THE ANIME PARADOX

STEVIE SUAN

PATTERNS AND
PRACTICES THROUGH
THE LENS OF
TRADITIONAL
JAPANESE THEATER

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Patterns and Practices through the Lens of Traditional Japanese Theater

By

Stevie Suan

GLOBAL ORIENTAL

For my Mother and Grandmother.
Thank you.

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PREFACE

My first experience with Anime was from before I could read. It was actually not on screen, but in a small, well-worn children's book, adapted from the American release of the Japanese Anime *Macross*—the compilation called *Robotech*. In Anime I found a very distinct world, with unique visuals and interplay between comedy and drama, fiction and reality. I actively sought out that "Anime beauty," from videos to games, to models to Manga, always searching for that specific "look and feel" that was so attractive. It was this interest in Anime that began my initial knowledge of Japan, sparking a fascination that has traveled far beyond Anime to another infatuation with the Japanese traditional arts. I believe that the similarities to the Japanese theater that is the subject of this book can be a bridge from the current culture to the past. I hope this study can be a doorway for the many Anime fans and scholars around the globe to enable them to appreciate the world of the theater from a new perspective, and that those involved in the classical worlds may be given a new avenue with which to view the contemporary art of Anime.

I do not think that my experience with Anime—leading me from an avid viewer into a participant in the study and scholarship of Japan, from a personal interest to a professional career—is an isolated case. Through some chance exposure many fans came across a product of Anime or Manga for the first time and could never shake the desire to search for more of "what was like that." There are no doubt millions around the world that had their first introduction to Japan with Anime, and from there, their interests grew, into diplomacy, into business, into law, into trade, into the arts, into fashion, into friendship and fascination. During the research for this book I came across a wonderful observation: that in the past the world began to learn about Japan through exposure to its art, from *ukiyoe* and *japonisme*, to the Kabuki Theater and kimono. In this era, the world continues to learn about Japan through art: sitting prominently among the current chosen arts are Anime and Manga. While many books on Anime seek to summarize the themes in Anime, the underlying narratives that lie within the Anime themselves, consumption practices, or the history of Anime, complementing these approaches, this book seeks to detail the formal structures of the art form itself through its comparison with those of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki.

I have endeavored to make this book as accessible as possible with the hope that it will spark new discussions on Anime, its structure and aesthetics, as well as allow for potential use in the university classroom. Though academic in nature, *The Anime Paradox* is designed to be for an interested general readership, and most specifically for those involved in: Japanese Studies; Media Studies—film, animation, etc.—and, of course, those researching Japanese Anime and/or Theater. Ultimately, through reading *The Anime Paradox*, I hope that those familiar with Anime or the traditional theater, and those new to either of these arts, may come to appreciate all four of the art forms discussed from a new and fresh angle. This book is not only a scholastic examination of the form of Anime, but explicitly deals with the theater in detail as well. This is not only an account of how Anime may be viewed from the theater perspective, but also of how the theater may be viewed from an Anime perspective. However, I do not try to hide my position as originally coming from the latter viewpoint, focusing primarily on Anime. *The Anime Paradox* is an exploration of Anime and the Japanese traditional theater from my standpoint as both a critic and a patron of these arts.

A Note on the Names and Labels: The Japanese names appearing here follow the Japanese convention of family name first. The titles of the Anime are written with the English name first, followed by the Japanese name. In the case of the theater images, some of the details of the performers and performances depicted have unfortunately been lost. I have tried to include as much information as possible, but due to the lack of sources, there are some instances where the details cannot be provided.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Styles of acting and the basic forms of art may differ variously, but what is effective about each is common to all. This moving quality is the Flower.

Zeami Motokiyo[1]

In Japanese literature from the Heian to the Edo period, the technique of allusion (*honkadori*) in poetry and of parody (*mojiri*) in fiction were particularly liked, reflecting a taste that valued the duality of imagery—creating, in other words, an aesthetics of paradox.

Yamazaki Masakazu[2]

The great plays of the Japanese theater have always combined realism and unreality in intimate conjunction. It may be that the Japanese have permanently lost their taste for this unique variety of theater; certainly their films, for all their excellence, show few of the old traditions. I think it more likely, however, that the combination of the seeming opposites which has proved so congenial to Japanese audiences over the centuries will again exert its appeal, and add to the generous contribution Japan has already made to the theater of the world.

Donald Keene[3]

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[1] Zeami, J. Thomas Rimer, and Masakazu Yamazaki, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). 39.

[2] Masakazu Yamazaki, "The Aesthetics of Ambiguity: The Artistic Theories of Zeami," in *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1984), xxxvii.

[3] Donald Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," in *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture* (Tokyo; Palo Alto: Kodansha International Ltd., 1971). 70.

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL[1]

I still vividly remember the first time I saw a Noh play. It was performed in the open by firelight (*takigi nō*), a special showing of *Aoi no Ue* (*Lady Aoi*) at the Shimogamo Shrine in Kyoto. The story was simple: Lady Aoi, the formal wife of Genji (from *The Tale of Genji*), was ill, haunted by the ghost of Lady Rokujō who had fallen out of favor with Genji. Rokujō was tormented by her loss and the humiliation of her carriage disrespectfully displaced at the Kamo festival by Aoi's attendants. Taking the form of a vengeful spirit, Rokujō released her fury and heartache on Lady Aoi at whose hands she was wronged. Pregnant with Genji's child, Aoi became incurably ill, and a monk was called to exorcise the demon Rokujō and save the life of Lady Aoi.

The performance was in October, and the shrine stage lighting was assisted by two small fires on both sides. I found a seat up front on the green mats laid out on the gravel floors. Usually Noh plays were performed indoors at special Noh theaters, and though showings at shrines are not uncommon, I felt lucky to have my first experience with Noh in such a prestigious setting. Shimogamo is one of Japan's oldest and most famous shrines. Waiting for the play to begin I looked at the structure of the wooden stage and the shapes of the flames. Every so often a man would come up and put more wood on the fires. Trees rustled in the light breeze, and the audience around me murmured in anticipation of the performance. The musicians and chorus made their way onstage, placing themselves in their respective positions. Upon completion, cutting the scene into an eerie silence, the flute began, piercing through all other sounds, bringing our attention to the antique stage.

On the front of the platform there was a bright orange kimono, lying simply on the floor, symbolizing Lady Aoi's body overtaken by illness. The actor playing Lady Rokujō entered slowly from the left. The regal embroidery of Rokujō's intricate orange robe contrasted with the worn elegance of her mask: an alluring face, consumed with distress. She sat neatly at

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[1] The name of the sixth episode in the Anime *Cowboy Bebop* (*Kaubōi Bibappu*, 1998–1999).

center stage, confessing her plight in tormented poetry as the actor's body rocked back and forth slightly. With each tilt of the head, the mask flickered between anger and sadness, wretched despair and bitter animosity. It was such a subtle difference it could almost not exist; just a flicker of emotion, a faint change in the shadows on the mask. Regardless of my lack of verbal understanding of her songs of misfortune, more was expressed in those slight movements than I could ever put into words. As the play progressed and the lady's anguish consumed her, she exited. Off to the side, with his back turned to the audience, the actor changed costumes as an explanation of the events took place.

Rokujō's return to center stage impressed itself deeply within me; a piercing image that was burned into the back of my mind. Whipping around from the shadows at the end of the stage, a dark mask of a demon glared at the audience with a look of unvanquished fury. All of the previous sadness and torment in her heart transformed into pure rage as she attacked the priest trying to exorcise her demonic form. Their battle was a dance of colors and patterns, set against the ancient wood of the shrine stage; swirling and pounding in an elegant fugue, her vengeful movements clashed with the sounds of the priest's exorcism. At last, her violent soul was brought to peace and the play ended, almost abruptly. A quiet, haunting beauty was all that remained in the brisk autumn air. Slowly, the sound of the audience returned, the spell wearing off, leaving us with only the images and excitement lingering from their world of Noh.
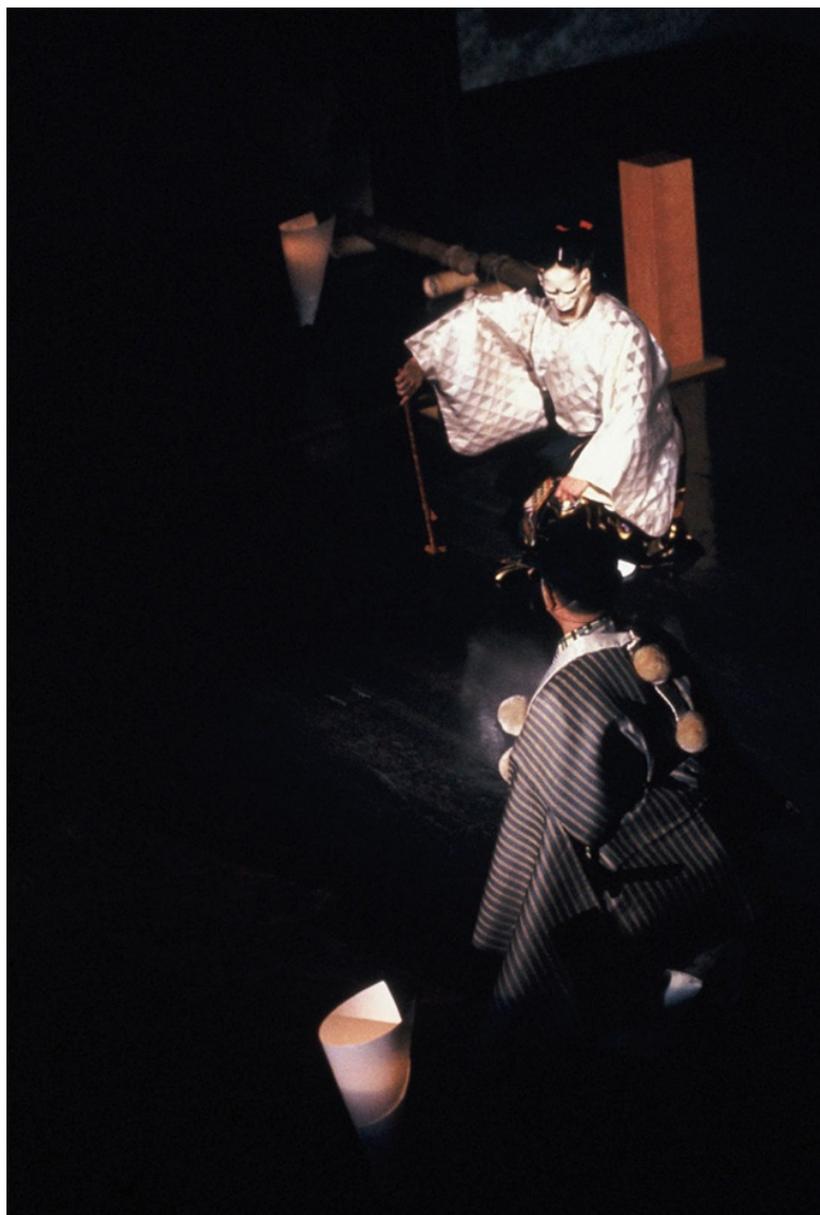
Figure 1.1. The priest exorcising the demon of Lady Rokujō in *Aoi no Ue*. © Toshiro Morita, the-noh.com (http://www.the-noh.com/).

THE WHITE WHICH LIVES WITHIN THE INKSTONE[1]

When compared to Japanese theater's history, Anime's fifty years[2] of development is a comparatively meager amount of time. Noh originated around the fifteenth century, followed by Kabuki and Bunraku in the seventeenth century, giving them all a few hundred years of maturation on Anime. Despite its youth, Anime has become a complex and sophisticated art form that has moved across international boundaries. Anime devotes itself to a particular aesthetic with a conventionalized set of visual, aural, and narrative elements that are (re)arranged to produce a particular type of stylization, resulting in an over-arching Anime form. These conventions distinguish it from both cinema and other forms of animation. Anime unmistakably "looks and feels" like Anime on multiple different levels, despite vast differences in narrative content. In Anime there is a highly specialized aesthetic logic in which variation can occur, but this is in turn produced under the umbrella of the larger Anime aesthetic. This is not to say that an aesthetic logic is unique to Anime—there are a myriad of other arts that employ this. Rather, Anime has its own, very specific form that allows it to invoke certain aesthetic ideals and emotional responses. This book seeks to examine that form in detail.

Besides the physical process of actually animating the Anime, there are other integral parts to producing an Anime: writing the narrative (or adapting it), character design, voice acting, music composition, sound engineering, and marketing, among others. Beyond these there are also certain aesthetic, stylistic conventions which all of these processes work in and around. These conventionalized aesthetics are the focus of this study. When I use the term "aesthetics," I am largely referring to the style of aural, visual, and narrative elements organized and arranged in a specific manner that result in particular emotive and intellectual responses. Multiple instances with such similar aesthetics create a pattern that is taken as the general aesthetic of the art as a whole. The form then, is this conventionalized system of elements that produces that aesthetic repeatedly. Despite being produced by different studios and despite the

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[1] The name of episode 10 of the Anime *Mushi-shi* (*Mushishi*, 2005–2006).
[2] This is dating from the first Anime series, *Testwan Atomu* (Astro Boy) in 1963, not the beginning of animation in Japan.

staggering number of Anime productions made each year, most, if not all, have the Anime aesthetic—this is what defines them as Anime. Anime's conventionalized aesthetics separate it from film and other animation types, drawing it close to formally stylized theatrical forms such as Kathakali, Balinese Topeng, Noh, Bunraku, and/or Kabuki. Other animated arts may be found to have their own form. This study does not stand to invalidate other animation forms or other arts in general, but to focus on the specifics of Anime itself. Anime is of course animation, and as Thomas Lamarre has expressed, this style of limited animation produces very particular properties.[3] What I am interested in here is delineating the results of the animation process, the very mechanics of Anime aesthetics, how they work and how they operate within the discursive space of Anime.

Taking cues from Jonathan Culler and Gérard Genette and writing on modern Japanese fiction, Sharalyn Orbaugh explains that styles and structures in literature are often implicitly understood by both writer and reader, and neither is always completely aware of such formal considerations when producing or consuming the works. She notes that this culturally and historically tied "literary competence" is something that we should be aware of when approaching literature, particularly those of a different culture or time. This awareness can then help us understand how different models of literature work, in part by seeing how the foreign works do not fit models we are used to.[4] The same may be said of Anime, where distinct patterns of conventions can be clearly discerned, having accumulated to produce the over-arching Anime form. When Asian traditional theater arts are examined, it is often undertaken with the recognition that they possess distinct aesthetics and a form that entails patterns and practices mutually understood by both the performer and audience. This does not imply that their meaning is fixed, but that the particulars of performance patterns and viewing practices are detailed and taken into account. In Anime we find a similar situation where there are many structural and viewing patterns and practices, many that resemble those of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki.

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[3] Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

[4] Sharalyn Orbaugh, "Extending the Limits of Possibility: Style and Structure in Modern Japanese Fiction," in *The Distant Isle: Studies and Translations of Japanese Literature in Honor of Robert H. Brower*, ed. Robert H. Brower, et al. (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, 1996). See details on "literary competence", 340–341. See also 360–361.

But, while there has recently been increased academic interest in Anime, there is a pronounced lack of attention and consideration given to the formal elements that produce specific narrative, structural, visual, and aural patterns. As Zília Papp notes:

> Based on currently available literature on Japanese popular animation and manga, there is a considerable lack of, and therefore need for academic work that focuses more on the form rather than the content of these products of media. If animation and sequential art are considered as legitimate art forms, there is a need for literature that specifically addresses the aspects that make them works of art, including formal elements and aesthetic values.[5]

Before Anime Studies can grow further, a foundation of understanding of the Anime form needs to be established to allow for more complex readings of Anime. By utilizing the comparison of the theatrical forms of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, Anime can be examined for its formal qualities in the repeated patterns and practices of the art form. I will be using the lens of Japanese traditional theater as a tool with which to view Anime, illuminating the formal elements, structures, and aesthetics that are an important aspect of the form. By switching this lens from Anime to traditional theater, we can view the arts of Bunraku, Noh and Kabuki from a different perspective, and see that some of the aspects we find peculiar to Anime, have been practiced in different ways in places we might not think to look. Anime is utilizing techniques similar to the theatrical traditions with new technologies[6] to express contemporary issues and connect to the larger media,[7] economic, historical sphere that we live in. Through the lens of traditional Japanese theater, we can highlight the formal elements of Anime and open them up for discussion and critique. In this manner we can create a method to talk about this new and complex art form in the context of not just one particular text, but the conventions surrounding it.

Anime is riddled with paradoxes that find their ultimate manifestation in the conventions of the form itself, in the confines that define it, that permit Anime to achieve certain feats. The various, specialized "parts" of Anime's form are unified within its whole, a simultaneously existence of distinct parts in a concrete whole. Paradoxically, each "part" is equal to

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[5] Zília Papp, *Anime and Its Roots in Early Japanese Monster Art* (Folkestone, Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2010). 18.

[6] See Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*.

[7] See Marc Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

those around it and the greater production at the same time. Other scholars have noted this in some of its different manifestations, particularly Lamarre and his delineation of the "exploded view," where each part of the Anime image is "at once apart and together," existing (literally) on multiple planes but on one plane at once.[8] Among the other pervasive paradoxes in the Anime form is its blend of realism and unreality on multiple levels. Ōtsuka Eiji and Azuma Hiroki denote the "vivid fiction" of Anime (Manga, and Light Novels) as "anime/manga-like Realism."[9] Christopher Bolton has noted how this blend of realism and unreality can be problematic for analysis as Anime skirts the fine line between the "real" and the "unreal." Bolton compares Anime to Bunraku and proposes that the similarities between the "oscillation in the puppet theater between the real and the unreal, the unified and the dispersed subject, the violent de(con)struction of the body and a tender regard for it," and that of the animated bodies of anime—specifically in the film *The Ghost in the Shell: Kōkaku Kidōtai* (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995)—provides a method of reconciling much of the ambivalence of the film's treatment of the female protagonist.[10] He concludes that Anime contains "actors" that are also "puppet performers"—the unreality of their presentation allows a distancing from any hyperbolic events (e.g. excessive violence inflicted on their bodies), but are not totally devoid of humanity to deny them vindication from their fates in the narratives.[11] Bolton also asserts that "as a performed medium, anime must be approached not just as a generic category of social text but also on its own aesthetic terms."[12] Anime's form and aesthetics are crucial to its existence. Thus, to unravel the problematic issues of Anime analysis, we must decipher its paradoxes. To do this, we must understand the formal conventions that allow Anime to achieve certain effects, but constrain it within specific bounds.

Papp stresses an extended, longer view of interpretation, contextualization and understanding of Anime, and clearly proves her point in the context of depictions of the evolution of *yōkai* throughout the history of

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[8] This is in regard to how the animation is composited, as cel layers that are laid over each other to produce the final image. Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 148.

[9] Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan E. Abel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). 56.

[10] Christopher A. Bolton, "From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 10, no. 3 (2002): 731.

[11] Ibid., 765.

[12] Ibid., 737.

Japanese art, pre-history to pre-modern, to post-war and the contemporary.[13] An extended view of Anime is an excellent method to actively place Anime in its context, one that is also taken up by Hu Tze-yue, who devotes a chapter to noting the similarities with a number of different Japanese art forms.[14] In my own study, I will examine Anime specifically in the context of Japanese traditional theater (here denoting Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki specifically) to allow for the mapping out of Anime's form. Though Anime shares much in common with many theatrical forms, it is the particular way the stylized elements come together and the distinct structures that govern the aesthetic logic of the Anime form that are most similar to those found in Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki. I will be looking at the underlying systems, the patterns and tropes, to outline the formal qualities of Anime, and using Japanese traditional theater as a foil to expose them. The use of the theater as a comparison is made viable as Japanese traditional theater is a "total theater" made up of multiple arts, from singing, instrumental music, pantomime, dancing, costume, set and spatial design, as well as literary production. Citing the multimedia artistic nature of Anime production, Antonia Levi goes as far as to state that Anime is "a unique form of theater which drew on all of Japan's historical, religious, and artistic traditions to create something uniquely suited to expressing the mood of late twentieth-century Japan."[15] Like Anime, the theatrical forms also possess distinct forms with recognizable aesthetic outcomes. Among many similarities to Anime, the theatrical forms also contain deeply pictorial—or rather, visually static—aspects to their productions. The multimedia experience of multiple visual and aural elements surrounding the Japanese traditional theater is comparable to that of Anime—images are codified, and have stylized voices and particular movements, just as they do in Anime.

In Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, we find a localized system that employs specific formal conventions that bear much resemblance to those in Anime. These can be seen in three areas; 1) the interrelation of part and whole, 2) the mixture of unreality and realism throughout the form, 3) hyperbolized and highly stylized aesthetics as a focus—the form as

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[13] See Papp, *Anime and Its Roots in Early Japanese Monster Art; Traditional Monster Imagery in Manga, Anime and Japanese Cinema* (Folkestone, Kent, UK: Brill Academic Pub, 2011).

[14] See Tze-yue Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

[15] See Levi, Antonia. *Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1996), 20.

content. These three properties create a link between the three theatrical art forms and Anime; each of these serves as points of departure for dissection of Anime's paradoxes. Through the lens of traditional Japanese theater, we can analyze this sophisticated and complex art, mapping the formal qualities in its structure, conventions, and aesthetics. By understanding these formal elements, more accurate analytical research can be done on Anime. Though the focus of this study is on Anime, the comparison can work both ways: just as Japanese theater can give us analytical insights into Anime, Anime can enrich our understanding of Japanese classical theater.

While comparisons with other art forms may be productive as well, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki are localized forms with long histories in Japan, part of a certain cultural milieu. I have specifically chosen these three arts (including Kyōgen in conjunction with Noh) out of the various performing arts in Japan as they are emblematic of the general conception of Japanese traditional theater both in Japan and abroad. All three collectively establish a nationally canonized[16] localized aesthetic expression—these are officially exported throughout the international community as representative art forms of the nation of Japan. In recent years Japan has given Anime a related role as part of the Cool Japan and soft power campaigns of Japan's advertised global image. Anime has begun to be officially recognized as an accepted (and endorsed) cultural product—one that, according to reports from METI (the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry), may provide economic support for the nation in its time of financial crisis.[17] The "traditional cultural exports" and the "contemporary cultural exports" welcome comparison as they are both touted as being representative of "Japan," old and new.

Noh, Kabuki, and Bunraku all had their respective conversions from "lower" art forms to "higher" art forms. For example, in the early Meiji period, Kabuki went from a popular art form with "lower class" roots, to a "high art" form that was lauded as the national theater of Japan in a span of twenty years.[18] Anime is just beginning its recognition as part of an

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[16] In the sense of being "National Theaters."

[17] The Cool Japan Advisory Council, "tying together 'culture and industry' and 'Japan and the world'." *Proposal of the Public-Private Expert Panel on Creative Industries*. Ministry of Education, Trade, and Industry; Economic Research Department (JETRO),. "'Cool' Japan's Economy Warms Up." *Japan External Trade Organization* (*JETRO*). Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), March 2005.

[18] The Meiji period began in 1868. As early as 1872 the Ministry of Instruction was urging Kabuki to reform. In preparing to be elevated to the status of "national theater"

accepted and exported cultural product. However, while Kabuki's transformation into a "high art" was due to the fervor of the times to mimic the Euro-American nation-state model (i.e. a "nation" had to have a certain number of elements, among them its own "unique" culture including painting, literature, and, of course, theater), Anime's acceptance is a result of its own late-capitalist historical circumstance—the government promoting economic growth and global recognition from the cultural value and international popularity of the art form.

Brief Introductions

Before we go further, I would like to provide very brief introductions to Noh, Bunraku, Kabuki, and Anime, describing their general physical appearances and basic histories. Each has their own particular aesthetics, with their own visual and aural language and style. Besides the multimedic aspects of these forms, this study endeavors to go beneath the surface and look deep into the very fabric of these arts, the formal conventions that lay beneath their productions.

Originally developing from the art form of *sarugaku*, Noh (see Figure 1.2) began its evolution with the aesthetic refinement it underwent in the fourteen and fifteenth centuries through the master playwrights, performers, and theorists Kan'ami Kiyotsugu (1333–1384), Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443), and Komparu Zenchiku (1405–1468). It is largely through their interactions with the old nobility's traditions and the new aristocratic warriors that *sarugaku* became relegated to the upper classes for the succeeding centuries. Heavily influenced by Buddhism, the stage is often left bare, save for a few simple props. The stage itself is based on the shrine platforms where it was originally performed. A bridge runs at an angle from the square-like main stage to a curtain that covers the green room, where the actor's transformation into character takes place. At the back of the stage is a large painting of a majestic pine tree and perpendicular to it

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many of Kabuki's elements that were deemed licentious by Euro-American standards were cleansed in accordance with the Victorian influences that affected many of the Meiji reforms. The Kabuki reformists created a whole new genre of plays heavily inspired by, if not directly adapted from, Noh and Kyōgen (*matsubame mono*) which helped associate Kabuki with the upper class connotations of Noh. Kabuki was performed for the Imperial family in 1887 and "officially" became associated as a "high" art form. See Kabuki sections in Toyotaka Komiya, *Japanese music and drama in the Meiji era* (Ōbunsha, 1956). See also James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, *Kabuki Plays on Stage: Restoration and reform, 1872–1905* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2003). Regarding the Ministry of Instruction, see page 4 of the introduction.

Figure 1.2. The influential Noh play *Izutsu* has long been considered a "model" Noh play in the Woman's Mode. Written by Zeami, its source is a number of episodes from the classical work *Ise Monogatari.* In the play, the ghost of Ki no Aritsune's daughter returns to the well where she and her exlover would play when they were children. Later the well is described in their poetry when they proclaimed their love for one another. One of the high points of the play is when the shite, Ki no Aritsune's daughter, delusional and half possessed, looks into the faux well on stage, craving to see her long lost lover. © Toshiro Morita, the noh.com (http://www.the-noh.com)

is a painting of a few shoots of bamboo. Like all of the theaters described here, traditionally, the characters are played by male actors.[19] Facing the audience in the back towards the pine are three drummers, and to their left a flute player (together they are the *hayashi*). The eerie sounds of the drummer's calls (*kakegoe*), the piercing flute and the drum pattern, all set a distinct atmosphere that is a hallmark of the Noh Theater. Perpendicular to them are a group of eight singers dressed in simple black and grey. They are the immobile chorus (*jiutai*) that can narrate and take over the lines of the characters. The plays are usually populated by only two or three characters, although more are not uncommon. The two main characters are the *waki* (the "secondary character," who introduces the scenes, area, and helps develop the basic plot) and the *shite* (the protagonist of the play). The *shite* will often dance as called for in the narrative. In various styles of speech-song/chant, the actors recite the elegant poetry that is the lyrics of the scripts. Movement, narrative, and music are all governed by the principal of *jo-ha-kyū*. The plays themselves are a source of much scholarship, works of art in their own right. Often movement is graceful but reserved, and the costumes the actors wear are extremely expensive and intricate, painstakingly hand crafted, reflecting the elegance and regal standing of the aristocratic patrons the theater endeavored to impress. The masks worn by the actors are simple and haunting, emblematic of the balance of mystery and grace that is one of the most famous qualities of Noh aesthetics. The narratives are almost exclusively serious in tone. Just as in Kabuki and Bunraku, Noh contains a complex language of conventionalized movements, images, and sounds.

Interspersed between Noh plays are Kyōgen plays, a comic form of theater that developed in close association with the Noh Theater. Traditionally, Kyōgen plays appeared between the serious and austere Noh performances, breaking the tension of the heavy Noh plays in a day's Noh-Kyōgen program. These plays are much shorter than Noh plays. Kyōgen plays are also performed by only a few actors, and are performed on the same Noh stage, often left completely bare. Stylized pantomime is used as the stage is fluid. Dialogue is emphasized in Kyōgen, but the voice is stylized in a different manner than in Noh. Satire and slapstick are abundant, and the pacing for movement and narrative follows the same structure as Noh.

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[19] This was true for much of the theaters' histories, however, in the contemporary context there are a large number of female actors (and playwrights) that perform and teach these arts, fully accredited. I will be focusing only on the male actors here because this was the general practice.

The costumes are simpler than the extravagant garb used in Noh. Special Kyōgen masks are used but only in some plays; they are comic in character but similar in make to the Noh masks, with a smaller variety than those in Noh. Punning, humorous mix ups in plot and word play frequent the clever stories which continue to bring smiles and laughter to a crowd. As the oldest of the art forms, with strong connections to the upper classes and classical traditions, Noh and Kyōgen have influenced both Bunraku and Kabuki in many ways.

Bunraku (see Figure 1.3) is a type of Puppet Theater from Japan, originating in the Edo period (1603–1868). Originally it was named *ningyō jōruri*, combining the use of puppets (*ningyō*) with the established form of chanting, *jōruri*. Controlled by three puppeteers dressed in black and in full view, the puppets are manipulated to mimic realistic human movement. To become a master puppeteer it takes an average of thirty years of practice. These puppeteers perform without a black cover over their face, unlike the other three puppeteers they are grouped with. However, it is amazing how quickly the puppeteers disappear from view and the puppets take on a life of their own. Next to the stage and off to the side is a chanter (*tayū*), who, accompanied by a *shamisen* player, chants both the narration and lines of the characters. It is through his words and expression, coupled with the highly skilled and precisely timed manipulation of the puppeteers, that the puppets have life breathed into them. It is not uncommon for audiences to leave the theater in tears, deeply moved by the events played out onstage. Despite the non-human actors, tragic events are recurrent themes of the plays. Lovers and families torn apart, epic and magical wars, killings and suicide are frequent proceedings in the Bunraku world. The sets are designed to replicate real-world houses, palaces, and other settings. Sliding doors, curtains, and ladders are all used by the puppets to accentuate the believability of their actions. At one time it was the most popular theater, a constant rival to Kabuki, which developed during the same period. Due to such parallel development, they often share many plays, dances, techniques, and tropes.

Kabuki (see Figure 1.4) originated in Japan at the very beginning of the Edo period in 1604 when Okuni danced on the river banks of Kyoto. Various musicians, actors, and prostitutes began to copy her dancing style and amusing narratives, quickly spreading it throughout Japan. Due to the commotion performances caused, it was ruled that women were not allowed to perform on stage. Thus, like Bunraku and Noh, Kabuki is staged by male actors, with the performance of the female role taken to an extremely specialized height in the *onnagata* female impersonators.

Figure 1.3. Many of the famous love suicide pieces of the Bunraku puppet theater such as *Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki Shinjū*, the play that began the trend) were based on actual scandals that were poetically adapted into stage productions. The popularity of such plays spawned its own genre, with adaptations of the plays made for both the Kabuki and Bunraku stages. Repetition of similar tropes and patterns, such as the inclusion of a lyric *michiyuki* section, marked characteristics that fans expected to see when attending performances. In this dramatic scene, a highlight of the play, the male character Tokubei hides beneath Ohatsu's kimono and secretly signals that he is willing to die with her by taking her foot and drawing it across his neck. "The Love Suicides at Sonezaki: The Tenmaya Tea House," *Sonezaki Shinjū:* February, 1981; Yoshida Minosuke III (Puppeteer, Ohatsu); *Kokuritsu Shōgekijō*, Bunraku. Courtesy of C.V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University.

Figure 1.4. The famous aragoto character Gongorō, from the play *Shibaraku!* The character of Gongorō has become one of the staples of the Kabuki stage, embodying the quintessential Kabuki bravado that has been popular for centuries. Since its creation in the late seventeenth century, *Shibaraku!* was performed and revised annually, only becoming standardized in the late nineteenth century. Note the characteristic *kumadori* make-up on his face. Image courtesy of the Kaizawa Kabuki Collection, Asia Collection, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library.

Incorporating a number of different styles and genres, Kabuki is known for its flamboyant costumes, *mie* poses (frozen tableaux), beautiful dances, music, and balance of humor and tragedy. Emblematic of the Edo period pleasure quarters (*yoshiwara*) and its aesthetics, the Kabuki Theater started from scandalous beginnings and has risen to have a special place as one of the high arts of Japan. The actors are, and have been, "national"[20] celebrities, drawing audiences in just to see their performances. As stated above, Kabuki and Bunraku developed at similar times and were often in competition with each other, influencing and inspiring the other, often taking movements and plays from one theater and converting it to the other. Certain acting styles even mimic puppet-like movements (*maruhon*, *ningyōmi*), and many plays feature a chanter to narrate the events occurring (*chobo*). Sometimes the musicians (integral to the productions) are hidden from the audience, but at other times they are in full view. The Kabuki stage contains many intricate moving apparatuses for wild effects and quick scene changes. One of the most distinct features is the *hanamichi* bridge, a long platform running perpendicular to the stage from stage right, through the audience to the end of the Kabuki hall. Actors enter and leave through the *hanamichi* at many points during the plays, posing, dancing or making dramatic entrances/exits. As in Bunraku, the sets are of the most grand production quality and often feature intricate moving parts, mimicking their real life counterparts or allowing illusions and spectacles impossible in reality. It is a theater of sensationalism producing a wondrous and rich aural and visual spectacle on stage. As with Bunraku and Noh, Kabuki programs were often full day events featuring a sequence of plays.

By far the youngest of the arts discussed here is Anime (see Figure 1.5), an animated art form that developed in the mid-twentieth century. Anime has its own origins in a theatrical form called *kamishibai* (lit. "Paper Drama"), where a traveling performer would narrate a story, using different voices for different characters. The narratives were drawn on paper slides that were pulled from a box resembling a television. Kamishibai provided a popular template for the style of limited animation that Anime utilizes.[21] The visual appearance of Anime is heavily influenced by the closely connected art form of Manga—a type of serialized sequential art

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[20] In the Edo period, Japan was not a "nation" *per se*, but famous actors were recognized and celebrated outside of their own cities, sometimes traveling to give performances outside their province.

[21] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 192.

Figure 1.5. Yukishiro Tomoe from *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust & Betrayal* (OVA—Original Video Animation). This production was a prequel to the television Anime series *Rurouni Kenshin Meiji Kenkaku Rōmantan,* based on the popular Manga by Watsuki Nobuhiro. *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust & Betrayal* (*Tsuiokuhen*) © N. Watsuki / Shueisha, Fuji-TV, Aniplex Inc. Image used with permission from rights holders.

that developed in Japan. Manga was, and still is, a very popular art form that provided the visual style for Anime. Coupled with Kamishibai, these two important art forms were the precursors to the infamous types of unrealistic movements (or lack thereof), conventionalized expressions, and serialization that characterize Anime.[22] The first Anime is generally regarded as Tezuka Osamu's *Testuwan Atomu* (*Astro Boy*), broadcast in 1963. Anime is a predominantly serialized form, produced as episodes— though films and shorts are not uncommon. The narratives of Anime, though sometimes extending for many seasons, usually have a finite structure, telling a complete story with a concrete beginning and end. Often adapted from Manga, video games, toys, and more recently Light Novels,

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[22] Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: xiv. See also Chapter 1: Limiting Movement, Inventing Anime.

Anime intertwines a complex network of references, associations, and multimedia products.[23] Anime contains certain repeated conventionalized expressions, types of movement, narrative and pacing patterns, tropes, and ways of viewing that have created a distinct and vivacious contemporary art form. The visual, aural and narrative styles that are common to Anime combine to form the very specific and easily recognizable aesthetic style that starkly separates it from other animation. Here I will be using "Anime" to mean (Japanese) animation with this particular aesthetic.

When reviewing the scholarship around it, it is quite clear that Anime is already considered distinct from other forms of animation, and there are many scholars that are concerned specifically with Anime. Hu calls it a "medium-genre" due to its "unique and recognizable characteristics," which can be "denoted from the fields such as character design, background presentation, origins of storylines, production work practices, channels of distribution, and kinds of audienceship."[24] Anime has been approached from a variety of different angles; to name just a few: Tsugata Nobuyuki has provided a history of Anime;[25] Thomas Lamarre has produced a media theory on animation and its particular properties and effects, focusing on Anime;[26] Marc Steinberg has detailed media systems and their importance to our contemporary cultural environments with the Anime system as an important pioneer;[27] Azuma Hiroki has detailed a new understanding of *otaku* (highly dedicated fans, usually of Anime, Manga, and video games) as emblematic of a database consuming, postmodern culture. Within this discourse there is a need for addressing Anime's formal conventions and aesthetics. Steinberg and Lamarre in particular both concentrate on the "generative limitation" of anime as a type of limited animation, allowing it to solidify into a particular style of animation, giving Anime the ability to achieve certain effects, including the ease of jumping between different media.[28] Here I will address the stylistic conventions that have evolved in the art form, ones that I believe can be understood through comparisons with Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki.

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[23] Ibid., x, 210n9.
[24] Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building*: 2–3.
[25] Nobuyuki Tsugata, *Nihon animeshon no chikara: 85nen no rekishi wo tsuranuku futatsu no jiku* (*The Power of Japanese Animation: Through an 85 Year History on Two Axis*) (Tokyo: NTT Publishing, 2004).
[26] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*.
[27] Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*.
[28] Ibid., 35. For Lamarre see Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*.

The study presented in this book is an examination of Anime as a type of limited animation, consumed by *otaku* (and casual fans)*,* and one part of a larger media system. I will be focusing entirely on the Anime themselves as a distinct art form to dissect their formal conventions through analysis of patterns that arise over a wide survey of works.

But Anime also have historical contexts that they are part of. Denoting a division in the development of Anime, Azuma defines a separation in Anime development between "expressionist" and "narrativist" directors. Expressionists included Ōtsuka Yasuo, Miyazaki Hayao, and Takahata Isao, that "had leanings towards orthodox animation films that conformed to the traditions of Disney and the Fleischer Brothers." The narrativists were described as having to work with limited animation, producing a refined type of visual art work and "unique production rhythm and composition (the still-picture aesthetic)" creating a specific style that is very different from animation produced in the United States.[29] Azuma asserts that these aspects are actually "mutations of techniques imported from the United States and a positive reappraisal of the results." While Anime (especially early Anime) is very influenced by American animation, and in particular Disney, in this study I have consciously tried to avoid discussions of development, exclusively focusing on the form itself, due to any discrepancies in when and where to draw lines in history and development. To construct a history of Anime is not this study's purpose, and this has already been undertaken by others.[30] Furthermore, due to the comparative nature of this project, I must take into consideration that there may not be a direct link or lineage between Anime and traditional Japanese theater in terms of specific influence and inspiration, and I do not want to imply that this is necessarily the case. But what Anime has currently become shows definitive formal patterns creating a connection through similarities in formal qualities worthy of in-depth analysis.

Most of the Anime that were utilized in this study are from the overlapping Action, Adventure, Science Fiction, Fantasy genres, many that could fall under the *shōnen* ("boy's") label. There is a sizable amount of Anime from other genres that were sampled, but the Action-SF (Science Fiction) genre makes up the majority of the texts from which the larger patterns and practices delineated in this study are drawn from. This choice was

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[29] Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*: 12–13.

[30] For example, the above noted Tsugata, *Nihon animeshon no chikara: 85nen no rekishi wo tsuranuku futatsu no jiku* (*The Power of Japanese Animation: Through an 85 Year History on Two Axis*).

made for a number of reasons: 1) this genre has the longest historical length—*Tetsuwan Atomu* could even be included in this, despite it being created before Anime's genres were solidified; 2) many of the most well-known Anime both within Japan and internationally are from this genre: *Ginga Tetsudō 999* (*Galaxy Express 999,* 1978–1981), *Kidō Senshi Gundam* (*Mobile Suit Gundam*, 1979–1980), *Dragon Ball Z* (*Dragon Ball Z*, 1989–1996), *Shin Seiki Evangelion* (*Neon Genesis Evangelion,* 1995–1996); 3) Many of the conclusions made here can be applied to other Anime genres, but the Action-SF genres highlight the points made in this study in the most blatant and easy to visualize manner. Certain elements described here are more prevalent in some genres and less in others. However, genre mixing is a frequent practice in Anime, blurring the lines between the distinctions of each genre. Much of what is discussed in this book can apply directly to Anime as an art form, and can be seen throughout Anime productions. Thus the conclusions and points made will be with the term "Anime," though the examples given will be primarily from the SF genre. There is simply too much Anime to direct a study at *all* Anime, and the differences within genres in Anime need further attention. It is my hope that this study can begin a discussion on this topic for future research.

Many Anime are series that run for two seasons of twelve or thirteen episodes, concluding the series at around twenty-six episodes. The majority of Anime discussed here are such twenty-six episode series, though films, longer, and shorter series are included as well. Anime is still relatively young and the newest Anime are perhaps the most built up in terms of formal structures—these Anime have a longer Anime tradition to follow and the conventions have been more clearly established. This is not to say that older Anime are not worth investigation, but that for the purposes of this argument the last fifteen years would suffice. Thus the Anime examined here are largely from the period 1995–2010, with a few Anime on the fringes of this time span. It is within this period that many of the now oft-cited Anime were produced and contains the latest generation of landmark Anime that have heavily influenced the art form. It is also during this span of time that the number of Anime produced and its endorsement overseas began to increase dramatically.[31]

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[31] This is based on data gathered from both Animenewsnetwork.com's encyclopedia, and anidb.net's Anime database, as well as on reports posted on the JETRO website. See "Anime Industry in Japan," ed. Anime and Manga Entertainment (The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), 2005). "Japan Animation Industry Trends," ed. Japanese Economy Division (JETRO Japan Economic Monthly, 2005).

   Even within such a small time frame, the amount of Anime produced is
staggering and in-depth evaluation of all of them is a near impossible task.
Larger conclusions about the art form are difficult as the sheer quantity of
material is bound to produce some discrepancies. Many preferred works
have been left out and some have been included as they have been largely
unmentioned in the academic discourse (to my knowledge). This research
involved a wide survey and I have included a perhaps overwhelming
amount of examples directly in the writing to give hard evidence of the
patterns observed and stated here. Much of the Anime corpus in the aca-
demic canon is still being defined but there is a large amount of attention
given to the works by Miyazaki Hayao, Satoshi Kon, and Oshii Mamoru,
among a few others. I have left out many Miyazaki and Ghibli works from
this discussion because Miyazaki consciously differentiates himself from
"Anime" proper.[32] Miyazaki is "Anime" in the English meaning as "anima-
tion from Japan," but Miyazaki (especially in his later work) relies on a
different semiotic system of sources than the larger, more serialized Anime
that make up the bulk of this book's discussion. This is not to say that the
formal theory delineated here cannot be applied to Miyazaki's works, but
rather to stress that Miyazaki and Ghibli are their own brand that deserve
separate discussion based on their own circumstances and specific style of
Anime. One major distinction between Miyazaki, Kon, and Oshii is that
Miyazaki is definitively in the global and local mainstream, viewed "by all
ages," whereas Kon and Oshii still enjoy a "subcultural prestige" in their
relative obscurity, especially in comparison to Miyazaki (e.g. they have
not won an American Academy Award). This brings them closer to the
other examples of Anime discussed in the book. All three directors pro-
duce brilliant and sophisticated masterpieces but they are noted for
their particular distinction, and it is their particularity that I wish to high-
light by leaving them out of the focus of this study. Each has their own
unique style that is recognizable and distinct. Much (deserved) attention
has already been given to their work, and though their productions fit well
into the patterns detailed here, I will only be giving them brief attention as
their works make up only a small fraction of the greater Anime corpus that
has hitherto been unexamined, especially in English. Miyazaki's work is
not necessarily emblematic of Anime as a whole. To a much lesser degree,
this can also be said of Satoshi Kon and Mamuro Oshii's productions,
though they clearly work within the typified Anime semiotic framework

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[32] Miyazaki and Ghibli instead call themselves "*manga eiga*" or "Manga Movies".
Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 35.

and thus are closer to the larger Anime industry's productions than Miyazaki's works. Another often cited director is Anno Hideaki and his famous Anime *Evangelion*. There are many unexamined works that deserve their due course in the academe, but I have included *Evangelion*[33] in almost every chapter for a number of reasons: as stated before it would rank amongst the most popular points of reference, well known by most fans, scholars, and even by non-specialists; it is also an epoch-defining Anime and an exemplary example of the use of the Anime form, making it a prime selection to cite throughout the book to illustrate the Anime form's various structures.

Comparing Forms

To map out Anime's form, we must first get a grasp of its structure. Within both Anime and the three forms of theater there is a particular interrelationship between part and whole that is essential to their construction and effective execution. The following section of this book examines the seemingly paradoxical practice of simultaneously unified and separate parts and whole in Anime, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki. In all of these art forms, definitive parts (actors, musicians, costumes, musical and narrative structures, etc.) interact with each other and the work in its entirety. These units are placed in a specific configuration, each partition contributing to a larger unit, which in turn is layered upon another unit, building upwards and downwards. This is most specifically evident in the musical and narrative structures of the performances. Yuda Yoshio and Yokomichi Mario have both described such structures, in Bunraku and Noh respectively, as *yosegi zaiku*, which Andrew Gerstle translates as "mosaic".[34]

 As animation, Anime is comprised of various "parts":[35] painted on celluloid (or computer), character parts are arranged against various backdrops, organized between multiple layers, pulled, spun, and moved— i.e. animated. As the frames pile up, and movement arises, they become

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[33] This is referring to both the original series (*Shin Seiki Evangelion, Neon Genesis Evangelion,* 1995–1996), the first films (*Evangelion: Death and Rebirth,* 1997; *End of Evangelion,* 1997) and the recent *Rebuild of Evangelion* (*Evangelion 1.0: You Are* (*Not*) *Alone,* 2007; *Evangelion 2.0: You Can* (*Not*) *Advance,* 2009; *Evangelion 3.0: You Can* (*Not*) *Redo,* 2012-forthcoming).

[34] This is largely in regard to musical, narrative structures. Andrew C. Gerstle, *Circles of Fantasy: Convention in the Plays of Chikamatsu* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1986) 40; Yushio Yuda, *Jōruri shi ronko* (*Essays on the History of Jōruri*). (Tokyo, Chuo Koron *Sha*, 1975). 73–74.

[35] As Lamarre has asserted, one cannot ignore the animetic processes that produce the Anime themselves.
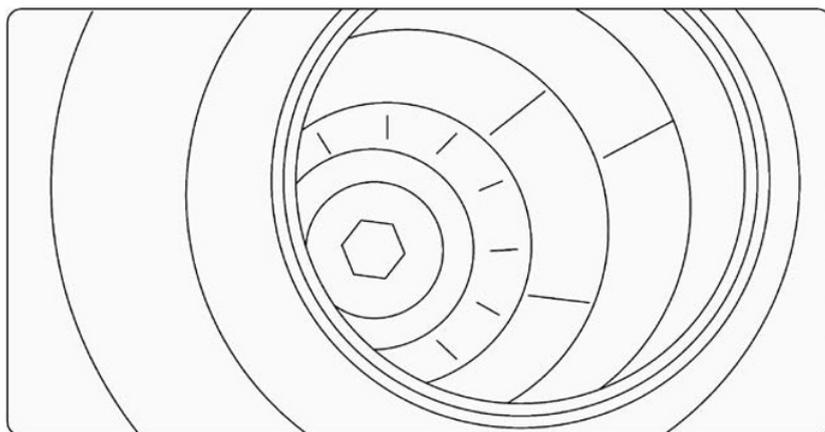
Figure 1.6. A mosaic configuration of various parts that are integral to the greater whole. Each segment is "nested," with smaller and smaller parts within the larger whole. Every piece is distinct, but fades into the bigger picture. I prefer the term "mosaic" as it emphasizes the aesthetic focused nature of this configuration.

scenes, arranged together to form episodes, the combination of which create story-arcs, all of them taken together as the Anime itself. An effective way to visualize this is also as a nested, mosaic system—individual parts that fade into a greater system, but with no part more privileged than the other, each segment crucial to the larger image. The form of Anime arises from the patterns that Anime follows, and indeed, they work as a moving mosaic of pieces and parts that manifest in a whole, much like the physical process of animation. Analyzing Anime, Noh, Bunraku and Kabuki as mosaic provides a crucial method for visualizing the structures and mechanics of the aesthetics of these arts. In a mosaic, each part is distinct, but every part is integral to the whole, larger image—every segment is separate but indivisible from the others. The relationship between the pieces is what gives each part and the whole meaning.[36] These parts

36 I am indebted to Matt Winchell for providing this simple explanation and accurate observation regarding Sergei Eisenstein's understanding of montage, describing it in relation to Kabuki. Sergei Eisenstein saw this type of relationship between part and whole in the many elements within Kabuki, relating this to cinema's montage in a treatise on film. Eisenstein saw each shot of a montage as an individual world, each building upon the other to then create the whole, and the desired emotional effect within the spectator. He saw this practice already being used within the Japanese traditional arts, commenting on both Kabuki, and *ukiyoe* woodblock prints. These forms would take different parts, exaggerate or condense them when needed to a specified effect; each its own unit, but putting them together to create a larger work that would induce a desired result based on the culmination of its parts into a whole. Tsukihashi Osamu notes that within the modern

run into and away from each other, combining, repeating and reiterating themselves on multiple levels within the mosaic. Furthermore, the term "mosaic" emphasizes the aesthetic nature of this structure.

   As explained by Gunji Masakatsu, the parts that make up the play and/ or aesthetic need to appear almost seamless in their flow.[37] Paradoxically, they are also distinct divisions that come together to make up the final work. This is not only limited to the world of traditional theater. Explaining the mosaic concept, Andrew Gerstle remarks: "Indeed, this skill of arranging disparate elements into a unified whole is a marked characteristic of all Japanese arts, whether graphic, literary, dramatic, or musical."[38] Beyond just Japan, this structure of a whole made of interconnected, separate-indivisible parts is not unique to Kabuki, Bunraku, Noh, or Anime in the context of World Theater and media. However, it is the particular manner in which these parts are organized and integrated into the whole that is shared by Noh, Bunraku, Kabuki, and Anime.

   In the traditional theater, specifically the Noh Theater, the general structure is based on the concept of *jo-ha-kyū* (序破急). Loosely translated it means introduction-break-rapid. Originally taken from traditional court music, this take on beginning, development, and conclusion governs all aspects of Noh, guiding the narrative, pacing, and musical structure of a play. In Noh, a day's program consists of five separate plays, each with its own plot, that are also organized according to *jo-ha-kyū* to produce a single day's event.[39] Kabuki and Bunraku would also follow this pattern and produce a day's program of a few separate plays. Although the practice of a full day's course does not occur frequently in contemporary

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Japanese language itself we find a good example of a mosaic system as well. The Sino-Japanese characters used are based on a number of radicals, able to be read as words by themselves with a specific meaning attributed to them. These radicals are then placed together to form a larger character with a separate meaning. That character can then be placed next to another or a series of characters to create a larger word or concept with another meaning. As the characters are taken from the Chinese system, this is evident in Chinese as well, particularly the traditional characters. For Einsenstein's article, see "An Unexpected Juncture." *Selected Works, Volume I: Writings, 1922–1934.* Ed., Trans. Richard Taylor. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988). For Tsukihashi, see "*Eizougihou to sakuhin no kouzou: eva sutorakucha* (The Filmographical Structure of Evangelion: Anime as Hyper Picture-card Show)." *Evangelion Works* (Comp. Tokyo: Gianax, 1998), 43–46.

   [37] Masakatsu Gunji, *Kabuki no bigaku* (*The Aesthetics of Kabuki*) (Tokyo: Engeki Shuppansha, 1975), 76.

   [38] Gerstle, *Circles of Fantasy*: 4.

   [39] The *ha* section would be divided into three different parts totally in five plays: *jo, ha1, ha2, ha3, kyū.* Kyōgen pieces are included between each Noh play and every Kyōgen piece also follows the principles of *jo-ha-kyū.*

performances, this structure was and still is the basic structure for the planning of a performance's schedule. In other words, a *ha* play will never precede a *jo* play if multiple plays are presented. These parts are taken together as a single unit and simultaneously with the larger whole; each piece is distinct but fades into the larger mosaic. Going deeper than that, the *jo-ha-kyū* system separates those larger parts down further to the individual plays, then those respective parts separate again within the plays, getting smaller and smaller. Zeami Motokiyo, who first applied this theory to Noh, remarks that they can even be traced down to a single note of music that itself possess a *jo*, *ha*, and *kyū* segment and that this theory can be applied to anything, not just Noh or music.[40] Each piece works off of the previous one and plays into the next, creating a system of layering, each part building on another to create the mosaic of the work itself. This type of mosaic system is perpetuated throughout the entire structure of Noh in multiple areas and aspects, most noticeably in the music, dance, and narrative patterns.

In Anime, this mosaic system is very clearly seen in the way it is largely consumed, as episodes. The tendency for Anime is to be episodic, with largely serialized productions. This probably developed for economic and marketing purposes, but regardless of the reasons, it has become a defining aspect of the form of the art. Each episode stands alone by itself within the series, but, put together constitutes the series as a whole. Even if the episodes do not necessarily linearly connect, they make up the Anime's contents; building upon the information within each episode, the Anime constructs a narrative that is taken *in toto* as the series itself. Within a typical episodic Anime series there are specific segments of the narrative that can also be seen as divisions with the story; story-arcs that follow a certain pattern. These frequently used methods of pacing and story-telling are effectively mapped out with the original *jo-ha-kyū* system from the theater. Using this concept of layering pieces upon each other in a mosaic structure, we can start to dissect the other elements of Anime's form.

Anime and the theater art forms frequently use references from external media (as well as self-reflexive references) to add layers of tangibility and interaction with the viewers. We can view them as a picture mosaic, made up of different individual images that ultimately form one larger

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[40] Zeami, Rimer, and Yamazaki, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*: 20, 185.

image.[41] For centuries the theatrical forms have borrowed material from real life events (popular scandals), or selected verses from well know poetry (*waka, haiku*), or the Japanese classics (such as *The Tale of Genji*, or *Tales of Ise*). Famous folk tales or legends were also used, and even references from within the theater world itself were frequent. Noh's use of reference to famous places, poems, people or songs (*honzetsu*) is crucial to the construction of the play and its atmosphere. This added extra meaning to the plays, building upon the previous feelings, information, and expectations the viewers had regarding these references, using them to induce the participation of the spectators, layering the emotions to create a desired aesthetic and emotional effect. Kabuki productions often use commonly known *sekai* (worlds) in which a new play is written. These various *sekai* would all feature a particular historical background, rules, characters, and events the audience would be expected to know before even watching the play. These associations were an integral part of the play's success.

As a post-modern art form, Anime is filled with intertextual pieces from every source of media: Manga, literature, film, music, history, the graphic arts, theater, even other Anime themselves, with content from all over the world. These intertextual parts allow expectations to be built upon the references, and are either altered or played out to the delight of the spectator. As the series develops, these are then layered upon each other and create a new work built from compounding previous ones. They also add to the atmosphere of the Anime, constructing a world, and producing an intertextual network of associations, a mosaic system of references that creates a particular aesthetic for the Anime.

Within Anime, a big emphasis is made on both the separation and interrelation of the internal and the external. Many Anime focus on the external world the narrative takes place in but at the same time explains the internal aspects of the characters that inhabit that world. While the external parts are at times exquisitely beautiful and unreal, the internal can be very real and affecting. Bunraku, Kabuki, and Noh all share this quality, emphasizing the distance between the very distinctly unreal external world and poignant internal world of the characters. This separation can be seen in a literal manifestation in the Bunraku puppet theater: the silent puppets being manipulated on stage and a chanter (*tayū*)

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[41] One often finds images of Albert Einstein or Muhammed Ali that are picture mosaics of various photographs of them, forming their physical image by their juxtaposition.

reciting their emotions on the side. Costumes also play an important role in all three forms in expressing the inner attributes of the characters portrayed on stage. In Anime, costume changes, as well as *mecha* changes, often occur in tandem with the character development, similar to the way a Noh or Kabuki character will change costumes after their true selves are revealed.

The settings created in Anime appear as intricate and elaborate backdrops for the drama, each with particular societal structures for the characters to move through. These are some of the most alluring parts of the works. Yet just as often it is the characters that are the draw for the audience, and in many series it is difficult to determine whether we are watching a story about a world and its characters, or a story of the characters within a world. Anime narratives sometimes produce this indistinctness: the environments the drama takes place in are so detailed and rich, with their own cultures, histories and rules that it is difficult to decide whether it is a show on the characters, the world they live in, or both. But the joy and the beauty of watching them come from this ambiguity. In Anime, both parts can be taken individually, and yet they exist inseparably as part of the Anime's aesthetic. To describe the environment around the characters, its rules, culture, and history, I will be using the term "world-setting"— a direct translation of a combination of "*sekai*" (world) from theatrical literature and practices, and "*settei*" (settings, establishment, creation) from Anime terminology.[42] Ultimately, the characters are intrinsically tied to their world-setting, and it is the interaction and tension between the characters and their world-setting that produce the aesthetic world of an Anime.

The theater forms also have a distinct relationship between characters and world-setting. This is not just found in the use of *sekai*. Setting has a crucial role in many plays, whether spectacularly constructed on stage as in Kabuki and Bunraku, or elegantly crafted in the poetry of Noh. Kabuki and Bunraku provide notable examples. In the tragedies in Edo period

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[42] Ian Condry uses the identical English term "world-setting" to denote generally the same concept: the setting the drama takes place in, an entity distinct from the characters. However, my conception of the term differs somewhat, as his is a translation of the Japanese word "*sekaikan*" as "world-setting" and designates "*settei*" (translated as "premises") as a separate concept that, along with characters, story, and world-setting, make up variable elements of Anime and other popular media forms that can be used for description and analysis. This is discussed in more detail in the chapter "Character and World." For Condry's article, see Ian Condry, "Anime Creativity: Characters and Premises in the Quest for Cool Japan," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 2–3 (2009).

theater, it is hard to tell if the tragic aspect is the character's plight, or the rigidly structured world of the Tokugawa social system which sustained their inescapable situation. However, in the theater, the actors are given a central role, and the indistinctness of focus between world-setting and character is different than that found in Anime.

Every part of these forms play off each other to combine in the final production. The individual musical, visual, intertextual, and narrative elements of the works interact with one another in the particular manner that forms the conglomerate definition of each art form. These elements layer upon each other creating a composite of interacting parts, formulating into a whole in a mosaic formation. It is this structural aspect—the mosaic, the paradoxical system where each part is on equal terms with its surrounding parts, separate-individual units forming an integrated whole—that relates Anime to Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki and is the fundamental concept that rules the interaction of all other elements.

The third section of this book deals with the mixture of realism (i.e., illusionistic verisimilitude) and unreality (i.e. not pertaining to lived reality) in these arts. These two elements are finely tuned to create poise between the real and the unreal to strike a particular chord in audiences. Perhaps this is most apparent in the medium of animation and the form that Anime takes with it. While animation is a highly malleable form, able to express itself abstractly with ease, Anime (in general) uses a hyperrealist style in creating their backdrops and machines. However this is balanced by the stylized way that the characters, specifically human characters, are drawn. Large eyes, odd hair, and wild costumes are abundant; even the human movement is stylized with speed lines, exaggerations, dynamic stillness,[43] and an odd fluidity in many of their gestures.

The unreal and the real ultimately blend, creating an experience where the action taking place before our eyes is simultaneously accepted and denied. Components of realism and unreality come together to ultimately produce the final work, both interacting with each other to create the balance between them. In the Japanese theater world, this tradition goes back centuries; the great playwright of Bunraku, Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725) even explains in his famous treatise that "Art is something which lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal."[44] It is

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[43] This is a term Steinberg uses to describe Thomas Lamarre's discussion of limited animation in terms of the dynamism of the still images used. Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: 6, 213n21.

[44] Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 63.

this aesthetic of blurring the real to fantastically unreal heights, and depicting the unreal in exquisite detail, that is found in both the theater and Anime, and is a continuing marker of their forms.[45] Modifying Richard Emmert's method of dividing parts of a performing art form, we can separate the pieces of the production into inner and outer elements of both unreal and realistic properties: the outer refers to the physical parts that make up the art form itself, such as costumes and stages; the inner pieces are those that pertain to the story, the characters and subject matter.[46]

The outer unreal elements can be found throughout the Japanese theatrical world in all the different forms described here. This can be seen in Noh with the use of masks, abstract acting, and sparse stage decoration, if any. The chorus and musicians are placed in full view and are on stage with the actors. In Kabuki the costumes and *kumadori* make-up create a conspicuous, unreal beauty, while the male *onnagata* actors play very convincing women on stage. In fact in all the theatrical forms only men perform, acting both female and male roles. In Bunraku, the characters are not even human, played instead by the puppets, controlled by three people in full view. The puppet's lines are then sung by the chanter seated to the side of the stage. In Noh, Bunraku and Kabuki, the use of music is an integral part of their presentations; dance is also essential in their acting styles, creating a very particular, stylized form of expression that is very clearly upfront in its unreality.

In Anime, the outer unreal elements are, as stated before, evident in the medium itself. Animation itself is unreal, both in providing the illusion of movement, and the fact that everything seen on screen has been created from nothing—either drawn or computer animated. Like Bunraku, human actors do not actually perform before us, instead, only the stylized Anime character images and their distinct Anime style voices are seen and heard. Interestingly enough, in contrast to the all-male stages of the theater, many times women will play the voices of male characters in Anime. Costumes are frequently brought to the extremes ranging from a schoolboy clad in their school uniform's shirt and pants, to a gunslinger on a

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[45] Antonia Levi has previously found a connection between Japanese theater and Anime, specifically in the use of the unreal and the real, stating that "Japan's popular media have retained that preference for the unreal over the real that characterized Noh, Kabuki, Bunraku, and the Takarazuka Theater." Here I am focusing on the combination of reality and unrealism, not just one or the other. See Antonia Levi, *Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation*. 5th. (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1996), 22.

[46] See "Expanding Nō's Horizons: Consideration for a New No Perspective." *Nō and Kyōgen in the Contemporary World*. Ed. James R. Brandon. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 24.

desert planet draped in a flowing red trench coat.[47] As many Anime are of the Science Fiction and Fantasy genres, the buildings, ships, and machinery are all produced specifically for that Anime and do not exist in our reality.[48]

Yet these outer creations are articulated in a highly realistic style. Every detail of the imagined landscapes, worlds, buildings, machinery; all of this is created to look believably tangible. Often scenes of nature will look like a realist painting, mimicking the real world very precisely. While movement can be stylized, it at times captures the slightest twitches to add an extra layer to the believability of a character's persona. In the theater the outer elements offset their unreality by balancing them with realistic elements. For example, Bunraku uses puppets, yet they move in an extremely real manner; while Kabuki actors, played by live humans, will often move with a very unreal feel. In Noh, although the masks can be considered an unreal aspect, Donald Keene notes that, while they are stylized and unreal in their appearance, they can also be used to add reality by creating a more believable image of the character for the audience, for example, in the case of a man playing a woman's character.[49] Although the props in Noh are largely minimalist objects symbolic in nature, certain props are realistic to add authenticity. A white frame of a shape resembling a boat is a stand in for ships of all sizes, but spear, sword, bucket, and spinning wheel props are actually used on stage by the actors. Whereas Noh has a very sparsely decorated stage, Kabuki and Bunraku are filled with elaborate sets that are reproductions of real world objects. Expansive backdrops, two story structures with sliding doors that can be climbed into, all are faithfully reproduced on stage. Even references help to add reality to the productions by making them more relatable to outside sources.

This mix of unreal and real outer elements creates an interesting look and feel on stage and on screen; uncanny and instantly recognizable. Ultimately, they create an unreal aspect but this is further balanced by the inner component's realism. This is most apparent in the breadth of human emotional depth produced through the characters and story. Tragedy is frequently the outcome of these narratives and many times violence and other intense events are portrayed in stark detail. However, the distance

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[47] The first example could be from many Anime, but the second is from *Trigun* (*Trigun,* 1998–1998).

[48] Except as merchandise created based on the Anime. Steinberg provides some insight on Anime merchandise in the lived environment. See Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan.*

[49] Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 55.

created through the unreal aspects allows the art to be accepted by the viewer and seen as "beautiful" through their stylized presentation. The stories, characters, and backdrops can often be quite literally out of this world. Demons, spirits, gods, and legendary heroes are all unreal subjects that are common characters in both the theater and in Anime. Many times, character types are consciously used over and over again to create a system of references that plays with the audiences' expectations. These characters can be outrageous examples of evil or good, or something in between. Plotlines and the worlds created can themselves be unreal with almost ridiculous premises, yet this is just a stylized stage for the human drama that grounds the unreal in the reality of emotion produced. Even though the world itself is ultimately an imaginary one in Anime, it appears tangible due to the detail put into its creation. Similarly, Kabuki and Bunraku, at one time popular theater forms, acutely portrayed Edo period life in Japan despite the unreal methods they used to express them. The unreal elements highlight the realism, and the realism highlights the unreality, allowing both aspects to be thought of as beautiful, simultaneously separately and together.

Another aspect that these art forms share is the self-referential indication that the world created is fabricated, expressed within the scripts themselves. Constant references to "other worlds," the next life, and dreams are abundant in all the art forms. At times, in Kabuki, the actors will even directly address the audience or themselves as star actors within the plays. As in cinema, Anime characters have voice-overs which allow them to direct their speech to the viewers. Many times characters will even declare that this is an Anime they are acting in. There are also a large number of instances where the animation style will suddenly change or live action footage is used within the Anime, as if to point out once more that this is not real.

All of these different elements, stacked upon each other and placed in a mosaic structure ultimately come together to produce the individual aesthetics that each art form strives for. These conventions provide them with limitations, but this gives them freedom to move within them by providing an ever-ready repertoire of techniques and patterns to draw from. The upfront unreality of the forms embraces the stylization and conventions instead of attempting to conceal them. What links the distinct and varying forms of Anime, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki is this focus on their conventionalized aesthetics, a direct result of their observance of formal conventions. Hyperbolized aesthetics lies at the center of all these arts, each with a very specific style, a "look and feel" created through the deep

levels of conventionalized stylization found throughout the multimedia forms. The very performance of these conventions defines a work as an Anime (or Bunraku, Kabuki, or Noh) as opposed to another art form. This is the central theme of the fourth section of the book: the examination of the conventionalized aesthetics and how their execution is central to Anime. The particular formal conventions have created certain prescribed limits that establish a distinct aesthetic, and the very performance of these conventions is central to the productions, on par with that of narrative content/plot. The composite performance of the formal components—of the balanced combination of real and unreal on various levels, particular narrative structures, costuming, conventionalized expressions, heavy reliance on intertextual elements, and distinctive visual and aural style— produces the mosaic that is the final work, executed in the aesthetic register of Anime. While within the over-arching Anime conventionalized aesthetic there are many different styles and modes, they all fall under the greater aesthetic of the art itself, differentiated by distinctions within the formal system.

Intricate costumes, elegant movements, powerful music, and scripts rich in imagery and intertext create a heightened aesthetic experience in the performance. In many places it has been said that the purpose of Kabuki is to be beautiful; Zeami wrote numerous pragmatic treatises on the Noh Theater, discussing the particulars of its beauty and how to create them; Chikamatsu discusses the precision of balance in the real and unreal in art—emphasized aesthetic specificity is critical to these art forms. The spectacle of the multi-medic sensations produced on stage is an integral part of the three theater forms, impressing spectators through epic grandeur or intensely refined grace. Anime also creates extraordinary visual and aural effects that are particular to its form. The unreal elements of both the theater and Anime are embraced to create a type of beauty that is unique to their respective forms of expression. One of the goals of these forms is to produce a specific aesthetic result, taking all the aspects of pacing, reference, realistic but unreal fantasy world and characters, placing them within a carefully composed mosaic—a blatantly conventionally stylized creation whose very conventionalized stylization is central to the attraction and consumption of the art. That is to say, the form itself *is* the content. Thus, in Anime are genres or shows defined thematically or aesthetically? Are genres defined by visual style, audio sound selection, voice-over style, and/or narrative pacing and structure as opposed to plot and narrative content? Seemingly minute differences in something such as style of visual Anime representation (e.g. size of the eyes) can affect

the tone of the series and a reading of the narrative content. While various different narratives can be displayed in these arts, the stylized form subsumes them. It is this focus on conventionalized aesthetics that exposes how Anime relates to the aesthetic traditions of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, with different content, for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

From the narrative and pacing structures, to a particular poise of the real and unreal, to the concentration on certain conventional limits to attain a certain aesthetic standard, it is apparent that Anime has developed into an art form with distinct formal qualities. The final section of this book analyzes an entire Anime within the context of all the formal elements to draw out its individual structure as one last complete example of the intricacies of the form of Anime.

As in the traditions of the Japanese theaters, Anime practices the mixing of paradoxes into an engaging symphony. What we see both on stage and on screen are beautiful illusions, an uncanny mix of realism and unreality, two seemingly separate parts that combine into an inseparable whole to create the grand mirage of these conventionalized arts. As we understand the form of Anime, with specific viewing modes and formal patterns, we can begin to read each Anime in a different manner. Interestingly, by looking through the lens from Anime to theater, we can see that many of the modes of viewing Noh, Bunraku, Kabuki, and perhaps other Asian performing arts as well, are practiced throughout the world in media one would not expect. We just need to turn our gaze from the screen to the stage.

PART TWO

A SIMULTANEOUS PART AND WHOLE

PIECES OF A SHOOTING STAR[1]

There is an interesting correlation between the structure of the works found in Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki and those in Anime. The plays in each form of theater are divided into distinct segments, and those parts then interact with one another to form the whole of the performance. The organized dispersal into fragments that are paradoxically taken both as separate parts and a complete whole is the same governing structural practice that is found in Anime. Distinct worlds, frozen gestures, separate sections and scenes versus the flow of the narrative, a distinction between internal and external—all function as necessary parts of a larger whole in these art forms.

One of the challenging aspects in analyzing Anime is the length of their narratives. Unlike cinema where a single film may be taken as a text, Anime can run the span of hundreds of episodes. Many Anime are more than a dozen episodes, often lasting at least a season or two. But the length of the narrative does not discount the importance of each individual episode. A single episode (or two) can be integral to the Anime's popularity, scorn, or infamy—a famous example is the eruption of anger from disappointed fans to the last episodes of *Evangelion* (*Shin Seiki Evangelion*, 1995–1996). Furthermore, when we discuss a single Anime, it is a whole that is comprised of various individual episodes. This interaction between the part and the whole, being simultaneously distinct episodes and a larger narrative, is a marker of the Anime form.[2] Furthermore, many Anime series then produce OVAs, and films. Anime also have Manga (or vice versa), video games, Light Novels (recently, many Anime have been based on Light Novels), figurines, and many other goods that are made with images or characters from the Anime.[3] While these products will not be discussed in detail here, are they not also part of the large whole of that Anime? Each individual piece is separate, but they are integral to the whole.

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[1] The title of episode 22 of the Anime *Wolf's Rain* (*Wolf's Rain,* 2003–2004).

[2] This is, of course, true of many television programs, including TV dramas.

[3] To follow Steinberg's assertion, Anime is the core of a larger media system. See Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan.*

The interrelation of part and whole is, of course, important to many art forms. But it is the specific modes, methods, and structures of their interaction within Anime, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki that I wish to highlight here. As stated in the introduction, Anime takes a specific form with certain stylistic qualities that limit it, and it is the similarities in the structures of those conventionalized limitations that bear a resemblance to the theater, thus providing an excellent foil to flesh out the Anime form. These limits though, are liberating, and create a sense of familiarity, allowing for pleasure through such familiarity and enjoyment through the occasional breaking with such expectations.[4] The organization of the "parts" that create these limits is the subject of the following section of this book, and will be explored from a number of different angles. Much of this chapter will be lead offs into the following chapters, but for considerations of space, other aspects will only be touched on here.

In her article "Extending the Limits of Possibility: Style and Structure in Modern Japanese Fiction," Orbaugh describes a "metaphor-based structure" in author Shiga Naoya's (1883–1971) work, specifically that of *Takibi* (1920). Orbaugh explains that patterns of meaning are provided by various structural devices in a text. For example, plot provides the mechanics for weaving meaning from the text through posing a question and promising to deliver the answer later, each piece of information modifying the previous and the next. The question posed shapes the following pattern. Similarly, metaphor allows for patterns of meaning that are woven from the text, determined by the original construction of the metaphor. That metaphor functions by the placement of two previously disparate elements, (e.g. "images, concepts, mythical constructs") in closely conjoining positions.[5] Orbaugh goes on to describe how in Shiga's works, certain images and phrasings "recur, combine, dissociate into different groupings, and then combine again, to produce a web of connections" hidden beneath the apparent simplicity of his written style.[6] Furthermore, she explains that in a metaphor-based structure:

> All parts of the text are related equally to the whole...this sort of structure is figured more like a web of interconnecting, inseparable elements. Until the final predicate, it is impossible to know how the various, seemingly

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[4] In regards to Noh Theater, see Karen Brazell Monica Bethe, "Noh as a System of Performance," http://www.glopad.org/jparc/?q=en/node/22774#footnote1_ibp92ku.

[5] Orbaugh, "Extending the Limits of Possibility: Style and Structure in Modern Japanese Fiction," 357.

[6] Ibid., 354.

> unconnected, elements are related…this may be reminiscent to the production of meaning in a *waka*, a *hokku*, a *renga* segment, or a Noh play, where the juxtaposition and interweaving of imagery, pulling together ideas and images not usually associated, induces a sudden insight into a conceptual or emotional complex, a particular human emotion."[7]

I will suggest that Anime—as a form with particular conventions—exhibits a similar structure of equally related, inseparable parts that weave together certain patterns through the juxtaposition of various images (in this case, literally), producing a larger meaning and depiction of the human (and post-human) condition.

Such a system is also evident in the very processes of animation that produces an Anime. Lamarre's conceptions of reading Anime as an exploded view, like that of an assembly diagram, described in his book *The Anime Machine*, can help to explain why and how Anime has developed into the form that it has. Lamarre discusses the implications of the materiality of Anime as (limited) animation. He also describes the use of parts in Anime that are appreciated separately, and within the whole, stating that the exploded view is a way of seeing "with all the bits at once apart and together—an explosion arrayed across multiple planes yet in a single plane."[8] This is due in part to the compositing process of celluloid animation, with its multiple layers, one on top of the other, ultimately creating the animetic machine—a combination of all the animation processes— that puts specific limits on the actual animation, and allows for certain types of movements, perspectives, and relations to technology. *The Anime Machine* takes you through the process of how Anime works as animation, and how and why it responds to *otaku* and their consumption habits in the ways that it does.

As Lamarre observes, there is a choice given in Anime narrative as it bends and twists along different trajectories, multiple foci from which the viewer is allowed to choose her central concern.[9] The spectator can make his/her own decision on where to focus attention within the larger production, whether it is visually on the image on screen with multiple viewable areas, aurally through the soundtrack and voices, or in the various plotlines. Lamarre notes this type of selection available to the audiences of Anime, stating that "the viewer is a reader or interactor" that can choose

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[7] Ibid., 365.
[8] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 148.
[9] Ibid., 108.

their own "line of sight."[10] He comments on how viewing Anime as a multiplanar image (an image with multiple planes, one that has multiple parts) allows us to see how many *otaku* fans can celebrate not only the director of productions, but writers, producers, animation directors, and character designers. Furthermore, it allows for various areas of enjoyment, as character and/or *mecha* design may be just as intriguing (if not more so) than the actual narrative, or the battle sequences more important than the character development.[11] In this way, a sense of variety and choice in modes, or rather, areas of viewing are readily apparent in Anime.

Kabuki, Noh, and Bunraku invite us to similar situations. The staged productions of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, allow for multiple viewing selections by the audience (see Figure 2.1). The eye is free to travel in various directions, and appreciation of the performance varies widely. Many go to Noh and Bunraku performances just to hear the singing and chanting styles of the poetic scripts, which then becomes the focus of that audience member's delight. Many times they are students of the dances or chanting themselves. In Bunraku, the *tayū* is always in full view, and at crucial moments, audience members will often turn their heads to view him exclusively. Within Kabuki productions, many characters will often appear on stage at once, with various characters doing different things—sitting down, waving fans, or performing different minor actions, chiming in when needed while other characters do the majority of the talking. In this way the audience can focus on one area, but is able to survey a larger scene with more occurring than just one single event. When viewing Noh, due to the shape of the stage, seating is arranged in a very limited number with seats facing both the front of the stage and the side perpendicular to it. Due to this, Kunio Komparu notes that each seat gives a different perspective on the action occurring on stage.[12] The focus of the production can change depending on the location of the audience member. Being up close allows the audience to focus on the actor's face and mask. If seated perpendicular to the stage, the audience gets a forward view of the chorus. When seated far in the back, the slow and refined movements of the *shite* play off the majestic pine in the background, and the different spatial design elements—based on placement of the *shite* (different in some schools of Noh) in time with the music and in conjunction with

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[10] Ibid., 141.
[11] Ibid., 145.
[12] See Kunio Komparu, *Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives* on different modes of appreciation of Noh.

Figure 2.1. Multiple Viewpoints In Japanese Traditional Theater: The staged productions of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki (shown in that order, top to bottom), allow for various viewing selections by the audience. The eye is free to travel in numerous directions, and appreciation of the performance varies widely.

Top: Noh performance of *Akogi,* Inoue Yoshihisa, August 25, 1985: Courtesy of Monica Bethe and the Global Performing Arts Database. Middle: Kabuki image courtesy of the Kaizawa Kabuki Collection, Asia Collection, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library. Bottom: "The White Fox of Shinoda The Two Look-Alike Servants," May 1976. Courtesy of C.V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University.

narrative development—are highlighted. In this way, there is a choice of viewing perspective in the theatrical world as well, with different modes of appreciation readily available as part of the enjoyment for the spectator.

It is important to note that most Anime (and specifically those analyzed in this study) conclude their narratives. While there are a number of Japanese animated television shows that run for long periods of time, such as *Sazae-san* (*Sazae-san*, 1969-Ongoing), many of the most popular Anime for avid viewers, both locally in Japan and abroad, are those that (eventually) conclude.[13] Furthermore, many *otaku* fans are interested in Anime that have a conclusion, some sort of closure to encapsulate the characters and world they enjoy in that segment. This is a significant marker in the form of Anime—that the segments are finite, the Anime narrative begins at a certain point and ends at a certain point. However, they can continue on in a different series, or in a different media form. It is the episode, the story-arc, the series, that must conclude. Due to this structure, other patterns within the Anime start to arise; there is a certain rhythm to the events, the development of story arcs, the build, consummation, and pauses of drama and action. Because of the general underlying knowledge that an individual Anime's narrative must begin and end within a particular time period (e.g. one season, thirteen episodes), certain practices and conventionalized patterns develop. This is common to many different art forms including film and theater. Specifically in traditional theaters, repetitions of rhythms in narratives, actions, and aesthetics are considered to be conventions of its form. It is with this lens that I will examine the narrative and pacing patterns in Anime as parts of its formal structure.

A crucial "part" of the Anime form are the characters. Many of the characters in Anime are archetypal "templates," base character personalities which are inserted into different situations with different external designs and voices. The design aspects in particular are almost standardized in their ubiquitous use in the Anime worlds. Similar hair styles, eyes, noses, scars, clothing, body proportions, voices, and color patterns recur throughout different Anime. Azuma's database theory provides excellent evidence for this. Azuma explains the use of different stock elements to create multiple characters, all organizing the same elements, but each time rearranging them to produce new characters. Popular characters are added to that database, and then their parts are rearranged to create the

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[13]　Evidenced even by a quick look on a prominent fan site such as MyAnimeList.net.

next new character.[14] Across the spectrum, certain character traits and physical design aspects are repeatedly reused in very similar characters, largely expressing/representing similar meanings. This mixing and matching of aspects is prevalent in character design in the theatrical world, in which each aspect of the costumes expresses a different meaning for the audience. Such mixing is not just prevalent in the use of character design, but within the narratives of both Anime and the traditional theater. Often the exact same type of character, in the same or similar setting will appear in different categories of the standardized Noh program format. Kabuki and Bunraku had certain *sekai* with specific rules, plot organization and characters that were repeated almost countless times. Through such practices, plot patterns and characters were often recycled and revitalized in Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki. In Anime, this is readily apparent as there is always another adolescent with some strange power that no one else has, or another that has to pilot an enormous machine. There are many other examples, and often these similar plot tropes will repeat and reference themselves across different, separate, Anime worlds.

Other intertextual references are also interspersed in Anime and the theater creating new narratives from previous references. For example, in Noh, there are some plays that quote similar references, but are two different plays. Furthermore, expressions of beauty in Noh poetry, heavily influenced by the communal linked poetry form of *renga*, were often based on a "database" of their own kind, with specific aesthetic rules as to how to link verses, and what words were suitable to follow others, during certain seasons and subjects, etc. They created an extremely complex system of associations, many taken from the world of *waka* poetry that came before it. These poems were directly utilized in Noh lyrics.

This compositional practice of having multiple elements on various levels (plot, character design, etc.) being mixed and matched—the combining of intertextual plot and narrative elements to create new works—is utilized by Anime as well. This is apparent in the frequently repeated storylines of invaders that can only be stopped by a select few,[15] (*Neon Genesis Evangelion, Shin Seiki Evangelion*, 1995; *Rahxephon, Rāzefon,* 2002–2002), or the search for a specific artifice (*Last Exile, Rasuto Eguzairu,* 2003–2003;

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14 Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*: 51–52.
15 This is an extremely popular pattern dating far back into Anime history, including the famous *Uchū Senkan Yamato* (*Space Battleship Yamato*, 1974–1975). As mainly contemporary examples are the subject of this study, Anime examples from the time period of focus are listed.

Freedom, *Furīdamu,* 2006–2008), or a combination of them (*Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit, Seirei no Moribito*, 2007–2007). Again, to continue the use of Noh as an example, as explained above, the general structure of Noh plays follow the same pattern, but the content and pacing is different for each play. This is further separated by the division of the five categories of Noh plays that were canonized in the sixteenth century. There are a set of expectations for the category of Noh play performed. Elements of song, dance, and intertextual source can be mixed with poetry in the conventionalized narrative pattern with a character that is chosen to be appropriate for that category of Noh play, thus creating a new Noh play. This is not to over-simplify Noh (or Anime); such a production is an extremely complex process and very difficult to produce effectively. There are estimates that perhaps thousands of Noh plays have been produced over the centuries, but only 253 are in the current repertoire. It is an excessively challenging task to write a Noh play, and those that have survived up until now contain some of the most enduring[16] sentiments and beauty that have been created in the tradition.

In the current staging of a Noh production, there are often a number of narratives presented at once; at least one Noh play and a separate Kyōgen play. At times two Noh plays are shown. The traditional full day's program, as outlined before, would include five Noh plays with Kyōgen pieces inbetween them. Though each play would be organized to produce the day's full aesthetic, every play was and is a separate narrative, with no connection to the previous or next one in terms of narrative content. In this way, a full day's Noh production has numerous different, smaller narratives that make up the entire production. Noh plays often feature very simple plots that do not focus on narrative development as much as on the exposition of poetry and dance within a narrative setting. This structure will be detailed later in the section on *jo-ha-kyū*, but it is relevant here as well to show there are multiple narrative sections that are taken into account in a single day's set of plays. Kabuki and Bunraku often followed this as well, with various different plays being included in a single program.

Another recurring element in Anime is the frequent use of repetition. As noted above, stories are reworked and reorganized, new additions are created from complex replications of various different tropes. But even

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[16] "Enduring" in the sense that, in the six hundred year history of Noh, the different societies they have been performed in have deemed them important enough to preserve.

within a single Anime, specific segments are repeated over and over, some as flashbacks, others in scenes of transformation, and sometimes just to emphasize a dramatic or comical moment. The use of such repetition will be delineated in the following segments of this section of the book. However, here I would like to note the observation that the repetition of transformations—or various movements directly one after another—to highlight an emotion or scene can be likened to the various movements made multiple times on stage. Often in dance sequences an actor will do something once in one direction, then the same action again in another, or repeat the same action multiple times. This is an attribute that is common in many traditional performing arts around the globe. It is a curious development that in the form of Anime, certain scenes are repeated multiple times to express a specific emotion. For example, in episode 22 of the Anime *Gintama* (*Gintama* 2006–2010), the character of Sarutobi Ayame hears the character Gintoki say something that sparks a deep emotional-sexual response in her. The background cuts away and we see a shot zooming away from her as she is floating in a bubbly pink background. This segment is repeated a number of times as she explains her feelings through voice-over. Such a segment highlighting an emotional/psychological response is standard practice in Anime. This repetition is characteristic of the Anime form, as much as the repetition of stylized movements is in many traditional performing arts (though they each have their respective logic for such actions).

Within Anime, the various different parts (episodes, narrative, design, music, voice-acting, etc.) all compound upon one another, building off of the other and eventually producing the scene, the episode, the series, and the franchise. *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann* (*Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann*, 2007–2007) is an excellent example, an Anime that consciously follows all the clichés of the Anime universes and compiles them into the final product that is the specific Anime itself. The series literally compounds and boxes the various elements and story patterns of other Anime, exposed in the very fact that the robot that is one of the main *mecha* of the Anime, is itself a compound of various other *mecha* in the Anime. Such manipulation of intertextual elements will be detailed in the following chapters. But to begin, we will examine the way that the rhythms and patterns of Anime and the traditional theater play out, and how their unified-separate, total structure is organized, as the basis for how all other parts interact in the forms.

NARRATIVE AND PACING PATTERNS

Evangelion[1] is famous in the Anime fan world for containing a series of seemingly unexpected twists and turns, apparent variations and deviations from the "standard" Anime pattern. Though this is true, I would suggest that it is in fact an exemplary and masterful manipulation of the Anime form, bringing the art to one of its highest crescendos. *Evangelion* is a heightened Anime experience, one that has become common to many Science-Fiction Anime. What sets *Evangelion* apart is the artistry, elegance, and precision with which it produces an almost hyperbolic Anime experience. The entire Anime of *Evangelion* is arranged in fragments. It is a beautifully crafted juxtaposition of various conventional elements, expertly intertwined into one final symphony that has resonated with millions around the globe—as Japanese critics have noted, it is truly an epoch-making Anime. For these reasons, among others mentioned previously, I will be relying on *Evangelion* throughout this project to provide an example that runs evenly within most chapters as a grounding point of reference.

The whole of the original *Evangelion* series (1995–1996) provides a good case study for Anime's narrative and pacing patterns. Each part of the series exemplifies a mosaic structure: single units of images are synced with certain sounds, and organized into smaller segments; these segments combine into larger sections that are grouped to create divisions within an episode; the episodes combine into a larger "story arc" component, the components building into the larger series as a whole. To illustrate this, the two introductory episodes of the *Evangelion* series are excellent points of departure. The first episode begins with segments that start slowly (e.g. a still, serene image), build up to a point (provide new information on the world-setting or a plot twist), then cap off with a spectacle (an explosion; intense, piercing, or grotesque image and/or sound), before repeating this pattern, pulling back the tension with a soft introduction. These compile

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[1] This is referring to both the original series (*Shin Seiki Evangelion, Neon Genesis Evangelion,* 1995–1996), the first films (*Evangelion: Death and Rebirth,* 1997; *End of Evangelion,* 1997) and the recent *Rebuild of Evangelion* (*Evangelion 1.0: You Are (Not) Alone,* 2007; *Evangelion 2.0: You Can (Not) Advance,* 2009; *Evangelion 3.0: You Can (Not) Redo,* 2012-Forthcoming).

and rise in intensity as the segments build up into larger sections, culmi-
nating in the episode's finale. Sometimes the images are still, sometimes
moving; the sounds are softer in the beginning, intricate as they develop
the plot (e.g. voices), and loud at the spectacle. This provides a "push and
pull" of tension, a sense of rhythm in the intensity and stillness of image,
movement, and sound.[2]

The introductory scenes of the first episode exemplify this. The episode
begins with quiet landscapes of a battle ready coastline, introduces the
main characters (Shinji and Misato), a mysterious beast (the Angel), and
ends with massive explosions, leading to ultimately show the grotesque
image of the Angel. Within this larger section, there are smaller segments
that follow the same pattern of introduction, development, then specta-
cle; each of these then pulls back to start a quieter introductory segment.
For instance, at the very start of the episode, after the quiet coastline is
displayed, an evacuated city is shown, leading up to a woman in a blue car,
searching for someone as she tries to navigate through the empty city. This
is the quiet introduction. We are shown the character she is going to pick
up: Shinji, a young adolescent boy, trying to get in contact with the woman
driving around. The phone he is using does not seem to work and from the
corner of his eye he sees a solemn, blue-haired schoolgirl looking at him in
the distance. Birds flying off of power lines above distract him, and when
he turns back, she is gone. These scenes provide us with information on
the characters and lead into the spectacle: a large blast exploding in the
vicinity, startling Shinji as he sees various aircraft battle the giant creature
we saw before. This whole section, as do those that follow, is comprised of
small segments that each start softly, then build up, and end in an explo-
sion (in this case, literally seen and/or heard).

The next segment begins by pulling the tension back. We see a control
center that is monitoring the events (soft introduction), and we learn,
from two older commanding men observing this all, that it has been
fifteen years since these "Angels" have come from (narrative/world-setting
information). Switching the view to behind these men, we see on the large
screen a clear image of this creature: a black figure with an odd, white,
masklike face, large shoulders, and thin, elongated arms and legs (specta-
cle). This segment culminates in the woman we saw earlier saving Shinji,

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[2] Both Lamarre and Steinberg discuss the rhythm in motion and stillness in Anime. See
Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 191. And Steinberg, *Anime's
Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: 17, 36.

cheekily apologizing for being late, narrowly avoiding getting caught in the line of fire, or under the debris from the explosions. This is the spectacle ending that section. The following sections continue with this pattern ultimately leading to the massive N2 bomb explosion, and then the grotesque image of the Angel on the screens in the control center that is monitoring the action. This division—the culmination of all of the segments up until now—builds up to the important world-setting point: the final, epic explosion did not defeat the creature, and thus conventional weapons are useless.

In the following larger division the tension will loosen up, and all the pieces of information we were given in this introduction are developed further. This division is unlike the previous, action/explosion oriented division, differentiating itself from the parts prior and after it by focusing more on the characters and providing us with further information on what is going on in this world we are being introduced to. However, each segment still follows a similar three part pattern to that of the previous division: an introduction, a disruption to the introduction and/or developing it, and finally providing a strong image or sound to conclude; the pattern builds tension to a point, then loosens it up in the next section or larger segment. Every section is again punctuated by a loud noise or intense image, then pulled back; information is provided, and another spectacle. However, this is all much more subdued in tone than the first division, the focus less "action" oriented and more on exploring the world-setting and providing plot and character details. For example, in the car, now attached to a train, Shinji asks Misato if they will be going to his father's place. She confirms this and he flashes back to images of his childhood, a younger Shinji shown left behind crying, letting the word "*otōsan*" (father) escape from the adolescent boy's mouth. This scene is abruptly broken by the loud noise of the train zipping through a station and the corresponding external image, effectively destroying the silence. The tension of that psychological development is then reduced by Misato telling Shinji to get out his ID card his father sent him, handing him a book that has the company name "Nerv" and the words "top secret" written on it, and continuing to talk about why Shinji was called there.

As this middle section of the episode continues, we explore Nerv headquarters, meet another character (Ritsuko) and encounter the Eva *mecha*. These are also organized in the "push and pull" rhythm, repeating this pattern as the tension loosens, finally building up to the climactic moment that Shinji declares he will pilot the machine. We are provided

information on the characters, breaking the previous tone of the episode from Science Fiction tropes to display deep-seated insecurities, the tensions of adolescence, and filial problems between father and son. It becomes evident that psychological issues may play a part in this through Shinji's buildup of anxiety with regard to his father (shown through flashbacks), and Misato's own introspective thoughts. These parcels of character and world-setting information are spread throughout this system to provide us with a pattern to read. However, at this point, the focus is still on the *mecha*, the drama revolving around the need for Shinji to pilot the Eva and save them from the Angel attack.

The next division pulls back, loosening the tension from the dramatic moments of Shinji's determination to follow his father's request and pilot the Eva. This is achieved through a "montage" of images as they prepare Shinji and the Eva for combat, even interspersing comical moments as Shinji enters the Eva's "entry-plug." After the preparation, the tension begins to build again as Shinji (in the Eva) is shot upwards to the surface at breakneck speed, where the Angel awaits, and battle will ensue. Before a black screen with a "to be continued" in white text cuts through, the last things seen and heard are the image of a distressed but determined Misato and her thoughts, spoken out loud: "*Shinji-kun, shinanaide!*" ("Shinji, please don't die!"). This is the quick and final section, a last larger division that, combined with previous divisions, and each of their respective smaller sections, ultimately forms the episode's narrative structure and pacing.

Of course, while what I call sections, segments, or divisions can easily be described as "scenes," I have chosen this notation because I would like to focus on how they are organized, arranged and juxtaposed in a particular pattern and style to create a set system, one that is emblematic of the general Anime style: a nested mosaic pattern made up of parts composed of an introduction, an exposition—a development and/or a break of the previous information that was provided—and finally a rapid, spectacle-oriented conclusion. This is then repeated in the next segment, the units building up tension then loosening them, until they reach a final, rapid, usually spectacle-based conclusion. These form the episodes that then form the story arcs that then form the series. It is all a sequence of nested units that form mosaic patterns.

I have given this account of the first episode of *Evangelion* to express exactly how this Anime deals with fragments, specifically in the pacing and direction. The entire first episode is made up of moments that introduce something, provide us with information, and then lead towards a flashy or thundering, climactic image and/or sound. Bits of information

are built up by consciously feeding us only small details of this world-setting, elaborating piece by piece the intricate events taking place. Once we understand this (introduction), the pattern changes—as in the middle of the episode where it goes from action oriented scenes to the more subdued sections when Shinji enters the Nerv headquarters—and we delve into further details and/or receive a "surprise" twist in the information, and this is then punctuated by a quick ending. All of these segments bleed into each other, distinct sections that pace and structure the episodes, then story-arcs, then series. This is all a very common experience for the avid Anime viewer. We are just getting one piece of this world-setting and the characters in it. We are exposed to the tropes and patterns so we are reading them as they develop: the young boy who was chosen; the quirky but caring female officer; the serious scientist; the mysterious orchestrator; the uselessness of conventional weapons; the dire threat of an invading force; and finally, the gigantic robot, what this series calls Evangelion. All of this would generally lead up to what would be a "standard" and energetic fight between the forces of Shinji and the Angel. Shinji will fight an intense battle but his spirit and innate skill will push him to the limits to defeat the enemy and prevail for humanity.

Through this technique—feeding us information, then developing it or disrupting it, bringing it to a rapid end, then loosening the tension and starting all over again—there is a system of understanding, of reading and drawing the viewer into the unknown setting and experiences that the viewer is seeking to piece together with the information provided, build on it and grasp the meaning of the events occurring. What makes *Evangelion* such a beautiful example of the Anime form is how well it executes this narrative structure and pacing system. In this episode we were given a developmental section that breaks the previous conventional tropes about Science Fiction Anime, and intersperses a number of aspects of mental anxiety and oedipal issues of the characters Shinji and Misato. In conversation, action, and flashback we are again fed only pieces of information about them. This tactic serves to draw the viewer in as they expect the rest of the information will be built upon all this later. This nested system of smaller pieces within larger pieces, within larger episodes, within a larger series, helps to organize and govern this patterned network of parts so that they can be understood and read by the viewer, allowing access deeper and deeper into the world created through the Anime.

To complete the example, I will turn to the next episode of *Evangelion*, which serves as the second part to this introductory unit of the series. The first two episodes establish the general premise and format of the

show—the invading Angels that can only be stopped by the Eva robots—and provides the general relationships of the main characters. However, coupled with the previous episode, the second episode, as a whole, provides a large break in the preconceived pattern the viewers have "read" in the first episode. This episode can also be easily divided into distinct sections.

   The episode begins with a massacre. Shinji tries to fight the Angel, and while he can move the Eva, he is uncoordinated, unskilled, and is brutally beaten by the Angel. Back at the command center sirens scream as they fear for Shinji's life. In all the, loud, flashing, confusion and mayhem, Misato shouts out "Shinji-kun!" This is then abruptly cut to the image of Shinji waking up in a bright hospital room bed. He is alone and all is quiet save for the singing of the cicadas outside. The intense contrast between dark colors and flashing alarms of the battle, and the extreme quiet, light colors, and stillness of the hospital room, distinctly "break" the episode into parts. Furthermore, this is a huge split from the pattern of the conventional *mecha* Anime story like the "classic" scenarios found in Anime such as *Tetsujin 28* (*Tetsujin 28*, 1963–1966), *Mazinger Z* (*Mazinger Z*, 1972–1974) and even *Mobile Suit Gundam* (*Kidō Senshi Gandamu,* 1979–1980).[3] These Anime set up the various tropes for *mecha* Anime that *Evangelion* works with and against. The general pattern has the pilot maintain a special adeptness at controlling the all-powerful machine, the "chosen" character defeating the evil invader with relative ease. This is all usually shown linearly, from invasion to defeat. In *Evangelion*, however, Shinji did not gracefully defeat the Angel. We know Shinji has survived, but this clearly cuts off the first action section from the second—another segmented, middle division—and is no longer linear. In this section, the world and its characters are, just as in the first episode, developed further: Misato and Shinji move in together, we learn more about Shinji's father—the commander—and the complex relationship between Ritsuko and Misato. The previous pattern that was leading towards a wild fight (which was built up from the first episode) is broken, interrupted by the subdued nature of the (almost) normalcy of the depiction of their daily lives, abruptly cut into the heat of the battle that was shown in the beginning section of the episode.

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   [3] *Mobile Suit Gundam* could be said to be working against the patterns set with *Mazinger Z*, however *Gundam*'s monumental impact to *mecha* Anime tropes cannot be understated, and is thus included here.

But the action returns, finding its way to the rapid conclusion at the end of the episode, creating another distinct division in the episode. Lying awake in bed, Shinji remembers, through jarring flashback, what occurred, and we are sent back to the continuation of the fight where we left off. The Eva goes uncontrollably berserk, and we witness the Eva savagely tearing apart the Angel (in some sense literally). The Angel then self-destructs into a cross-shaped explosion. Out of the ensuing inferno walks the surviving savage beast, the one eyed Eva's silhouette towering before the rising flames. This is the spectacle that caps off this segment. The tension pulls back slightly again, and we see Shinji quietly catch a glimpse of the Eva without its armor in the reflection of a building. The grotesque image makes Shinji scream in horror, and with that, it cuts back to Shinji in his bed. Misato passes by his room and tells Shinji he did something good, something that people should compliment him for. In the final moments, Misato says, "*Ganbatte ne.*" ("Hang in there/Keep at it/Good luck."). The screen cuts to "to be continued."

The system of providing information through introduction, a development and/or a break, and then a rapid conclusion is very effectively implemented in these two episodes. The second episode in particular breaks the previous pattern. Gone are the previously-built expectations from the first episode; in place is a carefully constructed, different type of *mecha* battle, a savage, primordial fight with vicious, uncontrollable organic creatures. Like in many Anime, the characters, already possessing heavy emotional issues of their own, become deeply traumatized by their experiences. However, Shinji did, in fact, defeat the Angel. He did follow through with some of the expectations created through the knowledge of tropes, but how he did them was very different, and the characters that were exposed because of it were complex creations built on previous types, but developed into convincing (flawed) individuals. They struggle against their strange world-setting that we, as viewers, are trying to get a handle on, and react to their environment in very human ways.

The first episode built a large amount of tension, bringing that to a head with the first segment of the second episode with Shinji losing the fight. Then this is completely done away with, broken and disposed of by the sharp contrast of the middle section and his new, everyday life. This draws the viewer in, the previous tension of the first episode and fight segment loosened, slowly building up as the episode progresses and finally breaking at the same moment that the memories of the fight come crashing down on Shinji. Throughout both episodes we are given pieces of

information about the events occurring and the characters that are involved in them. Slowly we try to piece together what they explain. Each little bit that is received is through this system of introduction, break and development, then rapid conclusion. These parts feed us what we need to know, the smaller segments moving into larger and larger ones until the patterns culminate in the spectacular finale.

The rest of the series follows suit. We learn a little more about the world, and constantly our expectations are broken, or given new ground to stand on. Nothing is truly fully explained, and while this world-setting is deciphered, the characters themselves try to find more and more information about it themselves; their own psyche's suffering as they too are drawn deeper and deeper into this world. New characters are introduced to create a new pattern of character interaction with the world-setting, they too are developed, and the plot begins to solidify as the characters seem to almost make progress. Then the Anime begins to get darker. The mystery of the Angels seems not nearly as menacing as that of the human characters who try to defeat them, and the characters' mental wounds push them towards debilitating inaction. Where does this all lead? Each part is organized in such a constructed and artful manner, never divulging too much of the information—the narrative, the characters, nothing is stable, and the viewer is forced to rely on themselves to piece together the puzzle of events and emotions that are displayed; all organized and expressed in the three part pattern that constantly repeats itself, (re) arranged into a mosaic that the viewer has to decipher to determine what it ultimately represents. It is this system, so superbly constructed in *Evangelion* that is emblematic of Anime. *Evangelion* employs a particular rhythm that is now the hallmark of this specific Anime; however the general structural pacing, the "push and pull" of controlling the tension of the narrative is characteristic of Anime narrative structure and pacing in general. It is this style of construction that comprises the basic formal structure of Anime.

In Anime there is always a pattern of feeding the viewer information, developing or disrupting the expectations of that information further, providing an "action" sequence to back up the development or twist with an event, then reverting back to the feeding of more information and starting this process over, building segments of tension one on top of the other as this system continually occurs. This happens in scenes, in episodes, in the story arcs, and finally in the series as a whole, each pattern nested within the larger system made up of smaller segments. This "push and pull" style

provides for very sustainably drawn out and "addictive" serialization. One can see this in the narrative patterns of fight sequences in Anime. These will often be extended battles between individuals or groups with members from one of the sides commenting on the events taking place. These characters on the sidelines explain the actions the characters are performing, the reasoning behind them, and maintain a sense of tension throughout the segment, allowing it to be spread out and paced in the mosaic manner. A wild flurry of action occurs, then is paused as the fighting characters pull back. During this interval the characters on the sidelines narrate to the other characters what the previous events could mean for the outcome of the event, help explain the reasoning for the emotions displayed by referencing the characters' pasts, and/or predicting the next turn of events. This segment allows the tension to be loosened, then built up again, finally resulting in a segment of action which then pulls back to more. We see can see this in any number of extended fight scenes in *Rurouni Kenshin* (*Rurōni Kenshin Meiji Kenkaku Rōmantan*, TV Anime series, 1996–1998) or *Gintama* (*Gintama*, 2006–2010), among many, many others.

The narrative and pacing structures in SF Anime often follow very similar patterns. Viewers are often provided with a circumstance, mysterious or odd—something that one or many characters do not understand. We are given just a small taste of the world-setting they inhabit and learn about it through them. Then, just when we come to understand it, this pattern is changed, and pieces of new information provide twists and developments that are eagerly consumed, all leading up to one grand and rapid spectacle caused through the clash of the world-setting and the characters. In the developmental phase, the core of the series is created, new characters are introduced and we gain a certain understanding of the world-setting that provides the basis for the wild finale. This pattern is quite common in Anime, one that fans come to expect and are drawn to, time and time again. It is quite a successful pattern of narrative pacing that has become part of the form of Anime, this pattern resonating with most Anime productions. But how does one properly map out and detail this fundamental part of the form, dissect its mechanics, and compare and contrast differences between Anime styles? For that, I turn to the lens of Japanese traditional theater, art forms that are already viewed as following a particular form and pattern. In the theatrical forms we find a similar system of structure that has already been in place for centuries—a system that Anime's form possesses similarities to, and one that can be useful to delineate how Anime's formal structures operate.

Jo-ha-kyū

With the massive amount of reiterated base narratives and character types in Anime, it quickly becomes apparent that there are frequently repeated structural patterns that emerge in Anime, comprising part of Anime's formal conventions. As noted above, the structural basis of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki is reminiscent of the patterns found in Anime, and as such is something that warrants further inspection. This governing principle is called *jo-ha-kyū* (序破急) and separates the performances into specific sections that course into each other in a similar fashion to the way this occurs in Anime. By looking at Anime through the already deeply established structure of *jo-ha-kyū* it allows us to highlight and label these patterns in Anime.

Conventionalized systems of program and performance organization are common throughout Asian performing arts and are not necessarily unique to Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki. For example, Balinese Topeng, the masked dance form performed with *gamelan*, also has a conventionalized system for organizing a day's performance. But the similarities between Anime's system and *jo-ha-kyū* are too great to ignore. The concept of *jo-ha-kyū* was taken from its roots in court music by Zeami Motokiyo around the fifteenth century, introducing the structure into Noh. In Noh, it governs many aspects of the performance and play structure, as well as the organization and categorization of a day's program of Noh plays. From the older and esteemed Noh and Kyōgen theaters, the structure proliferated throughout the Japanese theatrical world. It is the basis for Kabuki and Bunraku planning as well, although each art form uses the concept slightly differently, as each form of theater is distinct from the other. Here we will be focusing largely on its use in Noh.

"*Jo-ha-kyū*" has been translated in many places as "beginning-middle-end," or "introduction-development-denouement," but by taking a look at the Sino-Japanese characters that make up the word, a different definition is revealed: *Jo* (序) means introduction; *Ha* (破) break; and *Kyū* (急) rapid. In Zeami's own words, when speaking of a full day's program of Noh he explains:

> What I mean by the word *kyū* is the last verse. Since it gives the final impression for the day, this is in a manner of expression that creates closure. *Ha* is, as I said, the attitude that "breaks" the *jo*, exhausts a diversity of material in detail, and reveals things in all their particularity. What I mean by *kyū*, then, is what remains as a last impression once the *ha* has been thoroughly played out. For that reason, the *kyū* should be forceful and compact, with a startling

visual character, with expressive effects focused on a swift, unconventional dance or Sparring.[4]

The *jo* would introduce something to draw the audience in, the *ha* would disrupt and alter this flow to keep it interesting, then the *kyū* quickly ends in a burst of energy to leave a lasting impression. In musical terms the tempo would start off light and soft, be broken with the establishment of a faster tempo, leading up to the quick and fast paced ending, then repeat. As it is originally a musical concept, the implementation of *jo-ha-kyū* in narrative construction follows this pattern, but results in a system of events. Musical pacing and narrative construction are necessarily intertwined in Noh (as well as in Kabuki and Bunraku). Thus the pattern and style of narrative follows a softer section; in Noh's narrative events, this could be the introduction of a setting and character. This then is broken by a twist, the introduction of a new character or a revelation of the character's true identity, and in the process, this develops the previously established situation. This would all then be brought to a rapid conclusion with a "spectacle" of music, movement (dance or mime), or song. Within each of these parts, each individual section has its own *jo-ha-kyū* pattern following the same logic, just on a smaller scale. For example, in the introduction there will be a character introduced, who then explains their purpose (soft introduction), travels to where they need to go (development, breaking through the softness through interesting lyrics), then moves off to the side as a new character is introduced (a rapid conclusion to the segment). Of course this seems rather subdued as it necessarily follows the softer tone of the larger introductory segment it is part of. The larger development/breaking section will naturally contain more expansion, revelations (often in the case of Kabuki and Bunraku plot twists), and the finale will be quick and exciting. Still, within both the development/breaking section and the rapid conclusion this all gets separated into another smaller section that will proceed with the same pattern but accommodated to the larger section that it falls under.

It is through this structure that Zeami believed a successful performance could be achieved and the spectator's attention pulled in, captured, then released, building upon each previous segment. Its success can be affirmed as it has endured now for six hundred years. Within each play, going down further and further to the lowest possible denomination, *jo-ha-kyū* creates this structural flow:

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[4] Tom Hare, *Zeami: Performance Notes*, trans. Tom Hare (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). 78.

In the sequence of plays performed on a given day, each should have its own consummation through *jo-ha-kyū*. And again, in a single dance or a single sound, what is of interest is the consummation of *jo-ha-kyū*. There is *jo-ha-kyū* in a single gesture of a dancer's sleeve, in a single reverberation from the stomp of a foot.[5]

This structure is not confined to the construction of a single play. Each play that is part of the day's program is broken down in the parts of *jo-ha-kyū*, and those respective parts of the play are then broken down further and further into smaller sections, each with its own *jo*, *ha*, and *kyū* part. As explained by Andrew Gerstle, this composition has led scholars Yuda Yoshio and Yokomichi Mario to describe such a structure as *yosegi zaiku*, or "mosaic." Speaking of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's Bunraku plays, Gerstle explains that they are "composed of many structural parts, beginning with the smallest—lines and primary units—and ending with the largest—scenes and acts—all of which form an orchestrated whole."[6] Each unit is structured with *jo-ha-kyū*, leading into the next, until they eventually form a larger unit. This connects to bigger units that ultimately form the entire play itself, which then unites with other plays to create a whole day's performance.

The *jo-ha-kyū* structure also implies a continuation within this mosaic structure. In Noh, every part of the entire production is a series of nested *jo-ha-kyū* systems, even, as mentioned earlier, going down to the notes and lines of lyrics themselves. On a larger scale, there is the five Noh play structure: a God play, a Warrior play, a Woman play, a Mad Person play, and lastly a Demon play. The *jo* play is the God play, auspicious and light, meant to introduce the day's performances. The next three plays are the *ha* section of the day. The Warrior play is the *jo* of the *ha*, a play about warriors and their tales of war, faster in tempo and more serious in tone, but the basis is still introductory. Next is the Woman play, the *ha* of the *ha*. Plays of this category are some of the most revered plays, featuring a female protagonist, often an elegant noble woman, usually distraught. The next play is the Mad-Person (*monogurui*) play, or sometimes a miscellaneous play with different subject matter. A mad-person in Noh is generally someone who, due to their distress, sees the world with heightened poignancy and highlights the beauty of nature, creating within the play moments of *yūgen*,[7] thus building on the previous *ha* play. These plays

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5   Ibid., 216.
6   Gerstle, *Circles of Fantasy*: 40; Yushio Yuda, *Jōruri shi ronko*: 73–74.
7   *Yūgen* is an aesthetic ideal of Noh. Adapted from medieval poetry aesthetics, *yūgen* can loosely be translated as a graceful beauty, alluring in its mystery and depth. See glossary.
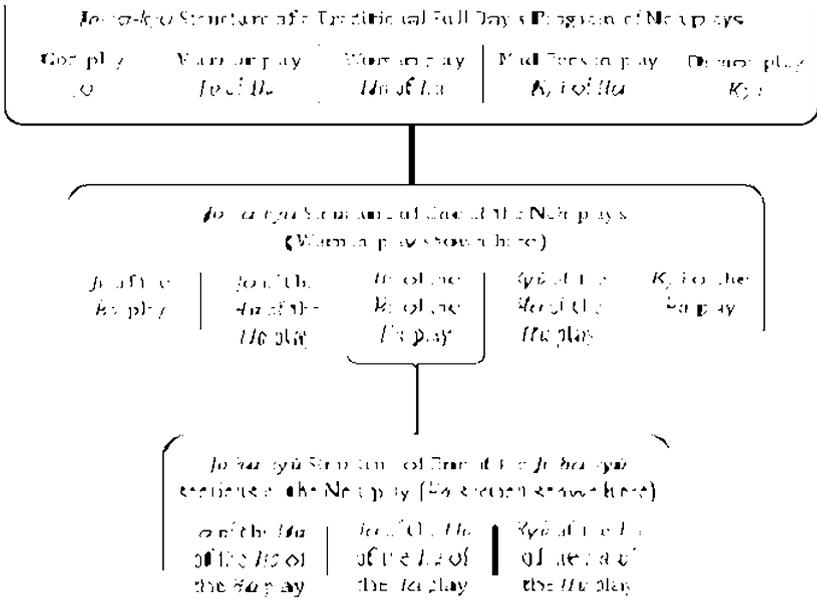
Figure 2.2. *Jo-ha-kyū* as Mosaic Structure in Noh: Each unit is divided into other units that are then further divided into smaller units—this theoretically continues down to the smallest note, all units, sub-units, and sub-sub-units nested within each other to create the larger mosaic of each play, which combine to create the full day's program.

are the *kyū* of the *ha* section and is the last play before the final, fast paced *kyū* play. In the third *ha* play, the quieter, slower atmosphere of the previous plays tips further into the *kyū* section, with a heavier emphasis on action and a faster pace, yet retains the restraint inherent in the previous category's plays. The next and final play of the day—the *kyū* play—is the Demon Noh. It is the quickest performance, filled with wilder dances and music that leave an intense impression on the viewer.

Within each of these plays, there lies a *jo-ha-kyū* structure, each organized accordingly (see Figure 2.2). And even within each *jo-ha-kyū* section of each play the sections are further broken down into *jo-ha-kyū*, and so on until it at last reaches each movement, each note, and each (sung/chanted/spoken) word, which themselves all carry the movement from *jo*, to *ha*, to *kyū*. For every *jo-ha-kyū* partition to end and be effective, it must then be followed by another *jo-ha-kyū* section. Thus, every *kyū* is then continued by a *jo*, then a *ha*, *kyū*, etc. In fact, even the final Demon play has a continuation; the final performance of the day is actually a quick excerpt from another Noh play sung by the chorus, usually of the *jo*

(God) category to symbolize that it is not over, that things will continue. In doing so it creates the spiral structure of Noh, as a never-ending system of *jo-ha-kyū*.[8] Bunraku (and at times Kabuki) keeps this tradition of ending on an auspicious note, with all the loose ends of the story getting tied up and a general return to a peaceful setting.[9]

The system is very effective for pacing and narrative structuring, especially for subject matter and presentation that is very clearly unreal. The *jo* introduces things lightly, acclimating the viewer into the unreality, then the *ha* breaks such introductory flows drawing the audience in and developing the characters/narrative further, piquing their interest with a revelation and deepening the plot and character portrayals. When the audience has become accustomed to this *ha*, it ends quickly in a fury with the *kyū*, climaxing and drawing a temporary close to the section. Then the *jo* begins again, softly creating a new sequence and leading into another. This continues on, the audience being introduced, tension built up, and then a quick climax. Each system builds upon the previous one, slowly building up to the final and ultimate culmination of all the previous sets. It is a very effective method of drawing in attention, increasing tension, and then loosening it, allowing a buildup of emotion to be eventually released in the finale. In Bunraku, this system is controlled largely by the *tayū* (and accompanying *shamisen* player) manipulating his audience with a series of gentler tones, cultivating this, then providing an intense climax, gradually stacking the layers of carefully created emotions, resulting in audiences that frequently are moved to tears. At times, in the case of Bunraku and Kabuki, this pushing and pulling of emotions can sometimes result in jokes—or perhaps better described as "lighter occurrences"—that happen during often somber moments in a play. These are used to loosen the tension so the intensity of the emotion can build up at the climax.[10]

In Bunraku, as Gerstle points out, this is very clearly represented in the musical notation in the songbooks that the *tayū* uses to perform. Each unit is subdivided into sections based on *jo*, *ha*, and *kyū* theory and these units are then put together to create larger units, which then are incorporated as parts of a scene, the scene itself, acts, and lastly plays in a day's program. Similarly, in Noh, the *hayashi*'s music, dancing sections, and the

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[8] Kunio Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives*. (New York, Tokyo, Kyoto: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1983). 43.

[9] Bunraku and Kabuki share many plays. Regarding Bunraku, see Gerstel, *Circles of Fantasy*.

[10] Gerstle, *Circles of Fantasy*: 42.

Table 1. The Structure of a Typical Noh Play.[11]

Dan (section)	Function	Shōdan
		Modern terms
1 (*jo*)	Appearance of the *waki*	Nanori
		Shidai
		Ageuta
2 (*ha* 1)	Appearance of the *shite*	Issei-ageuta
3 (*ha* 2)	Exchange between the *shite* and the *waki*	Mondo
		Ageuta
4 (*ha* 3)	Musical performance by the *shite*	Passage in kusemaiutai (kuri-sashi-kuse) or tadautai
5 (*kyū*)	Dance by the *shite*	Mai or hataraki
		Chunoriji or noriji

Note: This chart is cited from Thomas Hare's book *Zeami's Style*. Information unnecessary for this argument has been removed from the chart.

chorus and actor's vocal parts, coinciding with the narrative's actions, mark these smaller sections (*shodan*) within the larger sections (*dan*) of a play, as can be seen by the chart Thomas Hare produced for his book, *Zeami's Style* (see Table 1).[11]

However, *jo-ha-kyū* is not simply a division of parts that add up to a whole. Each section interacts with those around it, intertwining and building upon each other, pushing and pulling, back and forth. They ebb and flow into one another, feeding off of the previous and developing the next. Yet, each section can be isolated and addressed as a single unit. In Edo period Kabuki and Bunraku, this division of parts proved an effective structure for renewing and reviving plays, inserting new parts, and taking out unsuccessful ones very easily, allowing for the creation of a new production building off of the old, improving the results. It also aided in provided a variety of entertainment styles in a single day's program. At times the parts would be combining different plays and even worlds (*sekai*) to create one extravagant production. Regardless of how different each section was, they would play off of each other, the previous differing

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[11] Thomas Blenman Hare, *Zeami's Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo* (Stanford University Press, 1996). 53.

from the next to provide diversity, moving the work as a whole forward in some way to create a complete program through the interactions of the parts progressing.

Despite how it may appear, the *kyū* section is not necessarily considered the ultimate foundation of the three. Indeed, each piece rests on the successful execution of the previous and the next. Although quick and action oriented, the *kyū* section is made to be the concluding segment. It is to leave a lasting effect on the viewer, stunning them, and from there the next section can be built upon it. The *ha* section is in fact, considered the core of the group. In Noh, it is the third category play, the *ha* of *ha* play that is often considered the most refined. Many times in Bunraku and Kabuki, the emotional climax of the story will appear in the middle of the play, the *ha* section. It is at this point that everything turns in one direction or another, towards a "good" or "bad" end, and the full force of the emotional impact can be made. From this point the tension loosens up, and then compounds again creating the base for the sensational end that is the *kyū* section. Often, this conclusion is a feast for the eyes and ears, culminating in one final visual and aural extravaganza, leaving the audience with an image that is lasting beyond the end of the performance.

It should be noted that the *jo-ha-kyū* system is not always strictly adhered to with either a 3 or 5 set pattern. It is to a degree malleable, Zeami even stating that sometimes sets of four and six are necessary, depending on the circumstances. Sometimes, a quicker *jo* section is necessary, or a longer *ha*, or a more intense *kyū*; every situation creates a different need. However, the *jo-ha-kyū* order should not be skipped. In other words, even though a *ha* may be needed, it should always be preceded by a *jo*, and continued by a *kyū*, regardless of the length of them. We should also be aware that exactly where the divisions lie in the *jo-ha-kyū* structure can be subjective; they clearly exist, but where they end and begin may be a topic of debate, allowing for various interpretations. Zeami also explains that *jo-ha-kyū* can potentially describe and be attributed to anything, not only Noh, or its original basis in music.[12] Utilizing the understanding of *jo-ha-kyū* from the theater, we can better grasp how Anime's structure works. This concept provides a very useful tool for examining Anime's conventionalized style, structure, and pacing, giving us a vocabulary to begin discussing the intricacies of Anime aesthetics.

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[12] Hare, *Zeami: Performance Notes*: 39. In *Sarugaku Dangi* see Zeami, Rimer, and Yamazaki, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*: 185.

MAPPING THE STARS: DISSECTING ANIME STRUCTURE

Many times before, Japanese theater has been described as theaters of moving images.[1] One of the most noticeable aspects that produce this effect is in Kabuki, in the frozen tableaux called *mie* where the actor positions himself at important moments in an expressive pose. These mark climactic moments, and can be seen as ending a section and beginning a new one; in fact, some Kabuki productions will end with the cast on stage performing simultaneous *mie* before the audience in front of an extravagant backdrop. The *mie* are all positioned together within each section, creating what may be seen as an almost stop-animation-like sequence; the *mie* highlighting the critical moments in the scene, creating a composite of frozen images that move forward to create the progression of the scene as a whole.

Noh can also be perceived as "animated." Productions can be notoriously "still," with almost no physical movement on stage, and it is precisely at these points when Noh has the potential to be the most moving. The actor, wearing the ornate costumes and elegant masks, stands out against the barren stage and the pine behind, an image of precise graphic design, orchestrated by the style of that school of Noh. In these still scenes, the actor will project the inner depths of the character portrayed and the audience responds to the world the troupe has produced on stage. The subtlety of the expression is most notably discerned in the masks, where even the slightest tilt from the actor changes the emotions conveyed and the experience perceived by the audience. There is a tension produced between the stillness of the actor and the swirl of emotion and music that surrounds him, a tranquil exterior hiding the tormented psyche described in the lyrics. One may go as far as to say that Noh's animatedness lies, paradoxically, in its unanimatedness. These moments progress into livelier movements, moving the play and story forward in both time and

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[1] There are too many to list, but to give two notable examples, the film director Sergei Eisenstein has pointed out the pictorial nature of Japanese traditional theater, as well as pioneering Japanese literature scholar Donald Keene. See, Sergei M. Eisenstein. "An Unexpected Juncture." *Selected Works, Volume I: Writings, 1922–1934.* ed, Trans. Richard Taylor. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988). See also Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 52.

development, to create another series of still moments followed by livelier actions, combining with each other to finally produce the play before us. While the actors do dance and move, at times very aggressively, when viewed and remembered, it is as if a series of still images have left their impressions, more than the movement. The imagistic quality of a Noh performance is eloquently described by the narrator in author Natsume Sōseki's (1867–1916) *Kusamakura*:

> Two or three years ago I saw a Hōshō School production of the Noh play *Takasago*, and I remember being struck by the beautiful tableau vivant it made. The old man, brush-wood broom on his shoulder, walks five or six steps along the bridgeway leading to the stage, then turns slowly back to face the old woman behind him. That pose, as they stand facing each other, remains vividly before my eyes to this day. From where I was seated, the old woman's face was more or less directly facing me. Ah, how beautiful! I thought, and in that moment her expression burned itself like a photograph into my heart.[2]

In the novel, the character Sōseki writes is explicitly portrayed as a man who "understands" the methods and appeal of appreciating the classical Japanese arts, including the Noh Theater. His description explicitly details the sensation of viewing a Noh performance as containing subtle and elegant movements producing a deeply imprinted image which lingers after the performance. The actor's pose is likened to a photograph, a picture that is retained in the viewer's mind (and heart). The presentation of Noh provides an elegant, imagistic quality to the performance—we can read Noh as a theater of images that move, still figures against the static pine, gracefully repositioning themselves in their dances.

Anime, as an art form of animation, shares this aspect in the very medium itself. Made up of a series of images played consecutively that give the illusion of movement, Anime is an almost literal, hyperbolized example of the experience of watching Kabuki or Noh as described above. Given the history of theater in Japan artificially creating this type of imagistic expression with live action, it is tempting to read more than fortuity (and the right socio-economic circumstances) in limited-animation's success in Japan in the art form of Anime.

The most basic unit in Anime structure is the still image, multiple images viewed in rapid succession creating the movement we perceive. A large amount of the story-telling done in Anime is by the pictures

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2 Sōseki Natsume and M. McKinney, *Kusamakura* (Penguin Books, 2008). 16.

themselves. The backdrop, the characters, the emotions (visually expressed), everything is a drawn image, and through them we understand the narrative and character developments taking place. We read more than just the story; the entire image itself is taken in and understood. Many times there will be moments of complete stillness, nothing moving, just the camera panning across a single image to be absorbed. As Lamarre details, there is an inherent sense of movement in the Anime (style) image, giving it what Steinberg calls "dynamic-immobility"[3]—a term that could easily be used to describe Noh. One of the techniques used in Anime to fully take advantage of the image-based medium is to end segments with a powerful image, as a *mie* does in Kabuki. In Anime, this grotesque, flashy, or imposing image punctuates the *kyū* part of a section.

This is not to say that the aural parts of Anime are not vital to its success, or that they are not used to accent the progression of a *jo-ha-kyū* sequence. The voices of the characters are absolutely integral to an Anime, the voice-actors giving a sense of "humanity" and "realness" to the images, "fleshing" their personalities out with their performance. It is often the voice-actor that provides the "movement" (emotional, dramatic) during scenes of stillness or extremely limited movement. Silence itself is put into very powerful effect in many Anime. The stark contrast between silence and noise, and the slow building up of extra-diegetic or diegetic sound often mark the separation of segments. However, it is the image itself that formulates the basis of Anime's (narrative, pacing) structure,[4] and is perhaps the most memorable and easily distinguishable part of Anime. After all, Anime is "viewed."

The buildup of separate units into a larger sequence, and unique interaction between the parts and whole is perhaps most apparent in the way Anime is most commonly distributed and consumed. In general, an Anime is produced as a series, comprised of episodes that then contribute to the Anime as a whole. While most series contain a linear story—with each episode following the previous—some Anime are comprised of episodes that do not necessarily connect linearly, each episode an individual narrative in the same world with the same characters; some use a combination of the two. Regardless of which way the episodic structure is utilized, the common attribute is that each episode comprises the contents of the series, and interacts with the previous and next episode

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[3] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 190. 190; Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: 66.

[4] Both Lamarre and Steinberg assert the importance of the still image in Anime.

(through stable characters and world-setting), as well as with the series as a whole to create the individual Anime. If popular enough, multiple Anime (follow-up series, films, OVA) are made in the same (or related) world-setting with the same characters. Each production is distinct, but all are considered to be part of that Anime franchise.

The most basic structure of an Anime series is thus as follows. The individual images build up to create scene segments. These in turn come together to create larger sections within the episode; in general, these are bordered by opening credits and ending credits—the middle content which changes each episode is split in two by a commercial segment and usually precluded by a still image on a blank screen that informs the viewer of when the commercials will begin and end. These parts then create the episode itself. The episodes are separate productions but are all taken as a whole to create the series that is then labeled as the Anime. A further partition is added in that most series last two or more seasons, each comprising of approximately 13 episodes.

In a similar fashion as the segmented structure of the theatrical forms, Anime also divides its own narratives into divisions and segments. In most series,[5] the episodes are further divided by smaller story arcs or sagas: generally a number of closely related events that are directly connected with each other that serve as a component of the larger narrative. Within a single Anime series there may be many different story groups, usually connected, sometimes linearly, or by the characters, the world-setting, etc. In most Anime, there is also an implicit understanding by the viewers that the Anime will reach a definite finale. A narrative, world-setting, and characters will be introduced and then conclude. Because of the Anime narrative's finite nature, certain events have to occur, characters must be introduced, and drama must unfold in some pattern, and then come to a close. As substantial numbers of Anime are created each year, the techniques and themes used are bound to get recognized as they are reproduced over and over. But instead of dismissing this, instead of hiding this fact, Anime embraces it, conventionalizing such practices to the enjoyment of the spectator. As Antonia Levi notes, there is a general style of story-telling that is frequently used in Anime, a common pattern that avid Anime viewers are familiar with.[6] Certainly, Anime narratives often progress in similar ways.

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[5] In those viewed for this research, the vast majority have around 26 episodes.

[6] *Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation*. (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1996). 75.

In the individual episodes, to the story-arcs, to the entire series, there is a particular pattern, a rhythm that is evident in each part and whole, from small to large. We have already noted the "push and pull" pacing pattern in *Evangelion*'s first two episodes. While the rhythms created by *Evangelion*'s pacing pattern are specific to that Anime, the "push and pull" rhythmic narrative pacing and presentation is common throughout Anime. The style of limited animation that is so prevalent in Anime uses many still images, pauses, minimal movements, and flashes. As noted previously, characters are often poised in dynamic motionlessness. Sometimes stills of a landscape or smaller details within a room are interspersed between conversations. In Anime such as *Evangelion* and *Bakemonogatari* (*Bakemonogatari,* 2009–2009), solidly colored frames with text are flashed across the screen. In instances of minimal movement, characters may walk or move very simply, strolling down the street, or occasionally moving in a command center. At other times, the animation will burst into high-speed, intense motion. The effect of this variation and cutting between still, minor movements, and rapid movements, creates a certain pace and takes on a rhythmic quality, producing an almost musical feel to the progression of the images and the movement. As Lamarre explains, in the limited animation of Anime, "cutting from image to image increases in importance, as do the rhythm and speed of cuts."[7] Indeed, in Anime, the rhythmic pacing of the narrative is a hallmark of the form.

Sound is also used to coincide with this rhythm, silence and noise, diegetic and extra-diegetic, music and speech, all are employed in conjunction with the "push and pull" pacing of the anime. Sometimes the sound is disjointed from the image, at other times it is in sync, but the utilization of the sound helps keep the rhythm of that Anime (for the appropriate segment within the Anime). Anime like *Cowboy Bebop* (*Kaubōi Bibappu*, 1998–1999) and *FLCL* (*Furi-kuri*, 2000–2001) are particularly notable as they use sound in such a way that it seems as if the music is pacing the Anime. *FLCL* can be specifically singled out for having the musical soundtrack played during almost every part of the Anime (to varying degrees of loudness). Sound and image are both used in Anime to construct a "push and pull" rhythm that paces and structures the narrative, in each scene, episode, story-arc, and ultimately in the whole series. Similar patterns of such a system can be seen throughout the works of Anime.

Thus, the particular recurring patterns and rhythms in the narrative structure and pacing of Anime can be seen as part of its conventionalized

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[7] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 191.

Table 2. Structure of a Typical Anime Series.

Dan (section)	Episode Span	Function
Jo	1–4	Introduce world and major characters; audience guessing at what pieces/story means
Ha I	5–10	Bring in new characters; develop the characters and world; create stability in story pattern
Ha II	11–13	Explain larger conflict; create tension based on breaking previous expectations
Ha III	14–20	Focus changes from story pattern to larger conflict; develops towards dismal end
Kyū	20–24 (25, 26)	Action picks up; build up of previous characters and world tensions explode to conclude larger conflict
Jo	(25–26)	Conclusion of the characters development and loose ends of the storyline; show possibilities of new beginning based on previous events

form. As Anime's rhythms follow a pattern close to that of the *jo-ha-kyū* pattern used in the theater, I will use this already deeply established theatrical concept to help chart Anime's system in order to better grasp the form of Anime's structure (see Table 2). The application of mapping Anime through the *jo-ha-kyū* system allows for a reasonable delineation of the repeated patterns found in Anime narratives, due to the adherence to its own conventions. These patterns create a specific narrative aesthetic conducive to the production and elocution of certain emotions and events. Furthermore, the understanding of the placement of certain events within a narrative as localized within this *jo-ha-kyū* like formal structure provides them with a logic, rather than being arbitrarily placed, proving the existence of an Anime narrative form. Academic conclusions on Anime must necessarily take considerations of form into account. The occurrence and reoccurrence of certain events within an Anime (or even in Anime in general) may be attributed to the following a specific form. This ensures a deeper understanding of why and how certain events have

appeared in the narratives as and where they did. Mapping out the narrative structure allows us to concretely visualize the form of Anime and see where certain parts fit into the overall structure of that Anime.

The general narrative structure is as follows: The *jo* section functions to introduce the world and some of the characters that inhabit it. It also serves to set the general storyline that will be followed for the rest of the series. The audience has never seen this world and its characters before, and thus the first *ha* section introduces new characters and further develops the world-setting and the personalities of the characters. Depending on the type of Anime it is a general narrative pattern for the episodes are established at this point: what is the dramatic reason for each episode to begin and conclude? The second *ha* section usually ends the first season and starts to build tension based on the previous characters and world-setting development. The third *Ha* section completely breaks the previous tone of the story, with all the hopes and dreams of the previous events being shattered, moving towards what seems like a tragic end. This builds up to formulate the *kyū* section of the series, which comprises a series of fast paced, action oriented episodes resolving (to some degree) the larger conflict.

The *ha* sections (specifically the *ha* I and II) still make up the "core" of the work (Anime series) in the sense that this is the section where the drama stabilizes and the characters are developed. This is what may be considered the most "ideal" time in the series. The story pattern is solidified by then and continues for a short while along this line, creating a warmer atmosphere that allows the viewers to get emotionally involved with the characters, world-setting, and story. However, things turn bad towards the end of the third *ha* section, and this is when the larger story of the world breaks, creating chaos and action through to the end of the series. By building from the more pleasant (or rather, predictable) times, the tragedy or romance of the series is made that much more interesting by breaking that pattern. A good example of this is in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*'s final episode of the series, when Shinji imagines a "happier" world by referencing earlier instances. It is still inhabited by the characters of the series but now they are in different professions/roles. This segment possesses a starkly lighter tone to it than the previous parts of the episode (and the one before it), actively reproducing scenes from the middle of the series when things did not seem so serious and dark. The Anime *Planetes* (*Puranetesu*, 2003–2004) also follows this pattern, with more light hearted segments in the beginning and middle of the series giving way to a much darker action oriented succession of events that brings the world and

characters to the brink of chaos and disarray. *Cowboy Bebop* also has a middle section when all the characters are still together and form a bond as a team. The final episodes capitalize on the nostalgic tone of the series when they split up and tragedy consumes the remaining characters. Japanese traditional arts have long before Anime cherished the ephemeral, and this system of creating the base of the series characters and world-setting appeal in the *ha* section, only to be broken and sped up in the *kyū* works very well to exploit this to a beautiful end.

The narrative pattern described above is prevalent throughout Anime, especially Science Fiction, Fantasy, Action, and Adventure Anime. However, this is not a set formula. In some cases there is an extra episode or two after the larger conflict has died down. These episodes tie up loose ends in the story and set things on a more positive path. This can be likened to Bunraku plays ending on an auspicious note, or as Gerstle explains, (in certain plays) rising up from the dismay to return to the lofty court realms that the plays began in.[8] In some Anime, stability and promise of a brighter future is provided in the last episode or two to bring closure to the series and settle the tension built up from the *kyū* section. This is evident in the aforementioned *Planetes* series, with the larger conflict coming to a conclusion in the last *kyū* episode (episode 24), and leaving episodes 25 and 26 as a *jo* to bring things together and start a new beginning with many of the characters moving in different directions.

As mentioned earlier, in many Anime, there is usually a specific pattern of events that is understood to occur in most episodes. For example, as in the case with *Evangelion*, there are Angels that need to be defeated; in *Planetes*, specific missions that need to be accomplished; *Cowboy Bebop* has bounties that need to be captured; *Mushishi* (*Mushishi*, 2005–2006) has problems that *mushi* cause that are to be solved; *Real Drive* (*Āru Dī Sennō Chōsashitsu*, 2008–2008) has problems in the Metal that need to be fixed; and so and so forth. These mission episodes typically build into a larger plot and break from this pattern at some point. But not all Anime contain an explicitly repetitive task to be completed in every episode. Some follow a directly linear story, and instead each episode provides a new development that is continued directly from the previous episode. Yet in these (generally) linear storylines the same narrative pattern is evident and there are still clear divisions of story-arcs.

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8 See Gerstle's "Cyclical Imagination" chapter in *Circles of Fantasy*.

Table 3. Structure of *Seirei no Moribito* Series.

	Dan (Section)		
Division	Subdivision I	Episode	Events
Jo	*Jo*	1–3	Balsa saves Prince Chagum; is asked to protect him; Balsa defeats attackers but is wounded
	Ha	4	Chagum meets Tanda and Shaman Torogai who help Balsa
	Kyū	5–6	Torogai explains the situation with Chagum; Balsa and Chagum are chased, falling into a canyon, presumably dead
Ha I	*Jo*	7–9	Chagum and Balsa survive; buy a small watermill to hide in; Balsa and Chagum's characters are further developed
	Ha	10–12	Chagum and Balsa's relationship gets better; Tanda's character is developed
	Kyū	13	Balsa fights an old rival, threatening to reveal their whereabouts
Ha II	*Jo*	14	Torogai finds out official history is false regarding Chagum's reason for being pursued
	Ha	15–16	It is discovered Chagum is not dead; Chagum's brother dies, leaving Chagum as the successor
	Kyū	17	The watermill is attacked; Chagum, Balsa, Tanda, Torogai flee
Ha III	*Jo*	18–19	Balsa reaches an ancient village; Chagum told he must die to release spirit; Chagum runs away; Balsa recaptures him
	Ha	20	Balsa, Chagum, Torogai, Tanda set up camp in a cave
	Kyū	21–22	Balsa explains her history, trains Chagum; they become closer

Table 3. (*Cont.*)

	Dan (Section)		
Division	Subdivision I	Episode	Events
Kyū	*Jo*	23	Spring arrives; the spirit in Chagum takes over; he is chased by the creature trying to kill the spirit
	Ha	24	The original pursuers and Balsa join forces to protect Chagum
	Kyū	25	They fend off the creature's attacks and successfully give birth to the spirit and save Chagum
Jo	*Jo-Ha-Kyū*	26	Balsa and company are rewarded in secret; Chagum returned to place on throne; the group separates, Balsa on a final journey before she settles down

Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit (*Seirei no Moribito*, 2007–2007; from here on referred to as *Seirei no Moribito*) is one such series where each episode is in direct chronological order, without a specific mission to be fulfilled each episode. This becomes apparent from the very first episode where we are introduced to the general premise: Balsa, the spear wielding warrior, must protect the prince Chagum from being killed. It is not to defeat a series of invaders, or take down a certain number of robots (etc., etc.), but rather to complete one single task of saving Chagum. As the series progresses, the story develops and we are taken through the world-setting which they inhabit, get to know the characters, and follow the events leading up to the eventual rescue of Chagum from his fate. However, there are distinct sections where a situation is introduced, tension is built up, an action oriented climax occurs, and then the tension is loosened, continuing on with this pattern until the series ends (see Table 3).

In *Seirei no Moribito*, the first section (*jo*) begins with the introduction to the story and the race to get Chagum out of the city. This tension escalates, and when they are thought to be dead, the action lessens and they find themselves in a quieter area living in a watermill in the country. Here the *ha* section begins, allowing for an exploration of the characters and the audience to get involved with them. The story develops and Balsa is threatened by an old rival forcing her to fight a fierce duel, ending the *kyū* (spectacle) of the first *ha* section (developmental/break). The tension loosens slightly after the fight and the two are eventually found to be alive

by their pursuers, and forced to leave their peaceful setting. This ends the second *ha* section. The third *ha* section continues as Balsa and company find out more about Chagum's fate. They hide until spring and Balsa explains her violent past to Chagum, concluding that section with the spectacle of fight scenes from her memories. The final *kyū* section is filled with more excitement and action as the spring arrives and the race to save Chagum's life comes to a close. Barely surviving, Chagum is saved in the final moments and his fight with fate is completed. The last episode is the *jo* section where Chagum returns to the palace and is accepted as prince, while his non-aristocratic rescuers Balsa, Tanda, and Torogai are only rewarded in secret—the scandal kept away from the public's knowledge. Balsa decides to leave on a final journey to reconcile her past for herself before she can settle down like the rest of the characters who saved Chagum. Each section has a slow introduction, develops, then ends with action whose tension is loosened and built up as the next segment continues, slowly layering upon each unit to progress and build intensity.

To take another Anime as an example, the 26-episode Anime *Gantz* (*Gantz*, 2004–2004) has, as all Anime do, an introduction stage where the first characters are introduced (*jo*). Within this larger *jo* section, the introductory *jo* (the *jo* of *jo*) is broken by killing these characters off, then continuing the story after their death (*ha* of *jo*). This is then followed by a short action filled saga of them fighting their enemies (*kyū*). When concluded, they return to the real world, the tension loosens and new characters are introduced (*jo* of *ha*). This is then continued on into a longer running, more intense saga, following the previous pattern, with all the twists and turns of a *ha* section. At this point, the segment comes to a quick, action oriented conclusion (*kyū*). The tension loosens, and the characters return to the "real world." This concludes the first season (a total of 13 episodes).

However, within each saga, there is another *jo*, *ha*, and *kyū*. Taking the beginning introduction as an example (the first three episodes), the characters are exhibited (*jo*), they then get hit by a train and die (*ha*). The characters then enter the room where Gantz—the mysterious machine that brings them back to life—exists and other characters are introduced, upon which Gantz then starts to mysteriously sing (*kyū*). This is the *jo-ha-kyū* of the first *jo* section. These characters are then given weapons and told they have to go attack a specific target (*jo* of *ha* of *jo*). They are released into the world, although they cannot interact with the people in it, then find out their target is an alien and they must kill it to survive. Upon finding the alien, it turns out to be quite easy to kill, and one of the characters,

Katō, previously thought to be a "tough-guy,"[9] cries, trying to save the tiny alien (*ha*). This breaks the previous expectations and thoughts introduced in both *jo* sections, with the characters and the story moving in different ways than would be expected. However, a giant alien, the dead alien's father, appears, and is incredibly destructive. He kills the majority of the characters, leaving only who we now believe are the main characters. Katō, unable to kill the angry alien, gets seriously injured and tossed to the side, leaving only two characters left (*kyū*). This is the end of the *ha* section of the first *jo* segment. Building upon the previously built up tension of the previous *jo* and *ha*, the Anime moves into the *kyū* section of the *jo*. This part is much faster paced and filled with more physical action. Running away, Kei and Kishimoto try to dodge the angry alien (*jo*). Cornered, Kei has moments of inspiration and courage, allowing him to distract the alien to let Kishimoto escape. As he does so, he finds that the suit he is wearing gives him enhanced abilities, and is able to defend against and attack the alien (*ha*). Brutally beating the alien, he subdues him, but stops his attack due to a dying Katō's request. A previously missing character appears out of nowhere, binding the alien with some sort of weapon, and instructing Kei to kill him (*kyū*). The *kyū* section then levels out; the action subdues, and only the lingering intensity of the situation remains. The other character sends the alien away, and from then on the characters return to the room and the next segment begins with episode four.

But even within those sections, smaller *jo-ha-kyū* units are visible. Looking at the final *kyū* segment discussed above, Kei furiously punching the alien is the highest action point of the *kyū*. That is then interrupted by the alien asking for forgiveness. Stopping, the tension loosens, and a *jo* section begins. Katō, in very bad condition, starts speaking, and Kei rushes over to listen. At that moment the other character appears out of nowhere (literally as he was invisible), and binds the alien. This is the *ha* section, with its unexpected development. From there, he urges Kei to kill the alien (*kyū*). This though, could also be broken down. In this *jo* segment, between when Kei stops hitting the alien and the *ha* when the other character appears, another *jo-ha-kyū* section is visible: Kei stops, Katō unexpectedly speaks, and the blast of the new character's appearance closes the *kyū* section. This fades into the larger *jo-ha-kyū* within the *kyū* section which rests within the *jo-ha-kyū* of the larger introductory *jo* section of the first season. This then continues forward into the larger *ha* section of the first

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[9] This is the characterization Kei gives to Katō.

season. A similar pattern is created in the second season, and taken toge-
ther they make up the Anime known as Gantz. The mosaic style structure
can be seen here in the compounded way it is constructed: this pattern of
introducing a situation, breaking the expectations of the situation, and
then ending it quickly, layering these units, and then building upon them
to create movement in the narrative. In fact, this is literally how the
concept of animation works, with images played in repetition to create the
illusion of movement.[10]

To continue the *Gantz* example, in the final *kyū* section of the *kyū* sec-
tion of the *jo* section of season one, Katō is seen on the floor in extremely
critical condition. As the images cut to him, approaching the final *kyū* sec-
tion, we see him lying in a pool of blood. The image that ends that particu-
lar episode is Katō in the same position, except this time, the pool of blood
is quickly growing, where before the blood was static. This movement is
the last thing viewed (with no words spoken) before the ending credits are
shown. Building upon the previous images of Katō, we see him in a clearly
worsening situation. The final image, with the blood rapidly expanding,
intensifies the moment and acts very well as the *kyū* for the episode and
segment. The image of a larger pool of blood, in contrast to the previously
smaller pool, builds from the past image to create the final still that affects
us. Such "impressionable images" are used to punctuate final sections
throughout Anime. For example, *Evangelion* leaves the viewer with many
impressionable images: from Shinji's father towering above Shinji and the
Eva, to blood spewing out of the eyes of an Eva silhouette—these images
are given intensity in the context of the moment, punctuating the narra-
tive movement of the Anime. All of this is constructed in the mosaic sys-
tem and *jo-ha-kyū* provides a conceptual backdrop to discuss this.

Single Anime films also follow this mosaic structure. For example, the
movie *Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade* (*Jin-Rō*, 1998) skillfully separates the movie
by the use of color and the retelling of the Little Red Riding Hood story.
Dark segments are followed by light segments, and we, the viewers, find
ourselves weaving in and out of darkness and lightness as we travel
through the narrative. The ending image is light, signaling the conclusion

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[10] Here, one can see how Lamarre's theory on the animetic machine may be applied, as
the process of making animation itself can be seen to produce such a phenomenon of
layering in narrative pacing and potentially explaining how and why this structure devel-
oped. However, as the focus of this study is on the form itself and not the institutions,
processes, or history of Anime, due to considerations of space, I will leave out an in depth
explanation of how such patterns developed. For Lamarre's theory on the Anime machine,
please see Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*.

of the conspiracy, and leaving the viewer with the promise of more (dark-
ness) to come. Other Anime are also divided into parts, even exploiting
the predilection for partitions in Anime to illicit psychological reactions.
For example, *Perfect Blue* (*Pāfekuto Burū*, 1998) is constantly repeating
segments to skew the view of reality for the viewer and the main character,
building up tension and confusion through its manipulation. The film
5cm Per Second (*Byōsoku Go Senchimētoru*, 2007) is literally divided into
three parts, each displaying a span of time in one boy's lifetime, the gap
between each part left up to the viewer's imagination. All segments can
individually be taken as a standalone piece, but the storyline connects
between them, building upon the previous. The final section is the short-
est, displaying mainly a montage of scenes from the boy's adult life, with a
remorseful musical ballad as the film concludes. It uses the segment before
it to build an expectation, but breaks it without explanation, creating a
poignant effect through suggestion, leaving the viewer with the bitter-
sweet sadness that haunts the film.

The mosaic *jo-ha-kyū* system works very well for Anime, as it does for
the theatrical forms that preceded it. It succeeds in adapting the viewer
into the unreal world, peaking their interest, then leaving the viewer
astounded to come back for more next week. As Anime is divided into
episodes and consumed this way, it is almost natural that a system similar
to *jo-ha-kyū* would develop. However, the system is not a perfect replica of
the traditional *jo-ha-kyū* style as it may not have been consciously created.
The *jo* in Anime is often a bit more intense, or rather, action oriented,
than that of its theatrical counterparts. Due to the longer serialization of
series the introductions serve to expose viewers to the type of Anime
narrative they are to watch, to attract them through their expectations
of what will come. The *ha* then serves to hook them in with a break in the
preconceived pattern and solidify through to the *kyū* spectacle of an
ending. In the theater, the *jo-ha-kyū* system is founded on the musical
system which allows for the different, specialized parts of production to
stay organized. But unlike the theater, this system is not as "strictly"
adhered to in Anime. The patterns and rhythms in pacing and narrative
construction/organization have been conventionalized into a *jo-ha-kyū-*
like system, with most Anime following this mosaic structure, but it is not
canonical as it is in the theater.

However, in general, the theatre's mosaic, *jo-ha-kyū* system is an eerily
close fit for Anime's conventional structure. Utilizing the *jo-ha-kyū* con-
cept to analyze Anime provides the most supportive conceptual frame-
work for viewing Anime as the mosaic that it is. The understanding of

Anime as being made up of various separate parts that are individually contained, but fade into a larger image, is crucial to understanding Anime's formal structure and aesthetics. Furthermore, *jo-ha-kyū* implies pacing and narrative patterns that are utilized to achieve a certain aesthetic. I have used the SF-Action genre as an example and point of departure as there are a large quantity of Anime that fall under this genre or mix elements from it. Charting their structure through *jo-ha-kyū* allows not only for a better understanding of this genre, but the Anime art form as a whole, as different genres contain different patterns and structures that can be mapped out in comparison to that of Action genre delineated here.

The Anime *Azumanga Daioh* (*Azumanga Daiō,* 2002–2002)*,* an Anime of the "slice of life," School (*gakuen*) genre, is a good alternative example. This Anime presents a hyperbolized mosaic structure, depicting the everyday lives of a group of high school girls and their teachers in a light and comedic manner. Most episodes are, in fact, made up of a variety of individual episode segments, often punctuated with their titles as they begin. These segments are often in linear order as they go through the larger narrative of that particular episode. That episode then fits into the bigger structure of the "loose" narrative of the lives of the female characters and their female teachers. While there is no over-arching grand plot or conspiracy as in *Evangelion* or *Seirei no Moribito*, it does connect all the episodes as the characters go through their school life, following the linear path of their three year high school career. *Azumanga* does follow the general pacing structure of *jo-ha-kyū*, but it does so to achieve a different result. Many scenes (and the Anime as a whole) often assuage the *kyū* section for an extended *jo* in most scenes. The effect is a quieter, more subdued, almost weightless feeling to the aesthetic of the Anime—it is playful and light, in contrast to the heavy emphasis on the (larger) *kyū* that is found in Action Anime. In the *shōnen*/SF/Action genres, the *kyū* section's importance lies in the spectacle of the action, grotesque and fantastic images of *mecha* and monsters that are a large part of the attraction to these genres (and demonstrates the potential capabilities of the toys and models that will be based on these images). These elements all appear in the *kyū* sections and are highlighted in the culmination of the overarching plot that is resolved through spectacle oriented conflict, occurring in the largest *kyū* section of the series.

It may first appear as if the grander story arc of *Azumanga* is abated for the individual episodes and their segments. While a larger arc exists—in regard to the girls' school progress—it does not appear as a pressing source of plot movement. By examining the Anime through the mosaic

structure, it is revealed that *Azumanga Daioh* utilizes the *jo-ha-kyū* structure to emphasize the transient nature of youth. In the *ha* sections, a new character is introduced (Kagura) who becomes a main character from the second year onwards. Chiyo's youth is often remarked on, brought to the foreground in episode 12 when she considers that, as a child genius, she may be leaving her childhood too quickly. Episode 19 focuses on aging, the two adult teachers musing on the ramifications of growing older. The first two years provide the *jo* and *ha* as the main source of the interactions between the characters. The final sections of the third year end rapidly. This emphasizes the speed with which the carefree nature of youth leaves. Here the later *ha* and *kyū* sections are utilized to create different emotional responses. The world that is falling apart is not some diabolical scheme but rather the inevitable movement of time forward, away from youth, depicted through the dispersal of the group of friends as they move out of high school and into universities.

Up until this point I have not discussed Miyazaki's works. As noted prior, they are not in the same style as Anime such as *Evangelion*, *Seirei no Moribito*, and *Azumanga Daioh*, the larger corpus of Anime that is the focus of this research. However, despite this difference, Miyazaki's work does follow a similar structural pattern. I will not delve into this in rigorous detail as Miyazaki's work (and Ghibli) is so distinct. However, the film *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke Hime,* 1997) is an excellent case in point. The film begins with a brief introduction of the setting, then the unexpected boar-demon intruder, followed by an action sequence. These are the *jo-ha-kyū* sections of the larger *jo* division. The tension pulls back as Ashitaka travels to find the demon's source and cure the disease-like curse he contracted from the boar-demon. Here the plot develops, we explore the world-setting, are introduced to new characters (Jigo, San, the Wolf Gods, Lady Eboshi), and the surprise twist that the Forest Spirit does not cure the curse (the larger *ha* division). The over-arching plot of the Iron Town versus the Forest, the Spirit, and the Wolf Gods comes to a final showdown as the imperial scouts working with the leaders of Iron Town try to kill the Forest Spirit. This *kyū* section is a wild and violent spectacle that ends with the extravagant death of the Forest Spirit and the miraculous rebirth of a fledgling Forest. The film ends with a *jo* that ties up the loose ends of the plot. The inclusion of the *jo* provides a glimmer of hope for improved human integration with the environment, spearheaded by Ashitaka and San.

The *jo-ha-kyū*-like pattern appears to be an organically created language of Anime, a style of pacing and structure necessitated by both the

processes of its (limited) animation and its distribution as episodes. I would like to stress that my major claim here is not just "what" the narrative or pacing patterns are, but rather that they exist and are important to understanding and analyzing Anime. Indeed, each series and each genre within Anime have their own particular patterns. Viewing them as mosaic in structure allows for a better dissection of these patterns to allow for a greater understanding of the discursive space that Anime constructs. The *jo-ha-kyū* concept provides a very organized and already established framework for discussion on this topic, matching both the stylistic structure in pacing and narrative patterns very closely, allowing us to utilize it to map and delineate these patterns.

SPLITTING OF THE BEAST:[1] MAPPING *EVANGELION*

The serialized nature of Anime and its evolution from children's entertainment (missions that need to be completed), deep connection to the sequential art of Manga (panels, dynamic-stillness, chapters), limited, cel animation compositing processes (images shown in succession, cels layered over each other, interacting with each other),[2] and integration into a media mix marketing system (extended, engaging narratives that twist and turn to create affective responses in viewers, serving as promotion for other media's products),[3] makes Anime well suited to a compartmentalized, conventionalized, mosaic structure.[4] As we have seen, this mosaic bears a striking resemblance to the pervasive (mosaic) structure of *jo-ha-kyū* in the theater. It would be almost impossible to track down every creator of every Anime and determine if *jo-ha-kyū* is the system they used. Interestingly, in the recent "remake" (or rather, "rebuild") of the *Neon Genesis Evangelion* Anime series into a number of films—officially splitting the longer series into sections—the new productions were labeled by the same Sino-Japanese characters as *jo*, *ha*, and *kyū*: *Evangelion Shin Gekijōban: Jo* (2007) and *Ha* (2009). (Note: the third film has not yet been released but the title released for its production is *Q*, which reads as "*Kyū*".) From this we can presume that at least one director—a very influential one—and production company are aware of this theater technique in the production of their Anime.

This is further supported as *Evangelion* is one of the most skillful examples of the use of a *jo-ha-kyū* structure in Anime. This highly influential Anime does a masterful job of utilizing this structure to perhaps its most affecting result. Consisting of both films and a series, it is undeniably one

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[1] The title of episode 16 of the Anime *Evangelion*.

[2] For an extended media theory of animation see Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*.

[3] For more information on the media mix and its development see Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*.

[4] I should also include a group of dedicated patrons who can "read"/interact with this style (*otaku* and other fans who follow the rhythms and conventions), but for now I would like to focus on the works themselves. For discussions on *otaku* "reading" modes see Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*.

Table 4. Structure of *Evangelion* Series.

Division	Dan(Section) Subdivision I	Episode	Events
Jo	*Jo*	1	Introduction of Shinji, Misato, Gendō, Nerv, Eva, Angel
	Ha	2	First fight between Eva and Angel results shown
	Kyū	2	First fight's action shown, giant explosion
Ha I	*Jo*	3	Tōji and Kensuke are introduced; Shinji's pain in Eva exposed to them
	Ha	4	Shinji runs away, then returns
	Kyū	5–7	Rei and Shinji's relationship improves through defeating an Angel; larger conspiracy hinted at
Ha II	*Jo*	8	Asuka and Kaji are introduced; Asuka and Shinji defeat an Angel together
	Ha	9–10	Asuka and Shinji's relationship develops; Misato's character defined; Angels defeated
	Kyū	11–13	Shinji learns more about his father and self; Shinji excels at Eva piloting; Ritsuko's past briefly touched on; deeper history of NERV revealed
Ha III	*Jo*	14	Recap, and excursions into mind of Rei
	Ha	15–16	Misato and Kaji's relationship revealed; Asuka mentally damaged; delve into Shinji's mind; larger conspiracy exposed
	Kyū	17–18	Tōji gets picked to be pilot; brutally beaten on order of Shinji's father; Shinji deeply affected
Kyū	*Jo*	19–20	Shinji runs away, returns, weaving of previous story parts in Shinji's mind; Eva 01 awakens

Table 4. (*Cont.*)

Division	Dan(Section) Subdivision I	Episode	Events
Kyū	*Ha*	21–23	Enter the mind of Asuka and Rei: they are deeply troubled; Angels defeated, but Asuka cannot pilot Eva.
	Kyū	24	Kaworu appears, befriends Shinji; Kaworu is the last angel; Shinji left no choice, kills him
Jo	*Jo*	25	Full exploration of character's minds
	Ha	26	Full excursion into Shinji's mind; no action; showing of alternate "lighter" reality
	Kyū	26	Characters congratulate Shinji on his psychological and philosophical breakthrough

particular work that deserves a significant amount of attention. Due to its popularity and sophistication, *Evangelion* has been the subject of a number of studies, but largely evades analytical conclusions because it is so intricate that it is seemingly indecipherable. The complexity of the characters portrayed and world-setting they inhabit is impossible to do justice to with a simple outline of the story (see Table 4). The use of fragments to piece together the story and effectively delve into the psyche of the characters is practically a trademark of the series style. As Osamu Tsukihashi has noted, the prolific use of fragments in the series signifies there is a larger whole that makes up the segments.[5] Thus, though separate, the fragments do integrate into a meaningful whole and not just a series of disparate segments. While this can be said of Anime in general, as stated before, *Evangelion* is one of the best executions of this type of fragmented narrative structure. Throughout the Anime, events of intense action are

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[5] Osamu Tsukihashi, *Eizougihou to sakuhin no kouzou: eva sutorakucha* (*The Filmographical Structure of Evangelion: Anime as Hyper Picture-card Show*), Evangelion sutairu (Evangelion Style) (Tokyo: Daisanshokan, 1997).

quickly followed by subdued, quieter, even still sections. Loud noises are suddenly cut into silence and vice versa. This serves to slowly stack the emotions upon each other, rising to moments of tension, then loosening, building up to a point of climax. Furthermore, the series is very clearly divided into parts: the first two episodes acting as one unit, the middle sections divided into various story-arcs, and the last two episodes serving as a concluding unit. If we return for another look at the first two episodes, it helps reveal the careful use of a *jo-ha-kyū* system (see Table 5), which can now be easily mapped out.

In the first episode, an excellent example of the use of swift cuts to build and relax tension is when Shinji meets his father, Gendō. Though they are in the midst of being attacked by an Angel, the two argue as Shinji realizes his estranged father only summoned him to pilot the giant robot Evangelion Unit-01. Shinji refuses to do so, and slowly the tension is built up until the point where Shinji, seeing his replacement badly injured, agrees, stating firmly, "I'll pilot it." It then cuts to the scenes of the extended preparation of the Eva-01 for launch, and soon Shinji rises up to the surface in the Eva, ready to fight the angel. The previous tension from the drama of Shinji's decision to pilot the Eva is subdued by the quick cut to the preparations for launch. The preparation takes time and the anticipation of the battle to come is built up, only to be cut off by the "To be continued" that follows before the battle begins. This tension is in turn played upon by the next episode. Due to the space created by the episodes being separated, the tension is reduced. The quieter scene of the Eva facing the Angel is shown in the beginning of the second episode, establishing the situation. Then the action begins. While this is the beginning of an episode, the expectations are to continue the battle with Shinji victorious as in previous Anime with young pilots of giant robots. Yet the complete opposite occurs: Shinji and the robot are viciously beaten down by the angel. A quick *jo* of introduction to the situation, then the disruption of a *ha* section with Shinji fumbling around alter that prediction. Lastly, a *kyū* section of Shinji being badly beaten is inserted. Finalizing this disruption, the sensors at the base monitoring him sound piercing alarms of warning of his life in danger. Misato screams "Shinji!" and at the moment of her words ending there is a rapid cut to Shinji waking up with a start in a quiet hospital bed. This ends the *jo* of *jo* of the second episode, as well as the *ha* section created by the conjunction of the two episodes into one unit.

While the first episode moves forward in a linear fashion, the second episode does not. This splits the progression of time into sections. The episode begins with a continuation of the fight of the first episode, and then

Table 5. *Jo-Ha-Kyū* Structure of *Evangelion* Series *Jo* Section: Episodes 1–2.

	Dan (Section)			
Division (in series)	Subdiv. I	Subdiv. II	Ep.#	Events
Jo	*Jo*	*Jo*	1	Quiet announcements, empty cityscape, Shinji sees Rei briefly; military attacking Angel; Misato arrives at moment of big explosion; Misato and Shinji escape; explosions; decision to use the N2 bomb; giant nuclear-esque explosion; Angel still alive.
		Ha I	1	Misato's internal thoughts about ruined car; arrive at Nerv; Gendō receives command; see the Geofront in its splendor. Cut to commercial.
		Ha II	1	Misato can't find way around Nerv; meet Ritsuko; enter dark room, suddenly light, image of Eva 01 towering above them.
		Ha III	1	Gendō looming above Shinji; try to get Shinji to pilot it; argument with father (Gendō); Shinji refuses; badly injured Rei ushered in; explosion, Eva 01 moves to protect Shinji; Shinji says to himself "Don't run away"; Shinji agrees to pilot Eva 01.
		Kyū	1	Preparation sequence for Eva 01 launch; confirms with Gendō; Eva 01 launches; Misato says "Shinji, don't die."
	Ha	*Jo*	2	Survey's scene with Eva and Angel quickly; Eva 01 is released; Shinji walks, but falls; Angel viciously beating Eva 01 into submission; critical situation for Shinji on monitors; Misato screams "Shinji!"

<div align="right">(Continued)</div>

Table 5. (*Cont.*)

	Dan (Section)			
Division (in series)	Subdiv. I	Subdiv. II	Ep.#	Events
Jo	*Ha*	*Ha* I	2	Shinji awakens in quiet hospital bed; Gendō in conference room; Misato decides to take Shinji into her home; Misato takes Shinji to view the city; buildings rise at sunset
		Ha II	2	Shinji's awkward entrance to his new home; Shinji and Misato eat; Misato shows her comedic playful side; divide up chores
		Ha III	2	Shinji takes a bath; frightened by the penguin Pen Pen; Shinji thinks in bath;
		Kyū	2	Gendō and Ritsuko talk; Misato talks to Ritsuko on the phone in bath—information given
	Kyū	*Jo*	2	Shinji alone in his new bedroom; recalls the events of the night before
		Ha I	2	Eva 01 being beaten by Angel; noisy circuit board and screens displayed
		Ha II	2	Eva 01 suddenly reawakens and goes berserk, savagely attacking the Angel
		Ha III	2	The Angel makes moves to self-destruct; giant explosion; image of Eva 01 walking out of flames
		Kyū	2	Shinji sees Eva 01 without head armor in reflection in a building; an eye grows out of it; Shinji screams in horror
	Jo	*Jo-Ha-Kyū*	2	Shinji is alone in his room in bed; Misato stops by, tells him he did a good thing and should be proud; she wishes him good luck

quickly cuts to the results: Shinji in the hospital bed and the related after-
math of the battle—clean up, official talk, Misato and her colleague
Ritsuko speaking. It continues on from there to show Shinji's living
arrangements being changed to live with Misato, him moving in, and even
light hearted scenes of Misato's eccentric alcoholic behavior and the two
establishing who does what chores at home. Eventually, after they both
take the customary Japanese nightly bath, we find him lying in his new
bed. The time then switches back to the continuation of the battle at the
cliffhanger where we were left off. This section is filled with action, the Eva
going berserk and savagely destroying the Angel. This is the largest of the
spectacles and the core (*ha*) of the *kyū* section. The final moments of him
seeing the disturbing image of the armor-less head of the Eva and his
piercing screams are the rapid and impressionable images and sounds
that make up the quick *kyū* of the *kyū* section. Moving to the present,
with Shinji still in his bed, Misato passes by and tells him he did well,
ending quickly with the line *Ganbatte ne* (translated as: "Hang in there"
or "Don't give up", "Good luck") as Shinji stares off to the side, clearly
disturbed from the events we just witnessed him go through. The final *jo*
segment is used to hint that the series will continue onward from there in
a similar fashion as these episodes.

   Various fragmented segments are inserted throughout the mosaic struc-
ture of the episode to build up and "foreshadow" events as well. During
one point in the *ha* section (the second episode), Shinji is resting in the
bath and thinks about the previous events. At this moment images of the
Eva and the previous fight are quickly flashed on screen. These images
resurface at the *jo* of the *kyū* section, when, lying in his bed, the images
quickly pop up, then cuts to Shinji's face, then appear again, finally cutting
to a close up of Shinji's eye before transferring the scene to the actual fight
at the same point in time we were left off at in the beginning of the epi-
sode. All of this is done to the beat of the banging of the Eva's eye by the
Angel, the sound slowly rising in intensity as the interspersed images
increase in number and we finally cut to the full scene. The images were
introduced to us as fragments that were built up and compounded to
result in the final series of images that then transforms into the actual
footage of the battle.

   This style continues throughout the series and is the way the Anime
moves both its plotline and its character development forward: through
the use of fragments, cut in, built up, released, and then pulled back.
In fact, a movie was released (*Evangelion: Death and Rebirth, Shin Seiki
Evangerion Gekijōban: Death and Rebirth Shito Shinsei,* 1997) that is literally

entirely[6] comprised of cuts from the series, re-edited and placed together to summarize the events and progression of the series before a continuation of the *Evangelion*'s storyline was produced in two feature films. Even within *Death and Rebirth* there are sections. Each character is allotted a segment of time in which the film delves into the events pertaining to them and their psyche. These, in the case of the four children selected to pilot the Eva robots, are separated by scenes of them tuning their instruments as they get ready for practice. One by one they join the group and the music performed by the solo, duo, trio, and finally quartet is played in the background. When each character joins, a short summary of their history (and personality) follows in clips.

As Japanese critics have labeled it, the "riddle" (or "mystery;" Japanese: "*nazo*") of the series is tantalizing and part of the great attraction to the series. Even as eclectic as Anime stories come, it is a complex and distinct plot. But to the dissatisfaction of many viewers, the final two episodes do not completely address the unanswered questions of the series and instead deal with the internal, psychological aspects of the main characters of the series. However, this can be expected through an alternate reading of the series. Hints of this ending are laid out throughout the series, with introspective looks into the characters minds in many sequences, starting with the very first episode where Misato's worried internal thoughts about her ruined car are exposed through voice-over while she smiles at Shinji.[7] By looking at the series through the mosaic system's viewpoint, this outcome of a psychologically focused ending further becomes apparent. Such segments begin in episode 14 and continue to build steadily through the second half of the series (see Table 4 for their location; these introspective moments will be explored further in later chapters). Many times these introspective scenes are filled with flashbacks to earlier parts of the series, even earlier internal dialogues. By layering these moments of mental conversation, the series slowly builds these fragments, one over the other, until the final episodes where the viewer is accustomed to this style of narrative and the final in depth analysis can take place. Thus, these moments of mental introversion gain momentum

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6   The film is divided into parts, and the first section (*Death*) is a "recap" of the original 24 episodes in film form. A small amount of new material was added to the film, but so small that it is a negligible amount.

7   Napier points this out as well. See Susan Napier, "When the Machines Stop: Fantasy, Reality, and Terminal Identity in Neon Genesis Evangelion and Serial Experiments: Lain." *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams*, ed. Christopher Bolton. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). 113.

as the series progresses through the mosaic *jo-ha-kyū* structure, compounding on top of each other until their ultimate manifestation in the final episodes.[8]

This system further explains the almost nonsensical visual orgy that is the last film of the original *Evangelion* series, *End of Evangelion* (*Shin Seiki Evangerion Gekijōban: Air/Magokoro o, Kimi ni,* 1997). Supposedly concluding the "riddle" (i.e. plot) of the series, it continues where episode 24 leaves off. Yet it too follows a progression into the mind of Shinji, and ultimately, the last segments of the film are an extravagant and sensational series of images and events that literally change the entire world, and perhaps even universe. Finally, the last few moments of the film are Shinji and another EVA pilot Asuka, silently on a beach, the last survivors of the apocalyptic events that transpired, a final *jo* moment for a new beginning after the epic, sensational, and audio-visually stimulating *kyū* section.

As we apply these concepts to *Evangelion*, a universe rich in references, we find a story about a world filled with apocalyptic Judeo-Christian myths and the monstrous bio-mechanical products of science gone too far, or about the trials of adolescence, an existential journey about the weak and strong relationships we construct with others. Is the world and the plot the focus or merely a hyperbolized visual symphony, simply an indulgence into the pure spectacle of it all? If we take one option or the other, we get lost in theories and contradictions, which all contribute to the attraction, infamy, and acclaim it has gained internationally. Yet if we straddle both routes, if we accept the staggering number of references as if pieces in a picture mosaic, if we see these aspects organized in a carefully constructed aesthetic with a *jo-hay-kyū* structure, with the focus on the *ha* section, where meaning is accrued as the series and films go on, then the final episodes of this series start to make sense. As do the films, as do so many more Anime that many fans complain are "excellent in the middle and so disappointing at the end." The pattern that was compounded in the *Evangelion* series was not the external world, but the psychology of the characters, focusing on the *ha* sections to display the mental anguish of the characters. By subverting the *kyū* ending that was expected, they attempted something against the grain, away from external spectacle towards the internal. The response to this ending's unpopularity brought

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8 Whether caused by lack of funding and deadline pressures or Anno Hideaki's disdain for the otaku fans that have been cited in many sources, this construction of the Anime brilliantly controls the descent into madness that has defined the Anime.

an exaggerated grandiose spectacle in the substitute *kyū* section of the films. Where else could it go?

Though, it is important to stress that the progression of the *jo-ha-kyū* system in each Anime is different, as it is in each Noh, Kabuki, and Bunraku play. For example, in Noh the length and content of each *jo-ha-kyū* segment in a first category (God) play would be different than that of a fifth category (Demon) play. The nature of the spectacle in the *kyū* section of each play would be different as the aesthetics of each category play is different—in the God play it would be more subdued and auspicious in atmosphere, whereas in the Demon play it would be faster and wilder, generally darker in atmosphere. The same difference can be noted for the similar structural system in Anime. The progression of each segment and its content will necessarily match the general tone and atmosphere of each Anime. Thus the final *kyū* segment, the epic fight for the universe (literally) in the over-the-top style of *Gurren Lagann* is not mimicked in Anime that have a more nostalgic tone, such as *Cowboy Bebop*, where the spectacle and concluding dramatic conflict is mainly between two people[9] and their feud.

As stated before, the use of *jo-ha-kyū* may not be conscious in Anime. Rather, it is an effective way of pacing and structuring the narratives for serialization and commercial viability. With such a structure in place it creates an easy to follow and relatively quick to produce network of narratives that, as Lamarre points out, is a nodal point to various merchandising and franchises in other mediums, where much of the "real money" is.[10] As noted prior, I am not saying that Anime specifically operates with *jo-ha-kyū*, but that it is clear that Anime follows certain patterns, and contains certain formal structures and systems. These have attributes exceedingly similar to *jo-ha-kyū* and utilizing this system as a model is a very useful method to map that structure out. Furthermore, it is not necessarily the case that all Anime strictly follow this pattern. That could attest to the popularity of certain Anime, at their ability to successfully follow through with this system. Not all Noh, Kabuki or Bunraku plays were classics, or even successful in their time. Zeami himself says of Noh plays that "what is interesting in all sorts of performance relies on the consummation of

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[9] Spike and Vicious, though this is connected to their inclusion in a love-triangle with the scarcely appearing character Julia, who is killed in the final episode. The tragedy is heightened by the bonds Spike has made with the other characters which is developed in the *ha* section.

[10] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 185. Steinberg goes into Anime's connection to merchandising and marketing in detail. See Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan.*

jo-ha-kyū. If it is not interesting, then you should know that this is because *jo-ha-kyū* has not come to consummation."[11] The Anime *Gantz* provides a good example. Based on a very popular Manga (*Gantz*; Author: Hiroya Oku, 2000-ongoing), the Anime works very well until the last story arc and ending (*kyū*)—it was not extravagant or spectacle oriented and proved to be disappointing for many fans.[12] However, the previous sections proceeded accordingly well, and the section prior had all the makings of a well-constructed *kyū* segment, with epic action scenes and massive character deaths. This was premature and without "upping the ante" and building upon this to an even grander spectacle, the next few episodes "fizzled" out.

In *Genshiken* (*Genshiken*, 2004–2004)—an Anime about *otaku* and their Anime club—within the course of the Anime's narrative, the characters analyze a meta-Anime within their Anime. During their discussions, they make note of the fact that at various points in the series, certain developments should occur, ascribing to the notion that Anime has a formal narrative structure that is generally adhered to in successful series—things that deviate from the pattern unsuccessfully are not "worthy" Anime. In this case, the meta-Anime in the Anime *Genshiken*, the series does move along the general pattern smoothly.

Thusly, a key similarity between the theater forms and Anime is that they both have conventionalized narrative structure and pacing components to their forms. On a number of levels, the parts within this structure separate, reunite, and interact with each other to produce the larger work. By piecing together these segments the Anime creates a whole made of parts, moving from an introduction, breaking development, and rapid conclusion, connecting with each other, layering, compounding, and building upon the previous and the next in many aspects of the art form. A similar style of construction was already in play for centuries in Japanese theater's *jo-ha-kyū* system of structure. It is this system that is essential to the correlation of the other elements that combine to make up these art forms. *Jo-ha-kyū* (or a similar concept) is the factor that ensures the relationships between the separate parts interact successfully with the larger whole and thus create the desired aesthetic effects each art form strives for. This process is essential to create the elaborate mosaic that produces much of the story patterns of the Anime art form, among them the complex and creative intertextual network that is extremely prominent in the form.

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[11] Hare, *Zeami: Performance Notes*: 217.
[12] It should be noted that the Manga is still continuing, while the Anime concluded.

INTERTEXTUALITY AND PATTERN UTILIZATION

Within Japanese artistic production there has been a long tradition of intertextuality, and the Japanese traditional theater is well versed in this practice. Intertextual references have been used for centuries to the joy of spectators, with excerpts from external literary and poetic pieces, current events and legends, and even references from within the theater world itself. The Anime form follows this practice to the same end as the theater: using pieces of references to weave a new work. As Livia Monnet explains: "Citation, parody, and pastiche were common currency in nearly all traditional visual, performance, and literary arts in Japan from the eleventh to the nineteenth centuries...The transnational media culture of Anime, manga, and video games...thrives on imitation, parody, intertextual play, reflexivity, and self-referentiality."[1]

References in both Anime and traditional Japanese theater take many forms. From music, costumes, and images, to story-lines and settings, these elements are frequently used to evoke a certain effect in relation to the spectator's knowledge of that reference. The expectations and connotations derived from these references are manipulated to evoke a specific emotion and/or tone in the atmosphere, the plot, and the audience (in their reaction to the work). As the intertextual parts build up, juxtaposed and arranged in a particular manner, they compound to form a new work created on the steps of the old. In this chapter, the methods of implementation of intertextuality in both the theater and Anime will be described.

Utilization of intertextual techniques can be seen in the works of the renowned Bunraku playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon in his use of archetypes for the construction of both narratives and characters. This is particularly evident in his love suicide (*shinjū*) pieces, each work always resulting in the suicide of two lovers.[2] Often based on true events from Tokugawa Japan, the concept is very simple: due to certain circumstances,

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[1] Livia Monnet, "'Such is the Contrivance of the Cinematograph': Dur(anim)ation, Modernity, and Edo Culture in Tabaimo's Animated Installations." *Cinema Anime*. (Ed. Steven T. Brown. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008). 210.

[2] See Gerstle's "Descent to Paradise" chapter in *Circles of Fantasy* for a detailed analysis of Chikamatsu's love suicide pieces.

two lovers cannot be with each other and so choose to die together (to meet in the next life).[3] Often the male character is married and/or too poor to purchase the freedom of the female character who is a low level prostitute. Despite the narrative's "simplicity" and predictability, the plays were wildly successful, continuing to awe audiences even today. Despite the well-known knowledge of the play's endings, the beautiful language of the master playwright and the slight changes of the circumstances and story excited the audiences, transforming these popular scandals into art. Donald Keene attributes this to the exploitation of the fact that they are expressed through puppets: "Chikamatsu's genius enabled him to make believable people out of types."[4] When I use the word "types" here, I am referring to a series of templates that are re-used and slightly altered with each use, yet maintaining a core similarity between them, connecting each use to the template. The characters possess base characteristics, figures and designs on which various interchangeable parts for both mental and physical attributes are added, subtracted, or rearranged and placed in different circumstances that are likewise manipulated in a similar manner. In terms of narrative, the plot would be based on a similar paradigm, but adjusted in some fashion so as to create a new but ultimately congruous series of events and circumstances. (The use of types in theater and Anime will be explored in more detail later.) By using a series of adjustable types, creating a story system based on patterns, these elements can be manipulated to great effect by adjusting popular types to create a constant flow of likeable (i.e. "bankable") characters and plots. These can then be altered against the expected outcome of the story, providing a delightful surprise for the audience, or followed through with, satisfying the audience's expectations (as they did in the love suicide pieces). The foundation of this is the original base story, on top of which an "ever-changing pattern of actions" is built,[5] creating a new work through reference of a previous, well known one. In plays made from popular sources, the story ending was widely acknowledged, even the scandals they were based on popularly known gossip at the time. In spite of knowing the stories in detail, the audiences still flocked in to see the magic created on stage as it was altered towards an artistic end.

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[3] Gerstle, *Circles of Fantasy*: 113.
[4] Donald Keene, "Individuality and Pattern in Japanese Literature." *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture*. (Tokyo, Palo Alto: Kodansha International Ltd., 1971). 51.
[5] Ibid.

Kabuki would also use similar techniques (in fact many Bunraku plays were adapted for Kabuki and vice versa) and would frequently revive older plays. Hits that have been popular for centuries have had so many re-productions the plays are significantly altered, some parts kept, others revised, yet based on the original paradigm. Such productions occurred so many times that some of the oldest plays in the current Kabuki repertoire are almost entirely different pieces than the original works they were based on. For example the play *Shibaraku!* (*Just a minute!*) was performed and revised annually, only becoming standardized in the late nineteenth century.[6] By building on the previous patterns, stories, events or literature, the audience came to expect a certain outcome upon recognizing the reference. Sometimes the results would match the expectations, and other times they would go in new directions. However these results were manipulated: as the intertextual parts and their predicted outcomes built up, the plays were leading the audiences to a certain conclusion, whether unexpected or not.

Such a practice is formalized in Kabuki (and Bunraku) in the long tradition of using a *sekai* (world) in which the setting, the characters, and plot lines were previously decided upon. New plays would be written within these *sekai*, manipulating the characters inside the rules of the specific *sekai*. The audiences would be familiar with these worlds and characters before going to see the play, usually well-known historical periods or legends (popular and folk). Although the plays would be new, the characters, events, places, etc., would be understood to fall within the set realm of that particular *sekai*. This differs from our concept of "genre" as *sekai* were repetitions of events, stories, characters, costumes and stage tricks that were given a certain twist (*shukō*) to be considered a new piece, and were appreciated within the context of the *sekai*. Popular *sekai* included the world of the Soga brothers (*sogamono*), who famously achieved revenge against the man who killed their father, many years after his murder. The world included a general narrative outline (revenge against their father's murderer) and characters that were highly conventionalized in their appearance.

When a new play was to be created, a proper *sekai* was selected and a new *shukō* (plan, idea) was incorporated into the *sekai*, giving it a different twist, creating a new work from that *sekai*.[7] For example, playwrights

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[6] James R. Brandon, and Samuel L. Leiter, *Kabuki Plays on Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697–1766.* (Honolulu: University of *Ha*wai'i Press, 2003). 6.

[7] In a translator's note to Azuma's reference of Ōtsuka Eiji, they note: "Through this creative process of transformation, the *sekai* is thus first fragmented by and then

would take the characters that were originally from the twelfth century, and put them in an eighteenth century setting; sometimes playwrights would do the reverse, taking contemporary events and displacing them into the past. Such a practice was frequent in Kabuki and Bunraku play production. *Sekai* use allows for a clever utilization of intertext, through the combination and organization of the new, and re-arrangement of the old. In the repetition of similar tropes, expectations accumulate and a stylized form within each *sekai* is produced. A patterned mosaic of tropes, audience expectations, and refined, carefully varied repetition begin to create startlingly fantastic and sensational worlds mounted as elaborate productions on stage.

As stated before, many of the famous love suicide pieces of the puppet theater such as *Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*, the play that began the trend) were based on actual scandals that were manipulated and stylized into stage productions. The love suicide (*shinjū*) genre flourished after the popularity of *Sonezaki*, with similar tropes, themes, narrative style and plot re-occurring frequently. Among the attractions are the lyric *michiyuki* scenes, beautifully composed poetic passages of the lovers traveling on their path(s) to death. The success of the love suicide plays caused theaters in Tokugawa Japan to create more plays that ran along the same general narrative pattern as *Sonezaki*. This eventually grew into the love suicide genre, where audiences would expect the ultimate ending to be the suicide of the characters, and would seek out such performances. As many such plays were actual news stories, the references in Kabuki and Bunraku helped draw crowds and legitimatize the events unfolding on stage.

While the basic premise of such a seemingly morbid and "simple" genre might sound repetitive and easily replaced, they were so popular that the Kabuki Theater was forced to copy the Bunraku love suicides to compete. Though the plot lines and characters, and even the outcomes of the narratives were all very similar, audiences flocked to see their (commoner's) plight exposed on stage, expressed in the refined beauty of the aestheticised world the form produced and the narratives were enacted in. Like the performing arts traditions of Kathakali, Topeng, and Noh—among countless others—they are simultaneously confined by and liberated by the tradition and form, allowing for a different type of "creativity" to occur,

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readjusted according to new *shukō*." According to the text, it is with this link that Edo period theatrical practices can be applied to post-modern Anime and Manga. See Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*: 125.

working within the bounds of the conventions of the form. An integral part of this was the free association, repurposing, and reutilization of intertextual references. The form emphasized a difference in presentation from the "original" source, and thus a new experience.

The play of references used in the Noh Theater goes very deep, the concept of intertextuality at the focal point of the very construction of the plays. In Zeami's treatise *Sandō* he explains that the three elements needed to compose a Noh play are the Seed, the construction (*jo-ha-kyū*), and the composition. Zeami explains:

> The seed refers to the choice of a subject based on appropriate traditional sources, the actions of which are both appropriate for theatrical expression and especially effective in terms of the Two Arts of dance and chant....There is also the category of 'created Noh' in which a new play is prepared without any specific literary source, making use of the affinities between famous places or historical sites, in order to move the audience.[8]

The purpose of this was not only to cater to the refined and educated tastes of the aristocratic elite that attended Noh performances and would recognize and appreciate such references; it was also to create a certain familiarity with the events being portrayed on stage. By doing so it made the performance more real, more approachable to those watching it; understanding the intended atmosphere through the reference assists in the creation of the desired effect. Zeami states that certain well-known phrases should be made easy to notice within the performance script so that the audience can better pick up on them.[9] So important were references that, in the case of the "created Noh" plays, famous songs or poems about that place or person were inserted to increase familiarity, and later be exposed as the source of the play. All source pieces selected would be appropriate in mood and emotion for the play, and little excerpts from the source are placed throughout the play. In this way the already carefully constructed atmosphere gets further layered (or "mosaicked") and more complex as the source's connotations and latent emotional power get inserted into the play as well. The source of the play, often a famous *waka* poem, historical figure, or legend, would be previously known by the audience, and the play alludes to this source through setting, character, or events. The exposition of the poem (or poems) or revelation of the

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8 Zeami, Rimer, and Yamazaki, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*: 148–149.

9 Ibid., 150. Or, see Hare, *Zeami: Performance Notes*: 153.

character's true identity is one of the highlights of the production.[10] The intertextual reference "part(s)" are not only used as the source of the play, but are also interwoven into the very fabric of the play itself through the lyrics, the (thin) plot, or focus on the character, making the source integral to the play's success. The segments interact with the larger play by assisting in the creation of the world around it.

In Noh, the use of references can be seen to represent narrative elements that work to combine with other pieces and create an intertextual network in the new work of the Noh play itself. Take for example, the Noh play *Shunkan*. The main source is that of the abandoned monk Shunkan, left alone in exile in a famous segment from the epic about the Genpei War (1180–1185), the *Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari*). However a number of other sources are woven into the play, among them the *jidō* legend of a Chinese exile, stranded in a valley abundant with chrysanthemums.[11] There, biding his time, the exile carefully wrote out the sutras on the petals of the chrysanthemums. However, with the coming of morning, they were washed away with the dew, and the elixir made from the dew and ink was said to grant immortality. Though the base of the narrative's source is the plight of the monk Shunkan, aspects of this legend are inserted into the poetry of the play's lyrics, such as the imagery of chrysanthemums. Various other references from poetry anthologies are included as well, creating a sea of intertextual poetic patterns and images that weave into the base story of the abandoned priest. The culmination of this juxtaposition of various references creates the grander aspect of the play in the mosaic display they produce. However, the audience can follow these various references as they develop in the narrative, on top of, interwoven with, and separate to the Shunkan story. It should also be noted that the *jidō* legend is the source of two other Noh plays, *Kikujidō* and *Makurajidō*.[12]

The play *Izutsu* by Zeami is another excellent example. The source of this play is *Tales of Ise* (*Ise monogatari*), and quotes a total of six different poems from four different episodes of the classic text: episode 23 poem 1 (23.1), 23.2, 23.3, 17.1, 24.2, and 4.1. Though *Ise* is about an undetermined person, many scholars during Zeami's era, as well as those now, believe it to be about the exploits of Ariwara no Narihira (825–880). During Zeami's

[10] Thomas J Rimer, "Japanese Literature: Four Polarities." *Japanese Culture and Aesthetics: A Reader*, ed. Nancy G. Hume. (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995). 9.

[11] Masayoshi Ito, *Yōkyokushu*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1983). 454.

[12] See Kentarō Sanari, *Yōkyoku taikan/Sanari Kentarō cho*, 7 vols. (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1982).

time there were commentaries explaining the well-known *Ise* story and poems, and this is where he would have learned many details about *Ise*. The commentaries that Zeami would have had access to tied episodes 17, 23, and 24 together, explaining that all three were in regard to Narihira and Ki no Aritsune's daughter's love affair. However, Zeami added the poem from episode 4 to add poignancy and inferred the timeline to be 23, 17, and then 24.[13]

The play focuses on the plight of Ki no Aritsune's daughter, as her ghost wrestles with the loss of her lover Narihira. Throughout the play she recites the poems that would have been associated with her (according to the commentaries), repeating parts of them, accruing meaning and emotional impact as she slowly slips into the fringes of madness, donning the clothes of her ex-lover, dancing in them as she yearns to see him again. At the climactic moment of the play, just before she looks into the well where the previous poems were exchanged, hoping to see the long lost Narihira, the poem from episode 4 is introduced. When she recites this famous poem—Narihira's own poem that was meant for another woman in an unrelated incident—it is clear that she is on the edge of derangement; she thinks she is (possessed by) Narihira, and wearing his clothes, half hopes and half believes that the reflection will be Narihira's and not hers. The knowledgeable audience would have distinguished this episode as unrelated, and her use of it would have been spurious. This could be read as highlighting her delusional nature as well as emphasizing that she may actually be possessed by Narihira to be able to recite this unrelated poem of his. In such a way the use of intertextual references are intertwined into the play, layered over each other and manipulated to create an emotional impact on the audience and develop the character of Ki no Aritsune's daughter.

In the theater, references are not only textual but can also be visual. For example, certain poses (*mie*) of the famous Soga brother Gorō from the play *Kotobuki Soga no Taimen* (*The Soga Brothers Confront Their Enemy*)—poses that are done numerous times within the play and are "intimately identified with this particular play"—are referenced by performing the same poses in the play *Ame no Gorō* (*Gorō in the Rain*).[14] Poses from another Soga play, *Sukeroku* (*Sukeroku*), where Gorō is the "heroic dandy" of the *yoshiwara* (pleasure quarters), are also included in *Ame no Gorō*.

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    13   Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*: 121–122.
    14   Leonard C. Pronko, "*Kabuki*: Signs, Symbols, and the Hieroglyphic Actor," in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter (Armonk, NY and London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 250.

Because *Kotobuki Soga no Taimen* and *Sukeroku* take place during different time periods (the twelfth and eighteenth centuries respectively), the former focused on Gorō's (and his brother's) noble revenge on his father's murderer, and the latter highlighted Gorō's exploits in the pleasure quarters, these two aspects of Gorō are juxtaposed and alluded to in *Ame no Gorō*. As Leonard C. Pronko observes, "these visual reminders do not make us stop at the association between…young Gorō as Gorō-at-his-enemy's-mansion or Gorō as Sukeroku-in-the-gay-quarters. Instead they add to our aesthetic enjoyment of poem and dance the multiple associations of…the rich world of eighteenth-century pleasure quarters and of twelfth century Kamukura."[15]

What is common in the theatrical forms is the conscious use of intertextual parts, through direct and explicit citation, repetition of tropes, uses of *sekai* (in Kabuki), and various character types. Furthermore, they carry an abundance of intertextual references, creating a hyper-intertextual system of interrelated material from various mediums. They all draw heavily from the Japanese classics of the *Tale of Genji, Tale of the Heike, Tale of Ise*, from poetry traditions of their time and those past. In the case of Kabuki, the commercial art of woodblock prints (*ukiyoe*) was deeply connected to its conventions and popularity (though there are depictions of Bunraku and Noh as well). The focus that I would like to point to here is that there is an abundance of intertextual references and frequent use of patterns in the three theatrical forms, their use is formalized, and is a marked characteristic of their forms. For example, in the scholarly study of Noh, a deep knowledge of poetry, literature, and *setsuwa* lore, among other literary traditions is necessary to help analyze the texts. These media referencing components construct a network of associations within the art forms and create a hyper-intertextual environment from which they produce their respective aesthetics.

While the references, story, and setting are far removed from those typically used in traditional theater, the play of intertextuality in Anime is similar, and the foil of the theater provides a most useful tool to expose their construction. Anime often references within itself, a pastiche of previous Anime and other sources, showing the influence of earlier Anime and building on the viewer's expectations. Almost-*sekai* can be found in Anime, with franchises such as *Gundam* (1979-ongoing), *Macross* (1982-ongoing), and now perhaps *Evangelion* (1995-ongoing), and *Ghost in*

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[15] Ibid., 251.

the Shell (1995–2006, 2011)[16] among others, having new productions taking place in the same world with similar narratives and the same or similar characters. Cultural critic and Manga author Ōtsuka Eiji also notes a distinct similarity in what he calls the Anime/Manga "worldview" and the concept and utilization of *sekai* in Kabuki and Bunraku. He denotes that this mixing and matching of *sekai*, their characters, world rules, and histories in Kabuki and Bunraku are comparable to the acts of contemporary consumer production of objects that share the same worldview as the Anime. He explains that "in Kabuki, the talent of an author was judged by the particular excellence of their ability to cut out a variation from this world and perfect a single theatrical work," associating this with the popularity of *dōjinshi* (fan made) comics based on already produced Anime worldviews. These fan-made productions can sometimes sell in the thousands.[17] However, my stance is that the use of *sekai* in Kabuki and Bunraku is directly comparable to that in Anime itself, not necessarily just the fans and their own productions.

"*Sekai*" parallels can be found in the many *Gundam* (specifically noted by Ōtsuka) and *Macross* series that take place in familiar "*sekai*" or worlds, with the same (or related) timelines/histories, different, but similar characters, and analogous narrative tropes. A large number of series and films within the *Macross* and *Gundam* franchise world have been produced, many shows connected through the world or time period, creating an extended timeline within which the various separate Anime take place. Some are prequels to the original Anime, others begin far into the future, after the original series. The common link is that they inhabit the same world, usually with the same or similar governmental system, similar machinery (*mecha*, the word for any type of advanced machinery), and in the case of *Macross*, alien races in contact with humans from Earth.

While "genre" does imply certain thematic tendencies, a widely established pattern for that specific genre, "*sekai*" is a formalized structure within which certain rules are in place that form the events of the play. *Gundam* and *Macross* examples fit well into the *sekai* definition, though they often contain different characters. In the *Gundam sekai*, the many iterations of it take place in the same or very similar world, with very

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[16] A recent release of *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex: Solid State Society* (*Kōkaku Kidōtai: Sutando Arōn Konpurekkusu Soriddo Sutēto Sosaieti*, 2006; 2011) brings the Anime into more current relevance. Regardless, the Anime franchise has been extremely influential.

[17] Eiji. Trans. Marc Steinberg Ōtsuka, "World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative," *Mechademia 5: Fanthropologies* 5(2010): 111.

similar—but distinct to their respective worlds—protagonists, villains, *mecha* designs, and plots. They all resemble each other immensely in terms of their narrative and visual (graphical/technical/mechanical) design. Thus *Gundam*—and other long running Anime franchises—find themselves somewhere between genre and *sekai*, in a hybrid-like system that results in their long broadcast, extensive merchandising, and wild popularity—despite their apparent repetition of the same iterations. The seemingly minute differences in characters, the *mecha* designs, and narrative twists gain importance through their differentiation from the pattern, thus serving as references to the previous manifestations of the *sekai*-genre. The form of Anime aids in this as such reiterations are expected, familiar, cherished, and even sought after.

The original *Mobile Suit Gundam* (*Kidō Senshi Gandamu,* 1979–1980) was a wildly successful series and set of films about space colonies fighting for freedom from Earth and the robot(s) they used to fight those battles, the Gundam Mobile Suit. Since then a myriad of works using the *Gundam* name have been created: *Gundam Zeta* (*Kidō Senshi Zēta Gandamu,* 1985–1986), *Gundam: Star Dust Memories* (*Kidō Senshi Gandamu Daburuōeitīsrī Sutādasuto Memorī,* 1991–1992); *Gundam 08th: The MS Team* (*Kidō Senshi Gandamu Dai Zerohachi Emu Esu Shōtai,* 1996–1999); *Gundam Wing* (*Shin Kidō Senki Gandamu Uingu,* 1995–1996); *Gundam 00* (2007); *Turn A Gundam* (*Tān Ē Gandamu,* 1999–2000); *Gundam Seed* (*Kidō Senshi Gandamu Shīdo,* 2002–2004), to name just a few. Each is an extremely complex world working off of the original *Gundam* narrative concept. Although certain series deviate further than others, some with entirely different time lines, these separate Anime series are often connected in some fashion within the narrative. These Anime contain an in-depth political and military battle between different factions, the Gundam robots with their varying but very distinct "look and feel," the plight of the pilots from the factions that use these *mecha*, and a high-tech, "realistic" war setting in which the story takes place. Such narratives and corresponding attributes (characters, *mecha* designs, and government structures) can be expected from just understanding that it is a *Gundam* Anime. While each *Gundam* Anime is unique to itself, it clearly takes places in a *Gundam sekai* that allows these patterns to be accepted, re-lived and enjoyed.[18] *Gundam Seed*

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[18] Ōtsuka Eiji's idea of "Anime/manga realism" seems apt here. Azuma summarizes it as: "The modern Japanese novel is said to reflect reality vividly (*shasei*); the otaku novel reflects fiction vividly. The characters and stories that Seiryoin depict are never realistic, but they are possible in the world of comics and anime already published, and therefore the reader accepts them as real. Ōtsuka called such an attitude 'anime/manga-like Realism'

in particular bears very clear resemblance to the original *Mobile Suit Gundam*. The careful re-adjustment of the basic story patterns, set in the *Gundam sekai*, make it a prime example for a similar system of *sekai* with a *shukō* twist. The experience of seeing analogous characters fighting analogous battles in comparable machines is made all the more appealing in the minute differences from the "original." These plot lines, characters, politics, wars, and *mecha*, have made *Gundam* a highly successful franchise for the past thirty years. The performance of such a closely related production highlights the reiterated and rearranged elements, celebrating them as the blatantly apparent visual and narrative similarities move into and away from each other. Yet each *Gundam* Anime is a different experience, with similar but different Gundam designs, similar but different political conflicts, characters, and war settings, that each provide pieces, or rather, excursions into the *Gundam sekai*, and these various parts accumulate into a larger mosaic that is the *Gundam sekai* itself (or rather, the *Gundam* franchise).

Continuing the nested, mosaic pattern downwards, I will now examine the mosaic construction of intertext in an individual Anime. I would like to note that I use the term "mosaic" here instead of "bricolage" or "pastiche" as the term "mosaic" connotes the larger structure of Anime as an aesthetic configuration. A brilliant example of the mosaic use of intertext is the Anime series *Cowboy Bebop*, referencing sources such as that of Bruce Lee (1940–1973), Blues and Jazz songs, Film Noir and the Anime *Lupin III* (*Rupan Sansei*, 1971–72; 1977–1980; 1984–1985) to add to the hardboiled, nostalgic, vagabond feel of the series as a whole. Like Noh, such references (in the case of Noh, to poems and historical texts) add layers of tangibility and atmosphere to further the aesthetic. These references take many forms within *Cowboy Bebop*. There are particular shots, backgrounds, fights, and scenes that reference, for example, Bruce Lee's films. Other times it is the characters themselves, with the central character Spike frequently brushing his thumb against his nose as Bruce Lee famously did in his fights. There is even a scene where Spike gives a nearly identical "be like water" speech that Bruce Lee is known for.[19] One of the bounties the

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and identified its origin in the science fiction writer Arai Motoko's late 1970s statement that she 'wanted to write the print version of the comics Lupin the Third.' Ōtsuka argues that, although the naturalistic realism (of the modern Japanese novel) and the 'anime/manga-like Realism' give very different impressions on the surface, the progression from the former to the latter was a matter of necessity, because in Japan the former was fictional to begin with." Azuma. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. 56.

    [19] See episode 8: "Waltz for Venus".

main characters chase is also named after a famous student of Bruce Lee's: Abdul Hakim is starkly reminiscent of Kareem Abdul Jabbar who starred in Bruce Lee's film *Game of Death* (1978). Famous Blues and Jazz songs are the titles of many of the episodes, and a soundtrack featuring a vivid mix of Blues, Jazz and Funk complete the atmosphere. Smoky bars, dark shadows, and a seedy urban backdrop filled with *femme fatales*, Asian mafia syndicates, and other characters from the underworld spewing hard-boiled speech make the perfect setting for any Film Noir movie. The *Lupin III* reference comes into play with the general appearance and attitude of the main character Spike Spiegel. His scruffy sideburns and Lupin-style attire are a hint back towards the famous Anime. The many other intertextual references include westerns, the Godfather films (*The Godfather*, 1972; *The Godfather Part II*, 1974; *The Godfather Part III*, 1990), *Blade Runner* (1982), the Anime *City Hunter* (*Shitī Hantā,* 1987–1988; 1988–1989), and samurai films—all juxtaposed next to each other, spread throughout the series.

All of these parts and references are situated as a mosaic, one with the other, stacking their various connotations to add to the greater effect of the series. Each aspect operates like a single image in a larger mosaic that comprises a bigger image, like those commonly seen depicting Muhammad Ali, Albert Einstein, or some other popular icon, entirely composed of famous pictures of them. In such a mosaic construction, the intertextual references produce a network of connections around the Anime and bring it to life by interacting with these links. For example, the above mentioned *Lupin* references come through in Spike's personality, Spike always playing a slight of hand trick and smiling in the face of danger with a snide remark, a trademark of the Lupin character.[20] This is placed in conjunction with Spike's emulation of Bruce Lee in his gestures, martial philosophies, and adeptness in combat. The expectations of his appearance—established through the juxtaposition and linkage of these intertextual elements—are followed through to the enjoyment of the spectator as Spike's slick antics and hard-boiled Zen attitude make him an attractive anti-hero character. In this manner the use of intertextual references serve as metonymic devices to form the mosaic of the Anime. The appeal created by this amalgamation—or rather, juxtaposition—of iconic figures is even evident in Spike's death in the final episode, the tragedy of his early death accented by the references to the other icons, most specifically Bruce Lee.

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[20] See episode 1: "Asteroid Blues".

We can also see this metonymic device in the intertextual Film Noir aspects of *Cowboy Bebop*. These provide the viewer with a wide selection of images and ideas that are associated with the realm of Film Noir: the thugs and syndicates that lurk in the shadows are exactly what we are looking for; the Blues and Jazz titles and soundtrack add crucial flourishes to this atmosphere, giving the world a life of its own. In this case, these references add a touch of "believability" to the series, connecting it to a larger genre of Film Noir. The Anime is set in a near future, Science Fiction world where humans have colonized planets and formed urban metropolises throughout the solar system. This unrealistic setting is given "believability" with referential elements that recall a larger network of associations, allowing the viewer to accept the events occurring: the urban culture filled with Jazz, wandering bounty hunters (or "Cowboys" as the series calls them), a network of drifters, mobsters, hackers, and business-men, all tinged with the drifting sound of Blues—these fit comfortably in Film Noir, and add atmosphere to the galactic network we explore in *Cowboy Bebop*. With these referential elements in place, it helps ground the world of the series, shaping our expectations of what is to come. The references recall Film Noir and all the associations that come with it. As do the references to Bruce Lee, to *Lupin III*, and others. These are juxtaposed in a particular mosaic to create the desired atmosphere. Our desires are built up through the external references and follow through with them to our delight. Furthermore, these metonymic elements ensure a certain aesthetic that is *Cowboy Bebop*, defining the series as a whole.

In *Cowboy Bebop*, these referential elements easily flow together, but in other Anime the juxtaposition can appear jarring. For example, *FLCL* places rock music, robots, and an inter-galactic steam iron together; *Durarara!!* (*Durarara!!*, 2010–2010) puts Celtic Dullahan's with Tokyo street gangs; *Fate/Zero* (*Feito/Zero*, 2011–2012) literally juxtaposes "heroes" from various locations and time periods together in a contemporary battle of mages and assassins for the Holy Grail, mixing (or rather, pitting against each other) figures such as Arthur Pendragon, Gilgamesh, Diarmuid Ua Duibhne, and Alexander the Great. The important point here is that much of the intertextual referencing made in Anime is metonymic, and the asso-ciations of the reference are often juxtaposed with other metonymic refer-ences that combine to create a particular atmosphere for the Anime.

While some Anime may utilize references to Miyazaki's work, this is not necessarily the case for Miyazaki. His early work clearly shows influences of other animation, but as he matured, his work became more and more his own, specialized brand, and he consciously separated himself from

other Anime. Miyazaki's work generally does not reference other Anime, but there is a large amount of intertext involved, utilizing metonym and juxtaposition in a similar fashion to more serialized Anime. For example, the spirits in *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, 2001) heavily connote Shinto gods and *yōkai*-esque creatures. The character Yubaba, recalls the witches and evil grandmothers of European fairy tales, and is juxtaposed next to the spirits that populate the bathhouse she runs. Susan Napier calls the bathhouse "a dazzling bricolage which includes elements of Meiji and Tokugawa temple architecture mixed with Chinese restaurant styles and even, as Shimizu points out, touches of the grotesque visions of Peter Breughel and Hieronymous Bosch."[21] Many of the images of the bathhouse recall continental Asian decadence. All of these images and their associations are juxtaposed together to form the atmosphere of the production.

Intertextuality is a key element in the form of Anime, integral to the core of the narratives. Often, there is a certain amount of joy in noticing these references. Up until this point we have discussed intertext as a means for creating atmosphere, affect, and grounding for the Anime. However, these are not the only uses of intertext. Often a reference is used for comedic result. Kyōgen has numerous plays that play off of their association with Noh. As a theater that is primarily comedic (albeit a very particular type of comedy), it parodies many of the characters and situations in the Noh plays that precede and/or follow the Kyōgen pieces. For example, some *maikyōgen* (dance plays) feature ghosts or spirits that return to re-enact their deaths, parodying the common trope in Noh plays.[22] Like many performing arts, cinema, and other art forms, Anime also utilizes intertextual references for parody and farce. For example, the Anime *Gintama* has become famous for its parodies of other Anime. However, these comedies often reach high notes of dramatic poignancy, seeking seriousness in tone reminiscent of the Anime it is consciously parodying. In Anime, there is a fine line between the use of references for comedy or tragedy. To further dissect the use of intertextuality, tropes, and patterns in narrative, character, and world construction in Anime, let us now turn to a single case study.

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[21] See Susan Jolliffe. Napier, "Matter Out of Place: Carnival, Containment, and Cultural Recovery in Miyazaki's Spirited Away," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 299. For Shimizu, see Shimizu Masahi, *Miyazaki Hayao o yomu* (Tokyo: Torieisha, 2001). 93.

[22] Karen Brazell, *Traditional Japanese theater: an anthology of plays* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1998). 34.

WEAVING A STORY:[1] AN EXAMINATION OF *GA-REI ZERO*

To provide a more in-depth analysis of the use of intertextuality and manipulation of Anime tropes and conventions, the Anime *Ga-Rei Zero* (*Ga-Rei Zero*, 2008) is an excellent case in point, specifically the first episode. It is a mosaic of intertextual references that produces the initial interest for the series through the manipulation of these references and common Anime tropes. Though the references come from local and global sources, it is not the references themselves I would like to focus on but the methods with which they are put to use in the construction of the episode. In a previous chapter, we have looked at how *jo-ha-kyū* can be used to map out and elaborate on the structure of Anime, and now we will look at the contents of that structure in the context of intertextual references.

The first moments of *Ga-Rei Zero* episode one open to a bird's eye view of a Tokyo highway with military or police radio communications going on in the background. We see a shot of the city as a helicopter flies into the distance. This short segment is reminiscent of the introductory scene of the *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) movie, cueing expectations for a technological, Science Fiction world-setting. This expectation is further built up by the following images of a man in an orange jumpsuit, standing in a graveyard. This character recalls the recent past, shown through a flashback of a young boy dressed in a Victorian style, surrounded by luminescent blue butterflies. A similar looking young boy was also the central evil figure in the *Cowboy Bebop* episode "Sympathy for the Devil," although his hair was black. In *Ga-Rei Zero*, the boy is sitting ominously over a woman's body that is enshrouded in a white cloth. This image would immediately strike anyone familiar with the Noh play *Aoi no Ue* (*Lady Aoi*), in which the apparition of Lady Rokujō sits over a kimono laid out in front of her in the same fashion. In the flashback, the young man calls out the name Aoi, confirming this reference. He is clearly haunted by this thought as his expressions change upon recalling this memory. A woman (Natsuki) on a motorcycle

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[1] The name of episode 14 in the original *Evangelion* series. It is significant that this episode is largely a montage of previous events with a voice-over and blank screens with words on them, creating a narrative with the previously used fragments. A clever play on the much reviled (by fans) "re-cap episode."

wearing a similar orange jumpsuit drives up to him and calls him Tōru, which also happens to be the name of a character from the Noh play *Tōru*, based on the Heian aristocrat Minamoto no Tōru (822–895). A call from their control center comes in and informs them there is an attack in town. Tōru, comments that the situation "reeks of him," ("*yatsu no nio ga suru*") referring to the boy in the flashback. We see more of his character coming through here in his hotheaded desire for revenge against the person who committed some atrocity to Aoi—a common sentiment in revenge scenarios, very frequently seen in Anime. In introducing the character of Tōru, the audience would find such a situation normal and even expected, typical of introductory episodes.

The episode then cuts to a scene of firemen trying to extinguish the fires from the scene we saw in the *Ghost in the Shell*-styled introduction. They are suddenly interrupted by a special military force and its sharp commanding soldier tells the firemen to stay back. Judging from the concentration on his image, the audience might think he could be a main character as well. His forces are armed with special machinery and scanning devices over one eye, devices that recall those used by the alien warriors in the early episodes of *Dragon Ball Z* (*Doragon Bōru Z,* 1989–1996). The *ha* of the *jo* part of this episode begins here, with zombie like creatures, only visible through that specialized device, rising from the ground. They are noted as "Category Cs" and are shot at by the armed troops. These images exacerbate our expectations for a Science Fiction Anime with strong connotations of the many games with zombies such as the *Resident Evil* (*Biohazard*, 1996) franchise. This creates an aesthetic of the combination of technology and the supernatural, a common occurrence in Anime worlds. As the threat subsides, the tension cools. Suddenly intense, hard rock music plays (through extra-diegetic sound), and a larger demon appears, this one labeled "Category B." The music signals a layer of a more gothic, occult Anime feel, accenting the action of the annihilation of the soldiers; the commanding officer that could have been a main character, killed last and most brutally.

With the whole special squadron lost and the unwitting firemen terrified at what they just saw, the two characters Natsuki and Tōru, triumphantly ride in, guns blazing, on the sleek motorcycle—more energetic, techno-styled music playing as extra-diegetic background sound. They can see the demon even without the aid of those devices, signifying that they are quite powerful. This is a frequent occurrence in Anime: when those who can do something without the aid of a device that others rely on appear, it gives a common basis for the viewers to gauge the capabilities

of the powerful character(s). Here the emphasis is on Natsuki and Tōru and it is a signal to the audience that they are the focus; these are the important characters of the series. Clearly exhibiting to the viewer their expertise and skill in these matters, this action-packed scene serves as the *kyū* for this segment, complete with the over the top scene of Natsuki battling zombies on her motorcycle, skillfully maneuvering it, effectively "kicking" them with the vehicle, and destroying the horde. Yet they cannot defeat the Category B alone. As back up arrives for them, the casual and joking banter of the two reinforcements—dressed in the same orange jump suits—let us know they are all used to such supernatural battles, not panicking under the stress of the situation. With their help they destroy the demon and we expect that they are part of the team this series will focus on, thus ending the *kyū* of the *jo* section of this episode (see Table 6).

The leader of the group, previously only seen from behind in the control room, is shown in a conference with a group of military officials and addressed as Komparu. Komparu is the name of one of the most famous Noh families, schools, and the lineage of the legendary Zenchiku Komparu—the chosen artistic successor of Zeami, and the only other master to write treatises on Noh.[2] In this section, the tension and action from the *kyū* of the *jo* has settled, and the quieter *ha* section is beginning. Through the conversations of this group of officials, we understand the situation of the world that we are learning about, that there are secret government groups that support the exorcism teams to fight against demonic forces. The meeting of military officials reminds one of *Akira* (*Akira*, 1988) or *Ghost in the Shell*, or any other Anime with a similar plot that includes governmental, political, and military dramatics.

The original group in orange jumpsuits gathers and converses and we see all the characters of the team in detail, each with their orange uniforms on, and each with the typical Anime character designs that exhibit their personality: cute girls with big ribbons in their hair, tough guys with a scar on their face, a cheerful man with glasses. All of these characters surround Tōru and Natsuki, the powerful and attractive main characters. While talking, Tōru finds a blue butterfly wing on the ground, and they are informed that another large demon has been sighted, this acting as the *ha* plot twist of the episode, an unexpected event to pull us in further—a twist we find in many Anime episodes. Then the scene cuts to a view from

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[2] To be precise, technicially Zenchiku and Zeami wrote on *sarugaku*, the precursor to Noh. It was through Zeami and then Zenchiku's initial refinement of *sarugaku* that Noh became what it is today.

Table 6. *Ga-Rei Zero Jo* Section (Episodes 1–2): *Jo-Ha-Kyū* Structure of Episode 1.

Dan(Section)				Events	References
Div. (series)	Subd. I (*Jo* section)	Subd. II (ep. 1)	Subd. III		
Jo	*Jo*	*Jo*	*Jo*	View of the highway; Natsuki, and Tōru at the graveyard	*Ghost in the Shell*, *Aoi no Ue*
			Ha	Attacking the Category Cs, Category B attacks	*Dragon Ball Z*, *Resident Evil*
			Kyū	Natsuki and Tōru rush in.	Gothic music, Anime tropes, *Cowboy Bebop*
		Ha	*Jo*	Army conference call	*Akira*, Komparu
			Ha	Larger Demon appears, prepare for attack	Buddhist chant, *Aoi no Ue*
			Kyū	Mishap with attack plan	General Anime tropes
		Kyū	*Jo*	Meeting in tunnels drinking coffee	General Anime tropes
			Ha	Masaki gets stabbed from the shadows	*Blood: The Last Vampire*
			Kyū	Final flashback, she kills him	–

Tokyo tower, the same florescent blue butterflies bursting forth, flying around the grey-haired little boy we saw above the limp body of Aoi earlier in the episode. This directly recalls the Anime film *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door* (*Gekijōban Kaubōi Bibappu: Tengoku no Tobira*, 2001). The final showdown of this film is with the main character, Spike, and the antagonist, Vincent, on top of a tower reminiscent of the Eiffel Tower (or rather perhaps reminiscent of Tokyo Tower). Regardless, it is on this tower that the audience is treated to a vision of glowing, golden butterflies surrounding the two characters. These are the after effect of an experiment done on Vincent and are what victims of the disease he is immune to see before they die. Due to Vincent's results from the experimental testing, he eternally sees these butterflies around him, and they are a motif that flows throughout the film, symbols of evanescence and impermanence, themes that pervade the *Cowboy Bebop* series. The florescent blue butterflies in *Ga-Rei Zero* do not seem to serve the same purpose in this series and are more like a stylistic marker. While they carry the same connotations as they do in the *Cowboy Bebop* movie because of their reference, they function more like citations to add to the greater picture than a symbol in themselves. In *Ga-Rei Zero* (and in particular this first episode), the image of the blue butterflies is repeated over and over, accruing meaning as it reappears.

At this point, the team is shown discussing how to defeat the large beasts that have appeared. Again, for the third time, the image of the boy over Aoi is cut in while Komparu helps them formulate an idea to destroy the Category B. The action continues as Natsuki leads the beast away on her motorcycle. The team is seen in a montage of them preparing, accented by excessively hopeful techno-pop-rock music, very standard music in Anime. From the control room Komparu and the young female officer observe and orchestrate the events as the music continues on, cueing the viewer to expect their triumph.

Natsuki on the motorcycle leads the Category B beast down the water tunnels as the team generates a massive amount of Buddhist holy water, reciting the Buddhist chant "*namu ami dabutsu,*" then blasting the water and activating its holy energies with a device they hacked. In the Noh play *Aoi no Ue*, this incantation is used to exorcise the demon. As the water floods the tunnel and Natsuki and the beast approaches, Tōru prepares to aim his sniper rifle, only to be distracted in the last moment by one of the blue butterflies flying across his viewfinder. His shot misses forcing Natsuki to crash. Holding Natsuki in his arms, Tōru apologizes for his mistake. She remarks that such an error is not like him, and he is taken back by the

observation of the faltering of his character. Here we are getting a sense of their personalities—as we would in any episode of any show—revealing that he is usually much more centered and focused, but is hotheaded and has recently become distracted. It is a great example of the *ha* development within an episode.

As the water bursts in, they are saved by their team members in a hovering aircraft. Narrowly rescued, their mission is completed. The main characters all gather somewhere near the tunnels, their aircraft landed, conversing over coffee. Tōru pauses for a moment as if he felt something. Slowly lifting his shoe, he finds the wings of a florescent butterfly underneath it. He looks up as the sound of a violent slash is heard. All the other characters gaze in surprise and horror as we hear the sound of spraying blood and see a sliced off hand flop to the ground, dropping the coffee cup it once held. Masaki, the good natured and bespectacled electronic operator stands shocked in amazement at his hand cut off. He only blurts out "The coffee…," before a katana bursts through his chest. We cut to a side view of the assailant, sword still in Masaki, the shot panning from the legs upwards, outlining the shadowy silhouette of a school girl behind him, tensely posed with her blade in her victim. This image is starkly reminiscent of the main character from the Anime *Blood: The Last Vampire* (*Blood: The Last Vampire*, 2000), where a school girl in Okinawa violently kills a horde of demonic vampiric beasts. Here, the assailant character's school girl uniform design and color, menacing demeanor, and vicious killing spree distinctly recalls the character Saya from *Blood*.

Tōru is shocked, exclaiming that it is a "Category A" demon. The schoolgirl slices Masaki open, blood spraying everywhere in a stylized fashion. She then makes quick work of the pilot, the helicopter exploding in the background. The control center calls, and we see a murdered Komparu and hear Mami's voice on the phone before she kills herself as she is possessed by some strange creature. Switching back to Tōru and Natsuki, their backs against a pillar, Tōru freezes as Natsuki's head falls off, decapitated. In the background we hear Tōru screaming for Aoi as the scene moves to a flashback, the same one as in the beginning of the episode. Tōru is in a large body of water, yelling after Aoi. Someone is telling him to stop, that she is not the girlfriend he once knew. Once more we see the image of the ominous boy seated in front of a woman's body covered in a white cloak, lying perpendicular to the boy. He is surrounded by the blue butterflies and a wild fire rages behind him. Again, the *Cowboy Bebop* and *Aoi no Ue* references are juxtaposed. Tōru pushes a young woman away, and we see she is a *shōjo* ("young girl") in a black schoolgirl uniform, just like the

shadowy demon we saw kill his teammates moments before. The audience was led to believe she was evil, but now it seems she is/was on the side of the main character. Tōru raises his gun to aim, but Aoi gets up out of the water. Overwhelmed with emotion, Tōru calls out to Aoi as she approaches him. He begs her to stop as she gets closer. The schoolgirl tells him to shoot, and he has no choice but to do so. As the butterflies cover his visage the little boy produces a sinister smile (a type that is a conventionalized expression in Anime for menacing individuals).

The episode cuts back to the corridor of the present, fire burning over the exploded aircraft in the depths of the darkness. Tōru stares at her in horror and disbelief. "I told you to give up…" we hear in the schoolgirl's voice and Tōru looks up slightly. We see a close-up of her face as she lifts her katana; "…didn't I?" she finishes, as she swiftly swipes her blade across his body. We see her from the back, her dark figure covering the seated Tōru, blood splatter on the wall where she killed him. In the background all we hear is the crackling of the fire behind the pillar in the distance. It cuts to Tōru's hand, with the dead blue butterfly in it. This is the final instance of the image of the fluorescent butterflies that help structure the episode, reaching their final meaning as a symbol for death. Once more it cuts to a larger scene of the corridors, the schoolgirl over the bodies of her two victims, and the fire raging in the background. The screen goes to black with the title of the series *Ga-Rei Zero*, a box with a check in it, and some English text next to it: "Will you kill someone you love, because of love?" Another cut to the title of the episode "*Aoi no Ue,*" with the same checked box below it: "Garei-Zero- episode 01." The sound of the fire and the black screen with text continues through to the credits.

This first episode is a brilliant execution of intertextuality and pattern manipulation, organized in the mosaic structure. As the title referenced, the Noh play *Aoi no Ue* contains some similarities with this episode. Perhaps the most memorable image of the play, the ghost of Rokujō over the robe of Aoi is contained in the episode with the boy over the character of Aoi, lying on the ground. The episode also contains exorcists who try to defeat the demon, just as the monk does in the Noh play. However, in the play the monk succeeds in this. The Anime version works against this reference (for those that would recognize it) and the team of exorcists is instead defeated by the demon.

But what are noteworthy here are not the numerous references to the traditional theater form of Noh. That is just a fortunate coincidence, and is something that can be found in *Gasaraki* (*Gasaraki*, 1998–1999) for Noh, *Macross Frontier* (*Makurosu Furontia*, 2008–2008) and *Intrigue in the*

Bakumatsu - Irohanihoheto (*Bakumatsu Kikansetsu Irohanihoheto*, 2006– 2007) for Kabuki, and *Vampire Princess Miyu* (*Vanpaia Miyu*, 1988–1989) for Bunraku, among other references to the theaters in many other Anime. What is of importance here is how the show clearly uses references to other Anime in a pastiche style, creating a mosaic in conjunction with a *jo-ha-kyū* structure, juxtaposing these multi-medic references over and next to one another to create particular results. The flashbacks are compounded throughout the first episode, building towards the final recollection of the entire traumatic event at the end of the episode. The whole utilization of the flashbacks works well with the entire framework of the series as a whole. As this is the first episode it sets the pattern for the rest of the series, which is largely an extended flashback, building up to the moments of the first and second episode. This aspect is nested further as the final moments of the series are a shot of the main character, now much older, a reference to the Manga *Ga-Rei* (*Ga-Rei*, 2005–2010) that the Anime series is a prequel to. Thus, the entire series is in fact leading up to another larger plot, which is the Manga *Ga-Rei*, and a reference to this work.

What is extremely radical about this series' introductory episode is the most obvious: all of the main characters, or characters we thought were the main characters, are killed off. The conscious mimicking of common Anime tropes, interspersing intertextual references to produce specific images, associations, and expectations, then keeping these expectations completely unfulfilled, leaves the viewer in absolute awe and suspense. Even the material on the DVD covers shows these characters from the first episode, emphasizing their importance, making their deaths an extreme surprise for the viewer. It is a shock to the audience and a brilliant execution and manipulation of Anime's formal techniques and tropes. At first, this and the subsequent second episode might seem like the "break" section of the series, coming unexpectedly in the introduction. While it does appear to come extremely early, the series is only twelve episodes, less than half of the frequent, two season series. Thus, the regular patterns would be shrunken into a smaller number of episodes. However, it is not necessarily the case that this is the "break" section.

Although more subdued, the second episode follows the first episode's style of confusion, and introduces the characters who we believe are to be the main ones for the series. The second episode ends with the implication of death for one of the characters, which we later learn (towards the very end of the series), does not happen. It is the third episode that then takes a different track and begins on the same time-line as the rest of the series (from before the first two episodes), departing from the pattern of

"breaking" expectations that was the first two episodes which actually function as the *jo* portion of the series as a whole. In this way the normal Anime system of introduction and then breaking, or *jo* and then *ha* styles, is cleverly transposed: the *jo* part of the series contains large numbers of unexpected twists, but the *ha* part of the series, which still contains the core of the character development before the spectacular ending, is "unexpected" in its normalcy. Actually, the *ha* core of the series is very different from the action packed *jo* section, with a *shōjo* Anime feel to it, focusing on the relationship of the two main female characters and their interactions with their romantic interests and family. For the rest of the series, intertextual references play an important part as well; from the use of the image of the temple of the Pre-Cogs from the Hollywood film *Minority Report* (2002) to references from *Evangelion*. All of these referential parts are placed next to each other, producing a mosaic of expectations and connotations that the audience recognizes and follows. In this case, the Anime does not fulfill the expectations and atmosphere created from the references, to the surprise and enjoyment of the spectator.

WEAVING A STORY 2:[1] REPETITION, REVERSALS, AND INTERTEXT

Anime utilizes references to many outside media sources to produce new works from the rearrangement of various established "parts." While this may appear to be merely post-modern "copies" of previous "originals", the techniques used are very sophisticated, and create distinct works by building off of previous ones. For example, *Evangelion* contains a massive amount of references: the *Space Battleship Yamato* (*Uchū Senkan Yamato*, 1974–1975) Anime series; the Anime film *Akira* (*Akira*, 1988); the Anime *Space Runaway Ideon* (*Densetsu Kyojin Ideon*, 1980–1981); *Mobile Suit Gundam* (*Kidō Senshi Gandamu*, 1979–1980) and many other famous robot and Science Fiction Anime that came before it; 1960s imagery; the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968); the film *The Man who Stole the Sun* (*Taiyō wo Nusunda Otoko*, 1979); classical music; existentialism; Kabbalistic mythology; the stylistics of film director Jean-Luc Godard; and too many more to list. While some may question its "originality" (if anything can be "original"), Sumin Gyokuran explains that part of *Evangelion*'s originality is found in the type of cuts, extended static scenes, separation of the events of the series, and implementation of a complex plot and intriguing "riddle" are revolutionary, especially when considered within the Anime form of art.[2] The particular (re)arrangement of the intertextual parts is itself another "original" aspect of *Evangelion*, as it is in other Anime. These referential elements create "patterns of iconic references that [lead] in different directions"[3] and entice the viewer to follow and piece them together into a whole.

   In *Evangelion*, references begin in the first episode (*jo*), with a young adolescent male being "chosen" to pilot a giant robot, a scenario that is almost too numerous in Anime to count. A quintessential source would be Amuro Ray from *Mobile Suit Gundam*: a civilian with no training that skillfully pilots the prototype Mobile Suit *mecha* his father developed. To

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[1] The name of episode 20 in the original *Evangelion* series.
[2] Gyokuran Sumin, "Shinseiki Evangelion. (Neon Genesis Evangelion)" *20 Seiki anime daizen: raiseiki ni tsutetai ano meisaku* (*Complete 20th Century Anime: The Masterpieces to be Passed onto the Next Century*) 15 April 2000: 95.
[3] Thomas Lamarre, "The Multiplanar Image." *Mechademia 1: Emerging Worlds of Anime and Manga*, ed. Frenchy Lunning. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). 137.

reference this trope in *Evangelion*, the boy (Shinji) even exclaims when he first sees the Eva, "*kyōdai roboto?*" ("A giant robot?"), hinting at the previous Anime with such a situation presented to a young, untrained pilot. It is learnt that Shinji is special and, despite his lack of training, he is able to pilot this humanoid machine, Ritsuko and Misato both saying "He can do it!" as they convince him to do so. Although Shinji refuses at first, he eventually affirms that he will pilot it. Getting into the robot, they prepare for his launch and the battle is set to begin against the Angel terrorizing the city. The conventions from previous Anime with similar themes, plots, situations, characters and giant robots have been carefully set in place to lead the audience to the conclusion that Shinji will get into the robot, have a miraculous natural ability to masterfully pilot the robot and defeat the Angel in a graceful fight.

However, the second episode exposes that this Anime may produce a different pattern of events. While in most Anime that scenario would be played out successfully, *Evangelion* breaks those expectations and opens it in unanticipated directions. In the *ha* part of the two episode set, the second episode starts by showing the very painful defeat of Shinji at the hands of the Angel. He is not adept at piloting the Eva and fumbles around, getting beaten viciously by the Angel Sachiel. We see how painful the experience is; as his nerves are connected to the robot, every agonizing blow is actually felt by Shinji. Even the movements of the Eva and Angel are bestial and unrobotic. The sounds that come out of the Eva are savage, almost primordial grunts and screams, more organic than technological, even spewing blood as it gets damaged.

Later on in the series we see that while Shinji is good at piloting the Eva, he despises it. It is an experience he detests that only brings him pain. Instead of rising to the challenge, he frequently runs away. As Shinji keeps the place as the gifted pilot of the giant robot we expect him to act a certain way based on our previous experiences and expectations from other Anime. Similar to the frustrated, adolescent Amuro in *Mobile Suit Gundam*, who also went against the "*shōnen* hero" trope, Shinji takes the distraught pilot to new levels. Still, we expect Shinji to be heroic, courageous, conquering and admirable, even if he is not too intelligent. Instead, there are many times where he is cowardly, selfish, awkward and introverted, but this keeps us interested. The other characters in the series follow similar disruptions from the normal pattern. Misato, while introduced as a comical, silly character in the first episode turns out to be very different. She is an extremely intelligent and capable officer, and a deeply emotionally scarred individual struggling with her own loneliness. This too is

introduced in the second episode (*ha* of *jo*), when she questions if she is acting transparent, having Shinji stay with her to pacify her lonely life—her own psyche later developed in the *ha* of the series.

The *Evangelion* robots themselves are in fact, not even robots, but living creatures, almost perfect replicas of humans. In fact, the Eva are said to be the biotechnological humanoid product of humans playing God. They move in an almost lizard-like fashion, making rubbery sounds. When they fight, it is not the fluid battles seen countless times in other giant robot Anime. In place of this almost choreographed style, there are many messy, savage fights.[4] At times the Eva's brutally beat the Angels, who bleed excessive amounts of blood. Despite their odd shapes, they all seem to have organs, and there are scenes in which Eva's rip apart and eat the Angel's intestines and even other Evas'. It is literally anything but a graceful *mecha* like those in other robot Anime. These aspects disrupt our expectations and constantly provide a sense of novelty and freshness despite the almost overwhelming amount of references.

Within the series itself, there are references to previous parts of the same series. Flashbacks, as well as remixing and repeating of certain events and memories, are interspersed throughout the series at crucial moments, specifically at times when internal monologue is the focus—a common practice in Anime. As the scenes reoccur they layer in meaning and intensity as they are applied to new circumstances. Each viewing adds to the overall effect, identification with the inner psyche of the characters, and allows for a variety of views to be taken from only a few original events. Zeami utilized a similar technique in the Noh play *Izutsu*; Thomas Hare describes the play and the poems referenced in it:

> Zeami creates a new context for each occurrence of these poems, and the ambiguity resulting from the new context allows a new interpretation of each poem. The new interpretation, however, does not invalidate an earlier one, so the *waka* [poem] become more and more evocative as the play progresses and the *honzetsu* [source for the play] expands beyond the naive poetic encounter of *Ise monogatari* to encompass a broad range of experiences of love.[5]

As the Noh play *Izutsu* uses famous poems that are repeated through the play (Table 7),[6] layering and accruing new meanings each time they

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[4] There is even an episode where they literally have to choreograph a fight for it to be smooth.

[5] Hare, *Zeami's Style*: 155.

[6] The information from the table is taken from Thomas Hare's excellent analysis of the play, including a dissection of the repetition and layering of the *Ise* quotes in *Izutsu*. The

Table 7. Selected, Repeated Quote from *Ise Monogatari* in the Noh Play
Izutsu.[6]

Quote	Section	Play Line #
Kaze fukeba...	*Jo*	10
Kaze fukeba...	*Ha* III	93−94
Tsutsu izutsu...	*Ha* III	114−117
Kurabe koshi...	*Ha* III	119−122
Tsutsu izutsu...	*Ha* III	124
Kaze fukeba...	*Ha* III	132−133
Tsutsu izutsu...	*Ha* III	140−141
Full repetition of all poems	Interlude	
Tsutsu izutsu...	*Kyū*	154−155
Tsutsu izutsu...	*Kyū*	169

Table 8. Use of Internal Introspection in Second Half of *Evangelion* Series.

Event	Section	Episode
Misato's thoughts	*Jo*	1
Shinji's flashback	*Jo*	2
Misato's flashback; Shinji's flashback and mind	*Ha* II	12
Rei's mind	*Ha* II	14
Shinji's mind	*Ha* III	16
Tōji's flashback	*Ha* III	18
Shinji's mind	*Kyū*	19
Shinji's mind	*Kyū*	20
Rei and Asuka's minds	*Kyū*	22−23
Asuka, Rei, Misato's minds	*Jo*	25
Shinji's mind	*Jo*	2

Note: Most of the introspection that occurs after episode 12 is repeated scenes.

occur, repeating throughout the play's mosaic narrative, *Evangelion* does
the same with references to other Anime, as well as with self-reflexive ref-
erences (Table 8). While the subject matter cited is different, the technique
used is similar, and to the same end. Due to the ease of reproduction in the

line numbers align with those in Hare's rendition of the play. See Hare, *Zeami's Style:
The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo*: 156.

medium of Anime (flashbacks, etc.), the compound style of construction is often composed through the repetition of earlier events that are replayed on screen, building up as they are repeated and reviewed in new contexts.

Such a production would be difficult to (re)create on stage with visuals, yet Noh can be seen as producing this effect in the theater using quotations of famous poetry that are repeated and reintroduced in new contexts throughout the play. The medium of animation is particularly capable of recreating and adjusting such flashbacks, reinterpreting them with ease by re-using previous cels re-arranged in new contexts and places, necessarily tweaked for the specific circumstance. Anime frequently uses flashbacks in such a manner through patterned repetition. In many Anime the reappearance of such images is often to show recurring events such as transformations, preparations, or highlight emotions. In *Evangelion*, repetition of events provides an artful exposition of many characters through our re-reading of them within its new context, much as it does in *Izutsu*. Through reiterating the events which pertain to the character's psyche, it forces the viewer to relive/reconsider them as well. Other Anime also do this, with *Evangelion* as an exemplary example of this now formalized technique.

This is not just isolated to flashbacks of events. For example, episodes 16, 20, and 26 of *Evangelion* all contain very similar repeated images, such as the distorted image of Shinji's head as though seen through a fisheye lens, as he rides a strange train at dusk—a scene that is positioned to suggest it is in his mind. In episode 16, we also see Shinji in the dream-like, marigold-tinted train car seated in an upright fetal-like position, hands over his ears, across from a child version of Shinji. In episode 20, along with the distorted image of Shinji's face, we again see Shinji in a very similar train car. This time, however, he is seated with his hands over his ears, but legs touching the ground. Across from him is a calm Rei in her schoolgirl uniform. Similar images of the train are found in other episodes as well. In episode 26, we also see the distorted image of Shinji's face, and later a sketchy, marker-colored image of Shinji on the ground, hands over his ears and hunched over his bent legs, with Rei, Asuka, and Misato surrounding him in a triangle—there is no background image, just white space. (This image of women facing Shinji on either side of him, or a triangle of people around him is also repeated throughout the series.) In episode 26 we also see a number of scribbles—black lines on a white background—as well as other amorphous, morphing objects. While this may appear as jarringly sudden, similar images did appear in previous

episodes, including thick, moving white lines on a black background appearing in episodes 16 and 20. These are just a few of the examples of related imagery that are repeated and slightly altered in various new contexts, layering, accruing, and compounding meaning in each new iteration in *Evangelion*.

In *Izutsu* the repetition and references give us the context for her dance and expression through the tilts of the mask, ultimately creating a beautiful musical effect, and emotionally moving expression of the character's mental state. The story of her situation, the desire she feels for her lost lover and their long broken relationship is expressed through these references to the connected *Ise* poems and revitalized through their repetition, permitting us to understand her plight as expressed in song and dance (where repetition is frequent as well). The instances that are repeated in *Evangelion* are likewise compounded to grow in intensity as they are reiterated. The flashbacks used for Shinji's character (among others) are frequently re-shown, specifically events that exacerbate his debilitating depression downward. We are also presented with these repeated issues, increasingly allowing us to literally see and experience his mental stress, giving us access to his inner world as his psyche collapses.

This leads to the exposition of the mental breakdown of the characters and not to the denouement of the "riddle" or "mystery" (*nazo*) of the series' external narrative—an infuriating event for many Anime viewers as this ending was starkly different from most Anime, even those with unsatisfying conclusions. Yet, as much as *Evangelion* deviates from the standard Anime, its ingenuity lies in this very deviation within the framework of Anime's conventions. By manipulating these referenced and patterned parts, then going against the expectations created from them, the Anime stays fresh, new, and exciting. It layers and juxtaposes previous works in its mosaic system to create an experience that was unlike anything seen before it, and is itself referenced again and again in the numerous Anime that have followed it.

Significantly, the original series interacts with the new *Rebuild of Evangelion* (*Evangelion Shin Gekijōban: Jo*, 2007; *Evangelion Shin Gekijōban: Ha*, 2009; and the forthcoming *Evangelion Shin Gekijōban: Q*, 2012), which retells the original story, but altering the plot, adding new characters, switching around events, and creating new directions for the franchise. This plays with the viewers who have largely seen, or are at the very least familiar with the original series, manipulating them to expect one thing due to their prior affiliation with the original works. This expectation is then broken or met.

Notably, these films have thus far followed an episode-like format, with the ending themes being the same in each film, followed by a preview of the next installment, as well as a blank screen giving the title of the work in the same fashion as the episodes of the original series. This reinforces the prevalence of the episodic structure of Anime within the series of films. In the first film, *Evangelion 1.0: You Are (Not) Alone* (this film is labeled *Jo*), the narrative follows a similar path as the original storyline, containing only a few differences to the TV Anime's order of events. The first film ends, as would be expected, in a spectacular finish, but leaving the viewer fumbling for answers and questions. Due to this, the audience would expect the second film to generally follow the pattern of the original series, but it does not, fully living up to the label of "*Ha*."

The second film, *Evangelion 2.0: You Can (Not) Advance (Ha)*, skips a number of Angel attacks and rearranges the moments that certain characters are introduced and how they interact with the few events that are kept from the original series. For example, when the Eva-03 robot needs a test pilot, little visual clues are left to lead the viewer to expect that the character of Tōji will be chosen as in the original series. To the surprise of the spectator, Asuka is chosen in this new version. But there are aspects that reference the original series with accuracy in a very cunning way, successfully fulfilling the viewer's connection to the TV episodes. This can be seen in the early parts of the second film. An Angel is spotted in orbit slowly bombing the earth, looking for the main base, just as in the original series' twelfth episode. This timing though, does not follow the same timeline as the original series, skipping some Angels, while another was replaced by new events. The plan of defense/attack is the same as the TV series: to have all three Evas run to the point of the Angel's intended impact, hold it in place, and then kill it there. Yet the design of this Angel does not even remotely resemble that of the Angel in the original (Sahaquiel). Because of the timing difference, yet similar events, the viewer is lead to a mild confusion, tempted to think it is like the original, but kept in the dark by unfamiliar circumstances and visuals. The events before contact with the Angel play out similarly to the series (though, entirely new footage is used): Shinji utilizes Eva-01 to an impressive degree, reaches the Angel's point of entry ahead of everyone else, and "saves the day." But the manipulation of expectations through reflexive references occurs in the last moments before contact: the Angel's true shape unfolds (literally) revealing a more spectacular form, extremely reminiscent of the original Angel from the series, effectively creating a carefully manipulated moment of fulfillment of expected desire. The reference is made, yet is presented in a

way different enough (only recognized through understanding of the pre-vious reference) to delight the spectators.

In the rest of the second film, the story is switched to further live out its "*ha*" name, with the larger romantic interest being between Rei and Shinji, and less with Asuka, whose character is pushed more to the side in this version. The events are accelerated, creating further intrigue from this "break" (*ha*) from the narrative pattern of the original series. This is made interesting by the direct reference to the original series and its complete deviation from it. There is no doubt that much of the appeal of the new films is due to the beautiful recreations and fresh iterations produced in these films. The excessively detailed and intricate visuals help to add to the frenzy, as this visual and aural extravaganza may end in an even more spectacular and different manner than the original final film, or revert back to the introspective ending of the first series, thus teasing viewers to go back and examine the first series and films, to ponder what more could be in store.

Even those that have not seen the original will then be immediately referenced to the TV series which will again seem fresh and novel, but from a different perspective. Besides a skillful use of the Anime form, it is well executed merchandising. Two new works (the *Rebuild* films) have been produced based on the older works of the same source material. This is reminiscent of the many Kabuki plays revised time and time again, changing as the centuries passed. Perhaps, as the decades go by and Anime develops, a similar situation will occur with works like *Evangelion*, *Macross*, and *Gundam*, among others; repeated and revised, updated and renewed[7] until they too are one day crystallized and analyzed from a drastic dis-tance. Because Anime is made to be reproduced (as the medium of anima-tion is), the art form itself is conducive to allowing us access to the enjoyment of watching the originals and seeing how they have changed. A new repertoire is being built and revitalized, reworked and recreated.

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[7] Lamarre notes a connection between a "ritual rebuilding" in the newest installment of *Evangelion*, and explains that "Anno's comments about the newness of *Eva* imply that the rebuild may be construed as a ritual enactment or reenactment of something 'never old' about the anime. Such a combination of technological enhancement and eternal values runs the risk of turning *Eva* into what Walter Benjamin called 'an apparatus which is pressed into the production of ritual values.' If we are to counter such a tendency, we have to insist on the practice-oriented processes associated with ritual rebuilding rather than on the eternal values." My reading of Anime through the lens of traditional theater attempts to do just that, focus on the practice oriented aspects rather than the eternal val-ues, as the Kabuki productions have done in the past. Thomas Lamarre, "Rebuild of Anime," *Mechademia 5: Fanthropologies* 5(2010): 352.

I would like to mention one more noteworthy anime here. There are few Anime that better deal directly and self-consciously with the Anime form than *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* (*Suzumiya Haruhi no Yūutsu*, 2006–2006, 2009–2009). It is an almost excessively Anime, Anime. For example, one can read the madness of the "Endless Eight" episodes— (episodes 12–19 of the 2009 re-airing and "second season" of *Haruhi*), an enraging repetition of almost the exact same episode eight times, each episode with slight variations, but essentially the same—as a hyperbolized use of the repetition, reiteration, and revisitation that is part of Anime's form. Many upset viewers were forced to sit through eight exceptionally repetitive episodes, with the same plot lines, but characters wearing different attire, thus highlighting the characters and the world-setting where such time-loops are possible. Manipulating the viewer with a very self-reflexive use of character types, designs, story patterns, references, and repetition, *Haruhi* guides the viewer through its world, creating the desired aesthetic and emotive outcomes that have made it a huge success in Japan and abroad.

In terms of "originality" the show does not possess many tropes, techniques, or practices that have not already been done many times in Anime before. However, it is an excellent execution and manipulation of the Anime form and this could have contributed to its wide popularity among Anime fans, who marvel at the "pristine" performance of the form. The Anime explicitly explains and reaches towards general Anime narrative tropes, the character of Haruhi herself always in a frantic search for them. This is, in fact, one of the factors moving the plot. She literally *is* the world of the Anime. As the story progresses, a standard high-school drama becomes an intergalactic, time-travelling, ESP inducing spectacle with patterned clues as to who Kyon will get together with. The audience clearly being fed that he is the desire of Haruhi—everyone (most importantly the viewers) seems to acknowledge this but him, having picked up on these formulaic clues. The character Mikuru plays an important role as she is frequently objectified and we are given evidence that the pattern may break from the destination of Haruhi to Mikuru. Many of the joys of this Anime are the climaxes that follow the rocky path along this pattern, manipulated with crafty adeptness through the form of Anime. I have mentioned this here as part of the style is remarkably similar to *Evangelion*, with the occasional black screen with text on it, repetition of flashbacks to divulge character, and classical music playing as giant creatures destroy their "closed space" sphere (for example, in episode 6). The success of this Anime lies in how these references are played with, how the

tsundere[8] and *moe*[9] traits are manipulated through the formal patterns of Anime and the specific feelings that are produced as a result of this precision of form. This is not to say that plot is irrelevant, but like many Anime, it is just one part of the performance. In Anime, the distinct parts are woven into a mosaic through the narrative structure, and it is not necessarily the weave, but the mosaic and its parts that are the attraction.

Intertextual references (character designs, narrative structure, tropes, etc.), self-reflexive repetitions, and the similar patterns they are organized in, have developed into fundamental conventions of the Anime form. An understanding of the deep, structural integration of references and repetition in Anime can help us better analyze the art form. No Anime exists within a vacuum, and there is regular "communication" with other texts, media,[10] and most prevalently, other Anime and Manga. These various parts are constructed as pieces within a mosaic to result in the individual Anime. There are still further divisions that occur in abundance, the tensions and interactions of which, within the mosaic structure, produce a particular Anime. For now, let us turn our attention to two more interrelated divisions, whose interaction directly exposes itself in much of the visual expression of the art form.

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[8] A character who has a tougher, harder emotional exterior, but a softer, caring interior.

[9] Generally refers to a particular type of cute character, one in which that viewer desires to care for and attend to. Usually they are young female characters who embody a sense of helplessness and cuteness.

[10] For a discussion on communication between media-things, see Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: 111–125.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

Despite its highly sensational outward expression, the deep focus on the inner workings of the characters involved in Anime is a marked characteristic of the art form. Due to the long but finite story arcs, character development within a concrete timeline is one of the key points that have made Anime so popular internationally. Human drama is at the heart of the theatrical art forms as well as in Anime, and this is often displayed through the communication of two bisected parts: the internal and the external. In each of the theatrical forms, there is a distinct division of the internal workings of the characters and their stylized expression in the external. However, these aspects are fused together as much as they are separate, with the internal aspects rising to the surface, displayed in a conventionalized external manner.

In this instance (and in particular in this chapter) I will be using "internal" to demark the emotional and psychological elements of the characters, their very personalities, aspects of them that are not tangible. The term "external" will largely be used with regard to visual representation, areas that are "tangible" (e.g. costumes, character design) and which are used in the merchandising aspects of the art, taking shape in various different objects outside of the actual Anime video production. The external refers to the "surface" of the video production that is clearly visible and audible. In Anime, the internal expression is manifested externally in the characters' physical depiction.

Character design in particular is used to express the internal externally, allowing characters to be easily identified and differentiated, with their abilities and personalities quickly understood. In other words, their inner aspects are portrayed outwardly in their designs and costumes, internal personalities rising upwards to an external expression. Describing this practice, Lamarre labels Anime characters as "soulful bodies," denoting them as "bodies on which supposedly inner states, spiritual, emotional, or psychological tensions and conflicts are directly described, appearing on the surface in character design, implying potential movement of the body and the soul."[1] Lamarre regards these soulful bodies as a response to the

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[1] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 228.

animetic machine that produces Anime: the flattening of the multi-planar image causes all aspects to rise to the surface. Indeed, character design is an integral aspect of Anime and the rising of the "soulful" (internal) aspects of the character to the "surface" (external) design is one example of the interaction between the dichotomous "parts" of internal and external in the Anime form.

Evidence of internal personality is prevalent throughout character design in Anime. In *Cowboy Bebop*, Jet explains that instead of getting a biological, natural-looking replacement for his arm, he leaves a metallic prosthesis as a constant reminder of his past mistakes. A stoic, hard-boiled ex-cop, the internal characteristics of Jet are literally exposed on the outside in his visual representation. Aspects of character design can also be seen as references, or rather, pieces that are reorganized to be used on other characters types. This is described by Lamarre as the "cel bank"[2] and by Azuma as a "database."[3] The cel bank is the repository of already created animation cels that are reused, and Azuma's database theory cites the use of various parts that are recycled and remixed to create new characters.[4] Both conceptions describe the rearrangement of previously used "parts" to construct a new whole, a practice that has become a convention of the Anime form.

One example is the use of scars, and in particular the famous "cross-scar," infamously know through the character of Kenshin in *Rurouni Kenshin* (*Rurōni Kenshin Meiji Kenkaku Rōmantan*, Manga: 1994–1999; TV Anime: 1996–1998; Anime film: 1997; OVA, *Trust and Betrayal*: 1999; OVA, *Reflection*: 2001; Anime film, part 1: 2011; Anime film, part 2: 2012).[5] Similar cross shaped scars in a similar position, though sized differently, can be found on Sousuke in *Full Metal Panic!* (Light Novel, 1998–2011; Manga 2000–2005; TV Anime: 2003–2003; TV Anime: 2005–2005),[6] or Shichika Yasuri from *Katanagatari* (*Katanagatari*, Light Novel, 2007–2007; TV Anime: 2010–2010), among other characters. Sometimes the scar is not located directly on their face, like Tsume's cross-shaped scar on his chest

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[2] Ibid., 192.

[3] Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*: 42.

[4] Azuma labels these elements "*moe*-elements." Such utilization of character parts is not only apparent in the *moe* characters that are the focus of Azuma's discussion and can be seen throughout Anime.

[5] Note: there is an Anime called *Thunder Jet* (*Ginga Sengoku Gun'Yūden Rai*, 1994–1995) with a similar character to Kenshin who has the same scar in the same place. The series also contains themes and situations analogous to *Kenshin*.

[6] While many Anime are adapted from Manga and more recently Light Novels, I have refrained from providing this information unless necessary. This has just been to keep the focus on Anime as distinct (but clearly deeply related to Manga), and I have included this information here to emphasize the prevalence of this character "part."

Figure 2.3. The scar is one of many features (hair, eyes, costumes, etc.) which are placed on different character bodies to create a new character from these aspects. They can work as either references or symbols to express personality in character design. Shown here Rurouni Kenshin from *Rurouni Kenshin: The Movie* © 1997 N. Watsuki / Shueisha, Fuji-TV, Aniplex Inc. Image used with permission from the rights holders.

in *Wolf's Rain* (*Urufuzu Rein*, TV Anime: 2003–2003; OVA: 2003–2004; Manga (after TV Anime): 2003–2004). But not all "scarred" characters have the "cross-scar;" it is not found on Nanashi in *Sword of the Stranger* (*Sutorenjia Mukō Hadan*, Anime film: 2007) despite the ample scars on his face and similar character type to Kenshin (a samurai/assassin giving up killing)—in place there is another scar type: a long vertical gash down the side of the face. In the cases of Sousuke, Nanashi, and Kenshin, they are unmatched in their physical capabilities for combat and the scars serve as a sign of their war torn past. Each character has different aspects to their personality: Kenshin has a deeply compassionate, caring, and even a cute side to him; Sousuke is socially awkward but intends well; and Nanashi is a mild tempered vagabond. The aspect that they all share is a shattered and blood stained past that they (largely) try to leave behind.[7]

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[7] This character type—of a once fierce warrior who has given up the sword (or gun), determined to practice/uphold peace despite their extreme skill—is very popular and can be found in a number of Anime, including *Seirei no Moribito* (Novel: 1996; Manga: 2007-ongoing; TV Anime: 2007–2007), and *Trigun* (*Toraigan*, Manga: 1996–1999; TV Anime: 1998–1998; Manga: 1998–2008; Anime film: 2010), appearing as the main characters. Sousuke from *Full Metal Panic!* continues to kill, but he works for a company that tries to "uphold peace and justice" throughout world, as a highly trained global "police" force. Sousuke's rejection of his war-torn past is one of the major catalysts for character developments in the series.

The scar is a physical, external symbol of this aspect/part of their personality, in the sense that this aspect was selected for their internal attributes and is expressed externally in their physical design. Sousuke is a highly experienced mercenary who, since childhood, was involved in armed (and mechanized) conflict. He is very skilled, very deadly, and very precise at what he does. But, his war-torn upbringing has rendered him completely inept at living in contemporary peaceful Japan. Throughout the series, the tension between his adeptness and life-long conditioning to the art of war, and his inexperience with the mundane of everyday life, frequently erupt in comedic situations that build up to intense combat scenes. However, the development of his character is very similar to that of Kenshin's: a fierce warrior with innumerable kills behind him who develops into a more restrained individual, and through the comedic-abusive, but endearing romantic relationship with a female character (Kaoru), gains emotional progression and redemption from his past. In Kenshin, the remnants of his past move against him, constantly bringing out his past-self (the assassin) as he struggles to separate himself from it. For Sousuke, this process towards personal contentment and peace from the past is a central subject of the *Full Metal Panic!* series, and it too revolves around the female character he guards (Chidori Kaname). Though in *Full Metal Panic!*, Sousuke continues to serve in the peace-keeping military, trying to leave his past as a ruthless child mercenary (under the name Kashim) behind. In *Sword of the Stranger*, Nanashi also has a war torn past in the ancient, warring states period Japan, and is likewise a highly skilled (sword-wielding) warrior. Like Kenshin's vow to never kill again, Nanashi has pledged not to unsheathe his sword. However in this Anime, Nanashi finds solace in his relationship with a young boy he reluctantly chooses to protect. Perhaps the cross-shaped scar was left out from Nanashi's character design as his red hair (though frequently dyed black, according to the film) and previous occupation as a mass-murdering soldier are too similar to Kenshin's to allow for the added aspect of the same cross shaped scar. However, Nanashi's face has scars similar to those of Manji from *Blade of the Immortal* (*Mugen no Jyūnin*, Manga 1994-ongoing, Anime 2008–2008), an immortal *rōnin* that is trying to absolve himself from his own violent past, hesitantly protecting a teenage girl as she goes on a quest for revenge. It is this repetition of certain physical characteristics that express internal attributes that have been arranged and rearranged to produce the various character designs that alter pre-established character types (and plots) which proliferate throughout Anime. The clothing, eyes, skin tone, hair, *mecha*, and even weaponry, are all "parts" of the designs that express the character's personality externally.

Figure 2.4. Character design in particular is used to express the internal externally, allowing characters to be easily identified and differentiated, with their abilities and personalities quickly understood. The female characters with black, purple-black hair discussed below, contain the subtleties in the differences of the character design to display a wide variety of emotions, allowing the frequent use of still shots to continue to express the character's personalities. The distinct details in hair style and costume design create individual looks that fit their internal characteristics, displaying them outwardly in a manner that matches the general aesthetic of the Anime as a whole. Shown here is Faye Valentine from *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door* © S. Watanabe, K. Nobumoto / Sunrise, Bones Studios, Sony Pictures Entertainment.

Though the animated characters can move their faces, they are limited to the degree of realistic expression they can produce and thus character design and conventionalized emotional expressions (a subject I will discuss in detail later) are extremely important to the successful creation of believable characters. Amazingly, with the use of similar parts, the minute tweaks make "believable people out of types,"[8] apparent in the varied way that similar base characters, with similar internal characteristics, are adjusted externally to fit their world-setting circumstances and altered personalities, each with diverse external expressions that signify the differences in their characters. Take for example the characters Motoko Kusanagi, Misato Katsuragi, Faye Valentine (Figure 2.4), and Senjōgahara Hitagi. All of these female characters have purple-black hair, yet the subtleties of the character design display a wide variety of internal emotion, allowing the frequent use of still shots to continue to express the

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[8] Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits*: 51.

character's personalities. It is as if the color of their hair helps define their personality aesthetically (or vice versa), acting as an almost standardized symbol.

The *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (*Kōkaku Kidōtai Sutando Arōn Konpurekkusu*, 2002–2003) character Motoko Kusanagi has a (usually) calm demeanor and is the deeply respected "Major" of her special task force. Her commanding presence hides her identity crisis, but her overwhelming confidence in her abilities grounds her professionally and privately. The scanty bathing suit clothing she wears is paired with an empowering motorcycle jacket, creating an image of objectification that is juxtaposed with the clear authority her presence is always given. Misato Katsuragi from *Evangelion* is an equally efficient and qualified soldier, though a tactical strategist and not a Special Forces field operative. She is extremely gifted at her job as field commander for Eva operations at Nerv. While she displays a playful, even sloppy exterior, she hides a troubled past behind her, and her experience and maturity shine through when making personal and professional decisions. The iconic white cross she wears around her neck is a remnant of her father—a source of much drive and anxiety for her—and the outfit she wears to work is similar to that of the Major from *Ghost in the Shell*: a tight fitting dress (though not as revealing) with boots, and a red military jacket. The open jacket in particular reveals her laid back and overly familiar style of human interaction, but the slightly conservative, yet fitted dress she wears shows her more serious side. In the scenes of her in her apartment, she is dressed in shorts and a tank top, completely loose and ready to knock back the mountains of alcohol she imbibes every night. She is often visually objectified—by both revealing camera shots and house-pajama clothing (or lack thereof), and the adolescent Shinji's gaze—her inside (personal) and outside (professional) personalities contrasted and emphasized through costume change. In the Anime *Cowboy Bebop*, the character Faye Valentine is somewhat of an enigma in the narrative. She does not remember her past, and has a large gambling problem. Though at times she is goofy, she often plays the seductive *femme-fatale* in distress role unsuccessfully, running away frequently throughout the series, secretly hoping that her comrades, her "adopted family" of bounty hunters, will chase after her. She wears a bright yellow outfit that is extremely revealing, and she often tries to perform a sexualized femininity to get what she needs. This is juxtaposed with the sillier and more vulnerable side of her personality shown in the yellow color of the clothing she wears. Yet the edges of her hair and costume are all sharp, giving off the impression of a dangerous *femme fatale*. The

concurrence of these two aspects, as with the other characters, displays her complex personality visually. Hitagi Senjōgahara is the youngest of the examples, the third year high school student in the Anime *Bakemonogatari*. Though outwardly aggressive, she enjoys playfully insulting her love interest Araragi. She comes across as charming and confident, though early on in the series we learn about her problematic family life and the sexual assault she suffered, leaving her emotionally hurt, vulnerable to the supernatural, and in need of help—though she would only painfully admit it. Senjōgahara openly calls herself a *tsundere* character, with a tough exterior, but a soft interior personality. Her costume is either the *Bakemonogatari* version of the school uniform, or her slightly mature, but fashionable young woman's clothing. It is not too revealing, but is starkly contemporary, giving the impression of normalcy that she tries to exude.

All of these characters possess this similar aspect of feigned normalcy, and I would suggest it is no coincidence that their chosen hair colors are so similar, and that the slight slant of their eyebrows gives off the minute hint of an edginess that lies underneath. The distinct details in hair style, facial, and costume design create individual looks that fit their internal characteristics, displaying them outwardly in a manner that matches the general aesthetic of the Anime as a whole. The subtleties in every part of the character design allow for various types of expression, using conventionalized, stylized parts that allow the internal aspects to be displayed externally. This hints at the development of a "standardized" system of signification in presentation through character body, costume, and personality design made up of parts, resulting in fine-tuned character designs, within the practices of the form. What is interesting is that in Anime there are multiple styles, yet all fall under the "Anime" rubric. More will be developed on this in later chapters, but we should understand that the degree of expression capable through subtle differences in the manipulation of established types is worthy of high creative and artistic merit. It is important to note that, like the utilization of the masks of Noh, the puppets of Bunraku, and the costumes and make-up of Kabuki, Anime characters are consciously and specifically created to embody and exude the specific "look" and style that is decisively Anime, with similar formal systems to produce this expression of the internal, externally, resulting in that desired aesthetic.

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Now let us examine how this expression of the internal externally occurs in the theater as well. We have seen that the scars and hair in Anime

character design express internal attributes. It is also widely known that Kabuki's *kumadori* make-up often defines the attributes of the type of character being played, with villains and heroes each having a special style of make-up designed for them. This helps distinguish the actors onstage as well as showing what their internal characteristics are: in general, villains wear blue lined make-up, heroes wear red, as these are the most frequently used colors. Each color expresses internal characteristics: brown for selfishness, black for fear, pink for cheerfulness, green for tranquility, purple for the noble, and so on. It also produces a marvellous image that easily lends itself to artistic composition in the woodblock prints that popularly depict the characters, producing an onstage and in-print aesthetic that is one take on the "look" of Kabuki.

Within all of the theatrical forms discussed here, the faces of the actors are artificially "constrained" through the use of unreal presentation. But this frees the actors to portray characters that a depiction based on verisimilitude might be awkward or difficult to express. In Kabuki the thick *oshiroi* make-up creates an entirely white face, in Bunraku the puppets do not even have human faces to begin with, and in Noh there are the eternally still but eerily emotive masks. The use of elaborate costumes and refined masks hides almost all aspects of normal human expression. While at times the actors in Noh do not use a mask, the facial expressions for these actors are considerably emotionless and masklike. But however unrealistic the outer visuals are, the inner details of the characters are considered of the highest importance. Zeami dedicated a large portion of his treatises on how to propagate the proper state of (internal) mind for the actor to accurately express himself on stage. To simplify the detail Zeami goes into regarding this does not do it justice, but space does not permit an accurate discussion here. Speaking generally, his evolved theory espouses that through vigorous training and a clear mind the actor will ideally be able to divulge the depths of the psychic faculties of the character onstage through a seamless expression of the internal, in the external arts of song/chant and dance, and the three (acting) roles: the Martial, the Woman's, and the Aged Modes. This is reflected in his protégé Zenchiku's theories on performance and aesthetics as well.[9]

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[9] Zeami's *Nine Levels*, and passages in *Shūgyoku tokka* explain how internalization of technique through intensive training is key. This frees the actor to express the internal emotions of the character through the stylized, codified movements. Zenchiku's *Six Circles, One Dew Drop* establishes a paradigm where similar emphasis on training and internalization of the Two Arts of Song and Dance are crucial. For Zeami see Hare, *Zeami: Performance Notes*. For Zenchiku see Arthur H. Thornhill, "Yugen After Zeami," in *Nō and kyōgen in the*

Other parts of the theater's costume design also exude the personality of the characters. Many times a change of wigs for a character in Kabuki will occur after having undergone a transformation in disposition or an important event occurrence within a play, signifying a difference in persona and a change in the character. For example, after undergoing a seduction to a darker path, a character originally with smooth hair put back in an elegant way will return to the stage with hair standing on end, signifying his change and dive into corruption.[10] Bunraku has different puppets (specifically their heads) for different character types. Depending on the internal attributes of the character, the external image will be different. This is also taken into consideration in Noh. When a play is being performed, there is a system of rules with which the actor performing can choose a costume for the character being played. While there are certain regulations that must be adhered to, there is good degree of freedom on the actor's part, and they can choose the appropriate attire for their own interpretation of the character portrayed.

Each object, from the masks to the wigs and robes, carries with it a certain connotation and signification. Certain patterns display different emotions and can even carry different literary or seasonal references. The masks are extremely varied, and depending on the type of mask and character it is used for, the actor can choose which mask provides the best essence for the character he wishes to portray. For example the *Deigan* mask is that that of a middle-aged woman, the *Yase Onna* mask for a thin woman, and the *Ryō no Onna* mask for a ghost woman; all of these can be paired with a certain number of other costume parts to create a total number of twelve different combinations, all able to be used for the play *Kinuta*, depending on the actor's interpretation of the character. Karen Brazell has detailed the different approaches actors may have when portraying the same role. For example, in the oft performed play *Yamanba* (depicting the legendary "mountain hag"), she notes that if the actor "wants to emphasize Yamanba's relationship to nature, he is likely to pick more muted colors: greens and browns are common. If he feels Yamanba's supernatural power is more essential, he will probably choose larger, bolder patterns in contrasting colo[r]s."[11] There are also patterns on the clothing, motifs that

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contemporary world, ed. James R. Brandon (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997). Also see ————, *Six Circles, One Dewdrop: The Religio-Aesthetic World of Komparu Zenchiku* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[10] Masakatsu Gunji, *The Kabuki Guide*. (New York: Kodansha International, 1987). 40.

[11] Karen Brazell, "Costumes for Yamanba," Japanese Performing Arts Resource Center, http://www.glopad.org/jparc/?q=en/node/22316.

are used to express a certain atmosphere for the character: flowers to express femininity, geometric patterns for masculinity; some of the patterns are taken from nature (waves or lightning, for example), or Buddhist iconography (such as the Wheel of Life). These can be used to evoke a seasonal setting as well as the actor's interpretation of the character's attributes.[12]

Certain wigs can also change the character's external image, and through it, internal attributes (or perhaps most accurately put vice versa, the internal affecting the external), signifying a different quality. A red *kashira* wig signifies a true demon; black, a human with demonic characteristics; and white, a "malevolent or threatening spirit or demon."[13] A comparable use of costume to depict character meaning occurs in Kabuki and Bunraku as well. Bunraku characters are, in fact, literally comprised of different puppet parts that produce the individual character for that production. Again, the internal characteristics are brought to the foreground in an external display of the characters. The same character "parts" are repeatedly used on analogous characters, and this choosing of parts to display a character's internal aspects is a much older, much more standardized system than what we find in Anime. However, as we have seen— for example, with the wigs of Noh and the hair in the Anime characters described above—the Anime expression bears a conceptual resemblance to that of the theater in the repeated iteration of the same "parts" in new contexts to produce different characters with similar attributes.

Different Noh masks contain a certain emotional valence which divulges the internal aspects of the character in an external form. They are especially crafted to evoke a subtle but refined beauty, a specific look that has come to embody the Noh Theater's aesthetic. The female mask is one of the most emblematic images of the Noh Theater, and there is a wide range of characteristics specific to each individual mask. The *Omi-Onna* is for a woman with a lover's disturbed heart; *Masukami* for a female character on the brink of madness, or possessed by a spirit; *Fukai* is for middle-aged female characters who would have experienced the highs and lows of love and life; and *Magojirō* is used to portray slightly more mature young women (Figure 2.5).[14] Through the work of a master craftsman, the distances of the eyes, the eyebrows, the lips, the mouth, the jaw, the nose and

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives*: 298–299, 301.

[14] Information from the Noh Mask Database. "The-Noh.com – Noh Mask Database: Onna," www.the-noh.com/sub/jp/index.php?mode=db&action=e_view_detail&data _id=73&class_id=1.
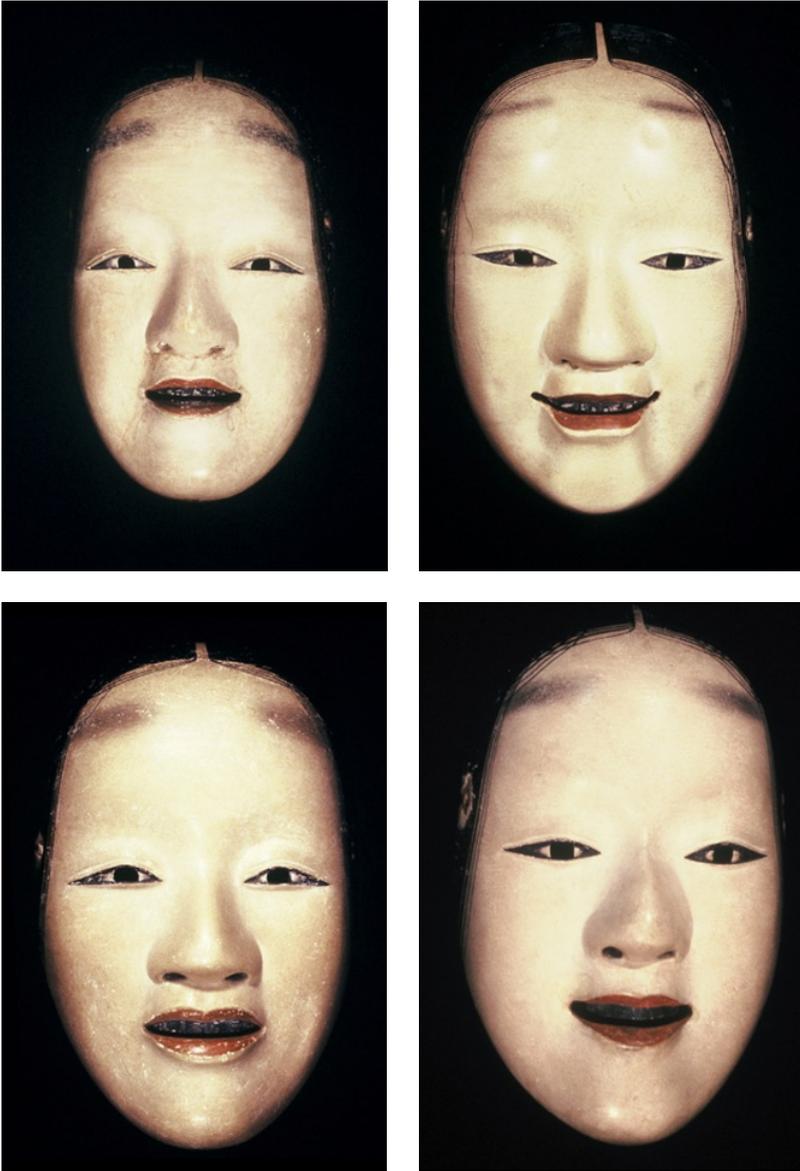
Figure 2.5. The female Noh mask is one of the most emblematic images of the Noh theater, and there is a wide range of characteristics specific to each individual mask. They are especially crafted to evoke a subtle but refined beauty. Clockwise from top left they are: *Omi-Onna, Masukami, Fukai, Magojirō*. © Toshiro Morita, the-noh.com (http://www.the-noh.com/).

the fine lines that create the border of the hairline, are all subtly organized and carefully constructed to produce the myriad of different character type masks. Some are designed to convey a sinister look, some delusional, and others calm, all with an ethereal beauty. The masks, though works of art in their own right, truly come into their own when donned by a master performer. The slight movements of the actor, clad in elegant and carefully selected clothing, bring the static mask and character to life. All of the elements of costume and facial (mask) design come together and ultimately produce the personality of the character externally through a visual expression, their internal aspects balancing with this image to ultimately produce what we grasp as the individual character. In Noh, Kabuki and Bunraku this is done artificially with human actors dressed up in stylized layers, whereas in Anime the medium of animation necessitates the utilization of such design methods as the actors and actresses are not real, but pure images faking the impression of movement.[15]

As I touched upon earlier, in all of the theatrical forms, characters change their physical appearance frequently. In Kabuki and Bunraku, many times a character will be in disguise until the end of the play when they reveal their true identity and change from one appearance to another. In Noh, many plays incur a change as the protagonist (*shite*) leaves after the first act where he or she reveals their true identity, reluctantly hinting at it throughout the first part. In the second act they then return as the true demon, god, or spirit that they are, with a new exterior image to support this. In the Noh play *Aoi no Ue*, as in many Noh plays, the *shite* performs the first half of the play in one mask, but when their true identity is revealed, he returns in a different costume and mask. The example of *Aoi no Ue* shows how this can be used to express the internal state of the character involved. Lady Rokujō is so possessed with anger and fury that her spirit literally transforms into a demon, the mask of the *shite* changing from *Deigan*, a mask for a tormented woman, to *Hannya*, the mask for a female demon. The contrast is striking, but it effectively portrays the complete emotional and spiritual transformation of the character within the context of the play. The *Deigan* mask depicts the internal character of Lady Rokujō externally as well, in its depiction of a distressed middle-aged woman, used for plays where the character is devoted to a lover.

One can also see the internal expressed externally through the costume changes in Kabuki. A particularly well known and exquisite example is the

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[15] Lamarre gives excellent examples and explanations of the need for animation to produce certain aspects. See *The Anime Machine*.

Dance of the Heron Maiden (*Sagi Musume*), where there is a *hikinuku* (a dramatic, quick costume change on stage) that occurs twice in succession. The young maiden previously seen dancing in a festive spring kimono, quickly changes behind the umbrella into a bright red one, expressing the bitterness of the betrayal she felt, and then changes once more back into the form of the heron maiden. The brief change into red expresses her torment as the *onnagata*'s body dances to express the character's lament. Not a word is spoken by the *onnagata*, as he is moving to the sad sounds of the *shamisen* and the chorus to his side. The words of their song express both the narrative and some of the emotions of the character. The lyrics expressing the internal emotions are separated, outside of the body of the character/actor, yet another division between internal and external. (This separation of the language of the internal character expressed through an external source is common to all three of the theatrical forms.) External, visual aspects change in conjunction with the internal workings of the characters themselves. This is all done in a conventionalized stylized manner in the traditional theaters. The unreal expressions characteristic of the forms help necessitate such a transformation to assist the audience in understanding and recognizing the difference, doing so in their respective styles. It also helps the audience understand what is going on when they are far from the stage and may not be able to see the actors clearly.

As the characters are unreal actors and actresses in Anime, and the world-settings themselves complete fabrications, the internal struggles of one of the main characters, exerted on the external world-setting, often erupt into a wildly sensational display. We have seen how this can be charted with the *jo-ha-kyū* system. While there are too many examples to note them all, the one that springs to mind first is *Evangelion*, specifically in the film *End of Evangelion*. The external world-setting has produced a series of situations that are as dire as they are fantastical, all taking their mental toll on the character of Shinji. In the final moments of the film, all of his madness explodes and we see a sensational spectacle of odd and grotesque images exploding in the external world of the Anime. *Gantz* provides another common example, where a character will reach some emotional breaking point and then perform feats of incredible strength, speed, and dexterity, spectacular action scenes that are brought about by their internal struggle that has now been discharged externally in the *kyū* section.

At other times in Anime, when a character reaches a new level of ability, usually through some sort of internal battle, his or her physical

appearance will change. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the internationally popular *Dragon Ball Z* (*Doragon Bōru Zeddo*, 1989–1996). Every time the characters reach a new level of strength through vigorous training and its corresponding emotional growth, this is exemplified with an external transformation. For example, one of the main characters, Goku, with black hair and black eyes, instantly morphs into a Super Saiyan with golden hair and green eyes when he reaches this peak of power. That changes when he reaches the next level, and his hair grows. When he ascends to the third level his hair becomes long enough to touch the ground and his eye-brows disappear into areas of pure muscle.

Transformations mainly occur during tenuous moments for the characters. In *Ghost in the Shell,* the Major has an ongoing existential dilemma throughout the Anime film, culminating in her "diving" in to communicate with the Puppet Master at the end of the film. The Puppet Master discusses the nature of existence, life, reproduction, and death, the two ultimately merging before being blasted away. The Anime ends with the Major in a new bodily form, having merged with Puppet Master and gaining a new sense of confidence. Though the change is explained in the narrative (her old body being destroyed, and Batō providing her a new one), the internal transformation is still reflected in her external form. She has literally become a new person and this is expressed in her new physical form. That it is so different makes the transformation all the more potent.

Such transformations occur in costume as well, as in *The Twelve Kingdoms* (*Jūni Kokuki*, 2002–2003,). The main character Yōko matures over the course of the series, as she goes from a scared and confused schoolgirl to the proud and capable Queen. Her ability to govern improves, and she slowly lives up to the role that she was given, but originally never wanted. She undergoes many changes in costume throughout the series, coinciding with both character development and narrative progression. In other words, the narrative movement and character growth is directly explored in the visual, external expression of the costumes.

In a *mecha* Anime, many times the *mecha* will (also) change in appearance by transforming or upgrading. *Gurren Lagann* features a boy who slowly matures and grows into adulthood as he takes up the task of saving the human species. The *mecha* he pilots transforms throughout his many adventures as he progresses both in skill and emotional confidence. Transformations in *Gurren Lagann*, as in other Anime, often coincide with events of personal development. In this particular Anime, the transformation is not just of the individual character but with and of the *mecha*.

In the first episode, Simon transforms his robot head, Lagann, when he comes to believe in himself and defeats the enemy. Later on, in similar situations, when Simon needs to gain further confidence to get over his fears to successfully defend humanity, he and his mentor Kamina combine their two *mecha* into the stronger and more permanent Gurren Lagann *mecha* form. Further into the series—at the middle of the larger *Ha* period, at the *kyū* of one larger story-arc—when the humans defeat the Spiral King, Gurren Lagann is beaten by the Spiral King, leaving only Simon's original Lagann head to attack the Spiral King. This too is quickly crushed by the Spiral King, leaving Simon's human body beaten up and dangerously exposed. But it is Simon, in his battered human body—one not contained by the glorious *mecha* covering—who overcomes his fear and attacks the larger Spiral King, destroying him with the tiny drill he found in the first episode. The growth of his character is symbolized by the fact that he sheds the *mecha* transformation and is instead transformed back into his human form.

Significantly, the compound layers of *mecha* move inwards to the human core. As the series progresses, the *mecha* transforms multiple times and a larger set of other *mecha* are nested over the original Gurren Lagann into a literally galactic proportioned *mecha*. At the end of the series, the adult Simon and his comrades are just about to defeat the Anti-spirals who threaten humanity's existence, but are trapped in a system of fake dreams meant to distract them for eternity. Though he has long been dead, the spirit of Kamina returns to Simon and makes him realize "who he is" and "where he can draw his strength from," one final time. Again, Simon is seen in the dream as his younger, smaller, meeker self, who then transforms to his adult, stronger, and now emotionally confident self—his external expression changing as his internal state does. In the climactic fight scene, the final blow is the larger *mecha* peeling away the layers, getting to the smaller versions of Gurren Lagann, finally leaving off at the human Simon in the top of the original head, piercing through the Anti-spiral. The transformation of Simon's personality coincides with the peeling away of the *mecha* as in the earlier episode against the Spiral King. But this time, the much older and wiser Simon is transformed to be unified with his Spiral *mecha*, and at complete peace with himself.

In general, Anime containing *mecha* usually feature a directly visible internal and external element to the story, as the basis is generally a person (internal) who pilots an enormous machine caught in a massive war (external). Thus, the drama is focused on the inner struggles of the pilot

and the outer battles of the *mecha*. Susan Napier, observes this division, stating:

> While the imagery in *mecha* Anime is strongly technological and is often specifically focused on the machinery of the armored body, the narratives themselves often focus to a surprising extent on the human inside the machinery. It is this contrast between the vulnerable, emotionally complex and often youthful human being inside the ominously faceless body armor or power suit and the awesome power he/she wields vicariously that makes for the most important tension in many *mecha* dramas.[16]

Indeed, this separation between the internal and the external strikes a powerful balance. The external world-setting is incredibly technologically advanced—usually to a destructive degree—and the political drama and violence is overwhelming. However, the internal world is still quite "human," very susceptible to situations such as heartbreak or stress. Any of the *Gundam* series Anime has this dichotomy: *Full Metal Panic!* (*Furumetaru Panikku!*, 2002–2002—and its subsequent sequels), *Macross* series, and *Evangelion* also share this attribute, just to name a few. *Yukikaze* (*Sentō Yōsei Yukikaze*, 2002–2005) provides a revealing example. The internal aspect, the "human" pilot, is plagued with a number of difficulties in both his personal and professional relationships, and literally interacts with (i.e. communicates with beyond simple commands) and depends on his external extension, the plane Yukikaze, for emotional and military support. There are frequent situations where he feels he cannot trust his senses, and relies on his *mecha* to support his conclusions. This separation and link between human and *mecha* is emblematic of the internal-external division-unity that proliferates throughout Anime. I would suggest that because of this interaction, Anime, as a story-telling form, has developed to be so well suited to portray the post-human condition and all the anxieties and possibilities of its increasing affluence within our world. However, due to the heavy influence of *mecha* Anime on the art form one may see it the other way around: Anime's obsession with the *mecha*-human relationship has resulted in a form profuse with internal-external relationships. Even in Anime that are set in school settings, such as *His and Her Circumstances* (*Kareshi Kanojo no Jijyō*, 1998–1999; shortened as *Kare Kano*), the external drama will often be accompanied by the internal turmoil of the characters. Ultimately the audience sees the inner disturbances of the characters' psyches on display, intricately intertwined with

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[16] Napier, *Anime: From Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*: 87.

the external world-settings dramas, the two becoming one to produce the narrative and world of the series.

Anime utilizes voice-actors to portray the stylized animations, breathing life and personality in the expressive images of the characters. The voice-actors employed are extremely talented and well trained, often the source of much fandom themselves. They too have a stylized mode of expression with a distinctive Anime voice and tone. Despite the appearance of the voice coming from inside the character, the voice actually does not come from within the character but "off to the side," as in the theater forms (e.g. *tayū* chanters and *jiutai* chorus). One might even go as far as to say that, like the cels of the animation, the voiced layer is flattened onto the images. In the Anime franchise *Ghost in the Shell*, when the characters talk to each other mentally through the use of their cyberbrains, the sound engineers give off the impression that they are coming from inside the character's heads, when really they are voice-overs.[17] In Anime, every character has a distinctive voice that brings the internal to the foreground in the external, conventionalized, stylized expression of the characters.

While in Kabuki and Noh non-realistic acting techniques and dances are used to portray the internal workings of the characters onstage, perhaps the most striking distinction between internal and external is in the Bunraku puppet theater. The puppets themselves are inanimate objects, and thus possess no literal inner emotional states or even the ability to speak. They are manipulated by three puppeteers who create highly realistic movements for them, yet are in full view of the audience. While they do dance and move to express a certain degree of emotion, it is the chanter (*tayū*) that is often credited with breathing the life into the puppets. Sitting on the side of the stage and accompanied by a *shamisen* player, the *tayū* sings all the parts of the characters and narrates the events occurring onstage. It is he who controls the tone of the emotions of the drama and enlightens the audience to the inner workings and the dialogue of the puppets that are moved on stage. In this particular case it appears that there is a literal separation between the internal and the external on stage. While this is physically true, the external descriptions are intertwined with the internal thoughts and emotions of the

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[17] Bolton notes how in the original *Ghost in the Shell* film (1995), the sound director Wakabayashi Kazuhiro used a spatializer to "delocalize sounds, making them seem to come from everywhere and nowhere at once. Bolton, "From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater," 749. Bolton cites the supplementary material on the *Ghost in the Shell* DVD (New York: Manga Video, 1998).

characters, the internal brought to the surface as they are connected in the script that is chanted entirely by the *tayū*. In both Bunraku and Anime, the voice is dislocated and integrated, at once inside and outside of the image and character, internal and external at the same time. The difference between the two lies in the physicality of the mediums: Bunraku's internal-external voice is literally "off to the side," whereas Anime's internal-external voice(over) is joined/flattened into the same frame(s) as the image.

The dislocated-integrated voice is one that is, at least to some degree, a performance practice that is common to all of the art forms discussed here. In Bunraku it is the crux of the performance and Kabuki has many plays that use such a chanting technique (*chobo*), with actors taking the place of the puppets in certain scenes. Noh has a chorus whose lines can be third or first person descriptions of events, the scenery, or the mental state of the characters, as with the chanter's lines in Bunraku. Noh's scripts produce lyric descriptions that constantly switch between these perspectives, the story told as first hand and narrated to us simultaneously. What is most prevalent here is that the dichotomy of internal and external is brought outwards, onto the surface and merged into one, acting as separate aspects at the same time. One of the characteristics of many Noh plays is this simultaneous switch/integration between descriptions of the external world around the character, and the lines explaining the internal conflict within. This distinction between outer and inner can be seen in relation to the structure of a Noh play in how the plays progress from an outward circumstance that will often develop inwards towards the plight of the character. In general, there is a working inwards from the external, a descent downwards into the depths of the human psyche. The natural world is often expressed with heightened beauty, balanced with the suffering of the heart as we delve deeper into the play and the character revealed onstage.

A similar practice could explain the reasons for *Evangelion* possessing such an introspective ending, dealing primarily (even in the *End of Evangelion* movies that directly followed the series) with the psyche of the main characters—specifically Shinji—and not with the external world-setting's "riddle."[18] While part of the narrative is focused on the battle with

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[18] It is noted that part of the reasons were funding and time constraints but regardless, there are endless other options as conclusions, yet this mental introspection was chosen, even though an action oriented or "riddle" solving explanation could have sufficed by reusing old cels.

SEELE, the other part is made up by the mental struggles of the characters involved. As the series progresses, there is a constant move inward from the external events, to a deeper focus on the internal. The *jo* section of the series introduces the world, the first two *ha* sections solidify it and create the basis for the majority of the events that are built upon to create the psychological portraits in the second half of the series. The third *ha* section starts this dive into the subconscious inner workings of the characters. The *kyū* section reveals much darker and troubled character psyches than previously guessed, using the preceding events, repeated and remixed, to aide in this depiction. This all leads up to the final two episodes where we are forced into the minds of the characters and watch Shinji as he goes through an internal monologue, leading to his breakthrough. Throughout the series we find ourselves slowly having the layers of these characters (and their world) torn apart, each portion revealing a deeper look into the depths of their own inner worlds. The *End of Evangelion* films are labeled episodes twenty-five and twenty-six, which are continuations of the "riddle" that is the other part of the series. However, these films also deal with a large amount of mental conflict of the characters.

In many other Anime we find a similar type of divided-unified expression. The outside world-setting is an incredibly complex network of politics, culture, technology and magic. The world-settings created are intricately detailed, down to histories that influence the current events happening before our eyes. Despite appearing as if the narrative focus is entirely on the plot of the world-setting, there is a significant amount of concentration on the characters and their individual development. We find this in *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), where the main character Motoko Kusanagi is in the midst of highly economic and political international scandal, while at the same time questioning her own existence and enduring a quest for her own identity. *Library War* (*Toshokan Sensō*, 2008–2008) features a character who, through the ongoing political and military battle for freedom of speech rights, finds her own individuality. *Gurren Lagann* has a *mecha* pilot who consequently develops both in skill and internal confidence as he tries to rescue the human race. *Evangelion* centers on an adolescent boy, and the other characters surrounding him, simultaneously working through their own psychological issues as they try to save the world from demise. The list goes on, as Anime's external world-settings and character's internal hearts are both separately examined and undeniably intertwined. In this, we find another division in the ambiguous focus of the narratives: that of the world-settings or the characters.

CHARACTER AND WORLD

In Anime, there are often extended segments where the camera pans across the environment. Sometimes these are establishing shots, other times cuts showing different settings and/or the surrounding area around the characters are interspersed with monologues, silence, or diegetic sound (e.g. the sound of cicadas with the image of a forest). In some instances, such shots do not have any direct connection to the plot or event at hand. The use of these shots of the environment/setting keeps the rhythms of the narrative movement; it is a method of pacing that exposes the surroundings of the characters, displaying their world-setting, and takes us through the aestheticised environment that they inhabit. In other shots, the layout of the image will often engulf the characters in the world-setting, emphasizing the backgrounds over the characters by the sheer amount of space it takes up within the image's composition.

This chapter will discuss this prominence of world-setting in Anime and elaborate on the relationship between the characters and their environment. In his article "Anime Creativity: Characters and Premises in the Quest for Cool Japan," Ian Condry uses the identical English word "world-setting" to indicate a concept similar to that used here: the location where the drama takes place, an element separate from the characters and story. Condry has translated the Japanese word "*sekaikan*"—which he notes is usually glossed as "worldview"—as "world-setting," and translates the word "*settei*" as "premise." Together with characters, Condry groups these three elements of Anime as sometimes gaining primacy over "story," in particular in the Anime creative (production) process. Condry explains the term "world-setting" as "the background or context of the series...the world-setting can refer to the technical look-and-feel (e.g. hand-drawn or 3D computer graphics) as well as symbolic references to particular eras (e.g. an imaginary Edo era, 1600–1868, outside of history, not, for example, a futuristic space fantasy)...the *sekaikan* ['world-setting'] defines the stage on which the drama of the characters and premise unfold."[1] As for "premises" (*settei*), they can be seen as the conceptual ideas that formulate

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[1] Condry, "Anime Creativity: Characters and Premises in the Quest for Cool Japan," 152.

the foundations of a show (e.g. *Samurai Champloo* using the premises of hip-hop, re-mixing, and samurai tropes).[2] Condry notes that premises can be dramatic tensions that link the characters,[3] and may contain the "characteristic of moving across eras, technologies, and social settings to reformulate not only the worlds of anime but also to speak back to contemporary concerns."[4]

Condry cites Ōtsuka Eiji as a prominent figure arguing that a crucial connection between character and story exists, from both production and consumption perspectives. But Condry explains that in his ethnography of Anime production processes, the story did not necessarily take precedence over character design during the creative meetings he witnessed.[5] Condry cautions that he is not proposing a binary opposition between character and story. He clarifies that the centrality of elements such as character, story, premise, and world-setting, may depend on the media form a work takes (e.g. Anime, film, video game, etc.), and that the differences between these elements and varying emphasis on them in different media can be useful tools for analysis and description.[6]

My conception of "world-setting" differs from that found in Condry's anthropological media study. Rather, "world-setting" is a translation of the combination of "*sekai*" (Eng: world) from theatrical practices, and "*settei*" (Eng: scene, setting, configuration) from Anime, Manga, and video game discourse. I utilize the theatrical term "*sekai*" in my conception of "world-setting" to highlight the connotations of the Edo period dramaturgical practice that used stock-worlds with specific settings, characters, and narratives that served as an interchangeable part of a total production. World-settings function as the atmospheric backdrops/settings that contain specific internal histories, societies, technologies, fauna, and physical rules that the characters abide by, interact with, and move through—an entity that is seemingly distinct from the characters. Composed of carefully arranged elements, Anime world-settings can also be understood as possessing a mosaic structure.

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  [2] Ibid., 147.
  [3] Ibid., 141.
  [4] Ibid., 158.
  [5] Condry cites the following text by Ōtsuka: Eiji Ōtsuka, *Kyarakutaa Meekaa: 6-tsu no riron to waakushoppu de manabu 'tsukurikata'* (*Character Maker: Learning 'Ways of Making' through Six Strategies and Workshops*). (Tokyo: Ascii Media Works, 2008). 18–19. See Condry, "Anime Creativity: Characters and Premises in the Quest for Cool Japan," 148.
  [6] Condry, "Anime Creativity: Characters and Premises in the Quest for Cool Japan," 159.
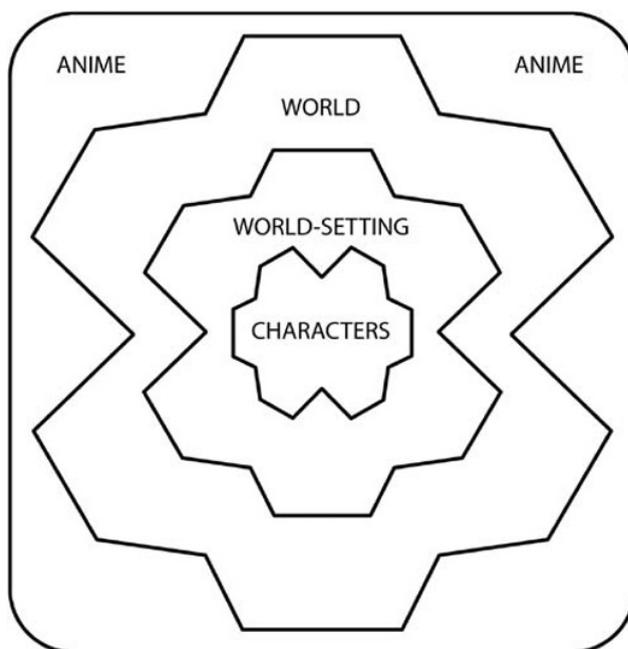
Figure 2.6. The world encompasses the interaction between these two distinct, but insep-
arable, parts of the same whole. The shape of the world (i.e. its aesthetic) is determined by
the formations created from the interactions between the world-setting and characters in
an Anime. The world-setting creates the circumstance the characters react to, with it, and/
or against it to create the drama and the tone of the Anime. Each Anime produces their
own larger aesthetic through the interaction of the particularly styled world-setting and
the carefully designed characters that populate it.

Yet characters are integral to Anime as well. In fact, in many Anime
works there is a direct correlation between world-setting and characters.
They are intrinsically connected and the tension between the two often
creates the drama of the narrative. When using the word "world" it will be
to encompass the interaction between the two distinct, but inseparable
parts of the same whole: character and world-setting. An "Anime world" is
the combination of the world-setting, the characters, and the drama that
arises from their interactions. The "shape" of the world (its aesthetic) is a
product of the formations created from the interactions between the
world-setting and characters in an Anime (see Figure 2.6). In this chapter,
I will be looking mainly at SF-Fantasy Anime as world-settings are the
most pronounced in this genre (as it is in other media, e.g. film), but it is
evident in other Anime genres as well.

To elaborate on world-settings further, they can be seen as the setting and circumstance the characters react to, with and/or against, generating part of the drama and the tone of the Anime. Each Anime produces their own larger aesthetic through the interaction of the particularly styled world-setting and the carefully designed characters that populate it. Perhaps it would be best to label these "atmospheric world-settings" rather than just purely "world-settings." Just as in many arts, the world-setting creates a specific atmosphere for the performance, an environment where the drama of the characters can play out. Inherently, an Anime has to create a world-setting as every part of the production is fabricated. Even Japanese school world-settings or other contemporary environments are created in such detail—with specialized aesthetics—that they are simultaneously mimicking this world—to convey a story that takes place within it—and producing a very specific realm on screen, stylized in a particular manner. The world-setting produces a particular visual and aural environment creating a certain atmosphere for the series to take place in. It has its own rules (physical, magical, natural, etc.), history, cultures, societies, populace (natural, human, alien, etc.), and technologies. How the characters interact with this environment produces the tone of the series as this moves the plot along. Ultimately, this interaction produces the world of the Anime. Many Anime, most specifically SF-Fantasy Anime, play with this convention.

World-settings/environments in Anime are grand and over-arching, created in precise detail. The backgrounds themselves could be taken as works of art. Seeing the fields in *Seirei no Moribito* or the forests in *Princess Mononoke*, the beauty in the landscapes of Anime is breathtaking. Even urban portraits in works such as *Cowboy Bebop* or *Ghost in the Shell* exhibit a level of realism and creativity that entice you into their worlds. Far beyond this, the intertextual techniques used in the creation of these realms helps to make them more tangible, with patterns we know and understand. The social networks, cultures, politics, economics, military and education systems that are either portrayed or created are so believable that there is almost no denial behind their actual existence in the narrative. The *Ghost in the Shell* series in particular shows countless political, financial, military and social struggles that are highly convincing in their depiction. The scandals and events presented are described in such technical detail they seem almost as if they are from a news article in the future.

To take another example, various sequences in the Anime film *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door* (*Gekijōban Kaubōi Bibappu: Tengoku no*

Tobira, 2001) reveal the intricate and highly detailed intertextual cultural backdrop of the *Cowboy Bebop* world. While looking like a contemporary multi-ethnic mega-city with advanced technological flourishes, the Anime actually takes place in the future on the planet Mars. We are presented with a mix of different cultures and images, pieces from various iconic cities world-wide, with alleys, parks, transportation, buildings, and landmarks that look like they are from New York (an Empire State Building-like building), Paris (a building like the Eiffel Tower), San Francisco (a Golden Gate Bridge-like bridge), Hong Kong (a densely populated Chinatown), or Morocco (an Arabic neighborhood called Moroccan Street) (see Figure 2.7). Here again we can see how the mosaic of these various parts is pieced together to create the desired aesthetic of the atmospheric world-setting for the characters to run through. In the film there is even a sequence where the character Spike walks around the city searching for leads on the bounty they are hunting (see Figure 2.8). Throughout, the composition of the frames feature this main character dwarfed by his surroundings, the world-setting. No words are spoken as he meets various different urban characters and we explore this fictional city along with him. In this sequence we see the nested mosaic of juxtaposed references: the Bruce Lee-Lupan III-noir detective-bounty hunter-amalgamation-Spike is literally interacting with the world-setting, the various neighborhoods and people that make up the urban, multi-cultural landscape of the *Cowboy Bebop* world-setting. The opening and ending credits of the film also exhibit various parts of this city that blatantly resemble famous landmarks from various cities around the world (some examples noted above). This is emblematic of many Anime in which the viewers explore the world-setting with the characters, and we are given access to the intricacies of that world-setting. This is characteristic of the Anime form—as everything is fabricated (i.e. drawn), any view of the world-setting provides us with an aestheticised image that constitutes part of a larger world-setting within which the characters move. No matter if the world-setting is a city on Mars or a high school in Japan; these are just parts of a larger manifestation of a particular aesthetic that is that Anime.

To match the intricacy of the environment, the characters within it are also constructed very precisely. They each have their own histories, personalities, and individual circumstances that make them unique. Furthermore, character development is crucial to the success of an Anime. Part of the beauty that lies in Anime is because of the characters and the interpersonal dramas that abound from them, not just those of the

Figure 2.7. While looking like a contemporary multi-ethnic mega-city, the Anime film *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door* actually takes place in the future on the planet Mars. We are presented with a mosaic mix of different cultures and images from various iconic cities world-wide, with alleys, parks, transportation, buildings, and landmarks that look like they are from New York (an Empire State Building-like building, top image) and Paris (a building like the Eiffel Tower, bottom image), amongst other places. *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door* © S. Watanabe/ Sunrise, Bones Entertainment, Sony Pictures Entertainment.

world-setting they inhabit. *Full Metal Panic* creates wonderful characters who we cheer on as they battle the enemy; in *Kare to Kanojo no Jijyō* (*His and Her Circumstances*—short: *Kare Kano*), the romance and filial relationships of the two characters is endearing, and we are engrossed in

Figure 2.8. In the Anime film *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door* there is an extended sequence where the character Spike walks through the urban environment in which the majority of the film takes place. This allows the viewer to explore part of the Cowboy Bebop world-setting with him, moving between various neighborhoods in the multi-cultural metropolis. *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door* © S. Watanabe/ Sunrise, Bones Entertainment, Sony Pictures Entertainment.

their individual and joint efforts to heal their psychological wounds; the character portraits in *Evangelion* are some of the most poignant in the art form.

Yet, these characters are very much products of their world-settings. It is hard to imagine a situation quite like that of Shinji's, Asuka's, Rei's, Misato's, or almost any of the other characters in *Evangelion* separate from

the world-setting they inhabit. Where else would a boy's mother be entrapped in the giant humanoid creation he pilots, leaving him with his estranged father; where else would the mother's adolescent clone (Rei) be his comrade, one of the final keys to ending humanity's suffering, and have a crisis of self, due in part to the fact that she is a replica, but also an individual? The interpersonal relationships of the characters are deeply connected to the stresses of their individual roles in their world-setting and the relationships it causes between the characters. In what other world than that of *Ghost in the Shell* would one question their identity based on their digital Ghost? Was she (Motoko Kusanagi) inserted into the robotic shell from mere computer code, or transferred from another body? Kusanagi and Rei both react to their world-setting with an existential disruption of self, but the impetus for this introspection is brought about through different (plot) processes that are each heavily interwoven into their distinct world-settings that produce them. Their reactions, in turn, then continue to move the plot along. In *Evangelion* (most specifically the film *End of Evangelion*), Rei's actions literally alter the world-setting itself, producing a mass apocalypse and leaving Shinji and Asuka as the only survivors. Kusanagi ends up being merged with the Puppet Master, giving her the capability to travel through the Net—i.e. she literally becomes part of the vast information network in their world-setting.

Philip Brophy has described how energy waves are often visualized in Anime, and the character's utilization of such energy leaves its physical imprint on the environment around them—they physically leave a mark on the world-setting. From the film *Akira*, Brophy cites the character Tetsuo, whose anger erupts in psychic energy waves that "emanate from his being and rupture his surrounding physical surfaces."[7] This destructive effect on the world-setting is another push and pull between the character and her/his environment. Brophy also notes the opposite of this destruction in a scene from *My Neighbor Totoro* (*Tonari no Totoro*, 1988) in which the various Totoro dance around a patch of seedlings, willing them to grow into gargantuan trees. Totoro's actions energize the seedlings, exerting a positive force on the world producing a Natural growth.[8] Again, the world-setting and characters are interacting, the world-setting physically adjusting after its encounter with the characters.

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[7] Philip Brophy, "Sonic-Atomic-Neumonic: Apocalyptic Echoes in *Anime*," in *The Illusion of Life 2: More Essays on Animation*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Syndey: Power Publications, 2007), 194.

[8] Ibid., 202.

This dialectic between characters and world-setting is characteristic of Anime narratives.

In *Xam'd: Lost Memories* (*Bōnen no Zamdo, 2008–2009*), as in many other Anime, the character's appearance and personality growth is a by-product of their world-setting—the world-setting and character are inseparable. The character of Akiyuki goes through a number of major emotional breakthroughs, brought on by the technological wars and the fantastic creatures that transform him. For example, he goes through many episodes without having his human face, and only that of the *hiruko* creature that merged with him. He is sold into slavery as he drifts aimlessly through their world-setting, allowing us to explore it with him. Only after another strange creature convinces an elderly lady to buy Akiyuki does his time with her provide him with a revelation, allowing Akiyuki to regain his sense of self. *Evangelion* is another excellent example, with a recurring theme throughout the franchise being "Why do you pilot Eva?" or "Why do you work for Nerv?" These can clearly be taken as metaphors, but they are nonetheless directly connected to the world-setting. Each question delves deep into the characters' histories and psyches to find the answer, something that we are given full access to in the final episodes of the Anime. But the Eva and the giant company Nerv that houses them are specific only to the *Evangelion* world. In these instances among many, both the causes of distress and the solutions to them are produced in the external realities of the Anime world-setting shown, then digested and exposed externally, creating the interaction and dependency between the two.

What is particularly engrossing is how we identify with these figments of imagination, these images created on screen, whose circumstances—particularly in the case of Science Fiction or Fantasy worlds—can be greatly removed from our very own. The characters' distress is caused by the world-setting they inhabit, but as they move against their environment their reactions appear "human." The aesthetics of the narrative outcomes of the world-setting vs. characters interaction is part of the world of that Anime. Thus the world-setting/environment and characters combine to create the aesthetic world (or that Anime's aesthetic) as the tension between the world-setting and the characters produces emotive responses through this interaction. The affective reactions of the audience to the character are directly tied with and associated with the world-setting that the action takes place in.

To examine another example, the world-setting of the Anime *Seirei no Moribito* is starkly different from that of *Cowboy Bebop*, with its own distinct Fantasy world-setting and an equally complex intertextual cultural

backdrop. This is also a mix of different cultures and symbols, recalling the ancient courts of China, Japan and Korea, as well as Ainu cultures. The world-setting is populated by a set of different fictional ethnicities that are juxtaposed to produce the larger world-setting with distinct social structures that the characters are forced to move through and deal with. On top of just the creation of an atmospheric world-setting, each section of the world-setting (and its corresponding ethnic group) is portrayed with their own respective culture (festivals, histories, language, social structure) and style (attire, architecture). These create the mosaic of the world-setting, which acts as the environment in which the narrative takes place. The drama occurs as a direct result of the characters moving through each part-place of the mosaic: the over-arching story begins with the fictional prince Chagum trying to escape his fate as bearer of the egg of a water-spirit that will cause a drought; Balsa protects Chagum who is being pursued by the imperial family who must destroy the egg to prevent the disaster; as they find out later, the imperially prescribed histories about the egg of the water-spirit are false, and the egg does not cause a drought but rather prevents it. The story goes on, but the basis of its movement is Chagum and Balsa (and company) running from the government and through the world-setting—the erroneous "official imperial histories" causing them to flee, and when Chagum and Balsa enter a new community they are faced with a different challenge and plot twist. (Again, we can see the "sense of exploration" of this world-setting by the characters). The implications of a dominant imperial system overwriting other ethnic histories and traditions are readily apparent and the fact that the protagonists are literally put against the system is revealing. However, ultimately, change does not occur and we are left with the same system and only the hope that the now "enlightened" prince Chagum who has seen the world-setting part-places outside of the palace will one day change them for the better. As the series develops, we realize that there is no antagonist *per se*, but rather it is the imperial power structure that is the major problem—i.e. the biggest opposition to the characters is the world-setting.

We can see a version of the world-setting versus characters conflict in the extremely popular Anime *One Piece* (*Wan Pīsu*, 1999-on going). Luffy and his crew spend most of the series traveling from island to island, each island with its own unique characters, environment, culture, and challenges. The drama is created through the tension of Luffy and his comrades coming up against each island's particular world-setting. One can see this as multiple world-settings within one larger world-setting, yet

another manifestation of a nested mosaic. As they move from place to place, the viewers are exploring the world-setting(s) along with the characters in the Anime.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, there are frequently characters that are deeply informed on the "goings-on" of the world-setting they are in or the events happening around them in the world-setting; others (often the protagonist) have little to no understanding of it. The character(s) uninformed as to the intricacies of this world-setting act much like the *waki* in Noh: they help to guide the audience through the world-setting they inhabit, and their participation in the actions performed provides the audience with an important point of reference to understand the events occurring. This necessary element allows us to get accustomed to the world-setting, comprehend what is unfolding before us, and have it plausibly explained within the narrative itself. The characters and the viewers start on the outside of the world-setting and slowly make their way deeper inwards (even into the minds of the characters), and through them, the audience does as well.[9] Character(s) that do not fully grasp all the details and intricacies of the world-setting are crucial to help explain the society, the culture, and history that are the detailed world setting. Such characters are seen throughout Anime's landscape, and often the plots are facilitated around these characters so as to provide explanations of the events that we are seeing and the reasons for their existence. Shūzō from *Here and There, Then and Now* (*Ima Soko ni Iru Boku*, 1999) having just appeared in their world-setting from the "real world" or Natsume from *Natsume Yūjinchō* (*Natsume's Book of Friends*, 2008–2008) having just been given access to the world-setting through a special event (Natsume receiving the Book of Friends), are both emblematic of the situations that are commonly found in Anime. Even in Anime where there is no character that is new to that world-setting, such as in *Seirei no Moribito*, there will be some mystery or vague mission that must be completed that the characters quest for, finding information that then informs the viewers while moving the plot forward. In *Evangelion*, we find both informed and uniformed characters: Misato tries to uncover various conspiracies, and Ritsuko and Gendō divulge much less than they know. As most Anime contain a world that we are not familiar with and have only been introduced to in our viewing of it, a sense of mystery is propagated and information on the

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9 Thomas J Rimer, "Japanese Literature: Four Polarities." *Japanese Culture and Aesthetics: A Reader*. Ed.. Nancy G. Hume. (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995). 9.

world-setting is only carefully provided in small doses in the manner of *jo-ha-kyū*. This creates a sense of intensity and tension that the viewer can partake in with the characters, producing ample opportunity to project emotion onto the events. Importantly this exhibition takes us through the world-setting, the performance of which substantiates the events occurring. This is one of the many ways that the characters interact with and move through the world-setting that creates the drama and emotive effects that produces the aesthetic of that Anime world.

Still, one is tempted to raise the question of whether the focus is on a story about the characters in a world-setting, or on a story about a world-setting and the characters in it? In the Anime *Xam'd*, there is an almost excessive cast of characters that the narrative focuses on for a twenty-six episode series; each character with their own history and place in the events of the story. The Anime follows numerous characters across various narrative paths that all ultimately converge in some way. In doing so, the viewer gets a large overview of the world that they live in, each character with their own histories and narrative trajectories that expose a different aspect of the world. In fact, it is hard to place who exactly the main character is. The best guess would be Akiyuki, however Nakiami comes as a very close second, followed by Haru, then the large array of side stories that all intertwine. Each character is performing roles, participating in events, reliving histories, and engaging in acts with rules that are particular to this world-setting.[10] Every character's plight and emotional development is intricately intertwined with that of the world they inhabit, its rules, customs, and histories. The question then becomes, is this show about these characters, or the world they live in? Is the subject of this Anime the world-setting where specific histories, cultures, and technologies exist, or is the plight of the characters that live within this world-setting the focus? The Anime *Kare Kano* (*Kare to Kanojo no Jijyō: His and Her Circumstances*) is very similar. It starts off with what appears to be the main characters of Miyazawa and Arima and their developing romance. However, as the Anime progresses, other characters are further introduced and developed, even extending to the parents of Miyazawa. In this way, the characters themselves become the extensions of the world-setting they inhabit. Thus, what appears to be a normative setting of a high school romance is actually an aesthetic world explored graphically

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[10] It should be noted that there are certain repeated world-settings, tropes that are common in even unrelated Anime, not just those that make up *sekai*. There is always another advanced civilization with a *mecha* to be piloted.

through the troubled, but endearing characters the viewers are given access to.

Mushishi is similar. Are we learning about the protagonist Ginko, or are we learning about the mysterious creatures known as *mushi* that inhabit this mist covered environment and the various people they affect. In every case that Ginko encounters, we learn about a new character (or set of characters) as well as a new type of *mushi*.[11] In fact, there is no clear linear story-line; each episode seems independent form the other. The only stable place is the world-setting and its *mushi*. Ginko sometimes notes in episodes that he returned to a spot months or a year later, but we are fed no information on what transpired during that year. There is no indication if the next episode is before or after the previous episode's events, except the few episodes that deal with a clearly young Ginko—the last episode of the series and one in the middle, are of such points from Ginko's childhood, but the final episode barely even includes Ginko at all. However, all the episodes always contain *mushi* and the over-arching atmospheric world-setting that helps define the Anime's aesthetic.

Other scholars have also noted the various narrative and visual trajectories inherent in Anime, Lamarre stating that the "grand narrative disperses into little stories whose character lines traverse the story world to form personalized fields."[12] As stated prior, it is a common practice in Anime to have a wide array of characters that filter in and out of the narrative, often making it difficult to ascertain who the main character is and what the central subject of the Anime is. The characters split up into different areas of their world-setting and have their own personal dramas that intertwine or drift apart. In doing so, they allow the viewer access to the world-setting that they inhabit and into each different realm they are coming from or going to. Their personal histories are intricately tied to the world-setting their narratives move in. Through this we learn about their world-setting, its character and aesthetic. As such, I would suggest that the characters and world-setting are distinct but connected elements of Anime, and that we are viewing the story of a world-setting as much as we are the characters. Just like the individual episodes that form a larger series, Anime's world-setting and characters come together to make the world that is that Anime itself. They are both equal, separate-unified parts of a greater whole.

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[11] There is one other recurring character, a very minor character that appears a few times as a collector of *mushi* artifacts.

[12] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 176.

Ōtsuka describes the deep integration of characters into their world, labelling it as "worldview" and describing it in conjunction to the Anime *Gundam* as "the era in which the main characters live, the place, the relations between countries, their history, their manners of living, the personal histories of the respective characters, the nature of their inter-personal relations, and even, in the case of the robots, the concordance between the functions matching their design and the science of the era." For Ōtsuka, the greater the number of these "settings" the more "real" the drama of each episode becomes. He notes that the "anime program becomes merely the extraction of a series of events that occurred during a specified period around a single individual arbitrarily chosen to be the central character from within this large world. Theoretically speaking, this also means that countless other dramas could exist if someone else were made the central character."[13] He also explains that "the ideal is that each one of these individual settings will as a totality form a greater order, a united whole."[14] This greater whole is what Ōtsuka labels as the "grand narrative." Azuma summarizes Ōtsuka stating that "each work in otaku culture merely functions as an entrance to this grand narrative. What con-sumers truly value and buy are the settings and the worldview." In other words, according to Ōtsuka, it is this world created on screen, and in the results that come from that Anime world that sells the products, the smaller iterations, the fragments of these "grand narratives" that are the only "things" available to purchase, as the larger setting cannot itself be sold, but is desired to be consumed.[15]

In a separate work describing the process of writing Anime-Manga related Light Novels, Ōtsuka advises to write characters that reflect the world that they are part of. They should reflect the worldview of their world and not the "real" world that we live in. Paradoxically, according to Ōtsuka, this adds a sense of realism to the characters.[16] These com-ments by the cultural critic and Manga and Light Novel author are reveal-ing, and can equally apply to Anime productions as well, especially in the context that so many Anime are adapted from these sources. There is a dual importance on both the characters and the world-setting and there is an intrinsic relationship between them: they are mutually dependent on

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[13] Ōtsuka, "World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative," 108.
[14] Ibid., 107.
[15] See Azuma and Abel, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*: 31.
[16] I am referring to Steinberg's translation here, see Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: 199. Or see Eiji Ōtsuka, *Kyarakutā shōsetsu no tsukurikata* (*How to Make Character Novels*) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2003). 203.

each other. As Steinberg notes, "the importance of developing this charac-ter-world relation has become the common sense among contemporary culture industry creators."[17]

On the level of the Anime form, the characters themselves are further extensions of the Anime aesthetic world, yet clearly exist as distinct enti-ties on equal grounds of importance. Everything is intricately intertwined and connected, yet separate and movable. Lamarre's theory on Anime is very useful here. He views Anime from the exploded view of the composi-tion of the various cel layers that make up the animated image itself, and the methods of (limited) animation compositing that create the final product. As we apply the concept of part and whole utilized in theater to Anime, where each aspect is separate but simultaneously part of the same whole, Lamarre's method of looking at Anime through the forces of com-positing is revealing, especially in this context of the connection between world-setting and character. Looking at the actual act of the animation, the cel layers are comprised of multiple elements: the backgrounds of the worlds and the characters are actually separate layers. Carefully manipu-lated, each layer is pulled in specific directions at varying speeds to create the illusion of movement. Lamarre gives the example of the characters Marie and the lion cub walking by the shore in the Anime *Nadia: Secret of Blue Water* (*Fushigi no Umi no Nadia*, 1990–1991): "Pulling the foreground layer of grass backward creates the sense that the characters are moving forward. The background layer of clouds moves backward too, but only slightly. Yet the little girl's layer does not move, and for the most part, her body also does not move. Every couple of frames, however, her arms and legs are put in different positions, and the result is a sense of her walk-ing."[18] Even in this example we can see how the world-setting layers are given careful treatment in production, and can be regarded as on similar grounds of importance as characters in the final product and in readings of the text.

The characters and their various narratives spread in multiple direc-tions and comprise half of the content of the world. The backgrounds, detailed and intricate as they are, are another set of foci within the Anime. The world-setting/environment is a focal point on equivocal grounds as the characters. They are integral to each other's existence and the combi-nation of distinct world-setting and charming characters is a defining aspect and large part of the appeal (and sales) of Anime. The world-setting

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[17] Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: 200.
[18] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 193–194.

is intertwined with the characters, causing their distress and creating their personality that then interacts with the world-setting. It is this very tension between the world-setting and the characters that move through it, that produces the tension of the Anime. As Steinberg explains, the two aspects of world and character come together and are sold separately and together at once.[19] Character designs (in multiple media) and world-settings, grand narratives[20] and non-narratives,[21] are ultimately both tied together, intertwined within the larger world aesthetic. Miyamoto Hirohito notes in his delineation of six elements that make Manga characters "stand out," "in the background of the individual narratives presented to the reader, there is the evocation of a larger narrative world in which the character dwells."[22] The same connectivity of characters to the background environment is present in Anime. Characters move through the world-setting with a specific visual and aural style and as their narratives move—often in repetitive and conventionalized ways—they produce certain affective outcomes. This becomes part of the aesthetic of that Anime and necessarily relies on the environment the events takes place in. These environments must be accurately aestheticised to match the characters and narrative. They are all intricately connected and dependent on each other, yet are able to be extracted individually for merchandising purposes. The largest, encompassing Anime narrative is that the characters are part of the aesthetic world and the world is a story told through the characters in the world-setting. The consumer can then choose his or her aesthetic realm to maneuver through, just until that particular Anime ends.

In sum, the world-setting is the environment within which the drama of the Anime takes place. Each world-setting contains an atmosphere, tone, visual and aural style, history, technology, and culture (and sometimes language) that are particular to that world-setting. The characters

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[19] Steinberg emphasizes the importance of Anime related media products' (such as toys and stickers) ability to connect to the Anime and character's world. He later states: "Just as a world must be seen through the eyes of the character, this world is also consumed through the consumption of the character." See Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: 199.

[20] See Ōtsuka, "World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative."

[21] Azuma suggests that the character is beginning to take precedence and that the grand narrative is collapsing into the grand non-narative in character merchandising. See Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*.

[22] Hirohito Miyamoto and Trans. Thomas Lamarre, Mechademia 6.1 (2011): 84–91, "How Characters Stand Out," *Mechademia 6: User Enhanced* 6, no. 1 (2011): 86.

are seemingly separate entities that interact with this world-setting. Though they appear distinct, the characters are actually products of this world-setting, and the drama of the Anime is produced through the tension that arises between the characters and the world-setting. This tension creates certain narrative outcomes that ultimately create the overall aesthetic of the Anime—i.e. in this world-setting, populated by these types of characters, we can imagine events of a certain nature: in the galactic, multi-cultural urban expanses of *Cowboy Bebop*, with Bruce Lee-Lupin III-film noir-esque characters, we can experience Kung Fu (or rather Jeet Kune Do), rundown spaceships, and hard-boiled romance and tragedy. This is the world of the Anime, encompassing the world-setting, the characters, and the type of narrative outcomes the tension between the world-setting and characters produces.

The world-setting vs. characters paradigm may also be found in a similar manifestation in the traditional Japanese theater, specifically Tokugawa period Kabuki and Bunraku. Not only utilizing the custom of *sekai*, in some Bunraku and Kabuki plays, the society—often represented by the characters around the protagonists—moves the story because the characters cannot. They are trapped, bound by the rigid Tokugawa regime and their social obligations within it; caught between their passions and their responsibilities in the society. This is characterized by the *giri-ninjō* conflict, or the clash between duty and human emotion that is the essence of many plays, in particular the love suicide genre. As mentioned before, in these plays, due to a variety of circumstances, two lovers are unable to be together in this life and so choose mutual suicide as their exit from suffering. There is also a subgenre of Kabuki pioneered by playwright Kawatake Mokuami, the *ingamono* or fate-play. These were filled with deterministic plots in which all the characters were bound by inescapable bonds of fate, leading them to their tragic end.[23] In the case of the love suicides, when the two lovers reach their deaths, where does the true tragedy lie: in the society in which they are forced to kill themselves to be together or the characters themselves?

Love Suicides at Amijima (*Shinjūten no Amijima*, 1721) is a classic example. Jihei (a poor, married paper merchant) and Koharu (a prostitute of the pleasure quarters) are hopelessly in love, but Jihei cannot afford to pay for her freedom. Jihei overhears that Koharu is willing to take another patron, who we later find out is actually Magoemon, Jihei's brother. In truth,

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[23] Brandon and Leiter, *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Darkness and Desire, 1804–1864*: 28–29.

Magoemon does not want to be her patron, and instead lectures Jihei about his disastrous affair. Hurt by Koharu's potential infidelity, Jihei is convinced to swear off all ties with Koharu. Magoemon's intervention is the catalyst for this. Later, we find out that the reason for Koharu's willingness to accept another patron was done with extreme reserve, but at the request of Jihei's wife, Osan, trying to protect her children and business from her fickle husband's potential suicide. Learning that Koharu has been ransomed and that the person who has paid the fee is Jihei's competitor (the evil, rich merchant Tahei), Osan is afraid that Koharu will commit suicide in protest—her feelings still true to Jihei. To try and make amends, Osan gathers her valuable possessions to pawn, adding this to the last of their savings, trying to procure enough money to save Koharu. At this moment Gozaemon (Osan's father) storms in, furious at the misfortune Jihei has caused his daughter. Taking Osan away with him, Jihei is left only with the option of suicide. Secretly he makes his way to Koharu and they travel off to their deaths. Throughout the story, Jihei and Koharu have to struggle against their lack of options, everyone around them moving the plot until the only pathway left is the road to their suicide. The surrounding, undeveloped characters make up the contents of the societal system that they are contained in.

Both Kabuki and Bunraku, throughout the Tokugawa period were popular theaters, and often exhibit the commoner's problems of their day. There are many instances of commoners standing up to samurai, or the delicately portrayed tragedies of the lower classes. Feudal values are found in abundance in Kabuki and Bunraku, with a wealth of human emotion. The stories of noble samurai seeking revenge, of poor merchants in love with prostitutes, diabolical murderers and lovable thieves, all of this is expressed through the stylized formal conventions of the art form: the presentation of the characters, their movement, and speech are all aestheticized, combining with the lavish sets to create a different world of stylized beauty that exists separate from "everyday" reality. In (post)modern times the intricacies of the Tokugawa world relegate Kabuki and Bunraku further into their own realms. Plays can be seen as existing as pieces of a popular culture outside of its original context, even in Japan. This is not to say that they are invalid, are not relevant, not "living theater," or are stale—rather, now, more than ever, these art forms take place in their own "worlds" onstage. People still connect with the productions on stage deeply, but they exist as a separate, unreal world.

The Kabuki play *Sukeroku*, set in the Soga Brothers *sekai* (world), provides a good example of a specific, aestheticized, Kabuki world. The Soga

Brothers were originally two brothers who lived in the twelfth century that successfully enacted revenge on the man who killed their father. An extremely popular *sekai* in Edo period Kabuki, the play *Sukeroku*, though taking place in the Edo pleasure quarters of the (generally) eighteenth century, stars the twelfth century brothers, displaced by a few hundred years into their new environment. However, there is no need for an explanation, no time travel or spiritual device included in the narrative as it is understood to be part of the Soga Brothers *sekai*. The play centers on the suave and skillful ruffian Sukeroku and his love—the most beautiful courtesan in the *yoshiwara* pleasure quarters—Agemaki, who constantly pushes away the pursuits of the elderly samurai villain Ikkyū.[24] Sukeroku effortlessly fights off Ikkyū's henchmen and protects Agemaki from Ikkyū's lustful grasp. It is a spectacular and comic fight scene, danced in the Kabuki style, with Sukeroku clearly outclassing his opponents in skill and wit. Later in the play we meet Sukeroku's refined but less "masculine"[25] older brother Shinbei, and we learn that they are really both the Soga brothers Gorō and Jūrō in disguise as Sukeroku and Shibei. Gorō (Sukeroku) teaches his older brother Jūrō (Shibei) how to be strong like him. In the Soga Brothers world, Gorō is stronger and played in the *aragoto* bravado style, and Jūrō is more refined, played in the softer *wagoto* style. This section becomes comic as they make a mockery of passing samurai on the street. In this way, the oppressed merchant class that were the predominant patrons of Kabuki, were allowed to see a world where those that oppressed them, largely the samurai upper classes, were ridiculed, but at a safe distance through the screen of the aestheticized and stylized Kabuki world of the Soga Brothers (who were also samurai). Later on in the play, a samurai leaves Agemaki's place, and Sukeroku (Gorō) challenges him, angry that his lover has been unfaithful. This samurai turns out to actually be Gorō and Jūrō's mother, meeting in secret with Agemaki. She scolds her children for being quarrelsome and the two brothers desperately apologize for their rudeness and explain that while they appear to be blindly causing trouble, they are actually carefully looking for their father's sacred sword, Tomokirimaru. This is all according to their plan to seek revenge for their father's death eighteen years ago! Such twists and revelations of true identity are abundant in this play and many others in the various worlds created on the Kabuki stage.

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[24] J.R. Brandon, *Kabuki: five classic plays* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992). See *Sukeroku.*
[25] (As defined at the time).

It is clear though, that the plight of these characters is intricately mixed within the world-setting that they live in: the issues of having a lover who works in the pleasure quarters clearly causes instances of jealously; it is the conventions of the Kabuki world that allows Gorō to be so boisterous but still be lovable, providing his ability to fight off hordes of men with ease; in Kabuki worlds, constant switches of identity are allowed, natural and encouraged; within the framework of the extremely valued filial piety of the Edo period such characters seeking revenge for the father are popular—the plight of the lower class (samurai) fighting against the older, evil upper class is a noble endeavor in the Edo period's popular societal vision. They are moving against and with the world-setting they inhabit, their environment intricately detailed to appear stylized but believable, complete with structures (physical and social) of both the *yoshiwara* pleasure quarters and its society. While in the Edo period such a display mirrored that of their surrounding society, as contemporary audiences (Japanese or otherwise) view these scenes, they are so far historically removed from their original contexts, that they appear as a separate world-setting with intricacies and rules that are inherent in them. The historical distancing may expose this even more so today than in the past. Yet all of the aspects of the play's narrative works towards creating a specific aesthetic of bravado and grandeur that facilitates sensational images and thus helps produce the atmospheric world-setting of Kabuki that the beloved characters—or more likely the actors playing them—can embellish in, unhindered by realistic restraints and produce the beauty of the Kabuki world, both in the play and in the art as a whole. The actors and the characters they portray are vital elements of this world, inseparable from it. In both Bunraku and Kabuki the world-setting, costumes, and events will differ greatly depending on the type of play. A *sewamono* (domestic piece) such as *Love Suicides at Amijima* will depict the houses and settings of the poor commoners in precise "ordinary" detail; *jidaimono* (period pieces) such as *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees* (*Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura*) feature much more spectacle oriented and grander sets, stage tricks, and costumes.

However, as James Brandon points out, "lavish and beautiful though a stage set will be, it is not allowed to become the dominant focus of interest, to exist independently of the actor…a kabuki stage setting supports the actor and caters to his needs."[26] Unlike Anime, in Edo Theater you do

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[26] James R. Brandon, "Form in Kabuki Acting," in *Studies in Kabuki: Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context*, ed. James R. Brandon, William P. Malm, and Donald H. Shively (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978), 117.

not get the same sense of exploration of a world. In Kabuki there are quick set changes, a distinct style of atmosphere that is a Kabuki production, and the use of *sekai*, but we are not necessarily exploring that world-setting. Part of the reason for this is the major differences in the medium: animation can easily create highly detailed landscapes as they are all drawn,[27] but the task is much more expansive, time consuming, and demands more labor when the structures need to be physically built on stage. Still, Kabuki and Bunraku manage to depict very detailed and extravagant sets. The setting for the *Dance of the Wisteria Maiden* (*Fuji Musume*) comes readily to mind: an unreal and spectacular set of large wisteria hanging from a giant image of a tree, all on stage. While the focus is on the spectacle of the setting, the kimono of the *onnagata* dancing, the lyrics of the song, and the graceful movements of the dance, the cultural backdrop is not really a focal point of this production, or most others. The actors and the characters they portray are central, and the settings provide the backdrop for this. As we have seen, the *sekai* have their own rules and expectations, but the sensation of exploring that world is not the same as in Anime.

In Noh, the relation to the world-setting is produced differently. The barren stage is fluid, becoming the grounds on which a deep and elegiac world unfolds through rich poetry and dance. The imagery of the back-drop evoked in the poetry creates the atmospheric world-setting for the play to take place; the almost eerie sounds of the *hayashi* set a tone that matches the poetic setting; the *shite* on the simple stage free to travel between any imagined settings, and there is almost a sense of exploration, due to the emphasis on the lyrics to produce the backgrounds in the minds of the spectators. But, due to the live nature of the performance of Noh, there *is* a sense of transportation involved. Where images along cannot suffice, I will leave but a small example, an excerpt from a play by one of the finest Noh playwrights, Zeami. His play *Tōru* (Figure 2.9), tells the tale of the deceased noble aesthete Minamoto no Tōru, whose ghost wanders the lonely moors by the ruins of his old estate. Below is a selection from the immaculate translation by Noh expert Thomas Hare. Tōru meets the *waki* priest, explaining the sadness of his lonely existence, one that was once so lively and vivid. As the two interact, they describe a solemn and ethereal landscape, mist rising through the pines underneath the autumn moon. Sitting in the midst of this scene, Tōru reflects on the glory of his

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[27] This is not to say that it is simple, but cheaper and faster to fabricate a world on paper than physically on stage.

Figure 2.9. The ghost of Minister Tōru describing the landscape to the waki priest. © Toshiro Morita, the-noh.com (http://www.the-noh.com/).

replica Salt Kiln in days long past, and the wretched state of it now. As he looks out into the distance, the chorus and Tōru sing:

> Well now, as for this coast of Shiogama,
> a man called Minister Tōru,
> scion of Emperor Saga, fifty-second in the line of earthly kings,
> heard of the famous view of Shiogama in Chika of the Far North.
> He transferred the features of Shiogama here,
> and from Naniwa's distant Mitsu Coast,
> each day he had brine carried here
> and had salt water boiled.
> He took lifelong pleasure in the scene.
> Afterward there was no one to carry on with this diversion
> and the banks were barren at ebb tide.
> What water remained where lakes had been
> was only what was left by passing rain, fallen in the ancient cove.
> Dead leaves scattered down, to float across the reflection of the pines,
> where even the moon no longer shines, and only
> the rush of the autumn wind remains.
> It was just as in the poem
> that Tsurayuki himself intoned:
> "With you no longer here,
> The trails of smoke at Shiogama fade.
> I gaze across the lonely banks and sigh."
>
> And when I gaze out there, it's true,
> Shiogama's kettles are filled with nothing but moonlight,
> all is gone to desolation and stark ruin,
> but here I stay, soaked with a tide of tears even in these latter days,
> the waves of age crash down upon me still.
> Oh, how I long for the past!
>
> "How I long, how I long for the past," I sigh,
> but my yearns and complaints
> come to no end, and at the water's edge,
> the plover cries and cries,
> the plover cries and cries.[28]

In these lines we find the use of intertext of the source of the play—the historical figure Minamoto no Tōru—is interspersed with the quote from the famous poet Ki no Tsurayuki (872–945). We can see the deep intermingling of the character and the world-setting, both being described and elaborated within the same verse, the barren imagery a reflection of Tōru's

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[28] Hare, *Zeami: Performance Notes*: 92. Also see Hare, *Zeami's Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo*: 251–252.

pathos. It is a song as sad as it is beautiful, a vision of the internal and the description of the external, a show of both the atmospheric world-setting and aestheticized character. Though the stage is bare, the world-setting is illustrated in the lyrics; but the placement of the characters on the stage, looking out into the distance provides us with striking pictorial images of the simple costumes against the giant pine on the stage. The austere spatial positioning on stage and the vivid imagery of the lyrics become one and the same, two separate expressions of the identical whole.

In both the forms of traditional theater and Anime, different segments are simultaneously taken as a whole and as parts individually. The elements of characters and world-setting, internal and external, references from various sources, all compound on top of each other in the mosaic structure that both separates and connects the fragments, pacing them in a particular manner. Such elements diverge into a variety of directions, but interconnect, becoming the final work that we view, simultaneously being parts that can be read individually and as a larger work as a whole. While the references stand out within the works created, they are both separate and integrated deeply into the fabric of the production. The same follows for the relationship to the external and internal aspects of the arts. While they are distinct, they are inseparable elements that work together, interacting with each other as do the aesthetic worlds produced by the play between the characters and world-setting. The interaction of parts, of sections that build upon each other in a mosaic, layered system, is integral to the creation of the final aesthetic that these art forms achieve. This is the concept that governs the successful execution of a uniquely balanced creation of unreal and real elements that weave together, all culminating in the traditional and contemporary art forms.

PART THREE

MIXTURE OF REALISM AND UNREALITY

LIKE A DREAM:[1] REALISM AND UNREALITY IN ANIME AND JAPANESE THEATER

> Above all, the *nō* creates an illusion, so that the audience becomes absorbed in the characters they see on stage.
>
> Zeami[2]

When watching the productions mentioned here, first time viewers may initially be struck by the performances' embrace of unreality (i.e. not aiming at verisimilitude or a strict imitation of reality in their presentation). Heavily stylized, in a swirling mixture of unreal and real components, fanciful worlds are created before us. Within Asia's artistic traditions, there is a long history of unreality in "art,"[3] and Japan is no exception. Through the mixture of accurate imitation and imaginative lyricism, this practice has resulted in the distinct aesthetic arts of Noh, Bunraku, Kabuki, and, now, Anime. This section will delineate the acute balance between realism and unreality over the following chapters. A number of elements contribute to this depiction: the stylized manner in which the actors move, the backgrounds, subject matter, and even the use of non-human performers on stage and on screen. While there are a large number of elements that are very apparent in their unreality, there is a startling balance of realism that lies beneath the surface to produce a multitude of emotional responses. The unreality distances the viewer and allows for high degrees of stylization to be accepted, but the detail in the depiction, among other realist elements, draws the viewer in. In this way Anime and the theater forms simultaneously distance and entrance the audience, pulling them in as they push them away.

As Donald Keene has stated, a carefully manipulated proportion is created in the mixture of realism and unreality. He notes the change in

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[1] The name of the second episode of the Anime *Planetes* (*Puranetesu*, 2003–2004).

[2] This quote is from *Sarugaki dangi*, which does not appear in the Hare translation of Zeami's treatises. Technically the treatise is not written by Zeami but by Hata no Motoyoshi. Rimer translates the treatise as "An Account of Zeami's Reflections on Art (*Sarugaku dangi*): Notes taken down by Hata no Motoyoshi." Zeami, Rimer, and Yamazaki, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*: 230.

[3] I put "art" in quotes as it was often not "art" in the modern sense, often tied to the ritual, spiritual, political, etc.

Bunraku presentation with the performance of *Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki Shinjū*) in the early eighteenth century. This was the first of the love suicide dramas, an "unprecedentedly realistic play," and began the current practice of having the puppeteers in full view of the audience. Up until this time, the puppeteers were covered by a screen, hiding them. With the beginning of this play, a new screen was introduced which allowed the viewers to see them manipulating the puppet. The screen was soon removed altogether, allowing the audience to clearly see the puppeteers, a practice which has continued on to the modern day. With no explanation as to the reasoning behind this change, Keene goes on to suggest that "the increased realism in the plots of the plays required a compensating unreality in the presentation."[4] Keene goes on to quote Chikamatsu Monzaemon's opinion on the use of unreality:

> If, when one paints an image or carves it of wood there are, in the name of artistic license, some stylized parts in a work otherwise resembling the real form, this is, after all, what people love in art. The same is true of literary composition. While bearing resemblance to the original, it should have stylization. This makes it art and delights men's minds.[5]

This balance between realism and (conventionalized) stylization is a defining characteristic of the three Japanese theatrical forms as well as Anime. This is most apparent in the medium of Anime itself. The entirety of the animated form is completely fabricated and manipulated. Like Bunraku, the characters are not played by humans, and are, in their own way, mere puppets; drawn and adjusted to fit and imitate the movements and gestures of a person, yet, are very apparently unreal. Even in Kabuki and Noh we find the human actors on stage looking far from "realistic" in heavy make-up (Kabuki) and masks (Noh). Keene comments on the use of masks in Noh, pointing out that while they are created in a highly refined and stylized manner, not all Noh plays necessitate the use of a mask. If the character on stage can be accurately represented by the actor's face—for example, a young man playing a young warrior character, such as in the play *Atsumori*—then a mask in not required to be used.[6] But because all the performers are human males, there are usually a number of masks used in the presentation of the play to aid in the actor's transformation

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[4] Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 60.

[5] Ibid., 63–64.

[6] Most plays do use a mask, but *Atsumori* is a frequently performed, famous, and notable exception.

into a character, for instance, for a female character or a demon. Because of this Keene explains that the utilization of masks may have been used to promote realism, not only for a purely stylized beauty.[7] These masks are one of the most emblematic manifestations of the almost paradoxical mix of unreality and realism which results in the highly stylized aesthetic form.

In Anime, this mixture is apparent in the way the world-settings and characters are depicted. For example, the general "Anime-Manga style" ultimately defines the "Anime look," effectively calling attention to these non-living, unreal creations; simultaneously highlighting their conventionalized, stylized nature, yet allowing them to perform actions with the believability that they are "human" characters. The characters appear hyperbolized with elongated figures, large eyes, wild hair, and outrageous costumes, yet they are distinctly human in construction,[8] detailed to the utmost degree, complete with the reflection of light in their eyes, individual strands of hair, and intricate details on their clothing. The images are representative enough to resemble actual human bodies, but they are clearly unreal in their depiction. In particular, the facial features are a hallmark of the Anime-Manga style, conveying the character's emotions. The slight, often stylized and codified, movements of their simple features allow for a wide range of expression.

In both Japanese traditional theater and Anime the mixture of real and unreal elements, produces a very particular aesthetic. Instead of striving for realism or pure abstraction, they often strike a very particular balance between the two. A comparison between two seemingly disparate creations from the theater and Anime reveals an underlying similarity. For example, the Eva-02 from Anime film *Evangelion: You Can* (*Not*) *Advance* (or any of the other *Evangelion* works), and the *Yakan* demon mask from Noh provide arbitrary, but illuminating examples. The bio-mechanical robot life form Eva is clearly far too fantastical to be real, however it is designed and constructed to look convincing, with tiny details, such as glowing eyes and ergonomic grooves specific to this model. Yet no matter how real it is drawn, it cannot escape the fact that it is fabricated animation. Similarly, the *Yakan* mask is a stylized depiction of a demon, meant to evoke a specific emotion and create the image of a demon, yet reserve a

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[7] Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 55.
[8] Though, the characteristic of them being human is not always the case, with animal characters, humanoid alien or robotic characters common in Anime. For ease of understanding, I have left this as "human" as they are the majority of characters.
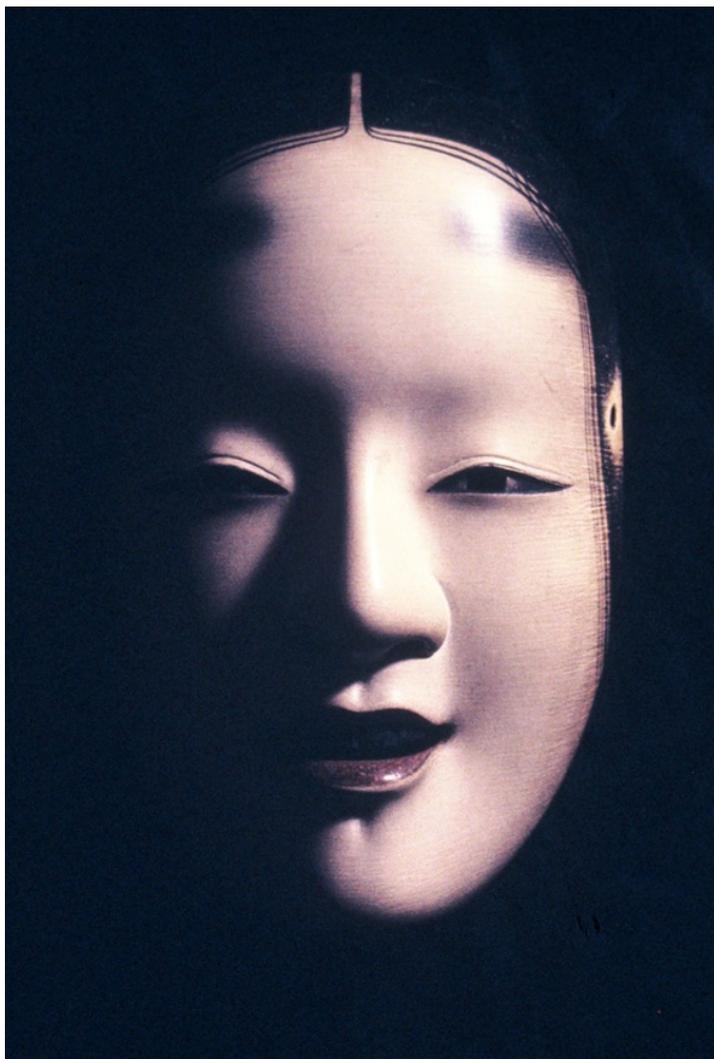
Figure 3.1. The *Fushikizō* mask from the Noh theater. This highly treasured mask of the Hōshō School of Noh exemplifies the austere and mysterious beauty of the Noh theater, embodied in the form of the mask. Carefully constructed, it shows the face of a beautiful young woman from ages long past. Though static, with the slightest tilt of their heady or body, a skilled actor can change the expression of the young woman character's face. An astonishing site to see, the male actor is able to do this as a woman character due in part to the use of the mask. While the mask itself is stationary, preventing a true realism and promoting an essence of unreality to the art form, the mask also adds an aspect of believability (and thus realism) to a male actor playing a woman's role. © Toshiro Morita, the-noh.com (http://www.the-noh.com/).

Figure 3.2. The Anime-Manga style depiction of characters finds a stylized, conventionalized depiction of the human figure. The images are representative enough to resemble actual human bodies, but they are clearly unreal in their depiction. In particular, the facial features are a hallmark of the Anime-Manga style, their slight movements conveying the character's emotions. Shown here is Yukishiro Tomoe from *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust & Betrayal* (*Tsuiokuhen*) © N. Watsuki / Shueisha, Fuji-TV, Aniplex Inc. Image used with permission from rights holders.

quiet dignity characteristic of the Noh Theater's conventionalized aesthetics. The very use of the mask itself points to the unreality of the demonic image, yet simultaneously allows the actor to portray a demon.

While I have drawn many parallels between the forms up until now, one of the most glaring differences between Anime, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, is that the theater forms are performed live, and Anime is reproducible, watchable on screens anywhere at any time. Anime lacks the immediacy of a live performance, the intensity and vibrancy created by the direct connection with the performers. The theater is viewed in public whereas Anime is most often viewed in private spaces (at home, in small clubs), and only occasionally in public (conventions, movie theaters, etc.). As explained previously, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki clearly provide ample circumstance for individualistic appreciation in the performance, as Anime

does with its own allowance for multiple viewing positions. However there is another interesting similarity in their distribution. The theatrical forms are traditional art forms, passed down from one generation to the next by teaching the next generation the nearly identical *kata* (techniques, forms, models) that they have learned by the master performers. As Samuel Leiter explains, what is shown on stage is often a series of moves that has been learned and perfected from a previous source and passed down through the centuries.[9] There are prescribed ways to show fear or anger, or even specific emotions and actions within certain plays, making individual creativity in expression second to following a codified system of expression that is practiced and precisely refined. Quality is often judged on adherence to the form in its performed execution. Other scholars have noted that in the Asian theatrical arts, the actor becomes a puppet, following traditional forms practiced and learned through the body.[10] In fact, in Bunraku, the actor is quite literally a puppet. The point here is that this practice comes very close to a reproducible form without the use of digital technology. Of course *kata* have been altered due to the transfer over generation to generation, changes made by a master by creative choice, or by lack or excess of ability. Movements slow down or speed up. But the concept is that the performance is crystallized and passed onwards. This adds one of many aspects of unreality to the performance in its clear stylization and reproducibility/sustainability over generations—the performance has been done before, but we are willing to view it again, despite its "unoriginality." While no two live performances are the same, the adherence to *kata* strives to ensure a "standard" form through repetition and emphasizes the performative aspects of executing that "standard" that took a lifetime to perfect.

A conspicuous element in these art forms is the vast amount of on-stage actions that bring attention to the act as a performance, further accentuating the unreality of the performances. For example, in the Noh play *Matsukaze*, the crucial moment where the character Matsukaze dons the robes of her past lover, stage hands arrive and attach the cloak and hat to the *shite* playing her while he is still seated. The process takes a number of minutes and the illusion of the world created on stage is momentarily broken. Similar moments occur during Kabuki when there are costume

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[9] See Introduction of Samuel L. Leiter, *The Art of Kabuki: famous plays in performance* (University of California Press, 1979).
[10] Georges Banu, Ella L. Wiswell, and June V. Gibson, "Mei Lanfang: A Case against and a Model for the Occidental Stage," *Asian Theatre Journal* 3, no. 2 (1986).

changes. Bunraku's very production itself has puppeteers as a constant in the performance. Often the musicians and chorus in all three art forms are in full view of the audience throughout the entire production. Such aspects of the performance frequently remind the viewer of the unreality of what they are viewing. The measures taken to show how fake the world is create certain thematic and stylistic conventions which add to the form's aesthetic of unreality as a whole. This is not specific to the Japanese theater, and can be found in Beijing Opera (*Jīngjù*), and various types of Southeast Asian shadow puppet theaters.[11]

Similarly, Anime has a habit of changing the style of animation mid series. In *FLCL* (*Furi Kuri*, 2000–2001) they switch between a number of styles, from Manga panel stills, to a wide variety of recognizable imitations of foreign animation, even switching to *South Park* style animation. Other Anime, such as the *Rurouni Kenshin OVA* (1999) series and *Evangelion*, add live action footage, as if to further destroy the illusion that the animation has created. Even with such visual aspects in place, there are also many references within the scripts of both theater and Anime which are filled with references to illusions, dreams, fate, and the worlds beyond. Frequently in Anime, characters directly explain that this world is illusory. For example in *Cowboy Bebop* the last words of the character Julia are: "It's all a dream."[12] There are other examples such as the large amount of Anime where one character can see something others cannot (*Natsume Yūjinchō,* 2008–2008; *Bleach*, 2004–2012), or where one character has access to a world that no one else does (*Tale of Twelve Kingdoms, Gantz*); it all points to how "fake" that world is in its fantasy. But at the same time is seems so very believable, so intricately constructed that even though only a select few have access to it, it appears legitimate. Often, a main character's or the viewer's perception is brought into question. This is usually achieved through the use of a confusing narrative structure, switching back and forth between realities, worlds, and times with very little information provided, confusing the viewers and the characters. We can find examples of this in *Shigurui* (*Shigurui*, 2007–2007), *Mushishi, Baccano!* (*Bakkāno!*, 2007–2007), *Kurozuka* (*Kurozuka*, 2008–2008), *Evangelion*, and far too many more to list here. The audience may end up questioning the

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[11] James R. Brandon et al., *Studies in kabuki: its acting, music, and historical context* (Honolulu: Institute of Culture and Communication, East-West Center: Dist. by University of Hawaii Press, 1990). 110.

[12] Japanese: "*kore ha yume, ne?*" Literally: "This is a dream, right?" The translation is from the English dubbed version of the series.

Anime world (and perhaps, by extension, our own world through the animated one) to some degree, whether it be politically or philosophically to express a deeper understanding of the "real world" we all live in. They all aspire to simultaneously construct and deconstruct a world. Within the theater traditions, most specifically Noh, there were immense influences from the Buddhist hegemonic world-view that inspired references to the illusion of our own reality. The art forms make an effort to explore how fragile the world and its reality is, simultaneously reminding us that what we are viewing is ultimately unreal, despite how detailed the fantasy may be.[13]

Manga and Anime critic Ōtsuka Eiji explicitly notes the tension between realism and "anti-realism" in Anime and Manga, citing the source to be in pre-war and post-war Manga, specifically those of Tezuka Osamu.[14] Ōtsuka details how it was American anti-realism in the Disney-esque manner of cartoon-like character design that was combined (and contrasted) with the enforced "scientific realism" that developed from wartime Japan's agendas, specifically in the depiction of weaponry and machinery. This style of detailed machinery but anti-realistic characters was adopted by animators and Manga artists. Speaking of Oshiro Noboru's animated work *Funny Factory*, Ōtsuka denotes that "on the one hand, in those scenes that might well be thought of as 'dream,' the factory machinery is depicted with great 'realism.' On the other hand, insofar as it happens 'in a dream,' the characters are depicted with Disney-esque anti-realism (precisely because to enter a dream is to enter an anime world). In sum, scientific realism and the Disney-esque coexist in the same manga."[15] Ōtsuka explains that this tension between the two (anti-realistic characters and detailed machinery) has risen up again in modern Anime and Manga. Hu has also noted how Anime and Manga continue a tradition of realism in stylized content, attributing it to the *emakimono* scroll paintings. She cites Imamura Taihei who finds a connection between Anime and the *emakimono* as well. In fact, Hu, emphasizes the "realist" aspects

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[13] Anime may be affected by such a concept as Buddhism has had such a strong effect on the arts of Japan for so long.

[14] Lamarre expresses that Ōtsuka "detects a tension and potentially a contradiction between ways of rendering mecha (scientific realism) and ways of drawing characters. He stresses the profound impact of Disney's animations on characters in Japanese manga and animation, noting an antirealism or nonrealism in the fluid lines and shape-shifting characters." Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 212.

[15] Eiji Ōtsuka, "Disarming Atom: Tezuka Osamu's Manga at War and Peace. Trans. Thomas Lamarre," *Mechademia 3: Limits of the Human* (2008): 120.

found in Anime throughout her book.[16] However, like Ōtsuka, I would like
to focus on the unreal qualities in conjunction with these realistic aspects.
Or better put, I suggest that it is actually a balance of the unreal and the
real that gives Anime and the traditional theater its specific attraction and
aesthetic.

Drawing on Okada Toshio and Ōtsuka, Azuma explains the differences
between the realism found in the modern Japanese novel, and those that
are found in *otaku* novels, explaining that the characters and stories
depicted are "never realistic, but they are possible in the world of comics
and anime already published, and therefore the reader accepts them
as real. Ōtsuka called such an attitude anime/manga-like Realism."[17]
Because such events, stories, character types, and abilities are common
in the world of Anime and Manga, they are perceived as seemingly real.
Of course this is true of the theater world as well, the most recogniz-
able example found in the bombastic styling, strength and demeanor of
the larger than life heroes of the Kabuki Theater, played in the *aragoto*
style of acting. Only on the Kabuki stage would this be viable. The unreal-
ity of the actual circumstances is depicted in the conventionalized
styles of Kabuki, possessing their own type of Kabuki logic, and thus
believability.

The object of this section is to dissect the intricately connected
elements of these art forms in order to analyze their specific balance of
unreality and realism. Due to the complexity of these parts and the precise
balance between reality and unrealism that they all employ, it is difficult
to dissect. To do so, I will be adapting a method of partitioning these ele-
ments similar to that which Richard Emmert proposed with regard to
Noh's form evolving in the modern world. Emmert suggests looking at Noh
through the separation of its "internal" and "external" elements, dividing
them across certain lines:

> In *nō* as in other Asian traditional forms, there are also elements that are of
> a different quality for the physicality of the performers: the costumes, make-
> up and masks, performance space, sets, lighting, the use of the performances
> space, as well as the literary content being present and its literary-musical
> structure. One might designate the physical elements "internal" since they
> are dependent on the physical training of the performer and by themselves
> cannot constitute performance, and the other elements "external" since

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16   Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building*. See chapter 3.
17   Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*: 56.

they cannot become part of a performance without the existence of a performer.[18]

Using a similar separation, the unreal and real elements of the three theatrical forms and Anime can be split into categories of inner and outer. The "outer" will, like Emmert's distinction, regard elements such as masks, sets, world-settings, costumes, etc.; the parts that deal with the presentation of the art forms. The "inner" aspects, in this case, will consist of elements such as characters, plot lines, character types, acting styles, and common stage practices—aspects that involve or are heavily related to the human part of the art forms. Narrative content is difficult to place in one category over the other as the ambiguousness of the focus on either world-setting or characters makes this difficult. However, regardless of whether the central point is on the characters or their world-setting, it does involve an inseparable connection to the human element, and thus will be placed in the "inner" partition. The unreal and real elements of the art forms will be divided along these parameters into inner and outer parts: unreal outer, real outer, unreal inner, and real inner. These make up another set of parts that interact with each other, dynamically changing throughout the performances to achieve a very particular balance that gives rise to a myriad of artistic expressions.

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[18] Richard Emmert. "Expanding Nō's Horizions: Consideration for a New No Perspective." *Nō and Kyōgen in the Contemporary World.* Ed. James R. Brandon. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. 24.

OUTER ELEMENTS

In this chapter we will be looking into the above mentioned "outer ele-
ments" of the art forms and detail how and/or why they produce the par-
ticular mix of unreal and real. The unreal outer elements are perhaps the
most readily apparent: the austere masks of Noh;[1] the *kumadori* make-
up of Kabuki; the puppets and chanter in Bunraku;[2] and the animated
form that Anime takes. Even glancing at their respective productions,
the presentations are immediately understood as "unreal." The flamboy-
ant costumes of the Kabuki characters feature striking colors and intricate
designs, almost begging to be reproduced in pictorial form, as in the wood-
block prints that depicted the actors. In their *kumadori* make-up and wild
costumes, the Kabuki actors populate visually sensational worlds that,
specifically today, appear removed from everyday reality.

  The Bunraku stage creates a similar sense of distancing. A view of the
stage will show a *tayū* (chanter) and accompanying *shamisen* player seated
on a platform that stands to the front right of the audience. The fully visi-
ble *tayū* and puppeteers, while clearly an integral part of the production,
quickly fade into the background and we are left with the puppets and
their drama as the focus on stage. From time to time the audience will drift
back between the puppeteers and the *tayū*, but as a whole, we are capti-
vated by the puppets and their world onstage. Seen from afar, the Bunraku
stage almost seems like an animated performance. Upon arriving late to a
Bunraku play, I was ushered to the back, and told to wait until the inter-
mission to move to the front where I had reserved seats. To my surprise,
I found the seats in the back to be much more enjoyable, particularly for
the purposes of this research. The Bunraku stage seemed like a production
of animation; an orchestration of non-human performers playing to a
rhythm in a stylized world-setting, with its own rules and histories to fol-
low, moving within it in a largely lateral fashion.[3] It was so far removed
from reality—the painted stage and sets, the musically narrated and

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[1] As detailed earlier, the masks carry both realistic and unrealistic properties, but I am
focusing on their stylization as unreal in this instance.

[2] It should be noted that in many Kabuki plays a chanter-musician combination also
appears, in a style like that of Bunraku. These are called *chobo*.

[3] Lamarre often notes that the movement in Anime is lateral and it is interesting that
this is a major part of the movements in Bunraku as well.

performed script, the non-human actors, these all coalesce in an other-worldly combination. In the performance, Bunraku creates its own unreal world on stage, and we are entranced and entertained by it.

In Noh, the stage is also filled with a large number of readily apparent unreal elements: the visible *jiutai* (chorus) and *hayashi* (drums and flute players), the empty stage and static pine in the background, actors in lavish, exquisitely detailed costumes appear onstage, wearing highly styl-ized masks—all of these elegantly unreal, aestheticized elements unite onstage to produce the art of Noh. Despite the lack of sets and sparse use of props, time and space are constantly in flux in Noh. This is expressed in the poetry sung and the dances that are performed on stage. Through sung-speech and the accompaniment of dance-acting, the story moves forward, the characters speeding through long journeys, evoking mystical landscapes, flashing back to distant memories; from the bloody roar of warfare to a quiet river bank, they describe and evoke the smallest, most elegant details in the world that they create on stage. In this sense the fluidity of the empty space provides for greater animation than would be possible with the use of actual sets. Time can move forward or backward instantly; places can age into antiquity, or be as new as the day they were first constructed; fog can drift in and out without restraint and we can gracefully travel into the deep and hazy realm of dreams. These events are commonplace in Noh and are easily achieved through its brilliant, fluid use of the stage, allowing the audience the freedom to envision the char-acters in any setting described in their minds. This allows the refined aes-thetics of the elaborate costumes and mask to flourish against the simple and static pine board at the back of the stage, resulting in the austere visual aesthetic of Noh.

The upfront unreality and its aesthetically pleasing, yet distancing result are shared by Anime. Being an art form based in the medium of animation, Anime is immediately understood as being unreal, as it is liter-ally a fabricated world created on screen. In fact, the movement itself is constructed through the fast repetition of images before our eyes, only interpreted as movement by us. Thus, everything that is seen within Anime is itself unreal, and it often fully embraces this aspect, creating planets, landscapes, buildings, creatures, *mecha*, costumes, and even character designs that would be (almost) physically impossible to be recreated in real life.[4] Yet these unreal creations are largely crafted in as realistic a way

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[4] Cosplayers (lit. "Costume play" in Japanese. Individuals will craft their own costumes to dress up as characters from various Anime, Manga, video games, Light Novels, Comics)

as possible within Anime's conventionalized aesthetic, allowing the visions to be related to and recognized as some degree realistic and not purely abstracted forms, which are perfectly within the bounds of animation's potential to create.[5] Through the fabrication of these "fake" landscapes, the Anime moves scene to scene, moment to moment, shot to shot, everything conjured up, each segment moving fluidly between one another. Impossible angles can capture impossible shots on impossible worlds. The "reality" of the Anime can easily be manipulated to any ends, and flows from one time and place to another without any actual physical changes in materials occurring, only that perceived by the viewer as the animated reality being interchanged, understood as proceeding within the unreal reality on screen.

Japanese traditional theater took this "animated" fluidity of time and space to extreme heights centuries ago, warping the stage into far away worlds as Anime does now on the screens it is viewed on. In this sense, Noh shares much with Anime, despite its apparent stillness. Entire worlds pass before (and inside) the audience, instantly morphing and changing; vast landscapes brought before us, explored, and then let go. It is perfectly fluid, and constantly in flux, the motion created within our minds and hearts. All of this is produced aurally, textually, and visually on stage but the creation is assisted by the audience. Shelly Fenno Quinn explains that, in his quest to improve and develop Noh, Zeami concentrated on the act of poesis, imparting a degree of space that is necessary for audience involvement in the play. She notes that, "the surest way to create such space was to abandon a representational style based on verisimilitude and to instead construct a multisensory flow of images for each spectator to synthesize on the basis of his own receptivity and imaginative engagement."[6] Through the use of engrossing and compound narrative scripts, "his texts exploit the power of the word to create imaginary worlds beyond the constraints of the realistic representation of scenes" with the audience participating in this creation.[7] Using more abstract forms of dance-acting

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and toy makers aside. These producers often create extremely detailed "real life" versions of many of the objects listed. A good example would be the life-sized Gundam statue that was exhibited in Tokyo in 2009. While it looked real, it could not move in the way it does in the Anime. The major point is that they are fictitious in nature and not constrained by the rules and laws of our reality.

[5] For example, completely abstract forms of story-telling, with totally non-referential images. See Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation*. (London: Routledge, 1998). 29.

[6] Shelley Fenno Quinn, *Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor's Attunement in Practice*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005). 6.

[7] Ibid., 12.

expression, as well as poetic lyricism in the scripts, a more personal expe-
rience is created as the elements of the chanting (and the meaning of the
words), dancing, and costume are interpreted and felt differently by each
person from every seated angle. These elements eventually combine and
produce certain effects, among them *yūgen*, a highly sought after aesthetic
concept often described as mysterious beauty, or elegance and depth. In
the viewing of the production, each individual will experience the perfor-
mance in their own personalized way. While images are suggested and cre-
ated on stage, the actual realization of them is by the spectator, in their
minds. A context is given for the dances and songs, the lyrics and move-
ments explaining to us the scenario and providing us with direct clues as
to the emotions being portrayed. However, their mode of expression is
abstracted. Tension is built up, compounded, and finally released; how-
ever, the actual connection of these elements is made by the spectator,
and so the events on stage are simultaneously occurring in the imagina-
tions of each person watching. In this way there is an exchange between
the audience and the actors onstage, the distance given through the unre-
ality is filled by the audience's imagination. When many people express
that "the book was better than the movie," it is due to the freedom that the
reading experience gives, to let each person individually decide the exact
hue and shape of the sunsets that are written. In Noh, this freedom is pro-
vided on multiple levels in the visuals and the texts, allowing the audience
the space to create the beautiful landscapes and comprehend the
abstracted actions. This can result in periods of very still movement, when
the audience can interpret the slight expressions made through the shad-
ows on the mask and the impressions that a master actor would project for
the character on stage.

   The pauses and long periods of stillness in Anime are understood in a
similar way to the performances of Noh. Hu states that Anime's limited
movements are comparable to those of a Noh actor, and that the "external
spectacle may be resting in an inert pose and mode, but what matters
most is the innate psychological state of the character that is being
portrayed. Although anime may harness modern technology to perform,
how the audience makes sense of the performance is another important
consideration."[8] Though she does not extend this observation much fur-
ther, her statement on the reception of Anime is apt. Much of Anime's

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[8] I would also like to stress though, that the "external spectacle" is just as important in
both Noh and in Anime to that of the internal. Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-
Building*: 100.

animation is populated by stillness, with scenes of only panning shots or enthusiastic poses where the camera scans the body. The viewers tie the images and sound together to allow for a build up of tension that is released, like in Noh, in the *kyū* segments. Often, the joy of the consumption process comes from the space given by the *lack* of action and movement to allow the viewer to fantasize and theorize on the potential events that are supported by the pieces of character and action received. While Anime can be viewed like Noh, Noh can also be viewed like Anime. It is in this way that the next generation of audience members—those who grew up enjoying the world of Anime—might view Noh, Kabuki, and/or Bunraku, as if they were live-action Anime.

Regarding the extreme prevalence of limited movements in the images in Anime, Lamarre notes, though he does not necessarily adopt such a view, that "limited animation might be closer to graphic design or manga than to animation (defined as full animation)" as it does not "strive to produce movement in the manner of full animation," and is often very *un*animated.[9] As noted prior, the Noh Theater is also characterized by its use of minimalist movements and periods of stillness.[10] I would go so far to say that Noh, with its own prevalence for stillness, could be viewed as close to that of Anime and its limited animation. In Anime, the image of a background panning across the screen is a marked characteristic of Anime style limited animation, establishing a scenario, or, if characters are involved, providing the illusion of motion. Lamarre notes that this is "closer to an art of describing, unfolding, or scanning the world."[11] In Noh, with an austere set, the stage acts as a place of fluid movement of background images, as expressed through the poetry of the text. In this way, a world is described to us, explained and unfolded before our eyes. While the *shite* is static in many parts of Noh, the world flows behind and around the character on stage through the images and atmosphere of the poetry in the lyrics. In this way, with only sparse props (if any) and no background scenery (save for the ever present pine tree), the stage is fluid, ever changing due to the spoken verse. The (un)moving actors on stage, with the world changing behind them, produce a mental effect that feels akin to the sliding planes in Anime. Though the static images give off the sense of movement in limited animation, there is very little movement actually

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9 Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 185.

10 Hu has also observed such a similarity in the non-action that is prevalent in Anime and Noh, viewing the use of stillness in Anime as an element from Noh. Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building*: 34.

11 Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 191.

occurring. In Noh, the *shite*'s image is all that is visually shown on stage, the stillness of the actors specifically organized against the unmoving pine in the background, while scenes and setting simultaneously manifest in the audience's mind.

The use of such stillness in Anime is taken to its height in *Evangelion*. One such crucial scene is in episode 24. Shinji learns that his affectionate friend Kaworu is actually an enemy Angel, just as Kaworu successfully reaches Central Dogma—Kaworu moments away from combining with the other Angel there, an act that would bring about the end of humanity. Battling viciously to get through, Shinji finally arrives in his Eva, facing the angel Kaworu in his adolescent human form. Realizing that the captured Angel is actually Lilith and not Adam, Kaworu realizes he should not destroy humanity and gives Shinji a request to end his life. If Shinji does not kill Kaworu, Shinji and everyone else will be erased. Deeply confused, Shinji stands there, perfectly still in his Eva, frozen in what we presume is silent, mental debate, with the gargantuan hands of the Eva wrapped around the fragile body of his friend. This image stays still for an excruciating amount of time, extra-diegetic operatic music playing in the background. Motionless, poised in static tension as the stress builds, the viewers are only able to guess at the conflicting emotions Shinji must feel. Just a few episodes prior, Shinji was traumatized when his father forced his Eva by remote-control to brutally beat another Eva that was possessed by an Angel, while Shinji witnessed this, helpless in his cockpit. Inside the other Eva was Shinji's close friend Tōji, brought to the brink of death by the assault. This parallel experience with Kaworu must surely be eating away at Shinji. In the still scene with Kaworu, none of this is shown nor discussed, but built up from previous episodes, all imagined entirely by the viewer. Suddenly the gruesome sound of the Eva's fist clenching is heard, followed by a splash, as Kaworu's decapitated head falls into the water below. These extended moments of stillness are used to heighten the tension and prolong the emotion, effectively creating an emotive response in the viewers, indirectly showing the struggle and stress Shinji feels to the audience.

Bakemonogatari is another Anime with a notable amount of limited animation that utilizes stillness in an artistic manner to a compelling result. We can find one example in Episode 3, which takes place in a very minimalist playground. The character Araragi meets his school-mate Senjōgahara for the first time since he helped her cure her "illness" of being possessed by a crab-*kami* (god). Static images are shown frequently with little or no animation, arranged to give the sensation of the

characters darting across and around the playground, as well as surveying the area that they are located in. The rhythm of these quick cuts mimics the slightly flirtatious banter between Senjōgahara and Araragi, making the lack of motion less obvious and creating a playful atmosphere reflecting the budding romance between the two characters. The interaction between the characters and the narrative progression is paced by this rhythm from the still images. It is an excellent example of the utilization of stillness in limited animation and the art it has developed into in the form of Anime.

To take an example of stillness/limited movement from the Noh Theater, let us examine the final segments of Zeami's play *Yorimasa*. Centering on the ghost of Minamoto no Yorimasa (1106–1180) who appears to a traveling monk, the play concludes with a reenactment of the climactic defeat of the noble warrior as the enemy (the Taira forces) rushes across the dangerous stream, clashing with his forces in his encampment. Yet the actual scene is not re-enacted in sensational detail as it might in Bunraku or Kabuki. Instead, it is narrated by the *shite* and the chorus, with limited movements on the part of the actor, the image of the poetry flowing across our minds as he performs. At the end of the play, the ghost of Yorimasa recapitulates the events that led up to his death, and in performance the *shite* is seated on a stool in center stage, miming with simple and subtle gestures, the events that led up to his final moments.[12]

Yorimasa explains, in detail, why his army was forced to flee to Mī Temple. The still seated *shite* gazes off into the distance, describing the scenery and places on the way, providing an effect similar to background panning in Anime. Camping at the elegant Byōdō-in temple, Yorimasa's troops rip off the center planks from the bridge, securing themselves across the banks of the river, awaiting their enemy. Still sitting in center stage, Yorimasa, with the help of the *jiutai* (chorus), recounts the scene of the mighty Taira army kept at bay by the river. They describe the three hundred warriors and their horses, one after another plunging into the white waves of the river, forging across it. Sitting, Yorimasa's movements are minimal, his gaze sweeping around the area at his feet, pointing with his fan, explaining that "not one horseman was swept away; roaring they climbed up this bank." The imagery of the poetry depicts the oncoming

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[12] All stage directions for Yorimasa come from Tyler's translation, with some adjustment in conjunction with Itō's stage direction; see *Granny Mountains*, 52–54, Itō, 427–428. All of the lines from the script are taken from Itō, 426–428. Translation mine. Itō, Masayoshi. Yokyokushu. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1983.

troupes, the scene completed in the mind of the audience; while in perfor-
mance, Yorimasa is still in center stage, against the pine of the Noh stage.
At this point, Yorimasa stands, the past literally coming into motion with
the movements of the *shite*; both his haunted past and the approaching
armies have arrived at one point. The chorus goes on, depicting the com-
bat: "the strength of the ally troops as they were could not hold their
ground, without realizing it they retreated some sixty paces," and Yorimasa
on stage retreats unsteadily back towards the drums, "the points of their
blades lined up, fighting as if this would be their end."

Through the lyrics we can imagine the battle raging, crimson and steel
swirling around him as one by one his soldiers fall; but in front of the audi-
ence, the *shite* is standing on stage against the pine. The chorus and *shite*
describe how, in a fleeting moment, Yorimasa sees his "aspirations, his
sons, two brothers, struck down as well." The narrative seamlessly enters
Yorimasa's psyche as he thinks "What can I hope for now?" "Only this one
thought had the old warrior," the chorus sings, Yorimasa lowering his head
and thinking out loud, "this is the end." Dropping his sword, the chorus
narrates as the defeated old warrior proceeds to an imagined grassy area
on stage where he mimes laying down his fan, casting his armor off, and
holds his fan like a sword, as if to suggest his suicide. Lifting his head high
he recites the poem he wrote before his death:

埋れ木の	This forgotten tree whose
花咲くことも無かりしに	Flowers did not bloom
みのなる果ては	With no fruit left
あはれなりけり	The end of its life
	Turns to sadness[13]

In the text, Yorimasa disappears into the darkness underneath that fan
shaped spot, though in reality (i.e. on stage) the *shite* walks slowly off
towards the bridge. Throughout this scene we are only given the descrip-
tion through the words and the brief motions of the character. The scenes
are depicted in front of us produced only by the imagery of the song lyrics,
like shots panning over the war scene. At crucial moments it is accompa-
nied by the actor's movement, performing actions that correspond to
those expressed in the words. In so doing, the image produced becomes
more dynamic. Such a rhythm between stillness and movement is evident
in the limited animation in Anime as well. To take a parallel example, war

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[13] Translation mine. Itō, 428.

scenes are often portrayed with still images of battle panning across the screen and combat sounds in the background. At certain points animated images of more complex movement will be interspersed, the audiences filling in the detail with their imaginations.

A technique of similar interaction between performer and spectator can be seen on the Kabuki stage as well, for instance, through the concept of *uso* ("lie"), in the Kabuki world, everything is done in its own Kabuki reality, apart from that of the world we live in. The *uso* of the Kabuki stage is "a deliberate fantasy that goes beyond the truth."[14] The techniques (*kata*) act like codes that are understood by the audience who have learned to interpret them, who "read and react" to them based on a repertoire of various aural and visual signs, sounds, movements, and images that each have certain meanings—a common element in Noh, Bunraku, and other Asian theater forms, and a subject I will return to later.[15] Something akin to this participation by the spectator takes place on the Bunraku stage, where the audience pieces together what is said and sung by the chanter, and the movements and events of the voiceless puppets. In this way the audience is involved in the completion of the performance.

Through the use of unreality, and the conscious avoidance of explicit reality, these art forms have found a way to necessarily involve audience inclusion to finish the execution of the production, and allow the full beauty and pleasure bloom for the audience with their participation in the completion of the suggestion, cued by the conventions of the art form that is then pieced together and read by the audience. Despite the difference in medium, the concept is the same in Anime as in the theater: the use of a number of conventionalized, stylized sensory elements is used to produce a contextual scenario that is ultimately joined together and experienced in the mind of the spectator. A very common example of this can be viewed in scenes of combat. In Anime, the context of the fight is built up through the narrative: the characters are developed and the conflicts rise to the point where a battle is about to commence. The characters (or in some instances *mecha*) engage, yet, instead of physical movements of attack, many times stills of the characters poised in violent images of attack are moved across the screen.[16] Sometimes speed lines behind the

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[14] Katherine Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). 140–141.

[15] Ibid.

[16] The reason behind this development can be traced back to money saving techniques created to boost efficiency and save production costs. Despite the reasons behind its invention, its frequent implementation is worthy of focus.

characters accentuate the movements. Frequently there will be a quick cut to show a slash or blast, then another shot of the results of the attack. Sometimes such scenes will be interspersed between complicated segments of fluid fighting. Many times, the battle scenes consist of a large number of still moments that are edited together, and built up to appear like fast paced action. Intricately choreographed action sequences are a large appeal of Anime, but they are built up through narrative context and largely still images until they erupt in a quick sensational scene. The tension is created less by the fights themselves than the context around them. All of this is orchestrated through the mosaic, nested system that is governed by *jo-ha-kyū,* allowing for an introduction to set up a situation, a break and development to extract drama, then a final quick release. This builds up over the course of the narrative to create a compounded tension through the system, inviting the audience to be drawn in and fed little pieces of action in the *kyū* sections that are supported by the surrounding *jo* and *ha* sections, which allow for a plausible loosening of tension and extended build up. It is a brilliant method to elongate serialization and excuse the lack of actual animated movement, building primarily on the potential for action that the viewer is eager to see, but rarely actually does. It is all in the mind, heavily suggested by the Anime and multiplied over the course of the narrative to intensify the action that occurs.

Kabuki and Bunraku achieve a similar interaction with the audience in their own battle scenes as well. This is done through the stylized dances and *mie* poses that highlight picturesque moments in the scenes. The combat does not always literally occur as a fight on stage, but often a highly choreographed dance. The scenes show off the bravado of the characters, the intensity of the struggle, the brutality of the event, or the acrobatic skills of the actors, all highlighted in the dance movements. The actual physical fight is thus imagined by the spectator. In this way, there is an unreal, lyric and stylized expression of the real action.

As mentioned earlier, this is all performed in a number of world-settings which are created in great detail on stage through the use of intricately designed sets, or exquisite poetry. However, these worlds are often inhabited with all manner of the supernatural. Ghosts, deities, spirits, gods and goddesses, all appear regularly on stage in Kabuki, Bunraku and Noh. Super-human abilities are even given to those that are normal humans and the interactions, even the personified emotions of the supernatural creatures, are frequent subjects for the plays. Anime is also filled with various types of beast, demon, or highly advanced robots and machinery. Even in Anime that have no traditionally fantasy or Science Fiction

elements—such as dragons or super-computers—the characters are fre-
quently created with a highly fictionalized aspect to them. For example,
the historical drama of *Rurouni Kenshin*—about an ex-assassin and ex-
revolutionary at the end of the Tokugawa era and beginning of the Meiji
era—has Kenshin's violent past constantly catching up to him, where he is
pursued by a "succession of enemies of an almost science fiction level of
unreality."[17] It is not uncommon in either of these art forms to have char-
acters that are supernatural and unreal; nor is it traditionally considered
unworthy of serious aesthetic consideration because of its unreal content.

Throughout these art forms, everything is highly stylized in presenta-
tion, and thus all equally as unreal. There is no division as to what are
actually unreal or real, with all the unreal characters and locations[18] placed
on stage together. In this way the acceptance of an unreal demon[19] can be
leveled to the same degree of acceptance of an unreal looking man or
woman. The same applies for the "imaginary realms" the supernatural and
the aristocracy inhabit.[20] As Donald Keene notes, because of the implicit
unreality in the puppets of Bunraku, as they are undeniably unreal, there
is no end to the unreality that the audience will accept.[21] Similarly in
Anime, the characters and backdrops, whether representations of the
"real world" or an unreal one, are all drawn in a very specific style that is
immediately understood as unreal, most specifically because they are
clearly drawn, pieces of animation. Because of this, the same equal accep-
tance of unreal and real is enabled, due to the initial acceptance that the
events unfolding before the viewer are all depicted in an unrealistic
manner.

But it is not only in the physical depiction of the world-settings
and characters, but in their movements as well. In the theater, every

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[17] Patrick Drazen, Anime *Explosion: The What? Why? and Wow! of Japanese Animation*
(Berkley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2003). 110.

[18] Famous real places were often used in the plays, but as with everything else, they
were depicted in an unreal fashion on stage, most clearly in Noh where they were not even
fabricated by sets. Sometimes the locations are mythical, such as the Taoist paradise Hōrai.

[19] It should be noted that, at the various times that the theatrical forms were evolving,
there were certain preconceptions as to what a demon or ghost, or other supernatural crea-
ture/realm looked like, and it was expressed on stage in a similar manner. Whether the
audience/actors actually believed in their existence is, of course, debatable.

[20] In many depictions of the court in traditional theater, they were presented as lofty
realms, many times expressed as if above the clouds. While they are real places, they were
portrayed in a very unreal manner as opposed to a farmer's village, or a samurai's house-
hold. The aristocratic dwellings were off limits to the lower classes.

[21] Donald Keene, *The Battles of Coxinga: Chikamatsu's Puppet Play: It's Background and
Importance.* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951). 97.

movement is stylized according to convention, even walking. Dances are, of course, another frequent source of unrealism in the narratives, sometimes inserted for no other reason than to be an aesthetic display, having little or no effect on the narrative. In Anime, movement is likewise stylized and unreal. Lamarre stresses the fact that limited animation produces very different sensations than other forms of animation and media in general.[22] With multiple celluloid layers placed on top of each other, pulled apart or pushed together, they create a sense of movement unlike that of cinema. Characters slide across, zip in and out, or stay poised and still as if ready to move. Such a manner of animation produces a certain effect, one that is clearly unreal. But, based on its wild popularity with viewers in Japan and around the world, this element of unreality is something that people enjoy, and perhaps even prefer to other forms of "realistic" expression in media.

The embrace of unrealism holds a number of benefits for subject matter that would be impossible or hard to bear if presented unrealistically. While researching in Kyoto I was visited by a scholar who was not familiar with Japanese theater. Curious about Kabuki, she wanted to see a production. We attended a showing of *Ogasawara Sōdō* and upon leaving the show she remarked that this was the first time she had seen infanticide on stage. Such horrific events or scenes of extreme violence are almost commonplace in the Kabuki and Bunraku world and might be difficult to ingest for the common spectator if they were presented too realistically. In Bunraku, the use of puppets allows characters to gouge out their eyes, instantly turn into animals, or battle them. This is perhaps most apparent in the famous Bunraku play *The Battles of Coxinga* (*Kokusen'ya Kassen*, 1715), where such events happen. The author, Chikamatsu Monzaemon, consciously exploited the use of the puppets as non-human performers to produce a large number of supernatural effects that would not be as relatable or executable with a more realistic presentation. Thus we find scenes of intense violence and immortals on mountain tops, all safely presented in their unreal puppet forms.

Similar scenes of the extraordinary do appear in Kabuki, but, due to the more realistic presentation with the use of live actors, a differently balanced approach is taken. Donald Keene describes horror scenes in Kabuki as "wild mayhem, with arms and legs lopped off in a lively ballet,"[23] making for a "lighter" (or perhaps "more acceptable" would be a better choice

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[22] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 37–38.
[23] Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 64.

of words) rendition of potentially horrific events. All of this violence is presented in a stylized manner, so much so that there are aspects of Kabuki that are called the "aesthetics of cruelty."[24] Gruesome scenes are also found in Noh, but presented very differently. In the Noh play *Kurozuka* (or *Adachigahara*), there is a scene where a number of monks stumble upon an ogre's secret room where she is hiding a number of dead and decomposing bodies that were her victims. Without directly showing the macabre scene, it is described through the verse and abstractly mimed on stage. This technique is not always used for scenes that are too intolerable to be shown on stage. Sometimes in Noh, ghosts will reach redemption and be sent off to the next world. In the case of *Kurozuka*, the ogre is eventually immobilized by the monks and her madness quelled. With the help of their prayers she is deterred and disappears, vanishing into the moonlit night. Such an epic performance would be almost impossible to perform realistically, even with modern special effects. Yet, it is so elegantly portrayed in Noh's distinct aesthetic expression. In these ways, the theatrical forms use a nuanced utilization of their unreal depictions to allow very intense events to be accepted and endured in an artful manner.

Because the form of Anime is animated, it allows for a number of topics to be taken up that would otherwise be too grueling or fantastic to be seen in a live action rendition. Violence is abundant in Anime, a characteristic that has unfortunately latched onto its stereotype outside of Japan. But it too is made endurable due to the unrealistic representation of it. Stylized fight sequences and wild, unrealistic blood effects create a presentation of violence that softens its intensity through its conventionalized stylization. The fantastic has also proliferated in Anime, with depictions of wild scenes of fantasy worlds and Science Fiction universes that would be difficult to reproduce in other mediums. The depictions of such creatures, landscapes, and machines are accepted and made believable through their obvious implausibility: the unreality is absolute so anything is conceivable. Yet despite this, there is also a large amount of effort put into depicting outer realism.

While the worlds themselves may be extremely unreal and fantastic, the general representation of them is in a realistic manner. Kabuki and Bunraku sets are created with extreme care and deft, with working doors and windows, staircases that the actors and puppets walk up and down, expansive backdrops drawn to create the illusion of perspective, receding

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[24] James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, *Kabuki Plays on Stage: Villainy and Vengeance, 1773–1799*. 2. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 21.

back into the world behind the set. In fact, certain scenes will involve signifiers of the seasons: red maple leaves falling for autumn or cherry blossom petals in the wind during spring. One particular Kabuki dance, the *Sagi Musume* (*Dance of the Heron Maiden*) dance, takes place in an onstage winter, snow lightly falling, piling up on the ground, drifting and floating about as the maiden dances on the stage, small accumulations softly brushed away by the movements of the kimono. Such fine points of detail, and the attention paid to them, create a world that, while clearly unreal, is at the same time startlingly intricate and tangible. It allows this world's unreality to be more believable in the details of its construction and beauty of its utilization.

What is similar between the theatrical forms and Anime is the production of complete realities on stage and on screen, aesthetic realms which are produced and represented in unreal terms. It is in these worlds that the actions and dramas take place, expressed on stage and completed within us. Though seemingly disparate, it is this similarity which these art forms share. When viewing the landscapes, characters, creatures and machines in Anime, it is evident that they are, for the most part, depicted in a "hyperrealist" style. Though many of the objects, *mecha*, buildings, and landscapes do not exist in our reality, they are very detailed in their depiction. This has been described by Ueno Toshiya as "the hyperreality of things with no referent, things that are 'more realistic than reality.'"[25] There is no doubt that the "Anime-Manga style" is distinct and there is a specific aesthetic that is consciously strived for. Yet this is all done so with many realist elements, adding a grounding aspect of realism, creating a balance between the unreal and the real. This is done, for the most part, in Anime in general: the characters, the backgrounds, the machinery, all are created in this "more realistic than reality" style to create another world, another possible reality on screen,[26] as the theatrical forms do on stage. As the theater created "things with no referent" in demons and ghosts, so does Anime with *mecha* and magic. While the unreality is absolute, it is made relatable by the finer details of its make-up. This is apparent in almost any Anime; all with long shots of the landscapes and worlds that the stories take place in. We have already discussed the detail inherent in the creation of the world-settings and characters in a previous chapter. In *Seirei no*

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   25   Toshiya Ueno. Trans. Michael Arnold. "Kurenai no metalsuits, Anime to wa nani ka/ What is animation." *Mechademia 1: Emerging Worlds of Anime and Manga*, ed. Frenchy Lunning. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 112–113.
   26   Ueno, "Kurenai no metalsuits," 113.

Moribito we find a number of exquisitely rendered landscapes of the world the characters inhabit, extolling the beauty of that realm. Even in *Evangelion* there are a number of scenes in which the natural world, as well as the urban stronghold that Shinji protects, are portrayed in moments of beauty and grandeur. In the fourth episode, when Shinji runs away, there are a number of shots that just exhibit the scenery around him. All of them are depicted in a highly realist manner and mimic the landscapes in our own world—except that they are clearly animated. The affluent use of such realism in depiction is a conscious choice of the animators, as proven by the abundance and general standardization of it within the medium. There are, of course, exceptions. The Anime *Kaiba* (*Kaiba*, 2008–2008) does *not* use such a method of realistic presentation and instead uses a much more abstract style (while still clearly within the bounds of Anime). It does, however, include a highly complex social (or rather galactic) system and history. The physics of the world in *Kaiba* are unrealistic, but this creates an even more alien world because of it, accentuating the alien-ness of the world-setting and characters. Yet, such Anime are the minority, and the majority of Anime are produced with a hyper-realistic approach within the distinct Anime style, clearly presented in the unreal format of animation.

The interaction of the characters with the world-setting also adds to the realism of the production: the world-setting seems tangible because the characters move against and within the world-setting. That the characters actually make physical imprints on the worlds-setting—with blasts creating massive craters, rubble flying everywhere, the destruction of cities, etc.[27]— adds to the detail, creating a sense of realism and believability in this interaction. The world must be real as the effects of both character and world-setting leave their imprint on each other. The characters mature and change, *mecha* evolving and transforming in reaction and resistance to the world-setting as the Anime progresses. It is the *mecha*, and the characters that drive them, that are themselves a carefully constructed balance of realism and unreality, and to discuss them in more detail, let us now turn to the "inner elements."

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[27] Brophy, "Sonic-Atomic-Neumonic: Apocalyptic Echoes in *Anime*."

INNER ELEMENTS

In the previous chapter we have seen the intricate balance of unreality and realism and how this tension is realized in Anime's expressive style, as well as within the medium itself, using the traditional theater as a comparison to highlight similar practices. In this chapter, we will do the same, except concentrate on the inner elements, those that are made up by the twists and turns of the narrative, the characters, the common movements and signs that the characters are composed of and produce. It is through the over-arching, high level of conventionalized stylization in all aspects of the forms that we find a mixture of reality and unrealism. There will be little surprise from most if I were to declare many of the stories and characters of Anime and the theater—especially Bunraku and Kabuki—as unreal and "larger than life." They are wild and eclectic selections of various referential signs that, as we have seen, diverge and combine in a most tantalizing and unreal manner. But despite the carefully constructed unreality, there is a very potent element of (human) joy and suffering that is evident in all the art forms. This inner "reality" grounds the works to the human world and is further highlighted by the aesthetic distance created in many of the unreal aspects—specifically the previously detailed outer elements.

Such a concept of a balancing realism achieved through the utilization of a "human," emotional element was developed and discussed by both Chikamatsu and Zeami in their treatises. Instead of insisting on an expression that was based entirely in reality, they instead chose to develop the internal, emotional aspects and allow their expression of them to grow through unreal terms. David Pollock has commented on this with regard to Chikamatsu's idea that art "is composed of two elements that exist in the complementary relationship of inner content to outer form,"[1] and that the pursuit of verisimilitude alone is not sufficient in the creation of art: "Art was rather a matter of understanding that realism lay instead in the human emotional response invested in its environment. If detail failed to grow organically from its foundation in the audience's empathic response to the characters' emotions, it would be perceived by the audience as

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[1] David Pollack, *The Fracture of Meaning: Japan's Synthesis of China from the Eighth through the Eighteenth Centuries*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). 208.

false."[2] It is the unreal elements that allow the reality of human emotion to flourish, but there is a sense of grounding human realism to the unreal presentation.

A classic example of the poise of unreality and realism in the performers would be the puppets of the Bunraku Theater, carefully balanced creations for performance. The puppet themselves are stylized fabrications, unreal in their scale and features of the human body, but representative enough to be understood as male or female, good or bad (through codified signs). While they are manipulated by three puppeteers in full view, they are done so with extreme dexterity and move incredibly realistically. This realism is again balanced by the unreal aspect of the chanter reciting all the lines for the puppets, and further by the characters (their abilities and personalities) and the puppets themselves as animate, inanimate objects. The puppet characters are most successful when used as types, helping to distinguish them as bad or good, devious or heroic. However, this paradoxically adds a realistic human element of empathy for the benevolent and/or disdain for the malevolent in the audience, brought out by the characteristics of the puppets' characters in the narrative. We easily understand who to hate and who to love, and this allows us a way to see through the unreality to produce very real emotions through them.

To continue the Bunraku example, in the love suicides plays, the main characters were viewed as sympathetic characters in the rigid Tokugawa society. As stated before, the plays revolved around similar plots with similar characters, and recognizably unreal productions, coming from a reorganization of base parts for both plots and characters. However, the formalized story-telling style (*jo-ha-kyū*), song and movements, add a layer of familiarity, the audience easily drawn into their tragic lives in their restrictive world-setting as they have an understanding of it. The emotions we imbue onto them are in fact, not real for the characters. They are merely puppets, expertly manipulated with realistic movement and lyric song in a craftily constructed narrative play. They do not hold emotion, but through drawing us in, we produce the emotion for them and/or make the unreal *feel* real. The human element we give them grounds their unreal expression of their physical construction as puppets. This is made further possible by their extremely dexterous manipulation to appear human-like in their actions and effectively aids our projection onto them. The playwright and performers manipulate the character and

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[2] Ibid.

narrative within the form to move the audience to project emotion onto the puppets, as the animate, inanimate objects do not have any feelings of their own.

While the puppets in the theater move in a highly realistic fashion, the human actors on stage in Kabuki and in Noh are often extremely unreal in their movements. In the Kabuki repertoire there are a number of plays that were adapted for the Kabuki stage from Bunraku. By doing so, the Kabuki performers noted that the success of the plays was due to the use of non-human performers that had certain prescribed movements that were paced in time with the lyrics and music of the chanter. This then developed into a style of acting that mimicked the movements of the puppets (*maruhon*, or "puppet style"), keeping this balance of unreality.[3] Instead of adding an extra element of realism through the use of a human performer, the movements of the puppet were often kept (e.g. *ningyōmi* and *ningyōburi*). Beyond just mimicking the puppet's movements, most actions in Kabuki are stylized, and despite the prevalence of "everyday actions" (e.g. ashing one's tobacco pipe), they are accentuated and aestheticized in a Kabuki-fied manner.

On the Noh stage, in all plays, a symbolic form of dance-acting is used to portray all of the characters, regardless of their existence being supernatural or mortal. Zeami spent a large amount of time perfecting the balance between imitation (*monomane*) and more abstracted forms of expression, evident in his extensive treatises. Originally, the style of *sarugaku*[4] that Zeami's family was famous for was the ability to accurately portray a number of character types. However, there was an aspect of lyricism that was lacking and an aesthetic mode, that of *yūgen*, that Zeami felt was better achieved through a more expressive style. Yet going too far into the abstract realm could dissolve association with the character. Thus a delicately constructed style of dance-acting and speech-singing was established and began to move the art from *sarugaku* to Noh. One can view such a transition for Zeami—from the emphasis on realistic mime (*monomane*) from his line of Yamato *sarugaku* to a combination of, and emphasis on, acting modes, dance, and chant, delineated as his pronounced concepts of the Two Arts and Three Roles (*nikyoku santai*: the Two Arts of Song and Dance and the Three Modes of Aged, Woman's, and Martial)—within the framework of an aesthetic that carefully balances between

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[3] Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 67. Brandon, "Form in Kabuki Acting," 74.

[4] A style of theater that is the precursor to Noh.

realism and unreality, verisimilitude and abstraction. The Two Arts of Dance and Chant/Song, create an unrealistic expression, balanced by the aspects of imitation in the Three Modes,[5] and eventually *sarugaku* developed into the art we have today.

During moments of sadness in Noh, the *shite*, clad in costume and elegant mask, do not cry profusely as their masks cannot display the actual act of crying. What is displayed is the *shiori* gesture for crying, a conventionalized, stylized movement that aligns with the aural elements and the beautiful exterior. This conceals the inner emotion from being directly displayed, cloaked in an "unreal" framework. This is not to say that the expressions of movement or song are not tangible displays of emotion—rather the inner emotions are forced through certain channels that ultimately produce an affecting response that is in many ways more tangible, but difficult, if not impossible to convey in words as they are "unreal"—i.e. non-representational.

We can also view the "secondary character," the *waki* in Noh plays, as part of this aesthetic conception to balance the real and the unreal. This character will introduce the setting of a Noh play and provide a point of reference for the audience as he interacts with the *shite*, the play's protagonist. The *waki* will then sit in the front corner of the Noh stage while the *shite* performs, sharing exchanges with him as the narrative progresses, listening to the character's story, hearing their plight and (often) praying for the character's salvation. The *waki* represent an important foil for the *shite* and provides a balance of realistic dramatic plot through a separate character to ground the blatantly lyric display of emotion through dance and song that the exquisitely dressed *shite* will perform. While the *shite*, in their mask and costume, performing their refined and reserved dances and singing, receive the most attention as the focal point, without the accompaniment of the *waki* (and the chorus), it would be a monologue of spectacular performance. The *waki* provides a necessary and important grounding factor that balances the *shite*, allowing for the production of a narrative, a plot, and different characters to appear on stage, sustaining the projection of emotion through a narrative that provides a context to the *shite's* exposition of dance and poetry—a realistic element adding plausibility and context to the events and emotions performed. This consideration for realism is also why Zeami stresses in his treatise *Sandō* that

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[5] This is not to imply that the Three Modes are entirely aimed at realistic imitation. Indeed, they are stylized themselves, but there is a strong degree of mimesis that is implied in the Three Modes.

the selection of a character for a play must be made carefully so that there is some believability for these characters to dance and recite their poetry. He explicitly states:

> What I mean here by the Seed is that person who performs the action in the source on which the play is based; you must be aware that this of great significance for the dance and singing in the play. You see, what gives the fine play of performance in this art its character is Dance and singing. If the Seed is a person who does not sing or dance, there will be hardly any way of making a visual display in the performance, no matter what sort of legendary hero or great star he or she may have been. Make sure you have a firm grasp on the rationale here.
>
> For example, as character types for dramatic imitation, heavenly maidens, goddesses, and shrine priestesses all are amenable to the dance and singing of *kagura*. For male roles, consider Narihira, Kuronushi, Genji, and spirited nobles like them, and for the Woman's Mode, Lady Ise, Komachi, Giō, Gijo, Shizuka, Hyakuman, and graceful ladies of their kind; all of these persons have a reputation for a fine play in expression through dance and singing, so there should be, as a matter of course, ready opportunities for visual display through the fine play in performance when you select one of them for central treatment in a play.[6]

Zeami maintains that the characters chosen should already be known (by the audience and playwright) to have a reason for being so graceful and elegant, able to produce the poetry and dance that is necessary for the elocution of the beauty of *yūgen*. With characters that the audience expects to be capable of such feats, it allows them to believe that the elucidation of song and dance is plausible. It is quite important for Zeami's idea of aesthetics that there is a certain believability of the character to produce the unreal and abstract, but graceful movements and music that they will express on stage—the proper poise of reality and unreality is necessary for the effective exposition of beauty.

A similar, precise interaction between real and unreal can be seen in the *onnagata*, the Kabuki tradition of the female-imitator specialist (Figure 3.3). While they are men acting as women, they do so with the utmost detail in their movements and costumed appearance. But, many talented *onnagata* may not be "normative" images of female beauty when first glancing at their facial features or hearing the sound of their voice. Instead it is the "rejection of reality in favor of an unearthly, stylized beauty that can dazzle audiences into believing that an old man with a heavily

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6 Hare, *Zeami: Performance Notes*: 151–152.

Figure 3.3. The *onnagata* actor from the Kabuki Theater is a prime example of the balance of unreality and realism that is a defining characteristic of the theater. The beauty and grace of *onnagata* onstage, moving and dancing in the most exquisite kimonos and costumes, creates a hyper-feminine image. Yet beneath the intricate costume and movements is a male sexed actor. *Onnagata* are among the most popular actors in the Kabuki Theater. Image courtesy of the Kaizawa Kabuki Collection, Asia Collection, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library.

powdered face is a miracle of feminine loveliness."[7] The beauty and grace of the *onnagata* onstage, moving and dancing in the most exquisite kimonos and costumes, creates a hyper-feminine image. Every action exudes a sense of femininity, yet beneath the intricate costume and movements is a male sexed actor, and the audience is cognizant of this fact. The *onnagata* actor is a prime example of the balance of unreality and realism that is a characteristic of the theater: a highly detailed illusion, wrapped in conventionalized stylization. A similar approach is taken in Noh, where the all-male cast will play female characters. While the robes and masks worn are of a female, and the dances meant to possess a lighter, feminine touch, the voice that is used to sing, immediately resonates more with the "grain" of a male voice.[8] In this way the unreality and reality are balanced together and the illusion is simultaneously kept and disregarded, creating a distinct image of femininity on stage. It is interesting to note that in Anime, unskilled male characters turning into powerful female characters, is a recurring plot and character element trope that appears in shows such as *Ranma ½* (*Ranma Nibun-no-Ichi*, 1989–1992), *Birdy the Mighty* (*Tetsuwan Bādī*, 1996, 2008–2008, 2009–2009), and *Kampfer* (*Kenpufā*, 2009–2009), continuing the grand tradition of cross-gendering in popular performance. It should be acknowledged, however, that the male character's personalities and the female character's personalities are usually kept as two separate entities.

In Anime, the characters are depicted in a very specific manner. They achieve a distinct "Anime look," which is immediately recognizable as unreal, with strange hair and large eyes, yet at the same time possessing clearly human characteristics—i.e. they are recognizably representations of humans (unless otherwise noted). In some instances their reactions to events are subtly human, at other times wildly exaggerated. Often, the character's actions are unrealistic in capability (e.g. flying through the air), but produce a sensation of what Lamarre terms animetism, focusing more on creating the illusion of realism of movement more than that of depth.[9] Ueno points out that, in the films of Oshii Mamoru, "while the characters' physicality is made arbitrary and fictionalized, their elocution is directed

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[7] Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 62.

[8] Roland Barthes discusses the "grain of the voice" which resonates deeper than any stylization, allowing the listener to determine the physical body (and in this case the sex of that body) that produces the sound. See Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice." *Image, music, text.* Trans. Stephen Heath. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). 181–182.

[9] See Lamarre, "The Multiplanar Image," 121.

in a way that clearly gives them a sense of reality."[10] In other words, there is a balance of realism and unreality in both movement and character depiction (physically and emotionally). Properties of both realism and unrealism in movement and design can be seen in the display of a number of emotions that are expressed in very stylized expressions, conventionalized gestures, body language that display human responses in an unrealistic manner; perhaps most famously the glittering eyes of a character when the character is impressed by something, or shaking eyes and mouth agape when terrified.

Despite the prevalence of conventionalized expressions, it is often in the smaller, more human movements like twitching and faint smiles that we see the minute details of human (and animal) movement so faithfully reproduced on screen. The *Evangelion* series provides a good example. Episode 11 contains a scene where the unconfident and insecure adolescent Shinji calls his estranged father. As he musters up the courage to talk to him on a pay phone, we see his hand move slowly, his fingers pulling in and out of his hand, subtly conveying Shinji's nervousness as he tries to ask his father to come to a parent teacher meeting. Despite their "other-world" premises and cultural backdrops, such attention to detail is what gives many Anime their sense of realism in the distinctly unreal medium in which they are presented. In this example, as his father refuses the phone line is unexpectedly cut due to a power outage caused by the invading Angels, forcing Shinji and his other teenage comrades to locate and pilot their Eva units to dispel the menacing threat. Their adolescent tensions come into play as they navigate their way to the *mecha*, trying to work as a team to defeat the Angel without any (parental) military guidance. The juxtaposition of the deep apprehensions felt by Shinji, the interpersonal relationships of the characters, and the unreal events produced in detail, create a combination characteristic of the Anime form.

However, despite the rich human development behind many of Anime's characters, there is a definitive play of archetypes that is abundant in Anime. This can be attributed to the non-human performers, who, like the Bunraku puppets, cannot express as wide a spectrum of emotions as a human actor can. Thus there is a reliance on a number of frequently used types, each accompanied by corresponding expectations, breaking or following through with them to create the drama in the series. This was discussed briefly in the section on intertextuality. The strength of these

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[10] Ueno, "Kurenai no metalsuits," 115.

characters in both Bunraku and Anime is when the art forms make "believable people of types,"[11] a specialty of Chikamatsu, most notably in his domestic tragedy pieces (*sewamono*). The puppets themselves have a number of heads and costumes that are interchanged to produce the desired type (Figure 3.4). Kabuki, with the use of *sekai* and its characters does the same.

The use of archetypes is, to an extent, used in the Noh Theater as well. This is apparent in the five Noh play system of God plays, Warrior plays, Woman plays, Mad Person plays, and Demon plays. Within each play category a specific type of character was organized to fit into the prescribed rubric of a day's program of plays. During the Muromachi period (c. 1336–1573) when many of the Noh plays in the current repertoire were written, there was no strict five category system, but it is clear from even Zeami's Three Modes that types were important. For example, in Zenchiku's treatise *Kabuzuinōki*, he organizes the plays he cites by Zeami's Three Modes, categorizing them by their type (e.g. Woman's Mode, Aged Mode, and Martial Mode). Furthermore, there are a large number of Noh masks that are used to portray a wide range of characters (see Figure 3.5). However, not all masks are interchangeable and there are specific rules as to which masks can be used for which roles, each mask possessing a slightly different emotive prowess. These masks can be seen as a use of "types" upon which added characteristics are layered to produce the final characters seen on stage.

The utilization of types creates a system in which, as noted previously, a number of expectations are created through their use. This produces a series of seemingly two-dimensional, unreal characters, which are slowly fleshed out over the course of the drama. We are persuaded into their believability as characters because the spectators have preconceived notions of the outcome of the characters. We know that they are to produce a specific effect, and are excited by their success or failure to achieve it. Each time a type is utilized, it is, of course, slightly modified to fit the particular narrative circumstance. As each "new" character type arises, the popular ones will be copied and slightly modified, layering on top of each other to eventually create another "new" archetype which, if popular, is then copied and the system repeats. Azuma would probably cite this as part of the database system, wherein there is a database that holds all the components of the character design, and new characters are created and

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[11] Keene, "Individuality and Pattern," 51.

Figure 3.4. The use of character types with puppets in Bunraku takes a very literal form, as the puppets themselves, like the characters in Anime are physically non-human perform- ers. They are both built of various "parts:" head, hair, body, costume—components that are combined to comprise the foundations of a character's image. Personality (through codi- fied signs) is built into the physical construction of the characters and is further imbued through their actions in the narrative. Top: Hishida Kōji—keeper of puppet heads. Bottom: (left) Bunraku performance of Hikosan gongen, September 1975, Yoshida Tamao head pup- peteer for the character Yoshioka in the *Kōri otonari yakata* scene; (right) "The Courier for Hell The Misappropriation (of Money)" February 1972, Kiritake Icchō (Puppeteer, Narutose, Bunraku/omo-zukai, head puppeteer), Yoshida Kotama (Puppeteer, Chiyotose). Images courtesy of C.V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University.

Figure 3.5. Within the masks of the Noh Theater, there are distinct traces of a particular aesthetic and distinctive character to each mask within each mask group. Clockwise from the top left they are *Ishiōjō* from the masks of the Elderly (*Jō*), Shikami from the Demon masks (*Kishin*), Kantanotoko for masks of men (*Otoko*), and the *Wakaonna* mask for female characters (*Onna*). Each of these masks is used for a different type of role; each possesses their own personal traits that the actor chooses to portray the character for the specific play. © Toshiro Morita, the-noh.com (http://www.the-noh.com/).

absorbed into this database.[12] Such a practice is evident in the Anime that followed *Evangelion*. Previously in many *mecha* Anime, the young boy character would be confronted with a problem, rise to the challenge using some hidden power or ability and, while reckless and perhaps distressed, will be pure-hearted, highly skilled, or passionate enough to gain our affections. The "distressed adolescent" is a ubiquitous character throughout Anime, regardless of genre. *Evangelion's* Shinji took this type and distorted it, hyperbolized it, manipulated it, producing a scared teenage boy, who, while having a secret power, is almost despicable, immature, deeply troubled, with an apathetical view of even the most dire, life threatening and humanity ending circumstances that he is confronted with. Even anti-heroes, prevalent in a multitude of previous Anime had many appealing attributes, but Shinji effectively produces an anti-anti-hero. Though his actions and all too frequent inaction are infuriating and even detestable, there is an underlying mutual sympathy as we have followed his development into what he has become and understand why he feels as he does. With the wild success of *Evangelion* a number of Anime used this archetype character to produce a different story that follows a similar path. Take for example, *Gurren Lagan*, which features a lost young boy who stumbles upon his destiny to pilot a powerful robot. The story outline begins in a similar enough fashion with a seemingly helpless character forced into piloting a robot due to the threat of an unknown giant monster. However, in this Anime he does rise to the challenge, and despite his bouts of depression and hopelessness, he eventually matures into the admirable character Shinji transgressed. But the success of this transformation is all the more gratifying for following through with the expectations. *Rahxephon* seems to follow an analogous path to *Evangelion* in the character types, organic *mecha* design, trope of "strange invaders," and estranged parental figures. Another similar character is provided in the *The Twelve Kingdoms*, except it is a female lead. While this is a Fantasy Anime, not involving any sort of *mecha*, the main character slowly develops through the course of the series from an insecure girl who, like Shinji "just does what she's told," to the strong willed queen of her kingdom. Throughout both Anime we are given the famous lines of Shinji, "Don't run away," signally the link to *Evangelion*, and helping us build these types into "believable people." A direct copy would exaggerate the unreality of the types, thus deviations

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[12] *Otaku* seek to consume this database in Azuma's paradigm. See Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*.

from the type are necessary, made possible by the extended narratives of most Anime series.

Here we find another paradox in the Anime world, in the individuality and charm of these archetypal characters. The vast majority of character personalities are based on types: the headstrong but pure-hearted adolescent (Naruto in *Naruto,* 2002–2007; Akiyuki from *Xam'd*; Recca from *Flame of Recca*, *Rekka no Honō*, 1997–1998); the reckless and comically energetic character (Matsuri from *Kamichu!*, 2005–2005; Tomo from *Azumanga Diaoh*, 2002–2002); the troubled person who always does as they are told (Yoko from *The Twelve Kingdoms*; Shinji from *Evangelion*; Arima from *Kare Kano*); the mysterious but powerful vagabond (Wolfwood in *Trigun*; Sesshomaru in *Inuyasha*, *Sengoku Otogizōshi Inuyasha*, 2000–2004); the clueless to love but talented soldier/player (Birdy from *Birdy the Mighty*; Sousuke from *Full Metal Panic!*), the list goes on, with slight variations to each in their respective Anime. Combinations of these character personality parts can be added or subtracted from each character (sometimes developing as the series goes on) to produce their character. For example, Sousuke from *Full Metal Panic!* is the dense, but talented soldier, but also has aspects of the troubled adolescent who only does what he is told. As the Anime progresses, he begins to become more resistive to "only following orders" and establishes his personality (agency) through this character development, but stays hopelessly (and charmingly) clueless about his romantic life. Despite their typicality, Anime characters create a large number of narratives, and eventually evolve into the seemingly tangible personalities that are enjoyed by millions around the globe. The fantastic irony is that even though these characters are unreal, are repeated and reorganized types, they create the impression of real, complex individuals. Through the use of character types, Anime has found another outlet to create a balance between the real and the unreal.

The effectiveness of this use of character types arises from a complex system of interchangeable physical parts (hair, costumes, eyes, body shape) and personalities that are utilized in Anime, the various compositions of different parts allowing for variation within the system. Other scholars have noted this practice, developing different theories behind its existence: Azuma Hiroki's database—where parts are combined and recombined to create new characters from a database of successful parts—and Thomas Lamarre's cel bank—a resource of previously used cells for animation that are interchanged and mixed to create new situations for characters—though different in detail, each explain the utilization of a reservoir of characteristics that is used to create and recreate

new designs based on the revitalization of previous material.[13] While much animation is done through computers now, the use of character types and the interchange of parts continue on. There are also particularly popular patterns for preferred situations that certain character types would be in, the style of their visual depiction, their personalities, and the drama they experience. *Moe* ("cute" characters that viewers want to feel affection and care for) and *tsundere* (those characters that at first have tough outer shells, but are truly affectionate inside) characters are among the most popular of such types (at the time of writing), often with slightly different personalities, but the general type repeated in different variations and world-settings.

But it is not only the visual aspects of the characters that are re-used or recombined, but the voices and sounds as well. Anime voices have a certain tone and pitch for different character types. Often the same voice actors and actresses are used in various different Anime, with similar voices prevalent throughout the Anime universe. They often represent types of characters, good and bad, young and old, human and non-human. The actors and actresses themselves have a large fan base and their movements between Anime can be easily followed. Some may be even be capable of determining what characters were played by whom, with voices that are similar in many Anime. For example, Ikari Gendō in *Evangelion* (1995) is voiced by the same actor as Hasegawa Taizō in *Gintama*, despite the deep differences in Anime style character: Gendō is serious and calculating to a flaw, and Hasegawa labeled a "*madao*" (*marude dame na ossan*: "completely useless middle-aged man") for comedic affect. The dark sunglasses and generally similar facial designs are used in *Gintama* as a reference to Gendō in *Evangelion*, even directly referencing this within the *Gintama* series. Avid Anime viewers would have noticed the blatant similarities of design and voice between the two characters of seemingly disparate Anime. As the same voices are used over and over, they have developed into stylized parts themselves, another aspect that can be put in place to create a character.

Other aural elements should not be disregarded either, as a check through the massive amounts of Anime sound tracks that exist clearly produce a myriad of different sounds, from hard rock to techno, from blues and jazz, to *shamisen* and wood clappers. Among these will often be "epic" tracks of high energy and intensity to match the visual spectacle

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[13] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 260.

that they will accompany. In general, however, there is a type of pop-rock with an electronic feel that populates the airwaves of the ending and theme songs throughout Anime, a specific style that fans associate with Anime. However, these songs can also be from other genres, as *Cowboy Bebop* has shown with its vivid Jazz soundtrack and Funk opening. In many Anime there are also very specific, usually playful sounds that are considered the "themes" of some of the characters, songs that play when that character shows their softer side, or when a specific sequence is repeated. To take the example from *Evangelion*, Misato has her own playful theme to express her silly and laid-back manner that she exposes at her home.

There are also tracks like "Angel Attack I" ("Angel Attack II" and "Angel Attack III" are also played and repeated) that will repeat every time an Angel attacks, or the song for preparation that will play when Shinji enters the Eva and gets ready for launch. These are comparable to the various types of sound and song in the Kabuki and Bunraku theaters that symbolize certain occurrences (e.g. rain) and are played at specific events (e.g. a character's entrance, dance-fight). There is a wide vocabulary of aural aspects that allude to various places, phenomena, and emotions, such as the pleasure quarters, the court, natural phenomena, eroticism, and even to accentuate *mie* poses. Then there are the distinct singing styles that are found within each theater, which are of the utmost importance in Noh and Bunraku, as they comprise the entirety of how things are said, surroundings described, and events narrated. Of course, song in Kabuki is equally as important. Even speech itself is stylized in these theaters, and, in the case of Noh, different styles of sung speech are used depending on the character portrayed, with combinations of the *tsuwogin* and *yowagin* ("strong" and "weak" sung speech) employed to emphasize a specific emotive personality for the character.[14] Years of training are involved to develop such abilities, and the use of this masterful skill results in literally interchanging various voices to define new characters, or rather, different voice "parts" used to create a particular character. In Kabuki and Bunraku, we also find different types of voices used by the chanters for different characters.

As emphasized previously, the practice of interchanging parts is and has been done in various different areas of the theater. In Bunraku, the use

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[14] For a detailed explanation of this see, Serper, Zvika. "Kotoba" ("Sung" Speech) in Japanese Nō Theater: Gender Distinctions in Structure and Performance." Asian Music 31.2 (2000): 129–166.

of puppets necessitates such a practice, with the base of a puppet being used, and costumes and different heads attached depending on the particular type of character needed for the play. Noh has a deeply codified system of costumes, wigs, and masks that the actor chooses from to express what he believes are the characteristics of the being he portrays on stage. These are constrained to the type of character and mask being used, involving an intricate system of rules. In Kabuki, similar practices happen as well, with specific costumes and make-up alluding to certain character types and producing different meanings. The use of *kumadori* make-up, for example, generally codifies the character wearing it as good or bad, depending on the color of their designs, red or blue for benevolent or evil respectively, with brown acting for selfish characters, and purple for noble ones.[15] In this way, the traditional theater forms, though acted live, utilize interchangeable parts to create different character types. These museum-worthy parts/costumes have histories of use and re-use that sometimes spans centuries. This is the theater's "bank" and "database" of parts to create a never ending spectrum of character part combinations similar to that which we see in Anime.

Character design is extremely important in Anime as is costume and make-up in the theater. Media Studies scholar Zília Papp has written two volumes of books, *Anime and its Roots in Early Japanese Monster Art* and *Traditional Monster Imagery in Manga, Anime and Japanese Cinema*, focusing almost entirely on character design and the aesthetic evolution in *yōkai* imagery in Japan from pre-history to contemporary Anime. There are also legions of books published every year with character design and *mecha* concept design for Anime, products bought by many fans. Often fans will draw their favorite characters (and personal interpretations of them) in still images or in fan made Manga productions. In Anime, characters and their designs are integral parts of the art form and have thus rightly been noted as crucial to its success (and merchandising). Using various types, the characters are highly utilized images that frequently define an Anime. Is Spike not the emblem of *Cowboy Bebop*, or Rei not synonymous with *Evangelion*? It is their design and centrality as extensions of their aesthetic world that attract many viewers to a particular Anime and the various merchandise depicting that character.[16]

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[15] In general, the use of red and blue are the most prevalent in Kabuki.

[16] For more on the history of character centrality in Japanese marketing, see Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*.

Figure 3.6. Costumes and kumadori make-up are crucial parts of Kabuki performance, adding to the spectacle. Colors, patterns, types of clothing and props often carry specific codified meanings, combining to illustrate a certain character (type). This can be seen as another example of the use of carefully organized parts, here used to construct the image of a character on stage. Image courtesy of the Kaizawa Kabuki Collection, Asia Collection, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library.

In Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, character "design," or rather, portrayal is equally important. Kabuki has historically had an intimate relationship with *ukiyoe*, with many woodblock prints selling based on the depictions of the famous and popular characters played by the best actors. As Anime has found in the post-modern age, great character design and portrayal provides marvelous subject matter for other products. Noh also has a small history of depiction in woodblock prints. There are even woodblock prints of Noh characters and their "parts" (masks, props, costumes) by Tsukioka Kōgyo (1869–1927). The actors choose the costumes very carefully to express the inner emotions of the character outwardly, creating a tense, picturesque stillness in their performance as they exude their hidden energies and we succumb to the plight of the characters and the beauty of the image organized and designed before us—a dynamic, and emotive portrait against the still pine board.

Many Noh plays have only two characters, one main character (the *shite*) and the role of the secondary character (the *waki*). A central focus of such plays is very clearly the *shite*. In this light, Noh may be viewed as the crystallization of character. The stories of the plays are often simplistic, following, as we have seen, a basic pattern, with intricate reworkings of intertextual references. The character design takes place in the context of costume integration. The *shite*'s dance, lyric song and moving pathos are the focus, combining to create the specific atmosphere of that production, that play's smaller narrative, part of the larger day's program. The reality of the fragile soul of the *shite*'s character is set up against his or her exquisitely costumed appearance, and the unreal movements and sounds of their type.

As we have seen, there is a large amount of energy put into the addition of detail and realism, yet quite distinctly the world depicted is unreal. The result distances the spectator from their ordinary physical realm through the beauty of the stylized mixture of unreality and realism. The audience reaches behind the illusion of the mask and the celluloid film, to realize its fantasy and see past it to the depth of the emotional realm beyond. When the circumstances are unreal, all that is left recognizably real is the emotion. This is evident in a large number of Anime, but perhaps most notably in the above mentioned *Evangelion*. As noted in the previous chapter, the original series ends with the internal analysis of Shinji's mind. The character's psyche and emotional growth is the focus of the final two episodes, which, from a "standard" narrative stand point may not be immediately accepted by the viewer.[17] But once looked at through the lens of tradi-

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[17] The reaction to the original ending of *Evangelion* was notoriously bad.

tional theater, through a lens observing form, we can understand its place-ment. Previously we have seen the mosaic structure of Anime used to build up the moments of psychological analysis for the characters in *Evangelion*. The trend in the theater's (specifically Noh's) narratives to move inwards is shared by *Evangelion* and this leads us from the external narrative world of Eva and the Angels, down into the world of the charac-ters' internal hearts and minds. If this external presentation is accepted as peripheral, as aesthetic dressings that facilitate an intriguing look into characters of an ultimately unreal universe, what is left is only the charac-ter's emotions and plight. When the world is stripped away, what we are left with are abstract character portraits, definitions of a soul that cannot, as in Noh, be defined in words or any other single expression. We can see this manifested in the background images of the last episodes, largely bare, nothing left of the grandiose scenarios that led Shinji to his fate of piloting the Eva. The external world-setting is not the only focus of the series, but the deep rooted existential crisis that Shinji, the other charac-ters, and through projection and identification, the viewers experience. With Shinji's breakdowns and final revelations, he emerges as a new individual. Due to the intricate, separate but inseparable connection to the world-setting, the same deterioration is shared by the world (and its characters) and provides another reason for the world's backdrops to be stripped away and an entirely new one added as the final image: the clear blue coral filled ocean the characters stand on in the series, and the barren shores and red seas of *End of Evangelion*.[18] This final exploration of the human element adds realism to the excessively unreal circumstances of the Anime.

  We have already seen how pacing and plot structures are patterned in Anime and the theater. As M.R. Axelrod has postulated, with regard to realist commercial fiction, repetition of formal structures breeds familiar-ity; though the content may be different, the form is generally similar, and this creates a sense of comfort.[19] In Anime, the repetition of similar char-acters and similar narrative patterns provides a sense of grounding famil-iar-ness that contrasts with the wild unreality of the content of many Anime (e.g. giant robots, alternate universes). To an extent, this is an

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[18]   While it is true the budgeting and scheduling issues helped produce the ending of the *Evangelion* TV Anime, because of the use of, or rather, re-use of previous cells and back-grounds, there was potential for a differently imaged ending. Cels, even battles, could have been used instead of the ending that was finally presented, and subsequently re-edited.
  [19]   Mark R. Axelrod, *The Politics of Style in the Fiction of Balzac, Beckett, and Cortázar* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992). 22.

example of what Azuma and Ōtsuka describe as "anime/manga-like Realism."

The use of narrative repetition (plot structures) and character types (physical and mental) coincide as the inner elements of unreality in Anime and the theater. Yet this is all grounded in how the human emotion flows through the characters and narrative variations that bring out the balance of realism and unreality that is necessary to allow the art form to move on that thin razor's edge between the real and the unreal and express what other forms cannot. While many art forms try to hide their unreality and strive for realism, Anime and the traditional theater have historically embraced their unreality on a number of levels, paradoxically striving to make that unreality as realistic as conceivable, producing a distinct aesthetic as this process becomes conventionalized. In their productions we find an unreal world where realistic fantasies can play out at a safe distance to allow for intellectual consideration as much as it provides aesthetic appreciation.

WHAT LIES BENEATH

There is a deep sense of intricacy present throughout the worlds of Anime, each with their own rules and histories that are explained and followed by the characters who participate in the drama in the world-setting. While they are clearly presented in the unreal medium of animation, the detail of these produces "plausible" universes. As described earlier, Anime like that of *Xam'd* have created a world so intricate that it is difficult to distinguish whether we are watching a drama of characters or of a world unfold. *Evangelion, Ghost in the Shell, Mushishi, Gundam* series, *Macross* series, and far too many others to name here, each have their own laws, political, economic and societal conditions that affect the narrative's movement.

This combination of absolute unreality in expression, but highly realistic construction, allows Anime to be very transgressive. In the past, Kabuki and Bunraku frequently used their stage to elucidate the plight of the urban townsfolk who were the patrons of their theaters. Kabuki companies would often stage plays about current events, displacing them into different times in Japanese history, changing names and places yet keeping the basic story the same in order to mount a production about a subject that would otherwise be forbidden under the Tokugawa censorship laws. Because of the unrealistic manner, and the highly codified worlds they were performing in, the theaters escaped some of the censorship of the Edo government, exploring the troubles the lower classes suffered at the hands of the strict society. Anime similarly uses the distancing effects of an unreal form to expose, treat, and comment on a number of issues that may otherwise be too intense or unbelievable (or expensive) to be dealt with in any other medium, particularly issues that are specific to the late twentieth century and the new millennium.[1]

Animation scholar Paul Wells explains the ability of animation to create environments where narratives can safely play out commentary that would be too radical in any other medium: "Animation legitimized the social and political ambivalence of such narratives by simultaneously *approximating* some of the conditions of real existence whilst *distancing*

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[1] Susan Napier comments on this at length. See Napier in *Anime: From Akira to Howl's Moving Castle* and her article "When the Machines Stop: Fantasy, Reality, and Terminal Identity in Neon Genesis Evangelion and Serial Experiments: Lain."

itself from them by recourse to the unique aspects of its own vocabulary."[2] This is embedded in the medium itself, "the very language of animation seems to carry with it an inherent innocence which has served to disguise and dilute the potency of some of its more daring imagery."[3] Through the use of the unreal presentation, the underlying subject matter can often be dismissed as pure entertainment and the actual issues being brought up cleverly disguised in an elaborate costume that distracts the viewer with its artistry. This is the route that Anime has taken in their productions. It is, as Levi puts it, "escapism raised to a high art...*Anime* is designed to provide a wide range of fantasy worlds where audiences can live out dreams (and sometimes nightmares) that will never otherwise find expression."[4]

The use of the animated medium facilitates a safe exposition of a wide range of societal problems—both local to Japan as well as modern society as a whole—through the unreal expression and allows it to mask what is below. This is strikingly apparent in Anime such as *Evangelion* and *Ghost in the Shell*, which clearly express a number of trepidations about the pervasiveness and accelerated technological progress of humanity. The blatantly unreal presentation allows the subjects to be brought up without fear, and the balance of reality—the detailed totality of the construction of these unreal worlds—allows for believable scenarios to be played out and a legitimate discussion on these issues to take place.

The visual aspects of the Anime medium also allow the projection of ideals and symbolism on the characters and world to be easily accepted, as the distance created through the unreality allows for safer processing of otherwise "dangerous" thoughts. As the unreality is absolute and all is fabricated, like the theater, the unrealism is embraced and the aesthetics are brought to a heightened degree in its highly stylized expression. Anime has a very discernible style, different from the animations of America, originally drawing on the cartooning of Walt Disney, but evolving into its own. It is a very specific look, a complex aesthetic of a balance between detail and simplicity. The Anime style owes much to the wildly successful art of Manga on which it is based. The reciprocal relationship between the two art forms has produced the Anime-Manga visual style that has become the most famously recognizable aspect of the forms. Due to the wide range in Anime styles it is hard to define this look beyond the pervasive large eyes and outlined renderings of the human figure (for example, fingernails

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[2] Wells, *Understanding Animation*: 21–22.
[3] Ibid., 19.
[4] Levi, *Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation*: 30.

are not always included in the construction of hands). Ample images have been provided up to this point in a variety of styles to give a solid conception of the general "Anime look." More on the aesthetics will be developed in the following chapter, but here I would like to focus on what hides beneath the curtain of this stylized world.

To cite one example of the ability of the Anime style to subtly express various emotions and critical issues through its realistically unreal form, the film *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) provides a scene that is illuminating. It is a short series of largely still shots, occurring in the scene where the characters the Major and Batō are observing an apprehended subject being interrogated. It is here we can see three versions of the protagonist the Major, caught in the middle of a military and political conspiracy, simultaneously invoking her own identity crisis. First there is the masculine version that is shown through the parallel between the muscular Batō and her, both leaning on the glass, both wearing similar military-esque jackets. The second version is the Major we see exposed when she goes diving and in her final monologue on identity, a mechanical entity, shown here in her reflection in the glass. Her expression in the reflection is different than that of the image of her standing, it is upset and stressed. The final version of her is the last one we see in this sequence of cuts. It is her face shown in the reflection from the other side of the glass, tinted by its color. Her expression is concerned but softer. This may be understood as the image of her as feminine. Previously in the Anime, this was shown through her difference as a woman by focusing on the parts of her body that distinguish her as such. But in this scene her femininity is displayed through the softness of her composition in the shot. The camera lingers there, allowing the viewers to see the subtle differences in her expression. This is an extremely difficult thing to do considering it is all hand drawn.

Such subtlety in expression is like that seen in Noh plays. The masks of the character have a single, mute expression, but through slight tilts and angles manipulated by the actor, the expression changes and a multitude of emotional shades of the character is expressed—a Mona Lisa smile, that can "mystically take on an infinite variety of expressions."[5] Kabuki's *kumadori* possesses a similar quality in that it is make-up made to display a particular valence (e.g. power, righteousness, evil) on the actor's face, yet the actor adjusts this to produce a number of subtler

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[5] Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives*: 229.

emotions through their acting. Of course the puppets of Bunraku are only capable of exhibiting the expression they are given, but can be manipulated into expressing many different grades of emotion. The importance of the similarity in this particular context is that there is a localized fascination with this idea of the mask—in some form or another, whether it is make-up or the puppet—in the theater and Anime can be seen as a contemporary extension of this. The mask covers your identity and hides the truth behind its walls. When you put on this mask you become a separate character, performing a specific role. This practice of expression with masks can be seen employed in the Anime form in *Ghost in the Shell*, an Anime dealing with identity in the age of ever progressing and invasive technologies.

In the scene described above, we can apply the concept of the mask to the three aspects of the Major. In doing so, we can see how she puts on the different sides of her; hidden behind her malleable mask that is her (mechanical) body. She is conflicted as to who she is and where her place in society is. She is treated like a human, as Batō points out, but is she truly human and not a complete cyborg, as the film alludes to? Objectified through partialization throughout the film, the Major's body is a constant focus, showing her distinction among her male comrades. But there is no clear gender "division" in performance. She is undoubtedly the superior warrior and leader, outclassing her male counterparts in typically male fields. Yet at the same time, she remains in a hyperbolically female body, clearly stating that she is female. In a world where the only difference is between human and cyborg, what distinction does gender make signified only by the visible body? Beyond gender dichotomies, there is the post-human dilemma of her humanity versus her status as machine. This is an identity crisis expressed in an unreal Science Fiction world. It appears as if she is trapped in her body and pulled in three different directions. While the backdrop is unreal, her psyche is highly relatable in our world of fragmented (gender) identities, and the artistry allows this to be elegantly shown in that simple moment through the medium of Anime. The underlying reality of the human emotion flows into the lyric external expression in the stylized Anime form, and the atmospheric cyberpunk realm it depicts allows her specific, cyborg identity crisis to proliferate. This is all made believable by the detail and complexity of the world-setting and her type (stoic soldier), yet acceptably fake and distant through the clear, fabricated state of the images as animation.

Bolton details the oscillation between real and unreal in Anime, specifically in the above mentioned film *Ghost in the Shell* (1995). He compares

the unreality and reality of animation to that of Bunraku puppets, postulating that the characters in both art forms are performed and performing, are both dead and alive, and that the events occurring to them are felt as both "magnified and displaced."[6] The precarious balance between the unreal and real makes readings of Anime notoriously problematic. For example, the violence presented is often extreme, but is stylized and cloaked behind this conventionalized veil. However, this does not invalidate its existence, but rather keeps it subsumed by its aestheticisation and is often treated in Anime as a conventionalized aesthetic display (e.g. a *kyū* segment). Bolton notes that understanding this can have revealing anlaytical implications, when applied, for example, to considerations of issues of subjectivity; what happens to, with, and by the character, and how do we interpret changes with regard to the "specific language (visual and verbal) of their representation."[7] The same understanding of unreality and realism can be utilized in reading Anime through its character types and world-settings.

To stay on the topic of gender for a moment, there are two particular Anime that feature two almost unreal world-settings in which the topics of the changing gender roles in society are brought up: *Noir* (*Noir,* 2001) and *Library War* (*Toshokan Sensō*, 2008). In both Anime the main characters defy stereotypes and search for their identity as individuals as well as within society. The first series, *Noir* tells the tale of two seemingly disparate female assassins: a woman from Europe—Mireille—and a young girl (*shōjo*) from Japan—Kirika. However, their fates seem to be intertwined as they are both caught in a web of espionage and mystery, fighting against a secret global conglomeration of power. Through a number of different twists and turns, the (almost)[8] entirely male pursuers are eventually revealed to be simultaneously deceived by a high-ranking nun-like woman who wishes to usher in a new era through a bizarre ceremony (yet the world-setting does not involve any particularly supernatural elements, it is supposed to be based in the "real world"). However, this woman's insanity is brought to light and she is eventually defeated by Mireille and Kirika, who now have an airtight bond of camaraderie. In the end, the two main

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[6] Here Bolton is quoting Susan Sontag's comments on Bunraku, and applying them to Anime. See Bolton, "From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater," 756.

[7] Ibid., 765–766.

[8] There is one female assassin sent to kill them, but the rest are male, save the nun-like leader and her (evil) assassin.

characters challenge their older, wealthy male pursuers and express confidently that they will choose their own fates from now on.

The world-setting is crucial to this narrative. Regarding the historical *shōjo* Manga *Ōoku: The Inner Chambers* (*Ōoku*, 2005-ongoing)—where a mysterious disease has killed most men and Tokugawa gender roles are reversed: the shogun is a woman and men inhabiting the inner chambers cater to the female shogun's needs—Hori Hikari notes that though the gender roles are switched, restrictions still apply to both genders, and thus "the demonstration of this oppression directs the reader's attention to the mechanism which generates oppression."[9] The author (Yoshinaga Fumi, b. 1971) exposes the power structures that are constraining for both genders. In *Noir*, the power structures are given a form in the clearly fanciful world-setting of assassins and espionage which moves the story, allowing the underlying struggle of the two women against an overbearing and archaic male ruling class to be played out without seeming overly radical. The final statement however is clear: the female characters reject previous restraints and will control their own paths in independence. The world-setting vs. characters conflict exposes these contemporary issues, enabling a critical narrative through the use of Anime's form.

Library War (Figure 3.7) takes place in a near future world-setting, where a number of media censorship and freedom-of-speech-suppression acts have produced a society in which books are guarded treasures and libraries are forced to take up arms to protect the books they keep. Anything deemed unworthy will be taken away by force by censorship supporting forces. In this world, becoming a librarian means joining the Library Corps. Enter Kasahara Iku, a tall and lanky young woman that strongly supports and understands the need to protect the rights of free speech and stop oppressive censorship. Her passion stems in part from an inspirational moment when she was younger (and apparently helpless) and was saved from pro-censorship groups by someone she calls her "prince." Due to this vigor for freedom of speech she joins the Library Corps and through her physical capabilities is chosen as the first female officer of an elite military task force for her base/library. As she struggles to keep up with her studies for librarian duties as well as train as an essential member in the task force, we find her coping with her identity as an individual and as a woman in society. She is given constant pressure by her family to "be more like a normal girl." Her difference is sometimes

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9   Hikari Hori, "Views from Elsewhere: Female Shoguns in Yoshinga Fumi's *Ōoku* and Their Precursors in Japanese Popular Culture," *Japanese Studies* 32, no. 1 (2012): 81.

Figure 3.7. *Library War* features librarian soldiers that protect their library's books by engaging in pseudo-warfare. In the series, we follow the struggles of the talented young soldier Kasahara, the first female allowed into the special forces of the Library Corps. The apparent unreality of the premise and world structure helps to concentrate on her struggle, bringing to the forefront the issues with free-speech and gender transgression as Kasahara moves against her world-setting. *Toshokan Sensō* (*Library War*, 2008–2008) Currently available DVD & Blu-ray Box (Asmik Ace Co., 2012) © Hiro Arikawa·Mediaworks/Library War Production Committee.

amplified by the foil her roommate, Shibasaki Akako, plays: while she is an extremely capable intelligence officer and aims to be the first female commander of the Library Corps, Shibasaki spends a large amount of time on her cosmetics and plays a more typically feminine role as opposed to that of a military officer on the front lines.

The use of unreality and realism in Anime can also be read here as containing progressive elements that are revealed in their balance, most notably in the use of world-setting and character types. Azuma notes the unreality of the world-setting in the Anime *Saber Marionette J* (*Seibā Marionetto Jei*, 1996–1997)*,* an advanced Edo period society, stating that "the spectacle of ultramodern technology mingled with pre-modern everyday customs that form the backdrop to this anime is totally lacking in any sense of reality," the observation fringing on the declaration that the setting is almost absurd.[10] Contemporary Anime series *Gintama* also has this sort of setting, but is self-conscious of the comedic oddness of the setting as it is a comedy Anime. A similar sense of incongruity is felt in the world-setting of *Library War*. The concept of book burning and censorship is a very potent topic, and can readily be seen as a plausible reason for taking up arms. However the idea of librarians as armed special operatives strays a bit to the absurd. There are frequent scenes of military officers in complete military uniforms and jump suits having defense conversations in a librarian's office. There is also the very substantial threat that despite Kasahara's prowess with her physical and tactical abilities, she may be forced out of the task force unless she can master being a librarian as well. "Scholarly warrior" has a different nuance than "librarian soldier"—the juxtaposition of the two almost disparate professions is ingenious in its incongruity. Nonetheless the idea is accepted due to the animated context it is presented in, at home next to the myriad of odd Anime scenarios abundant in the art form as a whole,[11] a good example of Azuma and Ōtsuka's anime/manga-like Realism.

The detailed societal environment provides a plausible Anime situation for Kasahara's fight to break gender boundaries to be accepted and seriously considered. This affords for simultaneous commentary on the issue of censorship as well as critical gender issues in the Anime. The unreality of the world-setting allows us to focus on the inner conflict of Kasahara's transgression, yet is safe within the bounds of the animated world it exists in. The outer layer of anti-censorship is slowly peeled away to reveal the

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[10] Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*: 22–23.
[11] Ōtsuka Eiji, Azuma Hiroki. Azuma and Able, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. 56.

layered inner realm of gender transgression, all displayed in the realistic unreal realm of Anime. I am not implying that the "outer layer" is any less significant than the "inner" layer in the Anime, but rather that there are multiple critical narratives at play at the same time.

The character types employed are also crucial to its reading. Kasahara, is the "strong-willed, pure-hearted, and talented in physical activities but lacking in her studies" type. Characters of this type are usually central heroic figures in Anime and thus her character type would typically inspire empathy for her situation, like the male character Sousuke from *Full Metal Panic!* (e.g. despite his frequent killing of people and personality short comings, he is a sympathetic and heroic character). Significantly, Kasahara's character design is unique, as she is tall and lanky, and does *not* possess large breasts, a characteristic that is uncommon in physically strong female characters. Kasahara is troubled with the pressures of being in the task force, being the first woman on the team, as well as with the trials and tribulations of romance. She dreams of her prince that inspired her to join the Library Corps, and deals with the commanding officer she constantly bickers with, who, it is later revealed, is coincidentally that very same prince. While on the one had she is dealing with the societal pressure to conform to gender stereotypes, she performs exceptionally well in a typically masculine profession. At the same time she has to deal with a complicated romantic situation that is generally characterized as a "hetero-normative" female gendered situation of searching for her prince charming. This tension is part of what progresses the series as we see her overcome obstacles in both her romantic and professional life, the two frequently coinciding as her love interest is her commanding officer.

Despite the world-setting and use of character types, Kasahara's circumstances resonate with real-world situations. The tension felt in *Library War* by Kasahara (and Shibasaki) is reminiscent of feminist concerns in contemporary Japan, such as "women's leadership, conflicts between job responsibilities and reproductive pressures, and the strong sense of isolation and alienation felt by female wage earners."[12] The depiction of the realistic circumstances of her character is ultimately aided by the unreality of the world-setting and character types to produce a critical narrative. In building Kasahara's character off of a frequently used type from other Anime, her situation within the world-setting's society is made familiarly identifiable as an oft-utilized character type.

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[12] Hori notes these in conjunction with *Ōoku*. Hori, "Views from Elsewhere: Female Shoguns in Yoshinga Fumi's *Ōoku* and Their Precursors in Japanese Popular Culture," 80.

The character vs. world-setting structure provides for her simultaneous performance of an extremely masculine profession and extremely feminine romantic quest to be received as a natural outgrowth of the world-setting, which, as stated prior, deeply affects the characters in Anime. The world-setting of censorship and gender norms often hinder her from reaching her romantic and professional goals, and her movement with and against the world-setting produces Kasahara's narrative. The familiarity and likeability of her character type provides the audience with a trope that enhances an empathetic reading of her narrative. Kasahara's struggle against censorship intertwined with her struggle against gender norms provides a transgressive narrative through the play of these formal elements.

Because so many archetypes exist throughout Anime, they may at first appear merely as a follow-through in conjunction with a convention. The use of types can be utilized for critical means, not merely existing passively. In reacting (fighting and winning) against a world-setting that is a literal manifestation of oppressive power structures, critical significance arises. In examples such as *Library War* and *Noir*, their unreality and realism is "multiplied and displaced," but allows for the projection of real-world emotions onto characters, and disguised unreal situations create a distance in which critical discussions can play out. As Hori notes of gender progressive Manga, they provide an "alternative space of subversive imagination."[13] The same may be said of certain Anime, with the Anime form providing the means of expression. Anime can be a space for critical discourse, and through seeing the balance of realism and unreality as well as the world-setting versus characters elements of the form, we can better highlight the proactive dialogues occurring in Anime.

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Noh actors use an unmoving mask with a single expression, and when unmasked, enter the stage with expressionless faces. Clothed in exquisitely beautiful attire, they do not seem to make eye contact with the audience, as if viewing a landscape far away, beyond the reality that we can see. They perform in another world, created from their actions and their words.

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[13] Speaking of Mangas such as *The Rose of Versailles* (*Berusaiyu no Bara*, 1972–1974) Hori writes, "such historical *shōjo manga* present non-normative gender identities, raise issues of women's political leadership and problems of compulsory heterosexuality, and create an alternative space of subversive imagination by women and for women." Hori, "Views from Elsewhere: Female Shoguns in Yoshinga Fumi's Ōoku and Their Precursors in Japanese Popular Culture," 78.

The entrancing soundtrack of this realm produced by music the orchestra creates, cuts through the theater, the atmosphere rolling in like mist, drawing us in, inviting us into their world to see what they see, feel what they feel; to participate in their reality while staying in our own. It is the audience that completes the Noh actor's performance. Like Bunraku, we cannot see these puppets or the masked actors of Noh really grieve. They cannot shed real tears, and so it is us, the audience that participates in the reality of their emotions, giving them our emotions and our experiences. It is we who make them real. We each view, from our different positions, a different tilt of the mask, a different angle of their world, and so make our own decisions on the outcome of such seemingly simple stories in ways we cannot always put into words.

Although the tears are visually seen by us in Anime, the characters themselves are not really crying because they ultimately do not exist in an approachable form. As William D. Routt notes, the characters do not have actual "thoughts or feelings," and it is through the context of the narrative that "we attribute thoughts and feelings to their actions: words, expressions, gestures, intonation and the like."[14] We project the emotions onto these celluloid beings. It is a very personal experience. We as spectators participate in these dramas and each take away something of our own. Important in Anime is the development of the characters, their troubles and pains. They are happening somewhere, some place unseen, behind the masks and the movements, the drawings and the soundtrack. But really, they are only happening within us. It is our feelings that are placed onto theirs and so we find ourselves in their world looking out at ourselves.

Such a reality cannot be experienced so profoundly except within our own minds. Traditional Japanese theater as a whole has previously manipulated such techniques to create unreal worlds on stage, most famously in Noh, where there are almost no stage props or sets. The whole drama unfolds simultaneously onstage and in our heads. Kabuki and Bunraku go a step further towards physical representations and create highly detailed sets that provoke us to believe that which is onstage is a brilliantly fabricated realm. But, the beings that produce the events, actors in *kumadori* or puppets manipulated, are clearly unreal. Their fights are stylized dances that we perceive as intense battles in our own minds. Their plight is just a

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[14] William D. Routt, "Stillness and Style in "Neon Genesis Evangelion"," *Animation Journal* 8, no. 2, Spring (2000): 29.

mirror of our own, played out in a world far more beautiful and strange than the one we know.

Anime follows this practice, creating expansive worlds and wild scenes on a two dimensional screen. While it is clearly an unreal vision, we fill in the gaps with our minds and bring these battles over into our world in our imaginations. It is this straddling between our inner reality and the outer unreality which creates a sense of distance and beauty for us that is readily recognizable. They work towards the end of realism through unreal presentations in so stylized a fashion that they have created a distinct aesthetic at the center of their art: it is the pure spectacle of this performance that dazzles us, completed in part by our emotional participation in it.

The use of unreal expression to produce a narrative that has its basis in 'realistic' human emotion is not just a defining characteristic of Japanese traditional theater, but of Asian and World Theater as a whole. In America and Europe, another example of an unrealistic mode of expression in theater can be found in Ballet. But almost every culture has made their own system of aesthetics, means of expressions, and ways that they have come to balance realism and unreality to tell their story. As we have seen, Anime endeavors to balance realism and unreality in its own particular way, in a manner that is similar to how it is balanced in Japanese traditional theater. Without hiding the unreality, even stressing it at times, Anime and Japanese traditional theater ground this with the detail inlaid in the presentation, ultimately creating an uncanny aesthetic of realistic unreality.

Anime, and much of Japan's various Anime/Manga styled merchandise, games, figurines, models, toys, and other products' popularity and production in Japan (as well as the rest of the world, judged by the success and influence of such Japanese popular products), could be an outgrowth of a general preference for unreal forms of expression over realism. It is a desire to enjoy familiar forms with blatant repetition and variation, with dependable practices and systems whose masters can manipulate them to great effect. Historically, all across the world, it is such forms that are preferred over vainly seeking out the myth of originality. Though energizing, such a practice is bleak, and the adherence to formal conventions allows for multitudes of depth based on refinement over time, the regularity and comfort in knowing the next step, and the surprise that comes when that is broken. There is great creativity in the variations within the form. We find it across so many arts, but we insist on the value of originality. Perhaps it is because few forms embrace and exhibit their formality to the degree that Anime and the theater do. With a form that is based in unreality, but

adds elements of detail and realism, the audience gains a grounding that allows them to participate and piece together the unreality, to allow them to get sucked in and accept the unreality as they are assisted by the realistic elements. In this way, emotions that are otherwise inexpressible can be produced, on stage and on screen, and aim this towards one glorious end: creating a particular type of beauty, one that is unhindered by the restraints of reality, and freed in the stunningly realistic display of unreality.

PART FOUR

HYPERBOLIZED AESTHETICS

AESTHETIC VISIONS

> As long as beauty is created, what may be missing in terms of technique from the performance will not cause any difficulties.
>
> Zeami[1]

As explained in the above sections, Kabuki and Bunraku both go to great lengths to create an encompassing realm on stage, complete with minor details to accentuate the facade. To help produce this, even the use of reference is called upon to enlarge this vision. Zeami explains this necessity in Noh Theater: "give the audience a larger more profound sense of the imaginative landscape being created, the essential effect of any *nō*. Indeed, the need for the use of such legends on ancient sites in terms of artistic material to construct a play is related to the matter of creating this 'larger view' in the minds of the audience."[2] This is to create a complete illusion; the world described in a particular style. In Anime, the many vast and extensive worlds are a spectacle in themselves, drawing attention to their beauty, exposing us to the aesthetic realm we are to experience; depictions of grandiose universes beyond our fickle reality. While Noh, Kabuki, Bunraku, and Anime each produce such expanses, they all do so in distinctly different ways. In Anime, these are, as previously stated, so complex that it proves difficult to distinguish the separation between the characters and world-setting, as which one is the focus of the production.

What is common here is the conscious creation of an aesthetic realm, a stylized field in which the play of human emotions can take place, expressed in the particular terms of beauty relative to that art form. This in itself is an integral part of the traditional dramas (not just Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, but other performing arts such as Beijing Opera and Topeng), defining them through their stylization, and elaborating on a number of topics regarding the human condition through the conventionalized

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[1] This quote is from *Sarugaki dangi*, which does not appear in the Hare translation of Zeami's treatises. Technically the treatise is not written by Zeami but by Hata no Motoyoshi. Rimer translates the treatise as "An Account of Zeami's Reflections on Art (*Sarugaku dangi*): Notes taken down by Hata no Motoyoshi." Zeami, Rimer, and Yamazaki, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*: 184.

[2] Also taken from *Sarugaku dangi*. See previous note. Ibid., 217.

aestheticized expression. The theater forms have a focus on carefully crafted stylization to a specific aesthetic end, achieved through conventionalization. They are all made up of very particular structural systems that are refined towards their respective aesthetics, producing a distinct type of aesthetic logic aimed towards the production of a performance that is conducive to creating certain aesthetic effects by the performers, and emotive responses from audiences. In the modern world (or perhaps "post-modern" is a more accurate term), Anime follows this practice, delving into contemporary human issues in its specific conventionalized aestheticised field.

Up until this point, in order to expose the form of Anime, this study has concentrated on the rhythms and compositions, the narrative structures, interrelated divisions, and the real and unreal elements in these constructions that all come together to produce the aesthetic of the form of Anime (and Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki). But this aesthetic is itself a part of the form, if not the very focus of the form itself—the form has become the content. The conventionalized aesthetics, the performance of which marks Anime as "Anime," are a good portion of the attraction to Anime, an aspect it shares with Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki. This section of the book will examine the importance and focus on aesthetics in these arts, specifically noting it in Anime. The aesthetics are crucial to the Anime form, so much so that it is practically synonymous with the form itself, made up by the processes and methods that have been previously detailed in earlier chapters (and those to follow).

However, it is not the aesthetic itself that is similar to the traditional theater, but the *focus* on conventionalized aesthetics that is the similarity between Japanese traditional theater and Anime. In effect, I would go so far as to say that Anime is in fact, defined by its very aesthetic. Each individual Anime has its own style, comprised of its narrative structure and plot, world-setting and character inhabitants, their design and personalities, the aural elements of the soundtrack and voice acting, and the ultimate atmosphere and emotive responses that these elements create. But these all fall under the greater Anime (and Manga)[3] aesthetic conventions. This component of conventionalized boundaries that productions are

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[3] While Anime and Manga are deeply intertwined, I have divided them here because audio plays a large part in Anime, while Manga is a sequential image and textual form. That being said, their visual style (what I have been calling, the Anime-Manga visual style) is closely related.

repeatedly performed within is what is shared with the traditional theater.

Hu defines animation by stating that "to animate is essentially to communicate, to tell a story for oneself or others or for both, via a chain of manipulated and designed images."[4] In my view, this statement would equally apply to the Japanese traditional stage in its artificially created images, the stillness in Noh and the *mie* of Kabuki. Rather than just stating that Anime is similar to Japanese traditional theater, I would say that the theater is also similar to Anime. They both create carefully constructed aestheticised atmospheres and stylized designs, filled with motion and most importantly, a dynamic stillness.

Kabuki, Bunraku, and Noh's stylistic conventions establish a certain amount of distance between the viewer and the performance through the unreality of the presentation, balancing this through a number of realistic detailing strategies. Each art does so in a specific way, ultimately creating a separate aesthetic for each form. This can extend even further than the actors, musicians, costumes, props, and sets, to the actual building that houses the stages themselves for all the arts: the Minami-za in Kyoto, amongst other theaters in Japan, can easily stand as a work of art by itself, both inside and out. The Kongō-ryū Noh Theater in Kyoto, as well as the National Bunraku Theater in Osaka, both provide beautiful environments specifically tailored to view the arts they stage there. This can be said of all the Noh and Bunraku stages, and the glamorous Kabuki Theaters. In the theaters, you are encapsulated in a space dedicated to the production of those realistically unreal aesthetics. Upon moving into the performance space of the theater you are literally exiting the outside world to enter a different environment. In performance on the stage, each respective theater form creates its own exquisitely stylized environment, a world that draws you into its beauty and charm, but very carefully keeps you away in its upfront unreality. In Anime, such a paradox is also evident, in what has been described by Napier as "a striking visual style, largely architectonic, in which space, shape, and color play off each other to produce in the viewer a sensation that is disorienting and exhilarating at the same time."[5] One could easily make the same statement about the Kabuki, Bunraku, and Noh as well. In an analogous manner, through the balancing of unreal and real elements, constructed in a similar mosaic structure to that of the

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[4] Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building*: 13.
[5] Napier, "When the Machines Stop," 108.

jo-ha-kyū system of the theater world, Anime creates its own highly stylized aesthetic realm on screen.

It is an absolutely captivating grandeur and aesthetic, yet so other worldly that its ultimate expression is also a focal point of these dramas, not just the narrative content. The unreality is embraced, exaggerated and balanced with aspects of realism, then followed to find an expression of beauty that is lyrical to the extent that it could not possibly be real. This practice of distancing artistic expression through hyperbolized aesthetics is one of the most important aspects of the art form. Speaking of Manga (and to an extent Anime), Jaqueline Berndt explains that "genres within manga are less centered on thematic content than in the United States and, furthermore...many regular readers today are less attracted by narrative content than by technical craftsmanship, visual spectacle, intertextual references, and cute characters."[6] The aesthetics, the beauty of the work as a mosaic whole of various parts (references, character/*mecha*/world-setting design, voice-actors, etc.) is a significant part of the experience of Anime.

This is evident in the large amount of Anime styles within the Anime art form. In general, the backdrops of Anime are rendered in a realistic and detailed manner, and thus, perhaps the most easily recognizable component is the varying degrees of realistic presentation of the characters. For the most part, in the general Anime style, the human form is elongated and the eyes exaggerated to easily convey emotion, to shine and show particular shading and light effects. The noses are small and sharp, accompanied by a small triangular mouth and a pointed chin. The hair usually sprouts in various directions and both eye and hair color can be almost any hue and tone from the visible spectrum (or combination of them).[7] Costumes have a huge range from everyday conservative to incredibly chic, scantily clad to excessively complex, deceivingly simple to gloriously pompous. However within this realm of stylization, there are more "cartoonish" (or rather "Anime-ish") and more "realistic" representations. Depending on the overall atmosphere of the Anime, there are a number of different Anime styles that are used. These seemingly minor differences can alter the tone of an Anime considerably. The aesthetics of the world

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[6] Jaqueline Berndt "Considering Manga Discourse: Location, Ambiguity, Historicity." *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*. Ed. Mark W. MacWilliams (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2008), 297.

[7] Though, as we have seen, certain patterns arise: purple, pink, yellow, red, gray, blue, dull blue, or black hair, and red, brown, green, or gray eyes are popular choices.

and characters are crucial aspects of an Anime, allowing viewers to select Anime not necessarily entirely on content, but on visual production as well. In this way the audience—or, perhaps more precisely put, the customer—can choose an aesthetic world within which they can enjoy the Anime. The types available range from *shōjo*, to gothic styles like *xxx-Holic* (*XXX Horikku*, 2006–2006, 2008–2008), to a more avant-garde style as in *Mononoke* (*Mononoke*, 2007–2007), to the *moe* styling of *K-On!* (*Keion!*, 2009–2009), to a more "serious" depiction as in *Ghost in the Shell* (1995); with the advent and frequent use of computer animations, a more computerized than hand-drawn style is also available. Each one is specifically recognizable to Anime viewers and the subtle differences affect the general atmosphere of the Anime and the presentation to a great degree. Simply by looking at the style an avid Anime viewer could take a good guess of what "type" of thematic content makes up the story, and what archetypical characters will be found in that world. This is also tied to which production companies worked on the Anime, many with hallmark styles that Anime viewers seek out. Each different aesthetic aims for a different ideal of beauty, but all under the larger umbrella of the Anime aesthetic. Again, the concentration, adherence to, and performance of conventionalized aesthetics draws Anime close to the traditional performing arts.

It has often been said that the purpose of Kabuki is to be beautiful.[8] The culmination of all the stylized acting techniques, make-up, costumes, sets, and music, is to create a beautiful experience for the viewer. The *mie* poses highlight these instances, freezing moments of tension and accentuating their beauty. Describing the art of Kabuki, Katherine Mezur states that "above all, stylization through abstraction, elongation, diminution, repetition, or exaggeration, highlights form over content and meaning."[9] She goes on to quote James R. Brandon, who explains the purpose of Kabuki's style, "to create a sense of beauty irrespective to subject matter. The extended murder scenes…may seem sordidly real, but in performance they are eerily beautiful. Delicately lyric music accompanies actions that are executed in artfully choreographed dance patterns."[10] On the topic of Kabuki appreciation, Samuel Leiter explains that the true connoisseur of Kabuki will eventually change their focus from the narrative to "those

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[8] Brandon and Leiter, *Kabuki Plays On Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697–1766*: 1.

[9] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness*: 138.

[10] Ibid., 138. For the Brandon quote see James R. Brandon, *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 23.

aural and visual elements that compose the *mise-en-scène* and which, in this performance-dominated theater, take precedence over the play's existence as 'dramatic literature.'"[11]

Sometimes parts of plays are included only for their aesthetic value. For example, the *ushiro-buri* movement in Kabuki and Bunraku—where the female character will turn around, back to the audience with the long sleeves of the kimono and their belt (*obi*) wrapped around their arms—has no direct connection to the plot but is an aesthetic focused event to show off the kimono and the elegance of the movement. Such a stylized action is done only as an exposition of beauty, and does not necessarily correlate with the events occurring at that point in the narrative.[12] Bunraku, much like Kabuki, focuses on the beauty of the puppets' movements—the *ushiro-buri* movement is actually taken from the Bunraku Theater and is a very difficult feat for the puppeteers to perform—the music of the *shamisen*, and the chanting of the *tayū* to create the atmosphere and effect of beauty in compliance with its conventions. However, the scripts are one of the most prized parts of these performances, the *tayū* raising it in respect before every performance. The words in the Bunraku scripts, as in those of the Noh Theater, form the poetry that is crucial to creating the tone and splendor of this type of expression.

While the plots of Noh plays are often considered quite simple (and quite often they are), the characters and events that take place are not necessarily the only focal point of the play. The wordplay and references within the scripts, as well as the dancing and costumes, moving to the rhythm of the music, all formulate the eventual production, and this culminates in the creation of a specific atmosphere of beauty. Among the most famous of these would be the elusive and elegant *yūgen* of the Noh Theater, an aesthetic that was highly prized since its inception in *waka* poetry theory. In the contemporary performance it is extremely refined and reserved in the extreme, created in a stylized arena in which the elocution of *yūgen* can occur. Though touched on earlier, to describe what *yūgen* is would be to undergo a project that is beyond the scope of this book, but it has been described by Arthur Thornhill as a dialectic between clarity and obscurity, darkness and light.[13] *Yūgen* is often translated as a

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[11] Samuel L. Leiter, Trans. *The Art of Kabuki: Famous Plays in Performance*. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1979). xvi.
[12] Brazell, *Traditional Japanese Theater: An Anthology of Plays*: 30.
[13] Thornhill, "Yugen After Zeami."

deep, dark, mysterious and profound beauty, associated with a lingering sadness subtly displayed with elegance and grace. Much of Noh Theater, over its six hundred year history has been aimed at this aesthetic ideal, among others, seeking the elucidation of certain types of beauty, spiritual, philosophical, visual, and aural. The result is a structural system that has been designed to produce such aesthetics as effectively as possible in the performance art troupe. To understand this, an educated audience is helpful but not necessary; a highly trained and experienced acting troupe is fundamental, and the actual viewing of the performance and examination of the text paramount.

Noh has been described as "internalized, understated, and very refined, …[A] well-wrought poem in which imagistic integrity overshadows plot."[14] When Noh is seen from a distance, the austere beauty of the stage itself creates a distinct image that Komparu compares to Japanese calligraphy: whereas the black ink can be thought of as adding form to the white paper, a deeper understanding of the form is achieved when you view the black ink as subtracting from the white space.[15] On the subdued Noh stage, the simultaneous subtraction and addition of all the seemingly sparse elements on stage provides an image for the viewer that emulates a similar visual experience to that of calligraphy, with the exquisite appearance of the *shite* against the simple stage. This is perhaps best appreciated when seated in the back of the theater.

The aesthetics and images in Anime are very distinct, readily recognizable from other forms of animation, film, or any other art. The human form and styles take their origin from the Manga which are the source for many Anime. But Manga's style itself is an art form that developed in Japan, finding its own roots in Edo period woodblock prints and amalgamating a number of other foreign and domestic influences. Though they are intricately intertwined commercially and artistically, when cast onto celluloid and put into motion, the Anime style becomes different from that of Manga, invariably altered in the adaptation process as it is now a) in motion, b) in color, c) includes sound, and d) is separated into different narrative divisions. Any number of physical, material, and marketing reasons could be behind this change. I will give one example, that of *Blade of the Immortal* (*Mugen no Jyūnin*, Manga 1994-ongoing, Anime 2008–2008).

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[14] Monica Bethe, "The Use of Costumes in Nō Drama." (Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies, Vol. 18, No. 1, Five Centuries of Japanese Kimono: On This Sleeve of Fondest Dreams: 1992), 7.
[15] Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives*: 70–74.

The distinct Manga style of the Manga artist Samura Hiroaki provided a texture and detail in the sketchy but refined realism of the Manga version, bringing the Manga international success. In adapting the work to Anime, the visual style was changed to a more "standard," "realistic" Anime style. Samura's style would indeed be difficult to put into animation, but there was something definitive that was lost in the translation of visual styles. The Anime aired for only one season.

As stated previously, the most basic unit of Anime is the static image. This visual cue, along with the key use of aural elements results in moments of the production which create the maximum impression on the viewer. These parts, like the *mie* in Kabuki, highlight the intensity of the moment and exhibit their beauty. Painstakingly crafted, the images seen in Anime leave their impression, memorable visions painted to the back of your mind, stirring and captivating the viewer. The Major slowly falling, fading into the urban circuit below in *Ghost in the Shell*; Shinji staring up as his father in the background of Eva-01 in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*; the forest spirit in *Princess Mononoke*; the urban landscape of *Akira*; the final confrontation between Spike and Vincent in *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door*; each succeeds in producing a striking and pleasurable aesthetic experience in the same vein as the classical theater of Japan that inspired woodblock prints to capture their beauty on paper. And just like the woodblock prints, these images hold commercial value in their dynamic stillness,[16] in their consolidation and crystallization of a certain type of beauty.

Scenes such as the above-mentioned Major Kusanagi falling through the window in *Ghost in the Shell*; or the excruciatingly long, still moment leading up to Shinji crushing Kaworu in *Evangelion*; when Julia gets shot, birds flying away in the chaos as she falls in the rain at the end of *Cowboy Bebop*; in all of these impressive scenes the tension is heightened through the elongation of time, allowing the imagistic beauty of the moment, of the emotion latent within these instances to be exposed. This blatant denial of reality, of creating a lapse in normative time, is a commonly aestheticizing technique used to exaggerate the emotions within that instance and continue the rhythmic pacing of the narrative. We find this in moments in Noh, Kabuki and Bunraku, when the tension is at the "point

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[16] Steinberg postulates how it is the dynamic stillness of the Anime image that gives it the power to leap between mediums with ease, allowing multiple products to contain the same affecting image of the Anime character. Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: 6.

of breaking," it is often the most beautiful, allowing time to slow down or speed up (in the world-setting's time on stage) to accentuate this.

The Noh Theater is not often characterized as one that is filled with spectacle, at least not in the same way it is shown off in the grandeur and flamboyance that is prevalent in Kabuki and Bunraku. While Noh does have a variety of fifth category Demon plays filled with rapid movements and sensational aspects, Noh theater is usually marked by its austerity and reserved expression of beauty. In the Meiji novel *Kusamakura*, by Natsume Sōseki, the subject of Noh is discussed by the narrator:

> The Noh drama, after all, has its human feelings. There is no guarantee you won't weep at a play like *Shichikoichi* or *Sumidagawa*. But what we experience in these plays is the effect of three parts human feeling to seven parts art. The pleasure we gain from a Noh play springs not from any skill at presenting the raw human feelings of the everyday world but from clothing feeling "as it is" in layer upon layer of art, and in a kind of slowed serenity of deportment not to be found in the real world.[17]

As the narrator observed, the dominant element of Noh is its exquisite, refined aesthetics. Again, we can see that the "reality" discussed here is the human emotion, and the unreality, the heavy stylization that it is expressed in. The elegant and graceful beauty of depth and elegance of *yūgen* may be one of the layers of art the narrator is referring to. Among the many plays that exhibit this beauty is the Noh play *Izutsu*.[18] The crucial moment of the play is when the delusional main character looks into the faux well on stage, craving to see her long lost lover. Half-possessed, wearing her ex-lover's cloak and hat, she peers into the well, wavering into madness, only then realizing it is just her own reflection and her lover Narihira is long gone. This is when the *yūgen* is at its peak on stage. It is such subtle movements and the music around the *shite* that is the Noh connoisseur's focus, seeking not just the liveliness of the Demon plays, or the auspiciousness of the God plays, or to understand the madness in the Mad Person's plays. All of this is expressed in elegant poetry with actors clad in exquisite dress and haunting mask, the movements stylized, graceful and precise, the music sustaining a certain atmosphere and pace within which the play proceeds. The plot is not the focus, but the presentation is. It is the elocution of the poetry and dance, the costumes and refined movements, the song and its lyric descriptions of the illusory world—these are what

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[17] Natsume and McKinney, *Kusamakura*: 11.
[18] Zeami labeled this a "model play," noting it as a play of the "highest flower." See Hare, *Zeami's Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo*: 134.

contribute to the *yūgen* in Noh. The production of this aesthetic has been a focus of this theater, and much of the theoretical literature and research around it. In other words, the aesthetic content; the focus of the Noh Theater is the execution of the form itself. The narrative is just one part that contributes to these aesthetics. This is common to all the theaters discussed here.

Among the examples of this is the *michiyuki*, prevalent in all three theatrical forms. The *michiyuki* is a frequent practice of the traditional Japanese theater that describes the journey of one or more characters in the play from one destination to another. This journey can be a quick description of the character(s) moving from one place to their arrival at their destination, speeding up a long period of travel to a few lines, or it can be a longer and more lyrical passage producing evocative descriptions of the places they pass through. Speaking of the *michiyuki* in Bunraku, Donald Keene remarks that it "is intended to intoxicate by its lyrical beauty, and to delight by its clever references to famous places in Japan."[19] Chikamatsu Monzaemon most famously uses the *michiyuki* in his love suicides, elaborating the journey of the lovers to their place of death. Through the vivid poetry of the verse, we are witnesses to their travel, even into the depths of the underworld and back into this reality.[20] These pieces stand to display to us the wonders of their world-setting, prepare us for their death in the narrative, building the tension through stressing the beauty of their environment. However, they are often a highlight of these plays, the glorious spectacle hidden in the lines that comprise their journey and the details that display this. Only the most talented and famous *tayū* will perform the *michiyuki* scene. This aestheticized trip the doomed lovers take is a focal point of the play and an integral part of the genre in general.

It is this attention to the creation of an imagistic environment that is consciously produced and prioritized that is the final, crucial link between the theater forms and Anime. While the expressions cannot possibly be real, they are presented in a highly stylized manner that is presented as reality within their unreal expression and exist as objects of beauty. This is, within all the art forms, one of the ultimate ends for their works. These hyperbolized aesthetics function as a critical ingredient in the attraction, definition, production, and performance of both traditional Japanese theater and Anime.

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[19] Donald Keene, *The Battles of Coxinga*: 21.
[20] See Gerstle's chapter, "Descent to Paradise" in *Circles of Fantasy*.

FORM INTO CONTENT

All three theatrical art forms employ a number of different arts to produce the overall aesthetic conditions for their productions. These include costume and set design, spatial design, dance, pantomime, singing, literature, and orchestral music; each of the various art forms used are necessary to the theatrical forms. They are what is currently labeled as "total theater," but for centuries, this was just how theater was done in Asia—a complete multisensory experience. Each respective art—each piece of the performance—is highly specialized and heavily stylized in the conventional manner of that theater. We find this in Kathakali, Topeng, and of course, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki. This adherence to conventionalized stylization on multiple levels of media (sound, movement, visuals) in the performance is evident in Anime as well. Though many subjects were broached in the previous section, this chapter will discuss how deep conventionalized stylization occurs throughout the Anime form. I suggest that the pervasive and upfront conventionalized stylization of Anime presentation highlights its aesthetic as a central focus. In Anime, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, there are different results that arise from the formal, conventionalized structures in these arts, and it is the performance (literally) of these conventions that is itself a significant portion of their content. The concentration is on the aesthetic display and spectacle, just as much as the narrative itself. This is not to say that narrative plot is unimportant, but rather that the presentation in the stylized expression is *not* subordinate to plot. As we have seen, even narratives contain a conventionalized structure, with patterns that are often repeated and reiterated,[1] taking a position on the same level as the presentation of it.

The keywords for appreciation in all of these arts are "view" (e.g. "viewers of Anime...") and "see" (e.g. "I will see *Aoi no Ue*."). Undeniably, there is a large amount of emphasis on the purely visual aspects of the performance. The costumes are, for lack of a better word, extravagant in both

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[1] In the theater—throughout Asia and the World—popular performances and plays were constantly repeated and replayed. It should be noted that these often have a ritual aspect to them, but the audiences were nonetheless fully aware of the outcome of the narrative.

Kabuki and Noh. Noh masks and robes are easily viewed as museum-worthy creations, painstakingly crafted to produce the regal beauty that the majority of the Noh world's characters epitomize. Many of the still moments in Noh allow the full beauty of the stage and costumed performers to be taken in and appreciated, with the costumes acting as "the primary focus of visual interest."[2] As noted previously, the sparse use of stage decoration and props allows the design of the stage itself to interact with the performers and create a scene which begs the description of a flowing painting, smoothly and elegantly producing the movement of the narrative. Kabuki is perhaps more accurately described as a "moving woodblock print" than a "picture," as there are countless Kabuki prints from the centuries. The costumes and make-up produce a highly aestheticised world that entices one to capture it in a permanent form. In fact, a common practice today is, in place of wood-block prints, photographs of the performance being sold in the theater.

In Bunraku, the puppets, the wooden dolls manipulated on stage, mixed with the chanter, provide extensive visual and aural delights, but in this theater, the script is of determined importance. The intricacies of its poetic prose, the fluidity and emotion latent in the words are what imbue the performance with energy and life. I am not implying that one element of the production (i.e. music, dance, costume, etc.) is more important than the others, despite the highlighting of individual elements here. Rather, it is the composite of all the components that are included in the multisensory productions that creates the final aesthetic. This point must be stressed: that it is the aesthetic, the conventionalized stylization of expression that is common to each theater respectively, and is thus central to the content of the performances themselves. There is a particular manner in which the scripts are produced, the actors pose, the music played, or the costumes are organized, and it is the performance of those particulars that defines them.

Kabuki and Bunraku—sharing common scripts and interacting with each other for centuries—often utilize a number of spectacle oriented elements to add a dash of both realism and brilliance to the events on stage (see Figure 4.1). These include falling snow, leaves and cherry blossoms, even real water and mud are used at times, augmenting the spectacle.[3] Flying, flaming spirit orbs and hovering ghosts populate many of the summer plays in Kabuki, meant to frighten the audience and "cool

² Bethe, "The Use of Costumes in Nō Drama," 7.
³ Brandon and Leiter, *Kabuki Plays on Stage: Brilliance and Bravado, 1697–1766:* 9.
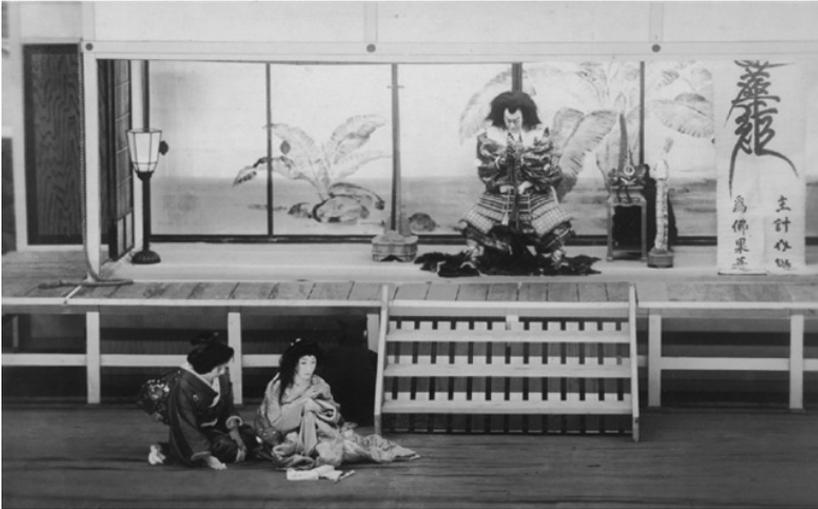
Figure 4.1. We can see the focus on aesthetics in the grandeur and spectacle on the Bunraku and Kabuki stage.

Top: Kabuki image courtesy of the Kaizawa Kabuki Collection, Asia Collection, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library. Bottom: Bunraku: "The Teachings for Women Imoyama and Seyama Mansions" May 1977; Yoshida Kazuo (Puppeteer, Kikyō), Yoshida Minotaro (Puppeteer, Kogiku), Toyomatsu Seijūrō, IV (Puppeteer, Hinadori), Yoshida Minosuke III (Puppeteer, Koganosuke). Courtesy of C.V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University.

them with their chills and thrills" in the sweltering summer months. Among other spectacular aspects of Kabuki and Bunraku is that of the transformation. Many plays have moments where characters instantly transform onstage in both identity and consequently, in appearance, morphing into a different human, animal, and/or supernatural form. The popularity of these transformations has made their inclusion in the art forms a central part of the attraction, with scripts being written to accommodate the transformations to awe the audience. Even the performance of the actor playing a character can be seen as one of many transformations abundant in the theater.

Within all the traditional theaters there are a number of *kata*, or forms/techniques that are mastered and then brought on stage. These are stylized expressions, serving as models for the arts from which their pervasive patterns arise. Described in relation to Kabuki, the term *kata* can "refer to all aspects of a production, from the costumes, wigs, and make-up, to the music, sets, and properties,"[4] with similar uses for the word in the other theaters. *Kata* are the "outcome of a need on the part of their creators for externalization of a hidden idea or emotion. Concepts which words are often incapable of expressing may be conveyed through the performance of highly polished *kata* which present quintessential elements of reality in terms both immediate and compelling."[5] These are consciously studied, conventionalized, stylized expressions that are used on stage to convey something otherwise done differently, or less artistically, in real life. *Kata* can include signs for crying or reactions to certain events in famous plays, dances to express particular emotions, as well as fighting techniques, musical cues, costuming and stage practices. They are unreal movements, acting patterns that are memorized, standardized and then reproduced, and in doing so create the particular aesthetics that result in the theatrical forms. While *kata* are often rigidly adhered to, they are malleable, and depending on the actor's ability and artistic inclinations, masters of the arts will adjust the *kata* to make their individual mark. These new *kata* may then be copied by other actors and themselves be standardized.[6] *Kata* ensure a particular set of stylization in the performances, even across generations.

Perhaps there is no other image as immediately recognizable that reflects the focus on stylized beauty than the masks of Noh and the *kumadori* make-up of Kabuki. For centuries the Noh mask has been an

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[4] Leiter. *The Art of Kabuki: Famous Plays in Performance*, xvi.
[5] Ibid., xix.
[6] Brandon, "Form in Kabuki Acting," 120–122.

icon for the austere beauty of the Noh stage. Each mask is hand crafted to produce a single expression for the type it is to portray. Frequently exhibited as singular works of art, there are many books chronicling only these masks and their images. The masks are produced in an almost haunting style, adhering to very specific characteristics in their production to provide such an air around them. They embody the Noh aesthetic, each one a very particular vision of the types of court ladies, gentlemen, and apparitions that fill the world of Noh. When combined with the costumes and lyrical dance-acting, the music and stage, the production, regardless of which play is presented, is the aesthetic experience that is labeled as Noh.

The *kumadori* make-up of the Kabuki Theater plays a pivotal role in the creation of a very specific Kabuki style. Many print makers would depict star actors wearing this stylized make-up, and even today these are a large part of the popular image of Kabuki. The stark white base with colored lines is an easily recognizable feature of the Kabuki actor. *Kumadori* make-up "epitomizes the bold elements of the play, demanding exaggerated costumes, exaggerated wigs, and an exaggerated manner."[7] Here, too the make-up allows for quick identification of character types, with different patterns to express the inner attributes of the characters wearing the make-up. Generally the color red is for heroes, or those that have good intentions but forceful dispositions, and blue is for villains or ghosts (or those that are both)—in particular these two make up the most frequently used colors, though there are others. Despite their apparent unreality, there is some basis of their construction in reality. Make-up resembling *kumadori* is also used in the Chinese Beijing Opera, but there is a difference between the two: "the Japanese closely follow the body and muscular structure of the face, whereas the Chinese merely paint a pattern on the face, disregarding the structure. In this respect, Japanese *kumadori*, although essentially symbolic, does in part agree with reality."[8] Yet, in general, plays that use *kumadori* make-up include unreal subject matter. By doing so, such unreal costumes seem warranted, even natural in this setting. The plays that use such make-up generally contain those with supernatural abilities, exaggerated and unreal in their strength, valor, and evil. Again, this balance of unreality and realism plays a role in the shaping of the aesthetic of the art form.

However, the theater (and Anime) places a very high importance on the aural aspects as well. Though audiences go to "see" Noh plays, one will

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[7] Ruth M. Shaver, *Kabuki Costume*. (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1966), 337.
[8] Ibid.

often find contemporary audiences "listening" to Noh plays, many of them students of the Noh style of singing (*utai*) of the performers on stage. The "viewers" will actually be found with their heads down, lost in the *utaibon* books, carefully listening, reading the lines, observing the notation, and connecting how a professional actor sings to that school's notation and scripts. A similar experience will occur in Bunraku, with many fans paying undivided attention to their favorite chanter and not the puppets on stage.

The Japanese theater aesthetic is also marked by how music is utilized in conjunction with the events occurring visually. In Noh, for example, a chorus adds a number of story-telling and narrative aspects, operating in both the third and first person. The orchestra, consisting of a flutist and two drummers (who also call out *kakegoe* as part of the rhythm; occasionally an additional drummer is added for more intense sequences), add to the atmosphere and keep the pace and rhythm of the performance. Often, as the music rises in intensity, so do the events taking place on stage, with more fervent dancing. Bunraku's *tayū* chanter is given the most control of the events occurring on stage. They are accompanied by a *shamisen* player at all times and infuse the visual aspects of the puppets with life through the performance of the narration and dialogue, all elucidated by the pair on the side, keeping the rhythm and pace of the story. Literally all that is seen is described and governed by this important musical element. Kabuki music shares this as well.

Other musical cues are also abundant in Kabuki, being described as "'aural colors,' those that appeal not to the eye but to the ear."[9] Kabuki's audio elements help to highlight the crucial moments in the plays. Certain musical tones would signal specific events, perhaps most often heard in the famous wood-clappers which are sounded at important moments, specifically when a *mie* pose is being performed. Often a *shamisen* can be heard in the background of many scenes, the sound producing a very particular atmosphere, some with a tinge of eroticism due to the instrument's, and certain musical types', connections to the pleasure quarters. It is all carefully constructed to combine with the visual to provide an overall effect that Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948)—master of film—describes as "cinematic." He goes on to explain that the audiences "actually 'hear movement' and 'see sound.'"[10] Speaking of such moments signaled by music, he

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[9] Gunji, *The Kabuki Guide*: 55.
[10] Eisenstein, "An Unexpected Juncture," 118. Interestingly, Philip Brophy observes a similar phenomenon in Anime, in the physical depiction of sound. See Brophy, "Sonic-Atomic-Neumonic: Apocalyptic Echoes in *Anime*."

cites one of the final segments of the play *Chūsingura* where two of the noble samurai notice the hut where the villain is hiding. Eisenstein stresses how the discovery of this must be emphasized, and precisely at this moment a flute is heard in place of a visual signal to pause the tension and accentuate the discovery. He cites this as a "pure cinematographic method."[11] Eisenstein also gives the following example in relation to the use of sound in Kabuki and its cinematic elements:

> Yuranosuke leaves the besieged castle and moves from the back of the stage to the very front. Suddenly the backdrop with its life-size gate (close-up) is folded away. A second backdrop is visible: a tiny gate (long shot). This means that he has moved even further away. Yuranosuke continues his journey. A curtain of brown, green and black is drawn across the backdrop indicating that the castle is now hidden from Yuranosuke's sight. Further steps. Yuranosuke moves out on to the 'flowery way' [*hanamichi*]. This further distancing is emphasized by the *samisen*, i.e. sound!!![12]

This combination of visual and aural parts, interacting within the play, simultaneously and smoothly flowing into each other, all culminate to create a complete multisensory effect of beauty. While on the one hand, the narrative is crucial to the success of the performances, on the other one cannot ignore the fact that an essential element of these art forms is the sheer aesthetic environment that is created through this flow in each of the theatrical forms. Eisenstein enthusiastically details the performance aspects of Kabuki, describing moments such as the following: "occasionally (and then it seems as though your nerves are about to break with the tension) the Japanese double up their effects. With the *perfect* equivalent of visual and sound mirages at their disposal, they suddenly produce *both*, 'squaring' them and aiming a brilliantly calculated blow of the billiard cue at the audience's cerebral hemisphere."[13] This aesthetic prowess that Eisenstein describes is shared by all of the types of theater. They can each explicate a different expression of beauty though their respective techniques to produce a primarily visual and audio experience that grows into an emotional and aesthetic *tour de force*. But this is always distinctly within the form's conventions, ensuring a certain aesthetic throughout. In this way, the traditional Japanese theater and Anime resemble each other. Anime appears to have embraced its unreal-ness, and allowed for stylization to proliferate throughout the form to the degree that the

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[11] Eisenstein, "An Unexpected Juncture," 118–119.
[12] Ibid., 118. The play he is referring to is again *Chūsingura*.
[13] Ibid., 119.

stylization—e.g. the visual style that is placed on many, many other products such as toys, stickers, models, and posters—became a source of content for sale.

Just as in the theater, every aspect of Anime is stylized in a particular way, with a certain over-arching conventionalized Anime aesthetic. This aesthetic, although having various reasons for its development has resulted in a number of different styles, but each can be accurately classified as "Anime" amongst a large grouping of other animation styles, even at a quick glance. The Anime style face is designed very specifically and very simply. It is a "basic human face reduced to its minimum components."[14] These, like the puppets in Bunraku, must be precisely manipulated in easily understood ways to convey the emotions they do not possess. The specific style of the Anime is an easily recognizable trademark that distinctly separates it from other forms of animation, and conventionalized codified movements are part of the stylization that proliferates in every aspect of the form. One of the most infamously recognizable components of Anime figures are the generally pervasive "big eyes" of Anime characters. These are very useful features for expressing emotion and conveying easily understood signs to signify a number of emotions. For example, bright glimmering eyes indicate an interest (whether romantic or enthusiastic) and shaky eyes represent fear, shock, sadness, or other negative emotions, depending on the context.

Conventionalized expressions are common throughout Anime, regardless of the content, the style, or production company. This visual language and often similar use of audio techniques are used to such a degree of frequency that they have become a nearly standardized set of conventions that comprise the expression of the characters' emotions in the form. Such methods of conventionalized, codified gestures, dances, music, and costumes are also common across Asian traditional theaters. For example, Kathakali drama uses various *mudras* (many hundreds, from different regions),[15] gestures made with the hands that communicate, among many things, different emotions, sounds, objects, actions, individuals, and creatures. It is a highly complex visual vocabulary that is just one part of the larger, danced, costumed and musical performance that utilizes these other codified elements in conjunction to display the narrative. Conventionalized expressions are also abundant in Kabuki, Bunraku and Noh.

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[14] Levi, *Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation*: 14.
[15] G. Venu, *The Language of Kathakali: Notations of 874 Hand Gestures* (Trichur, Kerala: Natana Kairali, 2000).

In both Anime and the theater, due to the unreal presentations of the performers, there is an inability to present certain emotions realistically, and such conventionalized symbols allow the actors to indicate to the audience that this emotional action is occurring. In the Japanese theater, these stylized movements are also considered *kata*. These can be interpreted within the context of the theater as signs, "the result of common consent, a general acceptance," as to what they refer to.[16] Gestures such as the *shiori* crying movement in Noh,[17] (or the glimmering eyes in Anime) are given meaning within the context of the narrative and events occurring. But the audience still recognizes this as a stock expression that has a certain emotional valence that the narrative contextualizes and layers over. Conventionalized expressions connect each production (Anime or play) to a larger framework of other productions of that art, legitimating the movements, giving them meaning, within the context of the production itself. (Again, we find a nested, mosaic system.) No production necessarily sits in isolation; they are connected through their formal structure.

However, this does not make their meaning "fixed." With regard to dance, in particular Kabuki dance, Leonard C. Pronko views the conventionalized expressions as akin to symbolist poetry, noting that "part of the pleasure arises from this area of ambiguity that allows us our own interpretation beyond the specific meanings either given by tradition or made clear by gestures that work as signs rather than symbols."[18] Pronko divides Japanese dance into two categories: mimetic—carrying specific meanings—and abstract—used decoratively—noting that they are not always mutually exclusive.[19] (Here again is the conspicuous balance of the real and the unreal.) Regarding gestures with a certain meaning, Pronko divides them into three categories: 1) imitative: stylizations of gestures such as weeping, laughing, drinking, etc.; 2) evocative: movement that suggest phenomena—e.g. snow falling, rain, blossoms—or objects—e.g. fans may stand in for a sword, as we have seen in the Noh play *Yorimasa*; 3) grammatical: pointing to oneself, gesturing negatively, or designating time. The visual vocabulary is accompanied by words, and meaning can change from the context within the dance, narrative, lyrics, or environment.[20] Non-mimetic gestures are designated as creating atmosphere.

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[16] Pronko, "*Kabuki*: Signs, Symbols, and the Hieroglyphic Actor," 239.
[17] The hands are brought in front of the eyes at an angle.
[18] Pronko, "*Kabuki*: Signs, Symbols, and the Hieroglyphic Actor," 248.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 249.

Depending on the context, these can be seen as mimetic to perform the actual action, or non-mimetic to set a certain tone. For example, depending on the context, an actor tying their *obi* (belt), can be the character actually tying their robe, or the character signifying their resolve to accomplish something.

This system is extremely complex and each art has its own conventions—though some resemble each other or are shared, especially in Kabuki and Bunraku as they have interacted so much for centuries, and both Kabuki and Bunraku have also drawn on Noh and Kyōgen. The Anime system, however, while containing many conventionalized gestures is not nearly as developed as that of the theaters. Most gestures fall within the imitative, with only a few non-mimetic ones. Though I will describe a few conventionalized gestures and emotional displays, I do not wish to delineate all of Anime's here. Rather, the point is to assert their presence as a means of expression across Anime works and stress how integral they are to Anime as a distinct story-telling art form. The execution (i.e. performance) of these conventionalized expressions is one of the central elements of the experience of both producing[21] and consuming Anime, and is one of the factors that differentiate Anime from other forms of animation.

Among the most commonly utilized conventionalized expressions is the sign for contentment, expressed by closed eyes that are curved upwards, accompanied by a smile, and often a tilt of the head (see Figure 4.2). Another prevalent conventionalized expression is the above mentioned "glimmering eyes," an expression that is so synonymous with Anime that it is often depicted as a stereotype of the Anime style. In this expression, reflections of light flicker or oscillate in the character's eyes, conveying a containment of overflowing emotion. The expression is somewhat abstract, but it does possess a similarity to the effect of becoming teary eyed. Depending on the eyebrows, the mouth, and very importantly, the situational circumstances, this expression can be used to display an overflow of sadness, happiness, or most any other touching moment that the characters do not convey in words. This particular expression can range from very subtle flickers in the eyes, to highly exaggerated expressions. It fully employs the art of (limited) animation, materializing as very slight reflections in the eyes, making it difficult to show in still images here.

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[21] Given the variety of different studios, it is remarkable how common these conventions are throughout Anime. Many fans even include these in their own works.

Figure 4.2. Among the most commonly utilized conventionalized expressions is the sign for contentment, expressed by closed eyes that are curved upwards, accompanied by a smile, and often a tilt of the head. Shown here is Tomoe from *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust & Betrayal* (*Tsuiokuhen*).© N. Watsuki / Shueisha, Fuji-TV, Aniplex Inc. Image used with permission from rights holders.

Almost all Anime from *Gintama* (*Shōnen* Comedy), to *Evangelion* (Science Fiction), to *Kimi ni Todoke: From Me to You* (Romance, *Kimi ni Todoke,* 2009–2010), to *Azumanga Daioh* (Slice of Life, School), utilize this conventionalized gesture.

As animated drawings cannot actually perform actions with the subtlety of a live actor aiming at realistic representation, the codified gestures and emotional displays allow for the depiction of delicate details that can expose personality or set a certain tone. These may be classified as nonmimetic in creating atmosphere. One such example can be commonly found in fight scenes within Anime. In segments when one character is unexpectedly stronger than their foes, the group or individual about to attack the more skilled advisory will often hesitate for a moment, stepping back slightly, then, as if gathering resolve momentarily, charge. This is a common sign in many Anime fight sequences. Another frequently used "gesture" in fights is used when a character is losing, or is hit badly.

Regardless if blood or dirt is on his/her face or not, he/she will brush their hand against their mouth, as if to wipe the dirt away, symbolizing their move to pull themselves together and rejoin the fight with renewed vigor. To cite an imitative gesture in fights or other tense situations, a character's eyebrow may twitch, ticking momentarily, their mouth clenched and teeth exposed. Often preceded by a threat from another character, this expression is used when an unexpected, potentially disastrous event has or will transpire. This is not the look of shock with a gaping mouth, another famous stereotype of Anime. It is instead an expression of resistance and determination in the face of adversity. These are commonly used in Anime to add slight details, codes to enrich the battle and draw out the tension in the scenes, cueing us to the emotions of the unreal characters. Though not necessarily related to fight scenes, there is also a specific method used when a character will be deemed evil and/or insane, strangely enough through their smile. But it is not just any smile; it is usually shown at an angle, pointed at the tip of its curve to produce an eerie, sly smile, the image often shaded to reveal the smile as if it is in secret. We have seen this already executed by the evil little boy in the first episode of *Ga-Rei Zero*, detailed in Chapter 2 of this book.

Azumanga Daioh provides an excellent example of an Anime that uses the conventionalized expressions of Anime to great effect. While most every Anime utilizes conventionalized expressions, *Azumanga Daioh* and similar Anime of the Slice of Life genre heavily rely on hyperbolized versions of these conventionalized expressions—white circles for eyes in times of trouble, shining, vibrant big eyes to depict overflowing emotion, sweat drops, animal teeth, and simplistic human rendering amongst others, are evident in almost every scene in *Azumanga Daioh*. Anime of all genres utilize these conventional expression styles in various narratives with differing degrees of exaggeration. To give just a few examples, there is a more "serious" Anime style such as that found in *Fate Zero* (*Feito/Zero*, 2011–2011), the more *shōjo* styles of *Honey and Clover* (*Hachimitsu to Kurōbā*), or the elastic style of *Azumanga Daioh*. The emotions and meanings that these conventionalized expressions convey are, for the regular Anime viewer, the audience's understanding of the general context of such an expression, imbued by the circumstances of the expression within that particular Anime, and then interpreted (i.e. completed) mentally by the viewer.

Such an understanding of this visual vocabulary is employed in Anime just as it is in Kabuki, Bunraku and Noh. For example, in Noh, the *shiori* gesture of the *shite* bringing their hands to their face, as if catching the

character's tears,[22] is commonly understood to express crying. It is given greater meaning by the context of this gesture within the narrative of the particular play it is found in. While the *shiori* gesture is used throughout Noh in many, many plays, each one possesses its own particular meaning based on the circumstances of its exposition within the play that is performed. The same system of understanding is at play when the light reflections in the characters eyes fluctuate in Anime, overflowing with emotion.

The above are just a few examples of the many codified actions that occur throughout Anime to symbolize certain emotions, as the unreal, fabricated, animated characters cannot actually produce emotion— another instance of the internal expressed externally. The over-arching point is that in Anime, conventionalized stylization is pervasive in all elements of its presentation and producing that conventionalized stylized presentation is a crucial element of Anime's construction and consumption. Necessarily, the conventions constrain the expressions that are producible to those stylized conventions that are available, consequently creating responses and effects within the texts. Which came first, the conventions or the narrative and character patterns, is debatable, but the fact that they exist is important as these produce a system of interaction between viewer and producer where the producer may expect (to some degree) the viewer to understand what each convention signifies and the viewer to be able to decode it. Their precise meaning is open to interpretation, but there is a definitive implication. The conventions limit the expressions and effects, but they also free producers (whether professional or fan) giving them an arsenal of conventions to express themselves with. But because there are these liberating limits due to the conventions, the conventions themselves and their particular stylization become a central focus as content.

For Kabuki, stylization is the key to the beautification of even the vilest of deeds enacted on stage.[23] As detailed previously, these aestheticised actions become acceptable because of this distancing factor: they are so clearly stylized, so blatantly unreal that they become "bearable" because of it. In all of the theater forms, this allows for the active discussion of not only exaggerated and super-natural circumstances, but also a number of previously taboo subjects. It also enables an accessible method for the

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[22] I am thankful to Julie Iezzi for informing me of this description.
[23] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness*: 138.

expression of domestic events to be turned into works of art. The simple plots of Noh,[24] or the *sewamono* (domestic tragedies) of Bunraku and Kabuki—tales of the Tokugawa commoners, subjects that were not traditionally considered of literary value—are all elevated to levels of high artistry to produce interest, all done through the conventionalized lyricism of the theatrical forms. Anime (and Manga), with almost innumerable works, have a staggering amount of products that are about conventional subjects, made elaborate through the flagrant use of unreal stylization techniques. We find this in the large number of dramas about junior high school and high school students. Too many to list here, even *Evangelion* can be read as a depiction of the trials of adolescence, but dressed up with giant robots and an impending apocalypse.

Another crucial element of these stylized "dressings" is music and sound. In Anime, certain sound effects punctuate visual events, much like the use of music for character or setting employed in Kabuki. Some musical patterns are used to signify different types of weather (e.g. *ame no oto*, "the sound of rain;" difference between a downpour and a drizzle produced by the *ōdaiko* drum),[25] but other patterns are used for characterization, when a character enters the stage. For example, certain Noh *hayashi* interludes are used to signify a noble man or lady, the pattern *toyose* ("the distant sound of battle") for warriors, or a *torikagura* for a courtesan. There is even a particular type of musical pattern (*mihokagura*) used only for plays that take place in the Soga brothers *sekai*.[26] As mentioned prior, characters often have certain themes in Anime. These character theme songs can be read as musical patterns that exhibit the characters personality. The song "Misato" (from the *Evangelion Official Soundtrack 1*) is a playful tune that suits the jovial and sloppy side of her character that she exposes to Shinji in her home. (Another manifestation of the internal expressed externally.) Many characters, including Shinji himself, have a song (or a few) attributed to them. Misato's song is used frequently throughout the series, setting a light-hearted mood and highlighting her high-jinks.

Anime soundtracks are also produced as merchandise to be sold to fans. Anime episode openings and endings have different songs that are widely

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[24] Though Noh events, often involving ghosts and gods, are often far from mundane, they have uncomplicated plots.

[25] William P. Malm, "Music in Kabuki Theater," in *Studies in Kabuki: Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context*, ed. James R. Brandon, William P. Malm, and Donald H. Shively (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978), 144.

[26] Ibid., 154–155.

distributed, played with each viewing as well as being frequently posted and accessed online. This repetition of the same song will introduce a viewer to a new band or song that then proceeds to sell their music in connection to the Anime. *Bakemonogatari* combines the two practices of character themes and opening songs by producing a new opening song for each of the newly introduced main (female) characters. In terms of merchandising and cross-platform/medium jumping, many Anime feature characters which sing songs in the Anime that they then sell records for and/or leap to games and other media products, usually all in the style/aesthetic of that Anime or Manga. A notable example is the Macross *sekai*-genre, where there is usually a female character that possesses some force or power contained in the voice and songs of that character. The general pattern is that her voice helps protect humanity through her music. In the case of Lynn Minmay from the original *Macross* (1982) that began the *sekai*, her singing transcended the war between humans and the powerful Zentradi warriors fighting them, her song being popular on both sides and stopping the war with her song. She is also usually part of a love triangle between two other characters, at least one of them a male pilot. It gives a very new precedence to the ancient introduction of the famous and incredibly influential Heian (794–1185) anthology of poetry (*uta*, or "song" as the poems were recited) the *Kokinshū*. Ki no Tsurayuki (872–945), one of the compilers of the important imperial anthology, wrote the preface, stating the famous lines: "it is song [*uta*—here meaning poetry] that moves heaven and earth without effort, stirs emotions in the invisible spirits and gods, brings harmony to the relations between men and women, and calms the hearts of fierce warriors."[27]

In the theater, there are specific sounds and songs that signify different emotions or settings, their associations used to set the mood for a particular scene. Sound is used similarly in Anime, however, each Anime has its own system of sounds that it uses to signify a certain atmosphere or cue a switch to a different tone. An Anime will often have a select soundtrack with certain songs which are utilized repeatedly in similar narrative contexts to accentuate the tone of the scene. Brophy explains that in much of Anime, image subscribes to sound, resulting in a mnemonic effect.[28]

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[27] Helen Craig McCullough and Tsurayuki Ki, *Kokin wakashū: the first imperial anthology of Japanese poetry: with Tosa nikki and Shinsen waka* (Stanford Univ. Press, 1985). 3.

[28] Brophy, "Sonic-Atomic-Neumonic: Apocalyptic Echoes in *Anime*," 193. Brophy's observation makes me recall Zeami's statements in his Noh treatises, advising "first let them hear it, then let them see it." What Zeami is discussing is a different utilization

I believe that Brophy's notion of Anime sound as mnemonic is useful in understanding Anime sound. But the mnemonic effects in Anime go deep into the fabric of the Anime in a manner that is similar to the uses in theater. For example, a somber piano song ("*Koko ha samurai no kuni da*;" "This is Samurai Country," from the *Gintama Original Soundtrack*) is used in *Gintama*, signifying the switch from a comedic tone to an elegiac one.[29] It is almost invariably that same song that plays during such serious moments. Likewise, there are also songs that cue suspense, an epic scene, a touching monologue, a moment of boredom, etc. One finds a similar use of sounds in American *Looney Toons* cartoons, one example being the famous "womp-womp" sound that is played after a disappointing turn of events. What is interesting about the use of such aural cues is that each Anime uses a different set of sounds as each soundtrack is custom created for that Anime. The sounds may be similar (e.g. somber piano songs), however, as stated prior, this is not strictly adhered to, and the musical genres used in Anime range from *shamisen* to Hip-Hop, Techno to Blues. The larger point here is that, as in the theater, the sounds are utilized as repeatedly used signifiers of a certain emotion or atmosphere. Of particular note are Kanno Yōko's musical compositions, and Watanabe Shinichirō's uses of music in the various Anime they have worked on (both together and separately). Kanno Yōko's impact on Anime music in general is a topic that needs further research, having been part of the production of a number of highly successful Anime.

Through the use of visual and aural stylization, all working with their own conventions, even the slightest of actions are aestheticized. The fight sequences in all of the art forms are wonderful examples of the aestheticizing of a particular act. While the fight sequences in Anime and theater were addressed briefly before, here I would like to point to them as performances of a certain type of beauty. In each form, the fights are explored differently, in the theater world drawing on a number of movement, costuming, and musical *kata* to do so. Learned to be performed in this way,

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of sound and image, but I thought it was worthy of note. See Hare, *Zeami: Performance Notes*: 100.

[29] Susan Napier describes three modes in Anime, within which an Anime may switch between: the festival, the apacolyptic, and the elegiac. I am not implying this switch here, but one could read the example of *Gintama* as an instance of her theory in play. Rather, I would suggest that what Napier observed is an outcome of the push and pull, tightening and loosening of tension of the Anime narrative rhythmic system, an outgrowth of form. This would be similar to switches between comedy and tragedy in Kabuki. For Napier's extended theory, see *Anime: From Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*.

the sequence conveys a number of different signs (e.g. conventionalized gestures, costuming determining the "good" and "bad," musical atmosphere, and narrative context). While they stand as dances in Noh, and somewhere in between in Kabuki and Bunraku, they are stylized, unreal expressions of these violent acts. As noted earlier, the violence in Kabuki has elsewhere been described as a "lively ballet."[30] Even in Bunraku the fights are not literal brutal fights with puppets, but expressed in their artistic form, as dodges and dashes, swaying movements that the puppets make, miming an actual fight. The final understanding of the events occurs in the audiences' minds, completing what can be interpreted as an aestheticized intense fight that we would perceive in our reality.

Anime is different in its approach (as the form and medium is different) to such fight sequences that are a staple part of the drama and spectacle. Here the fights do play out on screen; the characters actually attack one another in a blatant display of violence, imitating the physical contact one would see in a real world fight. But they are literally not real performances, affording such "physical" blows to the bodies to be approached with relative ease, like that of the puppet theater (both in terms of ease of execution to the material objects and acceptance of the violence by the audience). This is not to say the execution by the puppeteers or animators are simple to perform, but that they do not involve physical human bodies making forceful contact with one another. While Anime does mimic real world fights to a degree of accuracy, they are clearly stylized acts. Regardless of the fact that they are performed by animated characters created in a specific drawing/animation style, the shots of the characters and cuts as they exchange blows often "fib" the action. When shots of extended action do occur, it too can be easily described as a "lively ballet," the brisk movements of finesse and skill expertly choreographed with wild, extravagant displays of power that no human could ever perform so well.[31] Even blood is stylized to create an aesthetic effect. This emphasis on unreal stylization as a convention of the art form with a focus on spectacle—often violent, technological, and erotic spectacle—must be taken into account. As Bolton notes, the unreal actors involved both accentuate and distance the events occurring.

A look to the first episode of *Cowboy Bebop* shows us a spectacular fight scene between Spike and a renegade bounty target. There's a shot of their

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[30] Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 64.
[31] Admittedly, this is often the point of such spectacles, to point out that the performers within the storyline of the Anime are literally, not human.

feet gliding across the floor smoothly as they dance a violent salsa to the energetic Jazz in the background. The slick execution of these action sequences are of deep interest and attraction to viewers of Anime. There is no wonder that such a scene was included in the first episode to hook new audiences in. Scenes such as the one above are spotted throughout the series and are what many of the spectators are waiting to see—the culmination of the *jo* and *ha*. As they are unreal, the angles, shots, effects, movements, rhythms and abilities of the characters can be exaggerated to any degree required and allow for excessively spectacular and impossible action sequences that the unreality of the expression allows us to accept. Throughout Anime we find such examples of elegantly (and brutally) portrayed fights. Weapon wielding battles such as that in *Sword of the Stranger* are intense and impressive feats. Kusanagi taking out a suspect in *Ghost in the Shell* is a carefully choreographed event. The *Rurouni Kenshin OVA* (1999) is readily brought to mind with its excruciating blood effects, and fluid movements as the characters cross swords. Even *mecha* battles have their beauty. Take for example the high energy waltz of two fighter planes in *Macross Plus* (1994). The savageness is crisp and almost tangible in the fights within *Evangelion* (in both the series and films), the action raw and stark. One is reminded of the Kabuki world's "aesthetics of cruelty," however this is far removed from the gruesome ballets of the Kabuki stage and is its own blend of stylized violence. Although ghastly, they are captivating scenes. The types of movement, the strange dance of the Evas in the *End of Evangelion* film—where we witness the Evas (Eva-02 fighting Eva-05 through Eva-13) gigantic arms and legs chopped off, heads bashed in, and internal organs ravenously devoured—is depicted with a rhythm and fluidity that makes it just as alluring as it is appalling. Yet we keep watching, transfixed by the animated form and its implicit unreality, brought to a strangely mesmerizing lyrical expression. The stylization and the unreality of it become the focus, the aesthetics prized over the content.

An exemplary example of the importance of aesthetics in the general viewing of Anime can be found in the series *Last Exile* (*Rasuto Eguzairu*, 2003–2003). The plot line, though confusing at times, follows the relatively basic pattern of characters in search of a mysterious and powerful object. However, it is the world-setting and its aesthetic, with distinctive character and mecha design, pseudo-steampunk air ships, and renditions of cloud filled landscapes, that are the major draw and perhaps the main attraction for the Anime. The narrative itself is not the main focus, and instead, viewers delight in following the various characters into the different aspects of this highly stylized world-setting, with its own unique

cultures and perhaps even "castes" of characters. The review on the long running, well known fan website T.H.E.M. Anime Reviews states:

> Last Exile has one of the most interesting settings that I have come across in recent anime. It's a time of war, and chivalry dictates how the opposing forces battle. But instead of using horses and chariots, they use battleships. *Floating* battleships that fly using things called "Claudia engines". For armaments, they use cannons and musketeers that stand on platforms at the edge of the ships. The vanships, however, are like wingless World War II planes but can fly to the extreme heights that the battleships occupy. And yet, the Guild uses technology far superior - holographic displays, lasers and so on. It sounds like this setting alone could sink the title, but instead it manages to merge them seamlessly into an abstract yet believable world.... Resembling something from Miyazaki more than Gonzo, **Last Exile** looks *different*. From the faces of the characters down to the stylings of the battleships, it evokes a classic feel but all the while looks entirely new.[32]

A major draw to the Anime is that of the world-setting and its specific aestheticised expression over the plot. Through the balance of unrealism and reality, along with exceptional stylization, the Anime takes us through its world-setting by means of the various different characters that inhabit it, their dramas acting as windows into the culture and history of their world. But this world-setting "looks and feels" a very particular way, and this is where the value lies—the emphasis here is on the aesthetic.

This is true of the theater as well. We have seen how in a traditional day's program of Noh, Kabuki, and Bunraku, various different plays are included, and each individual play provides a slightly different aesthetic through the characters, the music, setting and narrative that culminates in the aesthetic of that play. Every part of the program can be seen as being consumed for their particular aesthetics. One example would be that of the Noh's full day program of five plays, each interspersed with comedic Kyōgen pieces. Each play has a different feel and atmosphere within each of the categories. The plays were chosen and organized into a day's program to produce the over-arching aesthetic of that day. In this way, various aesthetics were consumed within the day's program, simultaneously taken in as a larger aesthetic as the day progressed—different, distinct pieces in a larger mosaic.

In all of these arts beauty can be seen as a reflection of our real world, altered, formalized, and stylized in every aspect, depicting this

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[32] Enoch Lau, "T.H.E.M. Anime Reviews - Last Exile," http://www.themanime.org/viewreview.php?id=550.

world's—our world's—issues. While the deeper human aspects are grounded in realism, the external presentation is unreal. Due to the extreme lyricism needed to get to this degree of distance from reality, yet still be recognizable, the final production is created in this "slender margin between the real and the unreal."[33] This is then refined, polished over time and experience, popularity and trend, until it has developed into its own conventionalized form, and its definition of beauty cultivated. Eventually, this stylized part of the works becomes a focus, and the performance of the form is as much of the content as the narrative itself.

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[33] Keene, "Realism and Unreality in Japanese Drama," 63.

DIFFERENT STYLES

The vast amount of Anime styles within the Anime form itself is stagger-
ing. Set as a side-by-side comparison, a large number of distinct "looks"
can be seen, each a variation on the general Anime aesthetic. This is not
only in the depictions of the machinery, and clothing, but is perhaps most
apparent in the depiction of human characters and their backdrops.
Putting *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (2002–2003), *Gasaraki*,
(1998–2000), *Cowboy Bebop* (1998–1999), *Gintama* (2006–2010), *Hyakko*
(*Hyakko*, 2008–2008), *Here and There Then and Now* (*Ima, Soko ni Iru
Boku*, 1999–2000), and *Shigurui* (*Shigurui*, 2007–2007) next to each other
will reveal noticeable differences in visual style. Yet they are within the
Anime-Manga visual style's conventions. This is only a small selection of
the diversity available, a manifestation of the importance placed on the
aesthetics of the Anime. Certain audiences prefer certain styles over
others, and so productions are catered to these audiences, keeping the
preferred style in both narrative content and visual feel. This chapter notes
observations on a variety of Anime styles that all fall under the Anime
form—the various manifestations of "different styles" within Anime.
Paradoxically, because of their conventionalized aesthetics, through the
Anime form, each Anime is very different but very similar.

Often times in Anime, characters will abruptly transform into different
"exaggerated" states of their original design (see Figure 4.3). The eyes will
get larger, the body will swell up, lines will swoon and curve around them,
their glasses become solidly colored—the list can get quite extensive,
and these are some of the many conventionalized expressions that were
discussed in the previous chapter. The transformations in the visuality
(and often, accompanying aural segment) of the character are always
shown in a particularly codified way and describe to the viewer the inner
traits of the character in their reaction. They offer comic relief, express
love, determination, and immense exertions of power, but they always are
done in a particularly stylized manner characteristic of, and common to,
Anime and Manga. Such transformations are a common feature in Anime,
though many Anime tend to eschew the exaggerated expressions, keeping
an even tone throughout by limiting the physical morphing of the charac-
ters when they make conventionalized expressions.

Figure 4.3. Anime use a number of conventionalized gestures and expressions of emotions. These can sometimes be expressed as an exaggerated version of the original body. Top row: *Azumanga Daioh* © Kiyohiko Azuma·Mediaworks/Azumangadaioh Committee. Bottom row: *Toshokan Sensō* (*Library War*) © Hiro Arikawa·Mediaworks/Library War Production Committee.

The switching between these external transformations expressing inner traits often creates "lighter occurrences" in sometimes serious situations that may at first seem off-putting to those not used to such a convention. This is found in the theater as well, coming from the influence of the use of *jo-ha-kyū* and its similar result in Kabuki and Bunraku, where the lighter occurrences in serious situations are used to break or reduce tension. They become part of the style of expression, Keene describing these as "sandwiching regularly in one theatrical piece scenes of solemn splendor, low comedy, pathos, poetic description divorced from plot, fantasy and rough action. This is not the same as the inclusion of short comic scenes in Western tragedies; the play is in a composite form."[1] Comparison with the Edo theater could help explain why such conventions are frequently used today in Anime: they are a stylistic method to derive a particular atmosphere and type of drama/comedy; a series of introductions, breaks, and rapid conclusions that are brought about through the occasional insertion of lighter occurrences, creating the aesthetic of the

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[1] Keene, *The Battles of Coxinga*: 87.

Anime that often switches from extreme violence to excessive farce instantly. A ready example comes to mind in the final episode of *Full Metal Panic! The Second Raid* (*Furumetaru TSR*, 2005–2005). As the character Sousuke reaches the very depths of depression and self-doubt—having just killed his long standing, maniacal nemesis Gauron, shooting him point-blank after Gauron tells Sousuke that he killed Sousuke's romantic interest Chidori Kaname—Sousuke is faced with the task of piloting his *mecha* that no one else is capable of. The recent events have rendered him unable to muster the motivation to do so, wallowing in self-pity as his comrades face certain death without his help. Out of the darkness Chidori appears to a Sousuke filled with disbelief, having been just told that she was dead. Upon presenting herself she promptly runs and knees Sousuke in the face, and proceeds to attack him in the comic manner she did throughout the series. This effectively breaks the heavy tension of the previous moments, but at the same time provides a not-so-subtle display of a "return to normalcy" and confirmation of their relationship, reinvigorating the destructive banter that was their mutual bond. She eventually gets Sousuke to pilot the *mecha* and rescue his comrades in a spectacular *mecha* battle (the obligatory *kyū*).

While a similar scene where thick drama is broken by comedic high jinks can be found in Kabuki, Noh and Kyōgen produce drama and comedy but definitively divide them. Noh and Kyōgen are performed together; both on the same Noh stage, each with their own conventions, but deeply associated with each other—they are two integral parts of the same day's program. While Noh plays are almost entirely serious in tone and often sad and elegiac, Kyōgen uses the same stage space and different conventions to produce comedic effects. Juxtaposed next to one another, Kyōgen plays are placed between Noh plays and provide delightful contrasts to the heavy subjects of Noh. Similarly, the stylized expressions (especially those that "warp" the body) vary in degree of utilization between individual Anime—the "warped" expressions can come off as elastic and playful, and Anime that wish to avoid this tend to keep the more exaggerated expressions to a strict minimum, while others embrace it. A good comparison would be *Full Metal Alchemist: Brotherhood* (*Hagane no Renkinjutsushi: Furumetaru Arukemisuto*, 2009–2010) and *Seirei no Moribito*. While both are action Anime that deal with dark subject matter, *Seirei* stays away from heavy usage (if any) of deformed, exaggerated, and hyperbolic bodily contortions while *Full Metal Alchemist: Brotherhood* utilizes them to help break the tension in the series. Another example of differences in expression would be that of the original *Rurouni Kenshin*

TV series (1996–1998) and that of the OVA (*Tsuiokuhen*, 1999). The original would often make use of the conventionalized expressions which allowed for a more playful atmosphere when the tension loosens, displaying a more carefree side of the former assassin Kenshin, and largely mimicking the style found in the Manga (1994–1999). The OVA—a prequel that takes place before Kenshin has stopped killing and the revolution is still occurring—does not have the exaggerated expressions of the original series, sustaining a darker tone that reflects the bloody and tense atmosphere of the revolution. The *Kenshin* OVA was a stark stylistic diversion from the Manga and the Anime and created a new aesthetic for the *Kenshin* franchise. Generally, the Anime with more subtle displays of the conventionalized expressions tend to be more "serious" Anime, maintaining a relative realism in the character's depiction, while the external world-setting is often outlandishly unreal. *Seirei no Moribito* is one such example. Often, Anime that are based in the "real world" will include an abundance of warped bodily transformations, such as that found in *Azumanga Daioh*. The relationship between the real and the unreal is balanced in this manner, but I would like to note that this is not a definitive rule. There are many Anime that contain both an outlandish world-setting and frequent deformation of the characters in their conventionalized expressions. *Trigun* comes readily to mind as an example of an extremely unreal world-setting and characters that use exaggerated expressions frequently.

   The use of different degrees of exaggeration in the depiction of conventionalized expressions, the visual construction of the characters, the world-setting, the corresponding aural elements, narrative structure and pacing, as well as narrative content, are all organized to display a larger aesthetic style distinct to that Anime, but within the Anime form's conventions. To demonstrate the overall aesthetic focus and variety in Anime, let us examine the different styles of the three popular Anime series *Natsume's Book of Friends* (*Natsume Yūjinchō*, 2008–2008), *Bakemonogatari* (*Bakemonogatari*, 2009–2009), and *Mushishi* (*Mushishi*, 2005–2006). All three have male central characters that work towards capturing or helping supernatural creatures—*yōkai*. To be quite pernickety, *Natsume Yūjinchō* is about *yōkai, Bakemonogatari* are about *bake* (related to *yōkai*), while *Mushishi* focuses on *mushi*, more animalistic entities with a different, but similar pseudo-mythology behind them.[2] However, it should be noted

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[2] Z. Papp, *Traditional Monster Imagery in Manga, Anime and Japanese Cinema* (Brill Academic Pub, 2010). 210.

that the *mushi* stories appear to be grounded in Japanese folklore-esque histories.

Despite these similarities, the characters and portrayal of the creatures themselves are vastly different, and the worlds they inhabit or, rather, move through, all produce very different aesthetics as a whole. In *Natsume Yūjinchō,* the visual images of the *yōkai* apparitions in the series are very similar to (and clearly inspired by) more "traditional" expressions of *yōkai*, as well as those by Mizuki Shigeru's popular Anime and Manga *Gegege no Kitaro* (1966–2008), also largely based on traditional images.[3] In *Natsume Yūjinchō* we find a hazy countryside setting and hand-drawn feel, accompanied by a sense of rural nostalgia. The color palette used is quite bright, and there is a generally soft, playful, but tender sense to the depiction of the characters. The visual appearance of the human characters is in the graceful *bishōnen* ("beautiful boy") style, including the erotic tinge that is characteristic of that style. The narrative runs smoothly, following a subdued *jo-ha-kyū* pattern, each episode centering on Natsume's encounter with a *yōkai* that others cannot see, helping them relinquish the contract in his Book of Friends that he inherited from his grandmother. Based on the eponymous Manga (Author: Midorikawa Yuki; 2005-ongoing), there is a quiet melancholy that drifts through *Natsume Yūjinchō*, and a distinct feeling of nostalgia for a dying tradition lies beneath the narrative.

Bakemonogatari, almost in contrast, produces a barren, post-modern (sub)urban landscape. In fact, the entire Anime epitomizes a post-modern aesthetic, in tone, editing, narrative content, and visual style. It is an Anime filled with fragmentation and constantly calls into question its own (Anime) aesthetics, and (Anime's) eroticization of the *shōjo*, pushing the envelope to degrees of discomfort. Even the visual style is fragmented. The Anime mixes various different styles of Anime depiction, interspersed throughout the series (in particular episode 12), but generally stays with a very distinct, computer drawn, contemporary Anime style. The narrative centers on Araragi who helps various female characters that have each been possessed by spirits. The series is divided into distinct segments (*jo-ha-kyū*) by the story-arcs of each spirit. *Bakemonogatari* continuously pokes fun at Anime and *otaku* culture, actively playing with Anime expectations and conventions. For example in episode 10, the final segments leave the character Araragi no choice but to confront an apparition in

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[3] For an excellent, comprehensive look at *yōkai* in the context of Anime and traditional Japanese visual art, see Papp, *Anime and its roots in early Japanese monster art*. And Papp, *Traditional Monster Imagery in Manga, Anime and Japanese Cinema*.

physical combat to save a friend. However, upon moving to fight, the actual action is blocked by blank screens of red and black, screens that popped in and out of the series throughout earlier episodes—this time they cover the fight sequences, allowing only slight segments and disjointed sounds of the action shown and heard, breaking the expectations that had built up for a visually extravagant fight.

Unlike *Natsume Yūjinchō, Bakemonogatari* emphasizes the eroticism prevalent in many Anime,[4] with the victims and the apparitions themselves highly sexualized. Rather than nostalgic, the experience of the series is almost excessively (post)modern, the often austere backdrop, hyper-sexual images, disjointed rhythm with cuts, and clever manipulation of the *jo-ha-kyū* structure, self-consciously accentuate and distance the viewer from the events on screen to a degree that is heightened even for an Anime. Yet at the same time, the witty and charming banter between the sharp Senjōgahara and the selfishly selfless Araragi, the playful interactions with the various women Araragi meets, the almost abstract landscapes, and cute-erotic anthropomorphic depictions of the apparitions all produce a compelling and masterfully constructed world-aesthetic that has made it one of the most popular Anime of recent years. Though *Bakemonogatari* has a very distinctive look and feel, it still stays within the bounds of Anime's conventions, manipulating them to great effect. Derived from a series of Light Novels (Author: Isin Nisio; Illustrator: Vofan; 10 novels, 2006–2012), it is a carefully composed and superbly executed example of the Anime form, self-consciously (e.g. stated in the narrative) playing with Anime genre tropes.

Such manipulation and variation of the Anime form is shared by *Mushishi*. The aesthetics of this Anime produce what could be called a contemporary expression of the traditional aesthetic of *wabi-sabi*. *Wabi-sabi* shares a deep connection with the Japanese tea ceremony and it is generally characterized by a rustic, subtle expression, often found in earthenware pottery, showing off the effects of age and wear and their irregular shape. *Wabi-sabi* is often expressed in carefully constructed images of nature in poetry, gardens, and flower arrangements. It is an aesthetic tinged with a sense of impermanence and is associated with naturalness and simplicity. It is dull, patina, rust and wear. It is finding beauty in

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[4] *Bakemonogatari* would qualify as a "Harem Anime," a genre where a male character is surrounded by multiple female characters with which he has various quasi-romantic relations, usually with one particular female character as his main love interest. *Love Hina* (*Rabu Hina*, 2000–2000) is an example of such an Anime.

solitary moments, in the subtlety and quiet of moss growing on the side of a tree, in travel, or in the imperfections of an object worn and refined with age. *Mushishi* embodies this aesthetic, as the character Ginko drifts through lonely, mist filled mountains, and humble rural settings in search of humans unfortunate enough to come in contact with the ethereal, amorphous, animalistic *mushi* creatures. Each episode tells a separate tale, and often the results of this fusion of worlds are tragic or bittersweet. This elegiac atmosphere and muted color palette ultimately produce a world of *wabi-sabi*, with no other extended narrative than the pure exposition of the aesthetic.

But *Mushishi* still works within Anime's conventions. The Anime utilizes many conventionalized expressions, but in a less exaggerated fashion as *Natsume Yūjinchō* and does not diverge into different visuals styles like *Bakemonogatari* does. While *Natsume Yūjinchō* and *Bakemonogatari* generally follow a familiar *jo-ha-kyū* pattern, *Mushishi* is much harder to delineate. Due to the lack of a linear storyline, the Anime is exceptionally difficult to parse. There are groupings of episodes that seem to have a similar atmosphere to them. These episodes are subtly different from those before and after, some lighter, some heavier in tone. But this deviation from the norm accentuates *Mushishi*'s *wabi-sabi*-esque aesthetic, emphasizing a sense of wandering through that world, with no start, and no finish. The final episode barely even includes Ginko, only showing him briefly as a child, and then once more as an adult. Time is not stable. The only things that are seemingly reliable are the inevitable encounters between human and *mushi*. We accompany Ginko as he travels through drifting mists around the mountains, until he inevitably arrives at the next town where *mushi* and human meet. Based on the Manga by the same name (Author/Artist: Urushibara Yuki; 1999–2000), this Anime is exceptionally well crafted, with a distinct tone, narrative, and atmosphere, producing a very precise aesthetic, ironically defined by its fogginess. *Mushishi* is an excellent example of how Anime reinvents old traditions and aesthetics, while simultaneously creating its own new ones. While *Mushishi*, *Natsume Yūjinchō*, and *Bakemonogatari* are very different Anime, their visual style, pacing of each episode, exploration of a world-setting, conventionalized gestures, and stylized voices still group them and define them as Anime. Though their content is different, they are all clearly Anime in many more ways than just being "Animation from Japan." The common element between them is Anime form's structure and aesthetic logic, operating on multiple levels, binding them together as much as it distinguishes them from each other.

What may seem like subtle visual differences can ultimately factor into the aesthetic of the Anime as a whole, and these styles themselves are an important part in the experience of watching and selecting an Anime, thus a determinedly crucial component of the content of Anime itself. There are directors, animators, character and *mecha* designers, music composers, as well as entire production companies involved that each have a large impact on these styles and often have particular aesthetics that are associated with them. These are a major draw for fans to a particular Anime. It can be a deciding factor in an Anime's or a company's popularity.

In an interview in 2000, artist Murakami Takashi explains that he failed to become an *otaku* king as he felt he lacked the capability to memorize crucial *otaku* information and could not win at debates. Because of this he became an artist and began to incorporate *otaku* subject matter into his art.[5] A close inspection of his work's evolution reveals that his aesthetic (especially his early work) does not completely match that of the Anime-Manga style. The colors are slightly off, the designs too ostentatious; the eyes too bright, the *mecha* not composed in the same manner, the characters were too oddly shaped. They mimicked, but did not fit in with Anime's aesthetic logic. Azuma notes this distinction, explaining it in terms of his database theory, stating that "Murakami's experiments, no matter how much they borrow the otaku designs, cannot be otaku-like in essence, insofar as they lack the level of the database."[6] In other words, Murakami did not fully grasp the underlying system of *otaku* expression. Azuma explains that "it is useful to be cognizant of the difference between borrowing otaku designs and understanding the cultural structure behind such designs," with Murakami apparently performing the former.[7] Interestingly, after Murakami's rise to stardom, we can see his work's influence on Anime, such as in the opening scenes and composition of the cyber-world OZ in *Summer Wars* (*Samā Wōzu*, 2009). It seems that Murakami's work is slowly becoming incorporated into the myriad styles within the mosaic of the Anime form.

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[5] Mako Wakasa, "Interview with Takashi Murakami, Murakami Studio, Brooklyn, N.Y.," Journal of Contemporary Art, http://www.jca-online.com/murakami.html.

[6] Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*: 66.

[7] Ibid.

AN EXPRESSION OF REALITY

The form of Anime, as comprised by the areas discussed in previous chapters, produces the aesthetics of an individual Anime that, taken together with other Anime, ultimately comprise the cumulative aesthetic of Anime itself. Through the patterns and practices of the Anime form a system of expression and reception is created, simultaneously constricted and freed by its conventions. It is quite literally a way of seeing, a way of organizing, and a way of expressing what is experienced by us in this world. There are certain movements, modes of expressions, ways to draw, to sing and speak, lament and laugh, that are all particular to Anime. Narratives have a structure, characters have a type, expression is codified—these conventions and their repeated patterns produce the form, a method of expression of reality, and thus, a particular world-view. This is evident not just in Anime, but in Bunraku, Kabuki, Noh, and many other arts. Each expression is, of course, different in each respective form and tied to its historical circumstance, but they all produce a structure within which to interpret and express human experience. It is this structure that limits and liberates them—in having a conventionalized system, it creates a heavily filtered manner within which something can be expressed, but it also provides a repertoire of readily available methods for creation. As we have seen, adherence to, and variation within, the bounds of the convention create interest, making the performance of the form central to a production's success.

Following formal conventions necessarily binds the expression and thus creates particular patterns of this (re)construction of reality. Lamarre explains that the animetic machine produces certain effects—these are evident in, among others, certain types of relations to movement, perspective, and technology—that in turn create a specific image of the world. One may read the animetic machine as predisposed to the creation of a particular world-view. Other scholars have noted the creation of a world-view through Anime as well. Upon viewing Anime director Oshii Mamuro's storyboards for one of Oshii's animated films, Ueno remarked: "To Oshii, animation is not necessarily just a reflection or copy of reality; it is in itself an independent reality. For him, the world and reality itself are structured and schematized as animation."[1] He goes on to describe the hyperrealistic style of animation, mimicking even the use of different

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[1] Ueno, "Kurenai no metalsuits," 111.

lenses as in live action film. Ueno explains that "the goal of this is not to faithfully reproduce reality it is simply to point out that animation is nothing more than one possibility of reality."[2]

The Anime view of reality, though originating in Japan, is quickly spreading across the world, and is not isolated to the Japanese archipelago. Millions of fans around the globe consciously adopt and practice this view (to varying degrees). A simple search on an international art website such as Deviantart.com will reveal a vast number of exquisitely rendered images and sequences in the very distinctly Anime-Manga visual style, by people from various cultures from various places around the globe. There is room for personal and cross-cultural interpretation, variation and difference, but many fans strive to produce that particular style. The sheer popularity of this visual style and the dedication spent to achieve it is proof of its global, cultural, artistic value and merit.

Although anecdotal, my time spent in Japan during the course of this research has presented me with a number of situations where it seemed as if the Anime aesthetic was a widely accepted expression of reality. Having taught in Japan, instructing both children and adults, I would often ask students young and old to draw something for class. More often than not, the result would be in the Anime-Manga style, as if the world was commonly understood to be represented in that style. Once, a younger student of ten years old came early to class and, as he had a good sense of humor and an active imagination, picked up some stuffed animals used as props in younger children's classes, playing the part of "puppeteer" and miming a fight between the toys while I prepared for class. At first comical, he slowly developed the action narrative (sound effects included): the plush frog struggling to get up after a severe beating from his pink bear nemesis. All seemed lost for the small, lime green frog. But, in a final burst of energy the frog attacked with all its speed and might, blow after blow striking the bear, until in one swift move the two enemies dashed at one another (*xing*!) meeting each other's attacks. Standing far apart, backs facing, they stood across from each other in the stillness after the clash, silent in suspense. After a long moment, the fluffy bear fell with a pathetic moan, defeated by the righteous neon frog. This scene, although comically created by the student, is a reenactment emblematic of many Anime fights. Although this may have been inspired from other sources, I would think

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[2] Ibid., 113.

my ten year old student, whose favorite hobby was reading Manga, encountered this in Anime or Manga first. Though merely a single incident, it is revealing—a classic case of life imitating art. But it is important that his imitation was in a very clearly Anime style.

Thinking of such a climactic moment in the theater world, the Noh play *Tsuchigumo* comes readily to mind. A spider demon, disguised as a priest tending to the ailing emperor, attacks the ruler in his defenseless state. The emperor repels the demon, which runs off into the darkness of the halls around the royal chambers. At that moment, the emperor's chief retainer rushes to his majesty's aid. Meeting briefly in the hall (on the bridge of the Noh stage), the two freeze, each sensing the other's danger. Still disguised as a priest, the retainer stands motionless, his steely gaze never leaving the odd priest's eyes. In this extended instant the atmosphere is thick with intensity, each analyzing the other, both tense, ready to strike at any moment. The retainer worries for his majesty's safety while blocking the spider demon's escape. With no other option left, the spider demon priest dashes forward, swiftly flinging a spider web in attack. The retainer deflects it, but in doing so gives the priest the chance for escape. In an instant the spider demon is gone, leaving the retainer alone on the bridge amidst the spider webs slowly floating to the ground.[3]

Although an atypically ostentatious and uniquely dazzling play in the Noh repertoire, *Tsuchigumo*, along with all the other Noh plays, also carries with it a specific way to see and express the world. In this Noh way, the events that transpire are explored in a very specific "Noh style." The same may be said of Kabuki and Bunraku. It is "easy" to see this in their current forms, deemed "classical" theaters, bound and elevated by their declaration as "national traditions." At one point—though not necessarily concurrently—there was frequent experimentation in all three forms. In their current states, the theatrical forms, in all their glory, though involved in various experimental ventures, are generally reluctant to step too far out of their conventions. Regardless, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki all have (and had) discernible forms that combine a variety of skills and styles to produce a multi-medic aesthetic experience, each respective form ensuring the production of a specific aesthetic distinct to itself.

But even when there was experimentation, the adherence to form was visible. Many plays were adapted between the theaters—from Noh and Kyōgen to Kabuki, Bunraku to Kabuki, Kabuki to Bunraku—and if one

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[3] This is the Kongō-ryū School of Noh's version of the play.

were to take a look at the plays, it would be apparent that the expression of the material was modified to fit the other theater's style of expression, and meet the expectations of their audiences. Many have noted that works adapted for the Kabuki stage have been "Kabuki-fied" in the process. One of the best examples is the *matsubame mono*, a genre of Kabuki plays based on Noh plays that came about in the Meiji period when the Kabuki Theater was growing into a national theater. Kabuki actors began to borrow heavily from the Noh Theater, which was previously out of reach for those of the lower classes (Kabuki actors were considered among the lowest of the classes). The name of the genre is taken from the giant pine (*matsu*) that is the trade mark of the Noh stage. Thus, these *matsubame mono* (lit. "pine board pieces") were acknowledged to be assimilating the practices of the Noh theater, however Kabuki-fying them for the Kabuki stage.

Kabuki's aesthetics are generally more exaggerated, grandiose and fantastic; this is what the audiences expect and what the actors are trained to display. Because of the differences in the materials of the form, sets, musicians, and *kumadori* make-up versus masks, these elements were all changed when these Noh plays were adapted for Kabuki. While they are all technically types of theater, their respective material circumstances caused them to change their elements to convert them into their own respective mode of expression. The play *Momijigari* is a great example as the play contains many Kabuki aspects, despite being based on a Noh play. The simple props used in the Noh play were replaced with a grandiose autumn landscape, featuring a domineering, winding tree in center stage. The dances were also changed, producing the "circus-like dexterity that kabuki enthusiasts loved to see."[4] Along with the extravagance and bombastic style of the set, these Kabuki-fied elements "would have shocked a *nō* audience."[5] The play *Ibaraki* is another excellent example, as it is not actually based on a particular Noh play, and was created entirely for the Kabuki stage. *Ibaraki* was actually a "faux Noh" play based on Noh's narrative structure and pacing, Noh dance and costuming.[6] But it still retained elements that make it Kabuki and not Noh.

To take one risky, but tempting example, let us look at a production that has spanned a number of these forms through the centuries. The Anime

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[4] Brandon and Leiter, *Kabuki Plays on Stage: Restoration and reform, 1872–1905*: 307.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 25.

Kurozuka (*Kurozuka*, 2008–2008) is based off of a Manga (*Kurozuka*, 2003–2006), which was actually an adaptation of a SF romance novel (Author: Yumemakura Baku, 2000). This was inspired by the eponymous Kabuki production, which was an adaptation of the Noh play *Adachigahara* (also known as *Kurozuka*). These are all based off of the folktale of *Onibaba* and can be seen as an extension of the long standing tradition to rework previous narratives, the newest incarnation of it being the Anime *Kurozuka*. The original Noh play tells the folk story of an older woman spinning thread in a hermitage. She is visited one night by a number of priests who seek lodging. Agreeing to their request, she departs to get firewood, but warns the priests not to go into her room. One of the monks cannot hold back his curiosity and peeks in to find a horrible scene of bodies and blood, leading the priests to believe she is the fabled demon of the area Adachigahara. Terrified they flee, only to be pursued by the demon—now in full form—which they eventually quell through Buddhist prayers. The Kabuki version focuses more on dance and the internal torment of the demoness, but the basic plot does keep closely to the original Noh play. The Anime version takes the narrative off into a number of different directions with extreme violence, hints of eroticism, genetically manipulated creatures, a post-apocalyptic future, and an altered historical past. All three versions take on their own versions of the initial play and produce them on stage or on screen[7] in the stylized conventions that are particular to that form. Of course, the distinctions between each version have as much to do with their historical circumstance and the development of the *Adachigahara* narrative as with each art form's respective conventions for character depiction. The main point here is just to display how each form produces very different expressions of related source material. A quick look at the depiction of the demoness herself will show the differences in her depiction (see Figure 4.4): in Noh, a *Hannya* mask of a demon is used to depict the woman in true demonic form, and the mask of an older or withered woman for her human form; Kabuki shows the demon in human form as an older lady of noble birth, the demon form shown without a mask, but with ghastly *kumadori* make-up, colored accordingly; the Anime version, however, does not ever show the demon transforming, and she is always seen in the form of a beautiful woman, even when performing gruesome acts. The depictions of the inevitable battle with the demoness are also very different, with stylized dance-fights in the Noh style, Kabuki

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[7] Or in the case of the Manga of *Kurozuka*, on the page.

Figure 4.4. Various conventionalized stylistic depictions of *Adachigahara*: The expression of the story of *Adachigahara* (or *Kurozuka*) is very different in each of the art forms that it is played out in. The top image shows the demon in her true form in Noh, and the bottom in Anime. The differences in presentation are due in part to the aesthetics of the form itself and the expectations of the audience who would watch.
Top: *Kurozuka* © Toshiro Morita, the-noh.com (http://www.the-noh.com/) Bottom: *Kurozuka* © B. Yumemakur, T. Noguchi / Madhouse, Sony Pictures Entertainment.

style, and Anime style (although in the Anime version, the monks never directly fight with her, but many different abominations chase her through the centuries).

But as we saw in the previous chapter, there are many different styles of Anime, perhaps most apparent in their visual manifestations. Anime's various styles function as different aesthetics, each a different interpretation of the same "real" world that we live in. While there is an almost "standard" Anime look, there are Anime that stand out for their specific visual styles. Perhaps the most famous are the Miyazaki/Studio Ghibli productions which have created their own finely crafted universes. There are others though, such as *Kaiba*, (2008) with a very strange, almost abstract aesthetic; *Mononoke* (2007, not *Princess Mononoke*), and the film *Tekkon Kinkreete* (*Tekkonkinkurīto*, 2006). While these are definitely at the fringes of the Anime style (at least visually), there are still some particulars that make them "look and feel" like Anime. There are a vast number of examples that possess distinct visual styles, and these in particular stand out through their difference compared to the more "standard" visual styles found in most Anime.

While each Anime is distinct, on some deeper, structural level, on the level of form, they are all "Anime." Because Anime has formal conventions—in both the physical animation processes and the visual, aural, narrative, and pacing style conventions—it is predisposed to certain narratives, certain narrative styles and outcomes, most precisely, those that fit the commercial, serialized nature of Anime episodes. This is not to say it cannot change, or that these are necessarily destructive, but rather, the form helps shape these narratives within the aesthetic logic of Anime. The outcomes in the content can be interpreted in various ways, but they are still the result of the formal structure prevalent in Anime.

As noted before, certain stylistic visuals, sounds, and voices are associated with Anime and the theater. So are the specific types of plots and world-settings that the characters move within. In the style of the mosaic structure that proliferates throughout these forms, each individual production has an aesthetic that is then put together with all the other productions to create the grand aesthetic that is the very form itself. It is this conventionalized beauty that has become well-known internationally and domestically (in Japan) as the Anime aesthetic—a form of expression that, as noted before, is well suited to deal with the problems, fears, and desires of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Because animation can make the invisible visible and the imaginary real, Anime reflects a stylized depiction of a post-modern cultural imaginary, with all

the fears and desires filtered through the formal lens of Anime's conventions, projected on screen, and distributed worldwide. I wonder if an explanation for Anime could be found in its aesthetic, if it could be described as or even defined as an aesthetic made up of the techniques, methods, modes, and their frequent re-use of such, to create the aesthetic. Though paradoxical, the form's patterns and practices allow the viewers to (not) forgive and forget the realistic unreality, the repetitive archetypes, the re-use of the same references and plots, the combination of the same character voices and similar designs. Viewers enjoy and seek out these aspects—these are the constituent parts that produce the aesthetic that they are looking for; these comprise the form of Anime. The repetition then becomes valued, as it provides for the (re)creation of images, sounds, characters, world-settings, and emotions that become frequent in Anime, just as such repetition has become esteemed in what is now labeled, in Japan and across the world, as the "high art" *forms* of Bunraku, Kabuki, and Noh. Anime's status as "popular culture" obscures its sophistication. Its repetition is not a lack of originality, but rather an embrace of formal conventions, allowing Anime to be liberated within its confines—repetitive as they may seem—freed to seek out and attain a specific type of beauty through the adherence to, variation within, and performance of, the form.

PART FIVE

SCATTERING BLOSSOMS, FALLING LEAVES[1]

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[1] From Zeami's treatise *Shūgyoku tokka*: "In general it can be said that a flower shows its beauty as it blooms and its novelty as its petals scatter. A certain person once asked, 'What is the spirit of Transciency?' The answer was, 'scattering blossoms, falling leaves.' Then came another question. 'What is the meaning of Eternity?' The same answer, 'scattering blossoms, falling leaves' was returned. Indeed there can be different interpretations of one single moment that are of profound interest." Zeami, Rimer, and Yamazaki, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami:* 130.

THE SCENT OF GARDENIAS LINGERS IN THE RAIN:[2]
RUROUNI KENSHIN: TSUIOKUHEN, A CASE STUDY

In the previous chapters we have gone through the various elements that are shared by Japanese traditional theater and Anime, allowing us to highlight Anime's formal structures through their similarities and differences. We have seen how Anime works with segments and sections: the relationship between part and whole, each of the fragments acting on their own and in relation to those surrounding it, interacting with the larger work as one construct. This is epitomized in the mosaic, *jo-ha-kyū* structure and the narrative and pacing patterns that occur. The mosaic structure can also be seen in the use of references, as well as in the creation of the Anime world: the interaction between the detailed world-setting and the characters—like the other "parts" of Anime, they are simultaneously distinct entities and one whole. All of this is expressed in excessively unreal ways, kept balanced by attributes of realism, creating a realistic unreality that hyperbolizes and distances the effects of the images, sounds, and narratives. We can see "realism" in the emotional content, expressed in a conventionalized aestheticized manner, the unreal depictions allowing for distancing in its blatant fakeness. These are exaggerated and accentuated to create visions of beauty for the inner emotional realism. All aspects of these synthesized worlds are conventionalized, stylized fragments, and the performance of these conventions is integral to the exposition of content.

At this point I would like to explore, in detail, one particular work that deserves to be recognized for its brilliance: the *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust and Betrayal* (Director: Furuhashi Kazuhiro; Studio: Studio Deen; sometimes known as *Samurai X: Trust and Betrayal* in America and *Rurōni Kenshin: Tsuiokuhen* in Japan, 1999). It is an absolute masterpiece of Anime, technically as animation, in terms of visual and aural splendor, as well as narrative and drama, epitomizing the concept of Anime as art, providing an excellent example of the capabilities of the Anime form. In analyzing this Anime, I would like to expose one last time, the form of

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[2] The name of episodes 7–8 from the Anime *Darker Than Black* (*Dākā Zan Burakku-Kuro no Keiyakusha-,* 2007–2007).

Anime with all its components as previously described. I wish to elaborate on exactly how the Anime form works as an expressive, visual and aural narrative system through the dissection of the construction of this example, detailing the specific mechanics of this Anime's aesthetics.

This four episode OVA (Original Video Animation)[3] series is a prequel to the very well-known Manga (Author/Illustrator: Watsuki Nobuhiro. *Rurōni Kenshin Meiji Kenkaku Rōmantan*, 1994–1999) and Anime TV series (Director: Furuhashi Kazuhiro; Studio Gallop, episodes 1–66, Studio Deen, episodes 66–95. *Rurōni Kenshin Meiji Kenkaku Rōmantan*, 1996–1998).[4] The original Anime tells the tale of an ex-assassin in the Meiji era who had fought viciously to bring in the Meiji Restoration (1868), leaving countless bodies behind him. With the promise of peace and a new government in place, he vowed to never kill again and to atone for his sins, despite the enemies from his past catching up to him. The original Anime and Manga series take place almost exclusively in the beginning of the Meiji period, after Kenshin's time as an assassin has passed. While there are references to other media, famous places, people, history, and other Manga in *Trust and Betrayal*, the main source for the OVA is the original *Rurouni Kenshin* Anime and Manga series. For fans of the original Anime series, the OVA's story was only alluded to, but those familiar with the Manga would already know the plot as a crucial story-arc towards the end of the Manga (chapters 165 to 179). With the Anime TV series and Manga in mind, the OVA's narrative can be summed up as the life of Kenshin as an assassin (before the series), detailing how Kenshin got his scar—a defining and infamous (in both the narrative world and ours) feature of his character design.

This OVA is interesting as it includes a part of the Manga that was not animated in the original Anime TV series. But at the same time, the Anime OVA does not follow the Manga story precisely, largely accurate in terms of plot, but with a number of modifications. Certain scenes are left out—e.g. Tomoe being at the same *izakaya* restaurant as Kenshin the night before they meet; how the assassin attacks Kenshin; Katsura does not ask Tomoe to be Kenshin's "sheath;" Kenshin and Tomoe playing with children in the

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[3] A production that goes straight for DVD or VHS release only. Originally released as four separate episodes, they were later redistributed as a film as a Director's Cut. The OVA is used here as it is the original release, which, despite its relatively short run time, was split into episodes. Regardless of whether the reasons were economic or artistic, the episodic structure that seems most natural to Anime is embraced in the original release.

[4] Technically it is not a sequel as this does take place during the Manga in flashbacks, but depicts a time in Kenshin's life before the Manga's narrative.

country—and other flourishes are added—e.g. the extensiveness of the visual motif of flowers; flashbacks; extended fight scenes. In general, the Manga is much more fluid, linear, and explanatory in its story-telling style, whereas the Anime is more heavily fragmented in terms of linear narrative structure. The visual style is also starkly different: the character and background depictions are more "realistic," there are no "exaggerated" body transformations in the OVA, the color palette is markedly darker, and the animation style frequently combines live-action footage with cel animation. The audio is often disjointed and displaced, the voices more subdued (though Kenshin is voiced by the same actress, Suzukaze Mayo), and the soundtrack almost exclusively brooding and elegiac. The differences from both the original series and Manga in narrative, visual, and aural style allow the OVA to operate as a separate entity but clearly relies heavily on the intertextual references of the original Anime and Manga (each their own separate works as well—a manifestation of a nested mosaic relationship of parts). Taken as a standalone production it is a complete work, but in-depth knowledge of the original *Kenshin* series and Manga accentuates the drama with the characters and creates extra excitement with references to events that play important roles in the TV series and Manga. As a heavily fictionalized historically based drama, an understanding of the *bakumatsu* period (End of the Tokugawa Period, 1853–1867) will enrich the narrative through recognition of the events, people, and places cited in the Anime. We can see the balance of realism and unreality coming into play in the accuracy of the character names and roles, and timing of historical events, but the blatant unreality of the presentation, character persona types, and even the existence of Kenshin (though he is supposedly based on a real assassin of the time). The Anime form facilitates the expression of this unreal real history.

The OVA consists of four episodes of approximately 30 minutes in length each. Every episode correlates to the previous one and moves the over-arching story forward linearly (though time often jumps around in the narrative). These can be organized and separated into a *jo-ha-kyū* construction individually, and as a series as a whole (see Table 1). Differences in color (light and dark, night and day), time (past and present), and sound (low to high volume sounds, noise to silence) mark these sections. The first two episodes act together as an extended *jo* section, introducing the characters, explaining their pasts, and then ending with fight scenes as rapid and spectacle focused *kyū* segments. The first *jo* section of the first episode shows the orphan Kenshin rescued from bandits by a swordsman who becomes his teacher, changing his name from Shinta to Kenshin.

Table 1. Structure of *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust and Betrayal.*

	Dan(Section)		
Division	Subdivision I	Episode	Events
Jo I	*Jo*	1 (Trust)	Opens to a night scene and lone swordsman (Hiko Seijiro); Shinta's caravan attacked by bandits; Shinta is saved by Hiko Seijūrō; Hiko comes across the graves made by Shinta, dubs him Kenshin
	Ha I	1 (Trust)	Conversation about fiancé; Kenshin appears and kills them; Kiyosato cuts Kenshin on the face, dies; Camellia flower is left on the body
	Ha II	1 (Trust)	Kenshin washes his wound; flashbacks to training with Hiko; Kenshin's past is interspersed with his present killings; Kenshin meets Katsura for the first time
	Ha III	1 (Trust)	Kenshin drinks saké; his scar continues to bleed; flashback to talk with Katsura; flashback first kill; killing with wild blood effects; Katsura and young Kenshin leave together
	Kyū	1 (Trust)	Kenshin declines drink with Izuka; Tomoe drinking; Kenshin attacked; Tomoe leaves bar; assassin and Kenshin fight; Kenshin wins, smells plum blossoms; Tomoe sees Kenshin (rain)
Jo II	*Jo*	2 (Trust)	Tomoe collapses; brings her back to inn; dreams of preparing to kill her; she helps at inn, apologizes for drunkenness

Table 1. (*Cont.*)

	Dan(Section)		
Division	Subdivision I	Episode	Events
Jo II	*Ha* I	2 (Trust)	Kenshin leaves the meal; asks inn to take Tomoe in; talk with Katsura about Shogunate; mentions white plum scent; *Shinsegumi* investigates bodies, replaying Kenshin's attacks; Tomoe gives Kenshin towel for scar.
	Ha II	2 (Trust)	Tomoe is compared to flowers; Tomoe gives Kenshin a blanket while he sleeps; Tomoe's past; Kenshin's reaction almost killing Tomoe; Kenshin thanks her
	Ha III	2 (Trust)	Katsura and Tomoe talk; *Shinsengumi* talk; Tomoe asks Kenshin to festival; Kenshin comments on saké's good taste; *Shinsengumi* prepare to attack
	Kyū	2 (Trust)	Kenshin explains why he kills; Izuka informs Kenshin to escape; attack begins; Kenshin is found; Tomoe says not to kill; Kenshin kills many; they leave; Saito mentions plum blossom scent; Katsura tells them to escape to Otsu
	Jo	2 (Trust)	Tomoe and Kenshin walk to Otsu; Tomoe talks to acquaintance; she grabs her dagger
Ha	*Jo*	3 (Betrayal)	Kenshin chops wood; Tomoe and Kenshin travel in forest and town; eat food and decide to farm; Tomoe runs hand over area his scar would be on herself in mirror

(Continued)

Table 1. (*Cont.*)

	Dan(Section)		
Division	Subdivision I	Episode	Events
Ha	*Ha* I	3 (Betrayal)	Izuka visits the farm; Kenshin to become medicine man; Tomoe decides to keep knife away; sell medicine; Tomoe says she is a medicine man's wife; both agree current saké is good; Tomoe puts a blanket on sleeping Kenshin
	Ha II	3 (Betrayal)	Izuka tells Kenshin to wait; Tomoe asks why he doesn't ask of her past; writing in her journal, recalls past; she cries
	Ha III	3 (Betrayal)	Izuka revealed as conspirator; Enishi visits Tomoe; Kenshin tells Tomoe about his happiness; Tomoe tells him her past; dark gray tree
	Kyū	3 (Betrayal)	Tomoe and Kenshin sell medicine; Kenshin helps Tomoe up after a fall; love scene; Kenshin says will atone for sins
	Jo	3 (Betrayal)	Tomoe prepares to leave; Izuka tells Kenshin Tomoe is the spy; Kenshin's scar bleeds
Kyū	*Jo*	4 (Betrayal)	Izuka informs Kenshin; Kenshin stumbles into mountain; Izuka leaves; Kenshin remembers Tomoe
	Ha I	4 (Betrayal)	Tomoe and Shogunate man talk; Kenshin meets first assassin; Tomoe tries to kill man, then herself; Kenshin injured,

Table 1. (*Cont.*)

	Dan(Section)		
Division	Subdivision I	Episode	Events
Kyū	*Ha* I	4 (Betrayal)	kills assassin; Shogunate conspirator will avenge her fiancé; Kenshin kills second assassin
	Ha II	4 (Betrayal)	Kenshin staggers through snow; hallucination/*michiyuki*; Kenshin hobbles over flowers; breaks illusion through scream
	Ha III	4 (Betrayal)	Kenshin arrives at Shogunate conspirator, is attacked; dead Kiyosato appears, reveals flower to Tomoe; Kenshin hurt badly; Tomoe saves Kenshin, but dies doing so; Tomoe cuts the last mark on Kenshin's scar
	Kyū	4 (Betrayal)	Kenshin and Tomoe's body back in cottage; Kenshin laments past; Katsura enlists Kenshin again, Kenshin agrees but will atone after revolution; Izuka killed; Kenshin fights; hugged by Tomoe; looks out at landscape
	Jo	4 (Betrayal)	Hiko finds graves, with scarf on them; voice-over of Shinta renamed Kenshin; sky pans to night

This name changing scene is important for the intertext, marking the *kyū* of the *jo* as a reference to the original series, the creation of the name Kenshin and his beginning as a swordsman.

The next section begins with guards walking through Kyoto discussing one of the men's—Kiyosato Akira's—happiness that he will find in his upcoming marriage. It flashes back to Kiyosato's past, where he explains to his fiancé Tomoe his reasons for parting. Cutting back to the men, it is

Figure 5.1. The climactic scene where Himura (Kenshin) receives the first mark of his scar from Tomoe's fiancé. The bloody display of swordsmanship is highly stylized; exhibiting Kenshin's character as an effective, but perhaps maniacal, killer. The last image is of a brilliant fuchsia camellia on the fiancé's dead body. *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust & Betrayal* (*Tsuiokuhen*) © N. Watsuki / Shueisha, Fuji-TV, Aniplex Inc. Images used with permission from rights holders.

revealed they are protecting an important official, guarding him against the revolutionary assassins who lurk in the shadows of Kyoto's streets— such is the way of the historical world-setting of this Anime. As the conversation goes on, they get approached by Kenshin (now much older) stepping out of the darkness. Kenshin attacks them, slaughtering the guards and official with deft and precise sword-play. The effects of the blood are highly stylized (as they generally are in Anime) allowing them to be aestheticized into an expression of gruesome beauty through the unreality of the depiction (see Figure 5.1). The crimson color spraying out in quick and fluid bursts add a wicked tinge to the intensity of their moment of death; a gory spectacle, but one that is given distance through the unreal medium, something that may be vulgar and overwhelming in live-action. However, the image is clearly realistic enough that the viewers are shocked at the vivid depiction of Kenshin's masterful swordplay and vicious assassination. In the middle of the assassination, Kiyosato dodges an

attack. Kenshin turns around; oval eyes pointed downwards, with small pupils—a conventional expression for bloodthirsty madness (bottom left, Figure 5.1). Kiyosato, unwilling to die and envisioning his lovely fiancé at home, makes one final attack, and through his defiance marks Kenshin's face with his sword before being killed, giving Kenshin the first part of his scar. As a crucial part of the intertext, this is emphasized by the image rotated at a ninety degree angle, breaking the scene visually.

This segment was the beginning of the *ha* section for this episode, and the past is frequently interspersed by flashbacks throughout the *ha*. Cut scenes move between the early life of Kenshin as an assassin: displaying how he came to join the revolutionary team he is an assassin for, how his master trained him, and how hard he worked. All of this is placed into the story that is commencing, switching between the past and present almost abruptly. This clearly separates it from the first part of the episode which showed Kenshin's adoption, with this middle, *ha* section divided further into a series of flashbacks from the present. These are lightly introduced with the minor flashback of Kiyosato talking with Tomoe, explaining his leaving to Kyoto, then accumulating in frequency until we are placed back in the present at the end of the episode. The effect is disorienting at times, but keeps a certain rhythm to the episode. An understanding of the intertextual source of the TV series and Manga helps the informed viewer in gathering where and when the events displayed are occurring in the timeline of Kenshin's life.

The final part of this episode is the wildly violent and perplexingly angled fight between Kenshin and an assassin who assaults Kenshin on his way back to his inn. It is a very short action sequence but intense and well-choreographed. This section's fight segment's pacing can be parsed into *jo-ha-kyū*: the assassin appears (*jo*), is noticed (*ha*), then attacks (*kyū*). Then there is a standstill between the two warriors, the cuts switching between them at a progressively faster pace (*ha*), building the tension until it erupts in a rapid succession of intricate, precise movements: the assassin attacking (*jo* of the *kyū*), wrapping Kenshin in his chains and thus immobilizing Kenshin (*ha*), and ending with Kenshin slicing his assailant down the middle with the assassin's own sword as he lunges in for another attack. Each of these segments can be further analyzed with a *jo-ha-kyū* segment, each separated by the interspersing of Tomoe walking towards the area Kenshin is fighting in. At the conclusion of the fight, blood splatters everywhere, covering a dazed Tomoe who arrives at the very moment Kenshin kills the assassin.

The fight scenes are important uses of intertext in this introductory episode. Up until this production, the animated Kenshin was one who did not kill. Here, in the OVA, the focus is on exhibiting the "old" Kenshin, the *hitokiri battōsai* ("Manslayer") Kenshin from the revolution. The brutal spectacle of the scenes can be read as providing a contrast to the series, a display of Kenshin's violent "dance." It is a fulfillment of the expectation of Kenshin as Manslayer, but the unreality of the depiction "multiplies and displaces" the action. The violence, though vivid, merits its existence as a punctuating spectacle. The stylization allows for the aesthetic "enjoyment" of the complexity of fight scenes and blood effects, and the depiction of such vicious violence shows the demonic state of Kenshin's character.

Unnoticed in the fury of the fight, Kenshin only realizes Tomoe is there when an image of plum blossoms flashes on screen, signifying her scent. The "white plum scent" that Tomoe wears is mentioned a number of times. While this is in the Manga, the frequency with which it occurs in the Anime brings the plum blossom image into the realm of structural motif and metaphor. The first mention in the OVA is in the introduction, where Shinta is rescued and there is a comment on the smell of white blossoms and blood. Vocal references occur throughout the episode, finally being visualized with a cut to a white plum blossom image in the last moments of the episode when Kenshin recognizes the smell and realizes Tomoe has seen him. Even this can be seen in a mosaic style *jo-ha-kyū* system: introduced, then built up, and finally visually produced. This white plum blossom scent motif carries on throughout the series in the subsequent episodes. Other flowers also play a role in the series. The fuchsia camellia flowers that will eventually be displayed again are introduced in this episode, shown when Kenshin receives his first scar. He leaves one on the body of the man who gave him this scar, Tomoe's fiancé (Figure 1.1). These images and descriptions of the flowers "recur, combine, dissociate into different groupings, and then combine again," throughout the OVA.[5] It is, as Orbaugh notes on Meiji-literature, part of a metaphor-based structure: like a Noh play, "the juxtaposition and interweaving of imagery, pulling together ideas and images not usually associated, induces a sudden insight into a conceptual or emotional complex, a particular human emotion."[6] Such examples will be highlighted throughout this analysis.

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[5] Orbaugh, "Extending the Limits of Possibility: Style and Structure in Modern Japanese Fiction," 364.

[6] Ibid., 365.

The second episode of the *jo* section of the series begins where the first episode left off, and introduces the premise of the story: how Tomoe enters and stays in Kenshin's life in conjunction with the revolution, and Kenshin's role as an assassin in it. Tomoe was witness to an attempt on Kenshin's life by an enemy assassin, Kenshin defeating him, but being seen by Tomoe in the process. His existence was meant to be kept secret, so it would have been grounds to kill her. But as he could not bring himself to do so, Kenshin takes her to the inn where his group is staying, and she is allowed to help out as a staff member. In his dreams he imagines himself as he prepares to kill her, but awakens before he does. The details of the surroundings on the wall screens are also white plum blossoms, providing a visual expression of his internal mind, which will be exposed in greater detail as the Anime goes on.

It should be noted that this dream sequence is not in the Manga, and that one of the following scenes is greatly adjusted from the Manga version as well. In the Manga, when Kenshin arrives to breakfast that morning, how he is received and the transition to his talk with Katsura is portrayed very differently. The Manga version depicts the other revolutionaries teasing Kenshin (and Tomoe) in a comedic manner. Keeping in line with the style of the Manga as a whole, Kenshin's reactions are displayed in conventionalized expressions, hyperbolic exaggerations of the body, and Kenshin is visibly embarrassed by the ordeal as a whole. It is a light, comical scene where the other revolutionaries (including Izuka) half-joke that teasing Kenshin the *hitokiri* is dangerous. In the Anime, however, as soon as Izuka begins to tease Kenshin, Kenshin lifts his sword and the entire room goes completely silent, Kenshin clearly showing his displeasure, but only using the sword to hoist himself up to leave. Gone are the elongated bodies and heavy displays of prodding and embarrassment; instead the OVA maintains Kenshin as a feared assassin in his subtle display of objection to the teasing, producing a much colder depiction of Kenshin's character.

The *ha* of this episode begins with the revelation that there is a spy in Kenshin's group of revolutionaries. Again the past is represented in fragmented flashbacks as the *shinsengumi*, investigating their comrade's dead bodies, try to recreate the events that lead to their deaths and clips of Kenshin's diffusion of the *shinsengumi* attacks are inserted as they discuss each body. These scenes are added to the OVA and are not in the Manga. In a later scene in the *ha* section, Tomoe sees Kenshin sleeping, sitting up in a corner by the window, his katana held close. She comes in with a blanket to put over his shoulders but his instincts kick in and he unleashes his

blade on her, stopping short of her throat. She explains she was just going to put a blanket on him so he will not catch cold, and eventually he thanks her. Tomoe asks if Kenshin intends to keep on killing, Kenshin responding that it is all he knows. Bandits killed his family as they live in a world of injustice that Kenshin now wishes to change—the world-setting has moved Kenshin to swordsmanship and now a desire to literally change the world-setting. This tension between Kenshin and the world-setting is what drives the majority of the action and plot forward. The OVA almost directly states this in the narrative, with comments such as that in the first episode when the official Kenshin assassinates actual says to him, "You think you can change the world with the cut of your sword?"

Later in the second episode, the flower motif comes up again, when the matron of the inn compares Tomoe to an iris. Pomegranate blossoms are also brought to attention by the character Katsura in the *ha* section for no particular plot related reason. This episode's *kyū* section ends with the fight (spectacle) in which Kenshin fends off the many *shinsengumi* attacking the revolutionary's meeting. Due to this turn of events, Kenshin and Tomoe are ordered by the revolutionary leader Katsura to move to Otsu (on the other side of the largest mountain bordering Kyoto) and to act as husband and wife while they lay low. (In the Manga Katsura only asks that they live together, but Kenshin and Tomoe actually marry.) The fight scenes in the first two episodes exemplify such "aesthetics of cruelty" and gore (as in Kabuki) creating eerily spectacular effects of blood rushing from Kenshin's victims and intricate movements that are smooth, impressive, and violent ballets. It is pretty to watch only in its unreality, for too real a depiction would be unbearably brutal. The episode ends with a short *jo* segment, hinting at Kenshin and Tomoe's new beginning, yet tinged with suspicion from the image of Tomoe holding her dagger. The entire episode largely serves as a conclusion for the greater *jo* section of the OVA, setting up the narrative in a position for the character development that will take place in the following episode. It completes a unit of the series, the two episodes that take place primarily in Kyoto, the following two primarily in Ōtsu. These episodes focus on plot and the introduction of the world-setting and main characters that will be explored in the third episode. The first two episodes are both punctuated by violent fights, but the next episode has none.

The third episode is where the emotional climax and character development takes a leap, serving as the central *ha* section of the OVA. The first scenes remind us of the violence and darkness in the two *jo* episodes (largely taking place at night): peaceful images of Kenshin chopping wood

outdoors in the sunshine cut to dark images of blood spattering and his katana slicing through bodies, all in time to his splitting of the logs. This responds to the previous episode's *jo* ending, such violent imagery concluding a small *jo-ha-kyū* section. We notice a slight change in Kenshin here, as he gets up and looks at Tomoe. His features seem more pleasant and he comments on the weather. But another difference is visible in his costume. He is no longer wearing the *hakama* he wore as an assassin, but a dark blue kimono (both are the same color though)—his internal development signified by his external presentation. The larger *jo* introduction commences after Kenshin and Tomoe leave their cottage. This is a silent, slow moving passage, with images of the two characters in nature; concentrating on the scenery and placing live action footage into the scenes, creating a very other-worldly effect. The entire montage is series of solemn moments, followed by a quiet meal at night between the two characters, the *ha* of this episode's *jo*.

Though the Anime is clearly unreal—overtly displayed by the constant understanding that this is animation—there is an exceptional attention to detail in *Rurouni Kenshin*: *Trust and Betrayal*: the Milky Way seen above Kenshin while he talks with Hiko after training (episode 1), the beautiful painting on the screen doors where Tomoe sleeps (episode 2), or the leafless branches as they walk through the snow (episode 3). There is clearly a great deal of work, time, effort and artistry spent on creating a very believable world-setting with a specific tone, maintained in part through the tragic extra-diegetic music that plays in the background of the OVA. Yet, throughout the series, there are a number of instances where live-action shots are interspersed with the animation (see Figure 5.2). For example, film footage of water is placed within the animated background of the wall and trees, or a real fire placed within animated logs. It is as if this is to constantly acknowledge the unreality of the medium and to keep a sense of aesthetic distance so the Anime can be appreciated as an object of beauty, to focus on the form and stylization of the Anime itself (including the use of live-action footage).

Following the scene of them eating at night, we see Tomoe and Kenshin farming outside, the lightness of the day cutting the darkness of the previous scenes, and beginning the *ha* of the *ha* section. Izuka visits and informs them that they will have to stay in Ōtsu for a while, telling Kenshin that he will be playing the part of a man selling medicine in order to look legitimate. In the Manga, Kenshin is shown interacting with the townspeople, talking friendlily with them as he passes by, and playing with the neighboring children with Tomoe. None of this is shown in the Anime, focusing

Figure 5.2. Throughout the series, there are a number of instances where live-action shots are interspersed with the animation. These two images show examples from episode 3. On the left, film footage of water is placed next to rocks that look animated. The right image shows a real fire placed within animated logs.
Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust & Betrayal (*Tsuiokuhen*) © N. Watsuki / Shueisha, Fuji-TV, Aniplex Inc. Images used with permission from rights holders.

only on the interaction and growing relationship between Kenshin and Tomoe. Before going to sell the herbal remedies, Tomoe debates whether she should bring her knife or not and we are shown a dream-like walk through of a spring landscape as she contemplates, ultimately putting the dagger away, leaving without it. As Kenshin and Tomoe walk along the forest path, he asks her why she did not bring her knife with her. She pauses for a moment, and a crane cries as it flies off over a lake and into the distance. The sun is setting and a red sky glows behind the autumn trees. Tomoe responds that she is a wife of a medicine man now; she does not need a knife any more. Kenshin continues walking expressionless, but his face soon softens to her response, a subtle sign of his slowly changing personality, and his movement toward the character he will be in the TV Anime and Manga. It should be noted that this is an animated face, displaying this emotion through a stylized manner: eyes glittering and pointing downwards, face turning slightly to the side, as if avoiding being seen. Gestures such as this often signify a kindness in character and a slight element of eroticism. Often the background of the character will switch to a bubbly (literally), shiny, or rose-filled image, but here the depiction is substantially toned down. Such a subtle change reminds one of the skillful manipulation of Noh masks and the codified *kata* in Noh and Kabuki acting. Kenshin responds, saying that it is getting colder, and they should hurry up. The entire segment is a well-wrought spectacle depicting a visual change that corresponds with Kenshin's internal transformation.

The second *ha* of this section begins once more with the switch between night and day, again punctuated by Izuka's visit. Kenshin looks "happy" for the first time. Later on it rains and Tomoe asks Kenshin why he does not ask about her past. His answers are logical but touching and afterwards she looks at her journal and recalls her troubled history. It comes to us in silhouettes in a red room. We see how she suffered, blaming herself for her fiancé's death, others gossiping and scorning her for asking Kiyosato to go to Kyoto to earn more money for them. The contrast of visual settings is stunning and the red backgrounds mirror the autumn sky seen before. The surreal setting of the flashback and the intensity of the red surroundings of the background are blended with a certain degree of realism, but contrasts with the detail of the previous "real" dwellings of the cottage, enabling the recognition of this setting as an introspective flashback. Tomoe cries, lamenting how kind Kenshin is when he is not killing.

The third *ha* shows us that it is Izuka who is plotting against Kenshin and we meet Enishi, Tomoe's brother (and a crucial character in the Manga). These are, of course, unexpected developments, twists in the story-line in both the Manga and Anime versions. Enishi informs Tomoe of the plot of the Shogunate and she responds by telling him to leave. Enishi's hatred of Kenshin for killing his beloved sister's fiancé and happiness in one blow is his apparent motivation for his allegiance and participation in the plot against Kenshin. Later that night, after Enishi has left, Kenshin tells Tomoe how he has found peace in this cottage with her. Tomoe confesses her past to Kenshin, how her fiancé was killed in Kyoto and that it is why she travelled there, in grief and sadness, only to eventually meet Kenshin. The end of this segment of confessions is marked by the sight of a dark gray tree with snow falling in the background, Tomoe apologizing to Kenshin, almost letting out her involvement with the Shogunate.

The *kyū* section of this *ha* episode begins as the two go off to sell medicine once more. While Kenshin and Tomoe are returning home with enough supplies for the winter, Tomoe trips. They follow the same path they did earlier in the episode, the trees now barren and empty, snow falling wildly around them, the sky a foreboding dark gray. Tomoe falls, and despite her confession of having lost her way in life as a sad widower, Kenshin offers his hand to help her up and says that he will protect her. At that moment a crane flaps and is seen flying over the silent, snowy landscape, gliding towards the mountains over the same lake. These scenes mirror those traveling scenes earlier in the episode and highlight the differences and development in the characters and their relationship.

We are then sent back to the red room which serves as the memories of Tomoe, her haunted past that has caused her to conspire against Kenshin. As we have seen their affections for each other grow, and now have confirmation that Tomoe is an accomplice in the plan to kill Kenshin, we understand the full extent of her conflict between her duty to avenge her fiancé, to eradicate the man who took her joy away, and her attraction to that same man, who has showed her kindness, and displayed ability to change as they live in peace together. This is her conflict between the world-setting around her: the Tokugawa government, fighting against the deadly assassin Kenshin who threatens their order, and her personal desire to be with him. Her fiancé worked for the government and Kenshin works to literally tear that society apart as a revolutionary.

A voice-over/monologue explains how she was hurt in the past, and we cut back to Kenshin and her sitting in their cottage. The two characters look like dolls in the light of the fire (which is live footage), Tomoe reaching out to touch Kenshin's scar as the voice-over continues. In doing so, Tomoe falls into Kenshin's arms and the external world slips away into obscurity. Tomoe's monologue continues—revealing her perspective—as the two passionately embrace, snow lightly falling around them in their isolated world, a descent inwards to the character's emotional realms, all else fading away. This is the emotional climax of the episode and part of the visual spectacle (a *kyū* nested within the *ha*): the seasons changing around them, the crane in the snow, and the two lovers in their private darkness. Afterwards, Tomoe lies in Kenshin's arms, the two talk and he resolves to atone for his sins after the revolution is over. Tomoe looks at Kenshin as he proclaims that he will protect her and her happiness, and she is shown happy for the first time, expressed in the conventionalized manner of Anime-Manga: both eyes closed and arched upwards, with a faint smile on her lips and a slight tilt of her head to the side.

In the above-mentioned scene, though they are inside, when Tomoe and Kenshin first embrace, snow begins to fall, and we are given entrance into a dream-like world. Another crane flies off, and the background disappears into darkness as the two characters consummate their affections for each other. Similar to the use of flowers that have been used throughout the OVA, the images of the crane are part of a number of images that are repeated, reiterated in each new instance, built up over the episode or OVA to accrue symbolic, metaphoric meaning. We can see this even in the path that Kenshin and Tomoe walk back from multiple times, each one displaying a different season. It should be noted that this scene and the natural imagery are not in the Manga. These images of nature tempt a

comparison to the natural metaphors for love and loss abundant in both the traditional theater and the *waka, renga*, and *haikai* poetry that inspired so much of it. All of this imagery is expressed in the visual splendor of the medium of animation, embracing the medium's strengths. The scene of Tomoe and Kenshin's embrace is such a blatant display of unreality that it accentuates the moment, focusing on the two characters as snow lightly falls around them, allowing the viewers to see this moment as profound for the two characters, the world literally falling away from precedence— this moment is all that is important for them. But a scene where the background is replaced by a black or patterned image is a common conventionalized practice that singles out a character (or a few) and emphasizes the emotion of the moment. It is an extremely unreal presentation, but it highlights the expression of emotion by concentrating on the characters. The above scene is facilitated by the universal acceptance of Anime's unreality, epitomizing how artfully Anime can stylize human emotion in an unreal and lyric manner but still reach to the core "reality" of a human experience, creating the aestheticised beauty that has made Anime so effective as an art form.

The morning after, Tomoe wakes up, puts on her white plum blossom perfume, leaves the blanket she has covered Kenshin with many times before next to him, then bids farewell to her second love. She speaks as she leaves: "To the person who took away my happiness, only to give me another happiness." Closing the door, the eerily melancholy music that has been playing in the background as extra-diegetic music throughout the series has accrued enough meaning to resonate at full intensity here, emphasizing the dramatic importance and foreboding tone of the moment. Her face exposes her regret as she succumbs to her previous responsibility and engagement, leaving Kenshin. The subtlety in her facial expression is remarkable. It allows us to project the knowledge of her participation in the conspiracy, her tragic irony to have fallen in love with Kenshin, and the pain it must be inflicting in her heart, onto her face, onto that moment. Ultimately, however, the character is not real. She is not even a living being able to feel those emotions, and so we are producing them within ourselves, completing the picture drawn by the atmosphere that has been created by the conflict between her world-setting and her personal love.

The *jo* section at the end of this episode begins when Izuka arrives, telling Kenshin that Tomoe is the spy and he must kill her. Kenshin killed her fiancé, so she sought revenge shortly after; the proof is in her diary. The world-setting produced Tomoe's fiancé Kiyosato who worked for the

government of the world-setting, but it also produced Kenshin who killed Kiyosato as Kenshin works against the society and history of the world-setting to take down this government. And Tomoe got caught in the middle of this, bearing her loss, driving her to revenge, and leading her and Kenshin to tragedy. Rushing over he looks at it, his scar opening when he reads it, bleeding onto the floor. These scenes are not present in the Manga. Their existence helps shape a depiction of Kenshin as mentally damaged, physically revealing the breaking of his psyche. Thus ends the *ha* section of the series.

The components of the previous episodes are layered, built up over the course of the preceding episodes and presented here in their final exposure in the last episode. The *kyū* section comprises a large amount of fighting that serves as part of the *kyū* spectacle. While the *jo* episodes (episodes 1 and 2) included this as well, it was a different type of spectacle and attraction than that which is explored in the final episode. The expectations of wild fight scenes were anticipated as the OVA is in direct reference to the *Rurouni Kenshin* original Manga, where they are included as a substantial part of the story-arc's finale. The first episodes satisfy the expectations for fight sequences and we are slowly introduced to (or break into) a different type of spectacle in the third (*ha*) episode, with the emphasis on a peaceful lifestyle in nature, not on killing. The love scene, with the snow falling lightly in the darkness around the two characters, and the scenes of the natural landscape can be seen as a separate type of spectacle, a contrast to the earlier violence, literally showing us that there is an alternative beauty to the bloodshed that consumed the first two episodes. This acts in accordance with the character development as Kenshin begins to appreciate this peaceful setting over the violent one from which he came. Both sides are expressed to us in hyper-aestheticized forms and are appreciated as varying images of beauty. These two are compounded, the violent and natural-peaceful, to produce the final *kyū* segment of the series. Though there are fight sequences, they are short. The lack of a wildly extravagant *kyū* of swordplay further embraces Kenshin's ideological transformation. There are enough battles to ensure a fulfillment of the *kyū*, but, save for the brief anti-climactic fight with the Shinsengumi at the end of the episode, the fight sequences are remarkably simple in comparison to the first and second episodes—the fights depicted appear meaningless and empty. Instead, one of the most significant spectacles seems to be the *michiyuki*-like sequence. These subjects will both be broached again later in the analysis, but for now I would just like to note that the spectacles of this *kyū* episode are not just violent but include many dream-like hallucinations as well.

The final episode begins with a short recap of Izuka informing Kenshin, introducing why Kenshin is in the mountains. We see Kenshin making his way through the snow, blood running out of his open scar, hallucinating as he walks into what we know is a trap. Tomoe talks with her Shogunate conspirator and we find that they have tricked her. Hopelessly in regret she tries to kill him, and then herself, doing both unsuccessfully. Kenshin gets attacked by an assassin lying in wait for him, and though injured, Kenshin manages to slay his assailant. As Kenshin battles the second round of assassins (*ha* II) the Shogunate conspirator explains his duty in this world-setting, to protect the Tokugawa government and the society it has established, and for Tomoe to remember her fiancé and acknowledge that Kenshin's execution is just—that he and his organization threaten a legacy of peace that has spanned over two hundred years. This accentuates the world-setting by explaining the opposing ideology, and building the tension between character (Tomoe and her duty, Kenshin and his revolution) and world-setting (here represented by the Shogunate conspirator who has thus far not been developed as a character).

The second *ha* section holds one of the two main points of the spectacle. In this scene, a badly hurt Kenshin staggers onwards, the external world fading away to reveal darkness and a ground paved with dead bodies. In an eerie silence, magenta camellia petals fall around Kenshin while he trudges onward on a path lit only by lanterns, as if guided through another realm. Scenes of his life that we witnessed play out through voiceovers and still scenes that are placed on the sides of his passageway. Only existing in the OVA and not in the Manga, this scene can be read as a *michiyuki* scene, a visual elegy (see Figure 5.3). Just like in the Bunraku love suicides, this *michiyuki* spectacle comes in the *kyū* section of the larger performance—in this case, this is the *kyū* episode and this *michiyuki* is happening in the second *ha* section of this episode. Gerstle summarizes Yokoyama Tadashi's interpretation of Chikamatsu's *michiyuki* sections as "compact retrospective summations of the central problems of the entire play."[7] This is exactly the same case here, with a poetic and metaphorical replay of the past events of the Anime, further adding to the mosaic of the OVA, a box of the OVA within the box of the *ha* section of the *kyū* episode, again building on all the previous tension that has been set up. This is all done with a focus on a lyric spectacle to achieve this recap, a brilliant iteration of the repetition technique of previous scenes that is so frequently

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[7] Note that this is with regard to Chikamatsu's love suicides after *Shinjū kasane Izutsu* (*Love Suicides at the Sunken Well*, 1707) Gerstle, *Circles of Fantasy*: 121.

Figure 5.3. *Michiyuki*-like Sequence in *Rurouni Kenshin: Tsuiokuhen.* When a battered Kenshin moves forward, through the set of traps laid for him, in search for Tomoe, broken-hearted and delirious, he travels through a dream-like world, a *michiyuki* sequence as he crosses through a lantern-lit path, covered by the bodies of his victims and camellia flowers. *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust and Betrayal (Tsuiokuhen)* © N. Watsuki / Shueisha, Fuji-TV, Aniplex Inc. Images used with permission from rights holders.

used in Anime. Beneath a gray tree—one we saw in the previous episode for but a moment—Tomoe's presence is seen behind him, trailing him like a ghost as they trample over a floor covered in flowers. Peaceful scenes of nature flash before him as he trudges on this path now laden with the magenta blossoms. Over and over Kenshin repeats the words he once asked Tomoe, screaming them until he finally breaks free from this dream and arrives at what his assailant describes as his execution grounds.

This final *ha* section depicts a deeply wounded Kenshin losing badly to his confident adversary, the Shogunate conspirator. In the old temple they were waiting in, Tomoe shudders, writhing in emotional agony. She suddenly senses a presence and turns to see the blood covered ghost of her fiancé Kiyosato behind her, standing with a faint smile on his face. A look of forgiveness and warmth meets her. He is holding a camellia, like the one placed on his back after his death. Without any words he looks at the

Figure 5.4. The images of the camellia flowers, in Orbaugh's terms, "recur, combine, dissociate into different groupings, and then combine again," throughout the OVA. The power of the motif lies in the very accumulation of the images, their repetition and reiteration within the mosaic, resulting in an intangible expression of a human emotion that is found in each image and in their compounded whole. *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust and Betrayal* (*Tsuiokuhen*) © N. Watsuki / Shueisha, Fuji-TV, Aniplex Inc. Images used with permission from rights holders.

flower and subtly motions to her. Tomoe turns slightly, struggles, but finally understands, nodding in recognition. She looks again but he is gone, and only the blossom is left on the ground. This segment is entirely expressed in stylized motions of the animated figures with no words and only faint expressions exchanged (see Figure 5.4)—an incredible feat even in live action film. This scene, another important, symbolic spectacle, is also not featured in the Manga.

There is a sense of poetry to the repetition of the images in the *Kenshin OVA* that recalls similar usages of imagery in the verses in Noh scripts. Earlier in this book, I used the example of the *Evangelion* series that re-used images in different contexts. A similar use of compounding repeated images can be seen in the above scene with Tomoe. It is the final culmination of the camellia flower image, reiterated and reused throughout the

Anime, its meaning accruing in each new context, its ultimate meaning manifested in these poignant moments. From the camellia flower's initial introduction into the narrative when Kenshin kills Kiyosato, the flower begins to receive a connection with death. In the *michiyuki*-like sequence, Kenshin crosses a floor covered in camellia flowers, as if he is walking to his death. In the final segment with the ghost of Kiyosato, the silent nod towards the flower can be interpreted—within the narrative—as Tomoe's coming to terms with his death and her own. But while we can attribute any number of interpretations to the flower motif, and in particular the camellia flower (especially with the clearly Buddhist implications of the statuary behind Kiyosato), the power of the motif lies in the accumulation of the images, their repetition and reiteration within the mosaic, resulting in an expression of a human emotion that is found in each image and in their compounded whole.

Returning back to the action, we see Kenshin using the last of his strength, mustering up all of his energy to attack. He screams a silent roar while a voice-over monologue explains his inner torment as he lunges forward. Trying to protect the weak to create a happier world, he took away Tomoe's happiness and for that he now suffers. He swings with his deadly blow, slicing through both his enemy and Tomoe, who, at the last moment jumps in, holding his adversary back from killing him, sacrificing her life and saving Kenshin's. His final assailant defeated, Kenshin's battle is won, but at the expense of his lover. Holding her in his arms, Tomoe takes her dagger, lifts it up and cuts the final stroke on Kenshin's scar. "I'm sorry, my darling," she whispers, as she passes from their world, finishing the closing mark on the cross-shaped wound.

We know through the intertext that Kenshin will become a person who does not kill after her death. This traumatic moment permanently changes the famed man killer and the scar is a symbol of this, literally marking his transformation into the character of the Manga and TV series. His character develops beyond being a killer and assassin and decides to move towards pacifism. The last line on the cross shaped scar is a culmination of this internal character development that we saw in the previous episodes. However, in the Manga, the final mark of the scar is made through the clash of the final blow to the assassin and Tomoe. In the OVA the last line of the cross is made directly by Tomoe, emphasizing the dramatic reference, and physically marking (externally) Tomoe's effect on Kenshin.

His scar now complete and the reference fulfilled, the dramatic climax has been reached. Following this the loose ends of the story are tied up. Enishi sees his sister die because of Kenshin and swears further revenge

(to be played out in the original Manga/the future of this OVA) and Izuka meets his doom. Katsura returns to ask for Kenshin's help again, who agrees, lamenting over the dead body of Tomoe in their cottage, swearing to atone for his sins after the revolution is over. This is the *jo* and *ha* of the *kyū* section of this *kyū* episode. The rest of the episode is largely filled with quick scenes of Kenshin's battles, the fights of the legendary *hitokiri battōsai*.[8] There is a fight sequence with the hardened *shinsengumi* leader Saitō and Kenshin, shown only briefly and without a conclusion, referencing the same fight that is a subject of concern in the TV series.[9] This continues the allusion to the intensity of the fight, allowing the viewers to imagine the battle better than its actual execution would allow; a personal battle scene that was built up from the original series. But the fight is anticlimactic and without a direct outcome. All other fight scenes are shown without a detailed context and much less extravagantly choreographed than the first episodes. This gives the violence of this *kyū* section a hollowness that matches Kenshin's unspoken internal sentiments regarding killing and death. Tomoe's memory weighs down on and comforts Kenshin, who is now shown wearing the blanket she laid out for him—this is literally portrayed as we see Tomoe's specter wrapping her arms around the lonely revolutionary. The OVA ends with a silent, subdued Kenshin looking out into the distance, slight changes in his face occur as the wind blows against him. Text appears explaining the historical events of the revolution succeeding and Kenshin receding into the shadows of history. It is a somber and elegiac moment as Kenshin looks towards his future, what the intertext savvy viewers know will come, using the reference to the previous original series to stir up an emotional response. A *jo* section follows, with Kenshin's teacher Hiko coming across the same graves as in the beginning. A new grave with Tomoe's scarf around it is shown—the final culmination of the scarf image. Hiko sighs in silence and a voice-over is heard of the renaming of the orphan boy Shinta into the fabled Kenshin.

As mentioned in the previous description, the external expression of the internal is visible in Kenshin's character development that can be seen through his costumes, from childhood to adolescence, to killer then reformed assassin, and finally the famous Kenshin from the original series

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8   The film version adds an extra battle scene, further accentuating this.
9   In episode 28, Kenshin remembers a fight scene where he saves some of the revolutionaries from a *shinsengumi* attack. One of the *shinsengumi* (Okita) tries to intervene, but is stopped by Saitō, who uses a powerful attack on Kenshin. In the OVA Kenshin and Okita attack each other, but in the Anime they do not.

who has vowed to never kill again. Each costume is different, expressing the internal through the external depiction. As the assassin he wears a blue and white *hakama*. When he finally shows happiness and contentment in Otsu, he is wearing a blue kimono. He dons his *hakama* again to kill Tomoe, but it can be seen as regression for him now as he has progressed emotionally and morally. He transforms again with his vow to atone for his killing, wearing her scarf/blanket over his clothing. His final transformation is what we complete: no scarf, having left it on the grave, it is implied that he will be wearing the pink top and white bottomed *hakama* that he wears in the series, which should continue from that point on.

If we read the OVA against the typical Noh narrative structure, Kenshin would serve as the *waki* who introduces the setting and encounters a mysterious character, Tomoe, who could be seen as the *shite.* It is Kenshin as the *waki* that grounds the narrative for the audience, allowing us to see Tomoe, who later reveals her true identity before leaving in death, just as the *shite* often does in Noh.[10] Tomoe is given a substantial amount of depth and complexity, the OVA allowing us to go into her mind and see from her perspective, expressed through the dreamlike sequence where she debates taking the dagger, the red colored flashbacks to Tomoe's past, the love scene monologue, as well as in the silent, poetic sequence of Tomoe interacting with the ghost of Kiyosato. While Kenshin is clearly central to the narrative, an alternate reading of the OVA would be Tomoe's struggle against the world-setting that moves the narrative along, causing Kenshin to be manipulated throughout the OVA, and her assertion of her agency against the world-setting, saving Kenshin and causing her own death. We may also read the OVA as containing two perspectives (Kenshin's and Tomoe's) of the same world-setting, depicting their struggles and their explorations, two parts of the same whole, combining and colliding in the narrative to create the world of this Anime. The OVA starts with an external introduction of the characters and then spirals downwards into the depths of their hearts and minds, acclimating us to this transition through flashbacks, dreams, and hallucinations, reaching their full potency in the final spectacles of the *kyū* episode.

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[10] Death is not the only exit for the *shite* in Noh. Often the spirit will just vanish, returning to where they came from, or reach enlightenment with the helpful prayers of the *waki*. Many times the *shite* will disappear in madness or distress as the dawn awakens the *waki* from his dreams.

Beauty resounds in this production, particularly in the images. The visuals are clearly a central focus of the OVA as there are a large number of segments concentrating on the scenery, in meeting rooms with detailed walls, in the nature around Ōtsu, in the urban landscape of Kyoto, and in the depths of Kenshin's and Tomoe's minds. The *michiyuki* scene in particular recalls the *monogurui* in Noh plays, characters whose madness is not necessarily marked by lunacy but by a heightened attunement to nature, resulting in a lyrical exploration of that world-setting through poignant verse. There is another scene in the first episode, when Kenshin kills a target for the first time. He looks up and around, the focus is on the leaves and the trees, the sounds of the forest that surrounds him, as if to express his psychological transformation into a murderer of men with an escape through the expression of the natural world. Later on in the *michiyuki* scene, shots of natural landscapes flash before us, displaying scenes of nature in his moments of tragedy and insanity. Even the fights of the series can be seen as beautiful; blood effects carefully created to not only depict gore and brutality, but beauty; a deadly dance they perform with skill and accuracy, like those shown on the stage.

All of their movements, from violence to love, from misery to happiness are expressed in a specific Anime form, an elegant execution of a grand performance. From the starkly different visual and audio style and darker atmospheric tone compared to the original TV series and Manga, the aesthetic focus of Anime is distinctly apparent in this OVA. This world is a somberly different world than that painted in the Kenshin series. The entire production is of a tone and (visual) style that contrasts with the original series. This is a different interpretation of the same unreal universe, expressed in the same form but displayed through a different aesthetic lens. It is a world of evanescence, of the quiet majesty of nature, of death and tragedy, a world in which we are all bound to the fates we create. The emotional reality of such tragedy shines through the unreal form. Told in fragments, episodes and flashbacks, the pieces come together to build the mosaic that envelops us in the glory of the spectacle, but keeps us away through its unreal expression. It is far too beautiful to be real. This world has been shown to us, the emotions and the characters made alive for us by our acceptance of the unreality and indulgence in their beauty in a similar fashion as to those played out on the stages of Japan and Asia for centuries.

SENTIMENTS FOR THE REMAINING FLOWER:[1]
SOME FINAL OBSERVATIONS

While a large number of Anime have been mentioned throughout this project, there are two that I feel deserving special mention once again to further illustrate some points: *Cowboy Bebop* (1998) and *Evangelion* (1995). *Cowboy Bebop* was previously noted a number of times in detail, but I would like to add certain comments here. Firstly, I would like to address the music of the series. The concept of spectacle has been used here particularly in the visual sense, as animation is a medium of images. However sound does play a crucial part in the creation of the atmosphere, change of pacing, delineation of segments, and creating aural cues; it is a critical aspect of the overall aesthetics of Anime. Anime soundtracks are often sold separately, attesting to the quality of their music and importance as merchandise. *Cowboy Bebop* deserves special mention as its soundtrack is of such a high caliber. Comprised of originally composed pieces (primarily by Kanno Yōko) it consists of mainly Blues and Jazz, although it utilizes a number of other genres as well. The energy and sadness in the Jazz and Blues songs played add an extra layer of texture to the series, are pivotal aspects of creating the tension in scenes, and crucial in producing the tone of the series as a whole. For example, in the sixth episode, "Sympathy for the Devil," the harmonica that wails in the background throughout the episode is suddenly cut off at the final moments, allowing for the aftermath of the events we just witnessed to settle in, creating tension by playing off of the previous suspense through the contrast of the silence.

While the series paints the intimate portrait of a number of "wandering souls," there is a focus that leans towards the character of Spike. He himself is a mixture of a number of references from the Anime *Lupin the Third* (1971–), to Bruce Lee, and even encompassing film noir icons and Clint Eastwood. Throughout the show his personality renders him as a charming character with his suavity and skills. It is largely his exploits that serve as the action oriented spectacle. But as he keeps simultaneously running away from and chasing after his past, we slowly begin to

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[1] The name of episode 23 from the Anime *Noir*.

understand him as a tragic character, realizing his eventual death at the end of the series is appropriate. This is produced through its composite aesthetic of numerous references to film noir and other genres that are filled with such anti-heroes, and carefully constructed through the narrative pacing. The whole series plays with fragments, a common practice of the Anime form. From memories to dreams, Spike's past, the episodic structure, and the smaller sagas within the series, the series embraces fragmentation on multiple levels of the narrative.

This use of fragments distorts the storyline. What exactly happened between Spike, Julia and Vicious; what is the relationship between Spike and Faye; how did Spike and Jet meet and under what circumstances? These are all only suggested at in the series through bits of information that the audience must piece together. The whole narrative itself operates (performs) with the joy in the allusion to the events and our participation in drawing conclusions on our own. The distinct cultural, urban backdrop, highly globalized (or perhaps "galactic" may be a better word in this case) society shows influences of a number of different (fragmented) cultures and languages, both historical and contemporary. Are the characters not just children of this world-setting? The two mesh exceedingly well as the hard-boiled bounty-hunters and their drama against the syndicates and underworld products (the bounties) of the world-setting form the narrative and the bittersweet, tragic, nostalgic, and drifting sentiments that complete the atmosphere of this world. The illusion of the world's tangibility is solidified by references in the narrative to previous "lives" the characters had, events that are never fully explained or even referred to again, further fragments of this world. For example, when Spike visits his mechanic, they clearly have a history together, but it is never really explored. The same applies to many of the characters Spike meets from his past. This all creates an expanded view of the world and gives it its own history, developing the breadth of that world-setting and providing a believable stage for the drama to play out on. The world-setting and characters lay the groundwork and the use of a *jo-ha-kyū* like system allows the use of fragments to be exploited even further.

The instance of Spike's death at the end of the series is an excellent example of *Cowboy Bebop's* use of the Anime form. Throughout the series suggestions of his inevitable doom appear, even in the first episode: the Native American-esque mystic that Spike visits tells him he will meet a girl and then death. While, in that episode he does meet a girl and she does die, the reference can be applied to Spike in two other ways: later on he

meets Faye and in the end, he dies; he reunites with Julia and they both meet their demise. For the rest of the series there are other moments when Spike almost meets death; when he first fights Vicious, again when he meets Vicious for the second time, or when he is lost to the pull of gravity in space, narrowly rescued by his mechanic. While it seems certain that Spike will die, time and time again, he gets by, heals and moves onward, leading the audience to believe that he will survive the next clash, based on the pattern that has been provided. The film *Knockin' on Heaven's Door* was released years after the series and takes place in the middle of the series, when all the characters were together—i.e. the *Ha* section. This film, though taking place before Spike's death, taken in conjunction with the series, serves as a final *jo* section, allowing the characters to live on. In this film as well, Spike nearly dies twice.

In most circumstances this could be considered effective use of fore-shadowing, and, admittedly, it is a very clever use of the device. But the importance of pointing out the instances of the foreshadowing of Spike's death is to show that it is not merely assorted instances previewing his eventual demise, but a layering of these occurrences to build up and create a pattern which is then caught by the viewer and eventually played out. In this way the bitter-sweetness of his death is emphasized and highlighted. We know that it was inevitable, despite our desires to not have it so. Based on the previous pattern of events, compounded over the series, we are inclined to believe he will survive, but know, as this is liter-ally the final battle of the series—his past finally having caught up with him—that this could be his end. The foreshadowing of his death works against the evidence to suggest his survival that eventually coalesce and produce the tension in those final moments. This is where the entire series culminates and the lasting effect of the beauty in his death is fully expli-cated. We realize his previous survivals were just him moving closer to his demise. His last utterance, "bang," is copied from an earlier episode in which he kills a potentially immortal character: in the last moments of this withering character's life Spike throws up the harmonica that this dying blues-prodigy played, then aims at it with his finger and says "bang"—the actions and words of this gesture are repeated in the final episode as he staggers to speak them, then collapses. When Spike's ex-lover, Julia dies earlier in the episode, time slows down as the shot rings in the background; a flock of birds rises into the air, wings fluttering behind her golden hair as she falls. Spike, rushes to her side, and she whispers something to him. We don't hear this until the last moments of Spike's own life: "It's all a dream," she murmurs, and he concurs. With their deaths

the final curtain is pulled over their world, their reality. It all really is just a grand illusion.

<p align="center">***</p>

Evangelion has gotten a large amount of attention throughout this book for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is one of the most influential Anime in the last twenty years. Secondly, as stated in the introduction, many people familiar with Anime, specialists and non-specialists alike, fans, and mild enthusiasts are usually at least vaguely familiar with *Evangelion.* It is one of Anime's quintessential works that make it difficult to "draw a line between high culture and low culture."[2] While I discussed *Evangelion* in detail before, I would like to point out a few more observations when it is viewed through an understanding of Anime's form.

Deciphering *Evangelion* is an almost endless task which, in Napier's words, leads us on "a journey into inner and outer reality before...leaving its characters and its audience floating in a sea of existential uncertainty."[3] One reading of *Evangelion* is that the focus is not entirely on the plot, but on the emotion of the spectacle, the sensational "impact" of the series itself, and the infinite questions it makes the viewer contemplate, to drift through its melancholy and existential world, bringing together all visual and aural spectacles to force an experience that leaves the audience with a feeling both breathtaking and incomprehensible. The final film exists as a visual and aural orgy, a grand spectacle paradoxically similar to, and unlike, anything seen before it, causing many viewers to walk away in a confusing state of appreciation, aesthetic fulfillment (perhaps overload) as well as utter bewilderment.

Of the various Anime-Manga styles, ranging from cute to occult, that of *Evangelion* could be considered a "standard style" of sorts: elongated bodies, large eyes, but not too exaggerated, even a few characters with odd colored hair and eyes (although for the most part, the hair styles and colors are "realistic" and subdued). The character designs for the majority of the characters were, at that point in time, simple, yet distinct, but what is most noticeably special (in comparison with other Anime) are the designs of the Eva machines themselves. They are an important part of the spectacle in and of themselves.

As noted earlier, references throughout the work create a mosaic pastiche of intertextual fragments, creating a particular mixture of modern

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[2] Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: xiv.
[3] Napier, "When the Machines Stop," 108.

art and design, classical and pop music, shots of structures at odd angles (most famously of telephone lines), quick cuts to text and abrupt shifts between moments of silence to deafening audio stimulation. These all come together in its hallmark rhythm, producing the *Evangelion* aesthetic, its signature style. The intertextual references layer on top of each other, flowing into one another: the giant robots call forth the large number of previous Anime before it; the Judeo-Christian mythology adding a mysticism and religious overtone to all the events taking place; the monoliths of "Sound Only" that form the SEELE council recalls the images of *2001: A Space Odyssey*; the amount of external motifs and techniques intertwined within this Anime is so massive that an analytical dissection of them would be near impossible.

Along with the references, the story builds upon itself, the mosaic structure (as explained in the chapter on *jo-ha-kyū*) provides a base of information, breaks this with more questions, and provides us with an odd (visual) spectacle, then repeats with more information, building off the last set, keeping us perpetually guessing and grabbing at the pieces for answers. As Lamarre has noted, the juxtaposition of pieces in *Evangelion* has led to an experience where fans "clamored for more clarification and orientation, which Anno [the writer and director] at once promised and withheld."[4] The different texts and the compounding of events, scenes and scenarios, all combine to guide the viewer through a series of events that build a mutual experience between the viewer and the characters on screen. These then compound upon themselves again, and are eventually repeated and revised—repetition figures greatly in this series as it does in other Anime. This device is then used to systemically allow for the viewers to enter the character's minds. Each trip inwards peels apart both the external world where the drama is taking place and the layers of the characters' psyche, most specifically Shinji's. The surrounding visual spectacles of the Evas and Angels eventually dissolve as their place in the narrative ends. All that is left in the final two episodes are the "primordial," more abstract expressions that further distort the illusion the animation has created for the entirety of the series and presents us with Shinji's inner mind.

The aesthetic world of *Evangelion*, for the first thirteen episodes of the series, goes into detail about the world we are watching: a brief history of the events, some of the characters are explained and fleshed out, and we

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4 Lamarre, "Rebuild of Anime." *Mechademia 5: Fanthropologies* 5 (2010): 349–53. See page 351.

are given access to their daily lives. It is almost joyous at times, as the characters bond, and we explore the world-setting they inhabit, observing how they adjust to it and their new responsibilities. This continues on into the second half of the series. But the later *ha* sections show this world as darker. Our understanding of its past, of the scenarios of Nerv and SEELE, and the technology used gets more detailed, and the "truth" behind the Second Impact and what the Eva and Angels really are is partially revealed. This gives us a substantial but incomplete view of a society with a unique history of humans who have delved into the very depths of science, so far as to tamper with God. It is all very intricate, perhaps too intricate, as the "answer" behind all of the mysteries and questions, the truth to the "riddle" the world and narrative possess seems more unintelligible than the riddle itself.

While we get to explore this world-setting through the eyes of the characters, the stunning detail of it gets simultaneously shattered and accentuated by the insights we are given into their minds. This begins to increase in frequency in the second half of the series. The shift slowly builds up over time as the experiences they go through are shared by us. We can understand their plight as the product of their world-setting. As stated earlier, would in any other universe a boy lose his mother to a bio-mechanical robot, causing him to experience a large number of emotionally scarring experiences at the very hands of the *mecha* that absorbed his mother's soul, much of it orchestrated by his estranged father behind the scenes?[5] The focus oscillates to the characters but their plights, while applicable and relatable (lonely adolescents, awkward sexual encounters, filial drama) are ultimately tied to the world-setting they inhabit.

The issues of the external world-setting—collapsing familial values, the terrifying progress of science, and the evangelical tenacity that those in power will call forth to achieve their own ends—has been played out and its discussion successfully taken into account through the plausible depiction of that external world-setting. It is unreal and beautifully portrayed, with the scenes of the landscapes and the man-made city expressed in vivid images. The Eva themselves can be seen as objects of beauty, placed within their various settings, whether it be their hangars, or the world around them. I can think of the shot moments after Eva-01 has viciously beaten Eva-03; despite the scenes of horror that were just witnessed, the unreal presentation allows for the equal acceptance of a scene of beauty.

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[5] Only in other Anime worlds.

Deactivated and the situation diffused, as the sun is setting, the silhouette of Eva-01 is crouched down, as if kneeling to be knighted, rice paddies below, reflecting the vermillion sky in the background. In this world-setting, moments of silent beauty, extreme tension, and sensory overload are all presented to us in fragments, images, and snippets of conversation, we connect them, understand within ourselves that these fragments amount to a whole, a structure we complete in our minds and imagination because, ultimately, this is all unreal. We are allowing it to be explored by us, to make it "real" for us, and they aid us in the construction through the methods and techniques of the Anime form itself. But despite this external world-setting's intricate creations, another inner "reality" awaits. As this is unreal as well, we can accept a visualization of an "inner reality."

But we see the characters struggle; enter their minds, compounding each mental excursion over the previous, until we are finally acclimated to such introspection. With the unreal world's reality finished, when all the angels are defeated, we are left only with the experiences of the characters. That unreal, fabricated world-setting now exhausted, it has come to a close and we can focus on the "inner truth" of the emotions. Even when the budget allowed for a spectacular ending in the *End of Evangelion* episodes, the excursions to the inner and less visually extravagant mental realm of the characters is kept.

With the earlier aesthetic vision of outer reality sufficiently destroyed, the Anime begins to create a new version. Prior to the final two episodes, the series began to get darker in both literal tone and content. The characters' mental stability begins to disintegrate and the depth of the conspiracies and "scenarios" that fill the *Evangelion* universe start to surface, revealing odd mysteries and answers allowing us access into the inner depths of the structures that housed the Eva for the entirety of the series. All of this then gets shattered by the final two episodes; tossed away to give access to Shinji's mind, something we were given, piece by piece as the series progressed, marked by excursions into dark mental landscapes where Shinji interacts with himself and the voices of the other characters in an enclosed internal realm. This world then totally envelops the last two episodes. The external reality shed, we are only given access to the other characters' minds, and finally to Shinji's internal self. They find themselves in a theater, sitting on chairs, interrogated by the other characters in the series. In the final episode, the focus is on Shinji alone, and this reality is broken down further. This begins when we are given strange images of Shinji, such as his outline, filled with the rapid pictures of the other characters and quickly drawn images of the characters alone on a white

backdrop. The voices are still the same; however the drawing style is very sketchy and simple. This too gets broken down and another new reality is created. In this one he is given complete freedom, epitomized by a blank white world with him floating alone in it. This is slowly built up, and then taken away, morphing him into a wide range of different images, finally switching back to a painted version of Asuka yelling at him. Shinji then jumps awake in a "regularly" (in terms of Anime) animated world, with a detailed background and the characters interacting with objects. This short sequence about the alternative life of Shinji—another possible reality using aspects of the series (characters and even scenes, for example the entrance by Misato to the school and the other students recording her is taken from episode 7; see Chapter 2 on intertextuality)—pieces them together and references happier times in the series (for example the above moment from episode 7) and creates a notably more cartoonish (in terms of animation style) and lighter (in both color tone and atmosphere) world. Once acclimated to this version of reality, this too then dissipates and we return back to the sketchily drawn and colored frames which eventually lead back to the room where we found Shinji sitting in the beginning of the episode.

These episodes can be counted as a compound system to explore alternative versions of the same Anime world reality within itself—a nested mosaic of worlds within worlds. Each is different aesthetically, from the hectic external Eva and Angel populated world, to the abstract internal world of the characters' psyche, to the excessively free worlds with no rules and backgrounds, to a final "complete" world, with new histories, new rules that could also be "real." The Anime form easily expresses that through the amorphous animated medium, allowing for an infinite number of different expressions—yet in *Evangelion* they all distinctly stay within the Anime visual and aural style, as opposed to, for example, *FLCL* which switches styles. The blatant unreality of the form allows us to accept these rapid shifts in Anime reality. While each one is a separate realm, they all constitute the same work and, even within that episode are considered pieces of the complete *Evangelion* reality. This is then part of the *Evangelion* reality of the series, which is further part of the larger *Evangelion* franchise (world) including the movies.

The films also work brilliantly with and as fragments, most specifically the *Death and Rebirth* film creating a new telling of the previous series, exploring the major events that took place and reproducing the series in a more concise form. It is very literally self-referential. The other film (or rather, combination of two alternative/complementary final episodes),

End of Evangelion, is a visual orgy that serves to conclude the narrative drama in the original world, but leaves virtually all viewers more clueless than informed. It too follows the path of inward introspection along the linear plot progression, except in this iteration, the aesthetic backdrop is more surreal than necessarily abstract. In this film, above many other Anime films, it is easy to see the focus on the spectacle of the form. The images alone are spellbinding, bizarre yet captivating, and like the plot, leave the viewer with more questions than answers.

In accordance with the *jo-ha-kyū* structure the *kyū* section acts as the spectacular finale. But with *Evangelion*, the actual series ending and the film endings need to be taken together. The original final episodes act as *jo* sections, bring the world to a more elevated finale, or rather, the inception of a new beginning. But the *End of Evangelion*—while leaving the series with the promise of a "new beginning" with Shinji and Asuka alone on a beach—serves as a final *kyū* continuation from the series, a grandiose spectacle leaving the viewer in incomprehensible awe of what they just witnessed. There are few other words than "stunning" that better describes these episodes, and part of the joy of them is in the wild spectacle of the experience.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION: THE FORM OF ANIME

Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, along with many Asian performing arts, have conventionalized forms that limit them within certain aesthetic bounds, but free them through the establishment of a ready arsenal of expressive techniques. The confines of the organically occurring, formal, narrative structures, character types, visual style, sound usage, and gestural expressions to convey emotion, restrict Anime to a particular aesthetic system. Yet within this system there is an enormous amount of creative potential that has been explored across an immense range of subject matter. As in the case of theater forms, Anime works as a complex intersection of conventionalized, stylized signs operating on multiple levels (e.g. conventionalized gestures and expressions, costuming, character types, repeated aural cues, narrative patterns, etc.). The paradox of Anime lies, like it does in the theater, in the creativity spawned from inside its limits, that it is freed within its confines.

Anime's structure embodies the paradoxical nature of its form. Anime is, as a product of animation, a composite of parts: individual cels for character parts that are organized and moved against backgrounds, placed on various layers, and animated. These become scenes, then episodes, then story-arcs, then the entire series of the Anime itself. We can analyze this by viewing it as a nested mosaic system—distinct individual parts that fade into a greater system. However, within a mosaic, no single part is more important than the others. Each section, segment, piece, part, all of them are integral to the whole. The nested mosaic structure of Anime forms the basis of its aesthetic construction. Furthermore, this mosaic provides the key understanding of how various pieces interact with the larger whole.

As a predominantly episodic art form, the serialization of its episode "parts" within the mosaic system has resulted in a certain pattern of a push-and-pull narrative and pacing structure. This system introduces information, builds upon it—often with a twist/break in the previously revealed information—then releases the tension created in a rapid, visual and/or aurally opulent segment, only to "pull back" and loosen the tension, repeating the pattern over again, building upwards to a larger system of that same introduction, build/break, swift spectacle system. This operates in scene segments, episode sections, in sagas or story-arcs, and

ultimately in the Anime itself. Such a system resembles that of the theater's *jo-ha-kyū* mosaic, and can be effectively used to map out the narrative and pacing styles of Anime.

The concept of "mosaic" structure works well because of its connotation as an aesthetic system. We can see this realized in the deep play of intertextual references that resonates at the very heart of Anime construction. Referencing various sources from all ranges of media, Anime utilize intertext—often self-reflexive references from other Anime-Manga worlds—to a particularly high degree. Each intertextual part recalls larger connotations in a metonymic manner, and is juxtaposed next to one another, producing a particular "feel" or atmosphere for the characters and world-setting. It is a carefully constructed "image," each piece organized precisely into the mosaic. They operate with each other to create a network, a web of associations that move into and away from one another, repeated and reiterated, combining and diverging, producing expectations, fulfilling them or breaking the pattern to create a sense of enjoyment in the knowledgeable spectator.

The mosaic division and interaction of segments can also be seen in the depiction of character development. Internal attributes are often directly expressed in physical, external changes. Costumes and *mecha* are altered and transformed, their bodies physically changed in some manner to display the intellectual and psychological changes that the characters undergo. These are exhibited in stylized and codified ways: colors, conventionalized gestures, different appendages added, scars, etc.

Other major, indivisible-separate parts of the mosaic are the world-setting and characters. There is a sense of exploration that is received through the characters maneuvering through the world-setting, and it is the tension between the world-setting and character that produces a significant portion of the drama in Anime. The two physically interact, the stresses of the world-setting on the character being realized in their external modifications, and the characters' actions physically damaging the world-setting around them. They are both united as being essential elements of the world of that Anime, and the outcome of their interactions (i.e. the narrative) provides the tone of the series (and world).

All of this is depicted in a very acute style. There is a predisposition towards precise detail and realistic depiction of objects that are completely unrealistic, often fringing on the absurd and grotesque. Anime expression is paradoxically realistically unreal, or unrealistically real. Emotions run heavy in bombastic characters, fantasy worlds depicted in great specificity—yet these are often a composite of various different,

reiterated elements from multiple sources. Archetypes are found in abundance: characters, narratives, *mecha*, designs, world-settings, even the conventionalized manner they are expressed in (gestures, facial expressions, visual style, character voices, and mnemonic use of sound)—more parts to be arranged and rearranged for further unrealistically real Anime creations.

Because of the precise balance of the realism and unreality used in the depiction of the worlds of Anime, the events found in Anime are simultaneously "multiplied and displaced,"[1] they are paradoxically more intense and less meaningful in the context of both that particular Anime, and the Anime corpus in general. Wild images of violence and sexualized characters often appear, but in an art form whose structure is spectacle oriented, highly stylized within a conventionalized system, we must carefully consider how they function in the context of the individual Anime narrative, and Anime as an art form. This is further complicated as Anime is explicitly unreal. Anime is animation, exhibiting its fabricated-ness at all times. Anime is very upfront about this, embracing its unreality and accentuating it to high levels of formalized stylization, aiming at a very particular aesthetic.

This type of stylization can be found throughout all levels of Anime: in narrative structure, pacing, visual style, character voices, character design, expression of emotion (i.e. conventionalized expressions), *mecha* design, world-setting design, use of sounds—the list goes on. It is very evident that Anime strives to be "Anime" (i.e. within Anime's formal conventions) in all of these areas. In this we find that the performance of the form itself—in all of the above listed stylized elements—becomes the content. It is not necessarily the plot that is the focus; often the patterns of narrative progression are archetypal. Rather, in Anime, the various stylized parts are organized into the mosaic and accentuated through the plot structure—the plot is merely one part of the configuration.

These patterns—the Anime form—create a certain paradigm, certain tools to depict our reality, confines within which expression can occur, filtering real, lived, experience through Anime's formal conventions. Anime provides a manner of thinking, of viewing, of experiencing the world. It is in the particulars of its visuality—as Lamarre suggests, beyond Cartesian perspective and particular movement types—the specificity of

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[1] Bolton, "From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater," 56.

its aurality—the distinctness of Anime's timing of sounds and stylization of voices[2]—and in the patterns of its narrative style—pacing, structure, character types, conventionalized gestures—that certain "Japanese animations" become Anime, and construct that particular aesthetic.

Discussing Enka music, its fans, production, and performance, Christine Yano delineates many of the elements that construct Enka performance. She terms these *kata*, defining them as the patterns practiced and perfected to get a specific effect, made up by the aspects of "surface aesthetic, attention to detail, performativity, codification, historical signification, and transcendence."[3] Her study exposes a cultural fabric that repeatedly employs such features in an art or event, a system of fabricatedness that is embraced and brought to a level of precision and beauty, and predicated on form. It is to the degree of matching and or adjusting the pattern within the specified framework that is admired, rather than a complete break from the mold. Value is placed on the adherence to the "fabricatedness" as expressed in the *kata*, rather than on innovation, which is valued only in conjunction with the "fabricatedness." This celebration of the constructedness of things is a pervasive system of various guidelines that can be adhered to. It provides a structure for reading and interpreting. *Kata* sustain compositional support, but also rigidity in its confines. As we have seen, this embrace of fabrication, of constructedness and adherence to form is evident in Anime as well. Yano explains that mastery of *kata* is mastery over *kata*.[4] The same is true for Anime, where observance of form is prevalent, but variations within the form create delight. Those that are well constructed in conjunction to the form yet carefully deviate from it, produce some of the most popular Anime.

Form allows for a basis, a standard to which an art can delve into deeply. Meaning and interest is espoused by repetition and variation, into and away from the model of the form. The form is, of course, subject to change and experimentation within it. Anime is still young and not a traditional

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[2] Brophy notes the asynchronous use of sounds in various Anime. Bolton has noted the delocalization of voices in certain scenes in *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), but what I am specifically discussing is the stylization that voice-actors use when voicing characters in Anime. Brophy, "Sonic-Atomic-Neumonic: Apocalyptic Echoes in *Anime*." Bolton, "From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater," 749.

[3] Christine Reiko Yano, *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2002). 26.

[4] Ibid., 123.

performing art. However, the widespread popularity of anime has produced a global familiarity with this form and drastic changes may not be received well. As we go from the mid-1990s forward, towards the present date, evidence of the Anime form becomes increasingly solidified. This is due in part to the increase in numbers of Anime produced annually, allowing for a proliferation of the form. It can also be attributed to the recognition of the local and international success of landmark Anime, such as *Evangelion* (an Anime that paradoxically attempted to deconstruct Anime patterns), that create a particular pattern that is tempting to reproduce. As the popularity of Anime spread beyond Japan's borders, the familiarity with the form (of both viewer and creator, consciously or not) increased as well, solidifying it further.

Speaking of the phenomenon of Anime production and consumption within Japan, Hu notes that there is "an indigenous appreciation of the aesthetics of the anime language."[5] Stated differently, one could say that there is a localized understanding of Anime's formal conventions in Japan. But Hu also states that not all Anime fans, locally and globally, have the same level of interest and appreciation of Anime.[6] I would have to agree that while Anime has formal conventions, how these conventions are interpreted, related to, and how they are consumed differs between *otaku* and casual viewers, as well as between those who are within Japan and outside of it. Because so many people in various cultures enjoy it, Anime must possess some resonance to contemporary subjectivities, interpreted and expressed through the Anime form, understood and related to in different ways by the different groups and individuals that consume it. The aesthetics and emotions found in Anime are consumed by millions around the globe, millions who have all come to appreciate, in their own way, the type of beauty Anime explores in the bounds of its conventions. We must not forget that there is a degree of pleasure involved in both producing and consuming these aesthetics, by fan and creator alike. There is a certain aim towards a very particular aesthetic and attaining that, performing that, consuming that, begets pleasure.

Many scholarly works have been produced showing how well Anime as a medium deals with modern society's concerns and fears, or as a product of, and consumed by, the post-modern subject. As Anime can create and establish any setting and any reality through its medium of animation, it can more precisely (and relatively cheaply) define issues in ways other art

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[5] Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building*: 125.
[6] Ibid., 164.

Figure 5.5. Though all distinctly in the Anime conventionalized style, each Anime creates their own separate aesthetic within that system.

Top: *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door* © S. Watanabe/ Sunrise, Bones Entertainment, Sony Pictures Entertainment; Middle: *Toshokan Sensō* (*Library War*) © Hiro Arikawa ·Mediaworks/Library War Production Committee; Bottom: *Rurouni Kenshin OVA: Trust and Betrayal* (*Tsuiokuhen*) © N. Watsuki / Shueisha, Fuji-TV, Aniplex Inc. Image used with permission from rights holders.

forms cannot. The worlds created in Anime are reflections of our own, created out of our (or rather, Japan's) desires and fears, spun into a beautiful mirage from which characters and plots are produced. But as captivating as they are, the Anime (and theater) frequently express to us how fake these worlds are, as if they were produced in such tantalizing detail they consciously ward us from being entranced into their realm, as if to say, this world is an illusion and what you fear and what you can so easily see in this celluloid (or staged) world is really just the other side of the looking glass of our world. These fears and desires are alive now, in our reality. Anime, while a medium made of fabricated parts touches a surprisingly deep emotional and philosophical chord within its audiences. We knowingly understand as we consume Anime that it is fake, unreal. However, there is something we latch on to, something behind the Anime, something that lies within it. This is true of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki as well. All of these arts reach into a sea of emotion and bring forth its wonders in their individual aesthetic forms. Strangely, by showing us only their limited stylized surfaces, they hint to us the infinite depths from which they came.

As *yūgen* in Noh was to suggest to us the limits of our senses and lift the veil of this perceived reality to expose something deeper and far more vast than our finite view presents, Anime seeks to suggest to us, perhaps on a less spiritual level, the holes in our modern realm, alluding to the deeper perception of our society and world. Hu states that Anime, among other artistic productions, is the result of "when the conventional word, spoken or written, fails or proves to be insufficient in conveying other realms of meaning."[7] The images created through this "participate in expressing the missing communication gaps and in part allow the gift of creating and imagining to take hold."[8] Unreality aids in expressing what language alone cannot, and conventionalization provides a dependable method for that. Describing Miyazaki's film *Castle in the Sky* (*Tenkū no Shiro Rapyuta*, 1986), Lamarre expresses that it produces "sensations of awe and wonder, sensations of a world whose vastness and depth is somehow ungraspable...an aesthetic experience of the world in which the world exceeds our ability to grasp it rationally or to order it hierarchically."[9] This is done in part through Anime's particular stylized presentation, highlighting how far from reality it is, and how beautiful that unreality can be.

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[7] Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building*: 164.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 62.

Brophy notes that Anime with (literal) apocalyptic conclusions often have sounds following the bleak ending, carrying on after the destruction, going past "Western barriers of death, matter, and force."[10] We can read these final sounds beyond the blank images as a "*jo*" section that symbolizes a re-ignition of a cycle, just as in Noh plays. These hint at a different construction of limits, of endings, and of course, consumption: if an Anime world can continue, so can the merchandise that connects to it. But, it may also reveal something deeper. The repetition of final *jo* sections within the Anime form points to another world-view of a cyclical nature, of a longer narrative continued in a different episode, series, figurine, Manga, video game, etc., towards the post-human, and with perhaps a philosophical, maybe even spiritual dimension to it, all produced in the Anime style.

Throughout Asia, historically, there were different relations to what we would call "art." Often the performing arts traditions were tied to the ritual and the spiritual, as Noh was. This is not to say that there was no focus on "beauty," or aesthetic considerations were not taken into account, but rather that there were other degrees, levels, or layers to the experience of viewing, appreciating, and performing it. Anime (and Manga, video games, etc.) may provide its own relation to "art" in the post-modern world, where the realms of animated and aural art and consumerism combine, where merchandising and its creativity spark multiple narratives across media.[11] A whole *otaku* culture has been spawned from these cultural, media products. While these are consumer products from a late capitalist system, there is a very affective response these avid "consumers" have to the products. There is a deep aesthetic and emotional connection made with the Anime-Manga worlds, so much so that often consumers become producers,[12] making Anime-Manga style art, working to provide subtitles for new releases, or even making their own works. Perhaps the most famous example is the Gainax Studio, founded by a group of enthusiastic fans that went on to produce some of the most influential Anime of the past thirty years, including *Evangelion*. This was all done within the

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[10] Brophy compares the sounds in apocalyptic Anime to that of the live action film *Fail Safe* (1960). Brophy, "Sonic-Atomic-Neumonic: Apocalyptic Echoes in *Anime*," 205.

[11] Lamarre discusses the difficult distinction between low-tech and high-tech, low and high culture, and the avant garde and mass merchandising in Anime. See "Introduction" in Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*.

[12] Condry, "Anime Creativity: Characters and Premises in the Quest for Cool Japan," 143. Lamarre also mentions the blurring between "production and reception". See Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: xiv.

Anime form, which provided them with tools, cultural, and aesthetic patterns and practices that they utilized and performed in their productions.

Due to the similarities of the Anime form to the performing arts, I would state that Anime is a hyper-theatrical form—"theatrical" being viewed as the type found on the traditional Japanese stage—one that is digitally reproducible, and spreads out further into other media. Anime, Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki each create a hyper-aesthetic world, a deeply stylized realm where the performance of the stylization is integral to a production, and the appreciation (and consumption) of it. It is this centrality of conventionalized aesthetics—their respective stylizations—that seeps through into every real and unreal aspect of their forms, all the parts swirling into one vivid and glorious mosaic whole. The execution of their forms is what defines and distinguishes them. Through refinement in form, Anime has honed its aesthetics to such a pristine point that it has produced an expression of the (post-)modern condition with a particular acuteness.[13] It is through repetition, slight variation, and a deep commitment to aestheticized expression that has kept and created the form of Anime, raising it to a high degree of sophistication.

Thus, the paradox of Anime is not only found in the elements that make up its form—contradictory aspects of unreal and real parts, a fluid yet separate structured network of patterns and references that produce a myriad of fresh works—but that, through these features, Anime simultaneously reinterprets classical theatrical patterns and creates new contemporary practices. Perhaps, one day, far, far from now, when the cultures in this distant future are so removed from our own present one, there will be libraries of works on the intricacies of this late twentieth and early twenty-first century art form; trying to decipher why, still, it is so enticing, and why, like Noh, Kabuki, and Bunraku, centuries after their inception, they continue to mesmerize with their spectacular illusions and the conceptions of beauty that they are expressed in. But for now, in our own time, we can sit back and enjoy; marvel at their splendor and observe, as we have, their continuation of the pursuit of beauty, on stage and on screen.

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[13] Games, light novels, Manga, among others do something similar, but they are all ultimately deeply intertwined with Anime.

GLOSSARY

This glossary is meant to be a basic point of reference for readers who, through the course of the book, may want to quickly reference terms that they are not familiar with. What I have provided below are very simplistic definitions and many of the entries can be greatly expanded upon, as such a brief passage could not even begin to capture the depth and complexity of the subjects described.

Anime – An animated art form that developed in Japan in the mid-twentieth century. Anime has its own origins in a theatrical form called *kamishibai* (lit. "Paper Theater"), where a traveling performer would narrate a story, using different voices for different characters. The narratives were drawn on paper slides that were pulled from a box resembling a television. Kamishibai provided a popular template for the style of limited animation that Anime utilizes.[1] The visual appearance of Anime is heavily influenced by the deeply connected art form of Manga—a type of serialized sequential art that developed in Japan. Manga was, and still is, a very popular art form that provided the visual style for Anime. Coupled with Kamishibai, these two important art forms were the precursors to the infamous types of unrealistic movements (or lack thereof), conventionalized expressions, and serialization that characterize Anime.[2] The first Anime is generally regarded as Tezuka Osamu's *Testuwan Atomu* (*Astro Boy*), broadcast in 1963. Anime is a predominantly serialized form, produced as episodes—though films and shorts are not uncommon. The narratives of Anime, though sometimes extending for many seasons, usually have a finite structure, telling a complete story with a concrete beginning and end. Often adapted from Manga, and more recently light novels, Anime intertwines a complex network of references, associations, and multimedia products.[3] Anime contains certain repeated conventionalized expressions, types of movement, narrative and pacing patterns, tropes, and ways of viewing that have created a distinct and vivacious contemporary art form. The visual, aural and narrative styles that are common to Anime combine to form the very specific and easily recognizable aesthetic style that starkly separates it from other animation. Here I will be using "Anime" to mean (Japanese) animation with this particular aesthetic, generally regarded in Japan as "*nihon no anime*," with the word "*anime*" itself connoting animation in general.

Aragoto – A style of Kabuki acting for male characters that emphasizes a roughness and bravado. It is largely indicative of the Edo style Kabuki acting. Usually,

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[1] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*: 192.
[2] Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*: xiv. See also Chapter 1: Limiting Movement, Inventing Anime.
[3] Ibid., x, 210n9.

covered with *kumadori* make-up in red, these outrageously costumed characters are among the most popular during past and present performances. Another famous style of Kabuki acting for male characters is the *wagoto* style, which is softer and more refined, generally used for *sewamono* or domestic pieces depicting more "daily life" scenarios.

Bunraku – A type of Puppet Theater from Japan, originating in the Edo period (1603–1868). Originally it was named *ningyō jōruri*, combining the use of puppets (*ningyō*) with the established form of chanting, *jōruri*. Controlled by three puppeteers dressed in black and in full view, the puppets are manipulated to mimic realistic human movement. To become a master puppeteer it takes an average of thirty years of practice. These puppeteers perform without a black cover over their face, unlike the other three puppeteers they are grouped with. However, it is amazing how quickly the puppeteers disappear from view and the puppets take on a life of their own. Next to the stage and off to the side, is a chanter (*tayū*), who, accompanied by a *samisen* player, chants both the narration and lines of the characters. It is through his words and expression, coupled with the highly skilled and precisely timed manipulation of the puppeteers, that the puppets have life breathed into them. It is not uncommon for audiences to leave the theater in tears, deeply moved by the events played out onstage. Despite the non-human actors, tragic events are recurrent themes of the plays. Lovers and families torn apart, epic and magical wars, killings and suicide are frequent proceedings in the Bunraku world. The sets are designed to replicate real-world houses, palaces, and other settings. Sliding doors, curtains, and ladders are all used by the puppets to accentuate the believability of their actions. At one time it was the most popular theater, a constant rival of Kabuki, which developed during the same period. Due to such parallel development, they often share many plays, dances, techniques, and tropes.

Dan (*Shodan*) – The sections and subsections (*shodan*) of a Noh play. The various parts including different song and dance types are divided by these *dan*.

Edo Period – The historical time period in Japan (1603–1868) when the Tokugawa Shogunate took control over the various warlords and Imperial household, moving the government from Kyoto to Edo (present day Tokyo), creating a generally peaceful and prosperous era, but with a very strict and rigid social system. It is largely looked at as a "pre-modern" period, as the development of merchant culture and an agricultural economy emerged, with Edo becoming a metropolis and central hub of Japan. It is during this period that the arts of Kabuki and Bunraku emerged and became deeply intertwined with urban culture and the pleasure quarters.

Hanamichi – Literally "flower road", it is a long path perpendicular running from one end of the theater to the Kabuki stage. It is a trademark of the Kabuki Theater and is utilized frequently within a production.

Hayashi – The instrumentalists in Noh, seated at the back of the main stage. They consist of three drummers (from the left: a small *taiko*, the *ōtsuzumi* hip drum, and the *kotsuzumi* shoulder drum), and a flute player (*nōkan* or *fue*). The calls of the drummers (*kakegoe*) are part of the rhythms used to keep the pace of the play. In some Kabuki performances a *hayashi* is used, accompanied by more drummers and *shamisen* players. In Kabuki the *hayashi* are hidden and off to the side, but in *matsubame mono* the *hayashi* are in full view as they are in Noh.

Jiutai – The eight man chorus in Noh. They sit perpendicular to the pine at the back of the stage. The chorus can add lines of dialogue, setting, explains the internal thoughts of the characters, or narrate a scene. Their lines will often be interspersed with those of the actors.

Jo-ha-kyū (序破急) – Literally translated it means introduction-break-rapid. Originally a system of musical notation and organization, it was put to use in the Noh Theater by the *sarugaku* (the precursor to Noh) theorist and performer Zeami Motokiyo. It is the fundamental organizing principle of the Noh Theater for musical narrative, and aesthetic structural construction. It is used in the Bunraku and Kabuki Theaters as well. Generally, *jo* is a softer, auspicious introduction, *ha* is a break in that pattern, and *kyū* is a fast and sensational ending. This helps to created what has been called a mosaic,[4] nested structure, as each section of *jo-ha-kyū* can be further broken down to a smaller segment of *jo-ha-kyū*. A similar system can be seen in contemporary Anime in the tropes and narrative patterns that are common in many Anime series.

Kabuki – Kabuki originated in Japan at the very beginning of the Edo period in 1604 when Okuni danced on the river banks of Kyoto. Various musicians, actors, and prostitutes began to copy her dancing style and amusing narratives, quickly spreading it throughout Japan. Due to the commotion performances caused, it was ruled that women were not allowed to perform on stage. Thus, like Bunraku and Noh, Kabuki is staged by male actors, with the performance of the female role taken to an extremely specialized height in the *onnagata* female impersonators. Incorporating a number of different styles and genres, Kabuki is known for its flamboyant costumes, *mie* poses (frozen tableaux), beautiful dances, music, and balance of humor and tragedy. Emblematic of the Edo period pleasure quarters (*yoshiwara*) and its aesthetics, the Kabuki Theater started from scandalous beginnings and has risen to have a special place as one of the high arts of Japan. The actors are and have been "national"[5] celebrities, drawing audiences in just to

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[4] As explained by Andrew Gerstle, this composition has led scholars Yuda Yoshio and Yokomichi Mario to describe such a structure as *yosegi zaiku*, or "mosaic." Gerstle 40, Yushio Yuda, *Jōruri shi ronko* (*Essays on the History of Jōruri*). (Tokyo, Chuo Koron Sha, 1975) 73−74.

[5] In the Edo period, Japan was not a "nation" *per se*, but famous actors were recognized and celebrated outside of their own cities, sometimes traveling to give performances outside their province.

see their performances. As stated above, Kabuki and Bunraku developed at similar times and were often in competition with each other, influencing and inspiring the other, often taking movements and plays from one theater and converting it to the other. Certain acting styles even mimic puppet like movements (*maruhon*, *ningyōmi*), and many plays feature a chanter to narrate the events occurring (*chobo*). Sometimes the musicians (integral to the productions) are hidden from the audience, but other times they are in full view. The Kabuki stage contains many intricate moving apparatuses for wild effects and quick scene changes. One of the most distinct features is the *hanamichi* bridge, a long platform running perpendicular to the stage from stage right, through the audience to the end of the Kabuki hall. Actors enter and leave using the *hanamichi* at many points during the plays, posing, dancing or making dramatic entrances/exits. As in Bunraku, the sets are of the most grand production quality and often feature intricate moving parts, mimicking their real life counterparts or allowing illusions and spectacles impossible in reality. It is a theater of sensationalism producing a wondrous and rich aural and visual spectacle on stage. As with Bunraku and Noh, Kabuki programs were often full day events featuring multiple plays.

Kata – The word for "form, model, type, archetypes" in Japanese. These are found in all aspects of performance, from movement to sound, staging, and costuming. Many of the classical arts have specific *kata* that have been refined over time. A master teaches them to his or her student, and the student practices them to perfection. In this way the traditional arts are passed down from generation to generation, through their polished repetition over time. Though tradition weighs heavily for established *kata*, new *kata* can arise by adjusting old patterns or through a master's need for a new expression. Sometimes they are altered due to a master's artistic leanings, or due to the lack of ability (age or injury for example). *Kata* are often "canonized" if they become popular (or are effective enough) and are then backed and supported by the emphasis on tradition.

Kumadori – A style of make-up used in the Kabuki Theater, with a colored paint over the stark white *oshiroi* make-up worn by most of the actors. Largely used to help the audience understand the basic attributes of the characters they are used on: the color red is used for heroic characters, blue for evil ones, purple for nobility, black for fear, pink for youthfulness and cheer, green for tranquility, and so on. The pattern of lines decorating the face (and body) of the characters follow the contours of the face and are a signature trademark of the Kabuki theater.

Kyōgen – A comic form of theater that developed in close association with Noh Theater. Traditionally Kyōgen plays appeared between the serious and austere Noh performances, breaking the tension of the intense Noh plays in a day's Noh-Kyōgen program. These plays are much shorter than Noh plays. Kyōgen plays are also performed by only a few actors, and are performed on the same Noh stage, often left completely bare. Stylized pantomime is used as the stage is fluid. Dialogue is emphasized in Kyōgen, but the voice is stylized in a different manner

than in Noh. Satire and slapstick are abundant, and the pacing for movement and narrative follows the same structure as Noh. The costumes are simpler than the extravagant garb used in Noh. Special Kyōgen masks are used but only in some plays; they are comic in character but similar in make to the Noh masks, with a smaller variety than those in Noh. Punning, humorous mix ups in plot and word play frequent the clever stories which continue to bring smiles and laughter to a crowd. As the oldest of the art forms, with strong connections to the upper classes and classical traditions, Noh and Kyōgen have influenced both Bunraku and Kabuki in many ways.

Limited animation – Animation that is made at a rate of which can be eight drawings per second, less than full animation which aims to mimic cinema, moving at twenty-four frames per second.

Manga – A complex, popular style of sequential art from Japan. Largely in black and white, it is generally a commercial, serialized art fusing text and visual graphics to form a narrative. It is often noted that Manga has a particularly "cinematic" element to it. The visual style and narratives are the origin of many Anime; their parallel development has lead each to provide and take inspiration for the other art form. Manga's history is long and complex, an amalgamation of Japanese classical sequential art from the Edo period, and foreign comic strip influence merging in the Meiji and pre-war period. It is during the post-war period that Manga began to take the form that it is popularly known for now, moving away from generally children's oriented narratives to more "adult" topics.

Matsubame mono – A genre of Kabuki plays based on Noh plays that came about in the Meiji period when the Kabuki Theater was growing into a national theater. Kabuki actors began to take heavily from the Noh Theater that was previously out of reach for those of the lower classes, of which Kabuki actors were considered among the lowest. The name is taken from the giant pine (*matsu*) that is the trade mark of the Noh stage. Thus, these *matsubame mono* (lit. "pine board pieces") were acknowledged to be assimilating the practices of the Noh Theater, however Kabuki-fying them for the Kabuki stage.

Meiji Period – The historical time period in Japan (1868–1912) that followed the Edo period with an era of modernization, industrialization, and militarization creating the modern Japanese nation-state. The Imperial family was reinstated and the Tokugawa Shogunate disbanded. Japan also began its large-scale colonial project during the Meiji period. During this era, mimicking the Western powers that Japan strove to emulate, Kabuki began its elevation to the level of national theater.

Michiyuki – The section of a play in which one or more characters are traveling from one place to another. In Noh, it is usually the secondary character of the *waki* who introduces himself and travels from his current location to his destination, extolling the beauty of the landscape as he travels a vast distance in only a few

short lines. The *michiyuki* is also an important part of the Kabuki and Bunraku theaters. Originally in the Bunraku Theater, the *michiyuki* entailed some sort of romantic engagement that was the purpose of the journey. The chanter sings about the troubles of the character on stage as he or she travels, with lyric and imagistic descriptions of their inner emotions and the outer landscape they see. The puppet performs an elegant and sometimes elegiac dance to the song. In Kabuki, the effect is similar, with *michiyuki* scenes (now often performed as full pieces) narrated by a chanter, as in Bunraku, the actor dancing on stage as they make their journey. As unreal and highly stylized depictions of travel and emotion, *michiyuki* scenes often have some of the most beautiful and memorable poetry, dance, and mime scenes in the theater, and thus are focal points of attraction for many plays.

Mie – The famous frozen tableaux poses of the Kabuki Theater. At high points within a conversation or in the action of the play, the characters will strike a particular pose usually punctuated by the sound of the wood clappers, a frequent highlight of the performance. Sometimes flamboyant, sometimes subdued, the poses can be done by multiple characters at once and they often produce a particularly picturesque image. Many famous *mie* are depicted in the *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints of famous scenes from popular plays. Sometimes sections of plays or the plays themselves will end with a particularly spectacular *mie* of the major characters. This constant posing within the action and narrative adds an imagistic quality to the action on stage.

Moe – A type of affection that a fan feels for a particular female character on screen in Anime, on paper in Manga, or in their various manifestations in other products. It generally refers to a particular type of cute character, one which that viewer desires to care for and attend to. Often they are young female characters who embody a sense of helplessness and cuteness. Related is the character of the *tsundere*, who has a tougher, harder emotional exterior, but a softer, caring interior. The *tsundere* character will often (playfully) berate one character (the object of their romantic desires) before finally allowing themselves to open up and show them affection.

Noh – Originally developing from the art form of *sarugaku*, Noh began its evolution with the aesthetic refinement it underwent in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries through the master playwrights, performers, and theorists Kan'ami Kiyotsugu (1333–1384), Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443), and Komparu Zenchiku (1405–1468). It is largely through their interactions with the old nobility's traditions and the new aristocratic warriors that *sarugaku* became confined to the upper classes for the proceeding centuries. Heavily influenced by Buddhism, the stage is often left bare, save for a few simple props. The stage itself is based on the shrine platforms where it was originally performed. A bridge runs at an angle from the square-like main stage to a curtain that covers the green room, where the

actor's transformation into the character takes place. At the back of the stage is a large painting of a majestic pine tree and perpendicular to it is a painting of a few shoots of bamboo. Like all of the theaters described here, traditionally, the characters are played by male actors.[6] Facing the audience in the back towards the pine are three drummers, and to their left a flute player (together they are the *hayashi*). The eerie sounds of the drummer's calls (*kakegoe*), the piercing flute and the drum pattern, all set a distinct atmosphere that is a hallmark of the Noh Theater. Perpendicular to them are a set of eight singers dressed in simple black and grey. They are the immobile chorus (*jiutai*) that can narrate and take over the lines of the characters. The plays are usually populated by only two or three characters, although more are not uncommon. The two main characters are the *waki* (the "secondary character," who introduces the scenes, area, and helps develop the basic plot) and the *shite* (the protagonist of the play). The *shite* will often dance as called for in the narrative. In various styles of speech-song/chant, the actors recite the elegant poetry that is the lyrics of the scripts. Movement, narrative, and music are all governed by the principal of *jo-ha-kyū*. The plays themselves are a source of much scholarship, works of art in their own right. Often movement is graceful but reserved, and the costumes the actors wear are extremely expensive and intricate, painstakingly hand crafted, reflecting the elegance and regality of the aristocratic patrons the theater endeavored to impress. The masks worn by the actors are simple and haunting, emblematic of the balance of mystery and grace that is one of the most famous qualities of Noh aesthetics. The narratives are almost exclusively serious in tone. Just as in Kabuki and Bunraku, Noh contains a complex language of conventionalized movements, images, and sounds.

Onnagata – The style of acting of the Kabuki stage that is dedicated to the portrayal of female characters. As a result of a number of Tokugawa government edicts, all actors in Kabuki were only allowed to be male, and thus this specific style of acting for female roles developed. It was not uncommon in the Edo period for *onnagata* actors to set female fashion trends. The *onnagata* actor will dress, speak, move, and dance like they imagine a female character would, creating their own vision (version) of femininity on stage.

OVA – Original Video Animation, a production that goes straight to DVD or VHS release only. Often the production quality is very high and it takes an extended period of time to release. These can be shorts, films, or episodes.

Sekai – A concept from Kabuki, which, translated literally means "world." Often these are based on historical events or legends that are well known. *Sekai* include

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[6] This was true for much of the theaters' histories, however, in the contemporary context there are a large number of female actors (and playwrights) that perform and teach these arts, fully accredited by one of the five major schools of Noh.

certain characters and tropes that reoccur frequently within plays that take place in that *sekai* or world. Each *sekai* has its own rules, histories and expectations that the audience would be well aware of.

Shite – The principle actor of the Noh stage. He will perform the main character of Noh plays, which is the focus of the play's narrative. The *shite* will often pose as a human character in the first part of the play, then reveal their true identity at the end of this section. In the second half of the play, he will often change mask and costume to show the true form of the character he is portraying, often a ghost, demon, deity, or spirit from legend or history.

Shōjo – The *shōjo* (lit. young girl) has become an emblematic image associated with Manga and Anime, as well as Japanese popular culture as a whole. The age of the *shōjo* is quite amorphous, but usually anywhere from around eight years old to seventeen or eighteen years old, most often in their early to mid-teenage years. Generally depicted sporting a school-girl uniform of some sort, the *shōjo* often has some hidden power, and can perform acts of extreme violence. A typical image of the *shōjo* is a high-school or late middle-school teenage girl clad in school-girl sailor top and skirt. Pigeon-toed and depicted as having a "cute and innocent" demeanor, she will usually wield a razor sharp katana, or some dangerous firearm. However, there are many that perform without such magical or mechanical abilities and exist as emotive characters to gain an affective response from the viewer. Both versions of the *shōjo* adhere to specific aesthetic lines in order to produce the desired (aesthetic) appreciation from the viewer. It is a common character within Anime and Manga narratives.

Wabi-sabi – A traditional Japanese aesthetic, with a deep connection to the Japanese tea ceremony. It is generally characterized by a rustic, subtle expression, often found in earthen pottery, showing off the effects of age and ware and their irregular shape. *Wabi-sabi* is often expressed in carefully constructed images of nature in poetry, gardens, and flower arrangements. It is an aesthetic tinged with a sense of impermanence and is associated with naturalness and simplicity. It is dull, patina, rust and wear. It is finding beauty in solitary moments, in the subtlety and quiet of moss growing on the side of a tree, in travel, or in the imperfections of an object worn and refined with age.

Wagoto – See *aragoto*.

Waki – The secondary character in Noh plays. This character will often introduce the setting of a Noh play and provide a point of reference for the audience as he interacts with the *shite*, the main character of the play. The *waki* will introduce the play's setting and interact with the *shite* as needed. Later they sit in the front corner of the Noh stage while the *shite* performs on center stage, sharing exchanges with him as the narrative progresses, listening to the character's story, hearing their plight and (sometimes) praying for their salvation. The *waki* represents an important foil for the *shite* and provides a balance of realistic drama to ground the

blatantly lyric display of emotion through dance and song that the exquisitely dressed *shite* will perform.

World-setting – The environment within which the drama of the Anime takes place. Each world-setting[7] contains an atmosphere, tone, visual and aural style, history, technology, and culture (and sometimes language) that are particular to that world-setting. The characters are seemingly separate entities that interact with this world-setting. Though they appear distinct, the characters are actually products of this world-setting, and the drama of the Anime is produced through the tension that arises between the characters and the world-setting. This tension creates certain narrative outcomes that ultimately create the overall aesthetic of the Anime—i.e. in this world-setting, populated by these types of characters, we can experience narrative events of a certain nature. The world of the Anime encompasses the world-setting, the characters, and the type of narrative outcomes the tension between the world-setting and characters produces.

Tayū – The chanter that sits on the right of the Bunraku stage. Always accompanied by the *shamisen*, often it is his singing that is the main attraction of the Bunraku performance, one that avid fans come to see. He will chant both the narration and the voices for all of the characters on stage. The *tayū* will change many times during the performance, with the best and most famous performing the crucial scenes.

Tokugawa Period– See *Edo Period*.

Tsundere – See *moe*.

Yūgen – An aesthetic ideal of the Noh Theater. Used first in China, the word "*yūgen*" was originally written in Buddhist contexts, where it remained when it was brought to Japan. From there it took on a specific aesthetic character in *waka* and *renga* poetry, finally making its way to the Noh Theater in the late-fourteenth century. It has been described by Arthur Thornhill as a dialectic between clarity and obscurity, darkness and light.[8] *Yūgen* is often translated as a deep, dark, mysterious and profound beauty, sometimes associated with a lingering sadness subtly displayed with elegance and grace.

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[7] Ian Condry uses the identical English term "world-setting" to denote generally the same concept: the setting the drama takes place in, an entity distinct from the characters. However, my conception of the term differs somewhat, as his is a translation of the Japanese word "*sekaikan*" as "world-setting" and designates "*settei*" (translated as "premises") as a separate concept that, along with characters, story, and world-setting, make up variable elements of Anime and other popular media forms that can be used for description and analysis. This is discussed in more detail in the chapter "Character and World." For Condry's article, see Ian Condry, "Anime Creativity: Characters and Premises in the Quest for Cool Japan," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 2–3 (2009).

[8] Thornhill, "Yūgen After Zeami."

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