Emancipation in postmodernity : political thought in Japanese science fiction animation

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3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the important link between culture, philosophy and politics and the significance of everyday cultural practices as a site for philosophical inquiry through the works of Antonio Gramsci and Tosaka Jun. Contextualizing Gramsci and Tosaka's idea of intellectuals and everydayness in our contemporary society in relation to anime, I proposed to see anime as an important cultural practice in Japan and beyond, anime experts as intellectuals, and animation as an intellectual product. I argued that political theorists should look at popular culture including anime more seriously as part of their inquiries in contemporary political thinking.

This chapter considers the methods and approaches appropriate to analyzing anime as a mode of political thought. The first section of this chapter reviews the common methods and sources in the field of political theory, suggesting that the predominantly European and textual nature of their materials is a problem. The second section looks at alternative approaches taken by scholars in the field of utopian and science fiction studies, as well as more recent scholarship on visual media, and in particular film and its philosophical aspects. It highlights how there are various ways to interrogate political and philosophical ideas through unconventional sources such as utopian and science fiction literature and visual media. The last section then looks at various existing methods for studying the (animated) moving image in the field of film, media and animation studies to create a toolbox for analyzing anime as a mode of thought. Emphasizing anime as visual narrative, I take a trans-medial approach combining both narrative and visual analysis.

3.2. Existing Methods and Approaches to Political Theory

The mainstream approaches and methods used in studying political thought still remain very textual, focusing on analyzing canonical texts in the tradition of political philosophy, or at best analyzing these texts by situating them within their broader historical contexts. Compared with scholars in other fields of political and social sciences, "political theorists generally spend little time addressing questions of 'how' and 'why' in their work. Instead, they dive straight into their analysis, turning immediately to the task at hand; arguing, for instance, about the meaning and value of particular key

concepts such as liberty, justice and rights" (Leopold and Stears 2008a, 1). Along with political theorists' scant attention to the question of *how* and *why*, they also seem less concerned with the limited nature of their sources. For example, they rarely ask why some texts are included in the history of ideas, and others are not, nor about the implications of these exclusions.

Recent scholarship in the history of political thought has been more concerned with the question of sources. Siep Stuurman (2000, 152) argues that the canon of the history of political thought is "selective and incomplete" as it is about "the history of the victors, mostly upper-class European white men." David Runciman (2001) traces the methodological trajectory of the Cambridge School since late 1960s and defensively suggests that scholars of the history of political thought have broadened their sources by seeking out neglected ideas of the European past including political ideas of and about women in revolutionary Europe, and the political writings of Carl Schmitt and Michael Oakeshott. However, the state of the discipline clearly remains unsatisfactory for others who work on political thought in non-Euro-American contexts, because the mainstream disciplinary debates are still based on solely the Euro-American inheritance.

Chris Goto-Jones (2005a; 2005b; 2008b; 2009a) questions the accepted methodology of the history of philosophy and the history of political thought in Europe and persuasively argues for the relevance of studying the work of non-European thinkers, such as the philosophy of the Kyoto School. He demonstrates the sophistication and relevance of the philosophy of the Kyoto School in a series of works and argues for taking non-European work such as that of the Kyoto School seriously as philosophy, rather than simply dismissing it as a body of "exotic specimens" (Rorty in Goto-Jones 2005b, 36) or separating it as "Japanese philosophy" (or Indian Philosophy etc.) from consolidated "Western" philosophy.

Goto-Jones (2008b; 2009a) points out how the seemingly inclusive methodological argument of the Cambridge School – an emphasis on the importance of textual meaning and historical context – is actually exclusively applied to the European contexts and results in a persistant intellectual conservatism and Euro-centricity in the discipline. "Despite some successful efforts to broaden these contextual parameters, particularly to include dead, white females, it remains the case that of all the possible historical contexts that might be of interest to historians of political philosophy none of them appear to be found outside the geo-historical spaces of Europe and the USA" (Goto-Jones 2008b, 4). According to leading Cambridge School historians such as Quentin Skinner, the history of political thought should be about "uncovering the 'range of options lying behind a given philosophical or political predicament'" (Runciman cited in Goto-Jones 2008b, 15). Or for Charles Taylor, it is the quest for "discontinuities," which requires "recovering previous articulations which have been lost" (Taylor cited in Goto-Jones 2008b, 12). Their views appear to be open and inclusive. However, as Goto-Jones argues, one of the major problems for the history of political thought is that their enterprise has been based on a particular European history of political thought, yet it

clearly has an aspiration toward universalism. In other words, it is simply true that the Cambridge historians have deliberately or inadvertently marginalized or even excluded non-Europeans.[28]

> The history of political thought should be organized around competing explanations of particular problems, not around national or regional identities. It doesn't matter who thought of the explanations, what matters is that they were thought of and that they are interesting/relevant. Hence, the history of political thought should be a quest for intellectual discomfort, for alternatives and discontinuities that make us reconsider and think critically about our responses to the predicaments of the present. (Goto-Jones 2008b, 15–16)

Against this conviction deeply rooted among Cambridge historians, Goto-Jones calls for a more inclusive history of political thought that opens the doors to non-Europeans such as the Kyoto School philosophers, beyond simply seeking out early twentieth century figures in Europe as "source of recognizable innovation and discontinuity" (ibid., 21).

We can also find a similar dominant preference for textual and/or ethnocentric approaches in *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches* (2008b), a recent publication on methodology. According to the editors, the title aims to introduce some of the methods and methodologies used by leading scholars in the contemporary field of political theory (Leopold and Stears 2008a, 10). One reviewer praises it for covering a wide range of methods and approaches and discussions on them in the field of political theory including analytical philosophy, moral philosophy, the empirical social sciences, the history of political thought, the world of 'real' politics, critical social theory, and ideology (Zolkos 2011, 75). The editors Leopold and Stears (2008a, 4) emphasize the plurality and open-endedness of methods and approaches to political theory, and suggest that "the complex relationship between political theory and related disciplines" is the most important common theme shared among the contributors.

To some extent, this spirit of plurality and open-endedness is also found in the individual chapters written by leading scholars in the field. For instance, political theorist Michael Freeden (2008) emphasizes the importance of analyzing various ideologies and modes of political thinking not limited to the works of political philosophers. Although Freeden acknowledges an indispensable role for two mainstream approaches in the field of political thought, namely political philosophy

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[28] For example, it is evident in the title of the works produced by these scholars in the discipline such as Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (1978). Skinner's work is about a European history of thought, but is presented as *the* history of political thought, implying universalism (Goto-Jones 2008b, 7–8).

and the history of ideas, he points out the limitation of these approaches in understanding political thought and their possible harmful effects. "With all their richness, they [political philosophy and the history of ideas] leave a large gap that takes insufficient account of the ordinary and normal manifestations of concrete political thought in any given society, its patterns, its subtleties, its languages, and the processes it permeates" (Freeden 2008, 197).

For Freeden, political theory must be "the study of actual political thinking (or thought)" and it has two characteristics. "Political thought always displays two characteristics: thinking *in* a political way – that is to say, thinking politically – and thinking *about* politics. If we ignore those important features of human conduct, we will perilously impoverish our views of politics and of political thought" (ibid.). Investigation of the various ideologies and modes of political thinking through which human beings shape their social practices must therefore be a central subject in the study of political thought. Freeden further argues for the importance of broadening the range of sources to go beyond classic texts of Western political philosophy by including other political writings (e.g. party manifestos), parliamentary debates, newspapers, popular literature, everyday conversation, and visual and aural displays (e.g. advertising, public architecture, national anthems etc.). Freeden notes that

> If we fail to identify the various levels of complexity and the diverse conceptual forms in which those central modes of thinking about politics occur, and if we are not prepared to acknowledge their assorted written, verbal, and non-verbal forms, their rational and emotional dimensions, and the multiple seductive rhetorics they employ in different contexts, we will ignore a vast amount of what political thought embraces. (ibid., 205)

Freeden's close attention to the actual political thinking in various forms of expression is noteworthy, yet his own sources of analysis still remain very European and textual. For example, his major work *Ideology and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (1998) is a wide-ranging study of major political ideologies in the nineteenth and twentieth-century in Europe and the USA including liberalism, conservatism, socialism, feminism and environmentalism. It makes an important contribution to understanding ideologies as a central object of scholarship in political theory, but his sources remain the written works of political thinkers and several popular writings from Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Sweden, Belgium, and the USA. The title of the book, however, is *Ideology and Political Theory*, not "ideology and political theory in Europe and the USA."

As we can find in Freeden's approach and those of the other contributors to *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*, the methods and methodologies used by leading political theorists are

predominantly textual and limited to the analysis of written and verbal forms of language in Europe and America. Some contributors such as Freeden address the limits of the existing approaches and sources and call for broadening the body of sources beyond the classic texts. However, the title neither includes the rich tradition of utopian and science fiction literature as expressions of political thought, nor any poststructuralist approaches to the analysis of various textual and non-textual social and cultural practices. Neither are there any surveys of political thought beyond Europe and the USA. The editors touch on some of these absences in Introduction and explain that "such absences are partly because what follows reflects a discussion taking place in just one particular centre of political theory at one particular time…we hope that these absences are not taken in the wrong spirit; what follows is intended as an invitation to others to debate, and not an effort to provide the conclusive word on questions of method" (Leopold and Stears 2008a, 3).

I aim to contribute to such discussions of methods and approaches to studying political theory within this spirit of "plurality and open-endedness" by drawing on the richness of non-European and non-textual materials, namely, through focusing on the visual medium of anime in the genre of science fiction as an additional source of political thinking and political thought. Before moving onto the visual medium, I will first discuss the important role imagination, and more specifically science fiction and utopian literature, has played in political thinking and political thought.

3.3.   Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Theory

Political theorists often criticize utopianism, and yet at the same time they also offer alternative visions for the future. As Sargisson (2007, 25) rightly notes, "The relationship between politics and Utopia is curious because politics often rejects utopianism and yet politics is built on utopias." We can see this tendency in the works of leading political theorists in history.

For example, Marx and Engels (Marx [1848] 2000f, 267–268) criticized contemporary utopian socialists in *The Communist Manifesto* as "fantastic" in that they "reject all political, and especially all revolutionary action." Marx and Engels saw the utopian socialists as bourgeois idealists who envisaged future society in a speculative manner, and described them as being little interested in the revolutionary practices of the proletariat. For Marx and Engels, the critical utopian socialists "still dream of experimental realization of their social Utopias…and to realize all these castles in the air, they are compelled to appeal to the feelings and purses of the bourgeois" (Marx [1848] 2000f, 267). Marx and Engels clearly differentiated communism from utopian socialisms on the basis of political and revolutionary action, which involved more than "fantastic pictures of future society" (ibid.). Yet, their communism was also a utopian vision to some extent envisaging the emancipation of the proletariat through revolutionary practices.

Likewise, British historian E.H. Carr challenged utopianism, or the idealist approach to the international relations, from a realist perspective in his major work *The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919-1939* ([1939] 2001). Utopian idealists are confident that universal moral values such as peace or stable international order can be realized, believing in a "harmony of interests" on the assumption that human beings are rational beings and can hence cooperate together for common interests such as peace. For Carr ([1939] 2001) however, morality is not universal but rather relative and subject to power relations and the particular interests of different groups or individuals. In other words, morality serves as a disguise for the interests of the privileged. World politics is not characterized by a harmony of interests, but rather a conflict of interests. According to Carr, there are simply not enough resources in terms of natural resources, land and so forth in the world. Hence, privileged countries want to implement laws and morality in order to keep whatever they possess and outlaw the use of violence. It is therefore unrealistic to expect the underprivileged to respect laws and morality because it is laws and morality that keep them disadvantaged. Nevertheless, while Carr delivered a powerful realist critique of idealist utopianism, he is also very critical of pure realism. For Carr, international politics should not be all about "a naked struggle for power" (ibid., 87). Rather, "any sound political thought must be based on elements of both utopia and reality" (ibid.). Carr hence called for attention to create "a new utopia" or a utopian realism. Moreover, as Howe (1994) suggests, Carr's other writings during World War II revealed more optimism about the possibility of a peaceful postwar order.

Marx's vision of a new social order and Carr's vision of a new postwar world order were based on their observation of the material conditions and/or social reality of their times, and yet their alternative political visions were also built on some kind of imagination. In other words, despite Marx's rejection of utopian socialists and Carr's criticism of idealist intellectuals for largely ignoring the role of power in international politics, they do not argue against an alternative vision of the future or deny a political role to imagination. Imagination does matter in politics and political thinking.

Indeed, as Lyman Tower Sargent (2007, 304) points out, "many political theorists agree that utopianism is important or even essential" in political thinking. For instance, Quentin Skinner (1998, 78–79) writes

> I have never understood why the charge of utopianism is necessarily thought to be an objection to a theory of politics. One legitimate aspiration of moral and political theory is surely to show us what lines of action we are committed to undertaking by the values we profess to accept.

Likewise, Raymond Geuss (2010, x) argues that "Even the deepest kind of political conformism and any defense of the status quo require acts of imagining of some kind, albeit a particular kind of productive imagination."

In other words, imagination, especially "the constructive imagination of alternatives to present ways of doing things, or discriminatory skill, and of judgement" is central in any kind of politics and political thinking (Geuss 2010, 110). Geuss asks further questions, such as "how and to what extent is it possible to free oneself or take one's distance imaginatively from the beliefs, values and attitudes of one's surroundings?" and "To what extent is such distancing necessary for radical social criticism?" (Geuss 2010, x)

Taking a self-reflective approach, in the tradition of philosophy from Hegel to the early Frankfurt School, Geuss discusses the nature of imagination and its role in politics by analyzing a wide range of political and cultural issues including the war in Iraq, literature, museum, poetry and so on. Geuss underscores a close correlation between imagination, distance and the possibility and limitation of social criticism in his discussion. He argues that "the distance I am able to put between myself and my social world with its associated beliefs, intellectual habits, and attitudes is a crucial variable in determining how much I can see, how much I can understand, and whether I can occupy a position from which radical social criticism is possible" (ibid., xi).

Although Geuss emphasizes the function of imagination in politics and political thinking, literary forms of utopia and science fiction have not, with some exceptions, been explored seriously in the traditional academic field of political thought. For instance, one of the major textbook series in the field, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* includes only a few texts of modern utopian literature: Thomas More's *Utopia* (2002); William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1995); the collected volume of *Utopias of the British Enlightenment* (1994), and Charles Fourier's *The Theory of the Four Movements* (1996). Predictably the series neither includes a science fiction title nor a non-European text. Interestingly, Raymond Geuss is one of the general editors of the Cambridge textbook series together with Quentin Skinner, and both have acknowledged the indispensable role of imagination and utopianism in political theory and written about it. There appears to be very little room for science fiction literature as a source in the mainstream field of the history of political thought.

Many writers, critics and scholars of utopian and science fiction literature share Geuss's concern with the role of imagination and distancing in political and social criticism, and regard these genres as important sites for generating political thinking (Moylan 2000; Moylan 2014; Wegner 2002; Baccolini and Moylan 2003a; Jameson 2005).[29] Utopian political thought can be

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[29] Lyman Tower Sargent (1994) suggests that utopianism has been expressed in three major fields: utopian literature; communitarianism; and utopian social theory.

traced back to the ancient world (e.g. Plato's *Republic*); modern utopian literature is however rooted in Thomas More's *Utopia,* written in 1516. More coined the word *utopia* to refer to an imaginary island in his work. Utopia means *nowhere* or *no-place* from Greek *ou* (not) + *topos* (place) but More's usage is a pun, as Utopia could also refer to *good place* derived from the Greek *eu* (good) (Carey 2000, xi; Logan and Adams 2002, xi). The book is presented as the story of a fictional journey to the island by a fictional traveller Raphael Hythloday, whom More met in Antwerp. According to Hythloday, the social organization of Utopia is based on equality and justice, unlike contemporary England. There have been endless debates about the extent to which More meant the story seriously: Utopia would be an ideal society or "a land of happy, healthy, public-spirited communists", while many utopian practices such as religious toleration, divorce and euthanasia would be unacceptable for the readers in sixteen-century Europe (Carey 1999, 38). More's text could be read as political manifesto or elaborate literary joke. Although it is impossible to fully understand More's intentions in writing Utopia, it is less controversial to say "More's imaginary world surely prompts readers to see themselves and their society in a new light –a goal shared by nearly all writers of utopian fiction since (Weaver 2010, 17).

One of the important characteristics found in utopian and science fiction literature is the function of *estrangement* as a stimulus for critical reflection on the societies in which the authors and readers live, and for imagining alternative social and political arrangements. Literary theorist Darko Suvin (1979, 49) defines utopia as

> [The] verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis.

Utopian scholar Lyman Tower Sargent (1994, 9) defines utopia as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space." Sargent's definition includes various forms of imaginary societies: eutopia or positive utopia; dystopia or negative utopia; critical utopia or an imagined society, understood "as better than contemporary society but with difficult problems that the described society may or may not be able to solve and which takes a critical view of the utopian genre" (ibid., 9).

Sargent also defines utopianism as "social dreaming" and elaborated it as "the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live. Not all are radical, though, for some people at any time dream of something basically familiar" (ibid., 3). In Sargent's

view, "utopianism is essential but dangerous," a quality he describes as "the contradictory nature of utopia" (ibid., 22).

Suvin and Sargent agree on a number of important points in their definitions of utopia. Firstly, both scholars characterize utopia as a collective and social project rather than individual one. For Suvin, utopia is about the construction of a community different from author's community; and for Sargent utopianism is "social dreaming." Secondly, the particular social arrangements described in the utopia are "quasi-human", and thus utopian communities are the products of humanity rather than ideal societies portrayed in a mythical tale. Thirdly, and most importantly, both scholars emphasize the link between utopia and the socio-historical context in which it emerges. Referring to utopia as "historical estrangement," Suvin (1979, 53) notes that the estrangement is achieved by "explicit or implicit reference to the author's empirical environment." In Sargent's conception, this reference is the society where dreamers live. Because of this link to the empirical reality of authors and dreamers, fictional utopias allow readers to understand the texts as "an alternative historical hypothesis" in Suvin's (1979, 49) terms and to see their familiar environment differently. Referring to the utopian philosopher Ernst Bloch, Suvin (1979, 54) suggests that "the real function of estrangement is – and must be – the provision of a shocking and distancing mirror above the all too familiar reality." In Sargent's (1994, 27) words, "utopia serves as a mirror to contemporary society, pointing to strengths and weaknesses, more often the latter. This is one of its most important functions." The link between utopia and its historical context is essential for the function of social criticism and the political significance of utopian fiction.

Suvin also claims that utopian literature is the "*sociopolitical subgenre of science fiction*" (1979, 61 emphasis in the original). Although Suvin's categorization has produced disputes among utopian and science fiction scholars,[30] Suvin's definition of science fiction still remains an important reference point in thinking about the political dimensions of utopian and science fiction literature. Drawing on the idea of estrangement in literary theory developed by the Russian Formalists and the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht, Suvin (1979) defines science fiction as "the literature of cognitive estrangement." He elaborates on this, commenting that

> *A literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment.* (ibid., 7-8 emphasis in the original)

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[30] Sargent (1994) and Fitting (2010) disagree with Suvin's definition of Utopia as subgenre of science fiction, while Jameson (2005, xiv) follows Suvin's view and defines utopia as "sociopolitical sub-genre of science fiction."

For Suvin, science fiction is a distinctive literary genre and its essential function is to *estrange* or *distance* the readers from their social world with the associated beliefs, norms, and values and thereby to allow them to see their existing surroundings critically. Estrangement in science fiction arises from a narrative device Suvin called a *novum*, or a strange newness, novelty, and innovation which is based on "cognition" and its rational, logical and scientific implications (ibid., 63). Borrowing the idea of the novum from Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch, Suvin defines it as a "totalising phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality" (ibid., 64). According to Suvin, both Bloch and himself assume that a novum participates in the "front-line of historical process" in the Marxist tradition, which means a "process intimately concerned with strivings for a dealienation of men [*sic*] and their social life" (Suvin 1979, 82). This innovation is significantly different from the world in which the author and readers live and it highlights the tension between the world portrayed in science fiction and the world of the author and readers. For Suvin, it is this tension that estranges existing social norms and values of the readers (ibid., 64).

Literary theorist Fredric Jameson has written extensively about the relationship between utopia and politics, and the political role of utopian thinking through a constructive reading of various utopian and science fiction literary works within the context of globalization in late capitalism. Considering the discourses of the powerful liberal capitalist system – discourses such as "there is no alternative to Utopia" or "late capitalism seems to have no natural enemies alternative to Utopia" – Jameson (2005, xvi) argues for utopian thinking employing the "slogan of anti-anti Utopianism" as the best working political strategy.

Following Suvin's definition of utopia as "sociopolitical sub-genre of science fiction," Jameson (2005, xiv) sees utopia as a "socio-economic sub-genre" of the broader literary genre of science fiction, which is "specifically devoted to the imagination of alternative social and economic forms." Although he has been attracted by utopia throughout his career, Jameson has also written much about the failures of utopian thinking and the impossibilities of imagining and representing a radical difference. For example, Jameson (2005, xiii) notes that "our imaginations are hostages to our own mode of production (and perhaps to whatever remnants of past ones in has preserved)…at best Utopia can serve the negative purpose of making us more aware of our mental and ideological imprisonment…and that therefore the best Utopias are those that fail the most comprehensively." In other words, utopia and "our most energetic imaginative leaps into radical alternatives were little more than the projections of our own social moment and historical subjective situation" (Jameson 2005, 211). For Phillip E. Wegner (2002, 23), this is "the apparently paradoxical and the seemingly classically post-structuralist conclusion" of Jameson's thinking.

So, how did Jameson reach such a paradoxical standpoint? What is the political role of utopian thinking? For Jameson, the failure of utopian thinking or the impossibility of imagining a radical

difference does not mean a dead end and we should reject any utopian thinking (i.e. become anti-Utopian). On the contrary, such a failure is a crucial moment precisely because it forces us to generate further critical reflections and attempts to imagine another utopian vision or a novum that has not yet arrived. Jameson (2005, 232–233) notes that

> The formal flaw – how to articulate the Utopian break in such a way that it is transformed into a practical-political transition – now becomes a rhetorical and political strength, in that it forces us precisely to concentrate on the break itself: a mediation on the impossible, on the unrealisable in its own right. This is very far from a liberal capitulation to the necessity of capitalism, however, it is quite the opposite, a rattling of the bar and an intense spiritual concentration and preparation for another stage which has not yet arrived.

Echoing Bloch and Suvin, Jameson argues that the political function of utopian thinking is estrangement, which generates critical reflection and concentration on imagined alternatives to our present.

In a similar manner to these theorists, Wegner (2002, 17) argues that the utopian text or what he calls the "narrative utopia" has a pedagogical function for "teaching its audiences how to think of the space they already inhabit in a new critical fashion." Closely examining some of the most renowned narrative utopias such as Thomas More's *Utopia* ([1516] 2010), Bellamy's *Looking Backward* ([1878] 2000), Bogdanov's *Red Star* ([1908] 1984), London's *The Iron Heel* ([1907] 1981), Zamyatin's *We* ([1920] 2007), Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* ([1974] 2003), Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ([1949] 2000) and their historical contexts, Wegner (2002, xx) suggests that these narrative utopias have played a vital role in the historical process of modernity, generating "the cognitive space around which new kinds of lived experiences and theoretical perceptions form" and teaching its readers to live in the new social space now called the modern nation-state. The narrative utopia is a concrete practice and process in the histories of modernity, which engages in "a particular kind of praxis, a specific representational activity" of new lived experiences, rather than merely a fictional idea or vision (Wegner 2002, xviii).

It is very important to look at narrative utopia's concreteness and actuality in its readers' present, or what Wegner calls a "concrete symbolization of the historical *process*" because this concrete symbolization can explain why the narrative utopia matters to our political thinking (ibid., 24).[31] The narrative utopia is not merely a fictional narrative about a different time and place, which

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[31] Wegner's argument allows us to rethink Tosaka's rejection of utopia that I discussed in Chapter 2. If we look at Wegner's work on narrative utopia and its close relation to the emergence of modern nation-state, we

is nothing to do with its readers' present; on the contrary it serves as "a constitutive element in the production of modern social reality, a progressive counterblast to the essential conservatism of ideology" (ibid., 18). In other words, "the utopia transforms the closed circle of ideology or belief into an open spiral" (Ricoeur cited in Wegner 2002, 23). Echoing Jameson's discussion on science fiction and its specific narrative form to defamiliarize our own present rather than to offer images of the future,[32] Wegner suggests that the narrative utopia implies "dynamic temporal reorientation" since "the narrative utopia conceives of the present in terms of the future, as something that is incomplete and continuously coming into being…[and] the present, its concerns, desires, and contradictions…serves as the very raw material from which the narrative performance will generate something original" (Wegner 2002, xix). In other words, narrative utopia is a concrete political practice as a form of new political thinking and new political thought employing its estrangement function and temporal reorientation.

As the aforementioned scholars and critics suggest, utopia and science fiction are useful sites for exploring political visions. Yet, there have been few studies of non-Western utopia. As Sargent (1994) reminds us, the scarcity of the scholarship on non-Western utopia does not mean that there is no utopianism in other parts of the world, because people everywhere imagine some kind of fictional society or community, and engage in social dreaming. Sargent (1994, 19) suggests that although More's invention of a particular literary form of utopia is immensely important and spread rapidly, "clearly, if a non-Western utopia must be similar to More's *Utopia*, it is quite probable that none will be found." The limited scholarship on non-Western utopianism and utopian and science fiction literature is evident. For example, look at the number of published articles on Japanese utopia and science fiction in major academic journals of the field such as *Utopian Studies* (1987-present) and *Science Fiction Studies* (1973-present). Only a few articles on utopias in Japan appear in *Utopian Studies*. In *Science Fiction Studies* more articles are available than *Utopian Studies,* but this is a relatively recent phenomenon since 2000: part of the Global Science Fiction special issue in 2000 covers Japanese science fiction (Yuen 2000; La Bare 2000; Tatsumi 2000b; Fisch 2000); there

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should not dismiss narrative utopia as something useless or mere imagination/fiction. As Wegner suggests, utopian literary works have played a significant role in reorienting or/and shaping people's view about social space in modern history. Hence reading/watching utopian and science fiction works is a concrete social and political practice.

[32] See "Progress versus Utopia, or, Can We Imagine the Future?" (2005, 281–295). In this article Jameson argues that science fiction has a "far more complex temporal structure", especially in terms of the ostensible content of the described future: it exists "not to give us 'images' of the future – whatever such images might mean for a reader who will necessarily predecease their 'materialization' – but rather to defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own *present*, and to do so in specific ways distinct from all other forms of defamiliarization" (ibid., 286, emphasis in the original).

is a special issue on Japanese science fiction in 2002[33]; and the occasional research articles have been published. Although the existing scholarship on utopia and science fiction beyond Europe and USA is still relatively small, it has been growing, and further research will enrich our understanding of utopia and science fiction, and hence political thought from multiple locations more broadly.[34]

3.4.   Visual Media and Political Thory

Existing studies on utopia and science fiction suggest that utopian literature is a concrete political practice and a form of political thought. Utopian and science fiction scholars have expanded their source of analytical material from texts to visual media such as films and TV series (Jameson 1979; Jameson 2005; Fitting 2003; Wegner 2003; Roberts 2006).

Among these studies, Fredric Jameson (1979) reconsiders the negative aesthetic evaluation of mass culture relative to high culture, and proposes an alternative approach to mass culture in terms of its social and political aspects. If we want to understand the social functions of culture, it would be more appropriate to examine popular TV programs or films such as *Jaws* (1975) or *The Godfather* (1972; 1974) rather than Wallace Stevens' poems or Henry James' novels, because such mass cultural artifacts "clearly speak a cultural language meaningful to far wider strata of the population than what is socially represented by intellectuals" (Jameson 1979, 130). Analyzing *Jaws* and *The Godfather*, Jameson argues that the narratives in mass culture have both an ideological and a utopian or transcendent function at the same time.

For example, in his analysis of *Jaws*, the killer shark represents polysemous social and historical anxieties or "the most recent embodiment of Leviathan." The heroes who fight against the shark represent a utopian dimension of social harmony, which indicates "its ritual celebration of the renewal of the social order and its salvation" (Jameson 1979, 142). Jameson suggests that "anxiety and hope are two faces of the same collective consciousness, so that the works of mass culture, even if their function lies in the legitimation of the existing order – or some worse one – cannot do their job without deflecting in the latter's service the deepest and most fundamental hopes and fantasies of the collectivity, to which they can therefore, no matter in how distorted a fashion, be found to have given voice" (ibid., 144).

Jameson's account of mass culture's socio-political function as both ideological and utopian is insightful, yet he drew his arguments from a narrative analysis without paying any attention to

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[33] This special issue was later published as an edit volume (Bolton, Csicsery-Ronay, and Tatsumi 2007).

[34] Some notable exceptions to the academic neglect on science fiction outside of Europe and America include studies on Japanese science fiction literature by Tatsumi (2000a; 2006); Bolton et al. (2007); Brown (2010).

visual or acoustic elements of the films. Since he already argues for the importance of studying the narratives of mass culture, especially visual ones (i.e. TV programs and films), it would be appropriate to analyze how visual and acoustic elements function in a narrative more closely. For example, *Jaws* uses montage and sound effects extensively to dramatize the horror of the shark, and these effects construct a sense of anxiety and fear, which is central to Jameson's discussion. In other words, images and sounds play a crucial role to achieve the spectacular effect as part of the visual narrative in the film. Moreover, because of these visual and acoustic elements, the experience of viewing *Jaws* would be different from the experience of reading the original novel, hence these difference in media and narrative forms may have some impacts on "how a narrative could be consumed," which is also one of Jameson's major concerns (Jameson 1979, 132).

In the field of International Relations, some scholars have more recently studied the relationship between science fiction films and world politics (Weldes 1999; Weldes 2001; Weldes 2003a; Sheeran 2007; Buzan 2010). According to Jutta Weldes (2003b), popular science fiction themes such as alien encounter, outer space, war, crisis and so forth are familiar issues in world politics too: encountering Others is a theme found also in diplomacy or imperialism; the imaginary outer space can be linked with issues of sovereignty and subjectivity; and war and crisis with alternative processes and possibilities for world politics. Weldes (2003b, 2) also notes that "the apparent great divide between the 'hard truths' of world politics and the imagined world of SF is deceiving, however. The dividing line between the natural facts and material relaties of world politics' material realities and natural facts and the fictional worlds and imaginative possibilities of SF is far from clear." Pointing out the scarcity of scholarship on fictional imagination in the field of world politics, Weldes calls for attention to examining the connection between science fiction and world politics.

Existing studies on the relation between science fiction and world politics demonstrate that science fiction films could be a representational vehicle for reproducing official discourse about world politics (e.g. US foreign policy discourse), as well as challenging existing ways of thinking world politics (e.g. state sovereignty). For example, in her analysis of the socio-political contexts of the popular science fiction TV series *Star Trek* through its various seasons, Weldes (1999) suggests that the series reproduces and popularizes common assumptions of US foreign policy discourse such as liberal multiculturalism with hierarchy, pervasive militarism and interventions in other states. While analyzing *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987), Inayatullah (2003) suggests that the series portrays a mixed picture of imperialism and resistance through its depictions of first contact. Some episodes present the aliens in respectful ways, while other episodes rather remain imperialist, assimilating diversity through the device of the *universal translator*.

While these studies by International Relations scholars are informative for thinking about world politics though popular science fiction, their analyses again remain very verbal and textual,

while visual elements are largely neglected. For example, Weldes's analysis focuses on the ways in which the crews of the *Enterprise* use the pronoun "we/us" referring to themselves and more broadly the Federation, which would be associated with the United States. Inayatullah focuses on conversation analysis during the first contact. Although verbal language is one of the important analytical elements, *Star Trek* is a visual narrative, not a novel, and the visual dimension plays a significant role in representational practices. Again, by ignoring the visual, their analyses might miss out on some of the key issues of representation. For example, the character design of alien antagonists such as the Klingons is visual representation of the Otherness, carrying with it orientalist connotations. Moreover, as Adam Roberts (2006) suggests, the depiction of the Klingons and their culture (i.e. character designs, acting and casting) has changed over time significantly: from the samurai-like caricature of the Japanese in the original series in the 1960s to more sympathetic and attractive looks in the later series in the 1980s and 1990s. In Roberts' account, this shift would involve "an internalisation of the cultural signifier 'Klingon' into a North American cultural logic, albeit one that still marks their separation" (ibid., 103-104). By this shift, the Klingons as Japanese (non-American) become coded as African-American and Native-American (American). As Roberts' analysis shows, without analyzing the visual in visual narratives, it is difficult to fully capture the representation of the Others or aliens and its connotation, and hence to study the issue of subjectivity or imperialism in visual media insightfully.

Along with the growing interest in visual media in the field of literature and politics, philosophers have also explored film as a site of philosophical inquiry. There are at least two orientations: one is the more traditional field of philosophy of film and film aesthetics, which is concerned with the nature of the film as art, dealing with the nature of film, and how it differs from other art forms (Deleuze 2005a; 2005b; Carroll 1996; 1998a; 1998b; 2008); another field is called *film and philosophy*, *film philosophy* or *film as philosophy*, which is inspired by the work of Stanley Cavell (1979; 1981; 1996). Film philosophy scholars explore the philosophical significance of film as a medium of thought (Mulhall 2008; Litch 2010; Read and Goodenough 2005; Wartenberg 2007). Sinnerbrink (2011, 41) nicely summarizes the essence of Cavell's approach to film and philosophy.

> Cavell's 'Film and Philosophy'…expands how we might imagine thinking to occur, revealing film as a medium of thought that accompanies but also questions philosophy, inviting us to transform philosophical expression in light of what film allows us to feel and to think. For film can disclose the everyday in ways that bring to our attention the unfamiliarity of the familiar, the difficulty of acknowledging others, the problem of our sense of reality, the meaning of being human, the question of scepticism or nihilism, the possibility of love – all things that philosophy has traditionally asked about, and that film has now rediscovered, questioned and reanimated in its own distinctive ways.

There are two important points to note in relation to Cavell's approach to film and philosophy, and particularly regarding the philosophical capacity of film. The two points are interrelated. The first is to acknowledge film as a *medium of thought*, which casts familiar philosophical questions in a new light through the cinematic experience. The second point concerns film's function as a *mode of estrangement*. Film allows viewers to feel, think and question, and this cinematic experience would estrange viewers from their familiar surroundings and beliefs, allowing them to question what they know. For Cavell, estrangement though film is the "possibility of skepticism" which is "internal to the condition of human knowledge," and both philosophy and film are concerned with scepticism (Rothman 2003, 207). As Cavell puts it,

> Film is a moving image of skepticism: not only is there a reasonable possibility, it is a fact that here our normal senses are satisfied of reality while reality does not exist – even, alarmingly, *because* it does not exist, because viewing it is all it takes. Our vision is doubtless otherwise satisfiable than by the viewing of reality. But to deny, on sceptical grounds, just *this* satisfaction – to deny that it is ever reality which film projects and screens – is a farce of skepticism. (Cavell 1979, 188–189, emphasis in the original)

For Cavell, film is skepticism in a sense that the projected and screened reality in films does not physically exist, and, in fact, we cannot entirely know what reality is (in films). This uncertainty is exactly a form of skepticism about human knowledge.

Inspired by Cavell's works on film and philosophy, his followers have further developed the theoretical basis of "film as philosophy." Although to what extent films could be philosophical or contribute to the academic discipline of philosophy is still under debate, "it is uncontroversial to observe that a range of films, including popular ones, resonate in fruitful ways with traditional and contemporary philosophical issues" (Livingston and Plantinga 2008, xx). Among these philosophers, both Stephen Mulhall (2008) and Thomas Wartenberg (2007) argue that film can make contributions to philosophy through its distinctive art form yet they offer different accounts of what the philosophical practice of film consists of.

Mulhall (2008) explores the possibility of films as philosophy by demonstrating that some films can be thought of as *philosophizing*. Mulhall gives a significant role to some films such as the *Alien* series (1979; 1986; 1992; 1997), *Mission: Impossible* series (1996; 2000; 2006) and *Minority Report* (2002), which are equivalent to philosophical works, rather than merely seeing them as illustrations of philosophical ideas and issues in narratives. For example, analyzing how the *Alien* series addresses various interrelated anxieties about human identity, Mulhall argues that each film in the series develops sophisticated arguments about "the reflection of human identity to

embodiment" similar to those made in ongoing dialogue on the same subject among philosophers, and the series could make a substantial contribution to these debates. He notes that

> I do not look to these films [the *Alien* series] as handy or popular illustrations of views and arguments properly developed by philosophers; I see them rather as themselves reflecting on and evaluating such views and arguments, as thinking seriously and systematically about them in just the ways that philosophers do. Such films are not philosophy's raw material, nor a source for its ornamentation; they are philosophical exercises, philosophy in action –film as philosophizing. (Mulhall 2002, 4)

This is a bold claim because in his view, some films themselves can "reflect on and evaluate" philosophical arguments, and also "think seriously and systematically." Moreover, as Wartenberg points out, Mulhall clearly distinguishes "popular illustrations" from "thinking seriously and systematically," dismissing "popular illustration" as "lacking any serious and systematic thinking," while for Wartenberg (2007, 38), illustrations through cinematic narratives could be part of serious philosophical thinking.

Mulhall's analysis is very insightful and suggests that films could represent an alternative approach to thinking about philosophical themes and issues. His analysis focuses on the narrative, dialogues, character development, and acting, while paying little attention to cinematic features such as cinematography (e.g. low key lightening, low camera angles, point of view shot), editing, mise-en-scène (distorted images) or sounds, which play an important role in visual narratives and distinctive iconographies (e.g. monstrosity, bodily transformations, fear of otherness). Thus, without analyzing these cinematic features, it is still not very clear to what extent cinematic narratives are different from narratives in other art forms such as literature or theatre, which would also address philosophical questions.

Wartenberg (2007) also argues that films not only have philosophical elements or themes, but also *philosophize*. By philosophize, Wartenberg means that films can "illustrate philosophical claims or theories in a way that provides genuine illumination, [and also] *make arguments*, *to philosophical claims*, and *put forward novel philosophical theories*" (ibid., 9, emphasis in the original). Compared with Mulhall's (2008) more rigorous idea of philosophical exercise as "serious and systematic thinking", but not as an illustration of philosophical issues, Wartenberg takes a more moderate approach to the philosophical practice of films. In Wartenberg's examples, Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) provides the viewers an accessible illustration of Marx's critique of capitalism and theory of alienation, while science fiction films such as *The Matrix* (1999) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) perform thought experiments. These three films are all philosophical exercises.

Wartenberg regards the thought experiment as a particularly important practice linking philosophy and imagination. The thought experiment is a common technique used by philosophers in history, which philosopher Tamar Szabó Gendler defines as "to reason about an imaginary scenario with the aim of confirming or disconfirming some hypothesis or theory" (Gendler cited in Wartenberg 2007, 57). Wartenberg suggests that Gendler's definition contains two important aspects of the thought experiment: the philosopher asks the reader to imagine a fictional narrative; and this fictional narrative should play a role in a broader debate over a certain philosophical claim or theory, supporting or challenging the argument in question (Wartenberg 2007, 57). He also points out that both philosophy and film rely on fictional scenarios. Moreover, just as philosophers use the thought experiment in various ways, so do films. They can be a counterexample to a philosophic thesis; establish the possibility of a world; demonstrate impossibility; confirm a theory; or build an idealized model of the world (ibid., 58-67).

In the case of *The Matrix* (1999), Wartenberg demonstrates that the film performs a thought experiment as confirming Descartes' claim that "all of our beliefs about reality might be false" by showing viewers a fictional world. Moreover, *The Matrix* illustrates Descarte's philosophical claim about the deceptiveness of reality, and also leads viewers to accept that it is true "not only in the fictional world of the film but in the real world in which they [viewers] have been deceived about the world of the film they have been watching" (Wartenberg 2007, 74). What viewers see at the beginning of the film through the eyes of the protagonist Thomas Anderson/Neo is actually deception, the illusionary world of the Matrix. Only in later scenes do viewers gradually start understanding that the world of the Matrix is not real, for example by seeing a fight scene between Neo and Morpheus (in the Matrix) intercut with other members watching the fight on CRT screens (in the real world). With this example, Wartenberg very briefly discusses how some visual elements function in the thought experiment, yet most of his analysis is based on the narrative and he seldom touches on more specific cinematic features. Similar to Mulhall's analysis, it is not so clear to what extent cinematic narratives are different from narratives in other art forms in Wartenberg's analyses. Since Wartenberg argues for the significance of visual narrative because "the film's deception takes place in an even more immediate manner than that of the novel" (ibid., 72), it would be more convincing if he could explain exactly how the cinematic feature functions in the visual narrative.

Although Wartenberg only discusses very briefly how the visual narrative functions as a thought experiment and how it appeals to the viewer more immediately, he rightly suggests that the viewer's experience of watching the film and one's possible reflection on reality are a mode of doing philosophy.

Placing a person in an epistemic situation where they are made to question the justification of a certain belief or action is, of course, one of the characteristic moves of

philosophy…it [*The Matrix*] renders problematic the assumption that our ordinary
beliefs are reliable guides to the nature of reality. (ibid., 74)

Interestingly, we can also find a parallel between the philosophical aspects of film, particularly, the *thought experiment* and the *estrangement effect*, which Suvin, Jameson and their followers characterize as one of the most important functions of science fiction and utopian literature. Just as an imagined world in science fiction and utopian literature allows readers to distance themselves from their present, and lead them to question their existing beliefs about the present world, a thought experiment in a film would similarly invite the viewers to confirm a philosophical claim, or question or disconfirm it through a fictional narrative. Science fiction and utopian literature become a mode of political thought by contrasting a portrayed fictional world with the characteristic political forms and beliefs in the author's own present environment, while a film like *The Matrix* becomes a mode of philosophy by examining philosophical claims and theories through the visualised imaginary world. Both art forms can be useful approaches for readers and viewers, including political theorists and philosophers, to critically engage with a belief or an argument in question and to generate new thoughts and theories.

In summary, existing studies on film, politics and philosophy by scholars in the field of literature, politics and film philosophy have suggested that visual media, especially film, are a useful alternative medium for social, political and philosophical inquiries. Their studies provide valuable insights about a range of concepts and issues such as the ideological/utopian function of visual culture, subjectivity, human identity, and reality. Although debates on what it could mean to say that film is a mode of thought or political thinking continue, Wartenberg (2007) provides a more explicit account than Jameson (1979) or Mulhall (2008) about how film could function as a mode of philosophy, such as an illustrations of philosophical issue or a thought experiment. Wartenberg's approach to film is helpful in exploring anime's philosophical potential as a mode of political thought in this project. However, there are at least three limitations with the aforementioned studies, including Wartenberg's work.

The first is the issue of medium-specificity. The abovementioned works tend to analyze films as if they were like any other text, focusing on narratives with little attention paid to how a specifically visual narrative works. It is less clear to what extent narratives in films are different from other narrative forms such as literature or theatre in the existing studies. As I pointed out, images and sounds play a crucial role in cinematic narrative and they are closely linked to the concepts and issues in question. I want to suggest that some narrative styles and techniques are specific to the moving image, and these visual narrative strategies relate to the expression of political or philosophical themes, issues or questions. Thus, it would be more appropriate to examine how visual narratives exactly work. Looking at earlier studies on film aesthetics will help

illustrate how visual narratives are integrated into the depiction of philosophical ideas and arguments.

The second limitation is their restriction to live action films. The films analyzed are mainly live action films, yet animation and anime – another visual art forms and important cultural forces – and their relation to political and philosophical ideas have not been explored to the same extent.[35] As we have seen earlier, science fiction is a significant literary and cinematic genre and has attracted a lot of scholarly attention as a mode of political thought. Moreover, science fiction is also one of the most popular genres in anime.[36] There is much more scope to explore philosophical aspects of the moving image beyond live action films and I assert that science fiction anime is a potentially promising site for political thinking.

The third is that sources are largely limited to Hollywood and European films. Some popular films from the USA and Europe have been analyzed as a potential medium for political and philosophical inquiries in the field of literature, politics and philosophy, yet with only a small number of exceptions, the political and philosophical implications of imaginative fictions from other parts of the world such as Japan have remained unexplored.[37]

Thus, considering the limitations of the methods and sources in existing studies of film and its political and philosophical aspects, it would be appropriate to add to this work by looking at medium-specific features more closely, as well as extending the sources from live action to animation and anime, from Hollywood and Europe to the world beyond. Anime has specific aesthetic features and tendencies that differ from live action films and these features also relate to the expression of pressing political and philosophical ideas. Anime – rich fictional imaginings from Japan – can be a valuable source for exploring the philosophical capacity of the moving image further.

3.5.   Towards a Method for Analyzing Anime as a Mode of Thought

Considering some limitations in sources and methods in existing studies on visual media, politics and philosophy discussed in the previous section, I drew attention to animation, particularly anime. In this section, I review some of the existing studies that analyze the political and philosophical

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[35] Some notable exceptions are Lamarre (2009); Goto-Jones (2007); Brown (2010).

[36] Napier (2005, 11) suggests that cyberpunk and the so-called *mecha* genres (a genre featuring robots and machines) are the two most popular genres in anime.

[37] Oshii Mamoru is one of the few exceptions in Japanese films that caught a large scholarly attention for the philosophical exploration. Oshii's *Ghost in The Shell* (1995) is a very popular object of study (Silvio 1999; Napier 2005; Orbaugh 2002; Orbaugh 2006; Goto-Jones 2007; S. T. Brown 2010; G. A. J. Miller 2012).

aspects of the animated moving image and categorize them into two methodological orientations: the *thematic-oriented approach* and the *aesthetic-oriented approach*. Film philosophers and literary theorists often use a thematic-oriented approach in their analyses, while film and media scholars use the aesthetic-oriented approach to investigate the characteristics of media. I argue that we should analyze both thematic and aesthetic aspects of the animated moving image in order to understand the political and philosophical aspects of anime because these aspects are integrated into anime's expression of philosophical ideas. As the preceding studies have shown, anime has its own specificities and tendencies and anime's different styles and techniques are often integrated into the visual narrative. The visual narrative is also closely linked to the expressions of philosophical themes and ideas in anime. Thus, we need to pay attention to both aspects. I propose a *trans-medial approach* combining thematic-oriented analysis and medium-oriented analysis to exploreanime's political thought.

The growing body of scholarship focusing on political and philosophical aspects of animation is a more recent trend, both inside and outside of Japan since the late 1990s (Kotani 1997; Ueno 1998; Azuma 2001; Azuma 2007; Napier 2005; Bolton, Csicsery-Ronay, and Tatsumi 2007; S. T. Brown 2006; S. T. Brown 2010; Goto-Jones 2007; Lamarre 2009; Steinberg 2012a; Condry 2013; Yokota Masao and Hu 2013). A number of articles have been published in the leading academic journals since 2000 including *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *Science Fiction Studies*, *Japan Forum* as well as *Mechademia*, an annual book series by the University of Minnesota Press dedicates to critical works on anime, manga and fan culture since 2006. Accordingly, a number of monographs and edited volumes on anime's cultural, political, and philosophical expressions have been published.

3.5.1. Napier's Thematic-Oriented Analysis

Among those works, Susan J. Napier's *Anime: from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (2005, formerly *Anime From Akira to Princess Mononoke*) is a pioneering work offering an insightful overview of contemporary Japanese anime and discussing anime's expressive potentials in a book-length form. Focusing on anime's narrative form, Napier argues that anime is a distinctive art form effective in "stimulating audiences to work through certain contemporary issues in ways that older art forms cannot" (ibid., 4). Napier also points out anime's medium-specificity by saying that "anime is a medium in which distinctive visual elements combine with an array of generic, thematic, and philosophical structures to produce a unique aesthetic world" (ibid., 10).

In her analyses, Napier examines a variety of anime titles in terms of the three major expressive modes: the apocalyptic, the festival, and the elegiac, and discusses how these expressive modes interrelate with contemporary issues such as gender, identity, technology, modernity and so forth. Although she also admits that these modes are also found across other cultures, she sees anime as "a new kind of hybridity on the part of a global younger generation that is increasingly electronically conversant with the vast variety of worldwide popular culture" (ibid., 26). Thus, she emphasizes the importance of studying anime and its relation to various social and cultural issues both in a global context as well as in Japan's socio-historical contexts.

Napier's work is very informative and insightful yet there are some limitations in her approach to anime analysis. Firstly, she examines anime like any other literary text, rather than as an animated moving image, by solely focusing on the narrative structure, themes, and ideas found in anime. Although she rightly points out that anime is a distinctive narrative art form combining both visual and philosophical elements, her analyses tend to be less explicit about the ways in which visual elements are integrated into the philosophical dimensions, partly because she hardly discusses how the visual narrative works in expressing philosophical ideas in anime. In Chapter Five (85-102), for example, Napier examines three titles of the so-called robot anime or *mecha* genre – a subgenre of science fiction featured robots and machines: *Guyver: Out of Control* (1986); the OVA series *Bubblegum Crisis* (1987) and its sequel *Bubblegum Crash* (1991); and the television series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1996). She discusses how these works depict human interaction with technology in very sophisticated ways. Although all three titles are categorized into a typical *mecha* genre, Napier suggests that each work addresses human's ambivalent feelings about robot through the depiction of the anxieties, fears, and struggles of the protagonists rather than an optimistic celebration of technological empowerment found in other *mecha* anime. Her argument is plausible but her analysis does not address the visual narrative. It is therefore not clear to what extent the narratives of these anime titles are distinctive and different from other sophisticated cyberpunk titles, films, or spin-off manga.

For example, *Evangelion* is widely seen among fans, critics and scholars as an unconventional *mecha* anime in terms of both its themes and aesthetics.[38] Although the series has some basic

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[38] Azuma Hiroki (1996) celebrates director Anno Hideaki's achievement by discussing how Anno abandons a happy-ending narrative common in anime especially in the second half of the series. The series also deviates from conventional anime aesthetics, or what Azuma calls "anime-like things." While critic Kotani Mari (1997) points out the unique narrative of the series in terms of feminist literary theories, Lamarre (2009) discusses how the series articulates moral and existential crisis as technical crisis, and vice versa using effective limited animation techniques.

elements of *mecha* (combat scenes of giant robots, a story about teenagers etc.), its thematic aspects are distinctive, as Napier also notes. These include the fears, anxieties, and complex psychological status of the protagonists and the main characters when they face serious problems about human relationships, as well as in human-machine relationships. However, Napier seldom discusses its visual aesthetics – another important aspect of the narrative. *Evangelion* effectively uses various visual narrative techniques throughout the series to depict characters' complex emotions (a mixture of photorealistic still images and abstract images, color motifs, effective camera angles, voiceover narrations and so forth). These emotions are closely related to a symbolic expression of anxieties as well as ambivalent feelings about human interaction with technology. These visual narrative strategies are clearly different from the techniques used in text-based narratives. If we assert anime's medium-specificity – the combination of visual and philosophical elements in the narrative – as Napier suggests, it would be helpful and more convincing to examine how both the thematic and visual aesthetic aspects are integrated in anime narrative as well.

Napier's second limitation is that her three expressive modes – the apocalyptic mode, the festival mode, and the elegiac mode – appear to be a plausible account of common narrative forms in anime, yet it is less clear to what extent these expressive modes are distinctive aspects of anime because many anime titles she selected for the analysis are in fact adaptations of other narrative forms, most prominently manga and novels. Just to mention a few, *Akira* (1988), *Ranma 1/2* (1989), *Sailor Moon* (1992), *Cutey Honey* (1973), *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), *Nausicaä on the Valley of the Winds* (1984), *Only Yesterday* (1991), and *Barefoot Gen* (1983) are all based on the original manga titles; while some other anime works by Studio Ghibli such as *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), and *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988) are based on the novels. Although there are also original animated works such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1996) or *Princess Mononoke* (1997), it would make more sense to see Napier's expressive modes as not exclusive to anime but rather common to Japanese visual culture in general, including manga and anime.

In summary, Napier's work convincingly demonstrates that anime is valuable for scholarly investigation, "a cultural phenomenon worthy of being taken seriously, both sociologically and aesthetically" (2005, 4). Her work has been an important reference among the studies of anime available in English and has generated further critical scholarship in North America, Japan and beyond since her monograph was first published in 2001. Methodologically, however, Napier's focus on the generic, thematic and philosophical aspects of anime in the narrative, or what I call thematic-oriented analysis, has some limitations when it comes to consider anime's media-specificity, because anime's visual narrative forms or that of the (animated) moving image more generally remain unanalyzed in her study. In other words, Napier's work does not give a clear answer to questions such as what is anime; whether anime is a distinctive expressive medium or not;

and to what extent narrative in anime is different from other narrative art forms such as novels, manga or live-action film.

3.5.2. Lamarre's Medium-Oriented Analysis

Among the growing scholarship on anime and its philosophical aspects, Thomas Lamarre (2002b; 2006; 2009; 2008; 2010; 2011) considers the limitations of existing anime scholarship focusing on a thematic and/or socio-cultural 'reading' of anime, and extensively studied the anime medium's specificity. However, Lamarre acknowledges from the outset the difficulties of defining anime, as well as cinema and animation, because they are all related to each other. "If it is impossible to isolate and define cinema, animation and *anime* as objects, this is because there is always animation in cinema, cinema in animation, cinema in *anime*, *anime* in animation and so forth. And there always has been" (Lamarre 2002a, 187). Therefore he theorizes anime by examining anime's relations to other media, the dynamic of changing material conditions such as digital technologies, as well as the social, cultural and historical contexts in which anime has emerged.

In his major work *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (2009), Lamarre suggests two tendencies of compositing (i.e. internal editing of image layers) that appear across cinema and animation called *cinematism* and *animetism*, and stresses the multiplicity of animation.[39] In Lamarre's account, *cinematism* and its adjective *cinematic* are associated with cinema and camera movement; *animetism* and its adjective *animetic* are associated with cel animation and the moving plane. Lamarre characterizes animetism with its openness in compositing that allows layers of the image to move more independently that create a very different sense of motion. Yet, Lamarre stresses that neither tendency is the exclusive property of cinema or animation, and that both tendencies can be found in the moving images of cinema and animation. Referring to the multiplicity of animation, he notes that "it is the coexistence of so many different varieties of animation based on divergent series of animation that makes for the overwhelming sense of the centrality and ubiquity of animation today" (Lamarre 2009, 36–37).

Lamarre has developed an alternative theory of animation, centered on Japanese animations, but without lapsing into *medium-essentialism* or technological determinism.[40] He is well aware of

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[39] Lamarre (2009, 324n16) borrows the terms *animetism* and *animetic* from Ueno (1998) to capture qualities of the animated moving image. Lamarre does not use the term animatic to indicate characteristics of animated moving image. There is no discussion on his choice of the term animetic over animatic.

[40] According philosopher Noël Carroll (1996, 49), *medium-essentialism* is "the doctrine that each artform has its own distinctive medium, a medium that distinguishes it from other forms." Carroll rejects major positions

the danger of technological determinism and notes that his approach to animation "does not imply technological determinism, historical teleology, or formal exclusivity" (ibid., xxii). Lamarre argues that cinematism and animetism are different tendencies of the moving image, rather than a genre, styles, or mediums in their own right. Both cinematism and animetism "harness different potentials of the moving image in specific ways" (ibid., 10). Moreover, he also suggests that cinematism and animetism might coexist in a single film or even within a single moving image (frame or shot) and we might find various mixtures of those tendencies (Lamarre 2009, 10). Lamarre, however, stresses the specificity of animation because he believes that it is impossible to separate questions about the material specificity of animation from questions about material conditions or historical formation (ibid., xxiii). For Lamarre, animation is not an ontologically determined medium but rather a series of relationships or intervals between different technologies. By borrowing Felix Guattari's theory of the machine, Lamarre looks at animation in terms of the machine and sets it as a theoretical basis. Here, the machine means a series of relations and intervals between different technologies and it also implies a freer relation to technology, not the inevitable structural submission to technology (ibid., 303). Lamarre sees the animation stand – a device used for cel animation production since the early days to stack multiple celluloid screens in front of the camera – as an apparatus of animation that assembles other technical devices such as cameras and lighting to generate animated moving images. Since animation entails technologies of the moving image, he regards animation as the *multiplanar* or *animetic machine*. Looking at animation in terms of the animetic machine allows him to account for movements not only in cel animation but also at 3-D digital animation and CGI in live-action cinema because these technologies face a similar problem of "how to make the layers of the image appear to hold together under conditions of movement due to the mechanical succession of images" (ibid., 304).

In summary, Lamarre (2009) closely studies anime's medium-specificity and its relations to other media, material and technological orientations, most prominently the relationship between cinema and anime. Considering anime as a way of thinking about technology, Lamarre integrates the philosophical aspect of technology into his study of animation. In other words, Lamarre successfully examines both thematic and medial aspects of anime. His detailed study of various forms of animetic aesthetic features (open compositing, depth, movement, character design etc.) are very insightful and allow us to understand the dynamism of the animated moving image and sheds

of film theory, such as photographic realism that claim film's medium specificity as a unique, determinate medium. He instead suggests that there is no "nature" or ontological essence of the film or any other art media. Carroll (1996) argues that the very existence of any art medium is merely contingent, and there are only norms, styles, and practices in casual historical context. He also proposes an alternate framework for understanding the moving image and attempts to theorize the moving image at micro-levels, rather than establishing a grand theory of film.

light on anime's relation to technology. There are, however, some limitations if we are going to apply his medium-oriented approach to visual narrative analysis for exploring philosophical ideas through anime.

Firstly, Lamarre devotes a large part of his analyses to a thorough discussion of animetic features, yet hardly addresses common cinematic features in anime. Lamarre's primary focus on animetic features may be insufficient when it comes to analyzing political and philosophical aspects of anime, since it leaves other significant cinematic narrative strategies in anime unanalyzed. When analyzing philosophical issues in the in animated moving image, we need to include both animetic and cinematic features since cinematography (e.g. camera movement, camera angle), editing and sound also play an important role in the narrative of the animated moving image.

Secondly, Lamarre's discussion focuses on the animetic features and their relation to the issue of technology, but does not touch on how technology is depicted through the narrative and especially verbal elements of anime, such as dialogues, voiceover narration or written texts. Obviously Lamarre's work is a critical reflection of textual and thematic anime analysis done by other scholars, and he focuses on key medial/visual aspects of anime rather than non-visual elements in the narrative. Yet, anime is story animation and storytelling is essential in anime. The narrative form of anime, or that of limited animation more generally, lie in the effective combination of verbal and acoustic elements with simpler motion design. Thus, it is also important to include narrative analysis of non-visual elements when it comes to exploring political and philosophical ideas through anime.

3.5.3. Towards a Trans-Medial Approach to Anime

Combining the *narrative-oriented approach* with the *medium-oriented approach* to the moving image makes it possible to propose a trans-medial approach to analyzing political-philosophical ideas in anime. On the one hand, the thematic-oriented approach used by literary scholars and philosophers makes it possible to explore how a particular philosophical theme or idea is depicted in the narrative. On the other hand, the medium-oriented approach taken by film and media scholars makes it possible to consider anime's medium specificity and its relation to other media, and also to explore how various visual and acoustic techniques are integrated into the visual narrative. It is important to identify how the different elements come together to shape a narrative and express ideas with animated moving images.

Existing studies on the aesthetics of the (animated) moving image will be useful to identify which elements we should include in the trans-medial approach for the analysis of political philosophical ideas through anime. This section looks at elements and techniques analyzed in the

animated moving image. In the case of the moving image in general, the filmmaker controls a variety of cinematic techniques such as mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing and sound to shape a visual narrative. Similar techniques are also used in the animated moving image but there are other specific elements to animated moving images, which we should particularly pay attention to in analyzing anime.

The first feature is *mise-en-scène*. Mise-en-scène is originally a theatre term in French meaning "putting into the scene" or staging. In film studies it is about *what* is filmed and it refers to various visual elements involving in the framing of the shot such as setting, lightening, costume, the movement of the figures (Bordwell and Thompson 2003, 176).

According to animation scholar Maureen Furniss (1998, 62–83), because the components of animation design are different from those of live-action film, animated mise-en-scène should include other elements such as image design (character and background); color and line; movement and kinetics. Among these elements, image design and movement, and the relation between the two, are the most widely discussed aspects of anime aesthetics in the preceding and ongoing scholarship with a particular focus on compositing, depth, flatness, and motion design.

For example, animation historian Tsugata Nobuyuki (2011b, 12–19) summarizes four stylistic features of anime and most of them are about image design or movement: first, limited animation techniques such as flat and even image design, simplified motion design with reduced number of images; second, distinctive character designs (e.g. characters with big eyes); third, the compositing of two-dimensional and three-dimensional images; and fourth, sophisticated shooting, such as creative lighting and camera movement.[41]

Lamarre (2009) devotes a large part of his discussion on the relationship between the compositing and movement common in anime in his theory of animation. In his account, because the animated image is composed of multiple layers or planes, it creates a kind of openness or gap between the planes of the image, what he calls the *animetic interval*, and the planes can stand out or move more independently. This compositing creates a different kind of movement that he called

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[41] Tsugata (2004; 2005; 2011b) suggests that anime has developed a particular mixture of historical, stylistic and generic features, and this distinguishes anime from animation as Japanese commercial animation. Historically, Tsugata traces the origin of anime back to the early 1960s when the first animated television *Tetsuwan Atomu* series was aired in Japan. Tsugata suggests that the creators, Tezuka Osamu and his animation production studio Mushi Production, played an indispensable role in establishing the significant characteristics of anime. They created its distinctive styles and techniques under the cost-saving production system, and their style has become widely diffused in animated TV works (Tsugata 2004, 138–43). Others acknowledge Tezuka's contribution to anime aesthetics but also address that limited animation and its techniques were already found earlier in the works of United Productions of America (UPA) and Hanna-Barbera Productions (Gan 2009, 254–255; Steinberg 2012a, 11; Ōtsuka Y. 2013, 153).

animetism, which is different from *cinematism* associated with camera and camera movement. In his word, "*animetism* is not about movement *into depth* but movement *on and between surfaces*" (ibid., 7, emphasis in the original).

Animators, critics and scholars also address the visual styles of limited animation, particularly its image design and movement compared with that of cinema and full animation, which are often associated with realism. For example, the still image (*tome*) is used extensively in anime's limited animation combined with other techniques including camera angle and camera movement, editing or sound. There are mixed views on the use of still images.

For example, Miyazaki Hayao ([1988] 1996) points out the intimate relation anime has to manga, and calls its manga-inspired visual style *hyōgenshugi* (expressionism). Miyazaki is very critical about excessive use of such techniques in anime because in his view, animation without motion thoroughly deforms not only the designs and personalities of characters but also time and space (ibid., 106-108).[42] Other critics have been more positive, explaining how the still image is used in a creative way in limited animation as a narrative device rather than a mere means of reducing the number of drawings to save time and cost. Commentators Ōtsuka Eiji and Sasakibara Gō (2001) value such visual expressions developed by Mushi Production Studios and their animators such as Desaki Osamu. Ōtsuka and Sasakibara (2001, 169) see such a visual style as an impressionist approach rather than realist one.

More recently, media scholar Marc Steinberg (2012a, 1–36) considers the specificity of anime, and particularly that of limited animation, in relation to anime's central role in the Japanese model of media convergence, or so-called *media mix*. Steinberg argues that it is the dynamic stillness of the image or what he calls *dynamic immobility* of the image and the centrality of the character that allows anime to connect across different media forms and develop the media mix (ibid., 6). Analyzing the preceding media forms of *manga* (comics) and *kamishibai* (storyboard or paper theater), and their historical and aesthetical contexts in Japan in the first half of the twentieth century, Steinberg convincingly argues that manga and kamishibai developed a sense of dynamism within the still image and paved the way for TV anime's aesthetics and the popular reception of such "still-yet-dynamic images" later.

> On one hand, this dynamically still image [of manga and kamishibai] functioned as a kind of aesthetic precursor to anime, allowing spectators to feel the anime image moving and be moved by the image affectively – even if the image was formally immobile. On the other hand, kamishibai's and manga's development of the techniques

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[42] Neither Takahata Isao nor animator Ōtsuka Yasuo appreciate such *hyōgenshugi* aesthetics, yet they admit its effectiveness as visual expression (Takahata 2013, 363–364, 371; Ōtsuka Y. 2013, 134–142).

for the creation of this dynamically still image provided a toolbox for the development

of devices and techniques essential to the production of anime's limited animation.

(Steinberg 2012a, 33)

In summary, image design and movement are one of the most fundamental elements in animated mise-en-scène. As many commentators suggest, anime's limited animation creates a distinctive sense of movement and dynamism by using image design and compositing even without moving the image itself.

The second feature is *cinematography*. Cinematography refers to the filmmaker's control over "*how* it is filmed" and "cinematographic qualities involve three factors: (1) the photographic aspect of the shot, (2) the framing of the shot, and (3) the duration of the shot" (Bordwell and Thompson 2003, 229). Cinematography includes all manipulation in the moving image by camera, such as focus, zoom, angle of framing (straight-on angle, high-angle, low-angle), level of framing (horizontal or canted framing), distance of framing (close-up, medium shot, long shot etc.), as well as camera movements (panning, tilting, tracking or craning), and special effects. Many commentators and animators suggest that anime has effectively used sophisticated cinematography to shape narratives and achieve distinctive aesthetic effects since the first TV animation series *Tetsuwan Atomu* in the 1960s. (Furniss 1998; Tsugata 2005; Tsugata 2011b; Gan 2008; Gan 2009; Steinberg 2012a).

However, in the case of animation in general, its material and technological conditions mean that cinematographic techniques are limited compared with those available in live-action film and this limitation also has affected its aesthetics. Recent developments in digital technology have allowed much more complex camera effects and have had some impact on animation aesthetics too (Furniss 1998, 63). Going even further, media theorist Lev Manovich (2001) claims that this new technological development in digital cinema transforms traditional photographic cinema into a kind of animation. Manovich defines digital cinema as "*a particular case of animation that uses live action footage as one of its many elements*" (ibid., 302, emphasis in the original). Examining the technological development of computer-generated special-effects in Hollywood in the 1990s, Manovich suggests that traditional on-set filming becomes merely one of many raw materials (e.g. painting, animation etc.) to create moving images.[43] Once live action material is digitalized, the

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[43] Manovich (2001) gives the example of *Stars Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace* (1999). Traditional on-set filming was shot in sixty-five days but the postproduction lasted over two years and ninety-five percent of the film was created on a computer (ibid., 303). Yet this approach has received so much criticism that director J.J. Abrams is now explicitly shifting that ratio back to on-set filming for the new Star Wars films.

computer breaks every frame down into pixels, and pixels are then easily processed further. Live action material "functions as raw material for further compositing, animating, and morphing" (ibid., 301). Although Manovich points out the significant technological and stylistic influence of animation on contemporary filmmaking, there have been some critiques from animation scholars. Paul Wells and Johnny Hardstaff (2008, 6–7) argues that Manovich's view remains insufficient in two ways: first, Manovich defines animation as digital animation and neglects many other forms of animation; and second, his definition of digital cinema suggests that animation has been absorbed by cinema, and that no difference between the two exists. Lamarre (2009, 35–37) similarly criticizes Manovich's account of contemporary filmmaking as a simple shift from cinema to animation and Manovich's homogeneous view on animation. Rather, Lamarre suggests a divergence in the moving image called cinematicism and animeticism. Cinematography has been an important narrative device in anime from the beginning, yet new technological development in digital cinema further influences anime aesthetics too.

The third feature is *editing*. Editing is "the coordination of one shot with the next" (Bordwell and Thompson 2003, 294). There are various kinds of editing techniques such as continuity editing, cross-cutting editing, and montage. Editing is a very powerful technique and it involves a filmmaker's choice of and control over graphics, rhythm, space and time (Bordwell and Thompson 2003, 294-310). Anime also uses various editing techniques such as rapid cutting to manipulate a sense of motion and speed, cross-cutting or flashback to disrupt the temporal continuity in the narrative, or montage editing to dramatize the event and character's feeling.

The fourth feature is *sound*. Bordwell and Thompson (2003, 352) identify three types of sound in cinema: speech, music and noise (or *sound effects*). Sound is another powerful film technique for several reasons: it engages a distinctive sense of mode; it also can guide the viewer's attention; and it can shape a certain perception or interpretation of the image (ibid., 348).

In a similar way to Bordwell and Thompson's account of sound in cinema, Furniss (1998) identifies three types of sound in animation: dialogue, sounds effects, and musical scores. In the case of anime, dialogue or speech more generally plays a crucial role in the narrative. Anime very often uses monologue to express a character's inner feelings both on-screen and off-screen as well as voiceover narration accompanied by a still image or a reduced number of images.

In relation to voice acting in animation, Furniss (1998, 87) also emphasises that voice recordings are important "not only for the development of action within animation; they also greatly affect characterization." In other words, vocal quality and the action of the voice actors and actresses become an important part of character development. This is even more important in

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This shift has been part of the advertising campaign for the 2015 film *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (Abrams 2015).

anime's limited animation, or anime in general, because anime tends to delineate individual characters through character design rather than character movement. As Lamarre (2009, 185) suggests, "in some respects, it is true that the trajectory of limited animation has been to favor graphic design and character design over character animation." Thus, performances by voice actors and voice actresses breathe life into characters and stands in for action in their character development.[44]

In summary, we should consider all of the abovementioned features and elements in the animated moving image in the analysis of anime narrative. These elements are:

- Animated mise-en-scène: image design (character and background); movement; color and line
- Cinematography: camera angle, camera movement, duration of the shots, special effects
- Editing
- Sound

However, the question of how far it is relevant to discuss these stylistic or technical features depends on the focus of the analysis, and different anime titles use different techniques to achieve their aesthetic effects. For example, in the depiction of a battle scene, the 3D animation *Appleseed* (2004) chooses more realistic character movement with the use of special effects, complex cinematography and sound. The animated TV series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1996), by contrast, makes extensive use of limited animation techniques such as speed lines, camera movement, rapid cutting, editing, and sound to depict a battle parallel to the characters' inner feelings rather than using more realistic character movement. These stylistic features may or may not link to the theme or idea that the researcher focuses on, and therefore the researcher has to examine their significance in each case. In the analysis, one has to ask whether different visual

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[44] It is worth noting that director Miyazaki Hayao and the Studio Ghibli prefer non-professional voice actors to professionals in their films. The studio often chooses actors and singers, as well as other professionals who do not necessarily have voice acting experiences: copy writer Itoi Shigesato and his casting as dad in *My Neighbor Totoro*, or animation director Anno Hideaki and his casting as the protagonist Horikoshi Jirō in *The Wind Rises* are some of those examples. Hioki (2013, 223–224, my translation) suggests that Miyazaki would want to bring "something unexpected, surprise, or ordinary" from the non-professionals to complete his characters rather than simply adopting "perfect voice" performed by the professional voice actors. For Miyazaki's thought on voice casting and sounds in his films, see Hioki (2013). For the interesting discussion on Hollywood stars' voice casting for Miyazaki's films in the American market, see Denison (2008).

narrative styles and techniques link to the theme or idea in question or not, and if so, they should be addressed in the research.