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Refiguring Indexicality: Remediation, Film, & Memory in Contemporary Japanese Visual Media

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Refiguring Indexicality:

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by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this Master's Thesis to my cousin, Velina Burke, and my parents, Orlando and Tamara Villot, without whose support my college education would not have been possible. I also extend dedications to my sister, Kayla Jackson, and my brothers, Stephen and David Villot, who offered friendship and support throughout my entire life. Many thanks also to Kim Cadena, Amy Rose, Gina Szucs, and all my other friends, online and offline, who provided companionship and encouragement when I needed it most. I also thank my adorable nieces and nephews, Lynnea, Gabriel, Auria, and Darien, for all the hugs and unconditional love.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Through an analog between film and memory, I argue contemporary Japanese visual media constantly remediates this relationship in order to develop a more inclusive, plastic indexicality that allows media without direct material contiguity access to an indexicality not typically attributed to it. Amidst the early twenty-first century shift from old, mechanical media to new, electronic media, each Japanese text engages the West through intercultural discourses and intracultural responses, just as Japan has continually encountered the West since its forced opening by Commodore Perry in 1853. The plasticized indexicality figured by contemporary Japanese visual media implies the plastic nature of abstracted referents such as memory. I examine these issues through three texts, each representing three different contemporary Japanese visual media forms: the live-action film, *After Life* (Kore-eda Hirokazu, 1998), the anime film, *Millennium Actress* (Satoshi Kon, 2003), and the manga, *Black Butler* (Yana Toboso, 2006-ongoing). Each text remediates film and memory as analogs in ways particular to their own medium to refigure indexicality as inclusive of their own medium, revealing a cultural discourse wherein contemporary Japanese visual media engage with abstracted realities such as memory.

By plasticizing and abstracting the index through its remediation of film and memory, contemporary Japanese visual media reveal visual media's, especially anime's

and manga's, ability to relate to culture. Their refigured index is inclusive of all visual media, allowing each the opportunity to index subjective memory and experience. *After Life* introduces this possibility by privileging its memory-film recreations as a higher fidelity index to memory than documentary, though documentary's remediation informs this index. Both *Millennium Actress* and *Black Butler* extend *After Life*'s inclusive possibilities to suggest that their painterly realities are not divorced from reality, but rather representative of its decentered reception as subjective experience and memory. As media technology extends human beings, through new media such as the internet, it also abstracts us from certain material interactions such as reading paperback books or speaking to friends rather than texting them. Contemporary Japanese visual media suggest that as old media make way for new media, we should readjust our preconceptions about media's relations to culture, for as our world becomes digitized, even animated, the painterly realities found in film, anime, and manga bear more relevance than ever to how we construct our worlds, inside Japan and across the world.

INTRODUCTION

Through an analog between film and memory, I argue contemporary Japanese visual media constantly remediates this relationship in order to develop a more inclusive, plastic indexicality that allows media without direct material contiguity—particularly narrative fiction film, animation, and manga—access to an indexicality not typically attributed to it.[1] Amidst the early twenty-first century shift from old, mechanical media to new, electronic media, each Japanese text engages the West through intercultural discourses and intracultural responses, just as Japan has continually encountered the West since its forced opening by Commodore Perry in 1853. These intercultural and intracultural dialogues reveal how the plasticized indexicality figured by contemporary Japanese visual media calls for reevaluation of media's relationship to culture by revealing the plastic nature of abstracted referents such as memory. I examine these issues through three texts, each representing three different contemporary Japanese visual media forms: the live-action film, *After Life* (Kore-eda Hirokazu, 1998), the anime film, *Millennium Actress* (Satoshi Kon, 2003), and the manga, *Black Butler* (Yana Toboso, 2006-ongoing). As I demonstrate, each text remediates film and memory as analogs in ways particular to their own medium to refigure indexicality as inclusive of their own

[1] Anime is the truncated Japanese term for animation. It is used here (and often elsewhere) to refer specifically to Japanese-produced animation. Manga refers to Japanese-produced comics.

medium, revealing a cultural discourse wherein contemporary Japanese visual media engage with abstracted realities such as memory. Popular conception emphasizes indexicality in documentary, which bears material contiguity to the reality it films. Contemporary Japanese visual media interculturally engages with Western media forms such as documentary and intraculturally responds with abstracted Japanese media forms such as anime and manga that offer a model much like the decentered reality of memory they seek to index. By plasticizing indexicality's material contiguity, contemporary Japanese visual media offers a more inclusive index that extends to twenty-first century global culture's abstraction through new media digital technology.

Background

Understanding why *After Life*, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler* all remediate film and memory as analogs in order to refigure indexicality requires explanation before I analyze how each accomplishes this and what particular conclusions may be drawn from each. My arguments often refer to key theories and positions about the remediation of film and memory's analogous relationship. I unpack these theories and my positions on them in order of importance to my argument. I begin by considering the history of association between film and memory. Through Gilles Deleuze, a prominent thinker on the subject, I define memory with the help of the Japanese language. Lastly, I consider remediation and my position on it. With these positions explicated, the individual chapters will move straight to the questions of the thesis and refer to material here when pertinent.

The relationship between film and memory has been considered before, and my thesis explores questions rarely dwelled upon in the literature: how the remediation of film and memory interacts with indexicality across visual media through intercultural and intracultural discourses. I seek to move beyond the affirmation of film as what Harvey Greenberg and Krin Gabbard describe as "the art most natively suited to depict the brute mechanics of remembering, to meditate on the problems and poetry of recollection."[2] I accept the position of scholars such as Greenberg and Gabbard that film bears unique capacity to model memory through various formal techniques, from editing to lighting, to explore what the relationship between film and memory implies for the index as figured in visual media. The topics of film and memory studies vary, as observed by Susannah Radstone, who describes three separate "[m]odels of memory as cinema, cinema as memory, and cinema/memory, [which] all elaborate differently nuanced understandings of cinema and of memory."[3] Film is often the medium chosen to represent cultural memory, or history, through documentary forms and historical fiction, and memory is often the medium that film attempts to resemble with formal elements such as editing, connecting two different times as one does in mnemonic association. Whatever the particular direction or iteration of the study, this suggests film and memory as analog to each other, counterparts that constantly remediate the other to figure their own workings. Intercultural discourse remains largely unexplored. In *Flashbacks in Film* (1989),

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[2] Krin Gabbard and Harvey Greenberg, "REEL RECOLLECTION: Notes on the Cinematic Depiction of Memory," in *PSYART: A Hyperlink Journal for the Psychological Study of the Arts* (15 December 2009): http://www.psyartjournal.com/article/show/greenberg-reel_recollection_notes_on_the_cinematic.

[3] Susannah Radstone, "Cinema and Memory," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz (New York, Fordham University Press, 2010), 326.

Maureen Turim studies a handful of Japanese films in addition to the American and European films she focuses on. Turim briefly considers how certain Japanese films engage memory, such as *Rashomon*'s (Kurosawa Akira, 1950) flashbacks using Japanese storytelling techniques found in Noh theater. She limits her analyses to the flashback narrative device and its formal elements, focusing on film's capacity to depict onscreen memory through film form such as framing or editing. Turim's inclusion of Japanese film points towards the realization that since memory is a universal human phenomenon, film and memory's relationship reveals not only a culture's particularities, but also an intercultural dialogue through shared media forms.

After Life's, *Millennium Actress*'s, and *Black Butler*'s remediation of film and memory's relationship emerges from this history of associating film and memory in some fashion. One of the more prominent scholars considering this relationship was Gilles Deleuze in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1989). Deleuze argues that cinema, as a temporally-based medium in which images play over time and create illusions of movement by this rapid movement over time, may either directly or indirectly represent time. The time-image of cinema emerges through breakdowns, particularly of sensory-motor links and relations between humans and the world. Time requires heterogeneity and fragmentation, for Deleuze argues that time is "differentiat[ed] into two flows, that of presents which pass and that of pasts which are preserved. Time simultaneously makes the present pass and preserves the past in itself."[4] The past emerges in the present, in perpetual dynamic interaction with the passing present moments, just as the present

[4] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 98.

continually becomes part of the multitude of past moments. Time unfolds in constant differentiation. With this notion of time, Deleuze abstracts memory:

> Memory is not in us; it is we who move in a Being-memory, a world-memory. From this point of view the present itself exists only as an infinitely contracted past which is constituted at the extreme point of the already-there…. Between the past as pre-existence in general and the present as infinitely contracted past there are, therefore, all the circles of the past constituting so many stretched or shrunk *regions*, *strata*, and *sheets*.[5]

For Deleuze, memory precedes us, but it is not continuous, and it is accessed by the present acting upon the past. Memory is like the projection of film, or recordings of the past projected into the present, so the past unfolds simultaneously with the present in an edited fashion. This analog between memory and film, resting upon the notion of memory as decentered and abstracted, offers the prologue to how I argue contemporary Japanese visual media use this analog to refigure indexicality. If the reality these media seek to index is abstracted and functions analogously to film, then the remediation of this relationship allows them to abstract their own indexicality to model their abstracted referent.

By remediating and analogizing film and memory, contemporary Japanese visual media envision memory as visual. This relates to the Japanese language itself, a much older medium. In Japanese kanji, a written script adapted from Chinese (a remediation, if you will), memory is 記憶, which romaji transliteration renders as *kioku*. *Kioku* comprises two kanji: *ki*, which means "write or note down," and *oku*, which means "remember or think." Both kanji can individually be used as verbs, suggesting that memory is active; it is something continually created and maintained. *Kioku*'s kanji

[5] Ibid., 98-9.

implies that writing is the medium meant to actively record thoughts, to preserve the past in the present. Like film and other visual media, it does so visually, for each kanji is a pictogram, a visual abstraction of a concept. Memory is thus positioned in contemporary Japanese visual texts as another visual medium, an extension of human thought connecting past to present. The intercultural dialogues with Western media forms in contemporary Japanese visual media allow for my intercultural leap from Deleuze's philosophy, an example of Western thought, to Chinese-*cum*-Japanese language. The technology of film itself is intercultural, with multiple nations contributing to its developments. As with *After Life*, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler*, my argument allows old media (in this case, written language) to inform new media (Deleuze's philosophy on cinema and time). My methods reflect how the intercultural and intracultural dialogues of contemporary Japanese visual media rest upon its remediations of both old and new media, of film and memory.

The remediation in contemporary Japanese visual media necessitates consideration of remediation theory. While remediation theory refers to media, this does not exclude other definitions of remediation as a form of re-education, or correction, to "remedy" something. One may consider this definition with J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin's theory of remediation as "the representation of one medium in another."[6] This most basic of their conceptions relates to Marshall McLuhan's media theory, as he argued that "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium."[7] This suggests that

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[6] J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (MIT Press, 1999), 45.

[7] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 8.

remediation is at the heart of all media. McLuhan sees the relationship between media and culture as potentially corrective, for he argues that media both reflects and affects culture through its form when he states, "The medium is the message."[8] In McLuhan's view, the developments of electronic media offer more diverse and democratic values than hierarchical mechanical media, and this allows for a global village that networks the world, creating intercultural dialogues.

After Life, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler* all bear some corrective form of remediation, for each seeks to refigure indexicality as more inclusive. This inclusivity extends to the myriad of abstracted realities we exist in, from memories to dreams to our online personae. With this in mind, I redefine remediation here as the repurposing of one media form into another through incorporation or mimesis. When the film *After Life* remediates Noh theater stillness, it incorporates Noh's form into its own. When more abstracted media such as the anime *Millennium Actress* or the manga *Black Butler* remediate film, they do so through mimesis, for their reality is manufactured and cannot reproduce the form in the same fashion. Through remediation of film and memory's relationship, *After Life*, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler* provide particular examples of contemporary Japanese visual media's attempt to engage and reveal the abstracted nature of our culture.

Organization

As previously described, *After Life*, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler* guide my examination of contemporary Japanese visual media's remediation of film and

[8] Ibid., 7.

memory to abstract and plasticize the index. I examine each text in turn, in individual chapters. Three main topics guide each chapter: the figuration of old and new media in the remediation of film and memory, the figuration of indexicality, and the intercultural and intracultural discourses arising from each text. Each topic may be further broken down and arranged according to certain formal or thematic elements, some peculiar to the text under examination and some shared among the texts. The creators of the three texts bear little mention, since I am not interested in authorial intention, but rather the discourse each text produces in the context of its socio-historical moment. The conclusion extends a transmedia dialogue among the texts to broader considerations of contemporary Japanese visual media.

The first chapter, "It's a Wonderful *After Life*," focuses on *After Life*, the live-action film text. I first analyze how the film's remediation of film and memory engages with old and new media to imbue old media with new media values such as networking and create new possibilities inclusive of other media. Through photography's and Japanese Noh theater's stillness and a variety of looping functions, *After Life*'s remediations ultimately point to early Japanese cinema, which also remediated photography and theater. Traditional film becomes the medium of the memory, but its old media looping of time and space points to new media. I argue that *After Life* also remediates video, using its electronic medium to offer old media film the networking and polyvalency of new media. Film and memory, endowed with both old and new media values, offers a plasticized indexicality that remediates documentary in order to adapt documentary's form of indexicality for narrative fiction film. This abstracted indexicality engages abstracted realities such as memory, offering a signifier more closely modeled to

the signified. Through its original Japanese title of "Wonderful Life," *After Life* engages in an intercultural dialogue with the American film *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946), adapting its cultural moment of postwar recovery for Japan's post-crisis economic recovery, a moment where old media swiftly becomes replaced by new media. *After Life* responds to the old media figure of indexicality in *It's a Wonderful Life*, one aligned with "voice of God" documentary and hierarchy, by refiguring old media in new media ways, offering a multiplicity that brings old media towards the new, opening up towards new possibilities in other more abstracted media.

The possibility of abstracted media indexicality is explored in the second chapter, "Chasing the *Millennium Actress*," which focuses on the anime *Millennium Actress*. *Millennium Actress* also engages old and new media forms of film while remediating film and memory as analogous. Traditional film is represented as old media, while video is presented as new media. However, old media film is presented through new media video, and the two interact in a fashion particular to the animation medium, as two layers sliding against each other to create meaning. Figuring these media in interaction through animation puts all three in dialogue and allows animation to remediate their shared origins with film and how film as new media makes use of digital animation. The interaction of layers also figures indexicality in *Millennium Actress*, as documentary with its popular conception of indexicality becomes another layer of meaning, allowing animation to figure a highly abstracted index for abstracted, subjective memory. *Millennium Actress*'s index also points to its own medium, to how image-making is part of culture-making. Intercultural and intracultural dialogue arises from *Millennium Actress*'s portrayal of the protagonist as a figure of Japanese film history. Her life and

chase for a dissident artist imply Japan's own history of interaction with Western culture, particularly Hollywood film, as well Japan's own struggle to maintain an intracultural dialogue in light of its crimes in World War II. *Millennium Actress*'s engagement with this discourse allows it to recover animation's own history. Animation figures its own relevance to culture through the new media video abstraction of film, which models how animation abstracts reality as new media offers abstracted social interactions such as social media like Facebook.

Chapter Three, "That *Black Butler*, Remediated," examines *Black Butler*, an ongoing manga series. Like the other two texts, *Black Butler* also figures old and new media film through its remediation of film and memory. Old media film is represented through celluloid films strips and new media film through manga paneling resembling digital pixels, as points of light presented in array. I contend that this polyvalent figuration illuminates the relationship between manga and film as a creative process. Manga form's alignment with new media explores new potential for old media as it is restored through new media. As with *Millennium Actress*, *Black Butler* uses its own medium's forms to figure a highly plasticized and abstract index appropriate for abstracted memory. New media's abstraction of social interaction through texting or Twitter suggests also the abstractions of manga. *Black Butler* also highlights its own subjective process comparable to performative documentary, a documentary form that dwells on personal, affective experiences. These affective experiences relate to Roland Barthes's concept of a wounding, personal *punctum* found in photography, another still image medium. By plasticizing the index, *Black Butler* recovers the *punctum* for both film and its own medium, expressing the indexical potential of both in old and new media

forms. The passing of old media film is figured as a transformation into new media film, a continuous process that allows for further potential of indexicality to engage with abstracted realities, be they memory or internet. *Black Butler* seeks this potential by figuring intercultural and intracultural discourses through food and consumption. By demonstrating the preparation of British beef as a Japanese dish, *Black Butler* reveals its own cultural discourse as one of remediation. Its self-reflexive figure of consumption is figured through its male protagonist, whose feminization and sexualization demonstrate the processes of intercultural and intracultural discourses, for intercultural feminization leads to intracultural sexualization. These figures reveal *Black Butler* and the manga medium with a transformative capacity that allows it to index a dynamic reality.

My conclusion considers how contemporary Japanese visual media challenge prevailing views of popular media, particularly anime and manga, by refiguring the index to be more inclusive of their media. I argue that film, through its analogous relationship to memory, imbues manga and anime with new potential. I explore the possibilities that *After Life* entertains through *Millennium Actress*'s and *Black Butler*'s abstracted realities. These abstracted realities are not so distant from the material world in which we live, for in a sense we are always making our reality through our subjective perceptions, recreating images of reality in our memories. As media technology extends human beings, through new media such as the internet, it also abstracts us from certain material interactions such as reading paperback books or speaking to friends rather than texting them. Contemporary Japanese visual media suggest that as old media make way for new media, we should readjust our preconceptions about media's relations to culture, for as our world becomes digitized, even animated, the painterly realities found in film, anime,

and manga bear more relevance than ever to how we construct our worlds, inside Japan and across the world.

CHAPTER ONE:

IT'S A WONDERFUL *AFTER LIFE*

This chapter centers on the first media text under analysis: *After Life*,[9] a 1998 Japanese live-action film by director Kore-eda Hirokazu. Of the contemporary Japanese visual media analyzed in this thesis, *After Life* offers the most self-reflexive understanding of its own medium's relationship to memory. Memory is not only recreated on film but film also stands in for memory. In *After Life*, dead counselors at a postmortem waiting station interview the recently dead to discover the one memory they wish to carry with them into eternity and then film recreations of these memories. Once viewed, the deceased disappear with nothing more than that one memory-film. This chapter explores *After Life*'s entangled remediation of film and memory through 1) old and new media, 2) indexicality, and 3) intercultural and intracultural discourses. The relationship between film and memory engages both old and new media forms, from photography to video, through looping elements that render the film and memory analog synonymous to the relationship between old and new media. Neither media form can proceed without the other, just as new media life-videos inform the memory-films necessary for transcendence into eternity. These relationships connect to a larger

[9] The original title in Japanese is ワンダフルライフ (romaji transliteration: Wandafuru Raifu), which uses Japanese katakana to represent the English words "Wonderful Life."

discourse about the value of a more plasticized indexicality found in contemporary Japanese visual media. *After Life* engages this discourse by remediating documentary elements and footage in service of narrative fiction film. The remediation of memory as narrative film offers an indexicality that aligns subjective memory with narrative fiction film and abstracts the index by loosening its material contiguity to its referents. *After Life*'s original Japanese title references Frank Capra's 1946 film, *It's a Wonderful Life*, creating a specific intercultural discourse about indexicality's relationship to film and memory that it intraculturally responds to with its own developments. *After Life* illuminates how contemporary Japanese visual media refigures indexicality in order reveal the value of its media in engaging abstracted realities.

Part One: Old and New Media

As with the other contemporary Japanese visual media under examination, *After Life* self-reflexively remediates memory through the medium of film. The aesthetics of this remediation of memory and film engage cinema from its inception to its current form. In order to examine the confluence of film and memory's remediation and engagement with old and new media, this section analyzes *After Life*'s remediation of old, mechanical media through early cinema and new, electronic media through video. The remediation of early cinema is most notable throughout the memory-film of a counselor named Mochizuki—a memory-film made so he may move onto eternity after spending his afterlife interviewing and making memory-films for other deceased individuals. Mochizuki's memory-film evokes early Japanese cinema through stillness, which engages film's photographic base and the Japanese theater traditions of early cinema, and looping

references, which also recall early cinema practices. The remediation of new, electronic media occurs through the use of video, which a dead man named Watanabe watches in order to choose his one memory. Watanabe's life-videos directly remediate electronic media, and make use of networks, a collective endeavor that fosters polyvalency. In the following, I examine *After Life*'s remediation of old and new media in turn.

Film is both an old and new medium. The division between old and new media depends upon the historical moment, for certainly even early film was new media once, but I follow the divisions between mechanical and electronic media introduced by Marshall McLuhan, the seminal media scholar, in *Understanding Media* (1964). Old media aligns with mechanical media and new media with electronic media, including digital media, as Lev Manovich describes in *The Language of New Media* (2002).[10] While McLuhan argues old, mechanical media maintains social hierarchies, reinforcing imperialism and capitalism, *After Life* imbues old media with the more integrative and democratic values of new media. While both McLuhan and Manovich see limitations in old media, *After Life* suggests that old media taken together with new media may attain full new media potential in relating to abstracted realities such as memory. As a medium spanning the historical transition from mechanical to electronic media across the twentieth century, film comes in both old and new media forms. McLuhan argues that "[t]he movie, by sheer speeding up the mechanical, carried us from the world of sequence of connection into the world of creative configuration and structure. The message of the movie medium is that of transition from lineal connections to configurations."[11] Lineal

[10] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 25.

[11] McLuhan, 12.

connections suggest a top-down hierarchy, while configurations offer non-hierarchical inclusion. While a transitional media, early film is aligned more with old media, for film reels still entailed a lineal sequence of photographs to achieve the illusion of motion and early cinema technologies were mechanical. Early Japanese film often remediated traditional theater, aligning it with even older, pre-mechanical media. Made in 1998, as new media emerges as a major film form, *After Life* speaks to its own historical moment through its remediation of early Japanese cinema, relating it to old, mechanical film media. *After Life* rescues old media for the future, for old media is rendered as an analog for memory with the help of new media.

One of the most notable examples of *After Life*'s remediation of early Japanese cinema occurs in a memory-film created for Mochizuki, the main male character and one of the counselors of the dead. Some context is required to fully appreciate the scene, for Mochizuki spends most of *After Life* interviewing the dead and preparing to record their memory-films. He even assists Watanabe, the indecisive husband of the fiancé Mochizuku left behind when he died. After helping Watanabe and viewing his now-dead fiancé's memory-film in the afterlife's archives, he finally decides to move on to "heaven," which the film describes as a sort of eternity spent with one memory of a person's choosing. In his memory-film, Mochizuki faces forward, inviting the audience into a kind of silent discourse with him. The sound of a projector reel fills the scene, the sound of old, mechanical media the very soundtrack of the memory-film. He sits on the same set of a park built for Watanabe's memory-film. This set also physically resembles the park set from the memory-film of the dead fiancé that Mochizuki had viewed earlier in the film. Adding another layer of complication is the graphic match of the memory-

film park set to the bench found in the afterlife building's grounds, where Mochizuki had contemplated making this film. The camera lingers on Mochizuki seated upon the bench, silent and still, framed by Watanabe's park bench memory-film set. Time passes, but also lingers in the moment, much like Gilles Deleuze's conception of the passing present becoming the emerging past. The photographic quality of Mochizuki's memory-film scene is notable as Mochizuki sits on the bench of his memory-film, barely moving.

This visual stillness recalls two old media forms, particularly photography, the base of early, mechanical film, and traditional Japanese Noh theater, where pauses function as a stylistic device. Both remediations point towards the remediation of early Japanese cinema. The first under consideration is photography, the base of traditional old media film, which used a sequence of photographs to create the illusion of movement. The stillness harkens back to photography's capture of what Mary Ann Doane describes as the instant, or a particular moment of time. By projecting time through a series of differentiated instants, a dynamic experience of time, or contingency, emerges within this heterogeneous projection. In *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* (2002), Doane argues that the nineteenth-century rationalization and standardization of time removed people from their full immersion in time's cycles, but "film archives…a 'lost' experience of time as presence, time as immersion."[12] The rapid succession of photographic instants immerses people in time, but their meaning derives from the standardization of time that allows the projection of instants through time. This creates a contingency of any-instant-whatsoever, restoring the immanence of time paradoxically through its standardization.

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[12] Mary Anne Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 221-2.

A similar paradox emerges in Mochizuki's memory-film, for it is the movement of the photographic instants that create the motion—and yet, he barely moves, so the motion of still images creates stillness. Yet, the stillness is not wholly still, unlike a freeze-frame, and allows for minimal movement. The contingency reveals this remediation is of photograph as the base of film, not photograph as a medium unto itself, allowing for a polyvalent meaning that networks media.

This may be contrasted to the film with which *After Life* directly engages, *It's a Wonderful Life*, an old media Hollywood film which uses a freeze-frame. Freeze-frames are accomplished through a loop of the same image repeating, remediating photography, the base of traditional film. Unlike *After Life*, which allows for minimal movement in its stillness, *It's a Wonderful Life* momentarily obscures its own film medium by highlighting photography, limiting it to old media in form. Electronic new media had yet to enter the popular scene in 1946, and *It's a Wonderful Life* points to old mechanical media, photography, the base of old media film. The moment centers on identification of the celebrity Jimmy Stewart as George Bailey, connecting him to the base of this film, its lone protagonist. No other character will be as important as George, and no other character receives a freeze frame. The hierarchy of mechanical media has been established, with both photography and George at the top. In *After Life*, photographic remediation ultimately serves the film medium through the allowance for movement and contingency. Mochizuki is the male protagonist, but Shiori, the female protagonist, receives considerable attention as well. Their co-worker relationship is one of networking, not hierarchy. The memory-films self-reflexively reveal the relationship between early Japanese cinema and photography, of rationalization and contingency of

time, all through the play of stillness, but does so in a way that includes other forms of media than *It's a Wonderful Life*'s freeze-frame.

The stillness of Mochizuki's memory-film also remediates traditional Japanese theater, which may be considered the old media to the entire film medium's new media. The memory-film scene, near the end of the film, is a culmination of all Mochizuki's experiences, his finale, and perhaps even the point of *After Life*, for Mochizuki has learned to let go and move on with his afterlife. The stillness of Mochizuki sitting on the bench provides a coded representation to those familiar with Japanese cultural signs that this is an important moment, if not the most important moment, of the film. This cultural code emerges from a tradition in Japanese Noh theater described by Kunio Komparu: "Noh is sometimes called the art of *ma*. This word can be translated into English as space, spacing, interval, gap, blank, room, pause, rest, time, timing, or opening. Indeed, the conceptual prescription for this term varies with the speaker."[13] Located within an actor's lack of movement, *ma* provides a still moment that Masaru Sekine claims "adds to the emotional intensity of the drama, for it enables the audience to appreciate more fully what is going on."[14] The remediation of *ma* in *After Life* suggests that *ma* does more than provide understanding—it punctuates the flow of time in a performance. It highlights Mochizuki's past, his memories, as well as his future as the memory-film. *After Life*'s *ma* thus provides a pause that contradictorily highlights the movement it contextualizes, signifying all that preceded it and all that will emerge from it. It creates a lack of performance within a performance. As with the paradox of stillness and motion, of

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[13] Kunio Komparu, *The Noh Theater* (New York: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1980), 70.

[14] Masaru Sekine, *Ze-Ami and His Theories of Noh Drama* (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe Limited, 1985), 93-4.

temporal standardization and contingency in the remediation of photography, this is a paradox of time, where time seems to pause even though it proceeds. This remediation of theater occurs at once with the remediation of photography, for the paradox of the stillness lends itself to polyvalency.

The polyvalency of the stillness indicates another old media remediation, that of early Japanese cinema. The remediation of photography and of traditional Japanese theater techniques point directly to early Japanese films, which made use of both, either as the base of its medium or within its contents. Early Japanese film often filmed theater plays and used theatrical elements, from stories to set designs to actors. Old media film with photographic stills captured into film strips were used to record it. Donald Richie claims that "[t]he Japanese audience perceived film as a new form of theater" when it first developed, and Japanese audiences behaved at the movie theater much as they would at a theatrical play.[15] At the time, Japanese audiences found it difficult to discern the difference between theater and film, acerbated no doubt by the prevalence of the *benshi*, or live film narrators. Isolde Standish observes that early Japanese film companies drew staff from theater groups, causing a further remediation of theater performance into film.[16] Early Japanese cinema was perceived as old media even before electronic media were developed and dubbed "new" relative to the historical moment. The remediation of theater into early Japanese film persists throughout film history. Ozu Yasujirō remediated the art of *ma* in his film *Late Spring* (*Banshun*, 1949), which stillness also

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[15] Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film: A Concise History, with a Selective Guide to DVDs and Videos* (Tokyo; London; New York: Kodansha International, 2005), 22.

[16] Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Film: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York; London: Continuum International, 2005), 36.

pervaded. He self-reflexively acknowledges his debt to traditional theater during an extended sequence during which the main characters watch a Noh play in which an actor uses the art of *ma* to pause. In remediating photography and theater, *After Life* also remediates early Japanese cinema and even the work of the seminal Ozu, a director well-known outside Japan. By remediating this film history, *After Life* remediates the memory of the film medium itself—a move quite appropriate for a scene filming the memory of *After Life*'s own male protagonist. The engagement with old media becomes a remediation of old media.

As Mochizuki's memory-film suggests, memory and film become analogs through synonymous remediation, a loop constantly reaffirmed at all levels of *After Life*'s text. The reference to film history, the public memory of film, in a scene dedicated to recording a memory on film, creates a loop, a continuous connection between the inception of film and *After Life*'s historical moment at the end of the twentieth century, when new media becomes prevalent. Film's transitional elements emerge within looping, for it connects old media to new media. Lev Manovich argues that both early cinema and the computer programming found in new media make use of looping actions, so that new media is at once moving forward while also looping back to the inception of the old media.[17] Mochizuki's memory-film reaffirms this looping, for after the initial period of stillness, Mochizuki leans forward in thought while still sitting on the park bench set previously described. His pose mimics his own thinking pose on another bench earlier in the film, as well as the pose of reflective thought taken by an actor who had posed as Mochizuki in his dead fiancée's memory-film recreation. He mimics both himself and an

[17] Manovich, 296-300.

actor's representation of himself, creating a referential loop to earlier points of the film. The bench he sits on is in the same set that his dead fiancée's husband, Watanabe, had staged his own memory-film, evoking yet another memory representation. The park represented in the set was the same park where Mochizuki had parted from his fiancée, which became the same setting of her own memory-film. Stillness pervades each memory-film, linking their aesthetics. In this simple gesture, Mochizuki visually recalls numerous memory-films shown throughout *After Life*, memories of films about memories. When considering the remediatory looping references to film history also present in this complex and highly polyvalent scene, it becomes apparent how the remediation of old media becomes the medium of film and memory's analogous relationship.

Old media does not stand alone, for *After Life* also makes use of new media while correlating film and memory. The most notable use of new media occurs through video, an electronic medium often associated with film, especially in the rental film business that emerged in the late twentieth century. Halfway through *After Life*, Mochizuki, in his capacity as counselor to the dead, presents videos of recorded life events to an indecisive Watanabe. Jon Ellis describes these videos as "badly shot home movies. The image is blurred. The sound seems tinny. Even the acting looks fake. As Mochizuki warns Watanabe: 'They won't match your memories exactly, so please just use them for reference.'"[18] Though the videos lack the polished presentation and transcendent power of film in *After Life*, they offer the networking potential of new media, connecting numerous people and experiences. The videos show recorded events, not the subjective experiences that comprise memory, thus offering external experiences without the

[18] Jon Ellis, "Reviews: After Life," in *Film Quarterly* 57 (2003): 35.

perspectives and emotions of internal experiences. However, their referential capacity allows for new internal experiences to the same external experiences. They do not embody the same subjectivity as film does, but still create it. The life-videos network between old and new media, memory and experience, imbuing old media film with new media configurations.

The networking potential of *After Life* emerges through video's referential capacity. Some distant observer recorded Watanabe's life, creating a reference to his memory. These videos network with Watanabe's own memory, offering the potential to inscribe value to his memories through new experiences of the events of his life. The past emerges in the present, different from the other past moments that emerged in different present moments. The perspective of his present moment allows him to add new value to his memory, though he does not do so alone. Watanabe would never have had access to these videos if Mochizuki had not ordered them for him. Watanabe alone cannot choose his one memory, but Watanabe, Mochizuki, and the videos can help him choose. This networking prevents the singular directive and acknowledges that no individual lives in isolation. People form memories together, through shared experiences and histories. Film is also a collective venture in *After Life*. There are directors, producers, actors, set designers, and camera operators. Even though the dead choose their one memory, they alone do not produce the memory-film, but produce it with others. The networking power of new media, of video, infuses film as well.

The polyvalency of *After Life* emerges from its new media associations. Watanabe's life-videos hold meaning for more than just him. As the man who married Mochizuki's fiancée after Mochizuki's death, Watanabe's life-videos also show events

involving the latter's wife. When Mochizuki sits down and watches some of the videos with Watanabe, he views not only Watanabe's life, but also his lost fiancée's life. The experience of watching Watanabe's life-video later leads Mochizuki to watch his fiancée's memory-film and then finally choose his own memory. His memory-film takes place on the same set used in Watanabe's memory-film, which is a recreation of a scene from Watanabe's life-videos that *After Life* makes a point to show. Watanabe, and Mochizuki by extension, remediate the videos into their memory-films. The networking of new media video allows for polyvalency; the life-videos, the recorded events, offer multiple subjective experiences and memories for the characters involved. The memory-films cannot exist without networking. New media videos provide inspiration and background for the memory-film recreations. Old media requires new media to achieve new potential and possibilities. Film, imbued with both old and new media elements, provides the best signifier, the best index, for memory, as I argue in the next section.

Part Two: Indexicality

Contemporary Japanese visual media reveal a passion for and engagement with indexicality that abstracts the signifier and offers a plastic relationship between the index and its material contiguity with its referent. While media without direct material contiguity, such as anime and manga, have larger stakes in this engagement, *After Life*, despite being a live-action film, points towards their abstractions and shares their same passion for abstracted indexicality. This passion emerges from *After Life*'s cinephilia, or the love of film that emerges as its traditional old media forms give way to new media. *After Life*'s emphasis on film's capacity to embody memory privileges creativity and

narrative fiction film. It imbues its own form, that of narrative fiction film, with indexicality by remediating a film form considered highly indexical in popular culture: documentary. This section examines *After Life*'s engagement with and abstraction of the index through the remediation of documentary, theories of the index, and cinephilia. The figure of indexicality reinforces the analog of film and memory in *After Life* through both old and new media, revealing the suitability of a plasticized index to an abstracted reality such as memory in a twenty-first century world of new media digital abstraction.

After Life's figure of indexicality first emerges from its remediation of documentary footage. Kore-eda, the director, made four documentaries before *After Life*, so it stands to reason that documentary informs his *oeuvre*. *After Life*'s documentary remediation incorporates documentary footage seamlessly into the narrative fiction, all focused on memories and which memories the deceased would like to keep. The first half of the film dwells on interview scenes "shot head-on, with the interviewers' voices offscreen,"[19] resembling a series of talking-head witnesses from an expository-mode documentary.[20] Over five hundred people were interviewed before the script for *After Life* even emerged.[21] The audience is never informed which of the interviews are scripted and which are documentary footage of real people answering questions about their memories.[22] This style contrasts with the Hollywood film *After Life* references in its

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[19] Derek Elley, "After Life," *Variety* (20 September 1998), http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117913343?refcatid=31.

[20] One of the six modes of documentary that directly addresses the viewer to construct arguments about the historical world. See Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991).

[21] Kevin Ouellete, "Review: After Life," in *Nippon Cinema*, 8 August 2006, http://www.nipponcinema.com/blog/after-life.

[22] Ibid.

title, *It's a Wonderful Life*, which presents the main character's life through an unquestioned "voice of God" documentary-like approach.[23] The narrative offers a literal voice of God (or at least his angelic proxies), describing events exactly as they are and creating a strong determinate reading. What few questions Clarence, the junior angel, poses do not question the narrator's authority or the events, but rather seek further narrative clarity such as when he asks if George's brother lives or dies. *After Life* departs from this model with its interview style, not only allowing for polyvalency and interpretation, but making it a subject of the film. This is most evident in interview with the old woman who does not answer questions and instead focuses on leaves, which forces her counselor to infer her wishes for a memory-film. While *It's a Wonderful Life*'s documentary-like approach ends once the review of George's life ends, *After Life*'s documentary remediation is not limited to these interviews, for the entire film reveals a documentary-like aesthetic, with the more narrative shots often being done in a hand-held style. The film was shot "on 16mm film stock by Yutaka Yamazaki, an established documentary cinematographer,"[24] further reinforcing a documentary aesthetic. Fiction and reality merge, blending the documentary with the narrative. The documentary elements, and the associations of documentary, thus become part of *After Life* through their incorporation. As the film form most closely associated with indexicality, thanks to its non-fiction content, *After Life* takes this indexicality into itself. *After Life* networks with documentary indexicality in order to create its own, polyvalently allowing for both.

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[23] The "voice of God" is usually a male narrator explaining events on screen in an authoritative top-down manner that attempts to negate ambiguity.

[24] Ouellete, http://www.nipponcinema.com/blog/after-life.

The documentary elements of *After Life* imply that contrary to popular conception, documentary and fiction are not antithetical to each other, but rather complementary approaches to reality. In popular conception, documentary dwells on what Brian Winston describes as a scientific inscription of reality. Winston argues that, like any scientific inscription, interpretation is required in order to make sense of it, making fabulation a required part of inscription. In *When the Moon Waxes Red* (1991), Trinh T. Minh-ha describes this interpretation as a fictive space, for everything we see is framed and understood from our own subjective experience, particularly in relationship to the Other. She argues that many documentaries are disingenuous about their realism, for everything, from its framing to its production to its reception is subjective. Even reality is ambiguous and decentered—multiplicity of meaning exists at all levels. In this multiplicity, fiction emerges, not as a divorce from reality, but rather as an expression of someone else's subjectivity. No one can divorce themselves from their own subjectivity.

After Life's convergence of narrative fiction and documentary realism allows for the plasticization of the index. Consider Tony Rayns's observation that

> [t]he closing stages of the film are resolutely fictional, but there's still a strong backwash from the earlier documentary elements, enhanced by the clean simplicity of Koreeda's *mise en scène*. The recourse to fiction allows Koreeda to get into areas beyond the reach of any documentary camera: an understanding of the reciprocity of emotion between individuals, a suggestion that subjective memories can be just as subject to reinterpretation as 'facts' are, and a sophisticated grasp of the ways fact and fiction co-exist in film - any film, including *After Life* itself.[25]

[25] Tony Rayns, "This is Your Life," *Sight & Sound* (March 1999), http://old.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/147.

Together, documentary and fiction do what they cannot do apart: index subjective memories. The film offers scientific inscription through its documentary interview footage and its attempts to faithfully record memories. Yet, the memory-films recreate the subjective experiences and memories of the deceased, so they inscribe interpretations. In turn, the deceased's interpretation of their inscription allows them to disappear into eternity with their memories, revealing transcendent potential in their interaction. The entanglement of inscription and interpretation reveal *After Life*'s relationship to the index.

After Life conceives of the index as abstracted, with a more plastic and inclusive relationship to material contiguity that allows for the inscription of interpretation found in the memory-films. An index, a signifier that typically bears some trace of that which it signifies, may be considered a form of inscription.[26] What film inscribes in *After Life* is memory, the subjective, personal experience. This inscription is possible through the creative emphasis of narrative film style in the memory-films. *After Life* acknowledges the fictive lens of one's own personal frame, making the stylized recreation of memory the best index of subjective memory. Narrative film, not documentary, offers the best index to memory in *After Life*, engaging André Bazin's conception that "[n]o matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the [photographic] image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which is the reproduction; it *is* the model."[27] *After Life* pushes

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[26] See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980); André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?*, trans. by Hugh Gray (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Mary Anne Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[27] André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?*, trans. by Hugh Gray (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 14.

beyond even this concept of a distorted index still signifying its object to suggest that, if the signified is subjective, individual experience, a decentered object, then the signifier must be far more plastic in material contiguity. In order to become the model of its abstracted reproduction, it must embrace abstraction. That is why the life-videos, with their devotion to inscribing events, do not hold the same transcendent power of the memory-film that embodies interpretation, or mnemonic experience.

The indexical powers attached to film emerge from its old media form, as a series of photographic images projected through time. Bazin observed that "[p]hotography … embalms time, rescuing it simple from its proper corruption. Viewed in this perspective, the cinema is objectivity in time. The film is no longer content to preserve the object, enshrouded as it were in an instant."[28] He argues that film offers the duration of the object, rather than the single instant, and therefore indexes time. Memory also bears a special relationship to time. As Gilles Deleuze argues in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, time is "differentiat[ed] into two flows, that of presents which pass and that of pasts which are preserved. Time simultaneously makes the present pass and preserves the past in itself."[29] This conception of time feeds into Deleuze's notion of memory, or how the present opens onto the past. Layers of past and present interact with each other. *After Life*'s analog of memory and film demonstrates that film, as a time-based index, is the best signifier for memory, a time-based concept.

Both materiality and temporal materiality offer decentered and abstracted realities toward which *After Life*'s plasticized index points. Temporal materiality is decentered,

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Deleuze, 98.

filled with myriad subjective experiences of the present that open onto subjective experiences of the past. The inscriptions of actual events that led to the subjective experiences found in Watanabe's life-videos, for all their value, still do not hold the same power as the interpretive recreations of subjective experience in the memory-film. By loosening material contiguity from the indexical, another interpretation of the indexical emerges, offering an abstracted index for abstracted experience. *After Life* leans on indexicality even as it loosens indexical requirements. As *After Life* suggests when Shiori, the female protagonist, expresses her frustrations by disturbing snow, which will melt and be replaced by more snow, materiality is itself temporary, and abstraction accounts for this experience over time. Easing the obligations to record the object directly allows for an index of the object as perceived, of the experience of the object, rather than the object itself.

After Life also hints at the abstracted aspect of twenty-first century reality by suggesting how our reality has become more abstracted through the introduction of new media. Just as Watanabe's life-videos shape his decisions, our technologies, our extensions as McLuhan sees them, also shape our realities. Digital new media are integrated into office spaces, libraries, the home, and almost all aspects of life. New social media such as Facebook's abstract social interactions create a reality similar to that of the memory-films, recreated and reframed through its own media form. By abstracting us from physical interaction, it allows us to network across space and time. *After Life* imbues old media with the values of new media to illustrate how new media has granted old media, from old films remastered on DVD to old newspapers now saved as digital

history, a new place. The temporality of materiality and material culture create an abstracted reality that *After Life* suggests is best indexed by an abstracted index.

After Life's engagement with indexicality is also a self-reflexive engagement with its own medium. Manovich argues that "[c]inema is the art of the index; it is an attempt to make art out of a footprint."[30] While reductive to the breadth of film history, film, especially Hollywood film, often fosters a strong relationship to indexicality as Bazin and Doane perceive it. *After Life* suggests something different about indexicality at the same historical moment new media becomes prevalent. When Mochizuki watches his former fiancée's memory-film, he does not just encounter the past or even the past as refracted through her, but he also encounters *her*, for that is the memory to which she has been reduced; it is her substance. Memory-films embody the index; an encounter with one means encountering the index and referent simultaneously. *After-Life* reveals that the art of the index, which Manovich considers a limitation of old media film, has new media implications. Memory, like life, has limitations, and both fade away. The memory-film ensures that even as other memories might be forgotten, this one memory, in the form of film, will persist for eternity, and thus a self, even if a reduced self, persists. Thus, the memory-film becomes an archive.

After Life's memory-film archive records the possibilities of the archive at the end of the twentieth century, as old media films gives way to new media film. As Mary Ann Doane argues,

> The indexical trace … carries a historicity, makes the past present. … While the index hovers on the cusp of presence and pastness, it always seems to be haunted by an aspiration to presence, as exemplified by the asymptotic movement [of the

[30] Manovich, 295.

> nineteenth century] toward the instant of instantaneous photography. … The obsession with indexicality in the nineteenth century is a desire for revivification, for endowing the 'dead' past with life.[31]

Furthermore, the connection that *After Life* draws between death and film is appropriate when considering that the desire to archive arises from a fear of finitude and destruction.[32] The indexical capacities of film thus reanimate the dead and offer a form of immortality. The memory-film archives are communally available and continue to affect the world, as exemplified when Mochizuki watches his fiancée's memory-film. The abstracted index in *After Life* suggests that experience itself is the object. The archive emerging from the index exceeds boundaries and preserves this experience. As a film concurrent with Manovich's writing, *After Life* looks back to film history's art of the index not as reductive, but one filled with potential and possibilities, of preserving something important. As old media gives way to new media, *After Life* brings the two together, archiving and reanimating the possibilities of traditional old media film for the new media future.

In becoming a film archive of the index's potential for abstracted realities, *After Life* reveals its passion for indexicality as a form of cinephilia. Doane argues that as traditional film technologies grow obsolete and are replaced with new media digital technologies, renewed interest in film has emerged. For Doane, "[C]inephilia hinges not on indexicality but on the knowledge of indexicality's potential, a knowledge that paradoxically erases itself."[33] She sees this as a desire for cinema's contingency, its

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[31] Doane, 219-20.

[32] Ibid., 222.

[33] Ibid., 227.

ability to envelop one in time, even though this contingency emerges from the rationalization of time into discrete instants. *After Life* rationalizes memory into a discrete moment, for only one memory may be chosen, but its eternal loop also envelops one in its time, and each memory bears the potential and possibility for other memories—as witnessed with Mochizuki, who recalls Watanabe's and his lost fiancée's memory within his own. *After Life* offers the potential of indexicality found in cinephilia, encapsulated within its memory-films. Its cinephilia, however, is not limited to old media, for it finds the potential of indexicality by also remediating new media, as witnessed through Watanabe's life-videos. Its cinephilia reanimates old media through new media, imbuing it with even more possibilities. *After Life* aligns cinephilia's finitude to the finitude of human life and memory and forges connections between old and new media *through* indexicality to save old media for new media, suggesting the need for both to achieve the possibilities of either. This entanglement of media and indexicality in *After Life* further engages intercultural and intracultural discourses in very specific ways, as I examine in the following section.

Part Three: Intercultural and Intracultural Discourses

Contemporary Japanese visual media engages intercultural and intracultural discourses on its own terms, though the engagement invariably occurs through the remediation of film and memory through old and new media. *After Life* develops its specific intercultural dialogue with the American film *It's a Wonderful Life*, which it references through its original Japanese title, *Wandafuru Raifu*, or "Wonderful Life." Its intracultural discourse springs from intercultural discourse to create its own view of film

and memory's relationship and of the inclusive possibilities of the index as new media film becomes dominant in popular culture. This section considers *After Life*'s intercultural discourse with *It's a Wonderful Life* and the intracultural discourse arising from it through cultural moments and modes of indexicality. This discourse opens onto extending the inclusive possibilities of plastic indexicality to more abstracted media such as anime and manga.

After Life provides an explicit and specific discourse with Hollywood film through its original Japanese title, ワンダフルライフ (romaji transliteration: Wandafuru Raifu), or *Wonderful Life*. As previously mentioned, the title references Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, a 1946 American film that focuses on the life and memory of George Bailey as he contemplates suicide. By engaging with *It's a Wonderful Life*, a well-known Hollywood film, *After Life* acknowledges the history of Japanese film engaging with the history of Western films, especially Hollywood films. Japanese cinema began as a foreign import from the West, using Western technologies and materials, which also caused Japan to encounter the ideological uses of these technologies, including, as Standish argues, the "desire to represent 'life as it is' stemming from the Renaissance project that attempted to reproduce reality through mimesis."[34] Japan, with its tendency towards an interpretive, denaturalized representation of reality, now engaged with Western conceptions of indexicality. While Western scholars such as Bazin and Doane offer different interpretations of the index, both agree that the index is a sign that bears material contiguity within a referent. *After Life*, like other contemporary Japanese visual media, implies that an abstracted index that plasticizes this material

[34] Standish, 19.

contiguity is better suited to signifying abstracted realities such as subjective memories and experiences. This development specifically arises from its engagement with *It's a Wonderful Life*.

After Life's convergences with and divergences from *It's a Wonderful Life* prove instructive. *It's a Wonderful Life*'s narrative centers on George Bailey, who, as we come to find out, has been contemplating suicide. Angels review his life with a guardian angel in order to decide how to help him. Their position in the present, viewing the past, suggests these are memories, and the narration's constant identification of and with George locates them as his. Though the film never explicitly states the angels watch these memories on film, a freeze-frame of George as an adult implies this. Though film is the sequence of images projected at a speed that creates an illusion of motion, a still image that is animated through a sequence of images helps to identify film, for a freeze-frame both highlights and obscures film's construction. The freeze-frame's significance identifies these memory scenes as a film, for only film may provide a freeze-frame that reveals its photographic base through the mechanism of film itself. *It's a Wonderful Life* has been considered an exploration of the limitations but prevailing hopes of the American Dream, a fable of postwar reintegration, and a populist fantasy.[35] It is a film about recovering from World War II, the same war during which Japan and America fought each other. *After Life* seems less concerned about the politics and more about the

[35] See Glenn Alan Phelps, "The 'Populist' Films of Frank Capra," *Journal of American Studies* 13 (1979): 382; Robert Ray, *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1980* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 179-215; and George E. Toles, *A House Made of Light: Essays on the Art of Film* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 55. Phelps argues Capra's films reflect his own populist political desires, while Ray connects *It's a Wonderful Life* to the larger stakes of the struggle to achieve the American Dream. Toles makes the far more interesting claim that *It's a Wonderful Life* reflects the struggle of World War II veterans to reintegrate into American society while struggling with postwar despair and trauma.

cultural moment of recovery, as *After Life* was made in 1998, as Japan struggled to recover from an economic recession severe enough that they referred to the 1990s as "the Lost Decade."[36] Like George Bailey, Japan faltered and lost part of their recent history. *After Life* captures this in a very personal way through its own narrative about how the dead, in danger of their personal histories being lost, must choose one memory to preserve on film.

The analog between film and memory in the context of life and death in *It's a Wonderful Life* clearly served as inspiration for *After Life*'s own treatment of the matter. *It's a Wonderful Life* offers a prototypical example of film and memory as analogs through the freeze-frame mechanism. Memory is presented though the film medium. Form matters, as it structures memory as film, shaping both in response. When *It's a Wonderful Life* later erases George from the memory of everyone in his town, the loss of memory becomes a function of film editing and erasure. Erasing the memory of George negatively affects his family and friends: his mother becomes sour and mean, his wife shy and plain, his former employer a worthless drunk, his customers lack social standing, and his children cease to exist. To lose the memory of George is to lose themselves, a form of networking at the level of narrative. *After Life* explores this networking through film form by placing the same importance on preserving memory through film, for dead counselors who never preserved their own memories possess half-lives in which their own memories matter little. Shiori's photo-taking trip to the living world leads to dismissal of those pictures by her co-workers—her memories and experiences are

[36] See Elise K. Tipton, *Modern Japan: A Social and Political History*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 221-39.

meaningless until she chooses to preserve them in a memory-film. Film, a collective medium that generally requires multiple people to produce it and expects multiple people to watch it, offers the same collective restoration of memory in *After Life* as George's friends and family experience when George chooses to live in *It's a Wonderful Life*. To preserve film is to preserve memory, for film is the media extension of memory in both films.

Though taking inspiration from *It's a Wonderful Life*, *After Life*'s more plastic indexicality directly challenges *It's a Wonderful Life*'s traditional mode of indexicality. As previously noted, *After Life*'s use of stillness points back to its own film medium, as well as to other media such as photography and theater, while *It's a Wonderful Life* allows its freeze frame to momentarily obscure its own medium with photography. *It's a Wonderful Life* also reveals a more limited index, for the freeze-frame privileges the object it signifies, highlighting the diegetic character of George as well as Jimmy Stewart, the Hollywood celebrity who plays him. Material contiguity is privileged in this instance, offering the face of a celebrity to the audience and of the character to the diegetic angels reviewing his life. The form, like the narrative, is concerned with George Bailey. Even though his erasure is communal, for it is everyone else that forgets him when Clarence shows him another reality in which he was never born, their lives only become better when George exists. The network gives way to a hierarchical relationship with George at top. *After Life*'s figuration in Mochizuki's memory, however, points to a more open index that allows for difference and movement, as the park-set and Mochizuki's simple movement reminds us of other moments in the film, of other characters and their memories, as well as other moments in time, of early cinema, of other media beyond

photography, such as theater. *After Life* takes *It's a Wonderful Life*'s possibilities further by suggesting an abstracted, mutable reality, one permeated by multiple and variable media, that decenters the hierarchy of experiences. Multiplicity, of remediation and indexicality, indicates that Mochizuki's memory-film is not solely about him. His memory-film does not point just to him, but to all the people around him. *It's a Wonderful Life* dwells in old mechanical media's hierarchical structures, revolving around the celebrity and the protagonist, pointing only towards the object it signifies. *After Life* provides a multiplicity of characters and techniques more closely aligned with new electronic media through its multiple remediations of both old and new media and its enthusiasm for narrative fiction film. By pointing outside of itself, *After Life* suggests that a more plastic and inclusive index, with a looser relationship to the object it signifies, better approaches the experience of memory, for memory is never just about one person, but of how people interactively affect each other's memories as they pass through life.

As previously examined, *After Life*'s confluence of old and new media remediations create an analog between film and memory that offers a more plastic index. In an intracultural dialogue arising from the intercultural dialogue with *It's a Wonderful Life*, *After Life* responds with polyvalency, plasticity, and inclusivity. The memory-films preserve the memory of the deceased as well as the deceased's own memories and others' memories. Contemporary Japanese visual media, as would seem appropriate for its emergence in recent history, espouses the configurations and non-linearity of new media. Japan's culture may often privilege society over the individual, but collective concerns do

not erase difference.[37] This privileged collectivity allows for difference and offers a figure of indexicality for the potential of the internet, cell phones, and other digital new media to allow collective access while still permitting multiple viewpoints and modes of access. This potential indexicality points to how new media abstracts physical reality in order to offer more configurations of access and interaction across the globe. It also informs Japanese visual media's refiguration of an abstracted index that does not signify merely the object, but rather the object *and* the whole field of meanings, experiences, and interpretations in network with it.

After Life self-reflexively reveals how engaging with Western films does not result in simple emulation, but in complex media differentiation resulting from intracultural discourse *about* intercultural discourse. Studies on Japanese film often acknowledge the tensions between Japanese film and Western films, especially Hollywood films, and how Japanese film tends towards a more denaturalized presentation in tension with Western-aligned notions of realism.[38] Each Japanese film is a discourse, both intercultural and intracultural. *After Life*'s narrative also offers an example of this process of dialogue, inside and outside. When a young deceased girl expresses her desire to make a trip to Disneyland, a Western theme park with ties to Hollywood, her memory-film, Shiori takes her aside and explains how conventional and meaningless this choice is.

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[37] See Milton Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1993); Elise K. Tipton, *Modern Japan: A Social and Political History*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

[38] See *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Keiko I. McDonald, *Reading a Japanese Film: Cinema in Context* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2006); Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film: A Concise History, with a Selective Guide to DVDs and Videos* (Tokyo; London; New York: Kodansha International, 2005); Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Film: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York; London: Continuum International, 2005).

In response, the girl later decides that her memory-film should center on her mother cleaning her ears and the warm feeling of love she experienced during this act. *After Life* suggests that intercultural dialogue produces an intracultural dialogue, and the response emerges with a greater fidelity to subjective experience. In this way, we should understand contemporary Japanese visual media's response to the traditional notion of the index by Western scholars. Their refiguration of plasticized index to abstracted realities such as memory extends the possibilities of the index in Western scholarship, for they pay homage to the more traditional index even as they differentiate it. Contemporary Japanese visual media offers a new way to understand the index as a plastic, polyvalent signifier and the new possibilities it opens onto. This will be further explored in subsequent chapters on *Millennium Actress* and *Black Butler*, whose stylized media offer an even more strongly abstracted index and even more consequences to consider.

CHAPTER TWO:

CHASING THE *MILLENNIUM ACTRESS*

My examination of contemporary Japanese visual media's intercultural and intracultural discourses on indexicality's relationship to film and memory extends beyond the film medium studied in the previous chapter. I turn to the animation medium's *Millennium Actress*, a 2003 Japanese anime film by director Kon Satoshi. Anime is the truncated Japanese term for animation. It is used here (and often elsewhere) to refer specifically to Japanese-produced animation. The anime under examination here, *Millennium Actress,* focuses on a documentarian's interview with a retired Japanese film actress, which causes the boundaries between her past memory and present reality to become blurred and overlap. Her memories of her personal life and her filmmaking become continuous and inseparable. Like *After Life*, the subject of the previous chapter, the past is remade into the present with an abstracted relationship to materiality. However, since animation makes use of painted images, its abstraction goes even further. *Millennium Actress* remediates both old and new media to explore the relationship of animation to film in both forms. In its particular remediation of documentary, *Millennium Actress* challenges documentary's privileged ability to index reality and especially memory by incorporating documentary elements to demonstrate that its abstracted indexicality is still indexicality. *Millennium Actress* positions itself as an

abstracted medium suited to indexing abstracted experiences through figures of history and media, creating and engaging with intercultural and intracultural discourses on history. As with *After Life*, three avenues guide my close examination of *Millennium Actress*'s entangled remediation of film and memory: 1) old and new media, 2) indexicality, and 3) intercultural and intracultural discourses. *Millennium Actress*'s plasticized indexicality engages in a cultural discourse that remediates, in both corrective and media senses, sundered histories.

Part One: Old and New Media

Like *After Life* and other contemporary Japanese visual media, *Millennium Actress*'s figuration of film and memory occurs through the remediation of old and new media. *Millennium Actress* particularly remediates visual media such as film, video, photography, magazines, and posters. This remediation of old and new visual media creates an analog between film and memory, and my thesis focuses on two particular instances of remediation: film and video. This section analyzes *Millennium Actress*'s remediation of film as old media and video as new media. Both of these media are particularly notable in *Millennium Actress*'s opening scene, which remediates film *as* video and film *through* video. *Millennium Actress*'s opening scene engages this remediation through Thomas Lamarre's notions of animetic movement, or lateral movement across the screen, and the animetic interval, the interaction between layers of lateral movement, which is particularly foregrounded during a diegetic earthquake. These particular figurations of media bring film and video into dialogue with animation, allowing anime to resource the cultural value often associated with film and video, a

value derived from media's capacity to engage with culture. *Millennium Actress* challenges the exclusion of animation from this engagement in popular conception. In the following, I describe the scene and then examine the animetic movement elements and their relationship to film and video before turning to the animetic interval to do the same.

Millennium Actress begins with a Japanese documentarian named Genya as he watches a science-fiction film during an earthquake. In order to appreciate the opening scene as a frame for what follows, I must illuminate the over-arching plot. After watching a famous Japanese studio destroyed, Genya finally interviews Chiyoko, the reclusive retired film actress he has long admired. As Genya interviews her about her life and film career, her memories about both come to life with Genya and his camera-man as part of the memories. The camera man continues to record her memories as if actually there, while Genya involves himself in the memories to help Chiyoko, reenacting his previous rescue of her during an earthquake and merging present reality with past memories. As her memories unfold throughout Japanese history, from World War II to the 1960s, Chiyoko reveals she became an actress to find a dissident artist she had fallen in love with as a girl and spent most of her life searching for him. After another earthquake leaves Chiyoko hospitalized and dying, Genya confesses that her artist died shortly after they met. Undaunted, Chiyoko reveals that what she had ultimately loved was the chase. *Millennium Actress* ends as it begins, with Chiyoko rocketing off into space in her last film. Memories of Chiyoko's films and personal life become synonymous through the anime, and this figuration in old and new media ultimately relates to animation.

Animation and film began synonymously, and in many ways, film can be seen as a form of animation. Projecting twenty-four individual images per second creates the illusion of movement and animates the images, be they painted or photographed. As with film, Tze-Yue Hu argues, "[P]hotography as a new form of visual language was a forerunner of anime."[39] Animation as a medium developed as a sequence of photographs of discrete manufactured images shown in rapid succession. Lev Manovich further points out that film's forerunners that produced moving images, such as the magic lantern or Eadweard James Muybridge's zoopraxiscope and phenakistoscope, "all relied on hand-painted or hand-drawn images."[40] In short, film and animation emerged from the same media. Manovich argues film disingenuously divorced itself from animation by obscuring its own artifice and delegating this to animation, which, like early film, relied on "the manual construction of images, loop actions, the discrete nature of space and movement."[41] Manovich sees more potential for new media values of polyvalency and inclusivity in digitally animated cinema, a potential previously limited by Classical Hollywood Cinema. Animation undeniably foregrounds its own artifice more than traditional film, for animation is built upon manufactured images. *Millennium Actress*'s remediation of film seeks to reunify the divorced media by leaning on film's indexicality, seeing potential in the index that Manovich finds limiting due to its slavish devotion to realism. By loosening the materiality of the index, anime can lay claim to the same recognition afforded film.

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[39] Tze Yue Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 23.

[40] Manovich, 296.

[41] Ibid., 298.

Millennium Actress promotes its own medium's ability to relate to culture by foregrounding anime techniques when remediating film. Animetic movement and the animetic interval are co-dependent functions of animation. The animetic interval requires animetic movement. Understanding the use of animetic movement will illuminate the animetic interval when I turn to it later. In *The Anime Machine* (2009), Lamarre identifies two movement tendencies in anime, the cinematic, or movement into depth, and the animetic, or lateral movement between layers. Lamarre argues that the animetic elucidates how animation not only works with technology but also how it *thinks* about technology.[42] Animation's conception of technology reveals also its conception about itself and its relation to the world. Lamarre explores how various anime do, indeed, think about technology and culture, and I explore how anime relates to other media in its thinking. *Millennium Actress* wastes no time thinking of film in animetic terms as it opens with a scene from a film within a film of a field of stars in space. It appears as if the camera pans towards the moon, but since this is animation, what actually occurs is that the images slide before a stationary camera in an animation stand. Lateral animetic movement of a sliding layer is being highlighted here. The earth and the moon slide by with lateral motion, locating the viewer in the animated space. The animation takes an unfamiliar shot of outer space and soon reveals it as a familiar space near our world, highlighting the animation medium as the art of taking unfamiliar, stylized art and animating it so it becomes familiar and identifiable to the viewer.

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

This animetic opening takes place in the context of film remediation, linking the two media from the very beginning. The audience soon discovers that these images are part of a science-fiction film being watched by Genya, *Millennium Actress*'s male protagonist. We later discover this science-fiction film was made in the 1960s, a period during which film was still made with traditional, mechanical, old media means. *Millennium Actress* figures this mode of film animetically, revealing how film still bears relation to animation, since science-fiction makes use of artifice and, by genre necessity, often foregrounds created objects or images. Anime's view of the world in relation to itself influences the constant remediation throughout *Millennium Actress*. Melek Ortabasi notes how *Millennium Actress* always figures visual media such as posters, magazines, woodblock prints, photographs, and paintings in relation to its own medium.[43] A particular example emerges with photography, film and animation's mutual forebear: When a sepia photograph of Chiyoko as a girl is shown at the beginning of her memories, she gets up and animetically runs across it. *Millennium Actress* relates itself to film, a medium that has historically received more recognition despite its shared origins with animation. By figuring them all through anime form, anime seeks to gain access to its inheritance.

In *Millennium Actress*, film and memory enjoy a similar analog to that found in *After Life*, but figured animetically. During the film's credit sequence, animetic movements dominate as images of Genya and his camera-man laterally driving through a modern Japanese city are interspersed with what we will later discover are Chiyoko's

[43] Melek Ortabasi, "National History as Otaku Fantasy: Satoshi Kon's Millennium Actress," in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. by Mark Wheeler Macwilliams (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 289-90.

memories of her life and her films. A scene of Chiyoko as a young woman standing amidst postwar destruction is contrasted with the hyper-constructed contemporary Japanese city. A plane sliding laterally across the sky juxtaposes against a spaceship laterally rocketing through space, as if from Chiyoko's science-fiction film shown earlier. A modern cruise ship is compared to a young Chiyoko waving from an oceanliner on her way to film her first movie in Manchuria. A modern train driving through the crowded Japanese city is associated with an older train leaving the station as a young Chiyoko runs beside it, looking for her dissident artist. All of these juxtapositions contrast old and new technology while moving animetically. Many of these Chiyoko moments reoccur throughout the film, both within the diegesis and outside of it. This relates to the looping feature that animation and early film shared, looping moments of time through animetic images. Anime loops film back into itself, revealing its shared old media origins through Chiyoko's origins, through movement, the action that defines both film and animation, setting them apart from other media such as painting and photographs. By interspersing Chiyoko's memories with the present moments of Genya and his cameraman driving through the city, *Millennium Actress* suggests animation and film once again converge through memory.

Film does not appear as the sole remediation in *Millennium Actress*'s opening scene—it might even be considered a secondary remediation, since Genya watches Chiyoko's science-fiction film through a video. As described in the previous chapter, video is part of the new, electronic media identified by Marshall McLuhan. This double remediation becomes apparent through a specific function of video used in the opening sequence. After an earthquake, Genya prepares to leave and rewinds the diegetic

science-fiction film with which *Millennium Actress* opened. As the tape rewinds, it goes back through the scene we just saw, and soon back through clips of other films we have not seen yet, but will later see more of in *Millennium Actress*. What we have seen, we see again and again. The films pass through different settings and time periods, all featuring the same actress, who we later discover is Chiyoko. *Millennium Actress,* an anime, has remediated video remediating film, and the two interact as if different layers placed into interaction. *Millennium Actress* figures this through its own medium by way of the animetic interval, which Lamarre describes as planar interaction, or the movement between layers in animation, which create movement. Chiyoko's films place anime into dialogue with film through video, creating layers of each remediation. The double remediation in *Millennium Actress*, of watching film through a video, suggests that not all layers require material presence for an animetic interval, for they are both present in form. The layer of video and film interact here and impart video's new media value of networking onto the old media films it shows, for the diegetic looping action of the rewind creates a network of loops. This connects different times and spaces, as it will later in the anime, when Chiyoko's memories come to life and incorporate Genya and his camera-man as they film a documentary about her. Film, as new media video, is entangled with memory here, and in an animetic fashion

Millennium Actress uses the animetic interval to enact meaning from its interactions with video and film. The video abstracts the film, just as the animation medium abstracts reality with stylized painterly images, aligning anime more with video. *Millennium Actress* ends its presentation of the diegetic science-fiction film with video functions, complete with static rewind bars and noise. As explored in the previous

chapter, theorists such as McLuhan see electronic media, like video, as being more open and democratic than mechanical media. The new media, electronic and digital, offer networks, non-linearity, integration, and diversity that the hierarchal, mechanical, old media models do not offer. *Millennium Actress* frames film through video, transforming it into this new media model, yet still connected with its mechanical, old media origins through content. The contents offer clips of a variety of films in differing time periods, stretching beyond the content of the science-fiction film shown within the diegesis and pointing to how video extends and integrates film's capabilities. Through remediation and the animetic interval, layers of anime, film, and video all interact.

The network of film as new media video, rewinding through time, now rewinds time within the diegesis, opening the door for past memories to emerge in present reality. The Deleuzian conception of memory—a decentered flow of the present acting upon the past—explored in my introduction and previous chapter once again emerges through this figuration. The present opens onto the past, and the two time periods slide against each other, much like a rewind allows you to reach the past of a video through the present. Chiyoko's memories emerge in the present, allowing both Genya and his cameraman access to her past, also like video's rewinding function. The old media of film, including Chiyoko's films and Chiyoko herself, are figured through the new media of video, and more importantly, in an animetic way that highlights lateral movement and sliding layers. Past and present interact animetically, be it through media or memory.

The importance of the animetic interval to understanding the remediation of old media film and new media video and their interaction with anime, the media in which they appear, can be understood through another portion of *Millennium Actress*'s opening

sequence. Within the diegetic science-fiction film shown on video, a rocket prepares to launch, shaking the film's moonbase. *Millennium Actress* cuts to Genya, who is watching this scene as his own room shakes from an earthquake. During this earthquake, the audience realizes that the science-fiction scene they just witnessed was a diegetic film within the anime. This earthquake figures the animetic interval of *Millennium Actress*, and it will appear periodically throughout the rest of the narrative. Earthquakes animate a seemingly inanimate world, much like how animation brings individual drawings to life. Earthquakes occur when tectonic plates shift against each other, as if the animetic interval of material reality. This earthly animetic interval supersedes the diegetic science-fiction film, now visibly framed by a television screen. The man in the room, a documentarian named Genya, walks in front of it, the layer of his figure sliding over the layer of the film, now trapped within the frame of the television that played the film as a video. Through Genya's animetic movement, animation renders itself the primary medium. Greenberg and Gabbard describe cinema as "the art most natively suited to depict the brute mechanics of remembering."[44] *Millennium Actress* agrees with this by remediating film and memory as analogs. Still, by placing itself as the mediator of other visual media, *Millennium Actress* suggests its own medium may be better suited to represent memory, with its limitations and forgetfulness, its abstractions and representations of experience. Even as it remediates film form into itself, *Millennium Actress* privileges anime. However, it does not subtract from the value of the film medium, for Genya and the narrative clearly revere it, but instead adds this value to its own.

[44] Gabbard and Greenberg, http://www.psyartjournal.com/article/show/greenberg-reel_recollection_notes_on_the_cinematic.

The figure of the earthquake suggests that anime's remediation of film and video creates an animetic interval between these media, suggesting remediation itself is an animetic interval. Different media become layers than then slide against one another through the process of incorporation or mimesis in remediation. Anime finds an injustice in how film history relegates it to a shadow or a footnote, and *Millennium Actress* rectifies this by putting other visual media in constant dialogue with each other. It makes use of the new media video values it incorporated to network with other visual media. The earthquake reveals how media constantly engage each other and remediate each other—and the remediation does not lessen the value of any individual medium, but seeks to claim value for all of them. The animetic interval of the earthquake scenes figures anime as the *media*tor of the visual media it remediates. McLuhan describes media as "extensions of ourselves."[45] Animation creates an abstracted reality much like memory, once removed from the experience it embodies. Through the animetic interval, *Millennium Actress* suggests, by extension, that memory has animetic qualities. In Deleuze's conception of memory, sheets of the past emerge in peaks of the present. This geographical metaphor implies memory is a constant earthquake between shifting tectonic plates of present and past. Presented as analog to memory, film embodies this same animetic interval as it projects past recordings into the present, as do video and animation. The earthquake's reoccurrence demonstrates how media change over time, as exhibited with early film's divorce from animation, how film transitions to new media by appearing on video, how video embraces the old by recording films, or how old media become new media. *Millennium Actress* uses the earthquake to remind us that it does the

[45] McLuhan, 7.

same. All media, old and new, forge animetic intervals with one another through remediation, and meaning is made within this movement.

Part Two: Indexicality

Contemporary Japanese visual media's passion for and engagement with abstracted, plastic indexicality emerges in *Millennium Actress*'s desire to be recognized as capable of offering such indexicality. In the previous chapter, I explored *After Life*'s plasticization of film's mode of indexicality, and *Millennium Actress* takes this a step further, since it uses painted images as its reality. Manovich argues, "Animation foregrounds its artificial character, openly admitting that its images are mere representations. Its visual language is more aligned to the graphic than to the photographic."[46] *Millennium Actress* both agrees and disagrees. While it admits its reality is abstracted and created, it also implies that the reality it indexes is also abstracted and created. It specifically indexes the abstracted reality of memory, but the nature of its medium suggests that there are many other abstracted realities. Daily life in the twenty-first century is constantly abstracted, for social interaction may now occur through texting or Facebook. Our interactions are animated by digital technologies, loosening the material contiguity of physical interaction. This implies animation is not "mere representation," but true to a reality abstracted by new media, as well as to the decentered realities found in memory and subjective experience. This section explores *Millennium Actress*'s figuration of indexicality through its remediation of documentary, its dialogue with theories of the index, and cinephilia.

[46] Manovich, 298.

Similar to *After Life*, *Millennium Actress* figures indexicality through the remediation of documentary film. When Genya, the documentarian, and Kyoji, his camera-man, interview Chiyoko, her memories come to life. At first, it seems like a common flashback, but the play of documentary remediation foregrounds ambiguity between past memory and present reality. As each of her memories play out, Genya and Kyoji appear within the memories. Kyoji's camera transforms into a handheld video camera, an electronic new media device, now recording Chiyoko's memories as they play out. Both Genya and Kyoji react to the environments of the memories, from trains crashing to arrows raining down around them. Documentary is enfolded into memory, and the medium through which it plays out is animation and its new media implications. Memories of Chiyoko's life, her films, and her filmmaking all merge, edited together to tell the story of her search for her beloved dissident artist. At one point, *Millennium Actress* suggests the characters might act out Chiyoko's films or memories, but no diegetic explanation is made as to why the documentarians appear in her memories and affect them. While everyone in the memories possesses muted color, only the two documentarians possess normal skin tones. Once Genya decides to get involved and help Chiyoko in her films, which now have seamlessly transposed her memories, he takes on the muted skin color of the people of the memories. These different skin tones suggest documentary acts as a surface layer in animetic interval with Chiyoko's memories. This is reinforced by moments when Kyoji will laterally pass across the scene, still recording the entire event with his camera. Genya's change of skin tone as he involves himself in the memories figures how he moves from one animetic layer to another, often moving laterally, with horses or weapons, to come to Chiyoko's rescue. Documentary becomes

animetic. The earthquake of animetic interval produces an eruption, a transformation of the landscape, for Genya merges anime and documentary. The remediation of documentary in such an animetic fashion infuses indexicality with animetic qualities.

As examined in the previous section, *Millennium Actress* points out film's own artifice by figuring it through animation's artifice. Following the observations of Manovich and anime director Oshii Mamoru that film rejoins animation through its use of new media digital effects, Lamarre argues that "[t]he loss of cinematic recording of the actual reverses the trend of animation following cinema, making for a situation where cinema becomes animation."[47] *Millennium Actress*'s remediation of film, especially documentary, suggests that cinema and animation were never so separate, that animation possesses the same indexical potential, especially in the tectonic eruptions that emerge from the animetic intervals of remediation. The abstraction arising from new media, loosening material contiguity to provide other, more polyvalent, experiences, suggests that an abstracted, manufactured medium such as animation is not so unlike our reality. *Millennium Actress* positions itself as capable of embodying film's realism by remediating documentary, the most realistic of film forms in popular conception.

Millennium Actress's remediation of film realism is also a remediation of its indexicality. Bill Nichols identifies realism as a structured aesthetic with "both empirical and psychological dimensions that repeat some of the objective, subjective polarities of [Western] culture."[48] He argues that indexicality can be found in the empirical, observation-based dimension, as it connects directly to the referent. *Millennium Actress*

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[47] Lamarre, 36.

[48] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 177.

taps into this indexicality by remediating the empirical dimension of documentary reality, offering insight into Chiyoko's memories framed by Kyoji's ceaseless filming. However, by remediating indexicality into a drawn, painterly reality, it abstracts the index from its referent. Thus, *Millennium Actress* uses abstracted painted images to index abstracted concepts such as memory and subjective experience. The empirical dimension now also signifies the psychological and imaginative dimensions of realism. The tectonic shifts of a painterly animetic interval produce an index that is not dependent upon its referent, but still seeks to capture its ontological nature by reproducing its abstraction.

The abstraction of the index from the necessity to bear a material imprint with the reality it signifies does not remove materiality from the index in *Millennium Actress*. The material world still informs its character and object designs. Paul Wells argues that *Millennium Actress*'s *trompe l'oeil* element, wherein a painting is designed to seem real enough to be confused for reality, "points to the notion that all images, illusions and issues, are only matters related to how we perceive them."[49] Documentary film is still film, a representation. In *When the Moon Waxes Red*, Trinh T. Minh-ha argues that documentary is disingenuous about its realism, for everything, from its framing to its production to its reception is subjective. She argues that even reality is ambiguous and decentered—multiplicity of meaning exists at all levels. *Millennium Actress* remediates this multiplicity of subjectivity and objectivity within documentary to figure its own indexical properties. *Millennium Actress* taps into documentary's own image, rendering it

[49] Paul Wells, "Playing the Kon Trick: Between Dates, Dimensions and Daring in the films of Satoshi Kon," in *Cinephile* 7 (Spring 2011): 7.

as interpretive fictive lens, the seemingly real aspect of the *trompe l'oeil* painting that opens onto a created and creative reality.

Assigning indexicality to a medium making use of created reality such as anime would seem radical to André Bazin, who detailed how the ontology of the photographic index works by contrasting it to representational media such as painting:

> [P]ainting is, after all, an inferior way of making likeness, an *ersatz* of the processes of reproduction. Only a photographic lens can gives us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation, a kind of decal or transfer. The photographic image is the object itself, the object free from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which is the reproduction; it *is* the model.[50]

Though he did not dismiss painting's capacity for realism on its own terms, Bazin's argument figures a mode that values objects of the world. While it is important to note that he does not possess a slavish devotion to likeness—quite the opposite, actually—he does privilege material contiguity. For him, there must be an object that the index touched. I argue that reality, however, may begin as decentered and abstracted. New media particularly abstracts twenty-first century life, as mentioned previously, for the prevalence of digital technology abstracts everything from social interactions now done through Facebook to library research now conducted through online libraries. Material contiguity loosens, but the configurations of new media still allow for new experiences if reality. The abstractions of the anime medium touch upon reality's own abstractions, offering an index to abstracted experience.

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[50] Bazin, 14.

Millennium Actress indexes a very specific abstracted reality: memory. While memory can be collective and physically represented, its subjectivity renders the physical representation as itself an index, for memory is a multiplicity of abstract experiences, a decentered object. *Millennium Actress* seeks to capture the ontology of memory, its qualities, by remediating visual media in the context of Chiyoko's emerging memories. It presents memory as highly visual, following a cultural conception emerging from the Japanese term for memory, *kioku*, which means to write down thoughts, as detailed in the introduction of my thesis. The visual representation and abstraction of ideas and concepts in Japanese script, or kanji, suggests memory is visual. Given anime's abstracted and stylized media, through which human figures are rendered in lines with only certain features such as eyes emphasized, *Millennium Actress* positions its own medium as the perfect index for this visual memory. Painterly likeness is no longer *ersatz*, an inferior reproduction, for *Millennium Actress* implies that the best way to index an abstraction is through abstraction, plasticizing material contiguity without entirely removing it, for the likeness of the model still allows *Millennium Actress* to embody its referent. Its animetic interval's tectonic shifts between media offer the very model of subjective memory and its animetic interval between past and present.

The passion for this plastic indexicality in *Millennium Actress* emerges within its passion for film, be it documentary or narrative. As explored in the previous chapter, Mary Anne Doane identifies cinephilia as the longing for traditional film media as it is swiftly replaced by digital film media. *Millennium Actress* adopts this cinephilia by embracing new media as well, by using the form of video rewinding to imbue film—and itself—with the non-linear, more democratic, networking models of new media.

Millennium Actress embraces new media, for it has reunified film and animation since their separation in old, mechanical media form. *Millennium Actress* longs for the potential to index reality ascribed to film by thinkers such as Bazin, not for film's hierarchical models. The cinephilia that *Millennium Actress* embraces is a celebration, not a funeral, and its longing and melancholy for old media film is inscribed in old media's "chase" for an artist—the same chase that Chiyoko, the film actress, claims to really have enjoyed. As she passes, Genya suggests she might finally embrace the artist. That Chiyoko spent her life chasing after a painter is no coincidence. *Millennium Actress* suggests that after film cleaved itself from animation, leaving their relationship dead in popular conception, film chased after its memory just as Chiyoko chases her painter. The death of old media film, as with Chiyoko's death, finally leads to film and animation's reunion through new media, as film makes use of digital animation effects. *Millennium Actress*'s remediation of film and memory in the animetic fashion described in the previous section seeks to remediate the value ascribed to film as their media reunite, imparting each other with their qualities.

By embracing film's indexicality and plasticizing it through its own media, *Millennium Actress* also points out that it still possesses the more traditional notion of indexicality conceived by Bazin, an index bearing material contiguity with its referent. This index is self-reflexive, for in traditional hand-drawn animation, photographs of various arranged cels shown in sequence create the illusion of animation. Since the photographs are of the hand-drawn image, *Millennium Actress* offers a material referent to its own medium, animation itself. Wells offers some insight into the implications of this:

> Kon recognises that in essence it is the act of image making in itself, which is at stake in prompting what defines and interrogates reality/identity/history, and how far this reveals the sensibilities of those who make the images and those who are depicted in them. Consequently, Chiyoko's reported memories of her life actually see [Genya] Tachibana and his sceptical cameraman, Kyoji, feature in the imagery she is describing; imagery which moves seamlessly between her recollections of the life she led, and scenes from her films –most notably a samurai movie referencing Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957) and a science-fiction film recalling the work of Karel Zeman.[51]

By indexing animation, *Millennium Actress* indexes image-making. Image-making does not just produce art, but also memory, as suggested by the implications of visually abstracted kanji and *kioku*. By figuring memory and history throughout these images, *Millennium Actress* reveals the very process of contemporary Japanese visual media as one tethered to Japanese culture. To make an image is to make culture, to decide upon history. They do not move as seamlessly as Wells claims, for the animetic interval produced by remediation allows for tectonic eruptions, for constant recreations of reality. Like memory, culture is subjective, but it is a collective subjectivity. The multiplicity, the networks, the loops, and the intervals, all exist within Japanese culture. The formal play of *Millennium Actress*, its ambiguity between memory and present reality, all present a mirror to society, questioning how people access their culture through their own subjective experiences, their own interpretations. We all make the world in our own image. The material contiguity of *Millennium Actress*'s index thus points back to an index that privileges abstraction in both sign and referent.

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[51] Wells, 6.

Part Three: Intercultural and Intracultural Discourses

As with other contemporary Japanese visual media, *Millennium Actress* engages intercultural and intracultural discourses through the remediation of film and memory in old and new media. Its discourse centers on the figure of Chiyoko, the film actress Genya interviews, whose memories largely span the history of Japanese filmmaking from the 1930s to the 1960s, its most productive periods. Some scholars have pointed out that Chiyoko acts a figure for Japanese film history and its multiplicity through her life and place in Japanese film history.[52] As an actress making her first film in Manchuria while under Japanese imperialist control in 1930s and ending her last film in the 1960s, before Japanese film production and success began to wane due to the success of television in Japan, Chiyoko's memories offer a glimpse into the past. Her memories encompass not only her personal details, but her films as well, many of which take place in different Japanese eras, such as the feudal period or the Edo period preceding Japan's opening to the West and subsequent modernization. Her memories of her films embrace different types of Japanese films made, from the historical period pieces called *jidaigeki* to the contemporary setting films called *gendaigeki*. As her memories come to life in the present, Chiyoko's memories become larger than her, embodying the spirit of Japanese film history. Through Chiyoko and her memories, *Millennium Actress* engages intercultural discourse on Japanese film and the intracultural dialogues of Japanese history springing from that. This section considers *Millennium Actress*'s cultural

[52] See Dani Cavallaro, *Anime and Memory: Aesthetic, Cultural and Thematic Perspectives* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2009); and Melek Ortabasi, "National History as Otaku Fantasy: Satoshi Kon's *Millennium Actress*," in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. by Mark Wheeler Macwilliams (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008).

discourse with Japanese film history through the figure of Chiyoko as national memory in two major ways: the animetic interval and political allegory.

The memories that come to life in *Millennium Actress* spring from Chiyoko's life, personal and professional, rendering Chiyoko as the center of the animetic interval between past and present associated with both film and memory. Dani Cavallaro identifies Chiyoko's running and movement throughout her memories "as an allegory for 'modern Western science.'"[53] This movement does more than offer such narrative symbolism, as I identify this lateral movement across the screen as animetic movement. Chiyoko is presented as animetic layer in constant movement. Born during an earthquake, Chiyoko is quickly associated with the tectonic shifts of *Millennium Actress*'s animetic interval. Earthquakes punctuate moments of her life, past and present, from birth to death. The tectonic eruption emerging from the animetic interval of Chiyoko's memories of her films and personal life suggest how the two interact. The differing social personae through which she is presented—be it daughter, nurse, teacher, wife, feudal lady, prostitute, or actress—act in animetic intervals, for each persona interacts with the others to produce the whole person. *Millennium Actress* suggests this in the opening scene by rewinding through a variety of Chiyoko's film incarnations. The anime reminds us when Chiyoko's films command as much attention in her memory as her personal life and her films cannot be easily distinguished, for she is a product of both. The tectonic shifts between the different time periods and film genres in her memories indicates Japan's struggle between tradition and modernization, an animetic interval between two cultural

[53] Dani Cavallaro, *Anime and Memory: Aesthetic, Cultural and Thematic Perspectives* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2009), 16.

eras that emerges in Genya watching videos of his favorite films. He uses new media in order to enjoy the old. It demonstrates the relationship of Japanese visual media with wider culture, a culture moving towards new media, as animation—like film, phones, and even the program you download this thesis on—embraces digital technology. The tectonic eruptions of these animetic intervals produce new forms, such as 3D animation. In a way, much of digital new media is a form of animation, a manufactured moving-image media. One need only visit Tumblr, with its emphasis on moving-image gifs to express users' reactions, to identify the prevalence of animation throughout twenty-first century culture. Through the figure of Chiyoko, *Millennium Actress* uses the animetic interval to understand the relationship of media and culture.

Millennium Actress's understanding of reality through the animetic interval extends to its intercultural and intracultural discourses. As a figure for Japanese film history, Chiyoko's engagement with intercultural and intracultural discourses embodies Japanese film media's own intercultural and intracultural discourses. Japanese culture began its most dramatic intercultural dialogue in 1853 with its "opening" by Commodore Perry. Japan soon defined its own culture with and against the West, creating intracultural dialogues in response to the intercultural dialogues thrust upon them. Similarly, Japanese film and other media have historically defined themselves with and against similar media from the West, especially Hollywood film.[54] As discussed in the previous chapter, Japan's adoption of Western technologies led to their encounter with Western ideologies, particularly in the desire for realism embedded in the camera. The

[54] Certainly, this struggle for definition travels to the other side of the dialogue in the West, especially since Japanese visual media and style has become increasingly popular and emulated in media from the West. While my thesis focuses on Japanese media, I do wish to stress intercultural dialogue goes both ways.

Western desire for scientific naturalism and concealing artifice, as in deep focus, exists in tension with Japanese interest in a human-centric and human-shaped representation of the universe drawn from Confucian models.[55] From the tensions of intercultural dialogue sprung a Japanese intracultural discourse in response, as witnessed by how so many Japanese film critics explored the merits of their own films in comparison to the West's.[56] This dialogue led to creative Japanese films such as Kinugasa Teinosuke's *A Page of Madness* (1926), which engaged German Expressionism, and Kurosawa Akira's *Seven Samurai* (1954), which engaged John Ford's Westerns. Intercultural discourse interacts with intracultural discourse, revealing an eruptive animetic interval, through which the friction between the two produces new discourses.

Chiyoko's mnemonic animetic interval also reveals *Millennium Actress*'s engagement with its own medium through intercultural and intracultural discourses. Her chase for the dissident artist she met as a girl, a painter fleeing Japanese Imperial authorities for his political views, engages the undercurrent of politicization that surrounds the division between Japanese animation and anime. Lamarre observes that "accounts of Japanese animation frequently characterize anime as a distinctive form of limited animation that began in earnest with the production of animated television series in the 1960s."[57] The exploration of divisions between full and limited animation[58] and

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[55] Standish, 21-2.

[56] See *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Keiko I. McDonald, *Reading a Japanese Film: Cinema in Context* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2006); Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film: A Concise History, with a Selective Guide to DVDs and Videos* (Tokyo; London; New York: Kodansha International, 2005); Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Film: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York; London: Continuum International, 2005).

[57] Lamarre, 184.

feature-length and television animation has its merits, but my argument focuses on the timeframe of anime's so-called emergence, located in Japan's postwar 1960s, when it began to recover from the war and the American Occupation that stretched into the 1950s. During World War II, Japanese animation often depicted imperialist Japanese sentiments, as in *Momotarō's Divine Sea Warriors* (Seo Mitsuyo, 1945), Japan's first feature-length animation. Japanese World War II propaganda also figured in the shorter film that preceded it, *Momotarō's Sea Eagles* (Seo Mitsuyo, 1943). This is the same timeframe during which a dissident artist such as the one Chiyoko met would have had occasion to flee from Japanese authorities. Her first film, set in Manchuria during Japan's invasion and political takeover, embeds Chiyoko in same wartime moment as the *Momotarō* animated propaganda. A Japanese producer even implores her to make film for nationalistic reasons, though she only agrees to make films so she can find her missing artist. Her travel to the Japanese-occupied Manchuria occurs through animetic ocean liner and train movement, illustrating animation's participation in the same wartime propaganda Chiyoko left to make. Chiyoko, then, chases Japan's dissident political views, the opposition to the war and to Japan's terrible crimes in World War II. Chiyoko's search for her artist figures the search for Japan's lost intracultural dialogues of self-criticism, and her animetic movement creates the tectonic animetic interval between Japanese imperialist propaganda and its opposition.

The relationship of this intracultural dialogues to the medium of anime becomes apparent once again when considering the division between Japanese animation (prewar

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[58] Full animation exhibits more movement than limited animation. Lamarre also argues that limited animation tends more towards animetic movement, while full animation tends towards the cinematic.

and wartime) and anime (postwar). As mention in this chapter's introduction, "anime" is Japan's truncated term for all animation. Western scholars (including myself) use the term to conveniently label animation of Japanese origin, particularly of the postwar timeframe. Anime's origins are typically situated around Tezuka Osamu, the creator of prominent anime such as *Astroboy* in 1963, often called "the Godfather of Anime."[59] Whatever his formal innovation and style, Tezuka still worked in the same animation medium as his *Momotarō* predecessors. Considering Manovich's argument that film and animation sprung from the same source, the divide between anime and animation allows postwar Japanese animation, whether called anime or not, to exculpate itself from the guilt over Japan's wartime crimes that linger in the *Momotarō* war propaganda. Debates over the lack of acknowledgement for Japanese war crimes in Japanese textbooks or the lack of national recognition of the abuse of "comfort women," women forced into sexual servitude by the Japanese military in World War II, rage to this day.[60] Japanese intracultural debates frequently surround the acknowledgement of their imperialist past. Chiyoko's chase for the dissident painter localizes this argument in painterly animation, implying that Japan lost its own intracultural dialogue about its past and must chase after it to reclaim the true history of animation. Even her first film in Manchuria figures the Japanese presence and puppet government in Manchuria before World War II, an acknowledgment that film—and by extension animation—is part of this history. *Millennium Actress* presents a continuous film history through the figure of Chiyoko as she freely runs from one memory to the other. Furthermore, her animetic, lateral

[59] Hu, 98-103.

[60] Tipton, 255-6.

movement that figures film through animation, creating an animetic interval between film and animation, allows for the tectonic eruption of a continuous, if diverse, history for Japanese animation. *Millennium Actress* reclaims the breadth of history of Japanese animation, acknowledging both its crimes and its salvation in Chiyoko's animetic chase for the dissident artist.

Chiyoko's memories engage Japan's history, particularly the history of film and animation, both interculturally and intraculturally. The form of the animetic and the animetic interval create an understanding through which *Millennium Actress* reconsiders anime and all of contemporary Japanese visual media, as something more than just entertainment, as a way of understanding culture and image-making. This reconsideration is all the more important given the prevalence of animation and abstraction in a culture currently saturated with digital technology. Film and memory emerge as analogs in the particularized understanding of McLuhan's argument that media acts as an extension of the human and its culture. *Millennium Actress* takes this analog and invites its own medium into discourse with it by figuring film and memory's relationship into its own forms. Animation has long been over-shadowed by film and other art forms, but Japanese anime offers a particular instance of economic success and global recognition. Anime itself is in constant intercultural and intracultural dialogue with its fans and producers, inside and outside of Japan. Its plasticized indexicality indicates its merits in pointing out subjective experiences and memories—even when that subjectivity is a collective, as in the case of the historical debates over Japan's imperialist past. Anime struggles for validation as its scholarly studies emerge, and *Millennium Actress* reveals its importance and place in cultural and political history.

CHAPTER THREE:

THAT *BLACK BUTLER*, REMEDIATED

Thus far, I have examined contemporary Japanese visual media's intercultural and intracultural discourses on indexicality's relationship to film and memory in motion-picture media such as film and anime. The last text I turn to in this thesis is of a still-image medium known in Japan as manga, which is a type of comics. *Black Butler*, an ongoing manga series by Yana Toboso that began in 2006, remediates film and memory through old and new media to engage a more plastic indexicality, just as *After Life* and *Millennium Actress* do. *Black Butler* revolves around a young boy named Ciel Phantomhive, who makes a deal with a demon he names Sebastian Michaelis. In exchange for Sebastian's services, Ciel offers his soul for Sebastian's consumption, contingent upon the completion of Ciel's goals to avenge those who abused him and murdered his parents. The series defines the human soul as a cinematic record, or a film of one's life and memories, styling film as the medium through which Sebastian will consume Ciel. As with *After Life* and *Millennium Actress*, *Black Butler* remakes the past into the present with an abstracted relationship to materiality. It aligns more closely to *Millennium Actress* as it depicts memories in filmic form as manufactured images but suspends these still images in space, rather than time, as moving-image media would. *Black Butler*'s remediation of both old and new media forms explores manga's

relationship to film. It particularly remediates performative documentary, a documentary form that moves away from realism to embrace subjective experience.[61] *Black Butler* embraces abstracted indexicality through this documentary form. *Black Butler*'s more plastic indexicality positions its intercultural and intracultural discourses in relation to its own medium through thematic modes of consumption particularly surrounding film. As in the last two chapters, three avenues guide my close examination of *Black Butler*'s entangled remediation of film and memory: 1) old and new media, 2) indexicality, and 3) intercultural and intracultural discourses. *Black Butler*'s plasticized indexicality seeks to imbue its medium with the same ability to relate to culture as popularly ascribed to film by revealing manga's transmedia relationship with film

Part One: Old and New Media

As with the other contemporary Japanese visual media under examination, *Black Butler* figures film and memory through the remediation of old and new media. *Black Butler* makes particular use of film forms in the context of memory. I focus on two particular forms of film media, one old media and one new media, which create an analog between film and memory: celluloid film strips for old media and digital pixelization for new media. Both of these are remediated simultaneously in *Black Butler*'s first display of the cinematic record of a human soul. The cinematic record remediates film as a film strip and film as digital pixelization through manga form. *Black Butler* accomplishes this through multiple image panels laid out upon the same page, changing its panel layouts to

[61] See Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991).

mimic film strips while still maintaining manga panel layouts that also allude to the form of new media digital pixels. Film is cast as old media, while manga aligns itself with new media through a similarity of form. In the following, I describe the first cinematic record scene in order to explore its remediation of film as old media and digital pixels as new media.

The context of the first use of remediated film form requires explanation in order to understand its significance. *Black Butler*'s narrative is set in Victorian England. Despite his tender age of thirteen, Ciel Phantomhive, the protagonist, serves Queen Victoria as an investigator of dark events in England. During these investigations, he makes use of the talents of his demon butler, Sebastian Michaelis. After being abused and nearly murdered by cultists, Ciel offers his soul to Sebastian in exchange for his service, protection, and care. Once Ciel obtains his vengeance, Sebastian will consume his soul. Throughout *Black Butler*, Sebastian acts as Ciel's butler and tool, helping Ciel in everything from his daily life to his investigations for the queen.

The remediation of film does not become obvious until Chapter 10 of *Black Butler*. While investigating and confronting Jack the Ripper for Queen Victoria, Ciel and Sebastian discover Jack the Ripper is actually two people: Ciel's embittered aunt and her own butler, a *shinigami* (literally, "death god") named Grell Sutcliff. Like all *shinigami*, Grell functions as a psychopomp, a grim reaper figure who judges and collects souls. His weapon has the power to do this by revealing a "cinematic record" of the human soul, which plays out that person's memories as film. This is accompanied by flying film strips when Grell wounds Sebastian with his weapon. When Grell turns on Ciel's aunt and kills her with his weapon, the cinematic record's film strips suddenly command the manga,

which changes form to resemble film strips during the flashback. This "flashback," however, actually occurs in the diegetic present as a film. With this exposition in mind, I now turn to analyzing how *Black Butler* remediates the analogous relationship of film and memory through old and new media.

Black Butler's remediation of old media locates itself in the reproduced form of the celluloid film strip. When Ciel's aunt is killed, film strips burst from her chest in the panel of her death. On the next page, however, those film strips become the basis for the manga's display of her cinematic record. Images of celluloid film strips and film reels become the manga page background before turning into a black background. Manga page layouts such as the ones found in *Black Butler* typically display numerous panels, sometimes overlapping or bleeding into each other. Objects and text from one panel may burst into or provide the background for another. While presented sequentially, the odd angles and overlaps sometimes render sequencing ambiguous. When "playing" the cinematic records, this no longer occurs. Boxes with the black and white line art are fitted neatly in box-like fashion over the black backgrounds. Usually, the only thing to appear between the image panels is text—much like the intertitles of a silent film. The only other exception is the occasional word bubble used for dialogue, which could also feature as an intertitle. Like an old, mechanical film strip, *Black Butler* makes use of discrete images placed in sequence. While manga produces no motion, neither does a celluloid film strip when not projected. The illusion of movement has been removed, but the film form remains.

The remediation of old, mechanical media through the film strip in *Black Butler* is reinforced as old media in many senses. In Chapter 60, when a rogue *shinigami* reveals

he created zombies by splicing fake records into a cinematic record that was supposed to end, his fake records reveal him dressed up like Charlie Chaplin, dancing in a way closely associated with Chaplin's Tramp character. The rogue *shinigami*'s edited cinematic records suggest the early cinema closely associated with mechanical film strips. This mechanical media, closely associated with hierarchy, creates a more orderly presentation of manga panels, often revealing character motivations or backgrounds. However, I argue the manga panel layout offers an immanence reminiscent of Gilles Deleuze's time-image, a direct presentation of time. Manga panels suggest a disjointed time, revealing time's instabilities and breakdowns. The *shinigami* Tramp offers a cliché that does not hold, for it is clear beneath the Chaplin trappings that this is the rogue *shinigami* editing cinematic records. According to Deleuze, the time-image develops through European Art Cinema such as the French New Wave in the 1950s, just as electronic media such as television emerge. The time-image offers a bridge between old and new media. *Black Butler* remediates a cinematic form on the cusp of transition into new media, highlighting its transformative potential even in old media form.

By depicting film strips in manga form, *Black Butler* never simply mimics film strips, as the image panels are depicted side by side, in varying sizes and rectilinear shapes. Scott McCloud makes a distinction between film and manga in *Understanding Comics* (1993), where he argues that "[e]ach successive frame of a movie is projected on exactly the same space--the screen--while each frame of comics must occupy a different space. Space does for comics what time does for film!"[62] In *Black Butler*, manga takes film's time, and depicts it through manga's space. *Black Butler* positions old media film

[62] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Ar*t (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 7.

as spatially oriented as manga in its un-projected film strip form, converging the two media while allowing for differentiation. Past and present constantly interact by being displayed simultaneously, like memories freshly come to mind. The movement-image, the indirect presentation of time found in Classical Hollywood film, is now imbued with manga's own time-image by arranging film strips as manga panels.

Black Butler reveals a developmental relationship between manga and film built upon manga's remediation of film form, but remediated in such a way that film form becomes manga form. Many manga scholars have noted the influence of dynamic cinematography upon manga panel development, wherein manga panels mimic cinematic shots and angles.[63] Frederik Schodt acknowledges how cinema inspires manga artists, while Deborah Shamoon examines the use of certain cinematographic techniques in manga art. However, neither develops the implications of these formal relations and their transformations across media. Manga remediates film through mimesis, using film form to develop its own potential without reducing itself to simply copying film. Manga panels come in different shapes, sizes, and spacing, and when remediating dynamic cinematography, it allows for complex visual meaning. Manga looks to film, rather than other forms of art such as painting, indicating that it wishes to capture the potential of the camera to frame reality through its own aesthetic. The reality that *Black Butler* aesthetically frames is memory. By presenting memory as synonymous with film, *Black Butler*'s remediation of film also remediates memory into manga.

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[63] See Tze Yue Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010); Frederik L. Schodt, Ch. 1 in *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 1996); and Deborah Shamoon, "Films on Paper: Cinematic Narrative in Gekiga," in *Mangatopia: Essays on Manga and Anime in the Modern World*, ed. by Martha Cornog and Timothy Pepper (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2011).

Black Butler's multiple manga panels offer polyvalency. While remediating film into manga form, it also allows for new media's electric possibilities, particularly in digital pixelization. A pixel, or picture element, is the smallest unit of display in a digital image. As Alvy Ray Smith argues, "[a] pixel is a point sample. It exists only at a point. … But we cannot think of a pixel as a square—or anything other than a point. There are cases where the contributions to a pixel can be modeled, in a low-order way, by a little square, but not ever the pixel itself. An [digital] image is a rectilinear array of point samples (pixels)."[64] With all its manga panels displayed on each page, *Black Butler* mimics a pixel array with each panel representing a point sample. Its box-like remediation of film strips forces its panels into rectilinear shapes, but by keeping them as separated white spaces over a black background, they also become separate points of light, like pixels. Pixels may also offer complex point samples (and often sub-pixels) in many forms of digital media such as LCD screens by revealing different colors or patterns. Pixels are complex entities that are singular, yet possess multiple elements, much like manga panels, into which art may be drawn, be it simple or complex. *Black Butler*'s new media remediation also points to its own medium, aligning manga with the same media that abstracts twenty-first century life through digital online replacements for everything from conversation with friends to reading newspapers. Manga, a manufactured image medium that abstracts reality into stylized painterly forms, shares similar forms with the abstractions of new media and is all the more pronounced for manga's prevalence on the internet.

[64] Alvy Ray Smith, "A Pixel is Not a Little Square," in *Tech Memo 6* (Microsoft, 1995).

Black Butler's display of multiple panels in varying rectilinear shapes and sizes violates the typical old media film-strip convention, allowing for its array of images to recall pixels as well, making its film remediation polyvalent. Old media transforms into new media, and the multiplicity of images engages new media's networks and democratization. Just as film transforms from old media to new, manga swiftly moves from a paper-based medium to a digital medium, for numerous manga digital scans and fan translations circulate the internet. Many of the fan translations include cleaners who change the look of the paper-based manga by sharpening contrast and removing the paper texture. As new media, manga appears differently, just as digital media has allowed for restoration of old media film. *Black Butler* uses its own form to mediate between old and new media, aligning itself with new media's electronic possibilities of networks and democratization, while acknowledging that this could not have been achieved without old, mechanical media's lineal heirarchization.

By remediating film into manga, memory's remediation through manga emerges through memory's analog to film, for memory becomes a cinematic record in the narrative. The essence of the human soul is memory on film, which drives *Black Butler*'s plot, from Ciel promising his cinematic record to Sebastian to how each major story arc revolves around an antagonist mired in his or her past, in his or her memories. *Black Butler* acknowledges Deleuze's conception of memory as the past emerging through the present, these cinematic records are not flashbacks or a narrative trip back in time, but rather, films of memories actively playing out in the narrative present. Manga frames both film and memory within its own media, that of manufactured drawings, and this relates to the concept of memory as a subjective experience, constantly framed by the self.

Memory, then, is manufactured, much like manga art, and every action a character takes adds another scene for their cinematic record. The ambiguous sequence of each panel on a manga page mimics the ambiguous flow of time within memory, which puts the past and the present into constant dynamic contact, changing both in the process every time. This notion of manga's relationship to memory challenges the popular conception of it as a low, popular form of art with no relation to reality, which Donald Richie gives voice to in *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* (2005) by arguing that recent Japanese films are trying to be "cool," and possess limited communication due to the "uninvolved and uninvolving dryness which the manga or anime format famously affords."[65] While scholarly attention has recently shifted and manga studies developed, popular views in the culture struggle to accept manga and anime as serious art forms, hence the plethora of popular books meant to explain the popularity of manga and anime, from Frederik Schodt's *Dreamland Japan* (1996) to Roland Kelts's *Japanamerica* (2006). If media extends human reality as Marshall McLuhan argues, *Black Butler* reminds its readers that this applies to all media, not just film. The remediation of film and memory as analogous allows manga such as *Black Butler* to engage reality, much as *Millennium Actress* does for animation. The indexical ramifications of this bid are explored in the next section.

Part Two: Indexicality

Just as with other contemporary Japanese visual media such as *After Life* and *Millennium Actress*, *Black Butler* exhibits the same passion for and engagement with abstracted, plastic indexicality, though it does so through a still image medium. Like

[65] Richie, 220.

Millennium Actress, *Black Butler*'s painterly reality creates higher stakes than *After Life* for justifying manga's ability to relate to reality in abstracting indexicality. Film's association with indexicality by figures such as André Bazin and Mary Anne Doane offers it a higher level of cultural esteem. Manga, a media predicated upon painterly images, would initially seem incapable of grasping the indexicality Bazin associates with the photograph or film. However, *Black Butler* offers a different model of the index, one with a far looser relationship to its referent, similar to that of *Millennium Actress*'s challenge. It suggests an abstracted index best signifies an abstracted object. As a still-image medium, *Black Butler* offers an abstracted index that recalls Roland Barthes's conceptions of the index as related to photography. As with the previous chapters, this section explores *Black Butler*'s figuration of indexicality through its remediation of documentary, its dialogue with theories of the index, and its cinephilia.

Black Butler's remediation of documentary form is not as obvious and direct as the documentary remediations found in *After Life* or *Millennium Actress*. *Black Butler*'s documentary remediation emerges from the implications of the cinematic records. This particular remediation of film seeks the same indexicality historically associated with film, especially documentary. Film is popularly imbued with the ability to inscribe reality, and *Black Butler* remediates this association by remediating film's old media form, the film strip, the film form scholars such as Bazin engaged with when writing about film's indexicality. Each cinematic record in *Black Butler* displays the memories and experiences of each person. Frequently, the cinematic record's owner narrates his or her feelings over the images of his or her past in a first-person manner. Ciel's aunt's cinematic record dominates the present moment with her childhood and background, and

coupled with images of her past, she describes how she became Jack the Ripper with her *shinigami* butler. This begins with her feelings of inadequacy before her beautiful sister; her unrequited love for Ciel's father; her unspoken resentment for Ciel's birth; the loss of her husband and her unborn child in an accident that rendered her unable to conceive again; her encounters as a doctor with prostitutes begging for abortions; and how she killed these prostitutes in a jealous rage. Sometimes she speaks; sometimes the images speak for themselves. The nature of cinematic records like this, with contents that shift but styles that remain the same, allude to performative modes of documentary, which seeks to understand objective reality through subjective, affective experience. Memory, framed through film with first person narration, selectively edited for content, enters into the realm of what performative documentary seeks to index.

The remediation of performative documentary into manga form, displayed through manga panels, illustrates *Black Butler*'s desire to grasp at the same ability to index subjective experience. Bill Nichols classifies performative mode documentary as seeking knowledge through the self:

> Meaning is clearly a subjective, affect-laden phenomenon. A car or gun, hospital or person will bear different meanings for different people. Experience and memory, emotional involvement, questions of value and belief, commitment and principle all enter into our understanding of those aspects of the world most often addressed by documentary… Performative documentary underscores the complexity of our knowledge of the world by emphasizing its subjective and affective dimensions.[66]

Black Butler engages these subjective, affective dimensions, and its use of film form speaks to a remediation of performative documentary. Manga's stylized art reduces the

[66] Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 131.

world to white space and black lines, exaggerating certain features such as eyes and hair while minimizing the nose. Detail is offered to food and clothing, but not the human figure. As with memory, certain details and experiences are remembered, and others forgotten. People, individually and collectively, decide what is important and what is not about their memories. Like *Black Butler*'s stylized images, memories are manufactured by subjective experiences, by affective reactions. The ambiguous sequence of image panels illustrates memory's own ambiguity of sequence, and when the cinematic records imbue more linearity to the paneling, this illustrates the parts of memory that are clearer, that are actively relevant to the present, just as the cinematic record of the past plays in the diegetic present. Film form offers a sort of "zombie" temporality, where the dead past returns to a half-life in film form that is potentially false since the past cannot exist as it did when present. This breeds ambiguity and subjectivity even in clarified memory; the past, in memory or film form, cannot exist without being reframed in the present. *Black Butler* positions its own medium as capable of indexing this subjective experience of memory, just as the performative documentary it remediates.

As with *Millennium Actress*, *Black Butler* challenges indexicality as conceived by Bazin, who did not believe paintings or painterly, manufactured images could index reality in the same way as photography or cinema, for they bore no traces of their referent. This challenge emerges through *Black Butler*'s remediation of film, for it leans on cinematic indexicality in order to reinterpret it. *Black Butler* abstracts memory through film and then its own manga media, illustrating how memory, like manga, is abstracted from its material referents. However, memory's and manga's plasticized material contiguity still bears relation to reality. Even stylized, human figures are recognizable as

human. Material reality informs memory, though it need not have direct material contiguity, for its frame is abstracted, subjective experience. The subjectivity found in memory also imbues the perception of human figures as beautiful or ugly, clothing as fashionable or dull, food as delicious or disgusting. Material reality also informs manga, even as it reinterprets it through artistic license. However, direct material contiguity struggles to model the affective and represent decentered objects such as dreams, memory, or subjective experience. Even in documentary, reenactments with indirect material contiguity become necessary.[67] The abstractions of a manufactured reality in media such as manga engage with the abstractions of daily life. Manga's alignment with new media described in the previous section implies that, just as manga abstracts reality, new media abstracts reality by offering technology that refigures culture, from social interactions to shopping to research, through digital online media. The configurations of manga panels converge with the configurations offered by new, electrical media. As with the other contemporary Japanese visual media texts I have examined, *Black Butler* suggests an abstracted index is best to index abstracted reality, especially memory.

Black Butler's figuration of an abstracted, plastic index differs from *After Life*'s or *Millennium Actress*'s; it is a still-image medium that cannot index time as straightforwardly as motion picture media such as film and animation. The relationship between stillness and indexicality held particular interest for Barthes, whose theory of the *punctum* explored photographic indexicality. In *Camera Lucida* (1980), he describes the *punctum* as a deeply personal reaction to a photograph that wounds the viewer by

[67] One could take into account Erroll Morris's documentaries, particularly *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), which abstracts reenactments even further to focus on particular elements, such as tail lights, milkshakes, or popcorn, that are most certainly not the same elements present when the event occurred.

offering poignancy and meaning, thereby puncturing the generic, socially determined reaction to a photograph, called the *studium*. The *punctum* requires proof of a past reality that alludes to memory, one found in photographic details. Barthes stresses that the *punctum* cannot be found in film, which obscures the details of its photographic base, but finds something similar, an inarticulable "third meaning," in the film still, which "throws off the constraint of filmic time."[68] This third meaning cannot be articulated due to the visual nature of the film still, harkening back to the photographic *punctum*. *Black Butler* offers a diegetic *punctum* through the *shinigami*'s weapon that reveals the deeply personal cinematic record by literally wounding its victim.

When remediating film, manga image panels reveal the stillness and sequentiality of film stills. The cinematic records offer a visual experience that defies articulation, just as with the third meaning, for while they offer narrative explanation and character development, their display does not advance the plot. Ciel's aunt's cinematic records do not change her death or even Ciel's motivation; they act almost as a diegetic sidebar. Sebastian's memories of his early relationship with Ciel do not change their present relationship or prevent the antagonist from attacking them. The revelations offered by the cinematic records affect the emotional resonance of the story but remain relatively unimportant to the diegesis despite their prominence. As the mnemonic embodiment of the human soul, cinematic records reveal the personal poignancy of the *punctum*. While manga form is still, it nevertheless engages time, and this is where *Black Butler* goes beyond Barthes to claim the *punctum* for both film and manga media. Its remediation of

[68] Roland Barthes, "The Third Meaning: Research Notes on Several Eisenstein Stills," in *Image - Music - Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 67.

film stills occurs through sequential manga form that requires time to read it. *Black Butler* offers filmic time as part of *punctum*, for the experiences of time also provide a sense of past reality for the *punctum*. The subjectivity of temporal experiences relates to manga, for a person waiting in line for five minutes may see time as much slower than five minutes spent kissing his or her one true love. Manga represents this abstractly, using panel size and placement to draw out certain experiences through large images and minimize others with smaller images. *Black Butler* aligns its abstracted, plastic indexicality with an abstracted, plastic *punctum* through its painterly media, while also being inclusive of other media such as film.

The same passion for film and film's indexicality found in other contemporary Japanese visual media such as *After Life* and *Millennium Actress* also exists in *Black Butler*, a passion that implies cinephilia. Doane's conception of cinephilia has been previously considered with *After Life* and *Millennium Actress* as a longing and melancholy for old media film as new media film emerges. *Black Butler*'s cinephilia emerges through its figuration of old and new film media. Old, traditional film media emerges from death, and the cinematic record is revealed only though the *shinigami*, the grim reaper figures who judge and collect human souls. This death leads to a rebirth, for the manga paneling of the film strips alludes to new media digital pixelization. *Black Butler* mourns the death of old media film, but also imagines it as reborn through new media, exploring new possibilities and potentials for manga to index reality and relate to culture.

Black Butler does not accomplish this exploration of old and new media possibilities through the manga medium by accident, as manga also is reborn through

digital scanning as new media. Manga's distribution online, often through unofficial fan websites, embeds it within the abstracted reality created by new media. The abstractions of manga reality have become further abstracted by digitization, yet they offer even more experiences and reach even more people. Its own form changes. *Black Butler* sees the passage of old film as the passage of all old media. While it is an end, this does not mean the story ends; *Black Butler* is an ongoing manga series, and its success has led to an anime adaptation, a stage play, and an upcoming live-action film.[69] *Black Butler* has transformed through adaptation and remediation into other media, just as it transformed indexicality by figuring it within its abstracted form. *Black Butler*'s cinephilia figures its longing for old media not as a death, but as a process of transmedia transformation and rebirth. Its inclusive, plastic indexicality allows for each of these *Black Butler* media adaptations, old and new, to figure the same abstracted indexicality. The intercultural and intracultural discourses surrounding this position are explored in the next section.

Part Three: Intercultural and Intracultural Discourses

Black Butler engages intercultural and intracultural discourses through its remediation of film and memory. This is similar to other contemporary Japanese visual media such as *After Life* and *Millennium Actress*, though *Black Butler*'s cultural discourses focus less on old and new media and more on remediation itself. It notably invites and allegorizes intercultural and intracultural discourses through its use of food, particularly in the opening chapter's use of beef that is both English and Japanese. The

[69] "Hiro Mizushima to Star in Live-Action Black Butler Film," Anime News Network, accessed February 6, 2013, http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2013-01-08/hiro-mizushima-stars-in-live-action-black-butler-film.

transformation of food acts a figure for *Black Butler'*s understanding of remediation in general and its relationship to film in particular. The consumption of food, particularly in relation to Ciel's character, acts as *Black Butler'*s positioning of manga as capable of indexing reality as film, albeit in its own form—a move similar to *Millennium Actress*'s position with anime, though accomplished through different means. This section explores *Black Butler*'s engagement with intercultural and intracultural discourses through its figures of food and consumption.

Black Butler's Victorian England setting seems a remediation of nineteenth-century English literature. The setting engages intercultural discourse by its very nature, since nineteenth-century England was an imperialist nation that came in constant contact with other cultures and nations. Moreover, this imperialist English setting has been recreated in a Japanese media form. In the first chapter, the demon butler, Sebastian, fusses over dinner preparation and rescues the meal from the incompetent chef, turning badly seared British beef into Japanese *gyuu-tataki donburi* (marinated seared steak over rice). Its image features prominently on multiple pages, even larger than the characters on one page. The protagonist Ciel's ability to eat well and serve the best and most sophisticated foods mark him a proper aristocrat, as does his refined table. In *The Discourses of Food in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (2010), Annette Cozzi explains that beef was closely associated with the nineteenth-century Englishman.[70] The Japanese preparation of British beef saves the meal and Ciel's reputation, illustrating Ciel's origins in contradistinction to nineteenth-century British characters, for he is a Japanese

[70] Annette Cozzi, *The Discourses of Food in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 41.

presentation of a British character. Eating beef did not become popularized in Japan until the Meiji era, in the late nineteenth century, the same era in which *Black Butler* is set. This change in Japanese cuisine resulted from Western influence,[71] which also analogizes Ciel's existence as an Englishman created by a Japanese woman inspired by nineteenth-century British literature. The transformation of British beef into a Japanese dish suggests remediation, for *Black Butler* transforms film into its own manga medium through remediation. The beef acknowledges *Black Butler*'s remediation as intercultural, since it remediates a Victorian English setting into a Japanese medium.

Manga itself is an intercultural discourse, as a medium developed largely in the twentieth century as Japan struggled with Westernization and modernization. English language studies of manga often subordinate manga to a larger comic medium. In "Manga story-telling/showing" (2000), Aarnoud Rommens distinguishes manga's forms, which he identifies as cinematographic and variable. He uses manga's frequent remediation of cinematography as a distinguishing characteristic from Western comics. However, Rommens cleaves manga from comics too easily. Manga and comics are interrelated sequential art media with shared aesthetics, such as image panel layouts. Both struggle against popular cultural conceptions of their limited value and appeal and both recently have received scholarly attention. *Black Butler*'s self-reflexive use of British beef acknowledges manga as part of a larger comics medium—but with its own particular preparation, one that often remediates film. This Japanese preparation implies the intracultural discourse in response. Japanese manga creators' varying remediations of

[71] Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity* (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2006), 24.

film and cinematography developed a particularly Japanese form of the comics, for some claim to have made manga as if making film.[72] Manga became these would-be directors' creative outlet. The Japanese beef dish's narrative rescue of Ciel's English reputation suggests that manga is in constant intercultural and intracultural dialogues.

Related to food, the figure of consumption in *Black Butler* operates self-reflexively, even as it enters into the cultural discourses on visual media such as manga and film. The primary figure of consumption emerges through the sexualized relationship between Ciel and his demon butler, Sebastian. Ciel often claims how much he loves Sebastian's desserts and frequently consumes confections. Wearing a variety of fanciful and flamboyant Victorian-era clothing, especially in covers and art inserts, Ciel may be found draped in ruffles and bows, excessive even for his time period. These embellishments often resemble various confections. Ciel even once disguises himself as a girl and wears a cupcake-like ruffled dress.[73] In a non-diegetic art insert, Ciel consumes chocolate in a debauched scene while Sebastian undresses him. Ciel's constant association with desserts codes him as feminine. Annette Cozzi assayed how desserts are often associated with women in nineteenth-century British literature:

> Sweetie-pie and cream-puff, tart and cheesecake, honey, cookie, and cupcake—the delectability of the idealized woman, as sweet and insubstantial as a sugar bride atop her wedding cake, is evidenced by the countless nicknames of both insult and endearment deployed to diminish and reduce women to nonthreatening, consumable commodities. … The interpellation of women as insubstantial and inconsequential confections constitutes them not as concrete individuals, not as subjects, but as abstract nonentities, objects of desire who can be molded into

[72] Frederik L. Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 1996), 282.

[73] Yana Toboso, *Black Butler*, Vol. 2, trans. by Tomo Kimura (Tokyo: Square Enix, 2009), 78-123.

form, diminished and contained, swallowed neat and whole.[74]

The feminine association with dessert renders the feminine as something to be consumed through the intercultural dialogue arising from British culture and its own associations. By remediating the Victorian England setting of nineteenth-century British literature, *Black Butler* also remediates these conventions of femininity, which it soon responds to with a sexualization emerging from Japanese intracultural discourse.

Figuring Ciel as a consumptive object occurs not just through intercultural feminization, but through a mode of sexualization that emerges from Japanese genre conventions. Western genre conventions would consider *Black Butler* a mix of horror, mystery, action, and comedy, but in Japan, it is classified foremost as a *shounen* manga. S*hounen*, which means "boy" in Japanese, is oriented towards young males. Adventure, violence, female sexualization, and displays of masculine battle prowess are common in *shounen* manga. These elements can be found in *Black Butler*, particularly with Sebastian and his demonic skills. On the other hand, *shoujo* manga, meaning "girl" manga, caters to a female audience. A subgenre of *shoujo* is *yaoi*, or male homoerotic fiction written for women.[75] The intimacy of Ciel and Sebastian's relationship often bears the patina of romance, and their beautiful, stylized depictions cater to the *bishounen* (beautiful boys) conventions of *shoujo* manga.

Yaoi offers visual tropes that emerge in the depiction of Sebastian and Ciel, though they have never actually engaged in sexual activity. The *yaoi* tropes usually emerge when Ciel is in a compromised position. In Chapter 8, *Black Butler* leads readers

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[74] Cozzi, 72.

[75] Roland Kelts, *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the U.S.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 165.

to believe Sebastian is ravishing Ciel until they reach the next page and discover that Ciel is dreaming of Sebastian tying a corset around him for a disguise.[76] When Sebastian and Ciel hide inside a chest from an antagonist, they mimic a sexual position with Ciel's legs spread open over Sebastian's thighs.[77] Ciel's asthma attack in Chapter 34 offers another suggestive scene in which Sebastian seductively unties his eye patch and implores Ciel to "come" call his name for orders, rendering Sebastian's service as orgasmic.[78] All of these scenes have numerous visual counterparts in *yaoi* manga's prelude to sexual activity. *Black Butler* positions Ciel as a consumptive object through intercultural feminization and intracultural sexualization, creating a dialogue relevant to visual media when considering what Sebastian wishes to consume: Ciel's soul, or cinematic record.

By remediating film, *Black Butler* offers film for consumption through its own media. For Sebastian, a demon who devours human souls, film, or the cinematic record, provides the substance of his meal. The text indicates the consumption by feminizing and sexualizing Ciel, whose soul is Sebastian's intended meal. The very basis for the entire series revolves around the consumption of film through Sebastian's promised payment of Ciel's cinematic record after his services have concluded. However, when showing the cinematic records of other characters, remediating film form through the manga medium and allowing the reader's consumption of both media simultaneously, *Black Butler* self-reflexively intimates the premise of its entire series. As the story of Ciel's life, of his subjective experiences depicted through the abstracted, painterly mode

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[76] Toboso, *Black Butler,* Vol. 2, 112.

[77] Yana Toboso, *Black Butler*, Vol. 6, trans. by Tomo Kimura (Tokyo: Square Enix, 2009), 162.

[78] Yana Toboso, *Black Butler*, Vol. 8, trans. by Tomo Kimura (Tokyo: Square Enix, 2009), 60.

of manga, *Black Butler* is itself the cinematic record of Ciel's life—in manga form. The remediation has made film and manga inseparable; film has become manga, rendering manga as a cinematic record as well. The consumption of mechanical film media with its film strips has transformed into the new media association of manga's pixel-like panels. The transmedia transformation arising from the realization that *Black Butler* is Ciel's cinematic record in manga form allows manga to remediate film's indexicality, elevating manga to the same plane of consideration as film. Manga can take many forms, from *Black Butler*'s own *shounen* designation meant for teenagers to educational, historical, or biographical forms. *Black Butler* acknowledges these forms of manga media through the cinematic record it encapsulates, pointing to how manga can offer a plastic, abstracted indexicality not unrelated to the sort found in documentary reenactments or *After Life*'s memory-films, both with a loose relationship to the referent.

Manga's image panels are still, but they are not static, and the constant interaction between panels and pages, past and present, film and manga form, all suggest its own indexicality, one arrived at through the remediation of intercultural and intracultural dialogues. The gender and sex play in *Black Butler* illustrates the interplay of the gendered *shounen* and *shoujo* manga. By specifically and pointedly catering to a heterogeneous audience, manga invites a diversity that American comics has not achieved in popular conception, since American comics are often popularly perceived as male-oriented despite their growing female fanbase. Even film, particularly Classical Hollywood film, struggles with gender representation. Thinkers such as Laura Mulvey identify film as catering to a male gaze, and most film directors are male. *Black Butler*, created by a female, suggests that manga's diversity, its heterogeneity, is manga's

particular cultural value. Its remediation of film reveals film possesses its own heterogeneity, much as manga possesses its own abstracted indexicality. The transformative capacity of *Black Butler*'s remediation imbues its diversity onto the film medium in the same way new media transforms old media film strips into a non-hierarchical network of pixels. By aligning manga form with new media forms, *Black Butler* intimates manga's capacity to index and relate to how new media has abstracted culture with the proliferation of technology such as Facebook, cell phones, online ordering services, and the like. *Black Butler* does not simply claim other media's indexicality, but uses abstracted indexicality to highlight and impart its own ability to engage to culture. *Black Butler*'s remediation of film into manga allows for both similarity and difference, a richness of form and theme that transforms and imbues all contemporary Japanese visual media with new, more inclusive possibilities to engage reality.

CONCLUSION

By plasticizing and abstracting the index through its remediation of film and memory, contemporary Japanese visual media reveal visual media's, especially anime's and manga's, ability to relate to culture. Their refigured index is inclusive of all visual media, allowing each the opportunity to index the object of subjective memory and experience. *After Life* introduces this possibility by privileging its memory-film recreations as a higher fidelity index to memory than documentary, though documentary's remediation informs this index. In turn, *Millennium Actress* and *Black Butler*, an anime and a manga that create painterly realities, extend *After Life*'s possibility to include their own media. In ways peculiar to their own media, both *Millennium Actress* and *Black Butler* suggest that their manufactured realities bear marked resemblance to the way people perceive and remember the world. Their painterly realities are not divorced from reality, but rather, representative of its decentered, abstracted reception, or subjective experience and memory. In this conclusion, I illuminate discourse on contemporary Japanese visual media before turning to the potential of contemporary Japanese visual media and its plastic index.

I argue contemporary Japanese visual media discourse is as dynamic as the intercultural and intracultural processes *After Life*, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler* reference. Neither anime nor manga are as chronologically simple as he pretends, as

suggested by *Millennium Actress*'s blurring of past and present and *Black Butler*'s blurring of panel boundaries in many pages. Richie holds up *After Life*'s director, Kore-eda Hirokazu, as one of the rare directors exceeding contemporary Japanese visual media's limitations, but I argue *After Life* points towards the potential of anime and manga by abstracting and plasticizing its own index. Anime relies on the movement between layers, the animetic interval, for meaning, and manga panels frequently bleed into each other, making sequentiality ambiguous. *After Life* displays a mangatic sensibility by emphasizing stillness in many shots and using discrete memory-film sets, as well as an animetic interval when layering documentary with fiction and memory with film to explore their interactions. Anime and film share origins, and manga's development owes much to film techniques, as previously considered. The remediatory discourse between contemporary Japanese visual media can produce a complex and sophisticated text, as I have attempted to make clear throughout this thesis.

Contemporary Japanese visual media such as *After Life*, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler* celebrate the cultural changes that new media has wrought. They envision old media as continuous with new media and highlight new media's positive associations of networking, plasticity, and polyvalency. The prevalence of digital animation has not weakened film but offered it a new mode of expression. That not every film, anime, or manga can live up to this potential is undeniable, but the potential exists. Just as film and memory enjoy an analogous relationship, the abstract and creative modes espoused by *After Life*, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler* seek to demonstrate that a more plastic index—a new media index, if you will—can refer to the more plastic aspects of reality, especially memory and subjective experience. Contemporary Japanese visual media

entertains intercultural and intracultural discourses that require reconsideration of the more traditional notions of the index. New intercultural and intracultural dialogues become possible through the reevaluation of abstracted media and abstracted reality offered in *After Life*, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler*. They are not alone, either. A recent anime, *K* (Suzuki Shingo, 2012), envisions memory as a digital camera's recording, capable of being framed, edited, rewound, fast forwarded, and even deleted. Color offers energy and power throughout the diegesis, figuring the anime's intensely colorful animated world. Another recent anime, *Psycho-Pass* (Shiotani Naoyoshi, 2012-3), uses its animated form and the figure of a cyborg to suggest that though technology cannot fully comprehend the human mind, but that technology still contains the human mind, whether in a high-tech new media society or a cybernetic body. Consider how anime's own worlds are contained within painterly animation, yet *Psycho-Pass* suggests their worlds may exceed this, just as the human mind exceeds technology. Media, even popular visual media such as film, anime, and manga, engage culture. Contemporary Japanese visual media are not simply entertainment, but also engagements with reality.

Contemporary Japanese visual media such as *After Life*, *Millennium Actress*, and *Black Butler* remind us how media acts as extensions of ourselves, as Marshall McLuhan claimed. As film, anime, and manga quickly transform into digital new media, our technologies and lives have also transformed through digital new media, as witnessed by the prevalence of cell phones, laptops, and daily interactions on internet social networking sites such as Facebook or Tumblr. Our lives are filled with virtual, abstracted interactions, much like the creative interpretations of *After Life* or painterly realities of *Millennium Actress* and *Black Butler*. Combine this with notions of a decentered reality,

of how subjective perceptions and memories shape reality for each person, in constant dialogue with larger collective and cultural perceptions and memories (society and history), and twenty-first century life as a human becomes a constant process of remediation, of shaping the world in our own image. The inability to separate subjective reality from objective reality becomes the very basis for contemporary Japanese visual media's plasticized indexicality. The abstracted index, with a loose connection to material contiguity, also forces reevaluation of the supposedly more objective aspects of reality. A plastic index reminds us of a plastic reality. Even the material world is dynamic and constantly changing. Seasons come and go, climate change threatens our environment, oceans rise, earthquakes demolish cities in Japan and Haiti, buildings are constantly erected and demolished, and millions of people are born and die every day. In a world filled with constant change and development, contemporary Japanese visual media inclusively remediate both old and new media to envision a dynamic world with which they are fully prepared to engage.

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