

THE SENSE OF NO ENDING: THE POST/MODERN
APOCALYPSE IN SHŌJO MANGA OF THE 1990s

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Abstract

Shōjo manga is often perceived by fans, critics and scholars in and outside Japan as escapist and ‘narcissistic’ fantasy fiction which is indifferent to the political, economic and social conditions that constitute the ‘political unconscious’ of contemporary Japanese society. This thesis seeks to challenge this stereotype of *shōjo* manga. In this thesis, I read three apocalyptic *shōjo* manga narratives produced in the 1990s (*Sailor Moon*, *X*, and *Angel Sanctuary*) as cultural texts which employ the fantasy form to ‘apocalyptically’ expose and engage with the ‘political unconscious’ of Japanese society during the ‘lost decade’ of the 1990s. I discuss how the texts articulate and perpetuate the anxieties, desires and ideologies which emerged in response to the ‘postmodernisation’ of Japan and the world at the end of the twentieth century. However, I also acknowledge that these texts have a ‘semi-autonomy’ which enables them to demystify, deconstruct and subvert oppressive ideological and material conditions present in the ‘political unconscious,’ and to thereby motivate positive social change. As such, in this thesis I examine how the texts perform these ‘modern’ critical and transformative roles in a ‘postmodern’ world through paradoxically mobilising the ‘apocalyptic tone,’ or enunciative modality, opened up by ‘postmodernisation.’

Introduction

Japanese comics or manga is an immensely popular medium in contemporary Japan. Since its beginnings in mid-nineteenth century Japan, manga has become increasingly ubiquitous, and it appears that it will continue to be a mainstay of postwar Japanese popular culture in the years to come (Ito, “Manga in Japanese History” 46). According to the 2005 Annual Publications Index Report (*Shuppan shihyō nenpō 2005*), there were two hundred and ninety-seven manga magazines¹ in publication in 2004, and the estimated total number of copies published was more than one thousand million (Ito, “Manga in Japanese History” 46). One out of every three books published in Japan in 2004 was a manga, and manga can now be read online and even on mobile phones (Ito, “Manga in Japanese History” 46). Manga’s widespread popularity is due in great part to its variety: there are many different genres of manga which cater to mass audiences and to more specific demographic groups such as adolescent boys, middle-aged salarymen and housewives. The ubiquity of manga is perhaps also due to manga’s ability to perform many different functions as a visual medium of communication, ranging from entertainment to social critique and public information distribution (Ito, “Manga in Japanese History” 47). Given the pervasiveness and popularity of manga in Japan, the critical study of manga is an important means to finding out how the society which produces them responds to the political, economic and social conditions of the world it inhabits.

Amongst the many genres of manga (and related anime, television drama, video game and other trans-media adaptations), the apocalyptic stands out as a major genre which has received a considerable amount of critical attention in both Japanese and English-language scholarship on postwar Japanese popular culture. For example, Susan Napier argues that “one

¹ Manga magazines in Japan are compilations of several serialised manga stories by different artists published on a weekly or monthly basis.

of the most striking features of anime [and manga] is its fascination with the theme of apocalypse” (*Anime from Akira* 193). Napier posits the “apocalyptic mode” as one of the three main “modes,” or universal archetypal narrative forms, that structure anime and manga (“When Godzilla Speaks” 16).² In 2005, prominent Japanese Neo-Pop artist, critic and cultural commentator Murakami Takashi³ curated *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan’s Exploding Subculture*, a major exhibition held in New York which explored apocalyptic postwar Japanese visual art and popular culture in relation to the nation’s traumatic defeat in the Second World War and its postwar history.

To date, scholarly and critical attention on the apocalyptic in manga, anime and postwar Japanese popular culture has focused entirely on apocalyptic images and narratives created by male artists, writers and directors for predominantly male audiences. In the *Little Boy* exhibition, Murakami explicitly genders the tradition of apocalyptic texts in postwar Japanese popular culture as masculine. In Murakami’s view, “images of nuclear destruction that abound in anime (or in a lineage of anime), together with monsters born of atomic radiation (Godzilla), express the experience of a generation of Japanese men of being little boys in relation to American power, of being unable to become men, while eternally full of nostalgia for their boyhoods” (Lamarre, “Multiplanar Image” 135). All of the works Murakami selects for inclusion in the postwar Japanese apocalyptic tradition are visual art, anime, manga and movies which are produced by male artists and directors, and which are targeted at *otaku* (obsessive fans of manga, anime and video games who are usually male). Only a few female artists are represented in the exhibition,⁴ and in the catalogue which accompanies the exhibition, Murakami introduces their work as highly personal art which is

² The other two “modes” are the “carnavalesque mode” and the “elegiac mode” (Napier, “When Godzilla Speaks” 16).

³ All Japanese names in this thesis are written with the family name preceding the given name.

⁴ The only female artists included in the exhibition are Ban Chinatsu, Takano Aya, Aoshima Chiho, Kunikata Mahomi and Shimizu Yūko, the creator of Hello Kitty.

inspired by the female artists' individual psychological experiences and not by larger forces in society, and which is therefore not part of the apocalyptic tradition. Likewise, critics such as Napier, Thomas Lamarre, Thomas Looser and Michael Broderick have written only on male *otaku*-oriented anime, manga and film texts such as *Godzilla* (1954, *Gojira*), *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974-1975, *Uchū senkan Yamato*), *Akira* (1982-1990; 1989) and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1997, *Shinseiki Evangerion*) in their discussions of the apocalyptic in postwar Japanese popular culture and its relation to contemporary political, economic and social conditions in Japan.

This exclusive focus on anime, manga and movies marketed to adolescent boys and adult men occludes the existence of apocalyptic narratives in *shōjo* manga and anime. Manga and anime of this genre are targeted mainly at teenage girls and young unmarried women (Ōgi, "Gender Insubordination" 171), and are generally associated (even by fans and critics) with romance and everyday life rather than with 'grand narratives' of the end of the world. While critics read apocalyptic *otaku* manga and anime texts in relation to political, economic and social upheaval in postwar Japan, scholarship on *shōjo* manga and anime (and *shōjo* culture in general) tends to emphasise the more 'private' issues of gender and sexuality. Napier, for instance, discusses the representation of women in *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* (1992-1997, *Bishōjo senshi Seeraa Mūn*) but does not recognise that the series is an apocalyptic narrative as worthy of critical analysis as the male-oriented anime and manga narratives she discusses in her numerous writings on the "apocalyptic mode."⁵ This thesis thus seeks to counter the gendered public/private division of postwar Japanese popular culture, and to redress the lack of critical attention paid to representations of apocalypse, and to explorations of political, economic and social conditions, in *shōjo* culture. Although I do

⁵ See Susan Napier, "Vampires, Psychic Girls, Flying Women and Sailor Scouts: Four faces of the young female in Japanese popular culture," in *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures*, ed. D. P. Martinez (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 91-109.

participate in the ongoing discussion of gender and sexuality in *shōjo* culture, I seek to supplement this discussion by exploring the intersections between gender and sexuality and other political, economic and social conditions in Japan. In order to achieve these objectives, I examine three popular apocalyptic *shōjo* manga narratives produced in the 1990s: *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* (1992-1997, *Bishōjo senshi Seeraa Mūn*) by Takeuchi Naoko, *X* (1992-2002, *Ekkusu*) by CLAMP and *Angel Sanctuary* (1995-2001, *Tenshi kinryōku*) by Yuki Kaori (1994-2000).⁶

Sailor Moon revolves around the adventures of a Japanese teenage girl named Tsukino Usagi and her friends, who are all “Sailor Warriors” (“*Seeraa Senshi*”) committed to protecting Earth from the numerous attempts of alien invaders to destroy it. In the last story of the manga series, Usagi (a.k.a. Sailor Moon) defeats her most powerful (but by no means final) enemy, “Chaos” (“*Kaosu*”), and marries her boyfriend, Mamoru, to become the queen of a new Earth-Moon kingdom. *Angel Sanctuary* similarly depicts the myriad trials and tribulations which its protagonist, an English-Japanese high school student called Mudō Setsuna, undergoes as he embarks on an epic journey to save the human world from its predestined annihilation by “God” in the year 1999. At the end of the narrative, Setsuna slays “God”, thereby averting the apocalypse. *X* too features an adolescent Japanese protagonist who strives to save human civilisation from its predetermined fate of extermination at the turn of the millennium. The messianic protagonist, Shirō Kamui, joins several like-minded characters who have supernatural powers to form a group called the “Seven Seals” (“*Nanatsu no fūin*”). The Seven Seals engage in battle with Kamui’s doppelganger and the “Seven Angels of the Apocalypse” (“*Shichi nin no mitsukai*”) but the outcome of the battle is

⁶ All three manga series were published in manga magazines before they were published in single-series volumes (*tankōbon*), but I have used the dates of publication of the volumes instead because the volumes contain the finalised version of the manga. Manga published in magazines are essentially draft versions which have to undergo extensive editing in response to reader feedback before they can be re-issued in book form.

undecided as the manga artists were compelled to end the series prematurely due to publication problems.⁷

I have chosen to study these three manga series not only because of their common interest in the apocalypse, but also because they were all produced in the last decade of the twentieth century. Popularly referred to as the ‘lost decade,’ the 1990s was a turbulent period for Japan. With the bursting of the economic ‘bubble’ in 1991, the once-booming Japanese economy descended into a recession which Japan continued to suffer well into the first decade of the twenty-first century. Throughout the 1990s, the government was plagued with corruption scandals and ineffective political leadership; social problems such as death from overwork, teenage prostitution and school violence made news headlines with alarming frequency. In 1995 alone, Japan experienced two major disasters: the Kobe earthquake and the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. Markedly, the 1990s was also the decade in which Japan made the transition from industrial capitalist modernity to post-industrial or late capitalist postmodernity. Given the numerous troubles Japan faced in the last decade of the millennium, it is not surprising that apocalyptic narratives such as *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* were produced during the period and enjoyed widespread popularity.

Significantly, the term ‘apocalypse’ does not only designate the catastrophic destruction of the human world. It is also etymologically related to the Greek word ‘apokaluptō’, which signifies the act of unveiling or the revelation of a hidden secret (Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone” 26-28). In this thesis, I adopt a theoretically-informed historicist approach to reading *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* to show how these three manga

⁷ In an interview given at an anime and manga convention in Taiwan in 2006, one of the four artists of CLAMP, Ōkawa Ageha, explained that CLAMP could not continue serialising *X* in any of the existing *shōjo* manga magazines because the story was too similar to real-life events in the contemporary world, such as recent major earthquakes and murders committed by juveniles in Japan. Ōkawa stated that CLAMP was looking for a suitable magazine to continue the series (Chang, “Interview with Ageha Ohkawa and Mitsuhsa Ishikawa”) but till today the series remains incomplete.

texts employ the fantasy form to ‘apocalyptically’ reveal the hidden political, economic and social conditions of life in Japan during the ‘lost decade.’ I discuss how the three texts express the anxieties, desires and ideologies of contemporary Japanese society which emerged in response to the ‘postmodernisation’ of Japan and the world at the end of the twentieth century. However, the texts do not merely reflect the zeitgeist of their times. In this thesis, I also examine how the texts actively engage with the historical, ideological and material conditions of fin-de-millennial Japan. I demonstrate how the texts perform demystification, subversion and political resistance through mobilising the “apocalyptic tone” (Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone” 52-57), or enunciative modality, opened up by ‘postmodernisation.’ In essence, I argue that *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are post/modern apocalyptic narratives which reaffirm and perform the modern “apocalyptic desire” for critique and social transformation (Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone” 50-51) in a postmodern world.

Many critics attempt to explain postwar Japanese popular culture’s uncanny obsession with apocalypse with reference to Japan’s national ‘trauma’ of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Murakami in particular foregrounds the atomic bombings, and the postwar American domination of Japan that the bombings made possible, as the primary factors which have shaped Japanese popular culture in the postwar period. As mentioned earlier, Murakami sees male-oriented apocalyptic narratives as science fiction representations of the trauma of Japan’s defeat in the Second World War and its postwar relations of dependence with the United States (US). For Murakami, manga and anime grow out of the “creative marrow of [the] impotence” (“Impotence Culture – Anime” 58) and “infantil[ism]” of postwar Japan (“Earth in my Window” 137-138), which remains and will remain, in Murakami’s opinion, a “Little Boy” more than half a century after “Little Boy” was dropped on Hiroshima (“Earth in my Window” 101, 148). Such interpretations of postwar apocalyptic

Japanese popular culture bring to mind Dominick LaCapra's theory of the relation between historical experience and cultural texts. In *History in Transit*, LaCapra revises the simplistic psychoanalytic notion that the cultural text is the mere expression or 'acting-out' of repressed unconscious content. He argues that the text is actually a "compromise formation" of both the processes of 'acting out' and 'working through' traumatic experience in the collective unconscious (9-10). LaCapra's notion of 'working-through' entails the use of signifying practices (such as narratives) to symbolically represent the traumatic event cognitively yet affectively (119), in order to mediate between immanence or embeddedness in the traumatic experience on the one hand, and transcendence or the 'bringing into consciousness' of it on the other (129). 'Working-through' is therefore an endless process which nevertheless allows for limited agency, critique and positive social change (9-10). LaCapra's conception of the cultural text as a "compromise formation" of both symptomatic and transformative processes certainly challenges Murakami's interpretation of apocalyptic images and narratives in postwar Japanese popular culture as simply the compulsive repetition of Japan's nuclear trauma.

While there is a general consensus in existing scholarship that the experience of the atomic bombings is undeniably an important factor in the development of postwar Japanese popular culture's distinctive vision of apocalypse, critics such as Napier, Lamarre and Jerome Shapiro argue that apocalyptic manga, anime and film texts are often concerned with other issues and anxieties besides Japan's repressed fear of nuclear annihilation. Shapiro states that Japanese films frequently use the bomb as a MacGuffin⁸ to explore other issues" (*Atomic Bomb Cinema* 258). In "Born of Trauma: *Akira* and Capitalist Modes of Destruction," Lamarre critically intervenes in LaCapra's theory of traumatic experience to contend that

⁸"MacGuffin" is a term popularised by Alfred Hitchcock. It refers to a particular event, object or factor in a film (now also in a novel or other forms of narrative fiction) "initially presented as being of great significance to the story, but often having little actual importance for the plot as it develops" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Ōtomo Katsuhiro's manga and anime film *Akira* (1982-1990; 1989) does not 'work through' Japan's historical trauma of nuclear destruction. He argues that *Akira* instead deploys the process of 'acting-out' to symbolically anticipate and reveal the world's passage into "disaster capitalism" at the beginning of the twenty-first century (132-133). Like Lamarre, Napier acknowledges the impact the atomic bombings have had on postwar Japanese popular culture, while shifting the focus to political, economic and social upheaval in Japan to argue that apocalyptic anime (and manga) express the values and attitudes of Japanese society in different periods of its postwar history (*Anime from Akira* 214-218). For example, Napier reads *Akira* (the 1989 film version) in the context of the emergence of a new generation of Japanese called the *shinjinrui* ("new human race") in the 1980s. In her reading of the film, the anarchic and protean figure of Tetsuo represents the *shinjinrui*'s destruction of traditional institutions, and affirms the power of the *shinjinrui*'s new fluctuating and fragmented postmodern identities ("Panic Sites" 244-253). Clearly, Japan's nuclear trauma is not always, or even often, a central concern in apocalyptic Japanese popular culture texts, and this becomes even clearer when we turn to apocalyptic narratives produced in the 1990s.

In *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, Napier argues that the anime *Evangelion* (1995-1997) expresses the deep disillusionment and cultural despair of the Japanese public in the 1990s, as the recession and political scandals revealed the vaunted institutions of Japanese authority to be "corrupt, inefficient and brutally unmindful of the general citizenry" (216). Like Napier, I would like to shift the emphasis away from Japan's nuclear trauma to the political, economic and social conditions of 1990s Japan. In order to do so, I propose to supplement LaCapra's conception of the cultural text as an expression and transformation of repressed traumatic experience with Fredric Jameson's broader theory of narrative as a "socially symbolic act." In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson famously proclaims that "everything is 'in the last analysis' political" (20), and that all cultural texts, even the most

'private' and psychologising high modernist works of art, have a "political unconscious": in other words, all cultural texts have a necessary relation to the repressed political, economic and social conditions of the historical context of their production (20). In a critical move akin to that of LaCapra, Jameson revises the deterministic traditional Marxist conception of culture and ideology as the mere expression of the economic base, and privileges Louis Althusser's model of "structural causality," which allows the various levels of culture, ideology, the juridical, the political and the economic to remain "semi-autonom[ous]" in the mode of production (*Political Unconscious* 36-50). Because of this semi-autonomy, cultural texts are not simply 'reflections' or 'expressions' which passively 'act out' the 'essence' of trauma or of the economic base. They are "socially symbolic acts" which can act in complex ways on historical experience, strategies of ideological containment and the material conditions of social reality in the 'political unconscious.' They are thus capable of critique and motivating social transformation. In this thesis, I examine *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* as cultural texts which, through the fantasy trope of the apocalypse, express and perpetuate, but also demystify and subvert the historical, ideological and material conditions which constituted the 'political unconscious' of Japanese society in the 1990s.

Before I proceed to outline the key arguments of the thesis, I would first like to explain the methodology I use in my interpretation of the three manga texts. Manga is a particularly complex medium: it contains a wide variety of verbal and visual elements which interact with each other to produce word-image compositions or 'panels' which are static and yet dynamic. As this thesis focuses on the formal analysis of the manga texts, and in order to do justice to the multi-faceted nature of the manga medium, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach which uses concepts and technical terms drawn from literary, art and film criticism. A 'narrative,' in the common-sense usage of the term, refers to an imaginative, 'fictional' story. *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are 'narratives' in this sense, and they possess the

features associated with literary narratives, such as plot, characterisation and rhetorical figures such as metaphor and metonymy. As such, I appropriate the technical tools developed in literary criticism to analyse the narratives of the manga texts and, more specifically, the verbal elements of the texts.

Visual images are also ‘narratives’ in their own right, even when they do not allude to any literary narrative and/or are not organised in the form of a story with a beginning and an end. Drawing on Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia, art historians Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson have developed a semiotics-based narratology which treats paintings as sign-systems or ‘texts’ that generate a “polyphony” of discourses in “dialogue” with each other (Bal and Bryson “Semiotics and Art History” 203-206). This “polyphony,” according to Bal and Bryson, constitutes the “narrative” of the painting (“Semiotics and Art History” 205). Although my study is situated within the field of popular culture studies instead of art history, I find Bal and Bryson’s theoretical and methodological insights useful in the analysis of manga as a visual and verbal medium. Semiotics does not privilege the word over the image or vice versa, and hence it is well-suited to the analysis of manga’s verbal and visual elements, and the interactions between these elements. Therefore, in this thesis I borrow Bal and Bryson’s insights, and approach the three manga texts as verbal and visual sign-systems which enable the reader to produce different and sometimes conflicting interpretations simultaneously.

However, unlike paintings, manga texts are both static and dynamic narratives. In manga, verbal and visual signs are organised into word-image compositions or ‘panels’ which certainly can be contemplated on their own in the same way that paintings are in art criticism. However, these panels are further organised into chronological sequences whose patterns comprise the plot structure, and which function as one of the main forms of narration

in the manga medium. As critics such as Frederik Schodt and Ōgi Fusami have noted,⁹ this temporal aspect of manga is akin to the practice of editing in film. In order to take into account this cinematic quality of the manga medium, I supplement the literary and art critical approaches I have described above with a film critical approach in my analysis of the three manga texts.

Lastly, it is important to note at the end of this discussion on methodology that the manga medium is not reducible to a combination of concepts and terms from literary, art and film criticism, although an interdisciplinary approach does widen the range of conceptual tools available and allows for a more comprehensive analysis. Manga has its own distinctive rhetorical techniques and conventions, and hence I supplement my methodological approach by bringing my own experiences as a long-time reader of manga to bear on my interpretation of such techniques and conventions whenever they are relevant to the discussion at hand.

As I have mentioned earlier, in this thesis I examine *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* in relation to the ‘political unconscious’ of Japanese society in the 1990s. In order to give my argument greater focus, I divide my discussion of the manga texts and their interactions with the ‘political unconscious’ into the three distinct but overlapping thematics of modernity/postmodernity, national identity and Utopia, which respectively form the structural frameworks of each of the three main chapters of the thesis.

In the first chapter, I read the three manga texts in the context of Japan’s transition from industrial capitalist modernity to late capitalist postmodernity. Although this transition began in the US, Western Europe and Japan in the 1970s,¹⁰ Azuma Hiroki foregrounds the

⁹ See Frederik Schodt, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), and Ōgi Fusami, “Gender Insubordination in Japanese Comics (*Manga*) for Girls,” in *Illustrating Asia: Comics, Humour Magazines and Picture Books*, ed. John A. Lent (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001), 171-186.

¹⁰ David Harvey argues that it was after 1973 that the US, Western Europe and Japan began to shift from Fordism to a new regime of capital accumulation which he calls “flexible accumulation” (*Condition of Postmodernity* 145-147), and which can be regarded as synonymous with Ernest Mandel’s concept of “late

1990s as the period in which Japan attained “complete postmodernisation” (“Animalisation” 179). This is because, in Azuma’s view, the new generation of *otaku* which emerged after 1995 were completely uninterested in all forms of modern ‘grand narratives.’ Serialisation of *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* began before 1995, the turning point marked out by Azuma, and continued till 1997, 2002 and 2000 respectively. As cultural texts which straddle the turning point, the three manga texts articulate contemporary Japanese society’s ambivalence between modern anxieties about ‘virtualisation’ and its socio-political implications on the one hand, and the postmodern desire for the cultural liberation made possible by virtualisation on the other. However, the manga texts do not chart any linear progression from the former attitude to the latter, and this, I argue, contradicts Azuma’s claim that Japan became fully postmodern after 1995. In my reading, the manga texts instead suggest that postmodernity, far from being the transcendence of modernity, is actually the iteration of modernity, and that this ambivalence of the post/modern itself implies that the ‘postmodernisation’ of Japan and the world can never be ‘completed.’

In the second chapter of the thesis, I examine *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* in relation to the question of Japan’s national identity in the era of postmodern globalisation. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode argues that we as human beings require ‘fictions’ or paradigms (which are not necessarily literary) that give meaning to our lives by making sense of the origins and ends of the world, and of our relation to those origins and ends (7). ‘Grand narratives’ of the end of the world are such ‘fictions’ which construct subjective identities for individuals and communities, and one of these identities constructed is that of ‘the nation.’

capitalism.” According to Harvey, problems with the “rigidities” of the Fordist model of economic production were evident as early as the mid-1960s, but it took the economic recession in 1973, OPEC’s decision to raise oil prices, and the Arab decision to embargo oil exports to the US and its allies during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War to compel Western and Japanese economies to undergo restructuring in the 1970s and 1980s (*Condition of Postmodernity* 141-145).

Returning to our focus on Japan, we can see that the construction of national identity in the aftermath of Japan's defeat in the Second World War, and especially vis-à-vis the US, is a recurrent issue in existing research on the apocalyptic in postwar Japanese popular culture. In her analysis of the anime *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974-1975) and *Silent Service* (1995, *Chinmoku no kantai*), Mizuno Hiromi studies how the two texts articulate different nationalistic responses to the 'feminising' American imposition of constitutional pacifism on postwar Japan. She argues that the older anime text re-envisioned Japan as a nation of heroic men who go to war for the ultimate goals of "peace and love" and who eventually save humanity ("When Pacifist Japan Fights" 111). In contrast, the more recent (and non-apocalyptic) anime text contradictorily represents post-Cold War Japan as a feminine pacifist nation which builds world peace through international diplomacy, and as a masculine nuclear-capable nation which can stand up to the US ("When Pacifist Japan Fights" 119). In "Panic Sites: The Japanese Imagination of Disaster from *Godzilla* to *Akira*," Napier reads *Akira* as a celebration not only of the *shinjinrui* identity of a new generation of Japanese, but also of the new identity of Japan as a global economic powerhouse in the 1980s (255-256). In Napier's interpretation, Tetsuo's frightening yet exhilarating metamorphoses at the end of the film version of *Akira* express Japan's vision of itself as a monstrous Other alienated from and superior to the rest of the world (255-256). In the second chapter of the thesis, I supplement these existing discussions on the construction of Japanese national identity through exploring how the three manga texts redefine the Japanese nation in response to globalisation in the 1990s, which threatened to make the very concepts of the nation-state and national identity obsolete. Through the trope of the apocalypse, the manga texts re-imagine Japan as an economic and cultural superpower whose national power is paradoxically predicated on its deep involvement in, and mastery of, transnational processes, especially that of cultural hybridisation.

The texts' foregrounding of cultural hybridity is significant not only for my discussion of Japanese national identity, but for scholarship on Japanese popular culture in general as well. In Chapter Two, I argue that *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary*, in redefining the Japanese nation as the intrinsically superior and exclusive 'hybridiser' of cultures in the postmodern globalising world, demonstrate that cultural hybridity is actually a process of 'translation' which produces ambivalent national-cultural identities. Through revealing the mediating process of cultural 'translation' at work in the construction of their own narratives, the manga texts ironically undermine ideological attempts (including their own) to reify the Japanese nation into a discrete, unified and essentialist identity. Moreover, they challenge the tendency in Japanese popular culture studies to regard hybrid Japanese popular culture in the postwar period either as the suturing or synthesis of diverse and discrete cultures, or as the natural extension of traditional Japanese culture. I explain this point in further detail in the following paragraphs.

Ascribing hybridity to the products of postwar Japanese popular culture has become a critical commonplace in Japanese popular culture studies, but the majority of writings on this hybridity have not adequately addressed the question of *how* Japanese popular culture is hybrid: in other words, they have not examined closely enough what actually occurs in the process of hybridisation. Furthermore, many of these writings are implicitly based on a problematic understanding of cultural hybridity as the combination of discrete elements from different cultures into either a 'mosaic' or a 'melting-pot' form of multiculturalism. Douglas McGray's news article "Japan's Gross National Cool" is a case in point. McGray proclaims that "Japan was postmodern before postmodernism was trendy," as it has been successfully "fusing elements of other national cultures" into an eclectic yet "almost-coherent whole" since its importation of Chinese culture in the fifth century (48). McGray's argument implies that Japanese cultural hybridity basically consists of the mixing of 'Japanese' and 'non-

Japanese' cultural elements which ultimately retain their discrete boundaries in a collage-like assemblage. Moreover, McGray's argument implies that the ability to hybridise various cultures is a unique and innate attribute of the Japanese nation. Through its discourse on hybrid multiculturalism in postwar Japanese popular culture, McGray's argument indirectly supports reductive notions of cultural essentialism and exceptionalism.

Perhaps as a result of the profusion of claims about the hybridity of postwar Japanese popular culture, Japanese popular culture studies seems to exhibit a counter (but not unrelated) tendency to stress the influence of traditional aspects of Japanese culture on the aesthetics and themes of postwar Japanese popular culture. For example, Murakami draws a lineage connecting postwar Japanese art and popular culture (which he describes as 'Superflat') to the woodblock prints of the Edo era ("A Theory of Super Flat Japanese Art" 9-15). He posits that the Superflat visual aesthetic is actually an indigenous and pioneering 'Japanese' sensibility which "has been flowing steadily beneath the surface of Japanese history," and which anticipates "[t]he world of the future [which] might be like [what] Japan is today" ("The Super Flat Manifesto" 5). Although the views of Napier, Shapiro and Broderick are more nuanced than Murakami's, they emphasise the Buddhist doctrines of *mappo* and *masse*,¹¹ and the medieval aesthetic concept of *mono no aware*¹² in their discussions of apocalyptic anime, manga and films. While not unjustified, such interpretations of postwar Japanese popular culture often neglect the complex dynamics of cultural flows across space and time, and like the discourses on hybrid multiculturalism in postwar Japanese popular culture, they tend to feed into cultural essentialism and

¹¹ According to Napier, the Buddhist doctrine of *mappo*, translated as "the latter days of the Law," revolves around the idea that the Maitreya Buddha will re-appear when the world has fallen into decadence thousands of years after his death, in order to initiate a new age of enlightenment (*Anime from Akira* 196-197). Similarly, the Buddhist doctrine of *masse* describes the complete end of the existing world and the beginning of an entirely new one (Broderick, "Superflat Eschatology" 33).

¹² *Mono no aware* ("the sadness of things") is a medieval aesthetic philosophy which emphasises the pathos of the ephemeral nature of life (Napier, *Anime from Akira* 197).

exceptionalism. Through examining how *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* demonstrate that cultural hybridity is an ambivalent process of ‘translation’ which blurs national-cultural boundaries, I attempt to redress the lack of critical attention paid to the actual process of cultural hybridisation. I also attempt to redirect current scholarship on postwar Japanese popular culture away from essentialist notions of multiculturalism, traditional ‘Japanese-ness’ and Japanese cultural superiority towards greater awareness of the complexities of cultural production in the age of postmodern globalisation.

In the third chapter, I read *Angel Sanctuary* in relation to the thematic of Utopia. In “Apocalypse, Millennium and Utopia Today,” Krishan Kumar claims that millenarianism and utopianism often go hand-in-hand (212). While millenarianism gives one hope for a new future after the end of the present order but does not show what that future is, utopianism shows one visions of the ideal society but downplays the means of achieving it (213). Kumar feels that (Western) postmodern apocalyptic discourse since the 1990s has become a form of “debased millenarianism” (212) which lacks the hope for regeneration and the desire for utopia (204). Rejecting the pessimism of postmodernism while keeping some of its scepticism, Kumar argues that contemporary societies still need the utopian impulse to motivate social transformation, even if they do not know when they will attain their goals or if they ever will (212). Like Kumar, apocalyptic manga and anime produced in Japan in the 1990s retain the belief in utopia while negotiating that belief with postmodern scepticism. Through this negotiation, they produce critiques of contemporary Japanese society which open up possibilities for positive social change. In Chapter Three, I discuss how *Angel Sanctuary* constructs a postmodern feminine ‘utopia’ where it appropriates the enunciative modality to enact a critique of patriarchal and capitalist relations of social inequality in 1990s Japan, and to create subversive queer identities for collective resistance to patriarchal and capitalist oppression. Bearing in mind Kumar’s call for the renewal of the utopian impulse in

a postmodern world of “debased millenarianism” (“Apocalypse” 212), I argue that the postmodern feminine ‘utopia’ of *Angel Sanctuary* is an attempt to reconcile the modern potential of utopianism for critique, resistance and social transformation with the postmodern condition of Virtual Reality, and the postmodern awareness of the dangers of totalisation implicit in utopianism.¹³

Apocalyptic narratives are ‘fictions’ which make sense of our lives and the world we live in by “inventing imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions” (Jameson, *Political Unconscious* 79). Jameson argues that in mass culture, these symbolic resolutions of real social contradictions often take the form of utopian visions which perpetuate the status quo by ‘resolving’ and thereby repressing the collective’s anxieties about the historical, ideological and material conditions of its existence (“Reification and Utopia” 142-146). However, Jameson recognises that utopian visions also necessarily enact an implicit critique of the status quo by expressing in distorted form the repressed yearnings of the collective for a new and better future (“Reification and Utopia” 142-146). To put it in another way, the utopian dreams of apocalyptic narratives both ‘act out’ and ‘work through’ the ‘political unconscious.’ Through ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’, these dreams generate what LaCapra envisions as a continuous process of negotiation between existing institutions and challenges to them, which works towards social transformation without being reducible to either the pure reproduction of the social structure or the pure nihilistic transcendence of it (*History in Transit* 13-16). *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are apocalyptic and utopian cultural texts which utilise the postmodern enunciative modality, or

¹³ As the reader can see from the discussion thus far, I employ mainly ‘Western’ postmodern and cultural studies theories in my analysis of the manga texts. While some readers may have reservations about the application of ‘Western’ theories to a ‘Japanese’ context, I think my approach is justified. Despite their Eurocentric bias, ‘Western’ postmodern theories are still useful in explaining contemporary Japanese culture because Japan is an advanced capitalist society which exhibits many of the characteristics of postmodernity found in Western countries. As for the ‘modern’ psychoanalysis- and Marxist-inspired theories of LaCapra and Jameson, I would argue that these theories are very general and therefore can be applied to the Japanese context without doing much harm to the specificity of that context.

“apocalyptic tone,” to ‘act out’, but also to ‘work through’ the repressed political, economic and social conditions which constituted the ‘political unconscious’ of fin-de-millennial Japan. Through speaking in the “apocalyptic tone,” the three manga texts recuperate and perform the modern “apocalyptic desire” for critique and social transformation in a postmodern world. As a researcher and self-confessed fan of *shōjo* manga, I too seek to participate in the performance of the “apocalyptic desire” in the writing of this thesis.¹⁴ Through the critical examination of *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary*, I attempt to ‘apocalyptically’ reveal both the conservative and transformative dimensions of these apocalyptic *shōjo* manga texts for three main purposes: firstly, to challenge the popular perception that *shōjo* culture is at best interested only in issues of gender and sexuality, and is at worst narcissistically indifferent to the political, economic and social conditions of social reality; secondly, to redress the lack of critical attention paid to representations of apocalypse and explorations of the aforementioned conditions in *shōjo* culture; and most importantly, to mobilise the manga texts’ insights into the ‘political unconscious’ and the possible responses we may have to the former in the endless yet necessary striving for a better world or, in Ernst Bloch’s words, “the spirit of utopia.”

¹⁴ However, I do not claim to stand in a transcendent and omniscient position in relation to my object of study. Because some aspects of women’s lives tend to be similar in advanced capitalist societies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, I feel that my social position as a ‘woman’ in Singapore does help me to be more sensitive to the women’s concerns raised in *shōjo* manga. My ethnic and national identity as a Chinese Singaporean has also enabled me in some measure to maintain critical distance from the Japanese cultural texts, and from the political, economic and social conditions which I study. On the other hand, my familiarity with Japanese popular culture as a fan of *shōjo* manga helps ensure that this distance does not become one of alienation. However, ‘epistemic violence’ (as Gayatri Spivak puts it) is perhaps ultimately inescapable.

Chapter One

The Apocalypse of the “Cyberpolis”: Destruction, (Re)Production, and the Ambivalence of Post/modern Japan

Sailor Moon, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary*, whose apocalyptic narratives revolve around Tokyo and its destiny at the end of the twentieth century, utilise the city as a site for the articulation of tensions between modernity and postmodernity in fin-de-millennial Japan. Although cities already existed in the ancient world, their growth and development have been closely tied to the relatively recent emergence and evolution of capitalism. The development of urban trade and crafts around the eleventh century revived Western cities after their decline during the Middle Ages (Macdonald and Parrillo, *Cities and Urban Life* 47). Industrialisation in the nineteenth century further fuelled the explosive emergence and expansion of cities in Europe and North America (Macdonald and Parrillo, *Cities and Urban Life* 50-51), and in conjunction with colonialism, spread capitalist urbanisation to the rest of the world. This close relationship between the city and capitalism has led numerous social theorists to treat the city as a site for the study of ‘modernity’ and ‘postmodernity’ as historical periods coterminous with particular stages in the development of capitalism. The metropolis is featured in the writings of Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, Benjamin and many other theorists of industrial capitalist modernity (Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity* 4-5). Similarly, late twentieth century social theorists such as Fredric Jameson regard the contemporary city as a site for the study of post-industrial or late capitalism and the phenomenon of ‘postmodernism’ (Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society* 125). With these perspectives in mind, in this chapter I explore how the three manga texts articulate the tensions between modernity and postmodernity in 1990s Japan through the imagined destruction and (re)production of the city of Tokyo.

In *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary*, Tokyo undergoes cycles of destruction and (re)production characteristic of what Naomi Klein terms “disaster capitalism” (Lamarre, “Born of Trauma” 149-153). As Thomas Lamarre explains, “disaster capitalism” is a transitional stage which lies between Cold War-era industrial capitalism and post-Cold War information capitalism, and which involves the pre-emptive destruction and reconstruction of various countries by the US (such as Iraq) to reproduce the American capitalist system (“Born of Trauma” 149-153). Lamarre argues that the repetition of the trope of destruction/production in the apocalyptic manga narrative, *Akira* (1982-1990), anticipates the current wavering of Japanese society between the two aforementioned modes of production in this transitional stage. In the light of my larger intention to demonstrate that *shōjo* culture has a necessary relation to the ‘political unconscious’ of its historical context of production, in this chapter I use the abovementioned insights from Klein and Lamarre to read *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* in the context of Japan’s transition from industrial capitalist modernity to late capitalist postmodernity in the 1990s. I argue that through the representation of the destruction and (re)production of Tokyo, the three manga texts reveal in fantasy form the ambivalence of contemporary Japanese society towards the ‘postmodernisation’ of Japan and the world. In the first part of this chapter, I discuss how the texts express Japanese anxieties about the destructive ability of late capitalism to ‘virtualise’ contemporary Japan and the world; in other words, to convert all reality into the insubstantial floating signifiers of hyperreal ‘information.’ I also discuss how *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary* articulate fears not only of the loss of the real per se, but of the socio-political implications of that loss. I then consider how all three texts assuage these various fears by reasserting modern ideologies as modes of opposition to the debilitating forces of Virtual Reality, thereby pointing to contemporary Japanese society’s desire to return to modern ‘grand narratives’ in resistance to ‘postmodernisation.’ However, despite their articulation of

modern anxieties and metanarratives, *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary* paradoxically express positive contemporary Japanese attitudes towards ‘postmodernisation’ through their celebration of virtualisation’s liberating potential. I discuss this desire for ‘postmodernisation’ in the second part of the chapter.

Contemporary philosopher and cultural critic Azuma Hiroki would argue that the three manga texts exhibit this ambivalence between the modern and the postmodern because they were produced over the 1990s, the decade in which Japan made its transition from modernity to postmodernity. In “The Animalisation of Otaku Culture” and *Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals*, Azuma expands on Ōsawa Masachi’s model of the history of ideology in postwar Japan to account for *otaku*¹⁵ consumption patterns and cultural production in Japan in the 1990s. Ōsawa demarcates the period 1945-1970 as the “Era of Ideals,” when dominant, totalising ideologies or ‘grand narratives’ still functioned in Japanese society (Azuma, “Animalisation” 178). The “Era of Ideals” is followed by the “Era of Fictions” (1970-1995), when traditional ‘grand narratives’ began to collapse and were replaced with fictional histories of the universe and ideologies in *otaku* manga and anime narratives (Azuma, *Otaku* 34-35). Azuma introduces a third period to Ōsawa’s model called the “Era of Animals” (1995-present), which comes after the transitional “Era of Fictions,” and which corresponds to the emergence of a new generation of *otaku* who, like animals, feel no need for any kind of ‘grand narrative’ at all. These *otaku* are “database animals” who are more interested in superficial affective stimulation through the consumption of information (*Otaku* 35-36), and in the construction of “small narratives” through the repetition and recombination of simulacra drawn from a “database” (*Otaku* 37-53). In Azuma’s view, the “Era of Animals” thus marks the “complete postmodernisation” of Japan (Azuma, “Animalisation” 179). As texts which originated before 1995, and whose production extended into the late 1990s and

¹⁵ The term “*otaku*” is commonly used in Japan to refer to obsessive (usually male) fans of manga, anime and video games.

early 2000s, the three manga texts straddle the “Era of Fictions” and the “Era of Animals” and this liminality, for Azuma, would explain their ambivalence. In the last part of the chapter, I argue that the ambivalence of the texts actually challenges Azuma’s claim that Japan became fully postmodern after 1995, and suggests that the ‘postmodernisation’ of Japan and the world may be a process which never arrives at a final end.

As mentioned earlier, in the first part of this chapter I discuss how *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* express contemporary Japanese anxieties about the destructive ‘virtualising’ power of late capitalism through their representations of the destruction and (re)production of Tokyo. In the three manga texts, Tokyo functions as a metonymy of contemporary Japan and the human world, and it is represented as a demonic “cyberpolis” (“*saibaaporisu*”): a postmodern mega-city saturated with the computer technology, information networks and myriad signs and images of late capitalism. Tokyo in *Angel Sanctuary* is a Babylonian “demon city” (“*matoshi*”), where human hubris and suffering combine with advanced human-created technology to make the city a giant “magnetic field” (“*jiba*”) of “spiritual energy” (“*reiki*”) otherwise known as “Akasha” (Sanskrit for ‘air space’) or “infinite material” (“*mugen busshitsu*”). Tokyo in *X* is an Expressionist cityscape of dark skyscrapers covered with giant billboards and neon shop signs, and intertwined with thick, snaking cables which transmit not only electric energy but also the ‘energy’ of information production and circulation. ‘Information’ is constituted by floating signifiers which, like spectres, are ‘present’ as graphic marks and material commodities, and yet are ‘absent’ as empty vessels devoid of any real and final meaning. Therefore, the manga texts’ depictions of Tokyo as a generator of fluid, dynamic and ‘ghostly’ energy which is both material and immaterial can be read as fantasy figurations of the late capitalist production of information flows. Through overdetermination, the motif of ghostly ‘energy’ in the texts thus becomes a symbol of both late capitalist economic and cultural production and its products. Paradoxically, it is through

the depiction of the apocalyptic destruction of the postmodern demonic “cyberpolis” that the three manga texts express, rather than assuage, fears of the ghostly ‘energy’ of late capitalism and of the resultant ‘virtualisation’ of Japan and the world. In this way the texts offer an insight into the apprehension of contemporary Japanese towards the ‘postmodernisation’ of their environment in the 1990s.

The apocalypse in *X* is depicted in extravagant scenes of explosive streaks of ‘energy’ coursing through the Tokyo cityscape and causing iconic landmarks to topple over as multiple explosions rip through them and the surrounding buildings, and as massive columns of smoke pour into the darkened sky. These landmarks function in the narrative universe of *X* as spiritual ‘seals’ (“*kekkaï*”) that protect Tokyo, Japan and the human world from harm, and are therefore targeted for demolition by the Seven Angels, who wish to annihilate human civilisation in order to rejuvenate the natural world. Landmarks mentioned in the text include shopping malls (Sunshine 60, Shibuya 109), office buildings (the skyscrapers in West Shinjuku), hotels (Nakano Sun Plaza), tourist attractions (Tokyo Tower, Rainbow Bridge) and government buildings (the National Diet Building, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building). The dark coloration and evocation of grandeur and boundlessness in the scenes which depict the destruction of these landmarks bring to mind the category of the “Gothic sublime,” which, as a trope of the radical Other opposed to orderly knowledges and paradigms, has been appropriated and transformed by late twentieth century theorists to describe the postmodern condition (Mishra, *Gothic Sublime* 25). In “Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” Fredric Jameson rewrites the Gothic sublime as the “hysterical sublime” of the “whole new decentred global network of the third stage of capital itself” (214-218). According to Jameson, late multinational capitalism is an immensely complex system which is “unrepresentable” as “existential experience,” and which therefore prevents the individual subject from making sense of his/her relationship to this system (231).

As distorted figurations of the totality of late multinational capitalism (214-218), the cultural commodities of postmodernism are hence sublime too and evoke “intensities” of terror and euphoria when consumed (212). Through appropriating the formal qualities of the Gothic sublime (infinity of magnitude, obscurity and the possession of power), the scenes in *X* which depict the apocalyptic devastation of the Tokyo cityscape arouse terror and euphoria in the reader. This is because the Tokyo landmarks, which symbolise the political, economic and social structures of contemporary Japan, offer, in the moment of their destruction, an indirect glimpse of the immense web of late multinational capitalism whose connections between these structures and the reader’s individual experience are beyond the comprehension of the reader. The scenes also gesture obliquely towards a connection between the ghostly ‘energy’ of late capitalism and world destruction. Thus, through these allusions to the aesthetics of the Gothic sublime and the motif of ghostly ‘energy,’ apocalyptic destruction in *X* becomes a fantasy representation of contemporary Japanese fears of two kinds of ‘postmodern sublime’: firstly, that of the “unrepresentable” totality of late capitalism and secondly, that of the immense destructive power of late capitalism to ‘virtualise’ Japan and the entire world into the insubstantial ghostly ‘energy’ of hyperreal information.

In “Aesthetic Illusion and Virtual Reality,” Jean Baudrillard presents a chilling picture of the apocalypse as the (accelerated) end of the real and human world due to the completion of the project of universal “virtualisation” (201-204):

Now what exactly is at stake in this hegemonic trend towards virtuality? [. . .] It would seem to be the radical actualisation, the unconditional realisation, of the world, the transformation of all our acts, of all historical events, of all material substance and energy into pure information. The ideal would be the resolution of the world by the actualisation of all facts and data. (201-202)

Virtualisation entails the destruction and (re)production of the real in the form of hyperreal simulacra or floating signifiers which have absolutely no relation to the real, and which substitute themselves for the real (205-206). When all possibilities of virtualising the real

have been exhausted and the world transformed completely into a virtual world of simulacra, these simulacra can perfectly simulate and fulfil all human responsibilities and possibilities, therefore abolishing the need for human beings to exist (202-203). In this “final score of modern millenarianism,” the real and human world gives way to the “automatic writing of the world” (202-204); to the eternal self-(re)production of the world through the endless repetition of “models of a real without origin or reality” (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 1). Furthermore, although Baudrillard asserts that capitalism is not the ultimate determining ‘cause’ of this trend towards universal virtuality, he does not deny that capitalism is one of its major contributing factors. Baudrillard argues in “The Precession of Simulacra” that the logic of abstraction, which was first begun by capitalism through the process of commodification but which has now become autonomous, threatens capitalism’s power by turning it into a simulation of itself (*Simulacra and Simulation* 22). Capitalism reacts to this threat by “secreting a last glimmer of reality, on which to establish a last glimmer of power” but ironically ends up “do[ing] nothing but multiply[ing] the *signs* and accelerat[ing] the play of simulation” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 22). Late capitalism further stimulates virtualisation through its development of information technology,¹⁶ which enables the simulation of the real in ‘high definition,’ ‘high fidelity’ and ‘real time’ (Baudrillard, “Aesthetic Illusion and Virtual Reality” 204). This thus brings the world closer to the completion of the project of virtualisation, and the end of the real and human world. As we can see from the discussion above, the postmodern sublime consists not only of the global network of late capitalism, but also of the saturation and substitution of the entire world with hyperreal simulations generated by late capitalism.

¹⁶ The development of information technology (IT) is closely linked to late capitalist economic developments. As corporations grew in scale and in the complexity of their operations, and expanded out of national boundaries to become multinational corporations (MNCs) in the years after the Second World War, they invested in the advancement of IT to serve their increasing need for communications and control (Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society* 29). This then led to the emergence of MNCs specialising in IT (Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society* 29).

The apocalyptic destruction of Tokyo in *X* echoes Baudrillard's vision of the "apocalypse of the virtual" (*Illusion of the End* 117) brought about by late capitalism, and articulates contemporary Japanese anxieties about the inexorable virtualisation of Japan and the world. The protagonist Kamui and his comrades, the Seven Seals, do not want the human world to come to an end and hence struggle to defend the Tokyo landmarks from Kamui's doppelganger and the Seven Angels of the Apocalypse. However, the destruction of the landmarks, the city and human civilisation is preordained. This terrifying destiny of inevitable apocalypse reveals itself to some of the characters in the form of dream-images generated by the ghostly 'energy' of the characters' spiritual powers. Kakyō, Hinoto and Kotori literally 'dream' of the future as "dream-seers" ("yumemi") and interpret their dreams to divine the destinies of the other characters, of Japan and of the world. The trope of the dream as a vision of the future implies a modern(ist), rather than postmodern, conception of the sign as the distorted or flawed representation of a hidden reality which is ultimately accessible through hermeneutic interpretation. In fact, Baudrillard associates the dream with the second order of simulation, where representation is still perceived to have a (distorted) relation to reality, rather than with the third order of hyperreality (*Intelligence of Evil* 39-46, 70). However, the text's visual representation of the dream-seers' clairvoyant dreams implicitly suggests that these dreams are actually hyperreal simulacra which have no privileged relation to the real future and which, quite literally, 'precede' it and take its place.

The panels depicting Kakyō and Hinoto's dreams often feature the Baudrillardian motif of the screen. In volume 18 of *X*, Kakyō is depicted in his dream-world surrounded by numerous floating screens, watching the destinies of the other characters unfold before him on their smooth surfaces set against an empty dark background. According to Baudrillard, the screen is a flat surface with no depth; a "non-reflecting [. . .] immanent surface" which neither reflects nor hides any external objective reality ("Ecstasy of Communication" 127). It

is therefore Baudrillard's emblem for the third order of hyperreal simulation where representation no longer has any relation to reality (Baudrillard, *Intelligence of Evil* 42-44). We can thus read the screens in *X* as symbols of hyperreal simulacra, floating freely in the dark background that represents the underlying "black hole" of the absolute absence of the real (Botting, "Aftergothic" 288-295). Moreover, the great number of screens and the vast darkness of the background once again allude to the aesthetics of the Gothic sublime in their magnitude and obscurity respectively. Through the allusion to both the Gothic sublime and the Baudrillardian motif of the screen, the image presents a visual figuration of the erasure of the real and the proliferation of simulacra in the postmodern sublime of total Virtual Reality. 'Fate' in the narrative universe of *X*, thus manifested in the form of hyperreal dream-images, is hence a metaphor for the inevitable virtualisation of Japan and the world, and the apocalypse of Tokyo a metaphor for the completion of the project of virtualisation which culminates in the death of the real and the human. It is through these two metaphors that *X* articulates the anxieties of contemporary Japanese people about the ghostly 'energy' of late capitalism and its destructive forces of virtualisation which threatens the world they inhabit.

In the dramatic scenes depicting the demolition of Tokyo landmarks discussed earlier, this process of virtualisation is pictorially represented through the application of a highly planar, non-linear perspectival aesthetic mode, which Murakami Takashi calls 'Superflat' ("Theory of Super Flat Japanese Art" 8-32). These scenes express, through the distortions of the Superflat visual aesthetic, the destruction of the real and the 'flattening' of the world into the virtual screens of Kakyō's dream-world. In these scenes, the Seven Angels of the Apocalypse, alternatively known as the Dragons of the Earth ("*Chi no ryū*"), destroy the Tokyo landmarks by summoning devastating earthquakes. The earthquake that Satsuki, a member of the Seven Angels, causes in West Shinjuku is represented visually through the depiction of 'energy' in the shape of Chinese dragons descending upon the skyscrapers of the

district, drawn in a characteristically Superflat style. The Superflat “sensibility,” according to Murakami, entails the use of certain forms of composition to control the course of the observer’s gaze in order to emphasise the image’s extreme planarity (Murakami, “Theory of Super Flat Japanese Art” 9-15) and to create the sensation in the observer of “merg[ing] a number of layers into one” single plane (Murakami, “Super Flat Manifesto” 5). In the panel portraying the West Shinjuku earthquake, the ‘dragons’ are depicted as stylised white streaks sweeping across the grey and black background ‘layer’ of an aerial view of the cityscape. The ‘descent’ of the ‘dragons’ is thus depicted not as a convergent movement towards a vanishing point in a linear perspectival, three-dimensional space, but as a horizontal movement across the flat ‘layers’ of the image. A few pages after this image, the climactic destruction of the skyscrapers is depicted in an image which shows the buildings splitting apart and crashing into each other. The blocks of buildings seem to leap into the air in a linear movement from the right side to the left side of the panel, and this horizontal composition, like that of the image previously mentioned, directs the reader’s gaze to speed across the surface of the page instead of moving into a Cartesian illusion of depth, thus foregrounding the flat, screen-like nature of the image, and presenting the image as a hyperreal simulacrum which has no deeper reality. The ‘superflatness’ of the image is further emphasised by the use of photographic images of the real skyscrapers in West Shinjuku, which have been edited to heighten the black-and-white contrast, and cut up and rearranged in slanted and disjointed positions to convey the impact of the explosions. This compositional strategy of pastiche alludes to the virtual nature of postmodern cultural production: it demonstrates how simulacra are extracted from what Azuma calls “databases” of iconographic motifs and conventions (*Otaku* 37-53), and recombined to form depthless hyperreal texts which substitute themselves for the real. To sum up this discussion, the Superflat visual aesthetic highlights the virtual character of these apocalyptic images, and by doing so, it visually dramatises the terrifying and sublime

annihilation and instantaneous (re)production of the real world as its own virtual simulacrum on the pages of the manga text.¹⁷ Through the Superflat aesthetic (and the aesthetics of the Gothic sublime discussed earlier), *X* illustrates the destruction of the real and the ‘flattening’ of the world, and thereby expresses millenarian Japanese fears of the apocalypse of the real and human world upon the attainment of universal Virtual Reality.

Like *X*, *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary* express contemporary Japanese anxieties about the increasing virtualisation of Japan and the world through their representations of the apocalyptic destruction of Tokyo. However, the two texts suggest that these anxieties are not motivated by the terror of the loss of the real per se, but by the fear of unprecedented intensive social control made possible by virtualisation. (Virtualisation in the 1990s also resulted in the loss of Japanese national identity. For my discussion of this issue, please refer to Chapter Two.) The alien villains in *Sailor Moon* are displacements of anxieties about the power of late capitalism, which does not only destroy and (re)produce the real as hyperreal, but also produces social control through what Baudrillard calls the “ecstasy of communication” in a world of Virtual Reality. Many of the alien invaders in *Sailor Moon* appropriate the late capitalist structures of 1990s Japan, such as the mass media and the entertainment industry, and their practices, to control the minds and bodies of their human victims. The manga text represents contemporary Japan as a ‘media society’ hungry for the latest news and fads dished out by newspapers and television programmes. Zoisite, an alien invader sent by the Dark Kingdom to look for the magical Silver Crystal which is rumoured to grant its possessor immense power, takes advantage of Japanese society’s fascination with

¹⁷ For a different interpretation of the Superflat aesthetic in manga and anime apocalyptic images as a ‘symptom’ of the repression of Japan’s wartime past in the collective unconscious, see Murakami Takashi, “Earth in my Window,” in *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan’s Exploding Subculture*, ed. Murakami Takashi (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 99-149, Sawaragi Noi, “On the Battlefield of ‘Superflat’: Subculture and Art in Postwar Japan” in *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan’s Exploding Subculture*, ed. Murakami Takashi (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 187-207, and Michael Darling, “Plumbing the Depths of Superflatness” in *Art Journal* 60, no. 3 (2001): 77-89.

media-produced information. He poses as a celebrity scholar who has expert knowledge of the Silver Crystal, and appears on talk shows and television ‘specials’ to stir up a mania for the crystal in order to manipulate the entire population of Tokyo into finding the crystal for him. When he realises that no one has been able to locate the crystal, he converts the “brainwashing” (“*sennō*”) broadcast signals he has been transmitting from the television station in Tokyo Tower into electromagnetic waves (“*denpa*”) which absorb the life-force or ‘energy’ of his viewers. The panels depicting this process of absorption show the ‘energy’ of a girl and a boy leaking out of their bodies in the form of an ethereal miasma, and flowing into the screens of their television sets. This motif of ghostly ‘energy’ flowing out of and into the television screen echoes Baudrillard’s figuration of the postmodern sublime of hyperreal “communication” as the seamless flow of information through a vast system of screens and networks (“Ecstasy of Communication” 126).

For Baudrillard, the condition of hyperreality entails the “implosion” of the concept of the “relation”; of the gap between things which gives them determinate meanings (*Simulacra and Simulation* 31). As such, in a world of hyperreal communication, all distinctions between public and private, subject and object, and self and other collapse (Baudrillard, “Ecstasy of Communication” 127-130). The human subject becomes a “pure screen” (Baudrillard, “Ecstasy of Communication” 133) which receives and distributes information that flows freely in and out of him/her through multiple networks (Baudrillard, “Ecstasy of Communication” 128). Hence, the human subject ceases to be a subject, and dissolves into the terror and pleasure – Jameson’s word is “euphoria” – of “schizophrenic” communication:

[. . .] an over-proximity of all things, a foul promiscuity of all things which beleaguer and penetrate him[her], meeting with no resistance, and no halo, no aura, not even the aura of his[her] own body protects him[her] [. . .] In spite of him[her]self the schizophrenic is open to everything and lives in the most extreme confusion. (Baudrillard, *America* 27)

In the light of Baudrillard's theory, we can read the ghostly 'energy' flowing out of the television screen and into the viewer in the manga text as a symbol of information produced by the mass media, which penetrates the consumer and nullifies all attempts at establishing critical distance between the subject and the cultural object. The ghostly 'energy' flowing out of the viewer into the screen is also a symbol of information, but this is information generated through the virtualisation of the real and human consumer. The physical diffusion of the information-hungry viewers into their television screens is thus a symbolic figuration of the transformation of the consumer into a "pure screen" which merely receives and distributes information, and of the 'ecstatic' dissolution of the consumer's subjectivity into the sublime realm of screens and networks.

In "The Ecstasy of Communication," Baudrillard merely presents this 'ecstasy' as "an original and profound mutation of the very forms of perception and pleasure" of the post-subject (132) without linking it to his theories of "the code" and social control through pleasurable s(t)imulation. *Sailor Moon* makes this connection through emphasising how the alien villains attempt to destroy Tokyo/the human world by appropriating the mass media and other late capitalist structures and practices prevalent in contemporary Japan for the purposes of mind control.¹⁸ The ghostly 'energy' which enters into the viewers of the Silver Crystal television programmes, and which so excites them that it ultimately kills them, is not blank information devoid of all meaning and function. It is information coded with secret meanings which Zoisite uses to "brainwash" ("*sennō*") and manipulate the denizens of Tokyo into doing his bidding. Edmund Burke defines 'the sublime' as that which is not only great in scale or obscure, but which has the power to subjugate the observer absolutely as well (*Enquiry* 107-113). Likewise, Baudrillard's sublime "apocalypse of the virtual" (*Illusion of the End* 117) refers not only to the transformation of the real world into a hyperreal

¹⁸ Other late capitalist structures and practices appropriated by the alien invaders to launch their attacks on the people of Earth include the pop idol industry, the retail store, franchise expansion and the bargain sale.

simulation of itself, but also to the installation of a “universal security system” of absolute control (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 33-34).¹⁹ In “The Order of Simulacra,” Baudrillard states that the third order of simulation corresponds to the “structural law of value” (50), otherwise known as the logic of “the code.” In a postmodern virtual world, social control is implemented “by means of prediction, simulation, programmed anticipation and indeterminate mutation, all governed, however, by the code” (Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* 60). In other words, everything in the world is (re)produced and rationalised as hyperreal simulacra by semiotic and ideological codes, which restrict the meanings of these simulacra (which in principle can take on an infinity of meanings as floating signifiers) by determining the questions that can be asked and the answers that can be given in a continuous process of ‘testing’ (Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* 62-67). This new form of social control “reach[es] a fantastic degree of perfection” (Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* 60) because the logic of “the code” sets up a total environment of pleasurable simulation which stimulates the consumer to *want* to respond to the ‘test’ questions with the appropriate answers, and to enjoy his/her “‘ludic’ participation” in the power of “the code” (Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* 71). The ghostly ‘energy’ or information transmitted by Zoisite in the manga text seems to operate under such a logic of “the code” combined with the “ecstasy of communication.” The ideologically-coded information which flows into the viewers of the Silver Crystal television programmes pleasurable stimulates these viewers to respond actively to the ‘test’ question: “Where is the Silver Crystal?” with the desired ‘answer’ (action) of searching for the crystal. On a more profound level, this information stimulates the viewers to surrender their ‘energy’ to Zoisite’s control: in other words, to ‘ecstatically’ *sublimate* their real, corporeal human existence and

¹⁹ Baudrillard makes this statement in “The Precession of Simulacra” with reference to the Cold War policy of nuclear deterrence, and to the absorption of all events in the world into a totalising system of superpower politics, but it can be applied to his discussion of the apocalyptic perfection of the world through simulation in “Aesthetic Illusion and Virtual Reality” as well.

subjectivity into wispy miasmas of information whose meanings are determined by “the code” in the vast sublime of virtual communication. Through this symbolic representation of the intersection of the “ecstasy of communication” and social control by “the code” in its vision of mass media-driven apocalypse, *Sailor Moon* articulates contemporary Japanese fears not only of virtualisation caused by late capitalism, but also of the death of the subject and the apparent impossibility of resistance in a sublime yet code-governed world of Virtual Reality.

Like that in *Sailor Moon*, the representation of the apocalyptic destruction of Tokyo in *Angel Sanctuary* can be read as an oblique expression of contemporary Japanese fears of social control in an increasingly virtual world. “God” (“*sōseishin*”) in the narrative universe of *Angel Sanctuary* is a supercomputer which produces all phenomena and experience in the world as “information” (“*jōhō*”), and which rules over the world through the manipulation of this “information.” The apocalypse of Tokyo and the human realm (called “Assiah” in the narrative) on a particular day in July 1999 is predestined in the “Ragnarok Programme for the Destruction of the Material World Assiah” (“*Asshaa hōkai no ragunaroku puroguramu*”) designed by “God.” The world in *Angel Sanctuary* is quite literally a Baudrillardian “programmed microcosm, where *nothing can be left to chance*” (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 34), and where everything is generated and controlled by the godlike logic of “the code.” However, *Angel Sanctuary* differs from *Sailor Moon* in its focus on the close relationship between the power of “the code” and systems of unequal social relations of power. It articulates anxieties about “the code” and these systems, or ‘power regimes’, working in tandem to exercise total mastery over the everyday life of the individual. “God” in *Angel Sanctuary* is not only a fantasy figuration of “the code.” ‘He’ is also a symbol of a power regime which perpetuates its unequal social relations of power by reinforcing its semiotic and ideological code through a panoptic system of discipline. (“God” as a symbol of

the power regime(s) of patriarchy, the patriarchal code and capitalism will be discussed in Chapter Three.)

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault theorises “panopticism” as a model of repressive social control based mainly on the disciplinary technique of surveillance. The inmate in the Panopticon is kept constantly visible from the point of view of a centralised and absolute power (200) whose observation of him/her at any moment s/he is unable to verify (202). Out of the fear of being ‘caught in the act’ and punished, the inmate ‘watches’ and disciplines him/herself, and thereby internalises the rules of the institution’s code (202-203). The world created by “God” in *Angel Sanctuary* is a giant Panopticon. The eye is a recurrent motif in the text, and it often signifies the watching and control of the individual by an unseen other. For example, the body of Sandalphon, the immensely powerful and destructive leader of a new breed of angels created by “God,” is covered with innumerable bulging red eyes. After being raped by Sandalphon, Lila proclaims ominously that his child is “watching” her and everyone from within her womb with its many red eyes (“*ima mo mite iru no yo, onaka no naka kara watashi no koto, minna no koto...makka na takusan no me de watashi o mihatte iru wa*”). “God” is omniscient and omnipotent: he sees everything that occurs outside his command centre on the innumerable screens which float around him, and which function as his digital eyes, and the angels, unsure whether “God” is watching them (for he is said to have disappeared at the beginning of the story), obediently continue to live in accordance with the moral code established by “God.” Whereas ‘fate’ in *X* expresses contemporary Japanese fears of the inexorable virtualisation of Japan and the world, “God” and programmatic Providence in *Angel Sanctuary* are fantasy figurations of anxieties about social control effected through the perpetuation of “the code” by power regimes in a panoptic system of surveillance and self-discipline.

Through alluding to Foucault's theory of panopticism, *Angel Sanctuary* re-introduces the issue of social structures of power and their use of disciplinary mechanisms in its exploration of the socio-political implications of virtualisation. Baudrillard proclaims in "The Precession of Simulacra" that the condition of hyperreality, or Virtual Reality as he later called it, marks the "[e]nd of the panoptic system" (29). This is because in a "hyperreal sociality," there is no need for repression and punishment by an external power regime as "the code" reproduces itself and stimulates the individual to participate actively in his/her own domination by "the code" (Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* 70-71). Baudrillard regards panopticism as part of the second order of simulation which has been superseded by the third order of hyperreal simulation and the logic of "the code," and therefore he de-emphasises the role of power regimes in his writings on the hyperreal. However, the overdetermination of "God" in *Angel Sanctuary* as a symbol of both "the code" and panoptic power implies that the "panoptic system" has not quite "[e]nd[ed]" yet, and this implication challenges Baudrillard's notion of a complete transition into a post-panoptic social order in the age of Virtual Reality. In the scene depicting "God"'s realisation that the rebel angels Uriel and Michael have been sealing off 'his' source of "power" ("*chikara*") while 'he' has been battling the protagonist Setsuna, the sequencing of the panels creates a zigzag movement from an image of a screen to an image of "God"'s eye, and then to an image of the footage on the screen, and next to an image of "God"'s eye as a screen, and finally to an image of the screen again. This alternating pattern implies that the panoptic 'eye' of "God" is the virtual screen and vice versa. This conflation of the panoptic 'eye' and the virtual screen blurs the distinctions between the second and third orders of simulation and their respective systems of social control: it suggests that even in a world of hyperreal simulacra and "the code," power regimes and disciplinary mechanisms still play a significant role in the regulation of society (although the conflation does not actually reconcile the

contradictions between panoptic and code-governed systems). The conflation of the eye and the screen in the text's portrayal of "God"'s attempt to "programme" and master the universe also reminds the reader that discipline and the logic of "the code" ultimately share the same "political dream"; the same desire to implement a perfectly reified society governed by totalitarian power at the level of the individual's everyday life (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 197-198). This conflation of modern panopticism and postmodern social control by "the code" thus shows us that 'postmodernity' itself is not the transcendence of 'modernity,' but the repetition of the latter in an altered form. I discuss this issue further at the end of this chapter.

As we can see from the discussion thus far, the various representations of the apocalyptic destruction of Tokyo in *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* express contemporary Japanese fears of universal virtualisation, and of total social control by power regimes and "the code." The three manga texts, however, do not simply give voice to these anxieties but work to assuage them through the salvation, or perhaps more accurately, the (re)production of the city of Tokyo. By presenting happy endings where Tokyo is restored by characters who embody the values of liberal humanist individualism, the three texts reassert the ideologies or 'grand narratives' of capitalist modernity as viable forms of opposition to the apocalyptic post/modern forces of late capitalism, Virtual Reality and social control. In effect, the texts employ a positive aspect of modernity (liberal humanist individualism) to oppose a negative aspect of modernity found in postmodernity (social control). In doing so, the texts reaffirm the quintessentially modern notion of opposition itself. Nineteenth and early twentieth century liberal humanist individualism championed the rights of the individual, especially his/her right to liberty, and privileged personal relationships between individuals over abstract systems of socio-political organisation such as the nation-state (Davies, *Humanism* 41-42). This centrality of the private individual, his/her choices and

his/her relationships with other individuals is clearly evident in the plot and thematic concerns of the three manga texts. Although Tokyo is neither completely saved nor destroyed in *X* as the series ends prematurely due to publication problems, the text encourages the reader to identify with Kamui who, like Sailor Moon in *Sailor Moon* and Setsuna in *Angel Sanctuary*, is an ordinary adolescent who struggles to defend the city and human civilisation not in the name of abstract ideals or political systems, but for the sake of his loved ones. As the narratives progress, the protagonists of the three texts meet and forge strong bonds of love and friendship with other individuals who support them in accomplishing their goal. Moreover, *Angel Sanctuary* affirms the liberal humanist notion of an essential and universal human nature by explicitly designating the individual's care for other individuals as 'human(e)'. At the end of the narrative, Setsuna declares to "God": "A species which possesses emotions no computer can calculate . . . That is what human beings are" ("*donna konpyūta demo keisan dekinai kanjō tte yatsu o motsu shu... sore ga ningen da*"). The text implies that this essential and universal humanity of Setsuna, his lover Sara and his anthropomorphic angel and demon friends has a transcendental reality which cannot be (re)produced and controlled as hyperreal simulacra by "the code," nor observed and disciplined by panoptic power. When confronted with the unpredictable passions of Setsuna and his friends, "God"'s eye/screen blanks out into the white noise of impotence (Fig. 8). By ending their narratives with the defeat of "God" and alien invaders, and the restoration of Tokyo/the human world by characters who embody the values of liberal humanist individualism, *Angel Sanctuary* and *Sailor Moon* (and to a lesser extent *X*) celebrate the triumph of liberal humanist individualism over the destructive forces of late capitalism, virtualisation and social control. As cultural texts, they suggest that Japanese society in the 1990s not only feared late capitalist postmodernity, but also desired a return, via fantasy, to

modern metanarratives and oppositions in resistance to the formidable currents of ‘postmodernisation.’

As I have demonstrated above, *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* express anxieties about virtualisation and its socio-political implications; in response to the loss of the real and human world, and the dominance of power regimes and “the code,” they reassert the modern binaries of reality/artifice, human/inhuman and liberty/oppression. However, in *Angel Sanctuary* and *Sailor Moon*, these concerns exist in tension with a desire for virtualisation. The two texts celebrate virtualisation’s liberating potential, and it is through this contradiction that they reveal contemporary Japanese society’s ambivalent attitude towards the fin-de-millennial ‘postmodernisation’ of Japan and the world. Ironically, the texts’ affirmation of postmodern Virtual Reality is articulated through the repetitive destruction and (re)production of Tokyo, which, while championing the symbolic defeat of virtualisation, defer the final apocalypse and instead produce a ‘virtual apocalypse’ (Baudrillard, *Illusion of the End* 119); “the illusion of the end”; or in other words, “the apocalypse of apocalypse” (Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone” 66). In the video game-like narrative universes of *Angel Sanctuary* and *Sailor Moon*, no defeat or death is irrevocable, and Tokyo/the human world can be “reset” to its prior state after every round of mass destruction. As manga critic Nakajima Azusa points out, Tokyo and the human world return to normal after Setsuna defeats “God,” and Setsuna returns to this world and to the predicament he was in at the beginning of the narrative (“Tenshi yo, kokyō o mi yo” 408-409). As a result of this game-like narrative structure, the sense of closure at the end of the narrative is weak, and the reader is left with the sense that the story is “to be continued” (Nakajima, “Tenshi yo, kokyō o mi yo” 409). *Sailor Moon* has a similar game-like narrative structure. Sailor Saturn is the Sailor Warrior of apocalypse, but she never brings about a final end: her mission is to ‘end’ existing worlds so that there can always be “renewal” (“*saisei*”). It is Sailor Moon who performs this

continual process of “renewal” by restoring Tokyo/the human world after every battle to its pre-apocalypse state as a “cyberpolis” awaiting its next alien invasion. However, the restored city of Tokyo is never completely identical to what it was before its apocalyptic annihilation. Nakajima exaggerates the sameness of the ending and the beginning of *Angel Sanctuary* in her interpretation of the manga’s concept of the “reset” (“*risetto no kiku sekaikan*”). As she herself argues in her commentary, *Angel Sanctuary* is a *bildungsroman* (“Tenshi yo, kokyō o mi yo” 407-408). Even though Setsuna returns to the predicament he was in at the beginning of the narrative (he and his sister Sara have to defend their incestuous relationship from persecution by their parents and society), he and Sara have matured over the course of the narrative, and have learnt to balance their individualistic desires with their responsibilities towards others. Likewise, Tokyo/the human world at the end of the story is a repetition of the past with a difference: it has been liberated from the “programme” of “God” and is now free to determine its own destiny.

As narratives of the end which constantly defer ‘the end’ through these cycles of destruction and (re)production (with a difference), *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary* dramatise the logic of iteration and desterrance which Jacques Derrida calls the “apocalyptic tone,” and which is a basic condition of the postmodern world of Virtual Reality where everything is ‘textual.’ Through retelling the story in the Book of Revelation of the transmission of a message about the end of the world from God to Jesus, from Jesus to an angel, from the angel to St. John, and from St. John to the seven Churches of Asia, Derrida theorises (and performs his theory of) the “apocalyptic tone” as the “parasitis[ation]” (“Of an Apocalyptic Tone” 36) and sudden “derailment” of a “voice” by another “voice” to produce a multiplication and “interlacing” of “voices” (“Of an Apocalyptic Tone” 52-53). In “Signature Event Context,” Derrida defines “iterability” as a necessary precondition of all forms of writing which “links repetition to alterity” (90): a written mark can be taken out of the

context of its current inscription, repeated, re-contextualised and re-inscribed with a new meaning (92-93), and thus the iterated mark is the same as but also ‘other’ to the previous mark made (90). When a written mark or ‘message’ is passed from a sender to an addressee, it is iterated in different contexts which give it different meanings to form an “unmasterable polytonality” of “voices” (‘Of an Apocalyptic Tone’ 52). Furthermore, because of the *a priori* iterability of all messages and marks, the transmission of the message or mark never reaches a final destination. The message or mark is therefore subject to “destinerrance,” an eternal “wandering away” from any final addressee and any ultimate, authentic meaning (Miller, “Derrida’s *Destinerrance*” 893). Through repeating the apocalyptic destruction and (re)production of Tokyo as a city both the same as and ‘other’ to its previous incarnation(s), *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary* speak in the “apocalyptic tone,” perform iteration and destinerrance, and manifest in symbolic form “the apocalypse of apocalypse”: the end of the concept of ‘the end’, and of the notion of the revelation of Truth or Utopia. By dramatising the logic of the “apocalyptic tone” in happy endings where Tokyo/the human world is (re)produced after every round of destruction, the two texts contradict their own articulation of anxieties about postmodern virtualisation. Paradoxically, they express contemporary Japanese society’s uncanny yearning for the human world to be liberated from its own mortality, and to go on existing indefinitely as a virtual simulacrum which iterates itself endlessly through ‘virtual apocalypses’ generated by the “apocalypse of the virtual.” As Baudrillard states in “Aesthetic Illusion and Virtual Reality,” the “automatic writing of the world” is an “ideal” that is both feared and desired (202-204).

Moreover, the two manga texts repeat the destruction and (re)production of Tokyo/the human world to celebrate the “unmasterable polytonality” of “voices” (Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone” 52) or in other words, the sublime infinity of the possibilities of meaning and cultural production engendered by the virtualisation of the world and its emancipation

from 'the real' and 'the end'. The destruction and (re)production of Tokyo/the human world in *Angel Sanctuary* liberates it from "God"'s "programme" and opens up infinite possibilities for its future. The destruction and (re)production of the galaxy in *Sailor Moon* has similar consequences. In the final battle, Sailor Moon is brought to the "Galaxy Cauldron" ("gyarakushii korudoron") where all the stars and planets of the Milky Way are (re)born after their 'deaths,' and which the enemy "Chaos" has integrated herself into in a bid to rule the galaxy. Sailor Moon decides not to destroy the Cauldron together with "Chaos," even though that would end all wars in the present and future by ending all existence permanently. Instead, she wants the Cauldron to (re)produce and to continue to (re)produce the stars and planets which have been destroyed and dissolved in the Cauldron, in order to create "new futures" ("atarashii mirai") through the iteration of old simulacra. As Jameson claims in "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," the postmodern sublime evokes not only terror but also euphoria. The sublime image of the Cauldron as a gigantic generator emitting the ghostly 'energy' of countless radiant stars into the dark void of outer space is not only a fantasy figuration of the postmodern sublime where hyperreal simulacra proliferate in the "black hole" of the real (Botting, "Aftergothic" 288-295). It is also a euphoric affirmation of the endless possibilities of signification and of the construction of 'small narratives' generated by this world of Virtual Reality and its logic of iteration and desterrance. Through repeating the destruction and (re)production of Tokyo/the human world/the galaxy, *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary* thus articulate contemporary Japanese society's paradoxical desire for the cultural liberation that the apocalyptic destruction and virtualisation of the real make possible.

The repetition of destruction and (re)production in the manga texts also hints at contemporary Japanese society's desire for the political dimension of this cultural liberation. The texts' euphoric celebration of the infinite possibilities of signification and cultural

production in a postmodern virtual world paradoxically counters their own terrifying representations of the transformation of the world into a “programmed microcosm, where *nothing can be left to chance*” under the dominance of “the code” (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 34). In Derrida’s view, a textual world is one which “throws” *everything* – in the same way the Galaxy Cauldron in *Sailor Moon* ‘throws out’ stars and planets – to chance; to the unforeseeable deviations of desterrance and deconstruction (“My Chances” 2-14); and which therefore resists ‘programming’ by semiotic and ideological codes.²⁰ In Chapter Three, I discuss how *Angel Sanctuary* in particular mobilises this resistance to ‘programming’ for more specific political purposes.

As I have shown in my discussion, *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* reveal the ambivalent attitudes of contemporary Japanese society towards ‘postmodernisation.’ They express fears of virtualisation and its negative socio-political consequences, and reaffirm the modern ‘grand narratives’ of liberal humanist individualism and ‘the real,’ while paradoxically celebrating the potential of virtualisation for cultural and political liberation. I have mentioned at the beginning of the chapter that Azuma would argue that this ambivalence between the modern and the postmodern in the three texts should be attributed to the fact that these texts were produced over the 1990s and hence straddle the “Era of Fictions” (1970-1995) and the “Era of Animals” (1995-present). However, if such an explanation is to be valid, there should be a discernible linear progression from an emphasis on modern anxieties about the loss of the real and social control by “the code,” and the return to modern metanarratives (in fictional and fantasy form), to the privileging of the animalistic pleasures of postmodern communication and “small narrative” construction as the narratives progress. The three texts do not exhibit such a progression and instead allow their modern aspects to co-exist in tension with their postmodern aspects. This absence of a linear

²⁰ Baudrillard too recognises the aleatory dimension of signification in a hyperreal world in “The Beaubourg Effect: Implosion and Deterrence” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 61-73).

progression from modernity to postmodernity – manifested for example in the conflation in *Angel Sanctuary* of modern panoptic discipline and postmodern social control by “the code” – challenges Azuma’s claim that Japan became fully postmodern after 1995; furthermore, it suggests that the ‘postmodernisation’ of Japan and the world, which is understood by Azuma as a movement away from modernity, is a process that can never be “complete[d]” (Azuma, “Animalisation” 179). In “The Ends of Man,” Derrida argues that despite their critiques of humanism, the discourse remains implicit in the philosophies of Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger (119). In their writings, humanism is displaced, elevated and replaced by metaphysics, but its outline remains “in relief” (121). Derrida later extends this argument to poststructuralist theory in “Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy.” Deconstruction, according to Derrida, cannot fully transcend the modern Enlightenment paradigm of rational critique, but it can extend it with its self-reflexive awareness of the impossibility of reaching a final truth. In a similar way, *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* “relieve” or iterate aspects of capitalist modernity in late capitalist postmodernity. They thus reveal not only the ambivalence of fin-de-millennial Japan caught in-between modernity and postmodernity, but also the ambivalence of the post/modern itself, and its deferral of its own consummation which would be its own apocalypse.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the three *shōjo* manga texts, through their fantastic visions of apocalypse, ‘apocalyptically’ reveal (albeit obliquely) the complex relationships between modernity and postmodernity in the ‘political unconscious’ of contemporary Japanese society. In the next chapter, I turn my attention to the nation and national identity, two major aspects of capitalist modernity which have not quite disappeared with the onset of ‘postmodernisation.’ In Chapter Two, I discuss how the apocalyptic ‘grand narratives’ of the three manga texts mobilise the postmodern logic of iteration and desterrance to simultaneously enable and undermine the attempts of the Japanese nation to

make sense of its place and role in an increasingly globalised world at the turn of the millennium.

Chapter Two

The Apocalypse of the World City: Allegories of the Japanese Nation and its Ambivalence in the Age of Globalisation

As I have argued at the end of the previous chapter, the ‘modern,’ instead of ending with the emergence of the ‘postmodern,’ was in fact iterated and redefined under the new conditions of the latter half of the twentieth century to produce the ‘postmodern.’ Likewise, modern nation-states, nationalisms and national identities did not disappear with the onset of postmodernity: their meanings were and are being renegotiated in the new world of late multinational capitalism and its attendant processes of globalisation. As ‘grand narratives’ of the end of the world and the ‘world city’ Tokyo, *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* interpellate the Japanese reader as a member of the Japanese nation. As ‘fictions’ or ‘national allegories,’ the three texts reinvent the Japanese nation, through the postmodern logic of iteration and desterrance, to help the reader reconceptualise his/her nation’s place and role in the increasingly postmodern world of the 1990s. However, the texts paradoxically subvert ideological attempts (including their own) to reify the Japanese nation into a discrete, unified and essentialist identity through the ambivalence which lies in their narrations of the nation.

Frank Kermode argues in *The Sense of an Ending* that ‘fictions’ or paradigms (which are not necessarily literary) enable human beings to make sense of their relation to the world they live in, and to thereby feel that their existence is in some way ‘meaningful’ (7). Kermode’s conception of ‘fiction’ intersects with Louis Althusser’s conception of ideology as the “represent[ation] [of] the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (“Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” 109). ‘Grand narratives’ of apocalypse are such ‘fictions’ or ideologies which interpellate and construct subjective identities (which are ‘fictions’ or ideologies too) for individuals and communities, and one of these identities constructed is that of ‘the nation.’ Drawing on Benedict Anderson’s notion of

the 'imagined community' and Derrida's concepts of iterability, supplementarity and differ \acute{a} nce, Homi Bhabha argues that 'the nation' is not a sociological entity with an objective reality: it is a discursive construct which is generated through the act of narration, and which addresses its interlocutors and compels them to identify themselves as 'the nation' (*Location of Culture* 140). Bhabha notes that the 'fiction' or 'ideology' of 'the nation' is often narrated in a type of fictional narrative which Fredric Jameson terms the "national allegory," "where the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the collectivity itself" (Jameson, quoted in Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 140). In the first part of this chapter, I show how *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are 'national allegories' that interpellate the Japanese reader and discursively produce the 'imagined community' of 'the nation,' which, as I discuss below, is reconceptualised in the context of postmodern globalisation.²¹

In order to successfully interpellate the individual and (re)produce themselves, 'fictions' and ideologies have to remain relevant to the individual's present. They have to be constantly modified in response to the changing political, economic and social conditions which impact upon the individual's life in order to "represent the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" 109). Thus, literary history (and cultural history in general) in Kermode's view is an endless process of repeating and revising old paradigms to create new paradigms in order to cope with the increasing complexity of the world and its history (*Sense of an Ending* 166-173). Like all cultural paradigms and signs in a postmodern virtual world characterised by the logic of iteration and desterrance, 'the nation as narration' does not remain static: it is re-inscribed with new meaning every time it is iterated in a different context of enunciation

²¹ However, this does not mean that the manga texts determine the reader's response. The reader may choose not to identify with 'the nation' or to read the texts' address differently. Here I would like to refer the reader to the distinction Stuart Hall makes between dominant, oppositional and negotiated readings ("Encoding, Decoding" 515-517).

(Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 141-145). As the historical conditions which shape the context undergo transformation, new interpretations or narrations of 'the nation' are produced (*Location of Culture* 145). As 'national allegories,' *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* renegotiate and 'translate' the modern sign of 'the Japanese nation' to preserve its existence in a postmodern globalising world, where the very relevance of 'the nation,' the nation-state and nationalism is called into question. In the second part of this chapter, I explore what new visions of the Japanese nation the manga texts construct and how they do so, in order to discuss, as I explain in further detail below, how the manga texts paradoxically deconstruct the national identities they construct through their ambivalence.

In 'translating' the sign of 'the Japanese nation,' the three manga texts introduce ambivalence into the national identities they narrate. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that the process of 'translation' is not equivalent to the dialectical synthesis of antagonistic entities, or to the assimilation of one entity into the other (224). For Bhabha, there is always an element of the 'untranslatable' which forces the translating cultural formation or social process to negotiate with the otherness of the cultural formation or social process to be translated (227-228). This negotiation changes the boundaries of both the translated and translating entities to produce liminal and hybrid cultural formations or social processes (227-228) which are, as Bhabha put it in "Of Mimicry and Man," "not quite/not white" (480); which are never purely one thing or the other. In the final part of the chapter, I explore how the nation narrated by the three manga texts, despite its seeming unity and coherence, actually emerges out of the negotiation between Japanese culture and other cultures. I then explore how the resultant ambivalence subverts the ideological attempts of the texts, and of the dominant discourses in 1990s Japan, to construct reified national identities which (re)produce the hegemonic power of the Japanese nation(-state) over its East Asian neighbours. Through this discussion, I seek to illustrate how the three texts not only express

and perpetuate, but also critically engage with the ideological and material conditions present in the 'political unconscious' of Japan in the 1990s.

The reading of apocalyptic narratives in postwar Japanese popular culture as allegories of the Japanese nation is not new. For example, critics have read *Godzilla* (1954) and *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974-1975) as narratives which express in fantasy form the national trauma of the atomic bombings, and which rewrite the defeat of Japan in the Second World War into symbolic victories.²² However, unlike *Godzilla* and *Space Battleship Yamato* which feature stereotypical signs of the Japanese nation and unambiguous allusions to major events in Japanese national history, *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are not explicitly allegorical.²³ Nevertheless, the three texts do interpellate the Japanese reader as a member of 'the Japanese nation,' and discursively produce 'the Japanese nation' as an 'imagined community.' Therefore, these texts can be regarded as 'First World national allegories' (Jameson, "Third World Literature" 79) in which the introspective, fragmented story of the private individual is a covert and even unconscious expression of the social reality – and, in Bhabha's re-interpretation of Jameson, the textual construct – of 'the nation' (*Location of Culture* 140). *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are not simply narratives about the Japanese nation. The three manga narratives are first and foremost narrations of 'the Japanese nation,' and they narrate the nation principally through their evocation of the experience of temporal simultaneity.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that it is through the experience of "temporal coincidence" in the act of reading popular realist novels and newspapers that

²² See Susan Napier, "Panic Sites: The Japanese Imagination of Disaster from *Godzilla* to *Akira*," in *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, ed. John Whittier Treat (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 235-262, and Mizuno Hiromi, "When Pacifist Japan Fights: Historicising Desires in Anime," in *Mechademia Two: Networks of Desire*, ed. Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 104-123.

²³ In *Godzilla*, the creation of the monster lizard by American nuclear science is an obvious allusion to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In *Space Battleship Yamato*, humanity is saved from exposure to nuclear radiation by a Japanese crew on board a spaceship aptly named "Yamato," which is the name of the mythological prince and founder of the Japanese race.

‘the nation’ is ‘imagined’ in the minds of large populations of people who do not know each other personally (24-35). The notion of the ‘meanwhile’ implicit in the narrative structure of the novel and the newspaper, the typicality of characters, objects, places and events in novels, and the “mass ceremony” of reading mass-produced novels and newspapers create the sensation of (the same) things happening at the same time. This sensation of “temporal coincidence” compels the individual reader to see him/herself as part of a larger ‘imagined community’ of individuals all existing in the same time-space moment (25-35). Although *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are fantasy rather than realist narratives, and although they are targeted at a niche readership of mainly young female readers much smaller than the mass audiences Anderson has in mind, they operate in much the same way as Anderson’s novels and newspapers. They utilise the same narrative devices of typicality and metonymy to evoke in the contemporary Japanese reader of the 1990s the sensation of living with many other individuals like him/her in the same homogeneous temporality. The texts thereby compel the reader to ‘imagine’ and identify him/herself and these other individuals as ‘the Japanese nation.’ I explain this point in greater detail with examples from the texts in the following paragraphs.

The main characters in *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are three-dimensional, individualised characters who, moreover, possess superhuman powers, are tasked with the special responsibility of saving the world, and embody the values of liberal humanist individualism (as I have shown in Chapter One). Nevertheless, they are represented in the texts as relatively typical Japanese boys and girls whom the contemporary Japanese reader of the 1990s would have found familiar. Despite the fantasy elements of the three texts, the characters’ semi-realistic, Every(wo)man quality encourages the Japanese reader to identify with the characters and with the multitudes of individuals like them who exist in the ‘real’ world outside the narratives. The texts portray their protagonists, Tsukino Usagi a.k.a. Sailor

Moon (*Sailor Moon*), Kamui (*X*) and Setsuna (*Angel Sanctuary*), as relatively ordinary adolescents who engage in the same activities and face the same problems in their daily lives as many Japanese adolescents in the ‘real’ world did in the 1990s. Usagi is a ditzy and unmotivated schoolgirl who, like many ‘real’ schoolgirls in 1990s Japan, is regularly scolded by her housewife mother for performing badly in class tests, dreads preparing for high school entrance examinations, and spends most of her time dreaming of romance and frequenting game arcades with her girlfriends. Even though he is supposed to be the saviour of human civilisation, *X*’s Kamui still has to go to school and has problems understanding high school mathematics. The typicality of Usagi and Kamui is further emphasised by the outfits the manga artists have designed for them. Usagi and Kamui are often depicted wearing school uniforms, which most middle and high school students in Japan were required to wear in the 1990s. Even the costume that Usagi wears when she is the superheroine Sailor Moon is modelled on the iconic sailor suit-style uniform worn by many schoolgirls all over Japan. Compared to Usagi and Kamui, Setsuna is even more representative of Japanese adolescents in the 1990s, as *Angel Sanctuary* portrays him as a victim of several contemporary social problems which were of great topical interest at the time of the manga’s publication. Setsuna’s parents are divorced and he suffers from parental neglect; furthermore, he is bullied in school for being ‘different’ as he has brown hair and eyes due to his Japanese-English ethnicity. He laments that schools have become “mass production factories” (“*puroiraa kōjō*”) where students are placed under rigid control, and are hierarchised according to their grades by adults who do not care for their well-being. The breakdown of the family, bullying in schools and the negative effects of a regulatory education system fixated on examination results were portrayed in public discourse in 1990s Japan as widespread social problems afflicting youths all over the country, and this topical dimension of the manga text reinforces Setsuna’s (unfortunate) typicality as a character. The representative quality of Usagi, Kamui

and Setsuna compels the contemporary Japanese reader to identify with them, and with the many other individuals similar to these characters in the ‘real’ world outside the manga narratives, and to ‘imagine’ that all of them live in the same temporality and experience the same conditions. In this way, the manga texts ‘allegorise’ disparate individuals into the discursive construct of ‘the Japanese nation’ which, in the light of its numerous social problems, is clearly a nation in crisis.

Besides typicality, the three manga texts also use the narrative device of metonymy to stimulate the ‘imagining’ of ‘the Japanese nation’ through the experience of temporal simultaneity. In all three texts, Tokyo functions as a metonymy of the larger geographical and political entity of ‘Japan.’ The texts make it clear that the apocalyptic destruction of Tokyo will result in the demise of Japan before it results in the end of the world. As mentioned in Chapter One, several landmarks in Tokyo function in the narrative universe of *X* as spiritual ‘seals’ (“*kekkaï*”) which shield the city, Japan and the world from harm. The reader is told that the demolition of these landmarks by the Seven Angels will bring about not only the destruction of Tokyo, but the destruction of Japan (and then the rest of the world) as well. The metonymic relationship between Tokyo and Japan in *X* is further emphasised through the interaction between word and image. The verbal explanation that Tokyo is the centre of apocalyptic destruction is juxtaposed in the manga text with an image of the Japanese archipelago (*sans* Tokyo) situated in the centre of the globe with multiple concentric circles, ellipses and straight lines emanating from it as the locus and origin of apocalyptic destruction. This paradoxical presence/absence of Tokyo implies that – to borrow the words of the governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintaro – “Tokyo’s crises are Japan’s crises” (Ishihara, quoted in Machimura, “Narrating a ‘global city’ for ‘new Tokyoites’” 209). *X* thus indicates that the apocalyptic destruction of Tokyo is a synecdoche of the apocalyptic destruction of Japan as a whole.

Angel Sanctuary makes the metonymic relationship between Tokyo and Japan even more explicit through foregrounding Tokyo's status as the metropolitan capital of the state of Japan. Early in the narrative, the text explains that the annihilation of Tokyo (caused by the explosive reawakening of the angel Alexiel's soul which lies dormant in Setsuna's body) will cause Japan to collapse as a result of the loss of its capital. Metonymy, as defined by Roman Jakobson, is the linking of words to form a contiguous discourse or narrative, and it is the underlying logic of the realist novel ("Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles" 42-43). The metonymic linking of signs to other signs in the realist novel forms a spatio-temporal contiguity which creates the illusion of a 'real,' three-dimensional and unified time-space unit. As such it is metonymy that produces the sensation of temporal simultaneity across spaces which Anderson argues is essential to the 'imagining' of the nation. In the three manga texts, the metonymic connection of Tokyo's fate to Japan's fate makes the contemporary Japanese reader feel that his/her destiny is connected 'in the meanwhile' to the destinies of others who live outside Tokyo (if the reader lives in Tokyo) or in Tokyo (if the reader lives outside Tokyo). This sense of spatio-temporal contiguity gives rise to the impression of living in a shared time-space moment, and hence enables the reader to conjure up in his/her mind and to identify him/herself with the 'imagined community' of 'the Japanese nation.' And, as I have mentioned at the end of my discussion on typicality in the manga texts, the Japanese nation 'imagined' in these narratives is one that is in crisis.

The 1990s for Japan was certainly a period of national crisis and of the crisis of national identity. Popularly referred to as the 'lost decade,' the 1990s saw the bursting of the economic 'bubble' and the sliding of the once-vibrant Japanese economy into a seemingly endless recession. The 1990s also witnessed corruption scandals involving high-level politicians and bureaucrats, the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway, rising rates of death from overwork and suicide, and youth violence, bullying and absenteeism in

schools (Tipton, *Modern Japan* 211-226). Iida Yumiko contends that these ‘odd’ events and phenomena were due to the loss of real identity in the Japanese individual and the Japanese nation, and that this loss was in turn due to the postmodern virtualisation of the world (“Japanese Identity” 425-426). While I agree with Iida that virtualisation contributed to the crisis of Japanese national identity, in this chapter I focus on another significant dimension of late capitalist postmodernity which threatened Japanese national identity in the 1990s: namely, globalisation. The intensification of transnational ‘flows’ of people, capital, commodities and ideologies since the late twentieth century has induced the rise in power of multinational corporations (MNCs), the emergence of supranational bodies such as the European Union (Heywood, *Political Theory* 108-110), and cultural homogenisation and hybridisation (Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* 42-43). These phenomena and processes have resulted in the de-legitimation of the model of the nation-state and the ideology of nationalism (Chernilo, *Social Theory of the Nation-State* 139), and correspondingly, the erosion of national identity and the ‘imagined community’ of the nation. The threat globalisation poses to the collective identity of ‘the Japanese nation’ is ironically hinted at in *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* through their use of metonymy, which, as I have argued in the preceding paragraph, is one of the narrative devices employed by the texts to discursively produce ‘the Japanese nation.’ All three texts state that the apocalyptic destruction of Tokyo will result in the end of Japan *and* the entire human world. The metonymic linking of Tokyo, Japan and the world creates a sense of temporal simultaneity that unites the residents of Tokyo not only with the citizens of Japan, but with people in all the other countries of the world as well. This results in the ‘imagination’ of a global supranational community which dissolves the boundaries of the nation(-state) and renders ‘nationhood’ as a collective identity obsolete. Through the metonymy of apocalypse, the texts thus obliquely point to the creation of a common global temporality and community through

greater transnational interconnectedness, and to the challenge this situation presents to the Japanese nation.

However, the virtualisation of the world, which I have discussed in Chapter One and which Iida pinpoints as the cause of the loss of national identity in 1990s Japan, entails a logic of iteration and desterrance that gives rise to the enunciative modality. Bhabha calls this enunciative modality the ‘Third Space’ of enunciation. The ‘Third Space,’ according to Bhabha, “constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised and read anew” (*Location of Culture* 37). In this ‘Third Space’ of enunciation, the sign of ‘the nation’ is repeated, re-contextualised, re-inscribed with new meanings and thereby (re)produced in the present of its enunciation. In narrating ‘the Japanese nation’ in the 1990s, the three manga texts enunciate it and rework its meanings to construct new national identities in response to the threat posed to its existence by postmodern globalisation. Broadly speaking, all three texts attempt to ensure the survival of the Japanese nation in the age of globalisation by redefining it as an economic and cultural superpower which is both a strong nation and a prominent participant in transnational processes. The texts do so firstly, by representing Tokyo as a ‘world city,’ and secondly, through the narrative of the salvation/regeneration of the world by messianic protagonists who represent the Japanese nation.

In all three texts, Tokyo is depicted as a type of metropolis which Peter Hall, following Patrick Geddes, christens “the world cit[y]” (Hall, *World Cities* 1). World cities, according to Hall and Saskia Sassen (who uses the term ‘global city’), possess economic “global control capability” (Sassen, *Global City* 6). They function as major centres where MNCs manage their transnational production processes in conjunction with producer service

firms and financial institutions (Hall, *World Cities* 1; Sassen, *Global City* 3-6).²⁴ *X* depicts the West Shinjuku skyscraper agglomeration, which houses the head offices of MNCs, banks and producer and financial service firms,²⁵ as one of the spiritual ‘seals’ (“*kekkaï*”) in Tokyo which protect the entire world. We can read this as a symbolic representation of Tokyo’s great influence over the global economy as a world city. World cities are also major centres of the production and distribution of information by the mass media (Hall, *World Cities* 2), and the manga texts reflect this as well. *Sailor Moon*, for example, depicts Tokyo as a global media hub: the alien characters flock to Tokyo to set up their pop idol management agencies and to broadcast their television programmes, and their plans for world colonisation through the mass media are a thinly-veiled metaphor for the global expansion activities of multinational media conglomerates based in the city. However, world cities are not only centres of transnational economic and cultural activity but are also centres of national political power, where national governments and state institutions are concentrated (Hall, *World Cities* 1). As I have mentioned earlier in the chapter, *Angel Sanctuary* explicitly foregrounds Tokyo’s status as the capital of Japan. *X* does so more indirectly by featuring the National Diet Building in Tokyo, which houses the Parliament of Japan, prominently in the narrative as the site where Kamui and his comrades base their operations. This representation of Tokyo as a world city in economic, cultural and political terms enables the three texts to symbolically resolve the contradiction between Tokyo as a metonymy of Japan and of the Japanese nation, and Tokyo as a metonymy of the world and of the global supranational

²⁴ Sassen’s use of the term ‘global city’ is meant to differentiate her concept from Hall’s concept of the ‘world city’. Sassen’s global city model is more historically specific, as it examines the emergence of ‘global cities’ in the context of the formation of a highly transnational global economy in the 1980s and 1990s (Sassen, *Global City* 354), whereas Hall’s world city model is based on a broader historical timeline of the shift from early to industrial to late capitalism. Sassen’s model also focuses on the production of producer services and financial products which enable the global coordination of economic production (Sassen, *Global City* 349), whereas Hall’s model takes into account a wider variety of factors when identifying ‘world cities’. Nevertheless, there are points of convergence between the two models, and hence I have combined the two models into one here.

²⁵ Corporations and institutions whose head offices can be found in West Shinjuku include MacDonald’s Holdings Japan, the Japan Net Bank, Sompo Japan Insurance and Sumitomo Realty and Development.

community. Representing Tokyo as a world city implies that while Tokyo is extensively interconnected with the world through transnational economic and cultural ‘flows,’ it remains firmly rooted in the nation(-state). Because of the metonymic relationship between Tokyo and Japan, this in turn implies that the Japanese nation in the era of globalisation is at once national and global: it is an ‘imagined community’ delimited by the geographical and political boundaries of the state of Japan, and yet contiguous with the rest of the world in a shared temporality as a superpower which is actively engaged in transnational processes.

The second strategy the manga texts employ in their re-imagining of the Japanese nation as a national-transnational superpower is the narrative of the salvation/regeneration of the world by protagonists who, despite their embodiment of liberal humanist and individualist values, simultaneously function allegorically as representatives of the Japanese nation due to their typicality. Although this strategy is used in all three texts, I focus on *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary* in the following discussion. In these two texts, Japan is reinvented as a cultural superpower whose national might lies in its deep involvement in, and mastery of, the new globalisation processes of intensified transnational cultural ‘flows.’ The two texts imply that Sailor Moon and Setsuna save the world not only with their supernatural powers, but also with their ability to hybridise multiple and even oppositional entities, and to disseminate their hybrid creations to the rest of the world. In their respective narrative universes, the two characters are chosen to be the Messiah (“*kyūseishi*”, “*kyūseishu*”) because of the hybridity of their bodies. As I have mentioned earlier, Setsuna is bullied in school for being ‘different’ because he has Japanese and English blood, and as the mortal reincarnation of the fallen angel Alexiel, he is the Messiah who is “neither an angel nor a human being” (“*tenshi demo hito demo nai kyūseishi*”). Sailor Moon too is a distinctive hybrid being: she is the human (and Japanese) reincarnation of Princess Serenity, the ruler of the Moon Kingdom in the ancient past. Moreover, Sailor Moon’s body functions as a ‘vessel’ which can contain and

synthesise all the different ‘powers’ given to her by Sailor Warriors across the galaxy to produce a great explosive force in order to annihilate her enemies and save the universe. This motif of the synthesising vessel brings to mind the analogy of the melting-pot recurrent in official and popular discourses on multiculturalism in and outside Japan. The emphasis on the distinctive hybrid nature of Setsuna and Sailor Moon’s bodies, and on the bodily nature of their distinctive hybridity, implies that the two characters, and the Japanese nation they symbolise, possess a unique and innate ability to hybridise diverse ethnic and national cultures and identities which ‘flow’ into Japan in the age of globalisation. Furthermore, the texts also represent Setsuna and Sailor Moon as characters capable of reversing the ‘flow’ and disseminating their hybridised cultures and identities all over the world to form a global culture and identity. In *Sailor Moon*, the eponymous heroine marries her boyfriend Mamoru, who is the reincarnation of Prince Endymion, the ruler of the ancient Earth Kingdom, and their hybrid union results in the creation of a global kingdom united by a common hybrid Earth-Moon culture. At the end of *Angel Sanctuary*, Setsuna and his lover Sara embody the symbolic figure of the ‘angel’ redefined as a hybrid being who is “neither God nor Man” (“*kami demo naku hito demo nai*”) and who is “born surrounded with love” (“*mekuru meku yō na ai ni tsutsumarete umareta*”), and they universalise that hybrid identity of the ‘angel’ to regenerate all fallen human beings in the world. The salvation/regeneration of the world and the production of fictional global cultures and identities by the hybrid protagonists of the two manga texts imply that the Japanese nation, with its unique and innate ability to hybridise different cultures, occupies a pre-eminent position in the age of transnational cultural ‘flows’ as *the* ‘hybridiser’ and exporter of hybrid cultural products suitable for global consumption. Japan is thus narrated in *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary* as a nation which, far from becoming eroded by transnational cultural ‘flows,’ is peculiarly suited to take advantage of these ‘flows’ to construct and export new hybrid global cultures, and to thereby become a

cultural centre whose national 'soft power' over the periphery is paradoxically predicated on globalisation processes which transgress national boundaries.

This reified and essentialist representation of the Japanese nation as a cultural superpower with a distinctive and superior native talent for hybridisation sits uneasily with the prevalent view of Japan (from both the perspectives of the West and of the Japanese themselves) as a highly insular and xenophobic nation. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and especially after Japan failed to provide military aid to the United Nations (UN)-led intervention in the 1991 Gulf War, Japan was heavily criticised by foreign countries for its refusal, firstly, to participate actively in international politics and security, and secondly, to open its domestic markets to foreign enterprises (Ertl, "International Peripheries" 84). Both the Japanese government and ordinary Japanese people in the 1990s were also aware that the nation was facing great difficulties in integrating immigrants and ethnic Japanese (*Nikkeijin*) who had recently returned to the country after many years of living in South America (Tipton, *Modern Japan* 225). In response to these critical foreign and national perceptions of Japan as a 'closed' country, Japan adopted a national project of 'internationalisation' (*kokusaika*) (Ertl, "International Peripheries" 84). The 'internationalisation' of Japan involved measures such as increasing Self-Defence Force participation in UN peacekeeping operations (Bessho, *Identities and Security in East Asia* 21), and attracting foreign students to study in Japanese universities (Goodman, "Concept of *Kokusaika*" 75-76). Japan's attempt to represent itself as 'international' in the 1990s also produced a particular set of public discourses which sought to sublimate the contradictions between Japan's nationhood and its new openness to the forces of globalisation. This set of public discourses, which Iwabuchi Koichi terms the "trans/nationalism" discourses (*Recentring Globalisation* 52), is echoed in the manga texts' essentialist representations of Japan as the best and only 'hybridiser' of cultures. In an attempt to reconcile increasing transnational cultural 'flows' into Japan in the 1990s with the

notion of a Japanese ‘national essence,’ the state, the media, the private sector and academic and social commentators revived and re-interpreted prewar nationalist discourses which claimed that the Japanese nation was intrinsically capable of hybridising foreign (mainly Western) cultural influences (Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalisation* 53). Iwabuchi argues that this discursive construction of hybridity as “an organic and ahistorical aspect of Japanese national/cultural identity” constitutes an ideology of “hybridism” which is very different from Bhabha’s conception of hybridity (*Recentring Globalisation* 54). The ideology of ‘hybridism’ was used in various forms of public discourse in the 1990s – ranging from state cultural policy to scholarly treatises on ‘civilisation theory’ – to reinvent another prewar nationalist fantasy of Japan as the leader of Asia (and the world). Japan, it was said, occupied a privileged position because its genius for hybridisation made it adept at producing and disseminating hybrid cultures for pan-Asian (and global) audiences (Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalisation* 59-69). The prevalence of hybrid contemporary Japanese popular culture in East Asian countries, and its rising popularity in the United States and Western Europe in the 1990s, were often cited as evidence of Japan’s leadership position (Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalisation* 69) and of the ‘Japanisation’ of the world.²⁶ Moreover, these ideologies of Japan’s pre-eminent position in cultural globalisation were not mere wish-fulfilment fantasies. Iwabuchi argues that they enabled the Japanese nation(-state) to (re)assert its postcolonial power in East Asia in the 1990s (*Recentring Globalisation* 17). The Japanese state appropriated the notion that Japanese popular culture represented the historical experience of hybridising Western modernity, which was supposedly common to all Asian nations and yet more advanced in Japan’s case, in order to recast the export of Japanese popular culture products to East Asian countries as a ‘sharing’ of Japan’s advanced experience (Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalisation* 73-75). This then enabled the Japanese state to use Japanese

²⁶ For an example of such assertions, see Douglas McGray, “Japan’s Gross National Cool,” in *Foreign Policy* 130 (2002): 44-54.

popular culture as a diplomatic instrument “to improve Japan’s reputation and soothe – even suppress – the bitter memory of the Japanese invasion of Asia” (Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalisation* 73-75). This further enabled the obscuration, legitimation and (re)production of the asymmetrical economic and cultural relations of power between Japan and its East Asian neighbours which remained as the historical legacy of Japanese imperialism (Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalisation* 73-84). As the “trans/nationalism” discourses in 1990s Japan make evident, globalisation has not entirely displaced the ‘national.’ Instead, the ‘national’ is paradoxically reasserted through transnational cultural ‘flows’ and cultural hybridisation, and this redefinition and reproduction of the sign of ‘the Japanese nation’ in the context of globalisation is played out in the apocalyptic ‘national allegories’ of *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary*.

As ‘national allegories’ which construct identities for the Japanese nation in response to the new conditions of postmodern globalisation, *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* reproduce contemporary ideologies which depict Japan as a global hegemon whose national power is founded on its mastery of transnational economic and cultural ‘flows.’ However, as I have discussed in the Introduction, these manga texts are also cultural texts whose ‘semi-autonomy’ enables them to interrogate and subvert these ideologies which reify the Japanese nation into a discrete, unified and essentialist identity. The manga texts’ reworking of the meanings of ‘the Japanese nation’ as a discursive construct enunciated in the present of postmodern globalisation can be understood as a process of ‘translation’ which attempts to make an old sign relevant in a new context. I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that for Bhabha, ‘translation’ necessarily involves negotiation with otherness, and is therefore not synonymous with synthesis or assimilation (*Location of Culture* 224, 227-228). This negotiation with otherness gives rise to ambivalent cultural formations and social processes which resist reification, essentialisation and binary polarisation (*Location of Culture* 227-

228). In enunciating and ‘translating’ the sign of ‘the Japanese nation,’ the three manga texts negotiate not only the alterity of an old sign in a new context, but the alterity of foreign cultures which ‘flow’ into Japan as well. This generates an ambivalence which undermines the seeming coherence of the national identities they narrate. In Bhabha’s words, the texts produce “counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalising boundaries [. . .] [and] disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which ‘imagined communities’ are given essentialist identities” (*Location of Culture* 149).

Sailor Moon, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* contradict the “trans/nationalism” discourses of the 1990s – which they themselves articulate and reproduce – by, ironically, ‘translating’ and redefining the Japanese nation as ‘trans/nationally hybrid.’ In attempting to represent Japan as essentially the best and only ‘hybridiser’ and exporter of global culture in Asia and beyond, the three texts inadvertently manifest ‘cultural hybridity’ as a process of negotiating and ‘translating’ different cultures, which produces a profound ambivalence that puts into question the very notion of ‘national essences’ and the centre-periphery model of cultural imperialism. At first glance, *X* and *Sailor Moon* appear to define and to champion Japanese ‘cultural hybridity’ either as the suturing of discrete elements from various cultures, or as the synthesis of these elements and the transcendence of their differences. As I have mentioned earlier, *Sailor Moon* represents the titular character (who symbolises Japan) as a metaphorical ‘melting-pot’ which dissolves diverse cultures into a homogeneous whole. *X*, on the other hand, presents itself as a Japanese cultural hybrid produced out of the mixing and matching of concepts and symbols drawn from Japanese, East Asian and Western cultural traditions, and from religions such as Shinto, Buddhism and Christianity. The text’s ‘mosaic multiculturalism’ is explicitly advertised in the illustrations of tarot cards printed on the book jacket of each manga volume. For example, the tarot card illustration of Volume Four, which represents a character from the narrative, Monō Kyōgo, as “The Emperor,” features a

plethora of cultural and religious symbols assembled in a collage-like composition. These symbols include the *Hinomaru* or ‘Rising Sun’ symbol (the Japanese Shintoist and imperialist symbol of the Japanese nation), an orb and a crucifix-shaped sceptre (Western emblems of Protestant monarchical rule), a necklace of jewels and a mirror (two of the ‘three sacred treasures’ which constitute the traditional regalia of the Japanese emperor).

However, as cultural texts, *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are actually not cultural hybrids in the sense of the mosaic or the melting-pot. They are cultural hybrids which repeat, re-contextualise and re-inscribe the signs of local and foreign cultures with new meanings, and they do this through engaging in the postmodern aesthetic practices of non-perspectivalism, pastiche and play. We can see this process of cultural ‘translation’ at work in the tarot card illustration in *X* I have just discussed. On the one hand, the iteration of the aforementioned cultural and religious symbols compels the manga text to confront the received meanings of these symbols. On the other hand, the Superflat visual aesthetic of the image – instead of a three-dimensional, perspectival background behind Kyōgo, there is a *shōji* screen with a painting of mountains on it which, even though the screen is folded at multiple right angles, looks strangely undistorted and two-dimensional – strips the symbols of the ‘depth’ of their historical referents and established meanings, and transforms them into empty signifiers ready for re-inscription. Here, iteration and Superflatness in the illustration give rise to the negotiation between the otherness of the signified and the infinite possibilities of the signifier. This negotiation of meaning occurs simultaneously with the practice of pastiche which re-contextualises the symbols in the sign-system of the image-text, where the signs ‘supplement’ one another in a metonymic chain. Let us examine these processes of negotiation and re-contextualisation through the symbol of the orb and sceptre in the illustration. In sixteenth century portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, the orb and sceptre function as symbols of English and Protestant monarchical and imperial rule (Doran, “Virginity,

Divinity and Power” 179). The iconographic motif of the orb is ‘playfully’ iterated in the tarot card image as a miniature simulacrum of the planet Earth held in “The Emperor” Kyōgo’s hand. Together with the sceptre, it is metonymically linked to the necklace, the mirror and the *Hinomaru*, which are emblems derived from or associated with Shinto myths of the Japanese emperor as the descendant of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu. Through the processes of meaning-negotiation and metonymic re-contextualisation, the ‘Western’ orb and sceptre are rewritten as symbols of the imperial power of the Japanese emperor and the Japanese ethnic nation (symbolised by the emperor),²⁷ and of the truly ‘global’ nature of that power which far surpasses the old imperialisms of the Western European monarchical states of the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. As we can see from this example in *X* (numerous similar examples exist in *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary*), the Japanese ‘cultural hybridity’ manifested in the manga texts does not lie in the combination of discrete cultural elements, or in the blending of these elements into a unified whole. It consists in cultural ‘translation’: the linguistic processes of negotiation and re-contextualisation which give the signs of culture new meanings for new purposes, and which, as I will now demonstrate, put into question the concept of ‘national essences’ and the idea that Japan could have the final say in hybridisation as the ultimate and exclusive producer and exporter of global culture.

In the tarot card illustration in *X*, the cultural and religious symbols of the orb and sceptre, “The Emperor,” the *Hinomaru* and the regalia of the Japanese emperor, together with the rhetoric of ‘mosaic multiculturalism,’ are ‘translated’ to collectively connote a Barthesian ‘myth’ or ideology. This ‘myth’ claims the ability to hybridise cultures as a god-given ‘national essence’ of the Japanese ethnic nation, and as the foundation of Japan’s cultural imperial ‘rule’ in the age of globalisation. However, this ideology of ‘hybridism’ and cultural imperialism is undermined by the very act of cultural ‘translation’ that makes its existence

²⁷ Since the prewar period, the Japanese emperor has been regarded by nationalists as a symbol of the cultural unity and identity of the Japanese nation, or *kokutai* (Takeda, *Dual-Image of the Japanese Emperor* 3).

possible. When the signs of a foreign culture are ‘translated,’ the new meanings that they acquire are added to the two separate metonymic chains of signifiers which constitute the local and the foreign cultures, and this ‘supplementation’ changes the shape of both signifying chains. Thus, neither the local nor the foreign culture remains ‘pure,’ and both are transformed into a liminal cultural formation whose ambivalence blurs the boundaries upon which claims of ‘national essence’ are built. This is evident in the tarot card illustration where the ‘translation’ of the orb and sceptre into symbols of Japanese imperial power involves not only the transformation of Western European signs and cultural codes; it also involves the transformation of the feudal Japanese conception of ‘the emperor’ as a semi-divine figurehead, and of the ethnic nation as the secluded ‘Land of the Gods’ (“*kami no kuni*”), into a hybrid form of ‘Japanese’ (cultural) imperialism where the emperor is the semi-divine and sovereign ruler of an (cultural) empire that stretches beyond the geographical and racial boundaries of Japan. The tarot card image as a whole, then, is a cultural hybrid composed of ‘translated’ signs and their meanings which cannot be clearly classified as either ‘Western’ or ‘Japanese.’ Through such acts of cultural ‘translation’ and cultural hybridity, the manga texts render the notion of ‘national essences,’ and the ideology of Japanese ‘hybridism’ the former underpins, untenable.

The process of cultural ‘translation’ manifested in the tarot card image also does not produce final meanings which can be universalised, and this open-endedness challenges Japan’s claim to being the ultimate and exclusive producer and exporter of hybrid cultures which the rest of the world can only consume passively. Bhabha states that “[f]rom the perspective of negotiation and translation, [. . .] there can be no final discursive *closure*” (*Location of Culture* 30), and this means that ‘translated’ signs can always be iterated, re-contextualised and re-translated to form new hybrid cultural formations and social processes. Iwabuchi makes a similar assertion in *Recentring Globalisation* when he argues against the

assumption implicit in the “trans/nationalism” discourses that “Japan is the first and final stop in the indigenisation process in global cultural flows.” He points out that “Japanese culture itself, [although] arguably the fruit of skilful hybridisation, is in turn destined to be contradictorily consumed, appropriated, and indigenised in the process of transnational consumption” (72). Although Iwabuchi’s term “indigenisation” is problematic given the ambivalent nature of cultural ‘translation,’ he is right in his observation that East Asian audiences are just as capable as Japanese producers are of ‘translating’ the ‘translated’ Japanese popular culture they consume into new hybrid cultures. In fact, East Asian audiences are already participating in this endless process of ‘translation.’²⁸ This challenge to the ideological representation of Japan as the cultural centre and the rest of the world as the periphery is indirectly expressed in the tarot card illustration through a slippage in the re-inscription of the sign of “The Emperor.” In the illustration, “The Emperor” Kyōgo wears a traditional Japanese aristocrat/Shinto priest’s outfit, but the striking golden-yellow colour of the *ikan sokutai* (“outer robe”) brings to mind the ‘dragon robes’ worn by Chinese emperors during the Qing dynasty. Japanese emperors are not known to wear this colour. In fact, almost all portraits of Emperor Meiji (1868-1912) depict him in late nineteenth century Prussian-style military dress, while photographs of Hirohito (1926-1989) and Akihito (1989-present) often show the two men clothed in dark-coloured Western suits and ties. The golden-yellow colour of the robe in the illustration thus makes it possible for the figure of “The Emperor” to be read not as a sign of the Japanese emperor, but as a sign of the Chinese emperor, which can in turn be read as a sign of the cultural ‘hybridism’ and cultural imperial

²⁸ The localisation of contemporary Japanese popular cultural products in East Asian countries has been the subject of much recent scholarship on Japanese popular culture. See Iwabuchi Koichi, “Introduction: Cultural Globalisation and Asian Media Connections,” in *Feeling Asian Modernities*, ed. Koichi Iwabuchi (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 1-22, Iwabuchi Koichi, “Becoming culturally proximate: Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan,” in *Recentring Globalisation: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 121-157, Chua Beng Huat, “Conceptualising an East Asian Popular Culture,” in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5, no. 2 (2004): 200-221, and Wendy Wong Siuyi, “Globalising Manga: From Japan to Hong Kong and Beyond,” in *Mechademia One: Emerging Worlds of Anime and Manga* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 23-45.

power of the contemporary Chinese nation. This slippage reveals that signs are open to re-translation from alternative subject-positions of enunciation, and it obliquely points to the ongoing re-translation and re-export of Japanese popular culture in East Asian countries. It thereby undermines the narcissistic self-image of Japan as the best and only producer and exporter of hybrid global culture.

To sum up this discussion, *X*, *Sailor Moon* and *Angel Sanctuary* ‘translate’ Japanese and foreign cultures to produce themselves and Japanese national culture as cultural hybrids. Through their liminality and their foregrounding of the instability and desterrance of signification, the manga texts subvert the reifying and essentialist ideologies of Japanese ‘hybridism’ and of Japan’s superiority as the ‘imperial’ centre for the creation and dissemination of hybrid cultures. Through this subversion, the three texts disrupt the ideologies’ attempts to obscure the complex multidirectional nature of transnational cultural ‘flows’ (Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalisation* 79), and to (re)produce the unequal relations of power between the Japanese nation(-state) and its former colonies in Asia in the 1990s (Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalisation* 73-84).

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha uses the term ‘ambivalence’ in two ways: ‘ambivalence’ refers to the enunciative modality which enables signs to be re-inscribed with different meanings with every ‘translation’; secondly, it refers to the liminal, hybrid meanings signs are inscribed with in the act of ‘translation.’ This chapter has dealt with the question of Japanese national identity in the 1990s through the lens of Bhabha’s ambi-valent concept of ‘ambivalence.’ In the first part of the chapter, I explored how *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* are ‘national allegories’ which, through narration, produce ‘the Japanese nation’ as a sign. I proceeded to decipher the new meanings the three manga texts inscribe onto the sign of ‘the Japanese nation’ as they ‘translate’ it to ensure its survival in the era of globalisation in the 1990s. I then argued that the texts’ ‘translation’ of ‘the Japanese nation’ involves the

'translation' of Japanese culture and other cultures, and I demonstrated that this 'translation' introduces ambivalence into the reified identities and ideologies of the contemporary Japanese nation which constitute the dominant discourse of these heteroglossic narratives. In other words, the three manga texts paradoxically utilise the enunciative modality to express and perpetuate, but also to deconstruct and undermine ideological myths of the Japanese nation and its postcolonial relations of power. 'The Japanese nation,' oft valorised as a culturally (and racially) homogeneous, unified and primordial community by conservative nationalist politicians and scholars, turns out to be ambivalent in both senses of the word.

In "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," Bhabha argues that the 'splitting' of the national Self into a multiplicity of subject-positions of enunciation enables minorities to 'narrate' different hybrid identities and communities for political action, at the ambivalent margins of the nation (*Location of Culture* 149-150). In this chapter, I have focused on how the three manga texts mobilise the emancipatory potential of the enunciative modality to subvert ideological and material conditions revolving around the question of national identity in the 'political unconscious' of 1990s Japan. In the following chapter, I discuss how *Angel Sanctuary*, as a cultural text written by a woman for women, deploys the same liberating potential of the enunciative modality to produce a counter-narrative of the Japanese nation which engages with a different dimension of the 'political unconscious': namely, the patriarchal and capitalist relations of power which gave rise to social inequality in Japan in the 1990s.

Chapter Three

The Postmodern Feminine Utopia: The Critique and Queering of Capitalist Patriarchy in *Angel Sanctuary*

In “Apocalypse, Millennium and Utopia Today,” Krishan Kumar claims that millenarianism and utopianism often complement each other (212). While millenarianism gives one hope for a new future after the end of the present order but does not show what that future is, utopianism shows one visions of the ideal society but downplays the means of achieving it (213). However, postmodern scepticism since the 1990s seems to have made utopianism impossible (Kumar, “Apocalypse” 207). With the collapse of the ‘grand narratives’ of Truth, History, Progress, Reason and Revolution, it has become extremely hard to imagine a utopian future (Kumar, “Apocalypse” 207). Moreover, as I have shown in Chapter One, the cycles of destruction and (re)production which structure the apocalyptic narratives of *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* exemplify the end of the very notion of ‘the end.’ Bereft of both an absolute end and a new beginning, the postmodern (post-)subject seems to be trapped in the Beckettian condition of ‘messianism without a Messiah’ (Derrida, *Spectres of Marx* 28). Rejecting the pessimism of postmodernism while preserving some of its scepticism, Kumar argues for the renewal of the utopian impulse which would impel contemporary societies to change their present conditions (for the better), even if they do not know when they will reach their goals or if they ever will (“Apocalypse” 212). Using these insights from Kumar, in this chapter I contend that *Angel Sanctuary*, as a *shōjo* manga text produced by a female artist for a predominantly young female audience, exhibits such a utopian impulse in opposition to oppressive gender(ed) relations of power which remained entrenched in the ‘political unconscious’ of 1990s Japan.

Like Kumar, apocalyptic manga and anime produced in Japan in the 1990s seek to retain the belief in utopia while negotiating that belief with postmodern scepticism. This

negotiation, whether conscious or not, produces critiques of contemporary Japanese society which generate possibilities for positive social transformation. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (*Evangelion*) (1995-1997) is an example of an apocalyptic anime which performs this role. Christophe Thouny contends that the repetition of destruction in *Evangelion* defers the final apocalypse and thereby creates a postmodern spatio-temporal form he calls the “Waiting-Room” (“Waiting for the Messiah” 112-122). Trapped within the “Waiting-Room,” the social collective strives endlessly to attain the utopian ideal that lies outside its reach (“Waiting for the Messiah” 112-122). For Thouny, the utopian ideal postulated in *Evangelion* is the “dream” of the “death” of the individual self and the return to a mythic organic community (“Waiting for the Messiah” 114-115). Through the postulation of this ideal, the anime indirectly critiques the contemporary conditions of alienation in 1990s Japan, and seeks to motivate social change through collective striving for the ideal.

However, there is a more complex question which remains implicit throughout Kumar’s essay, and which Thouny’s reading of *Evangelion* does not address. The question is: How do we reconcile utopianism’s modern potential for critique, resistance and social transformation with the postmodern awareness of the dangers of reductive totalisation inherent in all utopian visions?²⁹ In this chapter, I argue that the apocalyptic narrative of *Angel Sanctuary* attempts to answer this question by suggesting that in the contemporary world, ‘Utopia’ can only exist *inside* the “Waiting-Room”; *within* the boundaries of postmodernity. The “apocalypse of the virtual” (Baudrillard, *Illusion of the End* 117) opens up a ‘utopia’ where the postmodern subject can regain a degree of individual and collective agency within the constraints of the historical context through enunciation.³⁰ In this limited

²⁹ The Holocaust is a clear example of how dangerous utopian “total solutions” (Kumar, “Apocalypse” 219) can be.

³⁰ This ‘utopia’ should not be confused with the ‘postmodern sublime’ of the infinite possibilities of signification I discussed in Chapter One. The latter, which in theory is boundless and never fully accessible to any human individual or society, is represented in the manga texts as an ‘apocalyptic’ phenomenon with

‘utopia,’ the postmodern subject can resist social ‘programming’ by “the code” and power regimes by iterating signs to subvert their dominant coded meanings and the social order which these meanings support. S/he can also iterate signs to construct subversive social identities for collective political action against domination. As a postmodern apocalyptic narrative, *Angel Sanctuary* draws the reader’s attention to the existence of this ‘utopia.’ How the manga text does so is the main focus of the first part of this chapter. In the second and third parts, I proceed to discuss how *Angel Sanctuary*, as a *shōjo* manga text, actively inhabits this postmodern ‘utopia’ and genders it as feminine for purposes which, whether intended or not, contribute to the political agendas of feminism(s). *Angel Sanctuary* appropriates the emancipatory potential of enunciation to produce a counter-narrative of the Japanese nation in the 1990s which critiques its patriarchal and capitalist relations of social inequality. This counter-narrative also undermines the illusion of national homogeneity and gender equality without re-totalising the nation under the sign of patriarchy or capitalism. *Angel Sanctuary* also mobilises enunciation to create liberating queer identities for Japanese women in the 1990s: these identities elude totalisation and yet are capable of functioning as loci for collective resistance against patriarchal and capitalist oppression. Through these distinctive modes of re-conceptualising and deploying the notion of ‘utopia,’ *Angel Sanctuary* attempts to resolve the contradictions between the modern utopian impulse to social transformation, the postmodern condition of Virtual Reality, and postmodern scepticism towards the reductive totalisation implicit in utopianism. *Angel Sanctuary* thereby renews the modern political potential of utopianism in a postmodern world of “debased millenarianism” (Kumar, “Apocalypse” 212).

As I have mentioned in the introductory segment of this chapter, Thouny claims that *Evangelion* posits the “dream” of a primordial organic community as the utopian ideal which

ambivalent value. In contrast, the texts represent the space of enunciation, which is delimited and accessible to human individuals and society, as a positive ‘utopian’ phenomenon.

lies outside the postmodern “Waiting-Room” (“Waiting for the Messiah” 114-115). In my reading, *Angel Sanctuary* is much less certain of the nature of the utopian ideal, and of the *a priori* existence of any utopian ideal. Instead, it implies that the only form of ‘utopia’ possible in contemporary times is to be found *inside* the postmodern world of Virtual Reality and endless destruction and (re)production. We can see that the ‘final’ round of destruction in *Angel Sanctuary* does not pave the way for the emergence of a utopia in the traditional sense. Unlike the Book of Revelation in which the creation of the New Jerusalem follows the Apocalypse, the restoration of Tokyo/the human world in the manga text presents no such hope of attaining perfection through destruction. The narrative of *Angel Sanctuary* ends on a high note with the literal and symbolic death of “God” and the liberation of all creatures from determination by “God”’s “programme”: in other words, the human individual is freed from extremely powerful semiotic and ideological codes which authorise themselves as Truth. The text, however, reminds the reader that this liberation does not mean that all of humanity’s problems are henceforth solved. The narrative ends with Adam Kadamon, the first and most powerful angel “God” has created, addressing all angels, human beings, demons and devils (and the reader too) after the protagonist Setsuna has defeated “God.” S/he (Adam is a hermaphrodite) tells his/her listeners that there is no true difference between Good and Evil, Heaven and Hell, and any other form of dualism, and that it is time for them to find the “answers” on their own as they struggle with frustration and uncertainty (“*kono yo ni shin no zen’aku ya kyōkaisen wa naku, tengoku mo jigoku mo nai no da to, sore wa anata tachi ga mizukara de kotae o dashi, kore kara mo nayami mayoi nagara mitsukete iku beki mono*”). The manga text provides no “answers” of its own. Moreover, it implies that social control by semiotic and ideological codes has not been completely eradicated despite the literal and symbolic death of “God.” Kurai, one of Setsuna’s demon allies, reminds the latter that once he returns to the human world, he and his sister Sara will have to spend their entire lives

escaping from persecution by their parents and the “moral majority” (“*seken*”) because their incestuous relationship is coded as ‘taboo.’ Although the future does not look very bright for the main characters and for humanity in general, the text implies that this post-Providential world is ‘Utopia’ (albeit an imperfect one). Despite his/her opposition to “God”’s “programme,” Adam’s message for the new world is referred to in the main written text as a “programme” (“*puroguramu*”) and, even more strangely, the *furigana* script indicates that the word “programme” should be pronounced as “prayer” (“*inori*”) instead. The conflation of “programme” and “prayer” implies that the new world Adam addresses is not a utopia of the real and of absolute liberty. The word “programme” implies that “programmes” or codes still exist in the new world and are in fact necessary as paradigms which enable thought. The word “prayer,” on the other hand, connotes blessing: it implies that “programmes” can benefit the social collective when they are iterated and rewritten to demystify and resist “programmes” which support social structures of domination and oppression. *Angel Sanctuary* implies that there is ultimately no transcendent utopian ideal (whether of freedom, the real or the organic community) which lies outside the eternal striving of the social collective. It suggests that ‘Utopia’ actually lies *within* the eternal striving of the social collective to find its own “answers” through the endless process of repeating and re-signifying signs to revise dominant codes, and to create alternative codes which have the potential for critique, subversion and social transformation.

Angel Sanctuary actively inhabits this postmodern ‘utopia’ predicated on virtuality and the enunciative modality to produce a counter-narrative of the contemporary Japanese nation which contests the popular perception of the 1990s as “the era of women.” “The era of women” was a catchphrase coined in the early 1990s in response to the perceived increase in Japanese women’s freedom, affluence, independence and power, which supposedly put Japanese women on par with their male counterparts (Tipton, *Modern Japan* 218). Writing in

the 1990s, Patricia Morley noted that women were entering male-dominated professions and “becom[ing] police officers, taxi drivers, jockeys, realtors (especially in residential real estate), veterinarians, construction workers, commercial pilots, members of the Self-Defence Forces, and cabinet ministers” (*Mountain is Moving* 84). The rising age of marriage for women was seen as an indication that women had new attitudes towards marriage and the sexual division of labour – they sought romantic love and they no longer wanted to be confined to the home – and were therefore postponing marriage to find ideal husbands who shared their new attitudes (Tipton, *Modern Japan* 230). Young Japanese women in the 1990s were also perceived as “sexually liberated” (Tipton, *Modern Japan* 220). The mass media stirred up controversy over “yellow cabs,” a slang term for “wealthy and leisured young Japanese women who travel[led] to exotic locales to pursue [. . .] sexual liaisons” with foreign men (Kelskey, “Flirting with the Foreign” 173). Public fears were also raised over Japanese schoolgirls practising *enjo kōsai* (“compensated dating”), an ambiguous form of teenage prostitution where the girls were paid with money, allowances, or presents, for dating and possibly having sex with adult men (Leheny, *Think Global* 16). *Angel Sanctuary*, however, does not present an idealised or sensationalised image of Japanese female empowerment and gender equality in the 1990s. Instead, it uses the emancipatory capacity of enunciation in the postmodern ‘utopia’ to reveal and critique the oppressive symbiotic alliance between the power regime(s) of patriarchy, the patriarchal code, and the capitalist mode of production which continued to lurk beneath utopian visions of the 1990s as “the era of women.” The text appropriates the figure of “God” from the Bible and Milton’s *Paradise Lost* – canonical patriarchal texts which seek to “justify the ways of God to men” (Milton, *Paradise Lost* 18) – to recast “God” as a symbol of patriarchy, and to *demythify and indict* ‘his ways’ to the Japanese female reader. Although “God” in *Angel Sanctuary* is a supercomputer devoid of biological sex, the text follows the Christian convention of

gendering “God” as masculine and portraying ‘him’ as the patriarchal ruler of all living creatures. Before the revelation of the true machinic form of “God” in the final chapters of the text, “God” is depicted as a middle-aged bearded man seated on a throne who refers to himself as “this father” (“*kono chichi*”). However, the text breaks from tradition when it represents “God” as a ‘bad father’ who is guilty of favouritism. Referring to and reinventing the Biblical parable of Cain and Abel, the text represents “God”’s love for the angel Rosiel and his hatred of Rosiel’s twin sister, Alexiel, as a senseless injustice. Through re-inscribing “God” as a biased patriarch who loves only some of ‘his’ children, the text exposes and indicts patriarchy as a similarly biased system which created and maintained hierarchies of privilege and subordination between individuals and social groups in Japan in the 1990s.

Clearly, the privileging of men over women is one of the hierarchies created and maintained by “God” in the narrative universe of *Angel Sanctuary*, and by patriarchy in ‘real’-life Japan in the 1990s. The manga text depicts Heaven as a society which claims to be sex-blind and meritocratic while in reality, it is marked by sexist discrimination against women. Female angels who achieve success in school and the workplace are persecuted by their male counterparts. For example, the male peers of a young female angel named Kirie disparage her good performance in military school by insinuating that she managed to become an “ST understudy” before they have because she used her feminine beauty to seduce their teachers. Lila, another intelligent female angel who works as a scientist, is battered and raped by her male colleagues who are jealous of her speedy promotion to the rank of Chief in their laboratory. After the rape, Lila takes on a false identity as a male angel called “Sevothtarte,” and she rises up the ranks of angel society to become a de facto dictator. However, she is ultimately forced back into a degraded position when she is raped again and her female body is appropriated by the male angel Sandalphon as a vessel for the birth of his child. Kirie and Lila’s stories echo Kate Millett’s radical feminist definition of patriarchy as a

system of unequal social relations of power, or 'power regime,' characterised by male domination over women (*Sexual Politics* 23-26). Clearly, the appearance of such stories of sexist oppression in a manga text which was produced by a woman in the celebrated "era of women" puts into question the exaggerated claims of Japanese female empowerment and gender equality in the 1990s.

Furthermore, Kirie and Lila's stories allegorically reveal that the material basis of male domination in 1990s Japan lay in men's continued control over women's sexual, reproductive and domestic labour.³¹ Kirie and Lila are both expelled by their male counterparts from the male-dominated fields of scientific research and the military, and are crudely pushed back into the subordinated (domestic) roles of sexual and reproductive labour. Kirie is slandered as a 'loose woman' who has to provide sexual services to compensate for her assumed lack of real talent, while Lila is sexually assaulted. Their respective forms of 'punishment' at the hands of men brutally reduce the two women to their sexualised and reproductive female bodies, and reaffirm male control over these bodies as 'resources' which are appropriated to serve the purposes of men. When viewed at this level of abstraction, the oppression of Kirie and Lila in the fantasy world of Heaven defamiliarises and demystifies the hidden structure and material basis of patriarchal domination which operated beneath the veneer of egalitarianism in Japan in the 1990s. Like the two female angel characters, young Japanese women in the 1990s could go to school and work in the public sphere with boys and men in the name of gender equality, while being subjected to institutionalised and informal forms of discrimination. Educational institutions, the state, corporations and the media continued to promote the ideological myth that Japanese women's primary and natural

³¹ My interpretation of the manga text is based partially on Heidi Hartmann's theorisation of patriarchy in "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union." Building on Millett's classic definition of patriarchy, Hartmann argues that the "material basis" of male domination lies in men's control over women's labour both inside and outside the family (15-16).

responsibility was to be *ryōsai kenbo* (“good wives, wise mothers”) in the domestic sphere. Under the guise of this myth of ideal femininity, women were systematically excluded from the permanent workforce, and were compelled to become *senkyō shufu* (“professional housewives”) whose sexual, reproductive and domestic labour, like that of Kirie and Lila, was controlled and consumed by men. Despite the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1986, companies continued to pressurise new female employees into opting for the ‘clerical’ (*ippan shoku*) rather than the ‘managerial’ career track (*sōgō shoku*), thereby cutting off the employees’ opportunities for career development from the beginning (Morley, *Mountain is Moving* 78). Many companies and banks also used indirect (and illegal) measures to coerce their female employees to retire upon marriage (Morley, *Mountain is Moving* 72-73). “Dull work, no prospect of promotion, and heavy social pressure [. . .] combined to make many Japanese women take the marriage option,” and to leave the workforce to become full-time housewives in the 1990s (Morley, *Mountain is Moving* 73). As housewives who were economically dependent on their husbands, women had to provide not only offspring but also physical and psychological comfort (often by providing sex) (McLelland, “Love between ‘Beautiful Boys’” 16) to their husbands (Morley, *Mountain is Moving* 45). Wage-earning husbands, on the other hand, owned and enjoyed their wives’ sexual, reproductive and domestic labour. They were not expected to help out with household chores: as Morley rather sarcastically observes, “[c]leaning, cooking, and operating laundry machines seem[ed] to be quite beyond the ability of the average Japanese man” (*Mountain is Moving* 46). Through representing Heaven as a hierarchical society where female angels are forced out of the public sphere, and where male angels control and benefit from the sexual and reproductive labour of female angels, *Angel Sanctuary* offers an oblique insight into the hidden systemic domination of women by men in Japan, which persisted despite women’s apparent professional and sexual liberation in the so-called “era of women.”

However, the demystification of patriarchy in *Angel Sanctuary* does not stop at the revelation that unequal relations of power between the sexes continued to exist in Japan in the 1990s, and were predicated on men's ownership of women's sexual, reproductive and domestic labour. Echoing the theoretical arguments of poststructuralist feminism in fantasy narrative form, the manga text suggests that patriarchy is a hierarchical system of gender which is not reducible to sexism. The text suggests that patriarchy is actually a semiotic and ideological code – Derrida's term for this conception of patriarchy is "logocentrism" (Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism" 417) – which does not only generate all phenomena in human experience as simulacra, but which also organises these simulacra into hierarchical binary oppositions where the subjugated term is always gendered as feminine. I argued in Chapter One that *Angel Sanctuary* suggests that power regimes play an important role in the exercise of social control as they perpetuate their allied codes through disciplinary mechanisms such as panopticism. I would like to supplement that argument here.

Angel Sanctuary implies that these power regimes (and their allied codes) are actually produced by conceptual hierarchies which are generated by the logocentric patriarchal code, and which are all metonymically linked to the binary opposition of masculine/feminine. Many different kinds of gendered power regimes thus operate within the larger framework of logocentric patriarchy. In the manga text, the privileging of men over women is only one of several kinds of power relationships created by the patriarchal "God." The manga text dissociates patriarchy from biological sex and shifts the emphasis to gendered relations of power by repeating the trope of the biased patriarch, who favours some of his children over others, across the different species in the universe created by "God." Katō Yue, one of Setsuna's (human) schoolmates, is abused by his father because he is the illegitimate offspring of his mother and her former boyfriend. Yue's sister, Sae, on the other hand, is lovingly indulged by their father because she is his legitimate child. Likewise, in the kingdom

of the demons, the Crown Prince Arakune is unwittingly sacrificed to assassins as a decoy by his father, the King, in order to protect Arakune's sister, Kurai, who has been secretly chosen as the true heir(ess) because of her greater spiritual purity. Sae and Kurai are biologically 'female' yet they are chosen by their fathers to occupy positions of privilege vis-à-vis their male siblings. These two instances of paternal partiality in the manga text imply that patriarchy is not reducible to the hierarchy of male/female: it is a code which creates other hierarchical and gendered binary oppositions (such as legitimate/illegitimate and pure/impure) which permit women (such as Sae and Kurai) to enjoy social power if they are associated with the privileged masculine term in the binary opposition. In this way, the text moves beyond the radical feminist conception of patriarchy as male domination over women to take into account social relations of power based on gender and semiotics, and not simply on sex and male ownership of women's labour. Moreover, the text condemns this patriarchal order of hierarchical binary oppositions for its cruelty and injustice through revealing the suffering it causes in the lives of those who occupy the feminised position of subjugation: Yue's ill-treatment at the hands of his father drives him to drugs and delinquency, whereas Arakune's deep sense of betrayal impels him to seek revenge on Kurai even though he actually loves her.

As I have shown in the preceding paragraphs, *Angel Sanctuary* reveals patriarchy to be a system which creates and maintains hierarchies of power between the male and the female sexes (as a power regime predicated on men's control over women's labour), and between the masculine and the feminine genders (as a semiotic and ideological code). This demystification of patriarchy leads to further insights into the oppressive symbiotic relationship between patriarchy and capitalism in Japan in the 1990s. Like patriarchy, capitalism creates and maintains hierarchies, but its hierarchies are those of class, where the determining principle of stratification is ownership of the means of economic production, or

‘productive labour.’ Through depicting “God”’s Heaven as a rigidly hierarchical society, *Angel Sanctuary* allegorically points to the ‘feminisation’ of the labouring classes, and to the ‘classification’ of women as subjugated (re)productive labour in Japan in the 1990s. As I have mentioned earlier, Heaven in the manga text appears to be an egalitarian society built on the principle of meritocracy and the possibility of upward social mobility through education and hard work, but in reality it is a patriarchal social order which discriminates against women and the feminine. Sexual and gender discrimination, however, are only two forms of social hierarchy in Heaven. Beneath the bourgeois ideological illusions of meritocracy and social mobility, angel society is a class hierarchy marked by the structural socio-economic inequality characteristic of capitalist societies. Angel society is divided into seven military ranks, and although every angel is supposed to be allocated his/her rank based on his/her performance in military school, there are several angels who are born into the highest ranks, and many who are born into the lowest. The lowest rank is the “labour rank” (“*rōdō kaikyū*”) which consists of a particular breed of angels called “Grigori” (“*gurigōru*”). Grigori are lower-order organisms which have no physical bodies, and which possess only a simple form of consciousness and very weak “astral power” (“*asutoraru ha*”). Their role in angel society is to provide ‘manual labour’ to higher-ranking angels who ‘own’ their labour: they carry out the spells cast by the latter, and once they exhaust their meagre “astral power” in completing their tasks, they die instantaneously. Because Grigori are invisible, the higher-ranking angels do not witness their deaths and hence nonchalantly sacrifice Grigori lives to perform the most trivial spells for their own amusement. From this brief description, we can see striking similarities between the Grigori and the manual labourers who subsist in the lowest levels of the working classes in (post)modern capitalist societies. The menial nature of the Grigori’s labour, their seeming lack of intelligence and education, and their invisibility and disposability compel the reader to see the Grigori as an allegorical symbol of the underclass

of manual labourers whose physical well-being is exploited to support the leisured lifestyles of the privileged classes who, on their part, remain indifferent to the labourers' conditions of existence. Moreover, the text allegorically reveals the patriarchal and capitalistic gendering of this underclass as feminine in 1990s Japan as the national economy became increasingly 'postmodernised.' I discuss this issue in greater detail below.

The text highlights the plight of workers who engaged in low-skill and low-wage manual labour in Japan in the 1990s by gendering the Grigori as a 'feminine' workforce. Although all Grigori are born without physical bodies and therefore possess no 'natural' biological sex, they are invariably given female-sexed bodies when the government in Heaven assigns them to work as servants in the homes and offices of higher-ranking angels. These Grigori who are given physical bodies are referred to collectively as "Sisters" ("*shisutaa*"), and they perform menial, and stereotypically feminine, tasks such as household chores, the nursing of child angels, and the forced provision of illicit sexual services. Like their non-corporeal Grigori counterparts, Sisters are not given distinctive individual identities; their intelligence remains suppressed so that they discharge their duties with perfect obedience; and they are treated as interchangeable and easily replaceable. In one scene, the dictator Sevothtarte (the male alias Lila assumes after her first rape) asks two Sisters who nurse the angel Metatron to describe the prophetic dream Metatron has had. Upon attaining the desired information, 'he' decapitates the Sisters and walks away, coolly calling for the "replenishment" of new nurses for Metatron ("*metatoron-sama no sewa gakari o atarashiku hojū se yo*").

By gendering the Grigori as exploited 'feminine' manual labour, the manga text alludes to the increasing 'feminisation' of paid work in the contemporary world of late multinational capitalism and, more specifically, in Japan in the 1990s. Drawing on Richard Gordon's concept of the 'homework economy,' Donna Haraway argues that in recent years,

work performed by both men and women is taking on feminine characteristics of disempowerment formerly ascribed to jobs done only by women (“A Cyborg Manifesto” 580). “To be feminised,” writes Haraway, “means to be made extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, exploited as a reserve labour force; seen less as workers than as servers; subjected to time arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of a limited work day; leading an existence that always borders on being obscene, out of place, and reducible to sex” (“A Cyborg Manifesto” 580). Saskia Sassen too states that the new global economy has brought about increasing polarisation between high- and low-wage jobs: almost half the jobs in the producer service industry are lower-income jobs, and high-income gentrification has spurred demand for a large supply of low-skill and low-wage jobs in the retail, food and beverage, entertainment, tourism and domestic service industries (*Global City* 9). As a result of increasing transnational ‘flows’ of people and capital in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, such ‘feminised’ manual labour jobs in Japan were taken up mainly by illegal foreign immigrants who were extremely disempowered. The illegal status of these foreign workers made their employment very insecure, and the insecure nature of their employment kept their wages very low (Aoki, *Japan’s Underclass* 125-126). These workers were often not paid for overtime work or given any employment benefits (Aoki, *Japan’s Underclass* 125); they did not have the right of collective bargaining (Aoki, *Japan’s Underclass* 117) and they were treated as flexible labour “which [companies] could dismiss at their own discretion” (Aoki, *Japan’s Underclass* 120).

Given the striking similarities between the fictional Grigori and the ‘real’ underclass of manual labourers in capitalist societies, we can certainly interpret the gendering of the Grigori as exploited ‘feminine’ manual labour in *Angel Sanctuary* as an allegorical representation of the ‘feminisation’ of manual labourers in Japan in the 1990s. We can also read the gendering of the Grigori as an allusion to the fact that women made up a large

percentage of this underclass of ‘feminised’ workers in 1990s Japan. The ‘feminisation’ of paid work, according to Haraway, refers both to the increasing disempowerment of workers, and to the performance of disempowering work by a predominantly female workforce (“A Cyborg Manifesto” 580). In 1990s Japan, a large number of female foreign immigrants (from East and Southeast Asia) worked as waitresses, hostesses, cleaners and prostitutes (Komai, *Foreign Migrants* 42). Moreover, through gendering the Grigori as ‘feminine’ manual labour, the manga text raises the possibility of categorising both foreign and Japanese women in Japan in the 1990s as an underclass of subjugated (re)productive labour which was owned and appropriated by both men and capital.

Besides the Grigori, mothers occupy a particularly ‘feminised’ and subjugated position in angel society. *Angel Sanctuary*’s representation of motherhood as a form of abject disempowerment suggests that even middle class Japanese housewives in the 1990s were part of the underclass of exploited female manual labour, even though their labour was situated mainly in the domestic sphere. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how Japanese women in the 1990s were compelled to abandon their careers after marriage to become “good wives, wise mothers” whose sexual, reproductive and domestic labour was controlled and appropriated by their husbands, and I argued that the manga text demystifies this hidden and naturalised form of patriarchal oppression. Now I would like to argue that *Angel Sanctuary* reveals this patriarchal oppression to be a form of class oppression as well. The text obliquely demystifies this “partnership” of patriarchy and capitalism (Hartmann, “Unhappy Marriage” 3) in the 1990s through its symbolic representation of motherhood as a form of severe disempowerment. In the text, motherhood is closely associated with the motif of the factory. In the final chapters of the narrative, the main characters discover that all angels are actually ‘born’ in a secret laboratory, where Adam’s body has been imprisoned by “God” and forced to function as an energy source for the growth of angel embryos; in other words, as a

maternal body. Stunned by the sight of rows of cylinders filled with grotesque embryos, one of the characters exclaims that the laboratory resembles a “mass production factory” (“*puroiraa kōjō*”). This allusion to a “mass production factory” echoes an earlier observation made by the protagonist Setsuna about the Japanese education system. Setsuna describes schools as “highly controlled mass production factories” (“*kontorōru sareta puroiraa kōjō*”), implying that schools in Japan produce students who, like mass-produced robots devoid of individuality and agency, are programmed to carry out their assigned tasks with perfect efficiency and obedience in the industrial factories and the company office ‘factories’ of corporate Japan.³² The metaphor of the factory becomes more literal in Heaven as angels are manufactured, in the aforementioned laboratory to work as “toy soldiers” (“*tōi sorujaa*”) who carry out “God”’s “programme” without question. Furthermore, this manufacturing of angels is carried out by “God” at the expense of Adam’s body and against the latter’s will. Through these repeated allusions to the “mass production factory” and its association with the production of a workforce, and the overdetermining of these allusions by the linking of Adam’s childbearing with the masculine violence of “God,” the text allegorically implies that motherhood in 1990s Japan was essentially the forceful appropriation of women’s reproductive labour not only by men in the domestic sphere, but by capital in the realm of economic production as well. Echoing Eli Zaretsky and Mariarosa Dalla Costa’s Marxist feminist conceptions of women’s relation to capital (Hartmann, “Unhappy Marriage” 5-8), the text implies that women’s reproduction in the Japanese household was actually a form of production as well, because it served the interests of capital in two main ways: it created new generations of workers (through childbearing and childhood socialisation) who would keep

³² Sugimoto Yoshio provides ample evidence of the utilisation of schools in Japan as training grounds for the future workforce. Writing in 2003, he points out that education culture in Japan has been becoming increasingly similar to corporate culture, as schools teach conformity and adopt an authoritarian approach in order to prepare schoolchildren for the pressures of conformity in the adult work environment and community (*Introduction to Japanese Society* 131-139).

the Japanese economy running, and it was labour that Japanese corporations did not have to pay for.

The text also obliquely points to the other ways in which Japanese women's domestic labour (which was not limited to childbearing and childrearing) enabled the production of the Japanese workforce in the 1990s. Like Adam who 'feeds' new generations of angels with 'energy' from his/her body in order to sustain the operations of everyday life in Heaven, the typical Japanese housewife expended great amounts of her physical energy in taking care of the household, children, elderly relatives and, of course, her husband. She thereby "free[d] her husband to work the long hours demanded by employers" (Morley, *Mountain is Moving* 44-45) and thus enabled the continued survival of the Japanese economy. In other words, both patriarchy and capitalism in Japan in the 1990s (and throughout the postwar years in general) were supported by the exploited physical labour of Japanese housewives who, together with the female foreign immigrants who came to Japan to work in the service industries, constituted an underclass of 'feminised' and female manual labour subjected to the demands of men and capital.

To sum up the discussion thus far, I have shown that *Angel Sanctuary* reveals complex intersections between the power regime(s) of patriarchy, the patriarchal code, and (late multinational) capitalism in Japan in the 1990s. Through re-inscribing "God" as a symbol of patriarchy, the manga text shows its contemporary Japanese female readers how these three systems functioned symbiotically in the 1990s to produce semiotic and social dualisms and hierarchies such as man/woman, masculine/feminine, bourgeoisie/proletariat and waged work/home work. The text thereby undermines both the myth that Japan is a

homogeneously middle class nation,³³ and the illusion that the 1990s in Japan was “the era of women” and of gender equality. Moreover, it does so without re-totalising the stratified Japanese nation within the framework of an analysis of social power that is reducible to either patriarchy or capitalism. The text’s mode of critique avoids totalisation as well, as it does not confine itself to a single feminist theoretical position on patriarchy, and instead appears to loosely combine different and conflicting insights from the radical, poststructuralist, Marxist and ‘dual systems theory’ strands of feminism. However, in contrast to the manga text’s interest in semiotic and social dualisms and hierarchies, Donna Haraway (clearly influenced by Baudrillard) argues in her influential 1985 essay, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” that dualisms and hierarchies are being ‘imploded’ to form a new postmodern “informatics of domination,” where social control is exercised through “coding” (576-585). As a cultural text produced in the 1990s when Japan was moving towards greater ‘postmodernisation,’ *Angel Sanctuary* implies that some dualisms and hierarchies were not ‘imploded’ despite ‘postmodernisation,’ and that they in fact remained relatively entrenched in people’s lives in 1990s Japan (and perhaps remain entrenched today). As I have demonstrated in Chapter One and in the preceding discussion in this chapter, *Angel Sanctuary* suggests that “the code” works together with power regimes to exercise social control in ways that benefit some groups in society at the expense of others. Nonetheless, the manga text does recognise that in the postmodern ‘utopia’ where everything is virtualised and therefore open to subversive re-signification – nothing is sacred, not even “God” – oppressive dualisms and hierarchies can be destabilised, but not fully transcended, through an ‘implosive’ practice of enunciation. The text genders the postmodern ‘utopia’ which appears at the end of the narrative (but which is actually

³³ It is often said that postwar Japanese society is homogeneously ‘middle class’. More than seventy-five percent of Japanese people identified themselves as ‘middle class’ in the National Survey conducted in 1996 (McCargo, *Contemporary Japan* 90).

implicit throughout the narrative) as a feminine utopia where enunciation enables the text to transgress and to blur boundaries in order to create liberating queer identities for its Japanese female readers in the 1990s. This strategic utilisation of enunciation for the political purposes of identity construction is the focal point of the last section of this chapter.

The postmodern ‘utopia’ opened up in *Angel Sanctuary* by the death of “God” and the disappearance of the notion of Truth is represented in the text as a maternal order which is opposed to “God”’s patriarchal order. Adam, the ‘mother’ of all angels and of all human beings, demons and devils as well (for these different species are all created by “God” through the manipulation of Adam’s DNA), is the emblem of this new world. S/he tells his/her “incomplete [imperfect] children” (“*fukanzen na kodomo tachi*”) that there are no true “boundaries” (“*kyōkaisen*”) in any form of dualism or hierarchy. S/he thus paves the way for the subversion of all boundaries to produce ‘partial’ identities which enact a ‘partial,’ but nonetheless politically progressive, challenge to hegemonic dualisms and hierarchies. (I will discuss this ‘partiality’ in greater detail later in this section.) Although earlier in this chapter I have argued that the manga text represents motherhood as the forceful appropriation of women’s labour by men and capital, the maternal figure of Adam hints at the possibility of redefining motherhood and, more generally, femininity and masculinity. Adam is a queer mother: s/he is a hermaphrodite whose intersexed body transgresses the boundaries between the male and the female, and the masculine and the feminine. However, Adam’s queerness is limited, as s/he symbolises the ideal unity of the sexes and genders in an original state of wholeness, and hence s/he ultimately does not interrogate the conceptual boundaries between the male and the female, and the masculine and the feminine. Nevertheless, the text does problematise these boundaries through other characters who actively ‘queer’ the binaries of sex and gender through enunciation to produce the subversive figure of the androgyne. I use the term “subversive” quite deliberately here to evoke its multiple valences of boundary-

crossing, boundary-blurring and political resistance. Like the hybrid ‘Japanese’ culture produced out of negotiation and translation which I discussed in Chapter Two, the queer identity of the androgyne defies both polarisation and synthesis. Its ‘implosive’ ambivalence – its “not quite/not white” quality (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” 480) –destabilises the dominant dualisms of sex and gender, and undermines the unequal social relations of power these dualisms produce, perpetuate and are perpetuated by. I now proceed to explore the queer identity of the androgyne and its political implications through a reading of the character Belial, who is one of the seven feudal lords of Hell (“*nana kunshu*”) in the narrative universe of *Angel Sanctuary*.

Like the hermaphrodite Adam, Belial possesses a transgressive body which refuses to stay within the “God”-decreed boundaries of either the male or the female sex. Belial’s body is a baffling mixture of some (but not all) male and female sexual characteristics. S/he (ostensibly) has a vagina but does not possess the capacity for biological reproduction. S/he does not have a penis, but s/he has a man’s flat chest and a woman’s narrow shoulders and girth. Kurai, the demon princess Belial woos on behalf of Lucifer, the King of Hell, initially assumes that Belial is “obviously” a man because the latter has a deep voice and is tall in stature (“*datte koe datte se no takasa datte dō kangaete mo otoko...!*”). However, upon hearing that Belial is not a man, she immediately assumes that Belial is therefore a woman, and she begins to identify ‘female’ characteristics in Belial’s physique. Kurai’s comic confusion over Belial’s sexual identity, which is made even more comically ironic by the fact that Kurai herself dresses and acts like a boy, shows that sex is not a natural, *a priori* foundation for the subsequent inscription of gender, but is, like gender, performatively constructed through the “stylised repetition of acts” which signify maleness and femaleness, and masculinity and femininity (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 140). Belial can ‘be’ both male and female, and masculine and feminine; depending on the corporeal signs of the male and

female sex/gender s/he articulates on the surface of his/her body. Moreover, Belial's transgressive enunciation of the signs of both maleness and femaleness, and of masculinity and femininity, not only denaturalises sex and gender, but also implies that women can redress their disempowerment in patriarchy through strategically appropriating these signs to perform identities which combine masculine and feminine qualities.³⁴

As an androgyne who, like Adam, possesses both masculine and feminine qualities, Belial joins a long tradition of androgynous *shōjo* culture figures who function as sites of identification for the Japanese female reader/viewer. These figures appeal to Japanese girls and young women who desire to possess positive masculine attributes such as assertiveness and agency, while simultaneously recuperating feminine attributes often regarded as inferior to virile masculinity, such as gentleness and empathy (McLelland, *Male Homosexuality* 80). These androgynous figures in *shōjo* culture range from the female *otokoyaku* who plays male roles in the Takarazuka musical revue, to cross-dressing but heterosexual female characters such as Oscar in Ikeda Riyoko's manga *The Rose of Versailles* (1972-1973, *Berusaikyū no bara*), to *bishōnen* ("beautiful boy") characters in homoerotic Boys' Love manga. Despite the differences, Belial and these various androgynous figures seem to embody what Mark McLelland, writing in the context of Boys' Love manga, calls an "intersexual" ideal: the "unit[y] [of] the best features of both sexes" ("Love between 'Beautiful Boys'" 13).

However, on closer inspection, it appears that Belial's androgyny is more complex than the mere combination of male and female, and masculine and feminine characteristics. Like Dick Hebdige's punks who engage in "semiotic guerrilla warfare" through "signifying practice[s]" of "style" (*Subculture* 117-127), Belial appropriates and re-inscribes the signs of fashion to 'implode' and blur the very boundaries which enable 'masculinity' and 'femininity'

³⁴ Admittedly, it is much harder to perform identities which combine male and female sexual characteristics in the 'real' world outside the fantasy space of the manga text. A woman cannot simply grow a penis.

to remain conceptually distinct. The manga text often depicts Belial wearing black frockcoats, waistcoats, pants and collared shirts with ruffles or ribbons tied around the collar. In a chapter title page in volume three, s/he wears black lace ruffles knotted at the collar, matching ruffles attached to the cuffs of his/her shirt and black high-heeled boots. At first glance, it seems easy to identify the various clothing items and design elements as masculine or feminine (in the contemporary context, black frockcoats, waistcoats, pants and collared shirts are masculine, whereas high-heeled shoes, lace, ribbons and ruffles are feminine), and to think of the entire ensemble as an androgynous pastiche of these masculine and feminine elements. However, bearing in mind that Belial is one of the aristocratic lords of Hell, we can see that the combination of these masculine and feminine elements in his/her outfits is evocative of the clothing worn by Western European aristocratic men as signs of normative masculinity in the centuries before the rise of the middle classes in the nineteenth century. The lace ruffles Belial wears around his/her collar in the chapter title page allude to the lace cravats worn by noblemen in the Restoration period (1660-1680), and the ruffles attached to the cuffs of his/her shirt imitate the aristocratic practice, which persisted from the Restoration to the Neoclassical period (1775-1789), of trimming men's shirtsleeves with lace, fabric and even ribbons. Belial's high-heeled boots too are reminiscent of the high-heeled shoes Louis XIV wears in his famous 1700 portrait by Hyacinthe Rigaud. These allusions to the aristocratic menswear of the past put into question the feminine connotations that the contemporary Japanese reader in the 1990s (and today) would have ascribed to Belial's lace ruffles, ribbons and high-heeled shoes. The signification of these clothing items thus becomes highly ambivalent, occupying an indistinct grey area where the feminine shades into the masculine and vice versa. In these instances, the masculine signs of historical aristocratic men's fashion intersect with their more current association with femininity: a process that re-inscribes these signs as 'hybrids' which are neither quite feminine nor quite masculine. Through this

enunciative or “signifying practice” of “style” (Hebdige, *Subculture* 117), Belial recasts ‘androgyny’ as ambivalence, ‘imploding’ the very boundaries that enable ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ to exist as separate conceptual entities.

As I have demonstrated above, Belial performs a kind of androgyny which radically destabilises the distinctions between the masculine and the feminine. This ‘implosion’ of the binary of masculine/feminine has several political implications. Firstly, it frustrates the privileging of the masculine over the feminine by the logocentric patriarchal code, and thereby challenges all power regimes which are allied to this privileging of the masculine over the feminine. This ‘implosion’ also thwarts the simple inversion of the binary and the valorisation of the feminine over the masculine in well-intentioned but misguided attempts to redress the power imbalances of patriarchy. As a double-edged sword which undermines both patriarchy and essentialist feminist identity politics, the ambivalent androgyny that Belial embodies seems to fit what feminist Linda Alcoff sees as Derrida’s ideal of “woman”: “the rupture in the functional discourse of [. . .] logocentrism” (“Cultural Feminism” 417). Alcoff argues that for Derrida, the only way to break out of the logocentric patriarchal code is “to assert total difference, to be that which cannot be pinned down or subjugated within a dichotomous hierarchy” (“Cultural Feminism” 417). Belial’s ambivalent androgyny seems to enact just such a “woman[ly]” disruption of semiotic and social hierarchies predicated on the binary of masculine/feminine.

Secondly, Belial’s androgyny constitutes an identity which, though ambivalent, is nevertheless a relatively coherent, stable and agentive form of subjectivity. Belial’s personality remains consistent throughout the narrative: s/he remains devoted to Lucifer from the day s/he first encounters him in Heaven before the latter’s rebellion against “God,” to the moment of “God”’s death at the end of the narrative. S/he is also shown to be clearly capable of acting as a subject on his/her own will: the text in fact represents him/her as an expert in

manipulating others to achieve his/her own aims. Given the relative unity and stability of identity, and constructive agency, that Belial exhibits, it is evident that the identity of the androgyne which s/he embodies partially contradicts Derrida's argument that the category of "woman" can only challenge logocentrism by being completely indefinable, fragmented and purely deconstructive (Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism" 417). While Alcoff recognises the positive potential that poststructuralist ideas like Derrida's have for feminism, she contends that deconstruction cannot be the only form of the feminist political struggle (418-419). In Alcoff's view, there is still a need for a positively defined identity of "woman" which recognises that it is an artificial construct, yet is capable of functioning as an agentic "position" for collective political action against patriarchal (and capitalist) oppression (432). In similar ways, Judith Butler and Donna Haraway call for the construction of queer (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 223-242) and cyborgian identities (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 571-572) which transgress and blur the boundaries of sex, gender, sexuality and culture, while providing forms of subjectivity which enable political alliances to be formed across these boundaries. The subversive figure of the androgyne which Belial represents is one such queer or cyborgian identity. Its ambivalence between masculinity and femininity eludes the totalisation of the dichotomising and hierarchising patriarchal code, while it retains a degree of coherence, stability and agency which give it the potential to serve as a collective identity for political resistance against patriarchal and capitalist domination.

Furthermore, while the subversive figure of the androgyne undermines the 'partiality' of patriarchy which privileges some groups and subordinates others, it remains a 'partial' identity which does not fall back into the trap of totalising the collective in the desire for political resistance. As I have mentioned earlier, at the end of *Angel Sanctuary*, Adam addresses all living creatures in the universe as his/her "incomplete [imperfect] children" ("*fukanzen na kodomo tachi*"). This motif of incompleteness echoes Homi Bhabha's notion

that identity is always inevitably 'partial.' Writing in the context of (post)colonial mimicry, Bhabha states that the Self is not a unified, unchanging 'essence' that constitutes a "full presence" which lies outside the play of language ("Of Mimicry and Man" 477-478). Identity, in Bhabha's view, is a "metonymy of presence" ("Of Mimicry and Man" 478); a sliding chain of signifiers which extends indefinitely without reaching a final anchoring signified ("full presence"); therefore identity is always partial and susceptible to re-inscription through the supplementation of the metonymic chain ("Of Mimicry and Man" 479). The ambivalent figure of the androgyne that Belial embodies is one such "incomplete" (*fukanzen*) identity. The identity of the androgyne, performatively constructed out of the negotiation and re-signification of the signs of masculinity and femininity, can be endlessly contested and redefined through the supplementation of the signs which constitute its "metonymy of presence." Like the queer identities Butler champions in the Conclusion of *Bodies That Matter*, the identity of the androgyne is open to constant reconceptualisation in response to the concerns of minority groups who wish to join the political alliance against various forms of domination (227-230). Therefore, while the figure of the androgyne disrupts the patriarchal code, and potentially functions as a collective identity for political action against patriarchal and capitalist power, it avoids reverting to totalising and essentialist notions of a transcendent Self which "unites the best features of both sexes" (McLelland, "Love between 'Beautiful Boys'" 13). It also avoids the claiming of such a Self as the universal 'essence' which unites all minorities against the hegemony of patriarchy and capitalism. Quite a few scholars of postwar Japanese popular culture have argued that the figure of the androgyne in *shōjo* culture is 'subversive' because it combines masculine and feminine characteristics.³⁵ The

³⁵ See Anne Allison's discussion of *Sailor Moon* and the Sailor Warrior characters as composites of masculine and feminine characteristics in "*Sailor Moon: Japanese Superheroes for Global Girls*," in *Japan Pop! Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. Timothy J. Craig (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 259-278, and *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). See also Allison's discussion of the figure of the cyborg in "Cyborg Violence: Bursting Borders and Bodies with Queer Machines," in *Cultural Anthropology* 16.2 (2001): 237-265; Susan Napier's discussion of the "flying

reading of Belial that I have provided above suggests that the queer or cyborgian figure of the androgyne in *Angel Sanctuary*, and perhaps in other *shōjo* manga texts as well, is far more subversive when it does not simply cross boundaries: the androgyne is perhaps most subversive when it implodes those boundaries, and opens up its own ‘partial’ boundaries of identity to endless interrogation and reconfiguration for the greater “democratisation” of queer politics (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 227-230).

In conclusion, we can regard *Angel Sanctuary* as a postmodern text which redefines ‘utopia’ in terms of the emancipatory potential of the enunciative modality, and which mobilises this ‘utopian’ dimension of the postmodern condition to pose a ‘partial’ challenge to patriarchy and thereby engender possibilities for social change. Enunciation does not allow the manga text to fully overcome social ‘programming’ by power regimes and their codes. However, enunciation does allow it to exercise some agency in appropriating and reinscribing the signs of patriarchy to perform a multi-faceted and non-totalising critique of patriarchal and capitalist relations of social inequality in the Japanese nation in the 1990s. Enunciation also does not enable the manga text to transcend the patriarchal dualism of masculine/feminine, but it does enable it to construct the queer identity of the androgyne, which subverts the dualism and its complementary social structures of domination and subjugation, without reverting to totalising notions of identity as “full presence” (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” 477-478). Through reconceptualising and strategically deploying the postmodern ‘utopia’ in relation to contemporary issues of sex, gender and social relations of

woman” figure in “Vampires, Psychic Girls, Flying Women and Sailor Scouts: Four faces of the young female in Japanese popular culture,” in *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures*, ed. D. P. Martinez (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 91-109; Mark McLelland’s discussion of the *bishōnen* figure in Boys’ Love manga in “The Love between ‘Beautiful Boys’ in Japanese Women’s Comics,” in *Journal of Gender Studies* 9.1 (2000): 13-25, and *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000); Jennifer Robertson’s discussion of the androgyny of the *otokoyaku* in *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Sharalynn Orbaugh’s discussion of the “Busty Battlin’ Babe” in “Busty Battlin’ Babes: The Evolution of the *Shōjo* in 1990s Visual Culture,” in *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, eds. Joshua S. Mostow, Norman Bryson, and Maribeth Graybill (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 201-265.

power in the 'political unconscious,' *Angel Sanctuary* demonstrates how we may preserve the modern political potential of utopianism for critique, subversion and social transformation in a postmodern virtual world, while keeping at bay the dangers of totalisation which are implicit in all utopian visions.

Conclusion

In *The “Cute” Emperor of Young Girls* (1988, *Shōjo tachi no “kawaii” tennō*) and *Folklore of Young Girls* (1989, *Shōjo minzoku gaku*), Ōtsuka Eiji accuses *shōjo* consumer culture in postwar Japan of “narcissism” (Ōtsuka, quoted in Matsui, “Beyond the Pleasure Room” 213). According to Ōtsuka, *kawaii* (“cute”) *shōjo* consumer culture encourages the *shōjo* (young female) consumer to see herself as a “cute, innocent [and pitiful] I” (Ōtsuka, quoted in Matsui 210), and to ‘empathise’ with others as extensions of her own “cute” and “pitiful” self (Matsui, “Beyond the Pleasure Room” 213). This narcissistic form of ‘empathy’ results in the collapse of distinctions between the *shōjo*’s “I” and the “you” of others, and this in turn leads to the absolution of individual responsibility and infantile dependence (Matsui, “Beyond the Pleasure Room” 213). The irresponsible and dependent *shōjo*, Ōtsuka argues, is made to believe that she can survive only in a closed fantasy world which is constructed for her by *shōjo* consumer culture, and which protects her from (but also paradoxically makes her vulnerable to) the harsh reality which lies outside (Matsui, “Beyond the Pleasure Room” 213, 220-221).

Although they are much less judgmental than Ōtsuka, Murakami Takashi and Takahashi Mizuki likewise affirm the idea that *shōjo* culture constitutes a ‘closed world’ for girls and young women in postwar Japan. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, Murakami regards the work of female Neo-Pop artists such as Takano Aya and Aoshima Chiho as highly ‘private’ meditations which are inspired by the artists’ individual psychological experiences and not by larger ‘public’ forces in society. Takahashi argues that *shōjo* manga in particular are primarily concerned with expressing the “inner feelings” of their *shōjo* characters (“Opening the Closed World” 117-122), and thereby represent gender-specific experiences which only girls can relate to (“Opening the Closed World” 135). Moreover,

according to Takahashi, *shōjo* manga represents these experiences in a distinctive visual language which functions as a “secret code” that keeps male readers, who are familiar with the different conventions of *shōnen* and men’s manga, out of the *shōjo*’s “closed world” (“Opening the Closed World” 128-129). Uncannily echoing Georg Lukács’ description (and condemnation, in Ōtsuka’s case) of high modernist art as “decadent” (“Realism in the Balance” 44), Ōtsuka, Murakami and Takahashi imply that *shōjo* culture, unlike male-oriented forms of postwar Japanese popular culture, is indifferent to political, economic and social conditions in the real world.

In this thesis, I have shown that this prevalent conception of *shōjo* culture as a ‘closed world’ is an unfair generalisation. As particular examples of *shōjo* culture, *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* demonstrate that *shōjo* culture is not reducible to narcissistic navel-gazing and self-withdrawal from the larger circumstances and concerns of contemporary Japanese society. Although their stories may seem incredible and unrealistic, the three apocalyptic *shōjo* manga narratives are cultural texts which express, expose and engage with the ‘political unconscious’ of 1990s Japan, *in* and *through* the distorting mediation of the fantasy form. In Chapter One, I discussed how *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* express Japanese society’s ambivalent anxieties about and desires for virtualisation as it made the transition from industrial capitalist modernity to late capitalist postmodernity in the last decade of the twentieth century. In Chapter Two, I examined how the three texts re-imagine the Japanese nation in the context of postmodern globalisation, and how they both articulate and undermine the ideological constructions of Japanese national identity predominant in the 1990s through their ambivalent practice of enunciation. In the final chapter, I first explored how *Angel Sanctuary* redefines the concept of ‘utopia’ in relation to the postmodern virtualisation of the world and the emancipatory potential of the enunciative modality. I then discussed how the text deploys enunciation to enact a critique of capitalist patriarchy in 1990s

Japan, and to construct the ambivalent identity of the androgyne which subverts patriarchal and capitalist oppression. As I have shown in the three chapters of the thesis, *Sailor Moon*, *X* and *Angel Sanctuary* certainly do not constitute a ‘closed world’ which shelters the *shōjo* reader from the external political, economic and social realities of life in Japan at the end of the millennium. In fact, as postmodern ‘fictions’ of the end of the world which enable us to make sense of our lives, the three manga texts suggest that if they are to be considered ‘closed worlds,’ that can only be because the entire world is now a ‘closed world’ of postmodern virtuality – a “Waiting-Room,” as Christophe Thouny puts it – where there are no external realities; no transcendental real; no utopian ideals. However, rather than despairing at this state of affairs, the three manga texts actively utilise the “apocalyptic tone” (Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone” 52-57), or enunciative modality, of the postmodern ‘closed world’ to engage in processes of deconstruction, demystification and cultural reinvention in the hope of social change. In this way, these postmodern texts ‘iterate’ the modern “apocalyptic desire” (Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone” 50-51) for critique and social transformation, and show us how we can live productively within the ‘closed world’ of post/modernity.

In this thesis, I have read several apocalyptic *shōjo* manga narratives as cultural texts vis-à-vis their historical context of production: namely, Japan in the 1990s. These apocalyptic narratives suggest that Japanese society at the turn of the millennium could no longer believe in the very idea of a final end and a utopian beginning, and that, consequently, the tradition of the “apocalyptic mode” (Napier, “When Godzilla Speaks” 16) in Japanese popular culture seems to have come to an end. However, the recent popularity of the apocalyptic manga and anime *D. Gray-Man* (2004-present/2006-2008) suggests that ‘the end’ of the “apocalyptic mode” has not arrived yet. As I write this in 2011, a full decade has passed since the global panic over the “Y2K bug” and other millenarian fears, and there has been no Apocalypse and

no Utopia either. Japan in the twenty-first century is not radically different from the Japan of the last decade of the twentieth century. Some things seem to have remained the same. The economic recession continues, and despite the ousting of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the 2009 lower house Diet elections, the DPJ has not solved the severe fiscal problems it has inherited from the LDP (Kingston, *Contemporary Japan* 103). Some things, however, seem to be changing. For example, the Japanese nation-state has been modifying its foreign policy over the last ten years in response to new developments in the international arena, including the shift in US security policies towards the strengthening of global antiterrorism measures since September 11, and the rise of China as an economic and political power (Ogoura, “Major Developments in Japanese Foreign Policy” 113-114). The status of women in Japanese society also seems to be improving. Some of the statistics in the 2009 Japan Institute of Workers’ Evolution report on women’s labour in Japan (*Josei rōdō no bunseki 2009: Keiki kōtai shita de no josei rōdōsha*) appear to support this claim. The percentage of working married women under thirty-four years of age increased in 2009 in comparison to the percentages recorded in 1999 and 2004 (4). However, the report also shows trends which suggest that gender equality may still be a distant dream. The number of women employed as regular members of staff decreased steadily from 2002 to 2009, while the number of women employed in temporary positions rose significantly between 2008 and 2009 (14). The income gap between male and female workers remains wide as well (25).

It is perhaps time to turn our attention to popular cultural production in the first decade of the new millennium, and to ask why apocalyptic narratives are still being produced in Japan, and why they are still popular with a postmodern audience which no longer appears to believe in the apocalypse and utopia. Does the continuing popularity of apocalyptic narratives contradict my interpretation of apocalyptic *shōjo* manga in the 1990s? Are twenty-

first century apocalyptic narratives extensions of their late twentieth century counterparts? Or do they constitute an alternative response to the postmodern condition? In answering these questions, we should also reveal how these new apocalyptic narratives articulate, critique, subvert and negotiate the ‘political unconscious’ of their moment in history. This would not only enable us to gain a better understanding of the political, economic and social conditions in Japan and the world in the past decade, but also to become aware of the responses we may have to these conditions, and of the possibilities for positive social change. We may then be able to mobilise these various insights to disrupt the perfect reproduction of the status quo, and to (re)produce it instead in “the spirit of utopia.”

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