venture into space, the show was generally set on Earth. The name, however, gives off an aura of forward-looking futurity that would have been appealing.

There is a general consensus that *Astro Boy* did well on US television. Shawne Kleckner, whose company The Right Stuf released tapes of the *Astro Boy* television series beginning in the 1990s, said “Oh, it was an incredibly popular show. In fact, some of the ad slicks that NBC put out at the time trumpeted the fact that the ratings on it were so good that it had beat the local news and *Lone Ranger* and *Superman* and a number of the other shows at the time” (Kleckner 2002). One English-language anime guide wrote that the show “became a major syndication hit, knocking the competition out of the box in major markets like New York and Los Angeles. Even in smaller markets where the lack of independent television channels confined the series to weekly rather than daily exposure, *Astro Boy* performed exceedingly well” (Ledoux and Ranney 1997: 10). A recent book on animation said that “a profound TV milestone arrived in 1963 with

*Astroboy* [sic] whose popularity in US syndication was a surprise. Due to the stellar success of this Japanese import, others soon came” (DeMott 2004: 206).

The internationalization of *Astro Boy* did not stop with the 1960s black-and-white television show. In the 1980s Osamu Tezuka oversaw a second *Astro Boy* series, this time in color, and another new *Astro Boy* show was released in 2003. A feature-length *Astro Boy* film was under development for many years as well, produced by Hong Kong-based Imagi Animation Studios; the film was released theatrically in the United States and Japan in 2009 and directed by David Bowers. Interestingly, the film was originally slated to be directed by Genndy Tartakovsky, the creator of such American animated shows as *Dexter’s Laboratory* and *Samurai Jack (Sci Fi Wire 2004)*. Tartakovsky also directed a number of the episodes of *The Powerpuff Girls*, an animated show about three artificially-created girls who fight crime – a show clearly influenced by *Astro Boy* and other anime.

*Astro Boy* is an important television program, then, because it provides an early example of how a show broadcast in a non-English language was localized and became popular in the context of American programming. The show continues to be influential in how cartoons from Japan are purchased and adapted to American television. In the years since *Astro Boy* made his debut, Japanese animation has become a part of the US cultural landscape, and it is now fairly easy to find such animated fare on television on a regular basis. Although some may critique the popularization of anime in the United States as the watering-down of a distinctly Japanese product, by examining how *Tetsuwan Atomu* was changed into *Astro Boy* we can see that in many respects even some of the earliest Japanese animation was created with export in mind.

## Hybrid Anime from *Astro Boy* to the 1970s

In subsequent chapters, I will examine some of the anime programs that have come after *Astro Boy*. Although, as stated in the introduction, my purpose is not to create a chronology of anime, to a certain extent this history is necessary to contextualize what I will be discussing. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we need to realize that the chronology of anime depends on how we define the term, due to its inherent hybridity. If we take this chapter as a starting point, we can see that it would be possible to begin an anime chronology with the first half-hour animated television program. The chronology would look different if I began with postwar animation that had been theatrically distributed. This time we would have begun in 1958 with Toei Douga's *Hakujaden* (dir. Okabe Kazuhiko and Yabushita Taiji), which was translated into English as *Panda and the Magic Serpent* in 1961. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the picture would change even more dramatically if we began from some of the earliest animation experiments in Japan. The definition of anime determines the waypoints we might stop at along the anime timeline as well. For example, in *Amerika de Nihon no anime wa, dou miraretekita ka?*, Kusanagi Satoshi (2003) gives a detailed chronology of anime in a fold-out section in the back of the book, listing both the Japanese and English titles for each year. However, Kusanagi's account takes in a number of titles that are not customarily thought of as anime and that many people probably did not realize originated in Japan. A number of these earlier examples are stop-motion animation productions by Rankin Bass, such as *The New Adventures of Pinocchio* (1960) and *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (1964). Although such shows were conceptualized, written, and funded

in the United States, the actual animation work was performed in Japan, making these programs “Japanese animation.”

Most chronologies of anime state that the first wave of anime in the United States following *Astro Boy* lasted less than a decade. A number of notable releases followed *Astro Boy*, such as *Gigantor* (1966), *Kimba the White Lion* (1966), and *Speed Racer* (1967), but the common assumption is that there was very little Japanese animation from the late 1960s through the late 1970s. Indeed, *The Complete Anime Guide* jumps from 1967-68 to 1978-79 in its chronology of anime on US television, although Kusanagi’s book, due to its more-inclusive nature, lists 1975 as the only year that lacked a new animated television program or film made in Japan. One source explains: “The perceived violence of their [Japanese television’s] shows and the looseness of Japanese programming standards had been keeping stateside producers from seriously considering any Japanese animation for nearly a decade” (Hofus and Khoury 2002: 16). The reality of the situation is a little less clear-cut. As we will see in the next chapter, there are many factors to consider when a media property travels abroad.

## **Conclusion**

Although a sense of history is important to the project at hand in order to situate the globalization and adaptation of anime, developing an in-depth chronology is not my main goal. From the brief sketches above, we can begin to get a sense of how anime has come into being. Of course, entire books have been written on the historical development of animation in Japan (Yamaguchi and Watanabe 1977). However, what I have tried to capture in this chapter is different. This chapter has sought to both clarify and complicate

the idea of anime as a singularly national concept. Anime comes from Japan and is produced in Japan, but it is a hybrid product and does not arise fully formed as a Japanese cultural production. In fact, as we have seen, even the earliest half-hour anime program on Japanese television developed through cultural negotiations between US and Japanese companies.

As detailed above, anime has a complex transnational history that makes it difficult to say with absolute certainty what is or is not anime. This situation is rendered even more complex because anime outside of Japan has taken on generic connotations that do not necessarily exist within Japan. In Japan, saying that one is a fan of “anime” or “manga” might be similar to saying one is a fan of “television” or “films” in the U.S. – it is a rather general assertion. However, outside of Japan, anime is often taken to be a genre of film or television rather than a media form that contains many genres. The blurring of genres happens within anime in Japan, but I would argue that it takes place to a greater degree when the generic knowledge is not as deep (even among dedicated fans). To examine anime and genre in 1990s Japan, Azuma writes about the anime franchise *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and the many additional media products such as games that were created in the wake of the show’s popularity. However, he asserts that even though the original show and its many derivative products are nominally set in the same diegetic universe and feature the same characters, there are many generic differences between them (Azuma 2009: 48). In other words, the *Evangelion* anime and a related simulation game like *Ayanami Nurturing Project* (the example Azuma cites) do not share any generic similarities—the former is a science fiction action / adventure series with religious and psychological overtones while the latter is a simulation game where the

player decides on the daily schedule and routine of a character in order to try to “raise” her in the most effective manner. However, they are grouped together in the minds (and wallets) of fans because they share a cast of the same characters. Outside of Japan, where fans are able to watch the *Evangelion* anime but may not have access to a translated version of the *Ayanami Nurturing Project* game, these generic groupings may be created with much broader strokes. In this way, I would argue, anime could be said to function outside of Japan as a quasi-generic term even though strictly speaking it is not actually a genre. As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, this is not necessarily a trait that is unique to anime, as Naremore’s (2008) analysis of film noir as a “discursive construct” suggests.

## **Chapter Two – *Robotech* and *Voltron* against *Warriors of the Wind*: The Americanizing of the Anime Experience**

As mentioned in previous chapters, from the very beginning of anime on US television, there has been a tension between anime's obviously foreign aspects (such as Japanese writing on signs and a more relaxed attitude toward violence) and its more easily domesticated characters and plots. American producers were often able to effectively obscure the origins of this imported anime through techniques of selective editing and dubbing. Generally speaking, though, the programs generated through such localization efforts were often very close to the Japanese source material. However, due to differences in viewing cultures or structures in the media industries between Japan and the country of localization, anime programs or films were sometimes changed into something altogether different. In other words, the localization effort involved not only translation, but also editing of the component anime programs or films into what might be considered a brand new product.

At the same time that American television producers were adapting Japanese television shows to meet a growing demand for such entertainment, the Japanese animation industry was undergoing a creative surge of its own. A prime example of this was the film *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (*Kaze no tani no Naushika*, 1984, dir. Miyazaki Hayao), which was undoubtedly a landmark in the history of Japanese animation. In director Miyazaki's adaptation of his own serialized comic, he showed how the animation medium can focus attention on real-world problems like environmental degradation and the need to coexist with other cultures (and even other species), yet tell an enthralling tale that still looks fresh nearly twenty-five years later. *Nausicaä* would go

on to win the 1985 *Kinema Junpô* readers' choice award and set the stage for Miyazaki to establish himself as a commercial and creative powerhouse in Japanese cinema as a whole, not just in the world of animation.

However, the American dub and edit of *Nausicaä*, named *Warriors of the Wind* (1985), has become infamous in fan circles for the liberties it takes with the Japanese original. Although most would probably acknowledge the necessity of dubbing the film into English for the American market, many people had a problem with the fact that *Warriors of the Wind* cut over twenty minutes from *Nausicaä*'s final running time. The general consensus is that the film was a "mutilated" (Megahey 2005), "wretched" (See 2005) and "horrendously-mangled version" ("Video List" 2007) of the Japanese original that was "subjected to a devastating series of cuts" (McCarthy 1999: 78) and which "interprets the story of *Nausicaä* just about as accurately as *Demolition Man* redid *Brave New World*" (See 2005). Such vocal opinions often fail to properly explain the exact reason for their anger, though, particularly in the context of anime industry at the time. As mentioned above, heavy editing and dubbing of anime was very common, yet few examples have generated the kind of backlash that *Warriors of the Wind* evokes. This then raises the question of what it is about *Warriors of the Wind* that has marked it so seriously as a failed product in the global marketplace.

Thinking about this in terms of the database fantasyscape gives us a good idea of how to approach why and how this happens. As we have previously explored, according to this concept media products are able to travel across global and cultural borders because some or all of their constituent elements appeal to the collective fantasies of a certain segment of the population. Azuma's (2009) database theory that it is not so much

the narrative that matters in contemporary anime, but rather the characters that matter (the traits of which can be mixed and matched as if choosing from a database of ideas) can be broadened to include the globalization of anime as well. When such shows are introduced to a country by a non-Japanese production company, it is presumably because the company thinks the show will be profitable and that there will be elements of the show attractive to these new viewers. As mentioned in previous chapters, although there is generally perceived to be little cultural proximity between Japan and a country like the United States, there are definite elements in anime that seem to “click” outside of a film or television program’s originally targeted demographic. I would argue that the way to explain this is through the implementation of fantasy, or to speak of the idea in a more globalized fashion, the fantasyscape. In a way, this is the idealized version of cultural proximity, in which media products are able to travel between countries and cultures because of a shared or similar cultural element. However, in the case of the fantasyscape, there is not necessarily a shared commonality, but rather there are aspects that participants wish were shared. However, the purpose of my study here is not to chronicle the specific ways in which such cultural fantasies are acquired and influence individuals’ daily lives; such questions would be more germane to an ethnographic study. Rather, the goal of this chapter is to detail how such fantasies play out in the localization of certain anime properties.

In order to accomplish this, I will compare *Warriors of the Wind* with two of the most enduring anime franchises that took liberties with the Japanese source material. *Robotech* (1984) and *Voltron* (1984-5) both altered the original Japanese animation and completely rewrote the stories to make them entirely new to American audiences, as well

as television audiences around the world. (US licensors often obtained the non-Asian rights to such shows, and as a consequence the versions distributed to the rest of the Americas and Europe were frequently re-dubbed versions of the American alterations, rather than translated versions of the Japanese originals.) However, not all attempted Americanizations of anime properties were successful. Through the database fantasyscape lens, we could say that such failed adaptations did not take the fantasyscape aspect into enough account. In other words, the producers of such anime films and television shows took information from the raw Japanese database and tried to change it in ways that did not work for one reason or another for its new audience. Such changes could have involved altering the relationships between characters, excising seemingly unneeded but in fact critical plot information to result in a shortened running time, and trying to tailor the show or film too closely to what the producers thought the audience might want to see. This last point is particularly interesting because it suggests that fantasy is not always easy to pinpoint or interpret; the things that an American producer thinks an American audience might want to see from a Japanese film may not be the things that the audience in fact wishes to see. Additionally, some of these aspects of fantasy are closely connected with the propagation of cult media texts, which I will also explore later in this chapter as well as Chapter Four.

As we have seen previously, media franchises rarely make the transition across national and cultural borders fully intact, and some components seem to travel more easily than others. Not only is this true for the franchise as a whole, but it holds for some of the components of that franchise as well. In this chapter, I will be examining how exactly the episodes of an anime television show or a film travel transnationally and how

in the process these components are subjected to the metaphor of the database from which useful components are selected. I will discuss the selection of these database components in the light of the fantasyscape concept, in which some pieces may seem to be more relevant than others due to the envisioned desires of the intended audience. Some of these pieces may be relations between characters, some may be the characters themselves, while some pieces may be more closely tied to the overall narrative. With this in mind, I will focus on how Japanese anime has been adapted, both successfully and unsuccessfully, to foreign markets. *Robotech* and *Voltron* are examples of successful television shows that originated in Japan but grew to take on global components through the process of Americanization. The first part of the chapter will analyze how and why the shows were produced as they were and what this meant for the production of subsequent anime shows as the form became increasingly globalized. I will then examine the adaptation of the film *Warriors of the Wind* (originally Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*). *Warriors* will serve as a counterpoint to the first part of the chapter and will delve into how the fantasyscape can be the undoing of a promising media property. In so doing, I hope to provide an important glimpse of the functioning of the database fantasyscape on the global stage. However, this is not to say that anime provides the only glimpse of the database fantasyscape in action. The popularity of martial arts films among African American audiences beginning in the 1970s is another example of this (Marchetti 2001).

## ***Robotech and Voltron***

Although imports of Japanese animation were popular in the United States in the early- to mid-1960s, there were arguably no new animated programs from Japan shown on major broadcast outlets in the US from the late 1960s until the late 1970s. (Although, it should be mentioned, localized versions of anime shows were very popular across Europe throughout the 1970s.) One of the biggest influences on the course of anime, and the impetus for the second big wave of anime abroad, was the May 1977 release of the film *Star Wars* (dir. George Lucas). This had ramifications not only on how anime would be perceived outside of Japan, but also on the anime that was produced within Japan. For example, in the late 1970s Takachiho Haruka authored science fiction space opera stories—about a crime fighting duo known as the Dirty Pair and an intergalactic troubleshooter known as Crusher Joe—that would go on to be animated and become staples of anime fandom. Takachiho has said, though, that before *Star Wars* came out it was very difficult for science fiction that was not “proper” SF (in other words, pulpier “space opera” stories) to get published in Japan. Although there were SF stories with elements of space opera in them before *Star Wars*, such stories had nowhere near the popularity as they did after *Star Wars* (*Crusher Joe* 2002). The influence of *Star Wars* could be felt throughout the anime industry in Japan. Writing about the 1978 anime television series *Captain Future*, Jonathan Clements and Helen McCarthy assert, “The sci-fi novels of Edmond Hamilton were optioned for anime production in record time when George Lucas mentioned that they were a major inspiration for *Star Wars*” (Clements and McCarthy 2006: 86). *Star Wars* also laid the groundwork for the beginning of the *Mobile Suit Gundam* (*Kidou senshi Gandamu*, dir. Tomino Yoshiyuki,

1979-80) franchise, which has been the bedrock of Japanese anime fandom ever since. (Although, curiously, *Gundam* did not become popular in the U.S. until 2000 with the television broadcast of *Gundam Wing* [*Shin kidou senki Gandamu Uingu*, dir. Ikeda Masashi, 1995-6].)

In the wake of *Star Wars*, many of the anime that were imported into other countries were closely tied to the genre of science fiction. Even television shows that were not originally about intergalactic combat were shaped to fit this developing science fiction mold. Of particular note in this regard was the television show *Battle of the Planets* (1978), which may have been one of the first programs to try to ride the coattails of *Star Wars* in the United States. The show was the brain child of Sandy Frank, who had begun packaging television shows for the U.S. syndication market in the mid-1960s. In their book about the show, Jason Hofus and George Khoury write about how Sandy Frank first saw footage of the anime program *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* (*Kagaku ninjatai Gatchaman*, dir. Toriumi Hisayuki, 1972-74) in April 1977 at the MIP (Marchè International de Programmes) in Cannes, France (Hofus and Khoury 2002: 17). Although Frank was initially interested in the program, the motivation to bring the series over to the US was the phenomenal success of the first *Star Wars* film (Hofus and Khoury 2002: 18).

However, the original *Gatchaman* series took place on Earth and did not involve space travel. In order to make the show into something that would appeal to the *Star Wars* audience, Frank authorized new footage to be animated for the show depicting the team flying through outer space as well as a talking robot that “hosted” the show and strongly resembled R2-D2. Hofus and Khoury mention that some of the people credited as “writers” on the show had watched the Japanese originals and noted the action that

occurred and the length of each speech utterance, which provided a template for the re-scripting (Hofus and Khoury 2002: 24). It does not seem that the *Battle of the Planets* staff worked on their episode scripts using a translation of the original Japanese scripts. Rather, they made up the story and dialogue based on what they saw onscreen. Additionally, a new score was created not only to make the show more palatable to a US audience, but “to supplement ‘dead spots’—silence in the original production” (Hofus and Khoury 2002: 23). From this, *Battle of the Planets* took *Gatchaman* as its raw material for a new and very different show. This method proved to be relatively successful, though, as the \$5 million spent on acquiring the rights, commissioning new animation, editing, dubbing, and re-scoring *Battle of the Planets* garnered US network presales of \$25 million (Hofus and Khoury 2002: 23, 27). From there, *Battle of the Planets* spread to many other non-Asian markets in its Americanized form, bringing further licensing revenues. This successful method of bringing anime to the world market would continue on into the 1980s and set the stage for the successes of *Voltron* and *Robotech*, both of which were changed significantly before they were shown on US television.

*Voltron* was a television series that began airing in the United States in September 1984. Like *Battle of the Planets*, it was a science fiction show that had been pitched to overseas producers at the Cannes market. (This marks these series as different from some of the ones that I will examine in subsequent chapters; American fans weren’t necessarily trying to import these titles, but rather the Japanese rights holders were actively trying to export them.) The series was comprised of two separate Japanese television shows—*King of Beasts Golion* (*Hyakujuuoo Goraion*, 1981-82) and *Armored Fleet Dairugger XV*

(*Kikou kantai Dairagaa XV*, 1982-83)—that had been roughly shaped into a single storyline. Both shows involved robots that could transform and unite into a larger robot to combat evil enemies; in the former the constituent robots were five large mechanical lions while in the latter they were fifteen various land, sea, and air vehicles. It was necessary to bring the two series under a single umbrella since the number of episodes in each individual series did not meet the minimum requirements for American television syndication. Although the two shows originally had no characters in common, they were produced at roughly the same time by the same Japanese studio, giving them a similar look. However, the two halves of *Voltron* were not popular in equal measure. The *Golion* episodes attracted far more of a following and is often what people refer to when they say “*Voltron*” today (Clements and McCarthy 2006: 711).

Although *Voltron* was intended as a show for kids, the *Golion* source material featured content that, in the US, would be considered suitable only for older audiences. For example, there were frequent battles throughout that often resulted in the spilling of blood—battles that were, of course, edited for US broadcast. Although the standards set for syndication allowed fighting and a moderate amount of violence, any blood or death was taboo in the US televised broadcast of *Voltron*. If violence was inescapable for narrative reasons, the antagonists were always described as humanoid robots rather than living beings. Even the death of one of the main protagonists was explained away—rather than dying, he was just severely injured and had to leave the show for a while in order to recuperate on another planet. Most allusions to the show’s Japanese origins were excised as well, such as occasional onscreen Japanese text. Some Japanese elements remain, such as the protagonists training by practicing judo in several episodes, although this might not

have struck the viewer as odd owing to the increasing number of martial arts movies that had been reaching American shores since the 1970s, particularly more kid-oriented fare like *The Karate Kid* (dir. John G. Avildsen, 1984). (For more on this, see Brown 1997, Desser 2000, and Marchetti 2001.)

The story of *Voltron* was very different from that of *Golion* or *Dairugger XV*. In fact, as with *Battle of the Planets*, the producers of *Voltron* did not try to translate what was being said in Japanese, but rather made up their own dialogue as they saw fit in order to match the edited scenes. The reluctance to kill anyone in *Voltron* also allowed the producers to commission original *Voltron* episodes. For example, after the last episode of *Golion*, all of the antagonists have been killed; by contrast, they have merely been injured or incapacitated in *Voltron*. This allowed the producers of *Voltron* to go back to the Japanese animation studio and order twenty additional episodes in order to continue the storyline. This was not the first time the US market had a guiding hand in Japanese animation production – as mentioned in the previous chapter, this was the case since *Astro Boy* in the early 1960s. This is not unique to Japan; US television has had a complex relationship with British television for many decades as well (Miller 2000). However this did mark the first time that the popularity of a program not made for the American market was successful enough to request that additional episodes be animated from the original Japanese studio.

In spite of its severe editing, *Voltron* has generally not been criticized within the fan community for the liberties it takes with episodes and characters. One possible reason for this is that the original Japanese anime never became particularly popular among Japanese anime fans. It was simply one in long string of giant robot shows that were

produced in the 1980s. It also lacked the participation of a crew who were well-known at the time or would later go on to make a name for themselves in the medium.

Consequently, shows like *Golion* and *Dairugger* did not make their way very far into the consciousnesses of American anime fans. (*Golion* was released relatively unscathed in a dubbed form in Italy, though, as were many other anime series that were not broadcast in the US [Pellitteri 2010].)

In contrast, of all the science fiction anime television imported in the 1980s, it was probably *Robotech*, which began airing in March 1985, that caused the greatest controversy among fans regarding how the program was edited. The series is generally considered to be the brainchild of Carl Macek, who served as producer and story editor. His original plan was to bring the anime *Superdimensional Fortress Macross* (*Choujikuu yousai Makurosu*, 1982-83) and re-dub it for American television. However, the original *Macross* contained a mere thirty-six episodes. As with *Voltron*, this meant that there were not enough episodes to qualify for syndication on US television. The producers of *Robotech* ended up grafting on to the end of *Macross* additional story elements culled from two entirely separate robot anime shows—*Genesis Climber Mospeada* (*Kikou souseiki Mosupiida*, 1983-84) and *Superdimensional Cavalry Southern Cross* (*Choujikuu kidan Sazan Kurosu*, 1984)—to bring the episode count up to eighty-five. The plot of *Robotech* was rewritten to make the transition between the shows as comprehensible as possible. Luckily, as was the case with the anime used in *Voltron*, all three programs had been animated at the same studio, Tatsunoko Productions, at around the same time, resulting in a fortunate boost to the continuity. The program shows how Earth deals with three successive invasions of aliens from outer space, with each series introducing a new

menace to the planet. *Robotech* carries the storyline from the crash of an unmanned alien space fortress on Earth, to fighting the Zentradi aliens who come in search of the battleship, to fighting off the *Robotech* Masters, to the onslaught of the Invid who manage to conquer the Earth. The final chapter in *Robotech* follows a small band of freedom fighters as they make their way to the Invid stronghold of Reflex Point, where they are finally able to drive the invaders from the planet.

Unlike *Voltron*, though, a number of anime fans have decried *Robotech* as a butchery of the original Japanese programs (Schley 2011). Much fan anger was directed personally at Carl Macek as well, who says that in the 1980s fan anger at his treatment of the shows resulted in death threats against him (Bresler 2006). Although the characters were renamed and there were a number of edits made, much of *Macross* and the other two anime series survived the transition to *Robotech* fairly intact. Although Macek's decisions were unpopular with some fans, *Robotech* performed relatively well, airing in "all major U.S. syndicated markets" and generating "more support merchandise than any other imported animation series" (Riddick, Napton, and Park, 1990: 11-12). As with *Voltron*, the popularity of the series prompted a number of attempts at continuing the storyline. A feature-length film called simply *Robotech: The Movie* was created by editing together another anime production by the same director as *Macross*—*Megazone 23, Part 1* (dir. Ishiguro Noboru, 1985)—with selected footage from *Superdimensional Cavalry Southern Cross*. However, the film received a very limited theatrical test release in select cities in Texas in the summer of 1986, but was not given a wider release due to its poor performance. Carl Macek has speculated that this was due in part to consumer

confusion about the film's audience, since it was an animated action film that was not intended for young children (Macek 1988: 50).

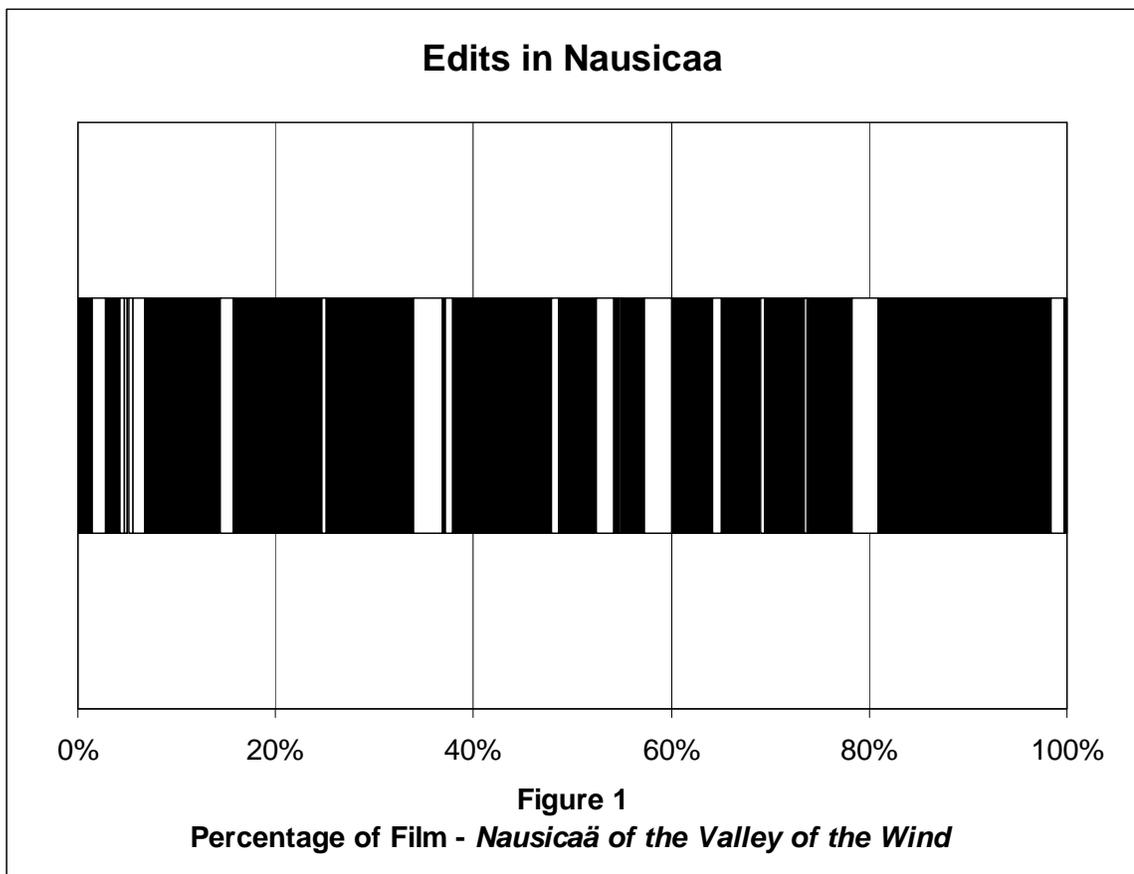
Another original television project called *Robotech: The Sentinels* that was to be animated in Japan was in production from the fall of 1985 through 1986, but this too was unsuccessful due to the falling exchange rate of the dollar to the yen as well as increased competition in the syndicated animation market in the United States. The parts of the first few episodes that were completed were re-edited into a feature-length, yet incomplete, work that was released directly to video. A version of *Robotech* based on computer graphics (rather than cel animation, or animation that looks like cel animation) called *Robotech 3000* was attempted in the late 1990s, but fan response to its proposed look and storyline was unenthusiastic. (Although, coincidentally, the CG work on this new series was performed by Netter Digital, who worked on a CG *Voltron* series around this same time.) Based on the strong sales of *Robotech* on DVD in the 2000s, though, a new film called *Robotech: The Shadow Chronicles* (2006, dir. Dong-Wook Lee and Tommy Yune) finally got off the ground (Yune 2007: 26). This latter film more successfully demonstrates the increasing globalization of the *Robotech* franchise and of the contemporary filmmaking process in general. For example, what originally began as an animated television series that was conceived, written, and created in Japan for a Japanese audience, was turned into a movie that was based on Japanese designs and characters, developed and coordinated in the United States, animated by the Korean company DR Movie (which has contributed animation to many "Japanese" anime titles as a number of Japanese studios outsource some of their work), and scored via "a live audiovisual link from Santa Monica [California] to the City of Prague Philharmonic

Orchestra in the Czech Republic” (Yune 2007: 133). With reference to Koichi Iwabuchi, this is bound to create some conflicting cultural odors. It is also a prime example of the database fantasyscape in operation—the producers and directors of the new film were able to select from the elements that appeared in the original Japanese series in order to craft what they thought would appeal to the tastes of *Robotech* fans around the world. (Due to the licensing and dubbing of *Robotech* into multiple languages in the 1980s, there are fans of the franchise throughout Europe and Latin America.) We can see the database fantasyscape operating in upcoming projects as well. Like *Voltron*, a live-action version of *Robotech* is in the works, possibly to be penned by Lawrence Kasdan (who wrote the screenplays to the *Star Wars* sequels *The Empire Strikes Back* [1980] and *Return of the Jedi* [1983]), bringing the cycle of influences back full circle (Kit 2008).

### ***Warriors of the Wind***

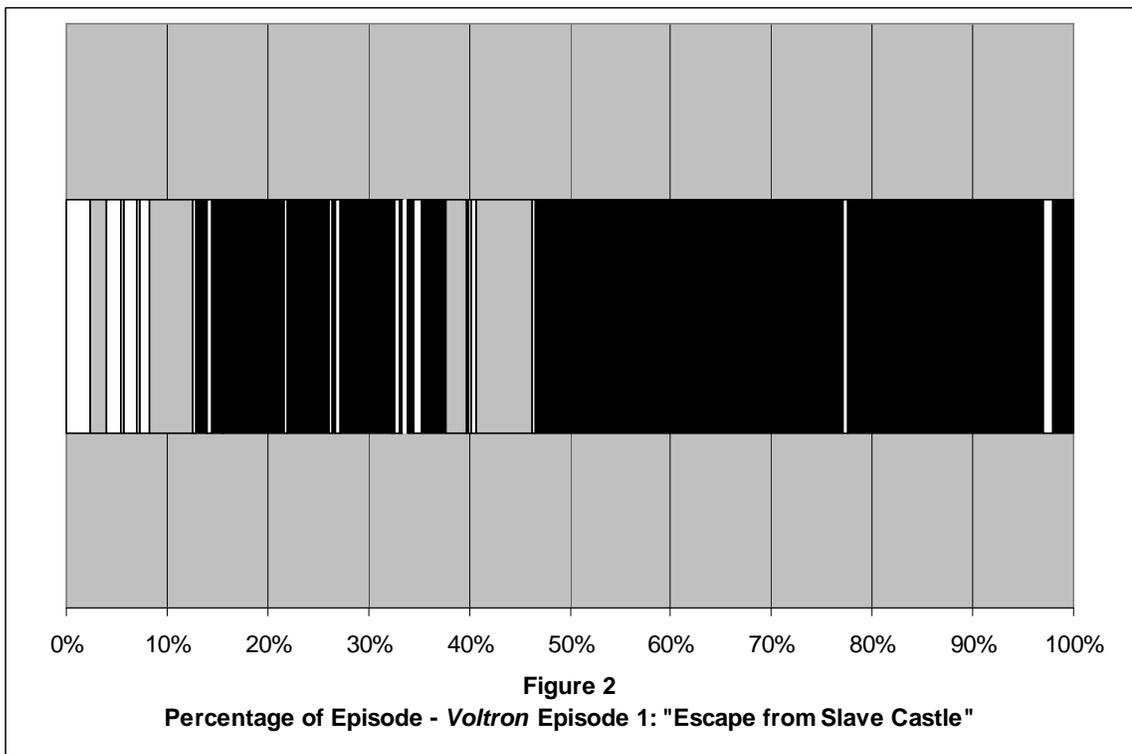
The examples given above would seem to suggest that Japanese animation in the 1980s was ripe for the plucking. If one chose the Japanese source material wisely, then it would seem that the post-*Star Wars* popular culture would be very receptive. Even in the case of *Robotech*, which angered certain segments of the anime-watching population, the producers were able to generate a franchise that has lasted over twenty-five years, even if not every individual project was a success. However, as I have mentioned, localizing anime was not always a successful endeavor. The film *Warriors of the Wind* was released roughly at the same time as *Voltron* and *Robotech*, but has not fared nearly so well. Although *Voltron* and *Robotech* have established themselves in popular culture to this day, *Warriors of the Wind* has been largely forgotten, other than as the butchered first

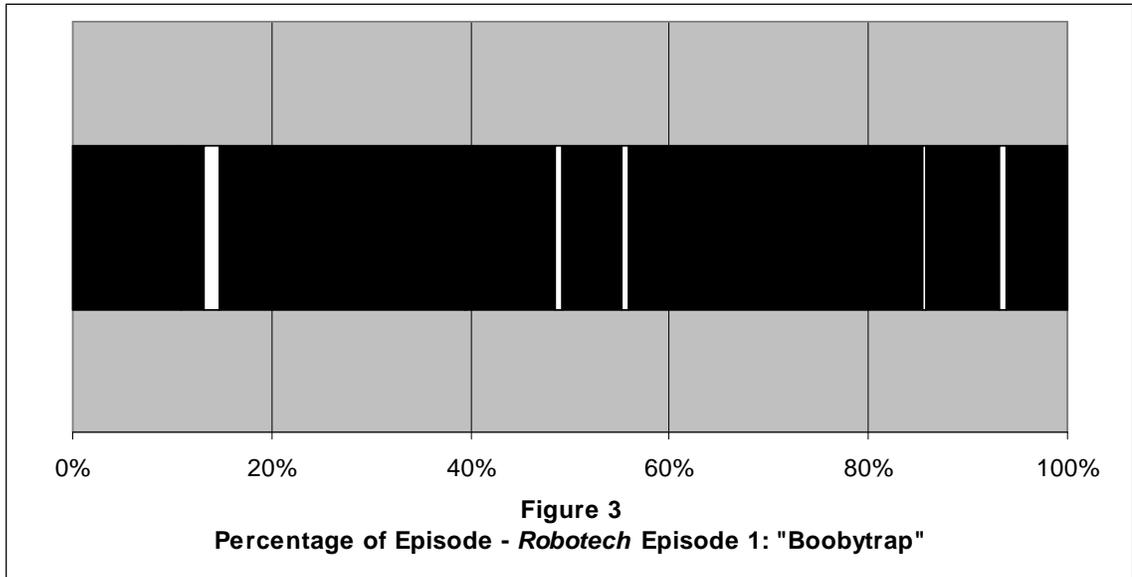
attempt at bringing *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* to a world market. Not only was there no ancillary merchandising for the film, it is very hard to obtain and can now only be viewed on old videotapes. (The Japanese original can be found very easily on DVD and Blu-ray through most major retailers, though, which serves to bury the memory of *Warriors of the Wind*.) So the question must be asked: Why was *Warriors* a failure when other shows not only succeeded at the time but were able to prolong their cultural lifespans for decades?



The first place we should begin our search is in the localization process. If *Warriors of the Wind* was treated much differently or more harshly than its contemporaries, then that might explain why it failed. A detailed comparison of *Warriors of the Wind* and the original *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* reveals nineteen separate

instances in which footage was removed in order to shorten the running time. The occurrence of these cuts is detailed in Figure 1. (The white lines represent where cuts in the film were made as percentages of the overall running time.) All of the cuts are short, varying in time from 5 seconds to 3 minutes, 17 seconds. The graph illustrates that the cuts were spaced relatively evenly throughout the film. However, there were a five short cuts (over a quarter of the total) within the first ten minutes of the film, omitting many of the shots Miyazaki used to establish setting and mood.





*Voltron* and *Robotech* were treated in a similar fashion, as one can see in Figures 2 and 3, which chart the cuts made in the first episode of each series, respectively. (The grey segments in Figure 2 indicate cuts that were placed elsewhere in the episode.) Although a similar pattern of editing cannot necessarily be extrapolated across the series based on a single episode, they do indicate that cutting footage (and rearranging certain scenes) was a regular occurrence in addition to the changes in storyline mentioned above. If one views the original Japanese episodes on which *Robotech* and *Voltron* were based, it is easy to see the reason for many of the cuts, since a number of scenes would not have been suitable for broadcast on US television due to violence or sexual content. Additional cuts would have been needed to make each episode conform to the episode length necessary for syndication in the US market.

This brings up the question of why certain scenes in *Warriors* were cut. Since *Warriors* was a feature-length film intended for theatrical distribution, it would not necessarily have needed to be edited for content or running time. In its description of

*Warriors of the Wind*, the FAQ list on the page of Nausicaa.net, a fan site for aficionados of the film of Miyazaki Hayao and Studio Ghibli, states:

New World Pictures felt it could only be marketed as a kid's action movie, so they cut out about a quarter of the movie (the parts they felt were "slow moving") and garbled the storyline in the process. Nausicaä was changed to "Princess Zandra." The voice actors and actresses...said later that they were never told what the story was about and so the acting was substandard. Miyazaki was horrified when he found out what they had done to his film, and Ghibli asks everyone to forget that this version ever existed. Fortunately, New World Video's rights to Nausicaä expired in 1995 ("Video List" 2007).

As is the case with fan musings, there is no supporting evidence given to back up some of the claims made. (It is interesting to note that Zandra is a rather appropriate name for Nausicaä, as it is a variant of Cassandra, who in Greek mythology had the ability to see the future but was unable to make people believe her. This is not unlike the prophetic role Nausicaä plays in the film.) The view that the film was intended for an audience of children seems to be widely held, although not necessarily supported by the cuts made to the film. The majority of the scenes that were taken out are ones that contribute to the overall world-building in *Nausicaä* or serve as background for the motivations of the film's titular princess. However, all of the action scenes remained intact, including ones containing violence and depicting moderate bloodshed. For example, the film's first scene includes a shot of a human skull and a lone doll, indicating that children have probably died in the devastation that has swept across the land. Other scenes include killings, dripping blood, and images of dead bodies, however brief. Still, the presence of such scenes belies the argument that the film was cut to be marketed as a "kid's [sic] action movie," although many of the cuts do reflect a possible desire to omit segments perceived as "slow moving." Similarly, through my research I cannot confirm the claim that the voice acting was "substandard" because the voice actors were not given

relevant details of plot and character. In fact, based on my own subjective criteria, I would judge the overall voice acting in *Warriors* to be slightly above average for the time in which it was produced.

Of course, any change to the voicing of a character can alter how that character is perceived, even if the same dialogue is being spoken. (The dub script for *Warriors* is often very close to the original Japanese dialogue; unlike the case in *Robotech* and *Voltron*, it is obvious that the producers of *Warriors* worked from a translation of the script.) Subtleties in characters do tend to get flattened in the film, though. None of the characters in Miyazaki's *Nausicaä* could really be called "evil," even though some of them may do horrible things. Rather, such characters are shown to be working toward their own conception of what is best, even though they might be misguided. In its selected editing and dubbing, *Warriors* simplifies these character relationships. For example, at one point Zandra says to Selena (Kushana in the Japanese) that she doesn't believe Selena is evil, to which Selena replies "Oh, but I am." Later, when advised that it's too soon to revive the ultimate weapon she has planned, Selena scoffs, "It's never too soon to rule the world." Such utterances work against the complexity of the world Miyazaki tried to create in the original *Nausicaä* film, which was never supposed to present two opposing sides in such stark terms. Still, some reviewers picked up on this element and wrote assessments like the following: "Princess Zandra reunites her people after a seven-day global inferno to stop evil" ("Cable TV Movies" 1986) and "The forces of good battle an evil queen to ensure a peaceful and safe future for mankind" ("Home Box Office" 1986). Such an emphasis suggests that in the database fantasyscape the constituent elements are malleable not only through selected editing of the visuals, but

through replacing dialogue as well. However, it also suggests that the elements that some producers may see as extraneous may be important to fans and viewers, who may notice their alteration or absence.

Although few positive reviews of *Warriors of the Wind* can be found, its status as a failure was far from universal. In fact, it played various film festivals in the United States and very little was done to disguise the fact that it came from Japan. *Warriors* premiered at the Los Angeles International Animation Celebration, September 25-29, 1985, and an *LA Times* article listed it alongside other American premieres of animated films from France, Australia, and Hungary (“L.A. Animation Celebration” 1986). A write-up of *Warriors* from the film’s premiere describes it as “incredibly exciting, blending elements of ‘Star Wars’ and ‘2001’...with rip-roaring pace and panache” (Wilmington 1985). It also played in 1986 at the Asia Society in New York in a “Fantasy/Animation” series alongside *Zu Warriors from the Magic Mountain* (dir. Tsui Hark, 1983) and *Uproar in Heaven* (dir. Wan Laiming, 1964) as well as at a Japan festival in April 1987 put on by the Japan Information and Culture Center in Washington D.C. If the film was “objectively” a failure, it is unlikely that it would have been shown in such venues, particularly those looking to inform a general audience about Japan and Japanese culture. This is not to say that the film was necessarily successful among audiences in such venues, but I maintain that if the film had been seen universally as a failure that it would not have received such distribution.

## Globalization Success and Failure

It still is unclear why *Warriors of the Wind* failed to find an audience while other shows that had been edited less harshly succeeded in the American market. As detailed above, there does not seem to be anything unusual in the way that *Warriors* was handled. Therefore, the film's failure would seem to rest upon how it was received by fans of director Miyazaki who cared about the film's artistic integrity. This is a crucial point – and since *Warriors* received only limited theatrical distribution, there is a paucity of more mainstream critical reviews written at the time from which to draw. In the following paragraphs, I consider possible reasons why many fans may have found *Warriors of the Wind* unsatisfactory.

One way of trying to understand this difference is in relation to the fandoms that arise around cult texts. As mentioned above, the *Robotech* and *Voltron* franchises have persisted from the 1980s up through today, with new products being made and the originals being reissued on DVD. Part of the reason for this enduring popularity is that both of these shows are cult texts, whereas *Warriors of the Wind* is not. In his book *Fan Cultures*, Matt Hills, although reluctant to provide a limiting “definition” of the cult text, characterizes such texts as needing to demonstrate an endurance of fan enthusiasm “in the absence of ‘new’ or official material in the originating medium” (2002: x) and suggests that cult texts share three main “family resemblances”: auteurism, endlessly deferred narrative, and hyperdiegesis (Hills 2002: 131). In other words, cult texts sustain fan enthusiasm, are the work of a singular creative individual (or are perceived as being so), and present overriding questions and problems to the characters that are never fully resolved. In addition, the events in such narratives take place in a rich environment “only

a fraction of which is ever directly seen or encountered within the text” (Hills 2002: 137). These three resemblances occur to a greater or lesser degree within any cultic media text. As mentioned above, *Voltron* and *Robotech* have sustained as franchises since their original broadcast, while *Warriors of the Wind* has not and has in fact been eclipsed by the market presence of a dubbed and subtitled version of the original *Nausicaä* film, suggesting that the former meet the criterion of sustained fan enthusiasm while the latter does not. By analyzing *Voltron*, *Robotech*, and *Warriors of the Wind* in the context of Hills’s concept of resemblances, we can begin to get an idea of why the former two succeeded with American audiences while the latter did not.

The “family resemblances” of deferred narrative and hyperdiegesis in particular suggest why *Voltron* and *Robotech* succeeded on American television. The two terms are closely linked, but one refers to the refusal to close the narrative while the other refers to the ways in which the narrative world could be expanded. Because the two series had to be assembled from more than one Japanese anime series in order to be syndicated, they necessarily needed to rewrite their storylines to make sense of an expanded textual universe. Although the plots of *Macross* and *Golion* left few loose ends in their respective storylines, *Robotech* and *Voltron* were written in a manner that forestalls a sense of closure in order to accommodate further episodes from the additional series. In the case of *Robotech*, this was done three times—once at the end of each of the three arcs that indicate the three previously separate series that comprise the show. In *Voltron*, the fact that US television standards meant that the antagonists could not be killed off gave the producers the ability to commission new episodes to be animated that featured these characters (who did not survive in the original Japanese version.) This move also, by its

very nature, creates the kind of hyperdiegesis Hills points to in cult media. By trying to merge multiple disparate series into a single show, the creators of the Americanized versions tried to patch over obvious gaps between spaces that were generated by editing the original Japanese components into something new. For both *Robotech* and *Voltron*, we can see this because both series had to invent an overarching storyline that would allow the US producers to unite multiple disparate shows under a single title name in order to sell the syndication rights. There is nothing necessarily connecting *Golion* with *Dairugger XV* or *Superdimensional Fortress Macross* with *Genesis Climber Mospeada* in the Japanese originals, so the American writers had to create plausible scenarios that would work, which in turn opens the narrative field to more additions. In fact, an animated sequel to *Robotech* was planned after the show aired, and there was originally going to be another robot in the *Voltron* universe created from footage of the Japanese series *Lightspeed Electro God Albegas* (*Kousoku denjin Arubegasu*, 1983-4). This points to how the producers of the shows planned to take advantage of the hyperdiegetic worlds they had created; however, the fact that neither materialized speaks to the economics of the industry at the time. Gaps invariably appear in database-oriented media products to a greater or lesser degree when their elements are juxtaposed in new ways, but these give a program or film the ability to take the characters and narrative to new places, expanding the scope of the potential fantasyscape. In the case of *Robotech* and *Voltron*, the plastered-over gaps gave the shows a sense of expansiveness that one would not necessarily feel from a single source.

All of the Japanese anime series on which the shows were based had distinct beginnings, middles, and endings that wrapped up the storylines. In contrast, *Voltron* and

*Robotech* intentionally have no such neat endings, but rather temporary ones after which additional adventures could take place. As mentioned above, such an expansion of the characters and narrative happened in an official capacity when twenty additional episodes of *Voltron* were created specifically for the American market; these episodes would not have made sense in a Japanese context since all of the antagonists had already been killed. In contrast, *Warriors of the Wind* offers less of an option for continuation than does *Nausicaä* due to the fact that the original Japanese ending credits were edited out of the film. In these credits, the audience is shown what happened after the climactic events of the film, with Nausicaä returning to her village to rebuild it, teaching younger children how to fly on their gliders, deepening her relationship with other characters, and hinting at further adventures yet to come. *Warriors of the Wind* simply ends after the Zandra manages to stop a battalion of giant attacking insects, and gives no indication of how the people and the rest of the flora and fauna of the world may be able to interact and coexist in the aftermath of what occurs during the film. Removing these scenes cuts off these impulses and constrains the world of the film.

The concept of auteurism also suggests why *Warriors of the Wind* did not do well with American fans. Viewers of the film, particularly anime fans, may have brought heightened expectations to the viewing experience because the film was directed by Miyazaki Hayao. When *Nausicaä* was originally released in Japan, Miyazaki was far from the household name he is today, but fans still turned out in droves to see the film. (This is dramatized in the anime film *Otaku no Video* [dir. Mori Takeshi, 1991], which is a fictionalized account of Japanese anime fan culture in the 1980s. In the film, Japanese fans are depicted lining up overnight outside a theater waiting to see a screening of

*Nausicaä*.) The film was based on a serialized comic written and drawn by Miyazaki that had been published in *Animage* magazine from 1982 to 1994. The project was very personal to him, and in fact the comic continued running for a decade after the film was completed. This could explain the hyperdiegetic scenes shown during the ending credits of the film, as discussed above. At the time the film was made, Miyazaki was still working through many of the ideas that would wind up in the much longer and more detailed comic version of the story. Although casual viewers and those with little knowledge of the edits made to the film may have been willing to accept *Warriors*, fans of Miyazaki would probably have wanted to see the version of the film as originally intended by its creator. (This is a point of supposition based on the customary attitudes of anime fans. Unfortunately, online records do not go back this far, and I have yet to find a printed anime fanzine from the 1980s discussing the edits made to *Nausicaä*.) It certainly would not have helped matters that Miyazaki strongly, and vocally, disagreed with the edits that were made to the film (McCarthy 1999: 42). In this way, the reaction against *Warriors* was probably not due to what it was but rather what it was not.

Comparing *Warriors* to *Voltron* and *Robotech* also illustrates some of the differences between film and television structures and audiences. In the case of the latter two anime, the need to make them suitable for broadcast on US television was the driving force behind many of the modifications that were made. The shows needed to be cut to adhere to standards of length, decency, and the needs of the syndication market. In contrast, since *Warriors of the Wind* was intended for the theatrical and home video markets, such modifications were not strictly necessary. Additionally, there is an acknowledgement that something new was being created from Japanese source material

in the case of *Voltron* and *Robotech*. Since the film was seen as a unitary object, much less leeway was given to edits, in part because the tendency toward auteurism is often more strongly pronounced with regard to films rather than television programs (although this is changing). Making alterations to a given film seems much more “destructive” to the original text than modifications necessary to prepare a television show for broadcast, even though the latter may in fact make more changes and take more liberties with the text.

In addition to the structural differences, between *Robotech/Voltron* and *Warriors of the Wind*, the film bore the brunt of being considered a failure due to its effect on the US release of anime films in general. For example, in spite of Miyazaki’s popularity among US audiences, it would be over ten years from the release of *Warriors of the Wind* before official versions of any of his films would again be commercially released in the United States. After *Nausicaä*, Miyazaki went on to found the animation company Studio Ghibli and create films like *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (*Tenkuu no shiro Rapyuta*, 1986), *My Neighbor Totoro* (*Tonari no Totoro*, 1988), *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononokehime*, 1997), *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi*, 2001), for which he won an Academy Award in 2002, *Howl’s Moving Castle* (*Hauru no ugoku shiro*, 2004), and *Ponyo* (*Gake no ue no Ponyo*, 2008). Although he continued making films for a Japanese audience, Miyazaki’s disappointment over the editing of *Warriors of the Wind* made him wary of further dealings with US film companies for a number of years. One may wonder if Miyazaki’s films would have been able to achieve more mainstream popularity in the United States (as they were able to do in Japan) if he had not had such an unpleasant experience with *Warriors of the Wind*.

## Conclusion

Like *Robotech* and *Voltron*, the Americanized version of *Warriors of the Wind* was the form in which the film made was exported to other non-Asian countries around the world. According to the US-based Miyazaki fan site Nausicaa.net, the *Warriors of the Wind* dub was released on video in the United Kingdom, and new dubs based on the *Warriors* edit came out in France, Germany, Spain, and Argentina (“Video List” 2007). In 1996, Buena Vista Home Entertainment announced a distribution deal with Studio Ghibli to release their films on video and DVD (“Disney-Tokuma Deal” 2000). A frequently-recounted story surrounding the production of the American version of *Princess Mononoke* says that Miyazaki sent a Japanese sword to Harvey Weinstein of Miramax with the simple note “No cuts!” However, Miyazaki says that it was actually his producer who sent the sword, but that he was happy to have prevailed over Weinstein (Brooks 2005). In the end, following the Buena Vista deal, no Studio Ghibli films were edited in any way without the explicit consent of the studio.

In February 2005, nearly twenty years after *Warriors of the Wind* was released, Buena Vista released the region 1 DVD version of *Nausicaä*, the first time the uncut film had been made officially available in the United States. (The Japanese region 2 DVD of the film, released November 2003, contained English subtitles, meaning that English-speaking fans with region-free DVD players could watch the film.) The pall of *Warriors of the Wind* still hung over this release, though. In his review of the film, Chris Beveridge of AnimeOnDVD.com prefaced his discussion of the film’s content with the following:

Nausicaa [sic] is a film that has suffered terribly before in its previous US release. It had been cut by something like half an hour and was done dub only with a good

chunk of the storyline rewritten. While if you knew nothing about it otherwise it was something that you could enjoy as a child, once you knew what was really behind it you could never go back and only lament that there was no other way of getting a properly translated copy of the film (Beveridge 2005).

Although he does not mention *Warriors* by name in the review, its presence is felt throughout. He mentions the time in the theater when he was “finally able to see it [the film] as meant to be” and concludes the review by saying he is “ecstatic that so many people are finally getting to see it for the first time.”

*Warriors of the Wind* was certainly not the first attempt at Americanizing anime that failed, nor was it the last. The editing of anime series and films in an effort to effectively localize (and, one might argue, sanitize) them remains a contentious issue within anime fan communities and even within scholarly debate. A recent article in a law journal proposes that anime viewers (and other viewers of world TV and film) may have a kind of “moral right” to access unedited versions of their favorite programs (Daniels 2008). Such a right is not supported by current copyright laws in either the United States or Japan, but it is interesting to consider in the light of our discussion of the database fantasyscape. However, as I have explored, editing an anime series does not necessarily reduce its popularity or franchisability since television series like *Robotech* or *Voltron* would not have been possible without such actions. By expanding the shows beyond the scope of the Japanese originals, the creators were able to fashion objects that could survive through the years. However, editing can work in an opposite way as well, as demonstrated through *Warriors of the Wind*. Here it constrains the original text by omitting much of the surrounding world of *Nausicaä* and may work against fans’ desired notions of authorial intent.

As we can see in the examples of *Robotech*, *Voltron*, and *Warriors of the Wind*, there are many factors that comprise how an anime property is both localized and received by the local audience. In the case of *Robotech* and *Voltron*, both tapped into a wellspring of genre that had been brought to the fore by the release of *Star Wars* less than a decade earlier. In these cases, it was not that non-Japanese audiences were somehow buying into an identification with Japanese values, but rather that the Japanese shows, in their production, were already tapping into this cultural fantasyscape, making the resulting product much easier to export abroad.

A similar method was attempted with the marketing of *Warriors of the Wind*. One of the most obvious pieces of evidence for this is the design of the artwork used for the film's poster and video cover. In the background of the art is a woman who looks vaguely like Nausicaa, but the main focus of the image is three characters, two of whom are brandishing laser guns while one wields something similar to a light saber. The two characters with guns are pure inventions for the art and never appear in the film itself. The character in the middle appears to be riding a kind of large creature rising up from the bottom of the artwork. In the background, there is also another young man with a gun riding a winged horse. He too is not from the film. In a way, the art for *Warriors of the Wind* is indicative of the company in which the film wished to place itself. The iconography seems to cull tropes from films like the *Star Wars* trilogy, *Dune* (1984, dir. David Lynch), and *Clash of the Titans* (1981, dir. Desmond Davis). However, as we have seen from the responses above, the film's references to such tropes were not enough to overcome some of the negatives that became associated with the localization effort.

In the end, the ability to consume media in a database-like manner means that seemingly simple conditionals (if I do X well enough, then Y will be successful with a certain audience) are rendered much more complex. However, the database fantasyscape can provide a useful tool for describing and explaining the transnational movement of certain forms of media and why some efforts succeed while others fail. As we have seen in this chapter, the database fantasyscape is also closely related to ideas of cult media, through which it operates. A media product can endure and take on a cult status if it shares some of “family resemblances” as explicated by Hills, but if we examine this idea in more depth we can see that the idea of such “resemblances” is another way of pointing to a database of concepts and examining the way in which the database elements are similar. Also as we have seen, in terms of finding an appreciative audience, some database elements can be more easily altered than others. In the case of *Voltron* and *Robotech*, cuts and edits allowed the series to expand their narrative reach and become greater than the sum of their constituent Japanese anime. On the other hand, the cuts in *Warriors of the Wind* relegated the film to the proverbial dustbin. For the reasons behind this, we can look to the fantasyscape for how individuals in a culture envision themselves and the experiences they wish to take from certain media products.

### **Chapter Three – Convergent Anime in a Fansub World**

Fan culture and participation is critically important to the global flows of anime. Although anime had been exported by Japanese companies in the 1960s and 1970s, the titles chosen were generally those destined for broadcast on television or to be shown to a general audience in movie theaters. This was a small percentage of Japan's total animated output, and many fans of such animation outside of Japan began importing such titles many years before Japanese companies began thinking that anime could be a viable export. To this day there are many dedicated anime fans outside of Japan, but efforts to sell anime (and related products) to them requires a different tack from selling to a general audience.

In this chapter, I will investigate the role that fan-produced translations of anime (called fansubs) have had on anime's popularity and growth, and how contemporary anime producers have had to adapt to an audience that has become increasingly used to getting their anime online and for free. In many ways, this illustrates the most literal instantiation of the database fantasyscape, since many websites from which fans can download new episodes of their favorite anime shows are arranged much like a database, allowing fans to sort and sift through the available options. (And, indeed, many websites are managed using databases on their backend in order to manage and organize information.) Such an arrangement allows for a higher degree of media "convergence" in Henry Jenkins's (2006a) terms. This is an example of technological convergence, since "When words, images and sounds are transformed into digital information, we expand the potential relationships between them and enable them to flow across platforms" (Jenkins 2001: 93). In Jenkins's formulation, anime could be additionally described as culturally

and globally convergent. In fact, nearly all contemporary anime properties are convergent in this way to a greater or lesser degree. My main case study to illustrate this is a television show called *The Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi* (*Suzumiya Haruhi no yuuutsu*, 2006). This title provides an example of how US licensors marketed a property that had become very popular in fan circles, but which was ultimately a niche product with only limited appeal for a general audience. However, this means that the core audience consisted of people who had more than likely already watched the show at the time of commercial release. Many had downloaded fansubbed copies of the episodes, so the licensors needed to formulate new ways of presenting the material as well as offering ways of experiencing and engaging with the text that the fansubbed versions could not provide.

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the development of fansubs (anime subtitled for fan enjoyment and usually distributed noncommercially). I will then discuss of anime on commercial home video, and examine how *Haruhi* fits into these developments. I will also consider how fansubbing culture and commercial culture collide, as well as what the future might bring for anime in general. The database fantasyscape model can explain all of these developments by pointing out how the different anime database elements flow asynchronously in response to particular cultural desires, and how such desires may coincide or conflict with commercial realities and necessities.

Azuma Hiroki asserts that the 1990s were a key turning point for the decline of narrative consumption and the ascendancy of database consumption. He sees the 1995 Aum Shinrikyou gas attacks on the Tokyo subway as marking the endpoint of the time

period during which “the ‘grand narratives’ underpinning the modern nation gradually collapsed” (Azuma 2007: 179)<sup>2</sup>. In its place, Azuma sees the rise of what he terms the “grand database” during which narratives lost their emphasis and media products became more focused on characters and their associated “affective elements” (Azuma 2007: 180-1). At the same time, more anime-related material became available to US-based fans. As a consequence, they had the ability to pick and choose the aspects of anime and related cultural products they would use to define themselves and the object of their infatuation. Of course, not every anime title produced could be made commercially available outside of Japan. The determination to acquire the rights, translate, and distribute a title can be due to factors such as market considerations (a certain title may not be predicted to sell well enough) or licensing considerations (a title may be able to sell well, but the Japanese licensor may be requesting such a high fee that no distribution company is willing to take the risk). Such factors become much less of an issue for fan-subtitled releases; since there is no monetary transaction involved and the resulting product is given away for free, there is a greater choice of titles to fansub. But still, not every single anime title is (or can be) fansubbed. This could be due to a general lack of interest in a particular title within the fan community at large (prestige and acknowledgement from within the fan community can often be a prime motivating factor for fansubbing a particular show) and a lack of committed people to encode and translate hours of video, as well as other

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<sup>2</sup> Although the connection between Aum Shinrikyo and anime may not initially be apparent, there were connections between the group’s philosophies and certain anime and manga that they used to reinforce their apocalyptic vision of the world (see Gardner 2008). Additionally, many similarities between Aum and an anime like *Evangelion* have been pointed out by critics like Azuma (Woznicki 1998). The Aum incident occurred in the interval between when the *Evangelion* manga began to be serialized and the anime began to air on Japanese television. See the next chapter for more on *Evangelion*.

considerations. These factors—commercial and non-commercial—contribute to an image of anime outside of Japan that differs from the image within Japan.

In this chapter, I discuss a number of different technologies that have facilitated the global spread of anime, particularly via fansubs, as well as the opportunities and challenges these technologies have posed. I will then examine some of the ways in which US companies that distribute anime have reacted to these technological changes in terms of how they have encouraged an attitude among fans of going beyond the core anime texts. As I will explore in more detail, the drive of the database fantasyscape means that consumers of contemporary media products like anime are becoming increasingly able to pick and choose products they wish to access without the intervention of intermediaries like distribution companies. Frequently this occurs via the illegal downloading of films and television shows from online sources. (In spite of the positive things that some have said about anime fansubs and their role in the promotion of fandom outside of Japan, the fact remains that they violate international intellectual property laws and as such are not legal.) However, the database fantasyscape also demonstrates that in a cross-cultural database of desire, there are multiple points of entry into textual worlds. Consumers are being encouraged to pursue these complementary and supplementary products that cannot be digitized and downloaded online. Examples of this include clothing (both branded clothing that express affinity, such as t-shirts, as well as special clothing for performative cosplay [see Chapter Five for more on this]), vinyl figures, model kits, posters, and *dakimakura* - large pillows with images of anime characters emblazoned on the pillowcase (see Kohler 2004 and Katayama 2009). In some ways, this can be seen as a

technique employed by media companies in order to try to regain control of the distribution of anime and the spread of associated franchises.

### **Fansubs and Anime – Tapes to BitTorrent**

One of the keys to the spread of anime outside of Japan (particularly in America) have been advances in consumer technologies that have enabled fans to copy, subtitle, and distribute films and television shows on their own. The flows of piracy are many and varied, and the proliferation of consumer technologies and increasing electronic communication speeds provide greater opportunities for such illegal distribution. By focusing on the technoscape of anime, I hope to sketch out one small aspect of the global flow of a product like Japanese animation. As in Davis and Yeh's analysis of the Hong Kong VCD market (2004), I wish to bring in Raymond Williams's (1975) idea of programmatic technology and apply it to Japanese televisual programming as it circulates outside of its native country. Davis and Yeh state that a programmatic technology is a technology "whose use-value is defined primarily by content, and facilitated secondarily by technology" (2004: 230). They go on to say that a programmatic technology "differentiates modes of consumption because it taps new audience formations and structures novel experiences. It satisfies an existing subcultural market while also expanding it into trans-cultural, trans-national areas" (2004: 231). As it pertains to anime, this would indicate that a key part of the importance of fansubs is the degree to which they allow fans to view and communicate with each other about television shows, films, and direct-to-video animation they might not otherwise have access to due to barriers that are linguistic (they cannot understand Japanese) or spatiotemporal (they do not live in

Japan so cannot watch or buy the latest releases). Many groups that produce and consume fansubs would say that what they do is not piracy because they have a code of ethics, they do not profit financially from what they create, and they create / watch fansubs because they are such fans of anime (Hatcher 2005: 531-3). However, such practices are indeed illegal, even if penalties are seldom enforced.

Anime's journey in the United States can be divided into four distinct periods of time, or waves. The first wave took place during 1963-1967. The primary technology associated with this wave is broadcast television. The second wave of anime occurred from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. The technology of this period is the VCR. The third wave was from the early-to-mid-1990s until the late-1990s, with the growth of the Internet and its ability to network fan communication. The fourth wave is the most recent (the late-1990s to the present) and the technology of this wave is the ability to download entire films and series using programs like BitTorrent. This wave is facilitated by increasingly greater amount of networked bandwidth being made available to consumers. Of course these waves are only abstract and concretized periods of time that were in reality more continuous and interrelated. However, for our purposes the division into waves is useful because it more clearly organizes changes in technology.

The popularity of anime in the United States begins most obviously with television, the development of which has been previously discussed in earlier chapters. However, a brief précis may be useful in this context. Japanese animation has been on American TV almost as long as it has been on Japanese television. Anime on television is often dated from January 1, 1963 when Osamu Tezuka's *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu*) premiered on Japanese TV. (It should be noted that this was not the first regular

animation on TV in Japan. However, it was the first half-hour series.) This began what can be called the first wave of Japanese animation in the United States. Other shows in this first wave of anime include *Gigantor* (*Tetsujin 28-go*, 1963 in Japan, 1965 in the US), *Kimba the White Lion* (*Jungle Taitei*, 1965 in Japan, 1966 in the US) and *Speed Racer* (*Mach Go Go Go*, 1967).

After 1967, no new Japanese animation appeared on US television until *Battle of the Planets* began nationwide syndication in 1978, prompted by the smash success of the film *Star Wars* (1977). (Many of the 1960s anime programs continued to be shown in syndication across the country between 1967 and 1978, though.) This began the second wave of anime, which lasted until the mid-1980s. However, the roots of this wave go back to 1976, when a number of animated programs popular in Japan (particularly giant robot and related SF shows) began airing on local Japanese community television stations, particularly in California and Hawai'i.

As I mentioned, the major technological innovation in this wave was the home videocassette recorder. (It should be noted that nearly all of the consumer VCRs in the US in the 1970s and 1980s came from Japan, so home recording around the world was in fact produced by Japanese technology.) This allowed US fans to record and share television programs taped from these local Japanese community television stations as well as from Japanese network TV. This technological spread of anime was helped by the fact that America and Japan share video format standards – both use NTSC (National Television Standards Committee). On the other hand, many European countries like the United Kingdom and Germany use the PAL (Phase Alternating Line) system, and a few countries use the French-developed SECAM system. The spread of Japanese popular

culture was also assisted by the flow of people to and from Japan, such as US military personnel who would serve at bases in Japan, as well as Japanese people who moved to the United States, especially in Hawai'i and America's West Coast.

It was around this time that the practice of creating fansubs began to become popular. A fansub is a subtitled version of an anime TV show, video program, or film produced, as the fan community phrase goes "for fans by fans." What this means is that people producing the fansub take the original source video (from the Japanese television, videotape, or laserdisc release), edit it (to remove commercials in the case of a television source), translate the dialogue, place subtitles onscreen, and then release it through certain channels. Until the 1990s, fansubs were usually distributed via organizations and networks, such as local anime club meetings, through which fans could obtain videotape copies of their favorite shows. Such meetings could be held in a variety of places, such as private residences, college campuses, or in sympathetic retail stores like comic book shops. However, the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization, the first US anime club, was able to hold its meetings in club space owned by the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society when it began in May 1977 [Patten 2004: 24; Patten 2008].)

The third wave of anime fandom began in earnest in the mid-1990s with the syndication of shows like *Dragonball Z* and *Sailor Moon* (both in 1995) on cable stations like the Cartoon Network in the United States and YTV in Canada. As previously mentioned, the major technology that promulgated anime fan activities during this period was the Internet, and its primary use was as a source of information and locus of fan advocacy. For example, many fans used the connectivity of the Internet to organize for specific fan-oriented causes (Levi 2006: 48-52). Throughout the 1990s there were many

petitions circulating to convince American companies to officially release one series or another. One of the most well-known online campaigns was the “Save Our Sailors” drive organized by fans of *Sailor Moon* who wanted to keep the show on the air on US television (“Save Our Sailors” 2010). In the 1990s, the Internet facilitated the exchange of fansub tapes among fans. In addition to enabling more contact among fan groups, fansub distributors established an online presence. These distributors (who were often separate from the groups that created the fansubs) enabled people without a local anime club, or who were not involved in organized fandom but who still liked anime, to see fansubbed titles. (See Hatcher 2005 for a more in-depth history of how fansubbed anime was created.)

Also growing in popularity around this time was IRC, or Internet Relay Chat. This technology first came online in Finland in August 1988 and was created by programmer Jarkko Oikarinen, a graduate student at the University of Oulu. According to the website Living Internet, “IRC became well known to the general public around the world in 1991, when its use skyrocketed as users logged on to get up-to-date information on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, through a functional IRC link into the country that stayed operational for a week after radio and television broadcasts were cut off” (“IRC History – Internet Relay Chat” 2004). IRC also allowed for the sharing of digital files of raw anime episodes and fansubs in special channels dedicated to discussing Japanese animation, and many anime fansub distributors had their own IRC channels they could use for distribution. Many fansub groups also used IRC to coordinate their efforts, since it allowed participants to work on different aspects of a single fansub project (timing, translation, etc.) easily without being in close physical contact with one another. This

kind of fan practice is of the type Henry Jenkins describes as a “new knowledge culture” that creates communities which are “defined through voluntary, temporary, and tactical affiliations, reaffirmed through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments” (2006: 27). Additionally, it is not just a coincidence that anime fan practices began shifting online around the same time Azuma identifies that “grand narratives” were declining in favor of “grand database” (2009). Both point to the increased presence of information databases as not just a way to store information, but as a way to structure communicative and cultural interactions.

It was a program called BitTorrent, developed in 2001, that revolutionized the online distribution of anime and that brought the structure of the database into the realm of the anime fan. BitTorrent is a more popular and efficient distribution of files than IRC, but cuts out the communicative aspect. Rather than dealing with specialized programs, all that BitTorrent requires is that a user installs the client on their computer. After installation, one can search for torrents online and with one click can begin downloading. The way many other downloading processes work is that each person who wants to download a file takes it from a copy located on a server. On the other hand, BitTorrent users share parts of the file they have already downloaded with others who want to download it, creating a more distributed structure for sharing files and preventing many of the bandwidth problems many of the other methods experience. Unlike other peer-to-peer file sharing applications, BitTorrent requires a degree of centralization in the form of a tracker, which coordinates the downloads. This new way of downloading files has proven to be very popular and revolutionary. (BitTorrent developer Bram Cohen received a Rave Award from *Wired* magazine in March 2004 for his development of the software.)

The ability to download high-quality anime files with a single mouse click has transformed the fansub experience. Some see this shift to programs like BitTorrent as a step in the right direction. In an editorial on popular anime information site Anime News Network, a writer by the moniker of Dan42 wrote an editorial in which he stated “with BitTorrent it's possible to put a greater emphasis on the actual enforcement of those semi-mythical ‘fansub ethics’ . . . . I would like to encourage all fansubbers to drop support for IRC (apart from chatting of course) and start releasing uniquely with BitTorrent. I believe it's what responsible fansubbers should do” (Dan42 2003). In spite of this look toward technology as a way to enforce a code of ethics (which would include things as not fansubbing licensed anime and halting distribution of a title once it had been licensed), many commercial distributors began to see fansubs as a real threat for the first time as fans became able to easily create thousands of digitally perfect copies.

Even though fansubs are not usually distributed for profit, as Sean Kirkpatrick points out, anime would automatically be protected by US copyright law because both the US and Japan are signatories to the World Intellectual Property Organization and the Uruguay Round Agreements (2002-3: 137-8). Additionally, at a panel at the fan convention Otakon in 2004, “Some audience members suggested that fansubs acted as a form of advertising. [ADV Films director and co-founder Matt] Greenfield dismissed those claims, and cited heavy losses in Asian anime markets due to prolific distribution of copied anime. Greenfield said ‘The US fanbase is pretty good about it, but other places are not. The problem is when you put a fansub up on Bittorrent [sic], anyone can download it’” (Phillips 2004). In general, though, fansubbing of unlicensed titles continues to be tolerated for a number of reasons. Kirkpatrick points to the facts that in

both Japan and the US there is a tradition of creating new fan works based on existing properties, most Japanese companies do not have the resources necessary for an international legal fight, and Japan is generally less litigious than the United States (2002-3: 146-152). There is even at times some crossover between commercial US anime distributors and fansub groups. For example, in 2002 Anime News Network reported that anime and manga publisher TokyoPop was using a fansub script as a point of reference in its commercial release of the anime series *Initial D* (“Tokyopop uses Fansub Script for *Initial D*” 2002).

Other cheap technologies of distribution are influencing the flow of programming from Japan to the US. The DVD format has become inexpensive and relatively easy to replicate in recent years. In addition to the increased US commercial licensing and distribution of Japanese shows, there have been bootleggers that sell pirated copies; some even sell DVD copies of fansubs. Another format is the VCD, or video compact disc, which is even less expensive to produce than DVDs and very popular in East Asia outside of Japan. Even though Japanese companies manufacture VCD players, VCDs have been described as “virtually unknown in Japan, as in North America and Europe” (Davis and Yeh 2004: 228). Although this holds true for the greater populace, VCDs were certainly not “virtually unknown” among anime fans in the early 2000s. (See Wang 2003: 49-58 for more on the manufacture and distribution of VCDs in Asia.)

I have so far tried to provide a brief thumbnail sketch of how fans of Japanese animation adapted current technologies for their own uses in order to create versions of anime they could watch and redistribute. However, these viewing techniques are slowly being picked up by the more mainstream television industry. In 2004 a *Chicago Tribune*

article reported that Comcast CEO Brian Roberts envisioned an online database of over 40,000 television and film programs available for download by consumers (Ryan 2004), and thanks to streaming services like Netflix and Hulu, such a vision has come close to fruition. That same *Tribune* article indicates the shrinking influence of content distributors like television networks, illustrating how fans and show creators can work together in a mutually beneficial relationship (i.e. the fans are able to view the shows they want to watch and the creators are able to get paid). Roberts's vision illustrates that the concept of organization around a database is not necessarily unique to the study of anime. However, as we will see, there are both challenges and opportunities present when trying to make money from media arranged in such a database structure.

### **Producers' and Distributors' Responses to Fansubs**

Before I address how anime distributors in North America responded to and adapted to the proliferation of fansubs, it is worth briefly considering the origins of such distributors, which are in a unique position with respect to anime fans and Japanese companies. They must constantly consider how to market and sell a product in an economic and cultural context different from the one for which the original anime products were produced. It is not just the individual consumers in the US who can choose products from the database that will best fulfill their personal fantasies—the companies, too, must select the products that they think will sell well to their consumers. Generally speaking, the consumers of fansubs are the same as the consumers of officially licensed and distributed products. With this in mind, it is worth noting that the anime industry in North America has its roots in the fansub community.

One example of the interaction between fan and professional production is the company ADV Films, which lasted from the early 1990s until 2009. The origins of the company are discussed on a commentary track for the 10th anniversary release of their first film, *Devil Hunter Yohko* (*Mamono hantaa Youko*, 1990) (“ADV Historical Commentary” 2002). ADV Films had its origins in an anime fan group called Anime NASA in Clear Lake, Texas. (Clear Lake is a suburb of Houston and is also where the Johnson Space Center is located.) The principals of the company were anime fans who had been spending large amounts of money on imported Japanese laserdiscs, and wanted to develop subtitled versions of shows that anime fans in the US could buy for more reasonable prices. They saw *Devil Hunter Yohko*, a fantasy show with some quite risqué humor, as a contrast to many of the SF anime shows that had been flourishing. (See other chapters for the development of anime in the wake of *Star Wars*.) Once the founders decided they wanted to bring *Yohko* over to the US, they had to locate the rights holders in Japan and begin to negotiate with them. They contacted the US licensing arm of Toho, the Japanese company that owned the rights, but the company was not familiar with the title and was in fact unaware that it was the rights holder. Nobody in the company had yet realized that there was a market for direct-to-video anime releases in the US and thus did venture into this territory. Once ADV had successfully negotiated the rights to distribute *Yohko* in the US, the company still needed to decide how to subtitle, replicate, and distribute it. Since a number of the ADV principals had previously been involved in fan subtitling films for club showings, though, they used the same facilities for their commercial release of *Yohko*, which relied on an Amiga 1000 home computer to do the subtitling.

The history of a company like ADV Film is significant because it synthesizes many the issues under discussion. First of all, in terms of the database fantasyscape, a North American company was able to identify an anime title that would have enough appeal to US-based fans and would sell enough copies that the company went on to release additional titles over the next nearly 20 years. (Even after 2009, members of the company still do business in the US anime industry, although not as ADV Films.) The fact that the licensing arm of the Japanese company from which ADV wished to acquire *Yohko* was unaware of the title speaks strongly to the transnational cultural aspects of the fantasyscape. Toho obviously never thought that a product like *Yohko* could succeed in the North American market or they would have done more to promote such anime titles to prospective US licensees. This perspective was compounded by the lack of support ADV received from Japan in the form of anything that might help them to create a localized product, such as a script or promotional artwork. Thus, even when interest in anime properties was expressed by foreign licensors, quite often the Japanese companies did not consider them as worthwhile business alliances to pursue. Therefore, the conduct of such early US anime companies has much in common with the fansub groups from which they sprang, even down to the use of personal computers like the Amiga in order to put the subtitles onto the video. It should be noted that other US-based companies distributing anime also had their roots in anime fan communities. For example, in an early post on the rec.arts.anime Usenet newsgroup, AnimEigo CEO Robert Woodhead described his company in the following way: “AnimEigo is a cooperative venture of Anime [sic] fans. We are licensing Japanese Anime [sic] films and OAVs, adding subtitles, and selling professionally produced subtitled versions at \_less\_ [sic] than the

street price of the original films in Japan” (Woodhead 1989). As we can see from these examples, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many anime fans saw that they might be able to take their passions in a more commercial direction. These were certainly not the first commercial companies releasing anime for the US market – as previously mentioned, this had been going on since the early 1960s. However, the same conditions that led to the spread of fansubbed video tapes also led to conditions that were favorable for small companies to be able to license and distribute anime shows directly to fans without having to worry about television broadcast or theatrical distribution.

Through the 1990s and early 2000s, small anime companies began proliferating in the US and began releasing more officially-licensed products. Because of this, Japanese companies began taking more notice of the US anime market. Since one of the original purported goals of fansubbing was to promote anime as a form of entertainment, which seemed to be less and less of an issue as anime grew commercially, anime fansubbers began carving out a specific niche for themselves in the English-speaking world. More and more anime began being fansubbed online, and it increasingly became possible to download a free, English-subtitled version of an anime show or film within days of its broadcast or commercial release. Consequently, there was increasing hostility on the part of Japanese media producers to the fansub practices going on in North America.

In December 2004, the Japanese company Media Factory sent cease-and-desist letters to a number of anime fansub groups and websites that aggregated links to fansubbed video files. This was one of the first indications that such Japanese companies were paying attention to what was going on in the fansubbing community. Since most groups ostensibly wanted to promote Japanese anime, this letter by a Japanese company

saying to quit such actions on the titles they owned was enough to stop many groups from fansubbing and distributing Media Factory's titles. (Some groups did not stop, however, but were driven further underground.)

In August 2006, US-based anime distributor Bandai Entertainment sent out a general warning to the anime community regarding their title *Ghost in the Shell: Solid State Society* ("Bandai Warns" 2006). In it, Bandai said that they would be on the lookout for fansubs following the Japanese DVD release of the film. The press release reiterated that Bandai retained all rights related to the film, that fansubbing is technically an illegal act, and that the company might take legal action against fansubbing groups or file hosters that made Bandai's properties available for download. Although Bandai Entertainment is based in the United States, it is owned by the Japanese company Namco Bandai Holdings. At the time, many fans asked why the company did not have a simultaneous release on both sides of the Pacific, instead of having staggered release dates for Japan and North America. However, for a Japanese company focused on a Japanese market, the reason for staggered releases is clear, since Japanese home video releases generally sell for much higher prices than foreign releases. (As just one example, the movie *Evangelion 1.11: You Are Not Alone* was released on Blu-Ray in Japan on May 27, 2009 with an MSRP of 6090 yen [~US\$71.35]. In the US, it was released on March 9, 2010 with an MSRP of \$34.98. There are often even greater disparities in price with television shows.) A simultaneous release across multiple markets would increase the likelihood that Japanese consumers would reverse-import the less-expensive versions of such titles. This staggered release practice is similar to the process of windowing practiced by Hollywood and discussed by Wang (2003). The strategy of many of the

major Hollywood studios in response to this has been to move toward a day-and-date release (opening a film in multiple territories on the same day in an effort to sate consumer demand) (Wang 2003: 15). This is, however, a practice that has been slow to catch on with many Japanese licensors, and legal warnings are often not enough to fully control fan demand for a product. Thus, some fansub groups did release *Solid State Society*, although, similar to the Media Factory releases, such fansubs were harder to find than usual and did not appear on many of the websites that aggregate anime BitTorrent links.

The fact that fans continued to fansub and distribute anime, even when specifically requested to not do so, led to a paradox in the 2000s. Anime in general had become more popular in North America than it had ever been, but North American anime companies were finding it difficult to continue releasing products. Where once fansubs had been seen as a way of promoting Japanese animation, they were now perceived as a very real threat to the profitability of, and hence continued existence of, anime in North America. At the same time, fansubs and its associated cultural practices had become a widely-accepted part of American anime fan culture. Fans also likened anime fansubs to the way Japanese anime was available for free over Japanese television, and consequently asked if the Japanese could get their anime for free, why couldn't the fans from other countries as well? The problem became one of definition – the US fans saw their actions as leveling the global playing field, while the Japanese media companies (and by extension, the North American companies that licensed from them) saw the creation and distribution of fansubs as piracy. In early 2008, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs even convened a symposium to discuss how to better protect intellectual property generated by

domestic companies on the global stage, with panels on global competitiveness and rights enforcement (“Japan's Foreign Ministry” 2008). Although fansubs were not specifically discussed, they did discuss issues relating to online file sharing. The fact that such discussions are even occurring within usually staid Japanese companies indicates a dawning realization that the best way to target anime fans that have grown accustomed to fansubs was not to focus on the fansubs themselves, but to build upon the branding and knowledge that such fansubs could provide. In the next section, I will examine a representative example of how a company tried to use the proliferation of fansubs to its advantage.

### ***The Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi as Media Experience***

The question nearly all media producers ask is how to provide content and still make a profit. If one can simply download a file and receive the same viewing experience that one can from a legitimately-purchased product, then the impetus for legal purchases would seem to be small. While many people would not download files illegally for ethical reasons, fansubbing has become an integral part of the culture around anime fandom outside of Japan. As a consequence, many in the fan culture do not view fansubs as piracy.

One solution for the content producers and distributors is to furnish consumers with something that cannot be downloaded or pirated. What is being sold, then, is not just the media product, but the whole associated experience of interacting with this product. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the database fantasyscape is integral to these new experiences and interactions. Taking a particular point of departure (such as an anime

series), distributors create related products, each providing the viewer/user with new ways of thinking about a media text and integrating it into his or her own life.

For example, a contemporary DVD has the ability to provide a multitude of ways of experiencing a media text such as a film. What does it mean when we say we have watched a film? Even though the claim to have seen a ‘film’ seems to imply a format specificity suggesting certain viewing practices, in discussions about cinema we seldom make reference to how we were exposed to the text. For example, when someone asks me if I have seen a particular film it usually matters little to them whether I saw it in its original theatrical run or on a rented DVD copy at home: primacy is placed on the experience of the film’s diegetic world. Similarly, in academic discourse when one refers to a film, the conditions under which the author experienced the film are rarely mentioned. However, this is a significant omission as different versions of a film can leave the viewer with different impressions. As Charles R. Acland writes, “The film performance varies across time and across consumption contexts and carries a degree of unpredictability with it. *No two screenings are absolutely identical*” (Acland 2003: 47; emphasis in original). Watching a film in a theatre is not the same experience as watching it at home. Even saying that one has watched a film on DVD brings up a myriad of questions: Was the DVD the widescreen or full screen version? Was it the original release or the newly remastered special edition with Dolby 5.1 sound? Was it the theatrical version or the director’s cut? And from which region was the disc? For example, when confronted with the Hong Kong version of the DVD for *Days of Being Wild* (dir. Wong Kar-wai, 1991) in an interview, cinematographer Christopher Doyle suggested that the interviewer obtain the Japanese DVD of the film, saying, “The color is

wrong on this one. It's not green enough. It was all green, but then they kind of 'corrected' it when I wasn't there. They took away the green because they thought I didn't know what I was doing" (Axmaker 2004). Thus the version of a film a person is watching can have a serious impact on one's reception of it.

Although the above summary presents an example of a film that crosses the boundaries of nation and culture, a viewer's understanding of the film encompasses more than just plot and narrative. The reception of a film is shaped by the conditions under which it is viewed, which are increasingly taking place not in theatres but in the home through the proliferation of consumer technologies like the Digital Video Disc (DVD) (Cubbison 2005, Klinger 2006). Because DVDs can vary in terms of how faithful they are to original film prints of a movie, as anecdotally mentioned above by Christopher Doyle, it is important to be aware of the ways in which viewing a movie on DVD can alter one's perception of the film. An awareness of the characteristics of DVDs is important because many of them have additional features that can vary from region to region, such as interviews, featurettes, commentaries, and the like, which also can affect one's interpretation of a particular film.

Many of the special features one might think of as being unique to DVDs are actually holdovers from the far less successful laserdisc medium. For example, the first director's commentary was on Criterion's laserdisc of *Black Narcissus* (dir. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1947) and the first film to be given the "special edition" edition treatment with a plethora of bonus features was Criterion's 1984 release of *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles 1941) on laserdisc (Neapolitan 2003: 46). The audience response to these special features has been somewhat contradictory. According to an

article in *Billboard* in 1998, just as DVD was beginning to catch on as a popular format, a marketing survey suggested that “as DVD popularity widens, the passion for widescreen and other bells and whistles has begun to ebb” (Goldstein 1998: 105). However, an article that ran in the same magazine less than a year later said that the presence of special features on the discs was one of the main factors driving DVD sales (Fitzpatrick 1999). In a more recent example, on the National Public Radio show *All Things Considered*, Art Silverman opined that interesting DVD extras can make a “bad” movie worth seeing. However, Silverman’s interviewees in the DVD creation industry say that most of the people they know never listen to the commentaries or watch the extras. However, one of the interviewees said that there is a “vocal but commercially significant minority” of people who watch and buy such products (Silverman 2005). It is also suggested that in the early days of DVD, producers would try to put anything they could find on the disc, even if it was only marginally related, in order to make the list of extras look more impressive.

This last point suggests that there is not necessarily a contradiction in the points that extras and special editions drive DVD sales and that people do not often watch such extras. There is not even a necessary connection between the purchase of a DVD and the watching of it. As philosopher and sociologist Slavoj Žižek has quipped, “Videos and DVDs have ruined movies for me... Instead of seeing the movie, I buy it, and then I have it, so why should I watch it?” (Mead 2003: 42). The additional pieces of information one gets in a DVD have become so commonplace that they are an expected presence on DVD and, even if unwatched, make consumers feel as if they are getting their money’s worth. It should be noted, then, that the present discussion of the way DVD extras affect the

viewing experience of a film could be said to apply to only a specific segment of the viewing population and that those who create the extras seem to be aware of this fact. However, even unviewed extras can contribute to the overall discourse of a film. For example, the knowledge of the presence of a commentary track by the film's director can lead to a higher estimation of the director, promulgating a form of auteur theory.

In their analysis of the *Fight Club* DVD, Robert Alan Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus (2002) draw on John Fiske's (1987) idea of "primary texts" (the film or, in Fiske's case, television program under discussion) and "secondary texts" (writings about the program). In order to more accurately describe the presence of supplemental materials on DVDs, Brookey and Westerfelhaus posit the term "extra texts" because "the material resides outside of, and in addition to, the cinematic text as traditionally defined by film criticism—i.e., the parameters of the theatrical release. Although extra-text materials function in a way similar to secondary texts, we do not believe the term 'secondary' fully conveys the signifying relationship they have with the primary-cinematic text" (Brookey and Westerfelhaus 2002: 23). Although I believe that Brookey and Westerfelhaus are correct in thinking about DVD content as falling outside of the strict primary/secondary text dichotomy, I do not think that the term "extra texts" does the job they intend of making the connection with the primary text. The word "extra" by itself implies that the DVD content exists in addition to, can be separated from, and possibly even stand apart from the primary text. However, this is not necessarily the way in which viewers experience the film. One generally becomes aware of the disc's packaging, artwork, and menus before playing the movie. All of these elements bring with them certain characteristics and help to structure one's viewing experience; they are an inseparable

part of the domestic consumption of many films. The DVD can be conceptualized as containing (generally) a single primary text and (possibly one or more) associated texts necessarily in relationship with one another by virtue of their physical connectedness.

One of the most interesting responses to the problem of fansubs, and one that took advantage of a myriad of extra texts, was the DVD release of the anime television show *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*. It was based on a series of light novels that were originally serialized in the magazine *The Sneaker (Za suniikaa)*. The first novel was published in mid-2003, and two more novels came out that same year; to date nine such light novels<sup>3</sup> have been published in Japanese. A manga adaptation of the novels began serialization in 2004, and an anime adaptation aired on Japanese television from April to June 2006, with a second season from April to October 2009, and a feature film in February 2010. It should be mentioned that there were audio drama and video game adaptations of *Haruhi* as well.

The first season of *Haruhi* was released on DVD in four parts in North America (May 2007, July 2007, September 2007, and November 2007), and for each part fans could purchase either a standard edition or a limited edition. The two editions were released at the same time; each of the limited editions retailed for around \$60, which is very expensive for four episodes of original content in the North American DVD market. The standard editions retailed for \$30 per disc, which was average for the time. However, in addition to the DVDs, the limited edition boxes were packaged with additional material for fans of the show – all came with additional music CDs that could fit into the

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<sup>3</sup> A light novel is a kind of Japanese fiction that is distinguished from other forms of literature by its ease of comprehension (usually written at a junior high or high school reading level) and its use of illustrations - most light novels have an anime-like image on the cover as well as additional drawings spaced throughout the book. Many successful light novels are made into manga and / or anime series.

special box that came with the first limited edition set. They also came with additional accessories like pencil boards (*shitakiji*), iron-on transfers, pillowcases, and accessories like those that main character Haruhi wears during the show, such as an armband and a headband.

The extra items included in the more expensive box sets serve to expand the narrative world of the program, giving the viewer multiple ways to engage with it and thus setting the stage for different personal experiences. In my own way of engaging with Haruhi, I watched the DVDs, frequently admired the art box containing the discs on my DVD shelf, occasionally listened to the music, and looked at the pencil boards every so often. I left the armband and the headband alone since I do not perform cross-dressing cosplay and I did not use the iron-on transfer because I had no articles of clothing I wished to decorate. Another viewer may have made different choices than I did, making more use of the clothing accessories as a part of a public performance, perhaps at an anime convention (see chapter 5), or as a personal performance to try to “be” like Haruhi in some small way in the comfort of one’s own home. Such accessories allow one to begin to enter the larger diegetic world of the program and to engage with it on a more personal, physical level.

One of the most interesting extras to come with limited edition box sets two through four were additional DVDs that contained nearly the same content as the main DVDs, only in a different order. (The series consisted of fourteen episodes, and the four main DVDs had the four episodes apiece on the first two discs and three each on the last two. The extra DVDs, on the other hand had five episodes on each of the first two discs and four episodes on the final disc.) Since the extra DVDs had more episodes on them,

there were no extra features on them, nor were the episodes dubbed into English (just original Japanese language with English subtitles). Upon first glance, this might seem oddly wasteful, since these DVDs only duplicate existing content on the main DVDs. However, these extra DVDs allowed the viewer to replicate as closely as possible the experience of watching the original Japanese broadcast. When *Haruhi* was originally shown on Japanese television, the episodes were intentionally not shown in chronological order, adding to the sense of mystery surrounding the show's events. This was the order in which the fans who watched the fansubs originally viewed the show, and they accepted its method of storytelling. The non-chronological order of the episodes portrayed an emotional, rather than a narrative, arc. Although the order of the episodes was not truly random, they did have the effect of emphasizing character over narrative, one of the hallmarks of database consumption. However, when *Haruhi* came out on DVD in Japan, the episodes were rearranged into chronological order to tell a more linear story. Through its marketing of the series, North American licensee Kadokawa Pictures and distributor Bandai Entertainment explicitly acknowledged that much of their fanbase would be people who had previously seen fansubbed versions of the series. Bandai wanted to provide committed fans an incentive to purchase the legitimate version of *Haruhi*. Therefore, the limited editions of *Haruhi* not only provided unique, non-programmatic content such as CDs, pencil boards, and pillowcases, the extra DVDs that were included provided additional reason to get rid of digital copies a fan might have in favor of the legitimate version.

Another way Bandai demonstrated their engagement with an audience already familiar with fansubs can be seen on the promotional videos they created for the series

and which appear as extra content on the main DVDs. These short promotional videos, originally released online, were intentionally designed to engage the fans who were already familiar with the show. The first video, titled “Adventures of the ASOS Brigade Ep. 00,” depicted a live-action version of the female characters from *Haruhi*, with only the actress playing Haruhi herself speaking English (the other two spoke Japanese). From the quality of the filming, the editing, and the acting (the performances seem hurried, often as if it is the actor’s first take), it is clear that the videos were low-budget affairs. The overall presentation works not only from an economic point of view, but also alludes to episode 00 of the series (the first episode broadcast) in which the cast of characters in *Haruhi* are filming their own low-budget science fiction film. Additionally, this video directly targets an internet-savvy audience and alludes to internet memes that would be familiar to them.

For example, after the video officially announces the license of the series, it cuts to an image of a cat with the letters “O RLY?” superimposed on it. It cuts back to a young woman speaking in Japanese who says “*honto*” (in this context it could be understood to mean “really”), but the subtitles translate into online shorthand as “YA RLY.” The next cut performs much the same function with an image of two turtles, one with the letters “O RLY?” and the other with the Japanese hiragana “emaji?” next to it. (Which can be read as a shortened version of a Japanese sentence like “Ee, maji desu ka?” or “What, is that correct?”) Elsewhere in the video, it states that the video was “Made by fans for fans.” This is a direct allusion to a fansub audience, as it echoes the old refrain often seen in many fansubs that asserts the purity of motive for subtitling and releasing anime for free. The video also exhorts the viewer to “Please buy the (R1) DVDs

when released!” All of these elements in the first promotional video show that the marketing push for the *Haruhi* series, at least at the beginning, was geared specifically toward anime fans and fans of the series in particular, rather than a general audience, many of whom had probably already watched the series via fansubs downloaded from the Internet. Additional promotional videos were released online to promote the show, many of which allude to the fact that there is already a fanbase that had been generated by the illegal consumption of fansubbed episodes. One such example is that in the ending credits of the extras, it says that a “very special thanks” goes to “all fansub lovers who buy the official DVDs and help support more creative works” but that “no special thanks” go to “downloaders / bootleggers who never buy the official DVDs.” This would seem to be saying that while fansubbing may not be encouraged, it is an accepted stopgap measure until a legitimate product is released.

In a unique way of dealing with the expandability of cult media, in 2009 Japanese television stations began re-broadcasting episodes of *Haruhi*, this time with the episodes in chronological order and with new episodes interspersed among the older ones. Most television programs in Japan are not re-run after their initial airing, so this was a surprising tack to take, although it was in keeping with the show’s offbeat approach to marketing both in Japan and abroad. This expanded the length of the series from fourteen episodes to twenty-eight episodes. The series was re-released with English subtitles on DVD in Japan as well (an uncommon practice for anime DVDs), a nod to the international nature of the show’s audience and perhaps a marketing move to try to get foreign fans to purchase the legitimate Japanese product rather than fansubbing the shows

themselves. At the same time, re-viewing the series with the new episodes plays with and questions the stability of the text in interesting ways.

## **Conclusion**

Fansubbing (and video piracy more generally) cannot be legislated out of existence. Thanks to ever-evolving technologies, there will always be new ways of acquiring films in illegitimate ways regardless of entreaties by rights-holders, copy protection, or even lawsuits. The powerful trade associations the Record Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) have been fighting a losing battle against music and film pirates for many years. Even with their concerted efforts pirated versions of the latest CDs and movies are easily found online. In addition, the rights-holders for anime titles that have not been secured for distribution outside of Japan do not in most cases have the resources to legally pursue those who illegally distribute their products overseas.

However, even if this were monetarily and technologically feasible, a forceful crackdown on anime fansubbers and fansub downloaders would almost certainly result in a backlash among anime fans. Changing the prevalence of fansubbing would require a change in anime culture. Technologies have given anime fans the sense of what might be called an “imagined community” that connects them to developments in Japan. This is not quite analogous to Benedict Anderson’s idea (1983), since, for the most part, barriers of language and culture prevent Japanese and foreign fans from conversing with one another on a regular basis (other than for fans who know other languages). At the same time, though, there is a distinct feeling among foreign anime fans that they want to know

what is airing on Japanese television and will not let things like rights or licensing restrictions get in their way. Among some fans there is a sense of longing to connect with Japanese culture and society, and by partaking of things like anime in more or less real time, they are able to imagine that they are a part of a community that is different from the one in which they are physically located. Such an attitude could in fact be beneficial for Japanese companies if they could determine a way to capitalize on it, since they have created products with which people very much want to watch, discuss, and interact.

In addition to the methods and techniques describes above, some companies are taking advantage of new technologies to distribute their new works. One of the most promising experiments in recent years has been the advent of streaming video. Increases in internet bandwidth has allowed for films and television shows to be able to be transmitted and shown to a viewer without a file being downloaded to the user's computer. One of the key companies doing this for anime content has been the website Crunchyroll.com. Streaming video also allows for close synchronicity with the broadcast of a show on Japanese television. In some cases (often for certain high-profile shows), Crunchyroll is able to provide an English-subtitled video stream to users within an hour of the show airing on Japanese television. In the spring 2010 season, Crunchyroll had simulcasts of seven new shows in addition to seven older shows they were continuing to simulcast ("Crunchyroll - Lineup" 2010). However, such advances have still not stopped the flow of fansubs, even for the shows that Crunchyroll releases. For example, on July 23, 2010, Crunchyroll announced that they would be simulcasting the show *Mitsudomoe* ("Crunchyroll - Forum - Summer Simulcast: Mitsudomoe Launches Today!" 2010). However, as of August 11, 2010, the online anime BitTorrent aggregator AnimeSuki.com

still listed torrents for episodes of the show (“Mitsudomoe” 2010). This is because according to the site’s policy they only consider a title licensed if it has been acquired for a DVD or Blu-Ray release, not for streaming-only (“Listing Policy” 2009).

Although fansubs are always illegal, they can provide useful services to the anime community as a whole. Not all fansub groups work on the latest titles that are airing on Japanese television. (These are the titles for which there is often the most active fan interest and are most likely to get licensed by a foreign distributor.) A number of fansub groups work on older titles that the group members see as particularly interesting or artistically relevant that have never been released outside of Japan. One such group calls itself the To-Y Restoration Committee, working in conjunction with another group calling itself Anime Classic. The groups came together through shared interest in an OAV (original animated video, essentially a direct-to-video anime release) from 1987 called *To-Y*. In addition to fansubbing a title that was nearly twenty years old when the group was working on it, they also took care to remaster the video from laserdisc. This means that the fansubbed version that exists for free online is of better quality than any version that can currently be purchased, even in Japan.

For these reasons and others, the future of US anime distribution companies is uncertain. The late 2000s was not kind to many companies releasing anime in the US market. Part of this was due to such companies overestimating potential sales and licensing titles with low sales potential. For example, a former marketing manager at Geneon USA has stated that the company had released titles that did not even sell one hundred copies in North America (Bertschy and Sevakis 2009). Another blow to the sale of anime in the United States was the bankruptcy of the retail store Musicland in 2006,

which also affected its affiliated Suncoast and Sam Goody stores. The Musicland stores had a major presence throughout America, particularly in shopping malls, and the company's bankruptcy greatly reduced the number of available venues through which to sell anime and ancillary products. Additionally, the role of the overall economic depression that hit the United States in the latter part of the first decade of the 2000s should not be overlooked; with so many out of work, fewer people had disposable income to spend on hobbies like anime. This led to a number of anime distribution companies closing, going bankrupt, or drastically reorganizing. For example, in August 2009, Kadokawa Pictures closed their US-based Kadokawa Pictures USA subsidiary, which had licensed the *Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* ("Kadokawa Pictures USA Licensing Unit Shuts Down" 2009). Around the same time in 2009, ADV Films ceased operations under the ADV moniker. However, in ADV's case, it was more of a case of the company splitting into a number of smaller, related companies for legal reasons. Many of the properties it was handling were transferred to other related companies, as were a number of former ADV personnel ("ADV Films Shuts Down" 2009). In fact, it was widely reported in the fan community that Section 23, which was one of the companies formed to handle distribution of the intellectual property formerly belonging to ADV (now belonging to a related company called AEsir Holdings), was so named due to the statute in Texas bankruptcy law that would allow the ADV to restructure in this way without actually declaring bankruptcy (VonSchilling 2009). Additional US anime distributors active in the 1990s and 2000s, that did not survive include Geneon USA (active in the United States from 1993 onward, initially as Pioneer; they changed to Geneon USA in 2003 but were shut down by their Japanese parent company in late 2007)

and Central Park Media (a domestic company formed in 1990 which filed for bankruptcy in 2009).

With the anime industry in such a state of flux, and with developments in computer technology allowing for ever faster rates of file transfers, in the first decade of the 2000s fansubs began to become a serious threat to the viability of commercial anime in the United States. As I have discussed in this chapter, providing fans alternate ways in which to engage with an anime text can be important to the development and strengthening of fandom. However, as we can see from the withdrawal of Kadokawa Pictures USA from the market, this approach to anime is not necessarily the most lucrative and may in fact harm the dissemination of anime. It may serve to strengthen the fannish attachments of some, but at the same time such an approach marks a title like *Haruhi* as a niche title, limiting its crossover potential to consumers who do not usually watch anime (a key market segment in a media environment like that in the United States). Part of this has been due to the fact that anime companies in Japan have been targeting more niche audiences themselves as a conservative way of trying to guarantee a fan base. This means that the titles that are available to US companies to license have been becoming increasingly niche as well.

This kind of specialization is one of the downsides to the concept of the database fantasyscape. In some ways, it may seem to offer more choice. In the end, however, if one is constantly going back to the database for elements and inspiration, the same (yet effective) ideas are repeatedly recycled. This may find success with existing fans, but is not particularly effective at building a larger audience. One of the bright spots in recent developments may be the increase in crossover properties between the United States and

Japan, as it infuses anime with new ideas. Although there has been American involvement (and money) in Japan's anime industry from the very beginning, there have been a number of co-productions in recent years, many of which have been omnibus compilations of shorter films with different directors. These include: *The Animatrix* (2003), a collection of shorts based on the universe of *The Matrix* (1999, dir. Andy and Larry Wachowski), which in turn had been strongly influenced by *Ghost in the Shell*; adaptations of video games created by US-based developers such as *Halo Legends* (2010) and *Dante's Inferno* (2010); and adaptations of US comics properties such as *Batman: Gotham Knight* (2008) and *Witchblade* (2006, dir. Ohashi Yoshimitsu), and the ongoing collaboration between Japanese studio Madhouse and Marvel Comics to create anime series for *Iron Man* (2010) and *Wolverine* (2010). In a similar move, the US anime distributor Funimation, which was one of the few companies to actually thrive and grow during the downturn in anime's fortunes in the 2000s, announced that it would begin to work with Japanese companies to create anime from original, non-Japanese ideas ("Funimation Starts Initiative for Co-Producing Anime" 2009). Time will tell if such productions, which couple an anime aesthetic with American plotting and characters, will prove to be salable to a US and international viewing audience. As we have seen from this and previous chapters, it is just the next stage in the ongoing hybridization of Japanese animation with foreign ideas and capital. However, this also highlights the necessity of being educated about the media and how critical it is to make skillful selections from the media database.

## **Chapter Four – Selling Cultic Transmedia: *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Ghost in the Shell***

In the previous chapters, I examined how anime is constructed transnationally and through selections of database elements, paying attention to how the conceptualizations of the term are likely to differ in Japanese and English. The boundaries of anime are something that I will continue to push against throughout this dissertation. In this chapter, I will address how anime might begin to exceed itself through additional media properties; this is to say how anime, which is limited to moving images one might view on a variety of screens, is able to move from those screens of reception and into the “real” world through a variety of vectors such as comics, games, and toys. Although in my examples I will continually return to animation as a point of reference, I could just as easily write about manga or video games and refer to their animated offshoots as subsidiary properties. As we shall see, though, conceptualizing contemporary media flows in terms of the movement inherent in animation has certain advantages.

One of the critical factors I have been addressing has been the fan response to anime, and how fan interaction has been necessary to its transnational flow. I would argue that the degree to which some texts are popularized outside of their original markets is the degree to which such texts are (or are perceived as) cult texts. Matt Hills, although reluctant to provide a “definition” of the cult text, characterizes such texts as needing to demonstrate an endurance of fan enthusiasm “in the absence of ‘new’ or official material in the originating medium” (2002: x) as well as sharing three main “family resemblances”: auteurism, endlessly deferred narrative, and hyperdiegesis (2002: 131). In short, cult texts are the work of a singular creative individual (or are perceived as

being so), there are overriding questions presented to the characters in the text that are never fully resolved across multiple iterations, and the events take place in a rich environment “only a fraction of which is ever directly seen or encountered within the text” (Hills 2002: 137). Often within contemporary anime media, a particular title does not designate a singular product (film, television program, video game, etc.), but rather a wide-ranging franchise, part of which can be seen as an example of transmedia storytelling. These aspects tie in to Hills’s cult media resemblances, since deferred narrative opens avenues for telling related stories in different media, as does hyperdiegesis, which might prompt the creation of additional texts (both official and fan-produced) that further explore the characters and narrative world. Since, according to Azuma, contemporary anime texts encourage an emphasis on characters rather than story and narrative, this can often more easily enable cult text formations, as characters and images are able to cross boundaries more easily than can entire programs that may have complicated back stories. Indeed, Azuma claims that one of the key “postmodern characteristics of otaku [Japanese fan] culture” is the prevalence of “derivative works” within the culture (2009: 25). The application of a cult sheen to anime texts may also help them to travel transnationally within established fan circles due to the fact that they are easily adaptable within various cultural and media contexts.

When one talks about adaptation today, the term does not refer merely to the act of turning the written word into film and vice versa. Rather, adaptation can refer to all manner of alterations made to a text to make it suitable for use in different media, including novels, films, comics, animation, and video games. In fact, it is increasingly

rare for adaptation into a different medium *not* to occur with a popular text (see Cherry 2009 for another example of this).

The concept of convergence, as explicated in Jenkins's *Convergence Culture* (2006), is closely related to that of adaptation, as both involve the transitioning elements of one text into another text in a different media. However, convergence differs from adaptation in that the new texts may build and expand on an "original" text in different ways. For example, one of Jenkins' main emphases is on transmedia storytelling, in which elements of a single narrative world are disbursed across multiple media, and it is up to the consumer to assemble all of these elements. This is not adaptation, but expansion. However, many contemporary media properties take both an adaptive and a transmedia approach to relating their plots and narratives.

The ideas of convergence and transmedia become additionally complicated when one thinks about how media increasingly flow across national and cultural boundaries. Tracking such cultural products transnationally can be rather difficult as they travel outside of their countries of origin. Some previous theories of the global movement of texts have theorized that transnational products may seem to carry with them a "cultural odor" (Iwabuchi 2002) of their origins while others may be more easily assimilated into the target culture due to their "multiple proximities" (La Pastina and Straubhaar 2005). However, such models of transnational movement seem to imagine texts as discrete, unitary objects that can be transported from place to place. I would argue, instead, that texts are inherently "fractured" and do not travel neatly and easily. (Jenkins admits as much, stating, "Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others" [2006: 3].) It is the psychological operation

of wanting to see patterns within chaos—the fantasy in the fantasyscape—that gives rise to the perception of convergence.

In this chapter, I will discuss the nature of adaptation in contemporary Japanese popular culture, focusing on the examples of the franchises *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Ghost in the Shell*. Both are texts that take part in constructing large fictional worlds and extend across multiple forms of media. Originally a manga, the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise has been adapted and spun out into feature-length animated films, novels, and video games. The world of *Ghost in the Shell* actually encompasses multiple narrative universes—that is, it is not possible to reconcile all of the events across all of the media without significant contradictions. Therefore, tracing the different media in the *Ghost in the Shell* universe is illustrative not only of how contemporary transnational media undergo multiple degrees of adaptation from an “original” source, but also how these adaptations become enmeshed in transmedia storytelling that cuts across multiple media. However, I will first begin with an analysis of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, another wide-ranging science fiction media franchise.

### **Cult Media and the Database Form in *Neon Genesis Evangelion***

*Neon Genesis Evangelion* was originally a 26-episode television series that aired in Japan in the 1995-96 season and has since spawned six theatrical movies in Japan (two of which have, at this writing, yet to be released), a planned English-language live-action adaptation, multiple video games and manga series, and hundreds of ancillary products. The series combines many standard anime tropes (such as the giant robot with a young boy as a pilot) with references to Christianity and Jewish mysticism. The story of

*Evangelion* focuses on a teenage boy named Shinji who is summoned by his estranged father, the head of a mysterious government organization called Nerv, in order to pilot a giant robot in order to save mankind from a series of invading aliens that are called “angels.” (The Japanese word used is *shito*, which literally means “apostle.”) The earth in *Evangelion* has been ravaged by the Second Impact, a failed experiment on a creature called Adam, which melted the polar ice caps and threw the entire world into a period of war and turmoil. This event, which took place fifteen years prior to the events depicted in the series, is somehow connected to the ongoing angel invasion, and through the course of the series and films the viewer begins to see how everything is connected.

The factors that have contributed to *Evangelion*'s popularity in the US involve aspects of anime in general in addition to specific elements found in the text itself. Moving from general to specific, the three most significant reasons are the *mukokuseki* nature of the anime form, the series' cultlike qualities, and its references to aspects of both Japanese and Western culture, which has the effect of rendering *Evangelion* both exotic and familiar. Like Jeffrey S. Miller's work in his book *Something Completely Different* (2000), part of my goal in examining anime is to study the ways in which foreign media influence has flowed into and had an impact on the United States. However, this is not to simply reverse the cultural imperialism thesis and conceptualize the movement of anime as a unidirectional flow from Japan to the US. I hope to demonstrate that such flows are multiple and reciprocal, with a back-and-forth exchange of ideas and influences at different points in time.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the fact that *Evangelion* and the Aum Shinrikyo attacks both took place in 1995 is emblematic of some of the larger movements within

Japanese society at the time. In the 1980s and 1990s, Aum Shinrikyou was a Japanese new religious movement with an apocalyptic worldview and an idolized leader who claimed mystical spiritual powers. In March 1995, they unleashed an attack in the Tokyo subways with the nerve agent sarin, which killed twelve people and injured thousands. (For background on the attacks, see Kaplan and Marshall 1996, Reader 1996, Lifton 1999, and Metraux 2000.) Azuma Hiroki theorizes the year 1995 as the end point of a distinct historical period for Japan. He divides postwar Japanese history into three distinct periods: 1945 to 1970 was the “prepostmodern” in which “overarching unities such as grand narratives, ideals, society, and the nation still functioned” (2007: 178); 1970 to 1995 as the “First Period of the Postmodern” in which “grand narratives had broken down yet were constructed as fictions” (2007: 178); and 1995 to the present as the “Second Period of the Postmodern” in which “grand narratives have completely disappeared” (2007: 178). The main events Azuma chooses for his dividing lines in 1970 and 1995 are the Japanese Red Army hijacking of an airplane and subsequent escape to North Korea on March 31, 1970 and the Aum gas attacks on March 20, 1995. Both occurrences of domestic terrorism received heavy media coverage and seemed to signal a kind of paradigm shift.

In terms of database structure, the interesting thing about *Evangelion* is that the show demonstrated a keen awareness of how its component database elements flow in an environment of fandom and what this means for the show itself. In particular, Azuma picks up on the events that took place in the final two episodes when he writes that the images onscreen broke down the previous images we had seen so far in the series and recontextualized them in new ways, saying “In other words, its creators made a parody of

the parody in advance. And, in their rather wonderful way, they pieced together an autocritique of their impasse” (2009: 182). The fact that the creators of *Evangelion* should be very aware of fandom and possible responses to the show is indicative of the background of Gainax, the animation studio that created the franchise. The studio has its roots in anime fandom, with one of its earliest and most distinctive works being the opening animation sequences for a Japanese science fiction convention called Daicon. These videos incorporate homages and parodies of many different fantasy and science fiction elements from around the world.<sup>4</sup>

So what is it exactly that happens in the last two episodes of *Evangelion*? After 24 episodes of a science fiction narrative that is engaging yet convoluted, involving secret government agencies, conspiracies, Jewish mysticism, Biblical prophecies, giant fighting robots, and a young protagonist with a severe crisis of confidence in himself, the final two episodes of the television show dispense with any pretense of trying to wrap up the narrative and begin to more fully explore the fractured psychology of the main character. Nothing in the series is ever really resolved (Hills’s “endlessly deferred narrative” at work), which both caters to the fan, since an open narrative with many questions provides ample opportunities for additional fan creation and intervention, and works against the fan by distancing the viewer from the characters by sometimes removing them from the screen entirely. For example, in one episode, dialogue is exchanged between characters with nothing but simple angular shapes onscreen, representing what might perhaps be an abstraction of disembodied consciousness.

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<sup>4</sup> Laserdiscs of the animation were sold in limited quantities at the time, but the footage has never been made available commercially overseas due to issues of obtaining the necessary copyright clearances for the characters they used from multiple science fiction stories as well as for the music.

It is out of an awareness of the database elements of contemporary anime that the creators were able to ensure the franchise had a life of its own after its initial television run had ended. In addition to the *Evangelion* television show, there was also an *Evangelion* manga that began its serialization shortly before the show's run. In the wake of the success of the show (and perhaps due to fan displeasure over the final two episodes), two theatrical films were created. The first, *Evangelion: Death and Rebirth* (1997), was a summary of the first 24 episodes of the series with nearly half an hour of new footage that ends in a cliffhanger. The second film, *The End of Evangelion* (1997), which was released in Japan a few months later, concluded the series in an explosively apocalyptic way. Rather than the philosophical abstractions mentioned above, the film ended with smoothly-animated climactic battles and the seeming destruction of the Earth. In spite of the more concretely depicted ending, the images depicted in the film were surreal enough to generate plenty of fan argument about what the ending was supposed to mean. In addition to the two films produced in the 1990s, director Anno Hideaki is currently in the process of creating a series of four new *Evangelion* films for theatrical release that retell the story in a slightly different manner. As of this writing, the first two films—*Evangelion 1.0: You Are (Not) Alone* (*Evangerion shin gekijouban: jo*, 2007) and *Evangelion 2.0: You Can (Not) Advance* (*Evangerion shin gekijouban: ha*, 2009)—have been released, with *Evangelion 3.0: You Can (Not) Redo* (*Evangerion shin gekijouban: kyuu*) slated for Fall 2012. The first film re-animates the events from the television show up through episode six in relatively faithful form, telling the same story in a similar manner but with updated visuals and an increased use of 3D CG animation. The second film begins to diverge more from the television chronology, and even introduces new

characters to the storyline. As of this writing, it remains to be seen how the final two films will re-envision the franchise.

What is perhaps even more interesting are the many *Evangelion*-branded products that allow fans to engage with the series in different ways. One example of this from relatively early in the *Evangelion* franchise was the publication of the book *E-Mono: Shin seiki Evangerion ouru guzzu katarogu (E-Mono: Neon Genesis Evangelion All Goods Catalog)* (Gainax 1997). This book purported to detail all of the official goods that had been produced relating to *Evangelion*, although with the rapid commodification of the franchise even this was surely out of date upon its publication. It was divided into six main sections: *amyuuzuyou puraizu* (prizes one might find in an arcade claw game), *hobii* (models and figurines), *gofuto* (videos, games, and books), *kyarakutaa guzzu* (character goods like accessories, stationary, and toys), *torēdingu kaado* (trading cards), and *rea aitemu* (rare items, such as certain telephone cards, posters, and foreign goods). This attempt at detailing and cataloging such items now, nearly fifteen years after the television series' debut, would surely run multiple volumes. The fact that a book was able to be created as both a document of commodification and, simultaneously, a product to be consumed is indicative of the impulse to collect and catalog that is concomitant with the move toward database consumption.

As we can see, database consumption and adaptation feed upon one another. New stories are constantly being created, which in turn spur the creation of further character goods, which provide fans with an increased number of departure points from which to base re-imaginings of the show's events and characters. In the case of *Evangelion*, a particularly interesting juncture for this is an alternate "school" world that depicts the

same characters from the series but contextualized in a different setting in which they are students and teachers at a seemingly normal high school. This has its roots in the final episode of the television series in which Asuka comes over to Shinji's house to walk to school with him, and they end up literally running into Rei along the way, who is a new transfer student rushing so as not to be late to her first day of school. In the original series, this alternate reality took place in Shinji's mind as he tried to envision what a different world might look like in order to work through his sense of self. It took up very little screen time, though—less than five of the last ten minutes in the last episode of the twenty-six episode series. However, this formulation of the *Evangelion* characters in an alternate school setting seemed to strike a chord with fans as a number of games and manga have been subsequently produced that have their basis in the re-envisioning of the *Evangelion* world to a greater or lesser degree. This also led to the development of video games such as the *Shinji Ikari Raising Project* (*Shin seiki Evangerion: Ikari Shinji ikusei keikaku*, 2004, PC game), which was made into a manga by Takahashi Osamu beginning in 2005, and the *Girlfriend of Steel* (*Shin seiki Evangerion koutetsu no gaarufurendo*) and *Girlfriend of Steel 2* (*Shin seiki Evangerion koutetsu no gaarufurendo 2nd*) games for multiple platforms. The storyline of the latter game was later adapted into a manga version that ran in a shoujo manga magazine in 2003, which was released in English as *Neon Genesis Evangelion: Angelic Days*. However, Azuma asserts that this alternate world of the *Evangelion* characters in a school setting “was already a parody of an image that had been widely circulated as a derivative work at the time of the original broadcast” (2009: 38). In other words, during the program's original run on Japanese television the creators took notice of the fiction and comics the fans were creating and incorporated that

into the show, adapting the desires of the fans and blurring the lines between what is “original” and what is a parody of the “original” work. However, this is not to say that *Evangelion*, or anime / manga franchises in general, are necessarily unique in incorporating fan ideas into the officially sanctioned product, but there is a greater awareness of the need to interact with fans in anime culture. One example of this came in 2007 when Gainax producer Takami Akai stepped down from the studio’s board after making disparaging online comments about fans who had been criticizing a show he was working on. (“Co-Founder Takami Akai Steps Down From Gainax's Board” 2007).

Although the series has not performed nearly as well outside of Japan as child-oriented shows like *Pokemon*, it is continually one of the most popular titles among US anime fans. Its popularity is demonstrated by the many different home video releases the series has received in the US over the years. The series has been released on VHS tapes (in both subtitled and dubbed versions in 1997 and 1998) and on DVD twice (from 2000-2001 and from 2004-2005; the second time was a remastered “platinum” edition). Both DVD editions have also been available in multiple collected box sets – the first version was collected in 2002, while the platinum edition was first collected in 2005, with a tin case in 2007, and as a special holiday edition in 2008. Although not all fans will buy every edition of *Evangelion*, it is worth noting that the show has maintained a significant presence in US anime fandom since its initial release. It was big news in the anime community when it was announced that the Evangelion TV series would be going out of print in late 2011 (“U.S. Evangelion TV DVD Release Going Out of Print” 2011)

In terms of a general approach to my subject matter, as mentioned in the introduction I have found one of the most useful models to be Matt Hills’s (2002) study

of fan cultures and his “suspensionist” position. Although the content of his book is directly applicable to our current discussion (and will be discussed in subsequent pages), it is Hills’s attitude toward contradiction that I find particularly engaging. Within US anime fandom, certain terms may be points of contention, and all fans may not even agree on what the term “anime” signifies. Through an examination of the “essential cultural negotiations” Hills references, I hope to paint a clearer picture of how US and Japanese popular cultures have referenced and informed one another over the last fifty years.

Initially, it may seem that citing the cultlike nature of a series like *Evangelion* as a reason for its popularity in the US is reversing the usual order of how a cult text develops – such texts do not become popular because they are cult, but rather they become cult because they are popular (among a certain population segment). However, it should be remembered that *Evangelion* is a Japanese series that has its own reception history in Japan, and that this reception is not completely unknown to US anime fans. Therefore, sometimes an anime title’s development of a cult following in Japan will engender a similar following in the US.<sup>5</sup> Although the status of *Evangelion*’s legacy in anime may be somewhat unique, it is not uncommon for the success of an anime title in Japan to translate into success in the US. As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the fan favorites on both sides of the Pacific through the mid-2000s was the science fiction comedy series *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*. When fans in the US initially began subtitling the episodes, it was fairly well-known that the series was the “next big thing” in

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<sup>5</sup> This has become even more likely thanks to the fact the current technologies such as video editing software, the BitTorrent protocol, and broadband internet connections enable fans to subtitle shows and post copies for distribution on the Internet within days of a program’s original airing on Japanese television.

Japan, which in turn probably drove more US fans toward it. There had already been much written in English about *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*, even before the anime or any of the associated comics or novels had been officially translated or released in the US. Because of the show's recent vintage, however, it is still too soon to determine whether it will achieve cult status like *Evangelion* has.

By Hills's criteria of the "family resemblances" of cult texts, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* could certainly be viewed as a cult text. In the aftermath of the boom in animation following *Evangelion*'s broadcast, the show was seen as a unique and very personal vision that director Anno Hideaki was able to bring to the screen. Although he was well-regarded as a director and an animator before he created *Evangelion*, with this series Anno catapulted himself not only into the high esteem of anime fans, but into the popular consciousness as well. (Anno recently appeared in a Nissan car commercial and has had multiple film cameo roles.) The two *Evangelion* films that followed the series were a response to fans' requests to try to bring some closure to what may have been the most maddeningly unique end to an anime series to date. As I have mentioned, the final two episodes of the series dispense with narrative and instead concentrate on the subjective emotions within the main characters' minds, employing a wide array of animation techniques and superimposed text to accomplish this. In other words, the fans wanted more of a sense of closure to the deferred narrative; although the films did answer some questions, such as how some characters felt about one another and the ultimate plan of a secret organization behind the scenes, it left many more open for argument. *Evangelion* also gives the impression that the world depicted in the series is only a part of a greater whole, with references given to a murky history involving the Second Impact as

well as contemporary events in Germany and the United States that are never seen. This has given fans ample room to write their own fan fiction and *doujinshi* (amateur comics) based in the world of *Evangelion*. It has also given Gainax, the studio that produced the series and films, the opportunity to merchandise the title on a massive scale, including immersive video games that allow the player to control one or more of the characters.

However, discussing *Evangelion* as a cult text brings up the greater problem of how to relate ideas of the cult to anime more generally. Anime can be used to refer to both film and television animation. Although it sometimes treated as such, anime is not a genre, since it contains genres of its own (science fiction anime, romance anime, school life anime, sports anime, etc.). However, as Jason Mittell shows in *Genre and Television* (2004) animation can be discursively constructed as a genre, and the same could be said for anime. As demonstrated above, specific anime texts can fit into the cult category, but the cult's emphasis on formal elements of the individual text means that anime as a whole cannot be considered cult. Nor, for that matter, can any other category or genre.

However, playing on Hills's idea of "family resemblances" among cult texts, I would like to propose that anime texts can be thought of as sharing similar visual and structural elements that help to make anime into a generally coherent (although not strictly bounded) group of texts that can also share qualities by virtue of association that may not strictly be a part of certain texts. In other words, anime fandom encompasses texts that can be considered cult and those that cannot. (There is no separate fandom for cult anime texts – *Evangelion* fandom cannot be separated from anime fandom in the same way that *Star Trek* fandom can be considered separately from general science fiction fandom.) As a result, the cult aspects of certain prominent texts like *Evangelion* can give all anime

texts something of a cult sheen, which has the effect of helping anime texts travel transnationally within established fan circles.

Although anime texts seem to fit into Hills' concept of cult texts, they also problematize his idea of hyperdiegesis. Although he does not explicitly say so, Hills' concept of a "detailed narrative space" that "appears to operate according to principles of internal logic and extension" (Hills 137) seems to imply that the narrative elements of a single cult text across various formats (films, novels, comics, and radio dramas, for example) would interlock to form a single overarching worldview. Granted, certain elements may not be accepted as canonical by either the producers or the fans, but the idea of hyperdiegesis seems to be working toward such a unified idea. In contrast, the individual elements of many anime franchises are rather self-contained, but still add to the greater whole. In other words, in a franchise that consists of a light novel, a manga, and an anime, each format may have its own "narrative space" with its own peculiarities, even though they share many common characters and narrative elements. In a sense, one might say that anime cult texts are an example of continual adaptation and re-fashioning both the exotic and the familiar into a cohesive whole.

In the case of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, these familiar and exotic elements become intermingled as the show moves transnationally. Indeed, as Susan Napier has suggested, this has been one key factors in anime's attractiveness to fans outside of Japan, noting, "[T]he medium is both different in a way that is appealing to a Western audience satiated on the predictabilities of American popular culture and also remarkably approachable in its universal themes and images" (2005: 9-10). Of course, what is familiar in one part of the world may be seen as exotic in another. One of the writers on

*Evangelion*, when asked about religious references in the show that specifically point to Christianity and Judaism, said that they were put in there partially as a way to distinguish *Evangelion* from the many other giant robot shows on the market, and that if they had known that the show was going to be exported they would have reconsidered including such allusions. When the show was imported into the US, though, it was precisely these religious references that American fans were able to apprehend and puzzle over. In other words, aspects of the show that were originally intended to make it more exotic to a Japanese audience became familiar when viewed in the US, while the more mundane elements of the show to a Japanese audience (like daily school life) were seen as exotic and unfamiliar to an American audience. Such references help to concretize the hyperdiegesis of the cult text, pointing out new avenues for possible fan inquiry.

In the introduction, I had mentioned Antonia Levi's (1998) theory on some of the reasons why Japanese heroes might become popular overseas in spite of an apparent lack of cultural proximity. This is particularly applicable in the case of *Evangelion*, in which the main male character Shinji could be seen as one of the many "flawed heroes" found in anime and manga; it is his job to pilot the robot that can save the world, but he is racked with feelings of grief, guilt, and loneliness that sometimes render him incapable of performing his duties. Also of note are the many strong female characters in *Evangelion*, which Levi says are of a type too infrequently seen in US media offerings. Although Levi occasionally overstates her case, such as when she writes that "most *manga* and *anime* are intended for a highly literate, adult audience" (1998: 70), and it would have been useful to have seen some ethnographic data backing up her assertions of how US fans interpret and react to Japanese popular culture, she does provide us with an example of

how a foreign text like *Evangelion* can be interpreted and adopted when it travels outside its country of origin.

### **The Database of *Ghost in the Shell***

Another approach to the database elements in contemporary Japanese anime can be seen in the case study of a franchise like *Ghost in the Shell*. Unlike *Evangelion*, *Ghost in the Shell* refers to multiple media universes envisioned by multiple creators, each with a unique take on the same characters. The franchise is a near-future cyberpunk tale set in the 2030s and follows the exploits of Japan's Public Safety Section 9, an elite counterterrorist squad. The franchise began in 1989 when Shirow Masamune's original manga began to be serialized in *Young Magazine Kaizokuban*. The serialized chapters were collected into a *tankoubon* (trade paperback) in 1991 while Shirow continued to produce additional chapters throughout the 1990s. In 1995, director Oshii Mamoru adapted the manga in a full-length theatrical film (see Ruh 2004: 119-140 for further details). Later that year a novel adapting the franchise was published, written by Endo Akinori, a frequent screenwriter for anime. A *Ghost in the Shell* video game featuring animated cutscenes produced by animation studio Production I.G (which had worked on the animation for the film as well) for the PlayStation console was released in 1997. Shirow continued to develop the world of *Ghost in the Shell* in manga form, releasing *Ghost in the Shell 2: Man-Machine Interface* in 2001 and *Ghost in the Shell 1.5: Human-Error Processor* in 2003. The worlds of *Ghost in the Shell* continued to be expanded in anime and game form as well, with two television series and an OVA directed by Kamiyama Kenji in 2002-3, 2004-5, and 2006, respectively; a second film called

*Innocence* directed by Oshii in 2004; two games— *Koukaku kidoutai: stand alone complex* (*Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*) and *Koukaku kidoutai: stand alone complex – karyuudo no ryouiki* (*Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex – Domain of the Hunter*) for the PlayStation 2 and PSP (PlayStation Portable) in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Around this same time *Ghost in the Shell* novels by Fujisaku Junichi and Yamada Masaki were also published.

There are at least three distinct universes present in the world of *Ghost in the Shell*—the world of Shirow’s manga, the world of Oshii’s two films, and the world of the television show. In my formulation, a narrative “universe” is one that presents a unified view of the characters and the events that take place within these universes can all be reconciled. In other words, there are few overt contradictions. What connects the many universes in the minds of the fans are the database elements that are able to flow from medium to medium and from country to country. The remainder of this chapter will trace how these three different universes intersect with one another and different media such as film, television, video games, DVDs, and novels. It will also examine how these universes have traveled from Japan to the United States as a way of illustrating the transnational flow of media products.

The original *Ghost in the Shell* manga, which began its magazine serialization in the 1989 and continued through the end of 1990, contains seven chapters that for the most part tell an overarching narrative, although some chapters do tell individual stories. The stories in *Ghost in the Shell 1.5: Human-Error Processor* were created and serialized right after the original *Ghost in the Shell* manga, although they were not collected into *tankoubon* (graphic novel) format until much later. The graphic novel contains four

stories in seven chapters.<sup>6</sup> Although not a part of the original *Ghost in the Shell* manga, the first two stories predate the first film. This is important to note, since elements from both *Ghost in the Shell* and *Ghost in the Shell 1.5* were incorporated into the first anime feature. (Interestingly, none of the screen adaptations have incorporated any of the narrative elements from the *Ghost in the Shell 2* manga, although some of the visual style is reflected in the *Stand Alone Complex* television series.) Some elements of *Ghost in the Shell 1.5* were later incorporated into the *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* series directed by Kamiyama Kenji. For example, the Section 9 operative Azuma, who has a large role throughout *Ghost in the Shell 1.5*, beginning with “Fat Cat,” does not make an appearance until the *Stand Alone Complex: Solid State Society* OVA. Another important character is Proto, who debuts in the manga chapter “Mines of Mind,” but does not appear until *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 2nd Gig*. In addition to characters, parts of manga episodes were later incorporated into anime adaptations. The climax of “Lost Past” involves a tense standoff between Saito and another cyborg sniper who can link into satellite imagery. This general idea would later be adapted for use in a different context in the *Solid State Society* OVA. Of particular interest is a scene in the second part of the “Drive Slave” story (page 80 in the English paperback edition) in which the new form of Major Kusanagi tries to open the hatch on an attacking multilegged construction vehicle to get to the pilot. As she tries to open the hatch, her arms strain and her synthetic skin begins to tear apart, revealing the complicated mechanisms and circuitry underneath. This same scene happens in the first *Ghost in the Shell* film when Kusanagi tries to open the hatch on a multilegged tank that has been attacking her. In both versions the strain on

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<sup>6</sup> Three of the stories take up two chapters apiece, although when the manga was first released in comic book form, October 2006 through May 2007, each story took up two issues for a total of eight – “Fat Cat” (1991), “Drive Slave” (1992), “Mines of Mind” (1995), and “Lost Past” (1996)

her arms gets to be too much and they eventually are ripped from her body. This scene presents an interesting way of approaching the adaptation process as particularly striking actions or incidents are repurposed to fit alongside new scenes or scenes that have been adapted from other parts of the manga. This method of adaptation is an example of the database at work. After the scenes' initial creation by Shirow, they then become a part of a conceptual database that can be generally termed "Ghost in the Shell." Subsequent works within this universe can draw various elements from this database even if they did not originally work together. Take the example mentioned above of Kusanagi trying to open the construction machine/tank. In the "Drive Slave" manga story, the incidents depicted take place after the Major's merger with the Puppet Master at the end of the first *Ghost in the Shell* manga. (The readers can tell because the Major calls herself Chroma and controls what appears to be a fully robotic body.) In the movie, though, the Major's battle with the tank precedes her merger with the Puppet Master. As mentioned previously, it is not possible to completely reconcile the events of the manga with those of the films and television series, but the anime versions often pick and choose their constituent elements from an array of selections presented by the manga.

It is not uncommon for successful anime series to receive some sort of theatrical release. Sometimes these films are continuations or sequels of the television series, making prior knowledge of the franchise a necessity. Another approach is for such a film to edit and adapt the series, which generally entails cutting out certain scenes and/or characters in order to create a product with a feature-length running time. Such adaptations can be faithful to the original, or can diverge greatly. (One example of the latter approach is the film version of *Revolutionary Girl Utena* called *The Adolescence of*

*Utena* [1999, dir. Ikuhara Kunihiro] in which the series story is so redesigned and abstracted as to present a nearly incomprehensible narrative to anyone unfamiliar with the series.) An anime film can also be a mixture of the two approaches, such as in the *Neon Genesis Evangelion* films of the 1990s—the first film mostly reiterated the events of the television show while the second one expanded on the characters and events to cover new material that had not been previously seen.

In the case of *Ghost in the Shell*, once the *Stand Alone Complex* television show proved to be successful, it was adapted as a series of compilation films, one for each of the two seasons of the program. In the case of the second season, the film called *Individual Eleven* massaged the events from a 26-episode series into 2 hours and 40 minutes, which is less than 30% of the original series' running time. In order to accomplish this, some points are left out completely (such as the return of the friendly multilegged Tachikoma robot tanks, which had perished at the end of the first season), and some events don't take place exactly as they did in the series. For example, in episode five of the second season, there was an attempted assassination of the Prime Minister that was thwarted by the presence of Section 9, who had been preparing for such a possibility. In the film version, Section 9 had nothing to do with preventing her assassination, which was stopped by the prime minister's own bodyguards. This enabled a narrative compression—while the events in the television episode took up 22 minutes of screen time, they could be conveyed through dialogue and a few brief onscreen images in less than a minute. Other similar changes included the fact that protagonist Kusanagi and antagonist Kuze had known each other as children. In the series, this was revealed across many scenes, while in the film this was told to other characters through expository

dialogue. This removed a certain level of detail from the film, but it also made the final film much more focused. Said director Kamiyama, “One thing I learned from the editing process is that by subtracting parts, you can strengthen the story’s structure” (“2nd Gig,” 2007). Due to the editing that such cuts entailed, certain scenes had to be re-animated. In addition, other scenes from the television broadcast that did not turn out as they had planned, often due to time or budgetary constraints, were re-animated as well. The compilation film was also used to make changes to certain scenes to clarify elements the director says that he thought weren’t fully explained during the television series. Director Kamiyama Kenji relates a scene in which background information of a character is communicated to the audience:

Simply speaking, we were left with little of the episode exploring Gohda’s past.... Also, I think this is something that was hard to comprehend in the series. When Motoko... talks with Gohda’s virtual personality, it appears that Gohda’s ghost is sitting there and Motoko’s speaking to a ghost. That’s not what’s really happening there. In fact, Gohda’s diary is stored there and the conversation represents Motoko reading the diary. In today’s terms, you could think of it as a blog.... So it’s not as if Gohda is actually there. That was one area that I felt might not have been portrayed clearly, so by having a Gohda from the past talk about the days he was a failure I think it became clearer (“2nd Gig,” 2007).

However, this means that some events portrayed onscreen are not provided sufficient explanation to make sense to an audience not already familiar with the source material. For example, the character Proto suddenly shows up in the middle of the *Individual Eleven* film without any introduction or explanation. Therefore, another character’s later shock at the revelation that he is an android prototype rings a little hollow since the audience did not really see much of Proto onscreen and did not have a chance to begin to identify with him. To a certain degree the same is true of the sacrifice made by the sentient Tachikoma tanks at the end of the film. The full-length version omits many of

the Tachikomas' interactions with the rest of Section 9 that occur throughout the television series, again giving the audience less chance to identify with the characters.

In their book *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin write that "animated film cannibalizes and refashions everything it touches with a ferocity that is itself mediated and excused precisely because the genre is not 'serious' and is supposed to speak to children" (2000: 147). Although I would take issue with their premise that animation is always intended for an audience of children, I find this to be an interesting vantage point from which to approach animated adaptations. In many ways, this parallels my current argument regarding the database fantasyscape, in that contemporary media products like anime are created by incorporating many different inputs and selectively choosing or filtering them. In this regard, it's worth taking a closer look at the end of the second season of the *Ghost in the Shell* television series – the conversation Gouda has with another politician shortly before he is killed neatly parallels one that take place at the very beginning of Shirow's original *Ghost in the Shell* manga. In the manga, the conversation is in a different context, but in it the people engaged in the discussion talk about the same things – master states and slave states, and how a state may profess to subscribe to the tenets of capitalism, but in fact be an "ideal socialist state." For our purposes, the exact details of the conversation are not the most salient points, but rather that the dialogue was appropriated for the onscreen adaptation in very different circumstances.

In order to stop Gouda from leaving the country, armed agents of the government at Section 9 surround him. As in the referenced scene in the manga, Gouda's bodyguards sport machine guns that had been concealed as briefcases. The way in which the team

surrounds Gouda even alludes to a parenthetical comment in the original manga by the author. In the manga, when they try to arrest the defecting government official everyone in the surrounding circle is armed. In an aside written in the gutter between panels, Shirow writes, “The police have their target surrounded, but if they fire they’ll hit their comrades. I don’t recommend trying this, dear readers...” (2007: 10). However, in *2nd Gig*, the team members at one end of the corridor all have guns, while those on the other side block the way with (presumably) bulletproof shields, seemingly taking Shirow’s jocular advice into account in execution of their operation. In the end, to stop Gouda from leaving, Kusanagi has to kill him in a hail of bullets. When they then realize that Kuze’s life is in danger, she leaps from the window of the high-rise building, and the viewer is left watching her from above, falling until she is nearly out of view.

The end of the film adapts a scene that is lifted nearly directly from the beginning of the first *Ghost in the Shell* manga. It takes place during spring at a Japanese shrine, with cherry blossoms raining down upon the Section 9 crew. Since the Tachikomas had sacrificed themselves, they now have robot tanks called Fuchikomas. There are also lines of dialog that are similar to those in the original manga – including a statement by Kusanagi to her relaxing compatriots that she is calling off their “round-the-clock cherry blossom surveillance operation” (the English translation of the manga uses “round-the-clock cherry blossom viewing party” [Shirow 1995: 16]). However, the scene in the anime ends in a more melancholy manner than that in the manga. Shirow’s manga has Section 9 pulling out of the shrine grounds in their Fuchikoma tanks and the members doing a “brain dive” into Kusanagi’s mind to be briefed on the next mission. After the previous similarities with the manga, the changes in the anime version may be

disconcerting to some fans familiar with the original, but demonstrate a willingness to alter source material to fit the scripted circumstances. As they are preparing to leave, Batou asks Kusanagi, “What about the briefing? Wanna handle it with a brain dive?”, clearly alluding to the original. However, Kusanagi’s response is negative, suggesting that Batou handle the briefing and that he and the others go ahead without her. He looks at her disbelievingly (as if he too had read the manga and thought he knew what to expect), and then proceeds ahead while Kusanagi takes off on her own. The film ends on the scenes of her driving her Fuchikoma by herself. This remediation of a scene from the original manga is a gesture toward hyperdiegesis and a wink at fans who had read the original manga.

So far, we have discussed the process of adaptation, but have left the series’ transnational journeys outside of Japan’s borders relatively untouched. Now that we have discussed the various films and series in some depth, we can begin a brief discussion of how the franchise has crossed borders, and what it has carried with it. One of the more interesting phenomena is that there are many more *Ghost in the Shell* DVDs in Japan than were released in other countries, mostly consisting of supplementary material. For example, there is a series of *Official Logs* that consist of a book and DVD, only the first of which was released in English. It covers through episode nineteen of the first *Stand Alone Complex* season and consists of essays, sketches, and background interviews with cast and staff members. Although one cannot by definition create a cult product, it is possible to create a media franchise with cult tendencies by giving fans the tools they would need in order to conduct their fannish activities. The *Official Logs* are one set of such tools, as they offer a glimpse not only into the production of the series, but into the

characters and the world around them, providing details about such things as the functioning of advanced cyberbrains as if such technology really existed. As we can see from the fact that only the first log was released in an English-language version, even if a foreign market is able to support the commercial release of series like *Ghost in the Shell*, it may not be able to support a release of a cultish product like the *Official Logs*.

Even when a particular release makes its way overseas, it can never replicate the exact same viewing experience. DVD artwork and extras prime the audience for ways to experience a particular title, and even if the same feature content is present on a DVD, these variations are enough to alter the viewing experience (Brookey and Westerfelhaus 2002, Parker and Parker 2004). Multiple levels of adaptation and localization are required whenever a media property is brought into a new country, particularly if there are differences in language. For anime, at least a subtitle track needs to be added to a DVD release. Often an English dub is added, particularly if the series of film is going to be shown on television or have a theatrical run. (Subtitles are rare occurrences in American theaters and particularly on American television. *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, though, was released with subtitles only into US theaters, so this rule is not set in stone.)

Another key feature that can cause differences in viewing experiences is how the video releases themselves are contextualized. In this case, we will examine a DVD that was released in Japan as *Innocence: Animated Clips (Inosensu no joukei, or Scenes of Innocence)* in conjunction with the second theatrical *Ghost in the Shell* film directed by Oshii Mamoru. It was released in a North American region 1 version titled *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence - Music Video Anthology*. Both versions consist of footage from Oshii film set to music from the film. The footage is not of any of the dramatic events that take

place, but rather consists of sweeping tracking shots through some of the intricately-designed animated set pieces created for the film.

In the Japanese version, each of the seven main tracks has the option to display the lyrics of the song either in Japanese or English, as appropriate. (Some of the songs are sung in Japanese, some in English.) Sound options for the DVD are Dolby Digital 5.1 or DVX (DiMAGIC Virtualizer X, a way of simulating multi-channel sound on home audio systems with only two speakers). The DVD special features consist of a trailer for the *Innocence* film itself, as well as trailers for the DVDs of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (for more on this film, see Chapter 4), *Kirikou and the Sorceress* (1998, dir. Michel Ocelot, released in Japanese by Studio Ghibli as *Kiriku to Majo*), and *Hotta Yoshie: jidai to ningen*, which was a series of DVDs and CDs released by Studio Ghibli on the life and works of Japanese writer Hotta Yoshie (whose works Ghibli has considered adapting into animated form).

In the North American version, the main menu and chapter menus look exactly the same. To the right of the chapter selection the data option again takes the viewer to a list of song lyrics, this time all of them in English and occasionally footnoted (such as an explanation of the mythological Japanese creature the *nue*, which is mentioned in the first song). Sound options for this version are increased, allowing Dolby Digital 5.1, DMX, or DTS 5.1. Also, there are subtitle options as well, for English (translation), Japanese, karaoke (Japanese at the top of the screen, rendered into romanji at the bottom, and that changes from yellow to white as the song progresses), or off. When the song is in English, all language options display the English, but the karaoke version still changes from yellow to white along with the pace of the song. The biggest difference is in the

special screen. The screen in the US version comes with two “bonus videos” as well as trailers for *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, *Avenger* (2003, dir. Mashimo Koichi), and *Planetes* (2003-4, dir. Taniguchi Gorou). The differing trailers are indicative of the respective companies involved in the project on both sides of the pacific. The Japanese version centers on Studio Ghibli releases, while the US version focuses on titles released by Bandai Entertainment. Altogether, the US version of the disc seems to offer the better deal. It has subtitle and karaoke options, an additional sound format, and bonus features that are easier to find. The bonus videos accessed via the special menu in the US version are included in the Japanese version, but they are hidden tracks (the Japanese packaging uses the term *shiikuretto torakku*, or secret track, in Japanese katakana) that can only be accessed via pressing the right keys at the right times.

The difference in function between these two discs may be perceived through Charles Solomon’s editorial review of the US version on Amazon.com, in which he writes, “Anime music fans may enjoy these fragmented clips, but others will wonder why Oshii allowed director Mizuho Nishikubo to cut up his film haphazardly” (Solomon 2005). (The US release incorrectly lists Nishikubo Mizuho as director, when his actual title is *enshutsu*, or “technical director.” See Frazier 1996.) This is a useful question because it points to how media products can be misinterpreted when they move across borders in a fragmented manner. We can see this a little more clearly if we examine the release dates of the *Scenes of Innocence* DVD as well as the main *Innocence* film itself. The film was released in Japan in March 2004 and in the United States in September 2004. The *Scenes of Innocence* DVD also was released in Japan in March 2004 in advance of the main film’s theatrical run. From this we can glean the intended purpose of

the Japanese version – it was intended as a promotional piece in order to get more viewers interested in the film. When this is taken into consideration, much more about the DVD becomes clear, particularly why there is not more character animation in the scenes from the film that are depicted. Due to the lead time necessary for tasks like developing artwork, authoring the DVD scenes and menus, and pressing the disc itself, the scenes on the DVD necessarily must represent the film in an unfinished stage. Consequently, it will seem incomplete since the DVD is being presented as a teaser of sorts for the main film that is yet to come.

However, this presents something of a problem when a DVD like *Scenes of Innocence* becomes the *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence - Music Video Anthology* in the US. As mentioned previously, the theatrical version of *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* was released in the United States in September 2004. The first Region 1 DVD version of the film came out in December 2004. However, the music video DVD was not released in the United States until July 2005. Such a release schedule means that the DVD that was originally designed to serve as a preview for the film's theatrical release in the Japanese market needed a way to justify its existence in a US market in which the film had been released and had been available on DVD for over half a year. In other words, the Japanese *Scenes of Innocence* DVD was originally designed to preview the background and music to a prospective audience in order to prompt them to go see the film. However, by the time *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence - Music Video Anthology* was released in the US, the film had long been out of the theaters and was even available on DVD. If we take these release dates into account, we can begin to understand why the US version was marketed as a collection of music videos rather than as incomplete preview footage. The

fact that Bandai Entertainment thought that re-packaging and releasing the DVD as something other than a promotional video for the film attests to both the immense amount of detail that went into the creation of the settings for the film and the presumed cultic interest fans of the film would have in its supplementary materials. From this single example, we can see that even though *Inosensu no jokei* and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence - Music Video Anthology* are nearly identical in their main content, they end up serving very different functions due to the temporality of their respective releases.

Another type of adaptation that commonly occurs for anime properties is to create a manga out of the animation. This is sometimes called “ani-manga,” “cine-manga,” or “film comics.” One might think that the commonalities between manga and anime would lead to an ease of adaptation between the forms. As noted above, the process of turning manga into anime can be very involved, but the result is often very cinematic, which is not easily transformed back into manga. This might not be so noticeable in scenes involving characters conversing with one another, but it becomes much more apparent when any kind of movement is depicted. Anime and manga encode movement in very different ways. The images of anime are not meant to be seen out of their context of the surrounding images that, when put together, create the impression of movement. Manga, on the other hand, are intended to be viewed in this way, so a manga author will take this into account when setting up action scenes. This all leads to the point that taking still images from an anime and arranging them in a certain way on a page, adding dialogue bubbles, and superimposing onomatopoeic sound effects do not create the same kind of reading experience that a manga does.

What “film comics” do, though, is create a kind of refresher guide to the film. I make the connection this explicit because such comics do not substitute for the film, nor do I believe that they are intended to do so. As mentioned above, the movement depicted in such manga and the transitions between panels are sometimes hard to decipher because the images were not originally designed with such readings in mind. In the case of the English translation of the *Innocence* film comic, this is reinforced by some of the uses of language. Rather than translate the text from the Japanese version of the film comic, the English version says that the “[d]ialogue [is] based on the English subtitles translated by Linda Hoaglund with Judith Aley.” From this, one can infer that the reading experience is supposed to attempt to mirror the viewing experience by not only using the visuals but also by replicating the dialogue. Also of interest are a few pages of Japanese text that are left untranslated in the second volume of the comic (Horn 2005a: 96-7, 99-103). On these pages, the comic abandons the manga-esque formatting and instead presents the images in a straightforward format, with the upper two-thirds given for pictures arranged in regular patterns (say, six rectangular images arranged two across and three high) and the lower third for text. At the end of the second volume, it notes that the Japanese text on these pages are lyrics to a song called “Ballade of Puppets” written by the film’s composer Kawai Kenji, and it goes on to describe how Kawai’s music fits and accentuates director Oshii’s themes (Horn 2005a: 148-9). In this way, the film comic is tied even more strongly to the original film—the emphasis on Kawai’s music would seem to indicate that one needs to experience the music to gain the full meaning of the events depicted. The film comic essentially serves as a pointer to the original. Also worth noting is that the end of the last volume carefully reproduces the ending credits of the film in

Japanese and English for 20 pages, which is over 12% of the length of the volume (Horn 2005b: 128-146).

The practice of creating comics from the raw materials of animation is not confined to Japanese contents. For example, in the early 2000s the US-based publisher Tokyopop has sold at least half a million of its “cine-manga” based on the *SpongeBob Squarepants* property (“Scholastic Sells” 2004), and around half that number of *Totally Spies* cine-manga (“Totally Spies” 2005). The phenomenon is not limited to adaptations of animated films and television programs either, as Tokyopop has published such adaptations of shows like *Lizzie McGuire*, *High School Musical*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, and *The Simple Life*.

## **Conclusion**

As we can see from the above examples, the *Evangelion* and *Ghost in the Shell* franchises can point to a variety of products, many of which contain complementary as well as overlapping narratives. Some texts were created as adaptations of previous texts, some texts were created to expand on a particular narrative universe, while others were a combination of both types of impulses.

Thus, the anime cult text is similar to other types of cult texts in that it does participate in Hills’ “family resemblances.” However, in this chapter I have also tried to examine how the concept of the database fantasyscape comes into play when dealing with such texts. Anime texts are not self-contained and created *ex nihilo*, but draw upon a constitutive array of sources. However, unlike the hyperdiegetic cult texts in Hills’ formulations, the hyperdiegesis in many anime texts extends across multiple diegetic

worlds that share narrative points and characters, but often key differences as well. The database fantasyscape also has an influence on how cult texts officially travel across national, cultural, and linguistic barriers. For example, in the case of the *Ghost in the Shell Official Logs* mentioned above, which is itself a pointer to the database of the world of *Ghost in the Shell*, the North American market was not able to support that particular kind of metatext even though it was a fertile ground for many other *Ghost in the Shell* releases. Even if there is a small, committed audience for the product, the cost of a company licensing and releasing the product may not be enough to justify a commercial release. The fantasy of certain fans and the reality of the costs entailed in creating, manufacturing, and distributing a product collide when the fanbase is not large enough to support licensing and translating in another language. As we have seen previously, though, the reality of the contemporary fantasyscape is that commercial unavailability in a target language is not a hindrance to consuming and enjoying the media products fans desire.

## **Chapter Five – Convergent Anime Spaces**

In previous chapters, we have examined how the concept of the database fantasyscape has impacted and influenced how anime texts are created as well as how they travel globally. It is important, though, that we keep in mind that media like anime are not just some amorphous things external to people's daily lives, but in fact are lived and experienced. I would argue that anime is not just animation from Japan, but can also be used to describe a way of perceiving information and the world around us. In addition to helping to structure the composition and reception of media like anime, the database fantasyscape works to structure our interactions with other people and physical spaces.

In this final chapter, I will attempt to bridge the gap between “media” and “reality” by drawing out elements from Japanese anime and illustrating how they have been referenced and incorporated in live spaces. I have previously been using Appadurai's (1996) globalizing “scapes” concept in a largely metaphorical fashion. In this chapter, I aim to describe how the concept of the fantasyscape as conceptualized by Napier (2007) might be enacted in physical spaces. In doing so, I am attempting to concretize how anime may be perceived and embodied. There will be two main loci for my analysis – the anime convention (and performances enacted therein) and anime-related spaces within the country of Japan, particularly the city of Tokyo. In the first locus, I will be discussing how fan space at an anime convention is organized and how the participants at such an event perform their idea of anime. In the second locus, I will be concentrating on representations of actual physical spaces in anime as well as two live-action documentaries that approach the city of Tokyo from an anime-centric point of view. In this way, I aim to examine how Japan has been conceptualized as an anime (or

anime-ic) space and how these concepts contribute to understandings of the connections between Japan and anime in a global context. This takes place through how people reference the database of anime character traits and selectively embody them through a complicated system of ritual and performance, as well as anime serving as a kind of methodology for interpreting and rewriting the contemporary cityscape.

### **Performing Media Fandom – Media and Place at an Anime Con**

Through contemporary analyses of media fans and fan practices it has become readily apparent that one cannot generalize about fans as being merely passive consumers of mass-produced information (Jenkins 1992; Hills 2002). Many fans not only watch their favorite television shows (or read their favorite novels or watch their favorite films) but actively engage with the texts, incorporating the meanings and messages of the shows into their daily lives and then performing their fandom to others, fans and non-fans alike. In this way, such performances allow individual fans to reconstruct themselves through their use of media, sometimes pushing against commonly held notions of how one ought to construct a “self.” As Deborah Kapchan writes, “Performance genres are intertextual fields where the politics of identity are negotiated” (Kapchan 1995). Thus, through their performances fans use media products to actively construct their identities.

For this analysis, I have chosen a specific fan community – fans of manga and anime – in order to illustrate the utility of examining fandom as an act of performance. Specifically, I investigate these performances within the framing device of the organized convention, or “con.” In her introduction to the book *Theorizing Fandom*, Cheryl Harris gives a list of a handful of fan terms including “cons,” which she defines as “Fan

conventions, often hotel-weekend affairs involving parties, panels, guest speakers, and appearances by celebrities” (Harris 1998: 8). As is evident from the description, a con is a multifaceted environment with many separate events going on at the same time under the con’s general aegis. These cons can be quite large as well – in 2004, Anime Expo and Otakon, the two largest anime cons in the United States, had official attendance figures of approximately 25,000 and 21,000 people respectively (“Otakon 2004 Statistics” 2004). This is a significant increase from anime cons that took place less than ten years ago; for example, the attendance at the 1998 Anime Expo was 4,745 people (Patten 2004: 123), meaning that attendance at that particular convention has increased fivefold in six years. These figures show a dramatic and marked interest in anime and anime conventions since the mid-1990s.

It may seem at first that studies of an anime fan group would be analogous to studies done on other fans and television watchers. While there are some similarities, there are also some crucial differences. This is because the term “anime” refers to animation originating in Japan without regard to transmission format or generic content. In terms of format, anime can refer to movies released in theaters, OVAs (Original Video Animation, or animated programs released straight to video), and television shows, while the content can range from science fiction to romantic comedies and from sexually explicit adult fare to children’s entertainment. Although works approaching media consumption from the viewpoint of form (Morley 1992) or genre (Mary Ellen Brown 1994, Brunsdon 2000) are certainly useful to contextualize an analysis of anime, as mentioned previously, anime is not a genre, although it can sometimes be discursively constructed as one. Similarly, anime can refer to animation that is originally seen in

theaters, on television, on the internet, or direct to video (although most anime makes its way to a home video format at some point even if that was not its original form).

Therefore, the consumption of Japanese animation in the United States is different enough that it warrants its own unique analyses.

In spite of the growing body of work that investigates anime fandom (including Newitz 1994, Pointon 1997, Norris 2000, Allison 2009), surprisingly little work has been done on how fans interact and perform their fandom at conventions. There have been a number of studies on the interaction of fans online (MacDonald 1998, Baym 1999, Bury 2005) and fan behavior at conventions is sometimes mentioned as a part of a larger study of the fan community (Gillilan 1998). Sometimes the con is a site for collecting demographic data on fans (Berger 1977) or for investigating fans' belief systems (Jindra 1994). What little has been written about fan interactions at conventions provides useful background information for an analysis of anime fans. Camille Bacon-Smith, in her book *Enterprising Women* (1992), briefly sketches out the science fiction convention as a place at which fans can gather to meet other fans, but her emphasis is on fandom in general and not on the con. However, her definition of the con is a useful one that deserves some attention. As Bacon-Smith says, "Conventions spatially and temporally organize the interaction between the community and potential new members, and serve as formal meeting places for the various smaller groups of fans who follow a convention circuit" (Bacon-Smith 1992: 9). According to this definition, the con is a gathering site of a kind of community that distinguishes between existing members and those who might want to become members. In very broad terms, then, there are two different types of audiences to which one can perform at a con – those inside the subculture and those outside the

subculture. (Of course, there is more of a continuum of subcultural knowledge than a strict inside/outside binary.) Bacon-Smith's definition of a fan convention also points to the interconnected nature of the various conventions that take place across the country and situates the con as a seasonal occurrence.

The formation of anime fan groups has much in common with the concept of subcultures or taste cultures. Like the other groups Dick Hebdige examines in his landmark treatise on subcultures, the behavior and dress of anime fans "take on a symbolic dimension, becoming a form of stigmata, tokens of a self-imposed exile" (Hebdige 1979: 2). Similar to Sarah Thornton's analysis of rave and club culture in the UK, anime fans "see themselves as outside and in opposition to the 'mainstream.'" (1995: 99). For anime fans, this "mainstream" is often Hollywood films and Disney animation. (See Napier 2000: 249-253 and Allison 2009: 138-9 for specific fan quotations and reactions.) This is most evident in the costumes some fans wear to cons, and will be addressed in further detail below. Many anime fans would argue that their actions do have some kind of "subversive value" (Hebdige 1979: 3) even if it is only within the world of popular entertainment. For example, Brent Allison concludes that "the participants [in anime fandom] have been building a system of meaning outside of or in opposition to a perceived (if not actual) U.S. mainstream middle-class culture" in terms of national, cultural, and sexual identity, while at the same time he acknowledges that "the participants are also *reproducing* the rituals and underlying assumptions of the middle class worldview in *anime* fandom" (Allison 2009: 144-5). This echoes the results of research done by Craig Norris (2000) on Australian anime fandom, which is comparable in many ways to American fandom in that it can act as "an empowering

tool...by transgressing and challenging mainstream popular culture and dominant available images of Australian masculinity” (2000: 218-9). Members of both US and Australian fan groups state that their love of anime is a form of resistance against the insidious spread of a vapid American popular culture with an increasingly global reach. Of course, such perceptions gloss over the fact that anime itself is a part of US popular culture, and has been since the early 1960s. Thus it is also useful to look at anime not only as a subculture, subverting more “mainstream” popular culture, but as a separate taste culture within popular culture. Drawing on some of Bourdieu’s (1984) ideas of taste, Herbert J. Gans discusses this notion of popular culture as an interrelated set of taste cultures, although he does note that “taste cultures are actually subcultures” (Gans 1999: 175). Each taste culture is based on “shared or common aesthetic values and standards of tastes” (Gans 1999: 6) which lead to the formation of taste publics, consisting of those “who make similar choices among and within taste cultures” (Gans 1999: 7). The coming together of audiences in this manner has much in common with Michael Warner’s idea of a public “that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation” (Warner 2002: 66). Thus the anime con is a gathering of an already-constituted public that shares an affinity for or curiosity about the same general types of Japanese popular culture.

In order to investigate the anime con as a site of performance, I will be drawing on Beverly Stoeltje’s writings on the functions and structures of festival (1987, 1992). Although the anime con is very different from more traditional ideas of the festival, it serves many of the same purposes for the anime/manga fan community. I will also incorporate Victor Turner’s concept of the liminoid, which seem particularly applicable

to the idea of the con. The liminoid is a more quotidian version of the liminal, which is an in-between time in many cultures that marks specific rites of passage during which certain social conventions may be suspended. Holy pilgrimages and marriage ceremonies may be liminal, while a rave may be liminoid. Of particular interest is Turner's point that the liminoid is "like a commodity—indeed, often *is* a commodity, which one selects and pays for" (1982: 55); this is indicative of that fact that no matter how subcultural anime fandom may seem to its participants, cons and fandom are still well entrenched within prevailing cultural and socioeconomic systems.

Throughout this chapter, I use the term "performance" as Richard Bauman has described it – a term that "usually suggests an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience" (1992: 41). In particular, the anime con seems to meet Bauman's criteria of a cultural performance – it is scheduled (sometimes over a year in advance), temporally bounded (the con has a designated starting and ending time), programmed (often to greater or lesser degrees of efficiency depending on the organizational skills of the people running it) and are coordinated and heightened public occasions (Bauman 1992: 46).

Additionally, I am drawing on the ideas of enactment put forth by Roger D. Abrahams.

This term casts a somewhat wider net than does performance, encompassing "any cultural event in which community members come together to participate, employ the deepest and most complex multivocal and polyvalent signs and symbols of their repertoire of expression thus entering into a potentially significant experience"

(Abrahams 1977: 80). Although I mainly examine issues related to performance, it should

be understood that I am looking at specific instances of performativity that are taking place within the overall field of enactment that constitutes the convention.

In examining the anime con, I hope to cast some light on some seldom-analyzed aspects of contemporary social relations. Although anime fandom may be seen by some as a fringe or subcultural phenomenon, I believe that an analysis of anime fans presents a case study of how many interact with and incorporate media like film and television into their daily lives. Media provides the grist for the mills of our identities, and through examining how the attributes of some of those identities are performed at an anime con, perhaps we can come closer to understanding our intimate relationships with modern media.

### **Anime Fandom in the US**

The origins of organized anime fandom in the United States can be traced to the mid-1970s, although public exhibition of Japanese animation in the theatres and on television began over a decade earlier. At first, anime fandom was attached to general science fiction fandom. In the 1970s some anime fans at science fiction cons would bring their own VCRs and hold screenings of tapes, which were often recorded directly from Japanese television or from Japanese-language television stations in the US. It is interesting to note that the exhibition of anime in this context had to be performed in order to make it intelligible to the audience because the consumer technologies available did not yet allow for amateur subtitling. Generally speaking, fans at conventions in the 1970s would cluster around a television attached to a video cassette recorder (a new technological development at the time) and rely on someone in the room who had

knowledge of the Japanese language. This person would, as the show progressed, loosely translate dialogue, point out specific cultural elements that might be lost on an American audience, and generally make sure that the fans could follow the progress of the story (Patten 2004). The cultural gap that necessitated that someone actively perform anime to an audience presents a curious parallel with the development of the film industry in Japan, which developed the role of the *benshi*, a live lecturer whose job it was to “introduc[e] the film by telling you what you were going to see and then, as the film progressed, telling you what you were seeing” (Anderson and Richie 1982: 23). In making this comparison I am not trying to posit a necessary cultural link between Japanese film exhibition in the early 1900s and anime in the 1970s, but rather trying to illustrate how performance has been used to “fill in the gaps” of understanding in media products. These performed explanations of anime were essential not only to the understanding of the shows, but to developing the fans’ sense of community. Through this active performance the fans became more than passive watchers of a videotaped television program; they were more deeply involved in the co-production of a shared understanding. Eventually these small screenings of anime were integrated as a sanctioned part of the science fiction con and “had become so popular that convention organizers were providing function rooms and video equipment and including them in the official programme” (Patten 2004: 60).

It makes sense, then, that entire conventions devoted to Japanese animation did not develop until the early 1990s. Before this time, the logistics of getting enough available material to show and gathering enough interested people would have been difficult. The first convention devoted solely to anime was held in 1991 (called,

appropriately enough, AnimeCon '91), and in 1992 Anime Expo, held in Southern California, became the first annually recurring anime convention. It was around this time that American companies began to release some of the first commercially available tapes of anime to the home video market. Advances in home computer technology also allowed for there to be fansubs of films and television programs that had recently aired on television in Japan. But another reason for this gap between anime fandom's origins in the 1970s and the first anime cons in the 1990s was the necessity of performance. Performing what was going on in an anime episode would have made sense to a small hotel room full of like-minded fans, but would have been much harder on a larger scale. It was not until commercial releases and subtitling came along to replace the human performances many fans required in order to understand the shows that the anime con was feasible.

Anime conventions are often held over the course of three days, beginning on a Friday and ending on a Sunday. Conventions can be held anywhere that enough fans decide to have them, but for logistical reasons they are usually hosted at a hotel with ballrooms and exhibition space. Some larger cons, like Anime Expo in Anaheim, California and Otakon in Baltimore, Maryland, have had to move from hotels to city convention centers in order to accommodate the increasing number of people who wanted to attend. Thus, geographically speaking, many cons tend to gravitate toward large cities. Smaller events do happen throughout the country, and although such events may take place at locations like libraries and museums, proper cons are generally assumed to be recurrent happenings and take place once a year. This gives a structure to the flow of time for the anime fan community and creates a feeling of seasonality. In fact, there is

generally said within the community to be a convention season that lasts from around May to September, spanning the summer months. This does not mean that cons and other related events cannot take place outside of this time period, but the “season” is when most of the larger conventions take place. This seasonality of anime cons can be seen as a reflection of the structure of work and school within society at large – the summer months are a time when students are generally out of school and vacation time is easier to arrange through many employers. In this way, the anime community structures its gatherings around its members' larger social commitments.

Like the festival, the anime con can be very structured. There are usually opening and closing ceremonies, presided over by the convention organizers and attended symbolically by many of the more well-known invited guests. There are contests in a number of forms, as well as dancing and music. Often there is a ceremonial banquet that requires the purchase of an additional ticket – as the invited guests are usually present at the banquet, this gives the fans the opportunity to interact with the guests (often voice actors, artists, and other industry professionals) on a more intimate level. Even though there are these general elements to a con and many cons follow a more-or-less archetypal form, the attendees often do not know what schedule of events will be before they arrive at the hotel. At one con I attended in 2004 this caused great confusion and consternation on the first day because copies of the schedule had not yet been photocopied and made available for distribution. This caused people to crowd around the main information table, looking at the sole copy of the schedule of events and making notes on whatever paper they had available. It can be seen from this incident that even though there is a general structure to the con event as a whole, the order and location of the many panels,

presentations, showings, and other events is not intuitive for those attending but rather requires a guide.

The con provides a forum for many different types of formal and informal performances. Some performances may be onstage in front of hundreds of people competing for a prize for best costume. Other performances may be on a panel of two other people in a sparsely-attended conference room. Yet other types of performances may be due to a subtle shift in genre, such as a particularly skilled video game player who begins attracting a crowd and starts showing off for his or her newly-found audience. Some performances may be spontaneous, such as someone in costume walking through the halls of the hotel suddenly getting into character and striking a pose. Yet others may be unsanctioned and well-practiced, such as a group of musicians who gather in the hotel lobby and begin playing their own arrangements of popular video game music. The structure of the anime con also allows for other types of ceremonial performances to be performed within its confines as well – probably the most notable example of this is a wedding that was performed at Anime Central in Chicago in 2001.

One of the most striking visual elements at an anime con is the large number of people sporting all manner of outrageous dress. This is *cosplay*, a Japanese term that conjoins the English words “costume” and “play,” meaning the act of dressing up as one’s favorite fictional characters. (At US science fiction conventions this has customarily been known as “masquerade.”) We often understand and interact with each other through the codes of popular culture, and cosplay is just one example of this. In this way, the con provides a space for self-expression and identity creation through another type of performance.

Like the early screenings of anime, cosplay in the US can be traced to anime fandom's roots in US science fiction conventions. Although science fiction conventions had been holding masquerades for many years, the foundation of anime fan clubs in the late 1970s brought an increased awareness of anime to science fiction fans. Writes anime historian Fred Patten, "In 1979, anime fans began entering the SF [science fiction] and comics conventions' masquerades in anime-character costumes, often winning prizes" (Patten 2004: 60). Although cosplay in the US seems to have sprung out of American-rooted masquerade, it is important to take a look at the phenomenon's Japanese roots. Cosplay in Japan has long been associated with Comic Market, or Comiket, now held every summer and winter at a convention hall called Tokyo Big Sight. First held in 1975, Comiket is, as the name suggests, not a convention but rather a place where manga are bought and sold. There are numerous small groups of amateur publishers, or circles, in the anime/manga fan community in Japan, and it is at Comiket where many of them show off their wares. The Comiket events are much larger than any US anime con, though, with attendance at Comiket 78 in 2010 reaching 560,000 people ("Comic Market Matches Attendance Record Set Last Summer" 2010)<sup>7</sup>. This is very different from the idea of the con in the US because there is much less emphasis on "seeing" and "doing" (and performing) within Comiket proper. However, outside of the convention hall there may be many people performing cosplay, the most skilled of which are often surrounded by throngs of photographers. The ideas of performance inherent in Japanese cosplay seem to be different from those of masquerade – based on what I have seen of both, it seem that while in masquerade the idea generally seems to be the creation of a costume as

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<sup>7</sup> However, this number can be a little misleading. Since Comiket is free and requires no ticketing, there is no way to be sure that some attendees were not counted multiple times.

an expression of one's affinity with a certain character or to show off one's fan-ness to others at a convention, in Japanese cosplay the idea is to perform for the camera in a very specific and sanctioned space. Of course, the performances do not fall neatly into these two categories, but thinking about them in these terms is useful for our current purposes. Cosplay at cons in the US bridges the gap between the expression-oriented behavior of masquerade and the to-be-looked-at-ness of Japanese cosplay. In this way, anime fans are able to select the particular characters they wish to represent based on either how they see themselves or the particular role they choose to represent to the rest of the world. It is another example of the database fantasyscape in action.

The idea of embodiment, though, brings up the potentially problematic notion of racial depictions in anime and manga. Like Michael Taussig in his writing on the carved wooden figurines of the Cunas, we may be inclined to ask why anime/manga characters, with their big eyes and racially unmarked features, resemble "European types" or the "Colonial Other" (Taussig 1993: 7). Some Japanese critics assert that characters in anime and manga look Caucasian and posit a Japanese inferiority complex because of this representation. Critic Sato Kenji even goes so far as to call representations in anime/manga "ethnic bleaching" and says that moviegoers' "flight to anime is an inevitable result of the ethnic self-denial that has suffused Japanese society ever since the Meiji era [1868-1912], and especially since the end of World War II" (Sato 1999: 24). In such a light, cosplay by non-Japanese American fans may seem somewhat problematic from a viewpoint of racial representation. However, connections between race and anime/manga drawn by critics like Sato assume a correlation where none necessarily exists. Anthropologist and manga scholar Matt Thorn explains that the reason why some

people say that manga and anime characters are Caucasian is that the characters are not generally racially marked. Thorn writes that "...Americans and others raised in European-dominated societies, regardless of their background, will see a circle with two dots for eyes and a line for a mouth, free of racial signifiers, as 'white,'" while on the other hand, "the Japanese are not Other within their own borders, and therefore drawn (or painted or sculpted) representations of, by and for Japanese do not, as a rule, include stereotyped racial markers. A circle with two dots for eyes and a line for a mouth is, by default, Japanese" (Thorn 2004). According to Thorn's reasoning, Japanese creators of anime and manga are not trying to say anything at all about race, but are rather trying to depict characters in a graphically simple style. Indeed, one might say that the designs of many anime/manga characters, which are often relatively abstract, may be part of why the art form has done so well in the United States. The graphic simplicity of anime/manga allows for the masking effect, which is the use of visually simple characters that interact with detailed backgrounds, a practice that, according to comics scholar Scott McCloud, "allows readers to mask [insert] themselves in a character and safely enter a sensually stimulating world" (McCloud 1993: 43). In the case of cosplay, the fan is taking the masking process one step further and attempting to physically become a character to a greater or lesser degree. It is out of a fantasy to enter the "sensually stimulating world" of an anime that a fan might desire to participate in cosplay, the act of which makes a character that had previously only existed on the page or screen a living, breathing person.

Many of the costumes employed by cosplayers are meant to be recognized by fellow fans at a convention. In this way, clothing at a con highlights the way in which our

sartorial decisions are coded in everyday life. According to Werner Enninger, “Like language, the signal system *clothing* is part of the acquired knowledge shared by members of social units” (Enninger 1992: 219). Although someone from outside the anime fan community may see a group of people decked out in outrageous garb, the outfits of the cosplayers have specific meanings to those within the anime fan community. Thus, part of the act of cosplay is the public display and performance of subcultural knowledge. However, not all attendees at an anime convention choose to participate in cosplay. Unlike the venues discussed in Thornton’s *Club Cultures*, there is not a specific sartorial code one must adhere to in order to gain admittance to an anime convention. However, those who are able to create the best looking costumes are often the people with the time, money, and skills to do so suggesting that even in this case “clothes frequently act as metonyms for larger social strata” (Thornton 1995: 114).

Cosplay can shape the behaviors of participants outside of the space of the convention as well as within it. Even though individual cons are weekend events, as mentioned above many of the cons fit into a convention season. Cons throughout the year will often draw many of the same attendees, depending on the interest, free time, and economic situation of the individual fan. For some people, cons and anime structure social life outside of the convention itself. One interesting article on the website Nerve.com, an online magazine about sex that describes itself as “a fearless, intelligent forum for both genders,” was titled “Sex Advice from... Role-Players.” In the article, the author presents the answers of four different cosplayers responding to sex and relationship questions, demonstrating how one’s convention life can spill over into “real” life. For example, one young woman said, “I don’t date people who aren’t cosplayers. I’m

enough into cosplay that it would just be too complicated to explain to someone why I need to work every night for eight hours and not sleep for a month before a convention” (Constantine 2004). She also says that the best way to begin a relationship with someone is to “Be in costume. That's really the in. Cosplay is predominantly female, which is interesting because a lot of the girls are single. Cosplayers are very trusting around each other... If you're a guy cosplayer, you're going to see every girl in your social group naked at some point. There's a lot of costume changes” (Constantine 2004). This sentiment is echoed by a young man, who says that cosplay is “the big icebreaker. A lot of videogame and anime characters have relationships with each other” (Constantine 2004). In other words, if two people meet and they are dressed as fictional characters who have a relationship within the diegesis of a fictional story, a real relationship might develop between those two people. This is another example of the mimetic impulse in cosplay; not only do some cosplayers try to perform as their favorite characters, they also incorporate and replicate the relationships of the characters into their own lives.

Although they have long been a present in the United States to a greater or lesser degree, anime and manga have been rapidly making inroads into general American popular culture. For this reason alone, it is important to try to understand what happens at anime conventions. Shared popular culture can be a powerful social lubricant, allowing people to make friends and develop relationships around common interests. Anime cons are just one aspect of this. Although most people will probably never attend such a con, and even fewer will try to dress as a favorite character, this phenomenon is merely an amplified version of how we connect with each other every day (Goffman 1959).

Thus, the database fantasyscape also has a strong impact on how human relationships are shaped and formed. Due to the proliferation of contemporary media and the easy availability of information online, it has become much easier in recent years to become more aware of the choices one could have of media to consume – in other words, the database of choice is in place and has expanded along with information technology. This has also prompted people’s fantasies of where they might like to go and even who they might like to be. In the next section, I will be moving from a discussion of the temporary performance spaces of the anime convention to an analysis of the relation between the database fantasyscape and physical locations in Japan.

### **Tokyo as Anime-ic City**

In 2004, Patrick Macias, an American commentator on Japanese popular culture, published a book called *Cruising the Anime City: An Otaku Guide to Neo Tokyo*. In it, he takes the reader on a tour of the highlights of the varieties of anime, manga, toys, games, and music that can be found in Japan’s capital city. In the book’s introduction, Macias asserts that although the anime industry might be receding from its growth in the 1990s, at the time of the book’s publication the influence of associated otaku (or geek) culture was in fact growing. He writes, “The more you look around in Japan, the more anime influence you are likely to see. That’s because anime is literally everywhere and has transformed Tokyo into an Anime City. And daily life there is stranger, more exciting, and more vital than any anime I’ve ever seen” (2004: 11). Of course, such assertions must be taken with a grain of salt, as Macias is attempting to provide enticing copy for the reader to purchase a copy of his book. On another level, though, Macias is indicating

that media products like anime have seeped from the screens and into our lives and the geographies around us. In Macias's view, the prevalence of anime, manga, and related popular culture has somehow changed the nature of Tokyo itself into an anime city. It is this slippage from the screen to perceptions of the world around us that I would like to explore in this part of the chapter.

There is a particular interest in place within anime circles in both Japan and abroad. For foreign fans of anime, (as well as for other types of media fans), the place where the objects of their affection are produced serves as a key attraction. In fact, an article on the Japan National Tourism Organization in English discusses how one might take an "'otaku' tour" as well as immerse "yourself in Japanese anime & comics" (JNTO 2010). There are tours, such as those conducted by the company Pop Japan Travel, that offer to take fans around Japan at various times to experience elements that may be of interest to anime fans. Many are themed to specific types of fans, such as their gothic lolita<sup>8</sup> fashion tour and their *fujoshi*<sup>9</sup> tour (see Pop Japan Travel 2010a and 2010b). Additionally, in December 2009 the City of Tokyo announced that they would be spending half a million dollars on a ten-minute animated short in eight languages to promote the city to potential tourists interested in anime and otaku culture ("Tokyo City" 2009). Even for Japanese fans of anime, place does not go unnoticed, and some fans focus on real-life places that have been incorporated into anime and how one could visit them. The book *Seichi juunrei: anime manga 12 kashou meguri (Pilgrimages to Sacred Places: Travels to 12 Anime and Manga Locations)* by Kakizaki Shundou (2005) is one

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<sup>8</sup> A style of extravagant dress whose "influences include Victorian children's wear, the French Rococo period, goth-inspired darkness and Japanese anime" (Jimenez 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Female fans of anime and manga that often feature homosexual male protagonists. This term can also apply to female anime and manga fans more generally.

such example. The term *seichi juunrei* translates into “pilgrimage” or “pilgrimage to a sacred place,” but has been adopted into general use by Japanese anime devotees to refer to visiting the places depicted in anime (Galbraith 2009: 198). Kakizaki’s book details places across Japan that have been depicted in twelve different anime or manga and exactly how one can get to them. Of course, since most fans cannot see these places in person, books like Kakizaki’s and websites devoted to similar topics<sup>10</sup> document such scenes to serve as a form of virtual pilgrimage.

In *Fan Cultures*, Hills advances the idea that fan geographies such as these extend the hyperdiegesis of a cult text since “the media cult cannot be entirely reduced to metaphors of textuality” (2002: 145). Cult texts exceed the confines of the page or screen and bring the physical world into their domains. In such spaces, Hills argues, “[r]eality and ‘fantasy’ cannot be fused, but nor are they conspicuously ‘confused’” (2002: 146). In other words, when fans go to specific places in Japan they have seen depicted in anime or manga, they are aware of the disconnect between the reality of the physical place, the drawn image that was seen, and their imagined images of what the place would be like. These are three separate things that cannot quite be reconciled with one another, but they are not wholly separate either. Although the relationship between the fan and the physical location is external to the cult text, the text still serves as a connecting conduit between the two, and as such we cannot ignore the role that physical locations play in fannish activities.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, see “Butai tanbou aakaibu” (“Setting Search Archive”) <http://legwork.g.hatena.ne.jp/> (accessed August 2, 2010); “Seichi junrei & tabi no hanashi” (“Talks on Sacred Pilgrimages and Travel”) [http://members.ytv.home.ne.jp/autumn\\_leaf/tabi-seiti.html](http://members.ytv.home.ne.jp/autumn_leaf/tabi-seiti.html) (accessed August 2, 2010); and “Seichi junrei no tabi: Suzumiya Haruhi no yuutsu” (“Travels of Sacred Pilgrimages: The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya”) [http://www.rinku.zaq.ne.jp/p\\_v/haruhi.html](http://www.rinku.zaq.ne.jp/p_v/haruhi.html) (accessed August 2, 2010)

Depictions of the interaction between anime and the city are particularly acute in many of the works of director Oshii Mamoru. Oshii is generally known outside of Japan as a director of animated feature films, although he is also a scriptwriter, novelist, essayist, comics writer, video game supervisor, and video installation artist. In 2003 Oshii was able to add documentary filmmaker to his list of accomplishments, as he worked on a pair of short documentaries focusing on the city of Tokyo: *Tokyo Scanner* (2003, *Tokyo sukyanaa*) and *Tokyo Vein* (2003, *Tokyo joumyaku*). These two films both inform and problematize Oshii's role as a director commonly perceived as an anime auteur—visually and thematically they fit very well into Oshii's body of work even though neither was directed by him. Through these films, we can see how Tokyo is an “Anime City” (to borrow Macias's term) not only because it is the locus of most anime production and contains so much to consume, but because of the decentered, capitalized perspectives one may bring to a depiction of the city.

The relationship between cinema and space is a complicated and long-lasting one. It is important to note that our concept of space is not something that necessarily exists intrinsically “out there” but, as Yingjin Zhang writes, referencing Henri Lefebvre, our perception has shifted “from space as a fixed entity to space as a ‘productive process’ that induces change and is subject to revision” (Zhang 2010: 2). It is critical to take space into account when discussing films because, as Mark Shiel notes, “cinema is primarily a spatial system and that, notwithstanding the traditional textual emphasis of much Film Studies, it is more a spatial system than a textual system” and this gives film “a special potential to illuminate the lived spaces of the city and urban societies” (Shiel 2001: 5-6).

Just as cosplay of a character and performance at an anime convention brings fans closer to an anime text, so do interactions with the places that are represented.

As Tom Conley writes in his book *Cartographic Cinema*, “[i]dentity can be defined in a narrow sense as the consciousness of belonging (or longing to belong) to a place and of being at a distance from it” (2007: 2). In other words, part of what makes us who we are is how we relate to both real and imagined physical spaces. Part of what film does for a viewer is to provide access to representations of these spaces. Another aspect of film and the city is the role that space plays in the lives of the people being depicted. For example, in his article “Stranger Than Tokyo: Space and Race in Postnational Japanese Cinema,” film critic Yomota Inuhiko discusses the role representations of Tokyo play in the films of three contemporary directors, including Oshii’s *Patlabor* (1989, *Kido keisatsu Patoreiba the movie*), *Patlabor 2* (1993, *Kido keisatsu Patoreiba 2 the movie*), and *Ghost in the Shell*. He finds that the films “provide a critical stance against the myth of a homogenous national identity” (2003: 76) and that they speak “not only to the variety of contemporary Japanese cinema, but also to the possibilities and limitations surrounding the issue of how Japanese film should face the Other” (2003: 89).

As previously discussed, anime has a strong connection to information and informational flows due to its production and to globalization processes as they materialize in the database fantasyscape. Through these relationships, the connection between anime and the places such animations depict bring these physical places into the circulation of information. This is a powerful assertion, and indicates the degree to which anime can give rise to the “anime-ic,” a term that can be used to describe the tendency toward anime or anime-like characteristics. My concept of the anime-ic derives strongly

from Thomas Looser's work, in which he writes of anime, "[T]he insistence on multiple layers, consisting of mixed styles and mixed media each with their own particular orientations, brought together on a single plane without any one point of origin that would fix the relations between them... this, I think, is a productive approach to *anime* and, more generally, to an understanding of the everyday in the latter part of the twentieth century" (Looser 2002: 310). In other words, an *anime-ic* space is a space containing multiple (not unified) points of view that lacks a fixed perspective. The term anime-ic can be used to describe off-screen spaces as well as onscreen ones, and does not necessarily dictate that such spaces be animated. In this way, anime not only becomes something to view onscreen, but a way of organizing and conceptualizing the world around us and the information it contains. Thinking of spaces as anime-ic is a potentially useful way to describe the diffusion of animated spaces away from the screen and into interactions with off-screen spaces. To describe a certain space as "*anime-ic*" is not necessarily to ascribe some inherent quality to the space as much as it is to describe a way of thinking about and experiencing that space. With these issues in mind, *Tokyo Scanner* and *Tokyo Vein* are anime-ic documentaries for two main reasons. The first is because the two films use specific textual elements that echo Oshii's previous animated, fictional works and have been promoted as "Oshii" films. The second reason is because of the two films' particular styles that display anime-ic characteristics independent of their textual connections. Each film takes a different anime-ic approach to depicting Tokyo. *Tokyo Scanner* takes a bird's-eye view of Tokyo using a high-definition video camera that allows it to rapidly transition between macro and micro views of the city. The goal in presenting the city in this manner is that "[b]y combining zooming in and out with [a] high-powered objective

[lens], the audience can immediately understand this huge urbanized city from the macro view while still sensing its intimacy from the close-ups” (*One Show Interactive* 2004: 84). The film puts the viewer in a cyborg-like viewing position through overlays of additional data and computer graphics on the images of the city that give the viewer additional information about what is onscreen. As Salvator-John A. Liotta writes of *Tokyo Scanner*, as the viewer traverses the route through Tokyo, “[t]he images of the city somehow change from figure to *data*, in an attempt to decipher the meaning of something we know to be more than mere images. They represent a possible ontology.... The metropolitan life presented in this documentary becomes fluctuating *data* that may be scanned: a kind of simulacrum of pixels” (Liotta 2007: 209). In this way, the city of Tokyo is rendered into information that becomes fodder for the database fantasyscape.

The film starts out in Tokyo Bay and traverses a counterclockwise arc through the city to Haneda Airport, at which point it begins traveling in a smaller, clockwise arc until the end at Roppongi Hills. *Tokyo Vein*, on the other hand, depicts a voyage down two of Tokyo’s smaller waterways. These urban rivers were once the lifeblood of culture and commerce in Tokyo, but in contemporary Tokyo they are seldom used for either purpose anymore. However, they are still prominent geographic features of the city, and have been the subject of increasing touristic interest (Hani 2007). In contrast to *Tokyo Scanner*, the cameras in *Tokyo Vein* change in neither direction nor zoom; instead, they remain fixed in position as the boat on which they are mounted glides down the rivers of central Tokyo. However, both documentaries represent an approach to the city of Tokyo that is represented in Mamoru Oshii’s *Patlabor 2*. As Inuhiko writes of the film, “Tokyo is a metropolis that appears on computer screens in a flood of signs and symbols, as well as a

city of abandoned canals and highways; this contrasting double image represents the city” (2003: 80). As we shall see, *Tokyo Scanner* and *Tokyo Vein* each present a side of this “double image.”

The approach taken by each documentary also provides an illuminating contrast between the Low City (or *shitamachi*) and High City (or *yamanote*) sections of Tokyo. According to Edward Seidensticker’s history of Tokyo (1984), these two divisions of the city have been in place since the Tokugawa shoguns made the city the de-facto capital of the country in during the 17th century. Although the boundaries between the two sections can be blurry depending on which sources one consults, generally speaking the *yamanote* refers to the hilly parts of the city to the west while the *shitamachi* refers to the lowlands to the east. There is a corresponding difference in culture between the two halves, with the *yamanote* having traditionally been mostly “a place of temples and shrines and aristocratic dwellings” and the *shitamachi* being “very much the plebian half of the city” (Seidensticker 1984: 8). With this customary division in mind, *Tokyo Scanner* seems very much the High City documentary, while *Tokyo Vein* is the Low City documentary. This contrast plays a key role in the films and animation of director Oshii Mamoru.

### **Tokyo in Oshii’s Films**

Throughout many of his films, Oshii Mamoru has shown a strong documentary impulse. Since 1987 and his film *Akai Megane (The Red Spectacles)*, Oshii has worked with concept photographer Higami Haruhiko, who has a background in documentary filmmaking. According to Higami, through conversations he had with Oshii on the *Akai Megane* shoot, the two came to realize they “share[d] the same perspectives on Tokyo”

(*Patlabor the Movie Archives* 2006: 125). Although *Akai Megane* was not an animated film, Oshii continued to work with Higami for nearly all of his projects since then, consequently bringing to the works a keen eye that sometimes bridges the line between animation and documentary styles.

Of particular interest to our cases of *Tokyo Scanner* and *Tokyo Vein* are Oshii's two *Patlabor* films, made in 1989 and 1993, respectively. These films place a heavy emphasis on the city of Tokyo, and the landscape of the city becomes a major concern. In the first *Patlabor* film, the police protagonists are trying to solve the mystery of a virus that is causing giant robots (called Labors) all over Tokyo to go berserk. In the process, detectives on the case investigate the background of the now-deceased head programmer of a new Labor operating system thought to be the cause of the malfunctions. The scenes of the detectives trying to track down the programmer's old haunts present seldom-seen views of the city, such as perspectives from along canals and of old buildings being torn down to make way for the shine of new construction. To a lesser extent, the second *Patlabor* film displays scenes of the city that the average Tokyoite may not have encountered or even thought about. Again Tokyo waterways are depicted, and although these are less emphasized than in the first film, a critical confrontational scene toward the end of the film is set there.

The scenes in the city in *Tokyo Scanner* do not map as easily to specific scenes in Oshii's animated films as easily as those of *Tokyo Vein*. However, *Tokyo Scanner*'s combination of informative computer graphics and documentary footage provides a perspective very much like that in one of his films. One example can be found in *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, which was released at roughly the same time as *Tokyo Scanner*.

An early scene of the protagonist Batou walking down an alleyway where some police officers had been previously slain is shown from his point of view. Since Batou is a cyborg, the world through his eyes is augmented in comparison to what a regular human being would see; as he walks down the alley, his attention alights upon various aspects of the scene, and each time additional information about what he is seeing is superimposed on the image so the viewer is granted the feeling of striding through a sea of information. Through the addition of wireframe animation that serves as narration about what the viewer is seeing, *Tokyo Scanner* tries to replicate this feeling of cyborg vision.

However, as mentioned previously Oshii Mamoru directed neither *Tokyo Scanner* nor *Tokyo Vein*. Rather, he was credited as *kanshuu* (supervising director) in both productions and his name gets top billing. Since Oshii is positioned as the main creative influence of both films, we can see that as viewers we are supposed to integrate them into his body of work, or at least watch them with such a background. It is relatively simple to see how *Tokyo Vein* can be easily integrated into the Oshii oeuvre, since its use of Tokyo waterways and a score by Oshii's musical collaborator Kawai Kenji presents a view of the city very much like that in one of Oshii's anime films. It should also be noted that *Tokyo Vein* was directed by Noda Makoto, who had previously written a book on Oshii and his films, so Noda more than likely had Oshii's themes and styles in mind as he was executing the film.

### **The Anime-ic Documentary**

As previously discussed in the introduction, the term "anime-ic" can be used to refer to the ways in which anime decodes and re-presents information to an accepting

audience. It also can refer to a way of organizing information and space based on database-like principles of flatness without a real center or periphery. In addition to the references to Oshii's works, *Tokyo Scanner* and *Tokyo Vein* also share anime-ic, though differing, approaches to their subject matter.

As mentioned previously, *Tokyo Scanner* traverses a large swath of the city, annotating relevant points of interest for the viewer and sometimes zooming in to provide more detail. This approach demonstrates the database nature of the anime-ic, and, as we traverse the city, all of the information with which the viewer is presented is in a way flattened. As the viewer is flown across the city, no particular location seems to be any more important than another. However, there are important exceptions to this generalization. One point in particular that stands out, though, occurs when, in the end, the helicopter lands on top of the Mori Building in the Roppongi section of Tokyo. The focus on this location as the origin of the view of Tokyo (the viewer never sees the helicopter take off) orients one to the city with the yamanote as the locus. This is a shift in perception of the makeup of Tokyo that has been occurring in the last century. As Seidensticker writes, since the Meiji Restoration in the late 19th century, “[t]he High City was accumulating the money, the power, and the imagination. Culture tends to go where money goes, and so the Low City was ceasing to be original in this important regard” (1984: 249). It is also worth noting that the *Tokyo Scanner* project was initially screened in a viewing room at the Mori Building in the Roppongi Hills development. This area in Tokyo's Western yamanote region was, according to Seidensticker, “the most blatantly electronic of the city's pleasure centers” (1984: 141). The Roppongi Hills development, which opened in 2004, was designed to be a forward-looking mixed use site that would

fit in with the area's reputation as an entertainment district but would also contain living spaces, offices, hotels, a garden, and art space. *Tokyo Scanner* highlights the frisson of looking at the rest of the city from a particularly privileged position and serves to work this pleasure of viewing into the physical city, creating a fantasyscape before one's eyes. It emphasizes the viewer and the act of looking while simultaneously flattening the scenes that are viewed.

Although it directly references scenes from earlier Oshii Mamoru films, at first *Tokyo Vein* might seem much less anime-ic than *Tokyo Scanner*, as it proceeds at a more languid pace and does not feature any of the additional computer graphics "scanning" the city as the camera passes by. The main factor that makes the *Tokyo Vein* documentary anime-ic is the ways in which one can view it on DVD. When it was presented originally, it was shown in a Roppongi Hills installation space with four main screens: the first three screens presented synched images of the canals to the front and both sides of the viewer as the boat navigated the Tokyo waterways, while the fourth screen told the viewer where he or she was in the journey. Of course, this viewing experience could not be duplicated in the DVD version; instead, the film makes strong use of the multiple angle capabilities of DVD players. The film is presented with five different angles – a separate one for each of the four original screens and a fifth view that takes them all in at once, albeit in a condensed and somewhat distorted view. This means that the documentary is endlessly customizable – through the act of switching between alternate angles, the viewer can allow his or her interest to wander, looking from side to side and occasionally checking the position on a map. Indeed, where the original experience would have given the viewer a single privileged position, the DVD release imposes no such unitary restrictions on the

viewer. The original surrounding experience has in a very real way become flattened for home viewing experience.

In addition to how the city is depicted, the subject matter in *Tokyo Vein* is of particular importance. Through the short film, Oshii and his collaborators endeavor to show the viewer a part of Tokyo that many natives may not see. The canals of Tokyo may once have provided a prime method of transportation within the city, but the advent of wheeled transportation around the city after the Meiji Restoration (1868) and the need for swift conveyance obviated much of the canals' use as a significant method of transporting people and goods (Seidensticker 1984). However, as can be inferred from the name, Oshii wants to show that this part of the city was once critical to how the living city of Tokyo had thrived. It is not just through this documentary that Oshii demonstrates this point of view. In 2008, Oshii appeared on the NHK television show *Kagai jugyō youkoso sempai* (*Extracurricular Lesson, Welcome Upperclassman*), in which people who have made names for themselves in the arts, sports, politics, etc. return to their former schools to talk to the current pupils there (NHK 2009). The title of Oshii's episode is "‘Mikata’ wo kaete taikutsu wo ketobase" or "Change your 'viewpoint' and reject boredom," in which he encourages the students to try to see the world (and later draw it) from unexpected perspectives in order to try to shake off the mundanity of daily life. One of his first excursions is to take the class on a boat tour of some of Tokyo's waterways. Oshii then takes them to the top of a high skyscraper to juxtapose the two views. Similarly, one gets the impression through viewing *Tokyo Scanner* and *Tokyo Vein* that the two films are meant to be viewed in conjunction with one another in order to try to get a more comprehensive panorama of the city.

Additionally, both films demonstrate a tendency toward the database that Azuma Hiroki has indicated. One of the reasons he concentrates on the database nature of otaku activities is because he sees a decline in emphasis on narrative and an increasing emphasis on character. Neither *Tokyo Scanner* nor *Tokyo Vein* try to impose a narrative on the events onscreen—they offer up the onscreen information seemingly without comment, although, of course, no film or documentary offers an unedited look at the world around us. Both films serve to “informatize” Tokyo, giving the viewer certain pieces of information as the films go along. In the case of *Tokyo Scanner*, this information often consists of key orienting landmarks or other notable points of interest. In *Tokyo Vein*, the main data points are the various bridges that arch over the waterways. The information is presented differently in the two films—it is superimposed on the viewer’s perception of the city (in *Tokyo Scanner*) and able to be selected from a special navigation angle (in *Tokyo Vein*). However, they both present a way of looking at the city that is reminiscent of Thomas Lamarre’s summary of Okada Toshio’s description of how anime fans view anime. According to Okada, fans pay “attention to what might be considered flaws, inconsistencies, or trivial details by other viewers....[T]hese apparently insignificant details became part of the viewing experience, making the experience of viewing akin to scanning for information, rather than reading a story” (2006: 366). It is by bringing these viewing practices to the fore as in *Tokyo Scanner* and *Tokyo Vein* that such documentaries become anime-ic and in turn can illustrate the city as such.

## Conclusion

It is worth noting that the documentaries *Tokyo Scanner* and *Tokyo Vein* were originally showcased as part of the opening of the Mori Building in Roppongi Hills in Tokyo. Indeed, in 2004, *Tokyo Scanner* won a bronze award in the promotional advertising category in a worldwide advertising and design competition. (The client was the Mori Building.) Footage from *Tokyo Scanner* was also incorporated into a promotional video that was used by the Japan Institute of Architects in 2005 to successfully convince the International Union of Architects to hold their congress in Tokyo in 2011 (“UIA 2011” 2005). This points to the influence that the anime-ic ways of seeing can have on the real world and how they can feed back upon themselves. Real-world architecture influences how space is portrayed in anime, which in turn serves as an influence for physical architecture. (This is not unlike the cycles of transnational cultural influences discussed previously in this dissertation.)

In this way, the flattening and anime-ization of physical spaces also points to a commercialization of them in which experiences and perspectives can be developed and purchased. With the development of GPS, motion sensing, and computer processing technology, a sensory experience like the one depicted in *Tokyo Scanner* may not be far off. A promotional campaign along similar lines was recently announced in conjunction with the anime *Denno Coil* in which consumers can use an application on their web-enabled iPhones to view special content at specific geographic locations (“*Denno Coil*” 2009; the anime series is about a group of Japanese school children who wear special glasses that allow them to see an online, networked world superimposed on top of their everyday world). By its very nature, such a promotion encourages an anime-ic view of

the world as it prompts people to perceive their environments through the filter of a digital camera that flattens the image and modifies the viewing experience. Of course, such a commodified experience is not accessible to all people equally. In the case of the *Dennou Coil* campaign, it is specific to people who have a certain kind of cellular phone running certain software. Even if the hardware and software were more generalized, though, there would still be costs associated with purchasing them that would necessarily exclude a certain portion of the population who could not afford such things.

Some might argue that their use as advertising means that these films are not “real” documentaries. Of course, this assumes that there is some sort of purity attainable outside of capitalist systems. The anime-ic way of looking at the world is inherently a capitalist one, for better or for worse. The “database fantasyscape” exists because there is value to be had in buying and selling fantasies, or parts of fantasies, transnationally and anime-ic spaces are just one way of looking at this commoditized world that we inhabit.

This chapter has attempted to tie together two disparate aspects of anime moving from a flattened, perspectiveless two-dimensional space into the world of daily interactions. Patrick Macias concludes the introduction of *Cruising the Anime City* with these words: “The odds are, we’ll all be living in an Anime City soon, be it Neo Tokyo or someplace else” (12). Although at face value this statement seems like mere wishful thinking for a city catering heavily to geek culture, it may have some inadvertent truth to it—our fantasyscapes are heavily impacting the ways in which we perceive the world around us. In Marc Driscoll’s summary of noted Japanese film scholar Imamura Taihei’s theories of Japanese documentary and animation, he writes that “Imamura’s central hypothesis is that, while documentation grounded in the camera as a sensory extension of

newly born cyborg humans could escape the fundamental workings of capitalism... animation is smothered in capitalism and its development is unthinkable outside the history of capitalist modes of production” (279-80). Just as animation depends on capitalism for its development, anime-ic perspectives on the world require a frame of mind that is receptive to capitalist impulses. The freedom of the de-centered anime space may appear to be liberating from hierarchies, but anime as we know it could not exist without the inequalities of capitalism; a beginning animator in Japan can earn less than \$12,000 a year (“Labor Group” 2009). It is the egalitarianism of free-flowing capital, which is not to be confused with a mistaken idea that such capital produces egalitarian results, which ensures anime’s continued survival.

## Chapter 6 – Conclusion

In 2011 theorist Azuma Hiroki stepped onto the other side of the production / criticism divide by creating an 11-episode television anime series called *Fractale* (*Furakutaru*). The series was originally broadcast from January 2011 to April 2011 on Fuji TV's noitaminA programming block. It was directed by Yutaka Yamamoto, who had previously worked as director on *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*. It's worth investigating *Fractale* in depth because it encompasses many of the themes discussed in earlier chapters, such as the database-driven nature of contemporary media properties as well as the difficulties involved when such properties travel outside of their original places of production.

The story takes place in a world of relative peace and tranquility, as there is little conflict and everyone has their survival needs met by the omnipresent "Fractale System." People aren't limited to the constraints of the physical world because they can go anywhere they wish by using their "doppels" (short for doppelgängers), which are customizable holographic projections. The main plot follows a young boy named Clain, who doesn't seem to fit into the world. He essentially lives by himself, although he is sometimes visited by the doppels of his parents, who live elsewhere (but not together). He is fascinated by antique (non-holographic) technologies like music players and cameras. One day he encounters a young woman named Phyrne; she is wearing the vestments of a priestess of the Fractale system and is fleeing from a group of people who are trying to capture her. Clain manages to save her and gives her shelter in his house. When he wakes up the next morning, Phyrne is gone, but she has left behind a mysterious locket. From the locket emerges the doppel of a young girl named Nessa who has the

unique ability to feel solid to those she wants to be able to touch her. Clain and Nessa set out to find Phyrne, and along the way encounter many different people, including the Lost Millennium, an organization of freedom fighters (or terrorists, depending on your perspective) who wish to live outside the Fractale system and are trying to destroy it because they feel that people have become too reliant on such an artificial, mechanistic system.

Through Clain's adventures, he discovers that the Fractale system needs to be restarted every thousand years in order to re-initialize its settings. To do this, however, a key is required. Phyrne herself is the biological key to the Fractale system, while Nessa's personality is a psychic component to the system. In fact, it is revealed that Phyrne and Nessa are components of the same person – Phyrne is a biological clone (of which there have been many) and Nessa is the digitized data of her younger personality. In the end, in spite of much conflict and bloodshed, the Fractale system is restarted, although the starting mechanism is destroyed in the process, meaning that, although the system will continue for many years, people will need to slowly wean themselves from a heavy reliance on such technologies.

Through this brief synopsis, we can begin to see how Azuma's critical eye has informed his narrative approach. Although the story itself is linear, the world of *Fractale* is not; as we can see with the emphasis placed on needing to restart the Fractale system, events occur in a cyclical nature. The key to maintaining these systems is a databasing of information, and even of people. Phyrne may be a central character, but there have been many with her physical form both before and after her creation. Her consciousness, in the form of Nessa, is necessarily made to be part of the database as well, and is separated

from her physical body. By creating the world of *Fractale*, Azuma seems to be admitting the inherent attractiveness of living in a database world and being able to pick and choose the elements we find the most attractive. However, much like the people under the Fractale system are yoked to the power structure of a hierarchical priesthood that maintains the system, so we too support and are connected to a complex system of global capitalism that manipulates our desires. Of course, the contradictions inherent in such a critique appearing in the form of anime are readily apparent. Like so many other media products, *Fractale* exists in other forms as well, including a manga series (published in Square Enix's online manga magazine *Gangan Online*) and a spin-off novel featuring different characters in the world, written by Azuma himself.

The experience of *Fractale* outside of Japan also highlights the complex negotiations involved when an anime product travels globally. It has now become common for many contemporary anime to receive an official English subtitled online "broadcast" within days, or sometimes even hours, of its original airing in Japan. This is often done through dedicated anime sites like Crunchyroll.com or Funimation.com, and is intended to thwart online piracy by providing foreign anime fans with legitimate ways of viewing new content. In the case of *Fractale*, the fact that it would be streaming on Funimation.com was announced the day before the streams went live ("Funimation to Simulcast *Fractale* Starting Tomorrow," 2011). However, less than a week later, and after only a single episode had been streamed, the Japanese copyright holders to *Fractale* mandated that streaming in North America stop due to piracy concerns. According to representatives of Funimation, the Japanese rights holders had told them they needed to remove "unauthorized videos of the anime on the Internet — including streaming sites,

file-sharing networks, and file servers — before its simulcast will be allowed to continue” (“*Fractale* Production Committee Halts N. American Simulcast,” 2011). This reaction on the part of the Japanese production committee is indicative of the nature of media distribution today – even when provided with a convenient and free way of viewing a show or a film, some fans will resort to piracy. Part of this could be due to the fact that a streaming show does not provide a way of “possessing” it in the same way that downloading a file does. Another possibility is that because streams on a site like Funimation’s are necessarily restricted by geographical region (often only to North America), fans elsewhere resort to piracy to view the show. Interestingly, at the same time *Fractale*’s North American simulcast was suspended, the show continued to be shown on French online subscription services (“*Fractale*’s French Simulcast Still Continues,” 2011).

However, given that large Hollywood studios—with many more legal and financial resources at their disposal than a relatively small company like Funimation—have a hard time stopping online piracy of their properties, it seems rather naïve to think that a small US anime company could have the ability to remove pirated copies of *Fractale* worldwide. Perhaps the Japanese right holders realized this, since five days later they relented and allowed the North American online streaming to resume (“Funimation: *Fractale* Simulcast Returns on Monday,” 2011). In the end, this served as only a minor hiccup to *Fractale*’s reception outside of Japan. Although the series was met with mixed reviews, (in Japan, the block of animated programming in which *Fractale* aired received its lowest ratings ever [“Noitamina Garners Timeslot’s Lowest Rating to Date,” 2011]) it performed well enough that Funimation decided to license it for DVD and Blu-ray.

However, this episode illustrates the difficulties involved in any contemporary media product legitimately traversing national and cultural boundaries, particularly one in which the rights are held by a committee of interests. Of course, as the problem with piracy illustrates, fans will find a way to watch the shows they want to see regardless of whether or not they are officially and legally available.

The previous chapters have illustrated just a few of the ways in which anime and associated transmedia products have been received and understood in the United States since the 1960s. I have detailed the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of what I have termed the “database fantasyscape,” examined specific case studies that highlight aspects of cult media, fan production, and localization practices, and dealt with performance and the city of Tokyo itself as avenues for exploring concepts of media convergence. Throughout these chapters, I have focused on the interplay between globalization and convergence and what this may mean for subsequent studies of transnational media.

I have been researching and writing this dissertation for over five years, and in that time many aspects of anime and global media have changed. When I began my research, anime was experiencing a boom in popularity. Thanks to films like *The Matrix* trilogy (1999-2003), particularly its animated-in-Japan offshoot *The Animatrix* (2003), and *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (2003), anime seemed to be making inroads into the Hollywood-dominated multiplex. Anime was appearing on US television as well, and unlike *Astro Boy* and other anime in the 1960s and 1970s, little effort was being made to disguise the animation’s Japanese origins. On the academic front, the assertion that Japanese popular culture would be the next big thing was buoyed by Douglas McGray’s idea of “gross

national cool” (2002). As mentioned previously, it was also around this time that the serious study of anime and manga began to proliferate. However, this popularity was relatively short lived. In the latter half of the first decade of the 2000s, the rapid expansion of anime and manga into book and video stores in the US proved to be a bubble that burst, leaving behind a market that was smaller but seemingly more stable.

As I write this, the future of anime both within Japan and outside of it is unclear. While there have been many great animators and animation directors to come from Japan in the last sixty years, there are very few young people who seem to be interested in following the path of animation. Sato Dai, who has written scripts for a number of anime series including *Cowboy Bebop*, recently stated that he thinks anime will die out within a few decades. (Galbraith 2010) Some of the reasons Sato gives are those that I have discussed previously, including a lack of respect for complex storylines in favor of recycled character and plot elements that cater more and more exclusively to viewers who are already anime fans. Catering to an already built-in audience like this may work in the short term, but it does not bode well for the long term health and expansion of the industry.

Through Sato’s comments, we can see that the database fantasyscape is still alive and going strong, and will continue to persist into the future. If anything, the decline of the economics of anime, along with a decrease in animators and directors with strong auteurist sensibilities, places greater emphasis on the database part of the fantasyscape. In a tight economic market, fewer and fewer creators are going to be allowed to take risks in style or substance, sticking to recycling images and tropes that have proven to be successful with fans in the past. According to Sato, this database fantasyscape (although

he of course does not call it such) may be responsible at least in part for anime's decline, stating "No one wants to hear about NEET [the unemployed]... They'd rather watch a group of high school girls in a band asking, 'How do I play this note?' ...If we are always escaping from reality and real problems, when will we face them?" (Galbraith 2010). Sato even criticizes the interaction between place and animation as discussed in the previous chapter. Although it might seem that setting anime in real-world locations may give it some kind of grounding, Sato disagrees. As Galbraith writes, "The backgrounds based on real places are another similar problem. 'It a drug for us' in the anime industry, Sato said. It boosts tourism and pleases fans. 'When I see anime today, I realize that we have no pride left'" (Galbraith 2010).

At the same time that the database fantasyscape has led to an emphasis on fan-centric character tropes, the amount of anime readily available outside of Japan has increased greatly. In particular, the numbers of anime series and films being legitimately released online has greatly increased during the interval I have been writing this dissertation. It used to be that the only anime one could find online was pirated anime, because the US anime companies could not or did not see online distribution as a legitimate avenue. (However, the blame probably falls more on the Japanese companies, who are often able to strictly control what a licensee is able to do with a particular title.) Now it is possible to view legitimately-licensed episodes of subtitled anime shows online within a matter of days or sometimes even hours on sites like YouTube, Crunchyroll, and The Anime Network. This points to the use of programmatic technologies that I had discussed in chapter 3. The goal of many anime fans was to view anime episodes as contemporaneously as possible with the Japanese releases in order to feel a stronger sense

of community and to be knowledgeable about the latest Japanese developments. Sometimes such streams are later reinforced with a DVD or Blu-Ray release (of higher quality) to the home video market. However, even though streams do not require the investment of physically creating, warehousing, and distributing a physical product, there are still not-insignificant costs in licensing and translating, so only a fraction of the anime programs in a season are able to be legitimately streamed in this way. Consequently, fansubs are still prevalent in the anime community. This distribution of anime is constantly changing, and it remains to be seen whether such streams will be a better long-term solution to anime fansubbing, or if the anime industry will need to begin bringing legal challenges to those who infringe on their intellectual property (an act that could easily backfire and upset fans).

Throughout this dissertation I have been discussing the transnational nature of anime, how it flows in currents between Japan and other nations (focusing particularly on the United States), how we can best understand it, and how such an understanding may contribute to media and cultural studies more generally. Grafting together some concepts formulated by Appadurai, Napier, and Azuma, I employed the framework of the database fantasyscape in discussing how the many varied facets related to anime interrelate and flow.

My last chapter pointed toward the necessary ties between anime, perception, and performance. In moving forward with further research along these lines, I think this will be a fruitful avenue of inquiry, not only with regard to anime, but for studies of media in general. Sociologist John Clammer (2000) proposes a study of emotions as a method of understanding Japanese society in a way that is just beginning to be discussed. There

have been anthropological writings on the emotions (few of them touching on Japan specifically). However, Clammer asserts that because consumption plays such a crucial role in contemporary Japanese society, the relation between emotions and consumption needs to be studied. This is important because, according to Clammer, “Japan is arguably the most developed example of [a society of consumption] anywhere in the world” (2000: 211). In fact, a good deal of media in Japan is structured in order to guide consumption. Clammer writes that “the Japanese media are pervaded by ‘information,’ sometimes in the form of quasi-advertising advice, for example on makeup, diet, or body-shape, but also in the shape of other advice on almost every imaginable aspect of life” (2000: 212).

I agree with Clammer’s assertions, particularly as they might involve anime. Regardless of its transnational applicability and ease of travel due to its *mukokuseki* nature, most anime and related products are produced for domestic Japanese consumption. (Keen producers of such media products undoubtedly have an eye toward export during the production process, though.) Understanding the fantasyscape means coming to a greater awareness of the role that emotions may play in the consumption and selection of products, not only within Japan but by people outside of that culture who may be experiencing (or want to experience) different emotional worlds that may mirror or perhaps even contrast with those of domestic Japanese consumers of similar products. To conclude, I think it is worth keeping in mind that discussions of anime and the database fantasyscape are worth considering not only in their own rights, but for the insights they lend to examinations of media all around us. As Clammer writes, “For at least some commentators, Japan is the quintessential postmodern society, the one that

others will follow as modernity passes away. Seen from this perspective, Japan has a universal significance” (2000: 219).

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Zhang, Yingjin (2010) *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

## Curriculum Vita

### Education

- Indiana University, Bloomington, IN  
Ph.D. in Communication and Culture, April 2012  
Minor: East Asian Studies  
Advisor: Barbara Klinger
- University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX  
Master of Arts in Asian Cultures and Languages, May 2002  
Thesis: “A Cyborg Mephisto: Mythology in the Science Fiction Films of Oshii Mamoru”  
Advisor: Susan J. Napier
- Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN  
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, with distinction, December 1999  
Minors: Asian Studies, Religious Studies, and Biological Science

### Publications

#### Articles, Chapters, and Books

- “Transforming U.S. Anime in the 1980s: Localization and Longevity.” (2010) *Mechademia* 5.
- “Early Japanese Animation in the US: Changing *Tetsuwan Atomu* to *Astro Boy*.” (2009) In *The Japanification of Children's Popular Culture: From Godzilla to Spirited Away*. Ed. Mark I. West. Scarecrow Press.
- “*Perfect Blue*.” (2009) In *Satoshi Kon: Il Cinema Attraverso lo Specchio*. Eds. Enrico Azzano, Andrea Fontana, and Davide Taro. Piombino, Italy: Edizioni Il Foglio. (Published in Italian translation.)
- “*Last Life in the Universe: Nationality, Technology, Authorship*.” (2008) In *East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film*. Eds. Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai. I.B. Tauris.
- “The Robots from Takkun’s Head: Cyborg Adolescence in *FLCL*.” (2006) In *Cinema Anime: Critical Engagements with Japanese Animation*. Ed. Steven T. Brown. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- “Creating ‘Amateur’ Manga in the US: Pedagogy, Professionalism, and Authenticity.” (2005) *International Journal of Comic Art* 7 (2).

- “Amerika-kara mita Oshii Mamoru.” (2004) In *Oshii Mamoru-ron: Memento Mori*. Tokyo: Nippon Television. (Published in Japanese translation).
- *Stray Dog of Anime: The Films of Mamoru Oshii*. (2004) New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

## Reviews

- Entries on “*Funky Forest: The First Contact*,” “*The Little Norse Prince*,” “*Love Exposure*,” “*My Neighbour Totoro*,” “*Only Yesterday*,” and “*Shark Skin Man and Peach Hip Girl*.” (2012) In *Directory of World Cinema: Japan 2*. Ed. John Berra. Bristol, UK: Intellect.
- “Volition in the Face of Absurdity” (2011) Review of *The Sky Crawlers* (dir. Oshii Mamoru). *Mechademia* 6.
- Review of *Vexille* (dir. SORI). (2010) *Science Fiction Film and Television* 3 (1).
- Chapter introduction on “Anime / Animation” and entries on “*Avalon*,” “*Ghost in the Shell / Ghost in the Shell: Innocence*,” “*Love & Pop*,” “*Paprika*,” “*Perfect Blue*,” “*Steamboy*,” “*The Taste of Tea*,” and “*The Twilight Samurai*.” (2010) In *Directory of World Cinema: Japan*. Ed. John Berra. Bristol, UK: Intellect.
- “Brain-Diving Batou.” (2007) Review of *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence: After the Long Goodbye* by Yamada Masaki. *Mechademia* 2.
- Review of *The Cinema of Gosho Heinosuke: Laughter through Tears* by Arthur Nolletti, Jr. (2007) *Scope: An Online Journal of Film & TV Studies* 7. <http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/bookreview.php?issue=7&id=200>
- “Historicizing Anime and Manga: From Japan to the World.” (2006) Review of *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics* by Paul Gravett and *Watching Anime, Reading Manga: Twenty-five Years of Essays and Reviews* by Fred Patten. *Mechademia* 1.

## Conference Papers

- "Documenting the Anime City: Auteursism and the Anime-ic Documentary in Oshii Mamoru's 'Tokyo Scanner' and 'Tokyo Vein.'" Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference. Philadelphia, PA. March 6-9, 2008.
- “America’s Anime, Japan’s Anime: Identifying Japanese Animation in Global Circulation.” Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference. March 8-11, 2007. Chicago, IL. March, 2007.

- “Complicating Transnational Asian Cinema: Nationality, Technology, and Authorship in Pen-Ek Ratanaruang’s *Last Life in the Universe*.” Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference. Vancouver, BC. March 2-5, 2006.
- “Wandering Locus Solus: An Overview of the Films of Mamoru Oshii.” Presentation on the “Pixar and Beyond: International Animation Today” panel. Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference. Vancouver, BC. March 2-5, 2006.
- “FanTech: How Consumer Technologies Fostered and Promoted Anime Fandom.” Society for Literature & Science Annual Meeting. Durham, NC. October 14-17, 2004.
- “The Robots from Takkun’s Head: Cyborg Adolescence in *FLCL*.” Popular Culture Association National Conference. San Antonio, TX. April 7-10, 2004.
- “Playing with an International Future: The World of *Cowboy Bebop*.” Asian Studies Graduate Conference. University of Texas at Austin. October 4-5, 2002.
- “Hacking Your Own Ghost: Mythology in the Science Fiction Films of Oshii Mamoru as Sites of Resistance.” Eleventh Annual Graduate Student Conference on East Asia. Columbia University. New York, NY. February 8-9, 2002.
- “Mass Media, Gender Roles, and Popular Culture in Japan and the United States.” 53rd Japan-America Student Conference. Berkeley, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Okinawa, Tokyo. July 22-August 23, 2001.
- “Forms of the Female in Japanese Cyberpunk Anime.” Eighth Annual Student Gender Studies Conference. University of Texas at Austin. February 15-16, 2001.

### **Invited Presentations**

- Presentation preceding screening of *Musashi: The Dream of the Last Samurai*. Waterloo Festival for Animated Cinema. Kitchener, Ontario. November 20, 2009.
- Panel discussion following screening of *Grave of the Fireflies*. Waterloo Festival for Animated Cinema. Kitchener, Ontario. November 18, 2008.
- “The Never-Ending *Evangelion*.” Paper and panel discussion following screening of the film *The End of Evangelion*. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. November 5, 2005.
- “The Root of TV Anime: Making *Tetsuwan Atom* into *Astro Boy*.” Schoolgirls and Mobilesuits 2005: Culture and Creation in Manga and Anime. Minneapolis College of Art and Design. September 30-October 2, 2005.

- “Using Anime and Manga in the Classroom.” NCTA (National Consortium for Teaching about Asia) Summer Enrichment Event: Arts Across the Curriculum. Bloomington, IN. July 11-13, 2005.
- “Toward Reflex Point: The Influence of Mecha Anime from the 1970s and 1980s.” Schoolgirls and Mobilesuits 2003: Culture and Creation in Manga and Anime. Minneapolis College of Art and Design. September 24-26, 2003.
- “An Empty Core: The Early Works of Oshii Mamoru.” Schoolgirls and Mobilesuits 2002: Culture and Creation in Manga and Anime. Minneapolis College of Art and Design. September 27-29, 2002.

### **Teaching experience**

- Associate Instructor – Indiana University, Bloomington
  - CMCL 202: “Media in the Global Context” (Spring 2006)
  - CMCL 290: “Hollywood I” (Fall 2005)
  - CMCL 190: “Introduction to Media” (Fall 2004 and Spring 2005)
  - CMCL 121: “Public Speaking” (Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Summer 2004, Fall 2006, Spring 2007, Summer 2007)
- Teaching Assistant – University of Texas at Austin
  - ANS 302: “Introduction to Japan” (Spring 2002)
  - ANS 372: “The World of Japanese Animation” (Fall 2001)
- Teaching Assistant – Purdue University
  - CS 190W: “Introduction to the Internet and the World Wide Web” (Spring 1997 – Fall 1999, excluding Fall 1998)

### **Honors, Achievements, Scholarships, Fellowships**

- Indiana University East Asian Studies Center Travel Grant (Spring 2008)
- Indiana University East Asian Studies Center Travel Grant (Spring 2007)
- Communication and Culture Department Travel Grant (Fall 2004)
- Indiana University East Asian Studies Center Travel Grant (Spring 2004)
- Graduate Assistanceship, Indiana University (2003-2007)
- Mitsubishi Fellowship (to attend the Japan-America Student Conference; summer 2001)
- University Graduate Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin (2000-2002)
- Asian Studies Departmental Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin (2000-2001)
- Member of Phi Beta Kappa, Golden Key, and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies