

Producing Animation: Work, Creativity, and Aspirations in the Japanese Animation Industry

Tomohiro Morisawa

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy at the University of Oxford

Trinity Term 2012

Social and Cultural Anthropology

Exeter College

Abstract

This thesis examines shifting relations of labour, creativity, and political economy in the context of commercial animation production in contemporary Tokyo. Based on 12 months of fieldwork in the Japanese animation industry (2009-2010), the ethnography of the thesis is centred on young animation makers whose lives are fraught with persistent job insecurity and socio-economic precariousness. Contrary to celebratory narratives of the global success of anime, found in both Japanese media discourses and the literature of Japanese studies, these professional young workers live on the socio-economic fringe of mainstream Japanese society. Despite such instability, labour discourses in the animation industry are notable for their highly aspirational quality, which appears to be based on global liberal discourses of self-realisation through the pursuit of dreams in the labour market.

Commercial animation production in the Japanese industry entails a complex division of labour in which animation makers are, at the root, divided between managers and creators. This management-creative relation structures the primary context of commercial production. Thematically, the thesis engages mainly with three research literatures in anthropology: the anthropology of creativity, the anthropology of work, and Japanese ethnography. The analytical locus is built on the perspective of young entry-level managers, with whom I worked during fieldwork and who were on the lowest strata of the workplace hierarchy.

Through the detailed ethnography of animation production – one of Japan's premier creative industries – the thesis examines creative processes of animation making within the terms of work and labour. In so doing, it engages critically with the social and economic structures of commercial animation production, and explores the lived dimension of labour on the production floor. Methodologically, this means combining the perspectives of political economy and phenomenology by situating the micro-processes of animation making firmly in the industry's social and economic relations of production. I pay particular attention to the ways in which shifting social and cultural discourses of labour in Japan intersect with global liberal ideologies, such as creativity and self-realisation, in the context of commercial animation production. The major focus of the thesis is therefore to explicate what it is that makes these young animation makers, despite adverse conditions of labour, retain their aspirations to pursue the profession of animation making.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction.....8

Part 1: General Introduction

1.1.1 Setting the scene: on the margins of creativity

1.1.2 The work of animation: research objectives and background

Part 2: Literature Review

1.2.1 Overview

1.2.2 Socio-economic contexts 1950s-1990s and the anthropology of work in Japan

1.2.3 Aspirational discourses of work

1.2.4 Creativity, animation production, labour

Part 3: Methodology

1.3.1 Overview of the field sites and fieldwork

1.3.2 Discussion of the method used and its implication for the thesis

1.3.3 Debates on the notions of ‘nativity’ and ‘field’

1.3.4 Summary

Chapter 2

Workplace of Animation: An ethnography.....76

2.1 A day in Golden Week

2.2 Ethnography and the creative industries debate

2.3 Business and industry structure of the Japanese animation industry

2.4 Production operators and the division of labour

2.5 Workplace of animation

2.6 Conclusion: political economy of the tension

Chapter 3

Visual Culture and Labour: History of Japanese animation industry...123

- 3.1 The wider picture
- 3.2 Early period: 1890s to the 1950s
- 3.3 TV animation and the 1960s
- 3.4 Work and labour in the animation industry since the 1960s
- 3.5 Rise of critical discourses from 1970s to 1990s
- 3.6 Anime in culture and anime in policy around the 2000s
- 3.7 Conclusion

Chapter 4

Dreams That Don't Add Up: Disconnect and neoliberal discourses in the Japanese animation industry.....168

- 4.1 *Karuizawa*, 6 December 2009
- 4.2 Precure staffroom
- 4.3 Imagining work and the future in Japan
- 4.4 Dreams, disconnect and what you love
- 4.5 Embracing neoliberalism?
- 4.6 Conclusion

Chapter 5

Seeing through Numbers, or Auditing Creativity.....202

- 5.1. Executive encounter of an ethnographic character
- 5.2. Seeing through numbers
- 5.3 Commercial animation production
- 5.4 Counting contingencies
- 5.5 Conclusion: auditing creativity

Chapter 6

Making Animation Japanese: Culture and creativity in the political economy of international subcontracting.....250

- 6.1 To the other side of production
- 6.2 Outsourcing production
- 6.3 Made in translation
- 6.4 Animated in the Philippines
- 6.5 Conclusion

Chapter 7	
Conclusion: Animation, disillusion, and self-realisation.....	290
7.1 Ethnography of animation production	
7.2 Anthropology of animation and disillusion	
 Appendix 1.....	 312
Appendix 2.....	328
 Bibliography.....	 330

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1 Fieldwork Timeline

Figure 1.2 Map of Japan

Figure 1.3 Map of Tokyo

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1 Production Flow Chart

Figure 2.2 Character Production Design

Figure 2.3 An excerpt from Storyboard

Figure 2.4 An example of Key Animation

Figure 2.5 An example of Colouring (TP)

Figure 2.6 Hand drawn representation of the animation production flow

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1 Animation Camera

Figure 3.2 *Imokawa Mukuzou Genkan Ban no Maki*

Figure 3.3 *Sarukani Gassen*

Figure 3.4 *Hanawa Hekonai Meitou no Maki*

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1 Precure Staffroom

Chapter 5

Figure 5.1 Rough key animation

Figure 5.2 Numerical representation of Cut 9-17 and others

Figure 5.3 Example of *The AS System* database (*Shukei-hyo*)

Figure 5.4 Example of *nippou-hyo* produced by the *AS System*

Figure 5.5 Timesheet of Cut 10-14

Figure 5.6 Rough Key Animation

Figure 5.7 Rough Key Animation

Chapter 6

Figure 6.1 Toei Animation and Toei Animation Philippines

Figure 6.2 Production Flow Chart and IB-TP

Figure 6.3 Character Colour Chart

Figure 6.4 Jocelyn's Translation of Production Design

- Figure 6.5 Buffers in communication between Toei and TAP
Figure 6.6 Cut 2-18
Figure 6.7 Cut 2-18, Director's Correction
Figure 6.8 A List of Technical Directions in Translation
Figure 6.9 Translated Storyboard

Appendix 1

- Figure A.1 Production Flow Chart

Chapter 1

Introduction

Part 1: General Introduction

1.1.1 Setting the Scene: on the margins of creativity

When we finally sat down in the franchised Japanese restaurant serving all-you-can-eat *shabushabu*,¹ some ten minutes' drive away from work in western Tokyo, the time was already approaching 10:00 in the evening. It was mid-June and as such the middle of the rainy season, but the stifling humidity no longer bothered us once we were inside the air-conditioned restaurant. Gathered around the Japanese-style low table on the *tatami* floor were Murakami-san (male, late twenties), Mizuno-san (male, late twenties), Yokoyama-san (male, mid twenties), Takeda-san (male, mid twenties) and myself (male, late twenties). They all worked in an animation production company called UTT,² located in the Suginami Ward of Tokyo, where I was doing my fieldwork on animation production between April and September 2010. Before coming to UTT, I had been at a different production company called Toei Animation,³ where I had also worked on the production floor (*seisaku genba*) between October 2009 and March 2010.

The guys who gathered in the *shabushabu* restaurant were all in the line of work called 'production operation' (*seisaku shinkou*), a job that mainly consisted of

management of the production schedule. Murakami-san had planned the restaurant visit that night because Mizuno-san, their fellow production operator, had just finished overseeing a difficult and important episode of the series that UTT was currently producing. As the food began to arrive at our table, we gradually unwound and started talking about more random things, swapping jokes over the boiling cauldron of delicious *shabushabu*. Yet despite the celebration behind the gathering, none of us ventured to drink beer or any alcohol. While Mizuno-san was free to go that night, Murakami-san and Yokoyama-san both had to go back to work afterward. Even though it meant they would return to their workplace sometime past midnight, such a practice was not unusual in the working habits of the animation industry. For these two, the occasion was thus rather like a temporary escape from the incessant demand of work and pressure from the episodes they themselves were working on. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, a jovial atmosphere reigned at our table and we never tired of joking about the most trivial of things.

By that time of evening (past 10:00 p.m.), diners were already sparse in the restaurant. However, if the other diners were to look at us gathering from afar, they might have mistaken us for a group of university students. None of us present were wearing business suits – material and hegemonic insignia of male workers (*salarymen*) in Japan. In fact, none of us ever wore business suits at work. Mizuno-san, the man of the evening, sported dark long hair that covered both of his ears, a neat pair of blue jeans, and a stylish but casual white shirt. Yokoyama-san had his semi-long hair dyed brown and permed, mastering an outfit one would find in any upcoming fashion magazine in Tokyo. Murakami-san, in contrast, was a big man with an unshaven beard and scruffy unwashed hair – not caring much about his appearance – which made him look like an interesting cross between *otaku*⁴ and an artist. Takeda-san had neither a hipster-like outfit nor unshaven beard; instead,

he wore a standard pair of jeans and a black polo shirt on top. I joined Takeda-san in contributing to downplaying the overall appearance of our group in the restaurant.

The topics of conversation to which we had given ourselves also resembled a kind of boyish immaturity more characteristic of university undergraduates than grown-up workers (*shakaijin*). In taking note of the shape of the ice cream we ordered for dessert, Yokoyama-san gladly observed, 'It looks a lot like a shit!' Bemused, we then nudged Takeda-san to go over to the counter and have our soft ice cream sprinkled with chocolate chips to complement the look. 'That's all fine by me,' Takeda-san replied, 'but I'll actually need a proper shit in the loo before I come back here with chocolates!'

In the group, whose members all worked on the same production floor at the UTT's studio, Takeda-san was the youngest, in fact a *shinjin* (new employee) from April 2010, and as such a target of convivial but relentless pranks played by Yokoyama-san. The culmination of the night's practical jokes happened soon after the ice cream incident: when Takeda-san left for the toilet, they decided to clear the bill quickly and hide in the car, pretending they had gone back to the studio already. We thus waited in the car for Takeda-san to come out of the restaurant for a short while. When he eventually appeared in the car park looking for signs of us, Mizuno-san started the car slowly so that he would notice. Seeing this, Takeda-san started running toward us, yelling: 'Hey! Wait! I knew you were up to something like this!'

After he too got in the car, we made our way back to the UTT studio. Even though it was approaching midnight, going back to work somehow seemed like the most natural thing to do in the world. Those young workers may have looked and sounded like carefree university students, but they were young professionals in the animation industry. All of them worked in fact a lot longer and harder than an

average male *salaryman* (Dasgupta 2007; Roberson 2003), but none of them could participate in the forms of job and social securities the latter championed throughout the postwar decades in Japan (Gill 2001; Rohlen 1974). As we sat crammed in a UTT company-owned Toyota Vitz, I looked outside at the slowly moving cityscape and the subdued streets of not-so-central Tokyo.

As I write these sentences now, it is indeed one of those countless drives with those young production operators (*seisaku shinkou*), first at Toei Animation and then UTT, which appear to metaphorically and poetically summarise my impressions of the work and the life that those young – and most often male – people led in the animation industry in Tokyo between 2009 and 2010. In thinking about my sporadic and impressionistic memories from the field, I am simultaneously thinking about the ambiguous fluidity, uncertain layers, and elusive texture of the dimly lit night as metaphors for their life and work. Such a condition not only reflected the subjective and phenomenological experiences of making a living in the animation industry, but also the social and economic insecurities such conditions of work brought about to the lives of those young workers there.

Throughout this thesis, I will attempt to make sense of this uncertainty about the future that was so acutely felt in the field, and to better understand what my informants in the animation industry were going through at the time. The country that was once disputed to be ‘number one’ (Vogel 1979) was no longer, and amidst the mounting anxieties that the nation itself seemed to be facing, those young workers were the ones who had to bear the full brunt of the consequences of such precariousness.

Coming back to the conversations in the *shabushabu* restaurant, one topic in the midst of jokes casually drifted toward what it was exactly that I – a Japanese PhD

student studying anthropology at a British university – was doing at an animation production company in Tokyo.

‘You see, anthropology [*bunka jinruigaku*],’ Mizuno-san was saying. ‘I thought it was about ‘native’ people and all that?’

‘Oh, I see,’ Yokoyama-san cut in with his cheerful grin, always ready for a good laugh. ‘He is here observing us ‘savage’ workers in the anime industry!’

Exactly what I was looking for, in fact, was a question often raised innocuously by many people I came to meet in the Japanese animation industry between 2009-2010. Many people I worked with in the industry had a university degree, and some of them had taken a course or two during their undergraduate years in either *minzokugaku* (ethnology) or *jinruigaku* (anthropology). As a result, several of them turned out to have a fine grasp of what the academic discipline of anthropology was about today, and one of them even wanted to discuss Lévi-Strauss with me (I was too ashamed to admit I had only read several chapters of *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, but not *The Savage Mind*, which this person wanted to expound upon). What appeared curious for them was therefore not anthropology itself, but rather the conceptual relation *my presence* facilitated between anthropology and commercial TV animation production.

But if they were a little amused by me being there, the presence of someone affiliated with academia in their workplace, expressing his research interests in anime and animation production, was by all means *not* a totally unexpected affair in itself. Sometime past the late 1990s, the political, cultural and economic discourses surrounding anime and the animation industry are said to have gone past something of a watershed in Japan. Quality national dailies such as *Asahi Shibun* began amassing reports concerning anime’s growing popularity overseas (especially in the United States and certain Western European countries such as France)

around the early 2000s. The Japanese government, taking note of this ‘cultural success’, began drafting anime and the animation industry into its policy agenda for new prosperity based on the production and mobilisation of intellectual properties: a Japanese response to the rising demand of postindustrial and so-called ‘new economy’ (Lofgren & Willim 2005). During his 2003 General Policy speech, then-Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi thus cheerfully declared that:

It is not only the manufacturing with which Japan leads the world. Japanese culture such as cinema and anime are also held highly across the world, and they create impacts that reach beyond economy. We strive towards building a nation whose wealth thrives on art and culture.

In this political rhetoric, ‘anime’ is discursively placed abreast with ‘cinema’, subsumed under ‘Japanese culture’, and posed vis-à-vis categories such as ‘art’ and ‘economy’. Since the proper emergence of the industry in the late 1950s, commercial animation in Japan has indeed come a long way. Another testimony to the sea change regarding anime can be seen through its treatment in anthropological and other academic discourses on Japan over the course of the past two decades. For instance, in Marilyn Ivy’s 1993 paper on the postwar formation of culture industries in Japan (what Ivy calls ‘mass culture’), anime was in fact hardly ever mentioned, even though she wrote about *manga* in the manner of more than just a passing reference (Ivy 1993:246, 248). By 2006, Anne Allison had published a monograph dedicated to the study of anime and what she addresses as the ‘enchanted commodities’ of its related character merchandise exported globally (Allison 2006, esp. 1-34). Ian Condry, another anthropologist working on Japan and its globalising popular culture, is now preparing another monograph on anime focused on the

practice of what he calls ‘collaborative creativity’ in the production process (forthcoming).⁵

More rapid has been anime’s development in disciplines outside anthropology; not only academic but also dedicated journalistic publications now amass a large corpus of literature, which have accumulated at a notable pace from the mid- to late-1990s onward and focus in one way or other on anime’s globalising distribution and consumption (MacWilliams 2008:4-5). In one such volume, for example, Stephen Brown, a scholar of Japanese literature, has gone so far as to state that anime is ‘one of the most explosive forms of visual culture to emerge at the crossroads of transnational cultural production in the last twenty-five years’ (2006:1). This, to put it into context, is by all means *not* an extreme or grossly misconceived point of view. Anime’s global rise in popularity and consumption *is* an empirically grounded and observable phenomenon, especially when we consider the spectacular commercial success of shows such as *Pokémon* and its global merchandise, as discussed extensively in the aforementioned work of Allison (2006).

And yet – or perhaps because – such celebratory accounts of the globalisation of Japanese animation are not completely ungrounded, it is made profoundly puzzling that the lived reality of the work on the production floor exposes a completely different picture, as we have just glimpsed above. If the popularly shared view of anime simply represented its straightforward success story in Japan and elsewhere, why was there so much uncertainty, anxiety, and insecurity on the production floor? Why were people working so hard and so long, to an extent that going back to work after dinner, past midnight, felt like a natural thing to do? If anime and the animation industry have been so successful during the past two decades, how come, according to one recent industry survey in 2009,⁶ 52.2 per cent of the total workforce in the animation industry was found to be earning below ¥2

million, Japan's relative poverty line? Although a statistic such as this clearly needs further contextualisation,⁷ it is more than three times the country's relative poverty rate published in 2006 *OECD's Economic Surveys: Japan* at 15.3 percent. This compares similarly when the national rate is divided in terms of age groups. Approximately 70 per cent of the workforce in the animation industry consists of men and women in their twenties and thirties. In a different 2005 OECD report,⁸ Japan's relative poverty rates for this age group were 16.6 per cent for those between eighteen and twenty-five, and 12.4 per cent for those between twenty-six and forty years of age (Tachibanaki 2006:69).

In summary, such celebratory accounts of Japanese animation at the turn of the 21st century, which has become a representative narrative and a mode for portraying 'anime' in popular, academic, and political discourse, convey a profound sense of a *disconnect* from the lived world of practitioners on the production floor. I contend, in this respect, that the existing research literature on 'anime', anthropological or otherwise, has consistently failed to take into account – and ground its findings in – the actual socio-economic conditions in which animations are being produced in Japan today.

It is, then, at this juncture that my research diverges from the existing literature on anime. Rather than looking at consumption and global distribution, I look instead at its *production process*: just how, when, where, and *by whom* are those '[e]xports in fantasy and entertainment goods' (Allison 2006:4) made? Just as imagination, innovation, and creativity have become increasingly salient features of the emergent form of labour in the so-called 'creative industries' in Japan (Condry 2006; Moeran 2006), to which today's Japanese government clearly subjects anime in its policymaking, how has the decade-long discursive shift actually impacted ways in which people work in the animation industry? Given the lack of job security,

standard work hours, sufficient remuneration, and the imminence of general precarity in life and employment, what was it, if anything, that motivated those young workers to come, work, and stay in the industry? Last but not least, how are we to understand creativity ethnographically in such demanding and severe conditions of labour?

Regardless of how anime may be considered within academic and Japanese discourses, and whatever its relation to fantasy, globalisation or economic growth, the majority of young animation workers I met on the production floor lived on the fringe of socio-economic existence in mainstream Japanese society. In respect to anime's lauded relation to creativity, they clearly worked on its margins. And it is these entwined relationships between animation production, creativity, and labour that I am going to attend to throughout this thesis.

1.1.2 The Work of Animation: research objectives and background

Put in the most abstract way, this thesis is an anthropological study of animation and disillusion in the domains of work and labour in contemporary urban Japan. I am here using the word 'animation' in a double sense of the term. Firstly, in an ethnographically specific manner, I employ it to refer to Japanese animation movies, a genre of visual entertainment commodities that are increasingly recognised and referred to worldwide by its Japanised form of abbreviation *anime*.⁹ Secondly, however, I also want to refer to an etymological and more general meaning of animation. That is, as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary, 'senses relating to inspiration, vivacity, liveliness,' and 'senses relating to life, quickening, bringing into action'.¹⁰ With this second, more expansive usage, my aim is to bring forth the senses in which the work on the production floor charmed, captivated, and *animated*

the workers coming to and already inside the animation industry; the work of animation, that is, as a complex nexus of affect, desire, and fulfillment in its own right.

In more concrete terms, this thesis is primarily an ethnography of commercial animation production in Tokyo, based on the 12 months of fieldwork that I conducted between the autumn of 2009 and the summer of 2010. As I introduced briefly above, my ethnographic focus was on the category of workers called ‘production operators’ (*seisaku shinkou*), whose work consisted mainly of the management of the production schedule and every creatively peripheral task that accompanied it. In ethnographically tracing the minute details of material and visual processes of production, and the work of production operators therein in the intense division of labour, I am intent on offering an ethnographically informed critique of the political economy of creativity (c.f. Leach 2007a, 2007b). As I will detail in this chapter, the findings of my research shall contribute, generally, to the anthropology of work, anthropology of creativity, and Japanese ethnography.

Contrary to the popularly shared notion of creativity as a transcendent form of human agency, my ethnographic critique grounded in the workplace of animation shall explicate the ways in which creativity is embedded and deeply implicated in the specific particularities of the ethnographic contexts in which it occurs. Such contexts in the Japanese animation industry, first and foremost, were commerce and labour under advanced liberal capitalism. Creativity, or creative labour, existed as a form of work on the production floor, and creative processes and inputs were valued inasmuch as they could pragmatically converge with the management of commercial animation production within the foci of production companies and weekly TV broadcasting. While this explicit bias toward commercial and pragmatic relevance in the valuation of creativity could be readily dismissed as

its vulgar capitalist devaluation, I intend to counter such a view, for it merely replicates the modern bourgeois dichotomy between the sphere of art, on the one hand, and the sphere of utility or – worse still – that of commodities.

In thinking about the implicit or explicit distinction between commercial and non-commercial forms of creativity, anyone conversant with critical theory of the Frankfurt School would be quick to point out its apparent homology with the distinction Adorno and Horkheimer made between ‘...‘autonomous’ and ‘commercial’ forms of cultural production’ (Mazzarella 2003:45; for the original discussion see Adorno and Horkheimer 1969:107; Adorno 1991:30). In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer (1969) famously addressed the latter form of commercial and industrialised cultural production, pejoratively, as the ‘culture industry’. Writing in the middle of the 20th century, they observed how ‘[c]ulture today is infecting everything with sameness’ (ibid.:94), and how:

‘Serious art has denied itself to those for whom the hardship and oppression of life make a mockery of seriousness and who must be glad to use the time not spent at the production line in being simply carried along. Light art has accompanied autonomous art as its shadow. It is the social bad conscience of serious art.’

(ibid.:107)

and

‘[T]he culture industry remains the entertainment *business*. Its control of consumers is mediated by entertainment, and its hold will not be broken by outright dictate but by the hostility inherent in the principle of entertainment to anything which is more than itself.’

(ibid.:108, emphasis added)

In the conventional reading of Adorno, while the products of autonomous cultural production are given the distinction of (serious) art and belong in the dialectic of progress, those that are produced commercially under industrial capitalism exist merely as entertainment commodities and become infected with ‘sameness’. The entertainment commodities, at worst, are not only contaminated by this inundating sameness, but their sameness also inundates the mass. The culture industry, at the moment of regressive dialectic, would actually produce the mass, where there is no such thing as ‘individuality’ (e.g. Adorno 1991:40).

In a convincing manner – for it *is* an accurate interpretation – this line of reading Adorno exposes him as a self-righteous defender of bourgeois art and high modernism in particular. As such, Adorno, ‘the Grinch Who Stole Pleasure’ (Mazzarella forthcoming:1), has now come under ‘persistent theoretical depreciation’ in the context of ‘a positive reevaluation of the character and potentialities of popular (mass) culture’ today (Bernstein 1991:1). From the vantage point of the present, the ontological separation between autonomous art and commercial entertainment may be sentimentally resonant for some, but analytically speaking, the proposed distinction appears at best historically confused. For, as Marilyn Ivy (1993:240) succinctly put it, ‘...both mass culture and modernism appeared only with the advent of ‘modernisation’ itself.’

The autonomous sphere of art, as it was then imagined, could not exist without the historical rise of industrial capitalism, the culture industry, and the political economy of the bourgeoisie.¹¹ It is on this point that a countless number of sociologists and anthropologists of art have recently provided the sustained critique,

not necessarily of Adorno, but of the social institution of art (Becker 1984; Cox 2003; Moeran 1997), its political economy (Bourdieu 1987), and the existence of modernist ontology behind it (Gell 1998; Ingold 2000; Ingold *et al.* 1996). As we can see, then, the social theory of cultural production has come a long way since the time of Adorno and Horkheimer, from being the critique of commercial and pseudo-artistic production to the critique of modernity that produced the very demarcation of ‘autonomous art’.

It is by taking note of this past development that I argue that the uncritical distinction between commercial and non-commercial/artistic forms of creativity, which implies the homologous replication of the distinction between art and commerce, should at once be discarded. As I hope is clear, my analytical stance is neither a shameless defense of late capitalism that makes commodity out of everything, nor a simplistic proposal to consider anime as ‘art’ or ‘culture’. Creativity existed, on the production floor of animation and its organisation of labour, both as a category of capitalist ideology – a form of discourse and a concept – *and* as something that was done in the context of everyday work.

I do not propose this in order to replace one kind of opposition with another kind of contrast. Whereas the former – creativity as the latest capitalist hegemony – was influential and clearly existed beyond the boundaries of the animation industry, the latter – creativity, if you like, as *practice* – was specific to and embedded in the relations of production unique within the animation industry. Together, they formed something of an order in the production process of animation, which was as much enforced as contested in the everyday doings of work.

Thus, in my ethnography, I do not ask, for example, if certain animation titles are more creative than others, if creativity is possible within the commercial framework of animation production, or, indeed, what the nature of creativity is – let

alone what culturally different ways of being creative may be. Eschewing questions of what is special about creativity, I instead attend, ethnographically, to what is special about *animation* and animation production for those workers implicated in the production process. I suggest this introduction of the practitioners' perspective to the debate in turn brings the anthropological studies of work and creativity, which have thus far developed relatively independent of each other, into a converging ethnographic focus on the production floor of commercial animation in Japan.

The question 'What is so special about animation?' in my research context was more than simply rhetorical. Here it is pertinent to recall again that the work of animation production and labour in the animation industry were somewhat different from those occupations that may be described by typical middle-class idioms of secure white-collar employments in Japan, most saliently expressed through the contested figure of *salaryman* (Dasgupta 2007; Rohlen 1974; c.f. Vogel 1963). The kind of job security and stabilised 'lifecourse' (Kelly 1993; Plath 1983, 1991) that historically characterised postwar Japanese corporate and occupational life were characteristically absent in the animation industry. Work hours stretched intolerably long, remuneration sunk to the bare minimum or below, and social security and welfare provision were virtually non-existent. As I will detail in Chapter 3, this precarity of employment was *not* the immediate effect of the recent neoliberal deregulation of the labour market since the late 1990s (Borovoy 2010; Brinton 2011), but a historical condition that structured work in the animation industry as far back as the late 1960s.

Despite this, and just as such forms of job insecurity have become a piercing social problem, a cohort of dedicated young people were nonetheless entering the industry, knowing full well what fate of working life would await them. At UTT, for example, as I overheard two middle-management men in the company office

discussing, roughly a few hundred students applied for only ten or so places at the company for the recruitment round of new graduates for 2011. Among the recruited graduates of 2010 – the year group I came to know well at UTT – one of the *shinjin* (new employees) was a graduate of Tokyo University, the nation's most highly ranked university, a degree from which is usually considered a ticket to stable and lucrative elite jobs in top firms. These youth did not come to the work of animation – one of the most insecure forms of employment in contemporary Japan – simply out of non-choice. It appeared, rather clearly, that they willingly chose it as their career path.

Writing recently about the far-reaching social and economic transformation Japan went through between the 1960s and 1980s – the nation's peak era of economic growth – Ronald Dore (2006) lamented how the kind of workplace arrangement that characterised an early stage of spirited labour unionism in postwar Japan, in which those from heterogeneous (educational, social, and economic) backgrounds could still converse equally on intellectual ground, have virtually disappeared today. The components of the socio-economic transformation during the growth period are described in the research literature variously as: 1) the hegemonic rise of white-collar *salarymen* as ideal workers (Dasgupta 2007; Gill 2000; Roberson 1998), 2) consequent effects of high economic growth and the ideology of 'all middle-class/all mainstream society' (*sochuryu*) (Borovoy 2010; Brinton 2011), or 3) sociological structuring of education-to-work transition facilitated via 'school mediated employment' (Honda 2005).

Throughout this period, an ideologically charged yet highly popular representation of the lifecourse of an average man in regular employment (both blue-collar *and* white-collar) and his family had become irreducibly stabilised (Binton 2010; Honda 2009). While the hegemonic representation of Japan as a

homogenous society in both class and ethnic terms, which emerged as the ideological corollary of such transformation by and around the late 1970s, was in many ways an ideological myth (Kelly 1991, 1993), the kind of leveling-out effects that this myth, as well as real socio-economic change, brought about to numerous social organisations in multiple facets of everyday life in Japan must be examined carefully.

Taking Dore's observation to be true, the eclectic mixture of workers in the production floor of animation, where one could observe the graduates of a top national university working side by side with a high school graduate and engaging in the same line of work, pointed to the presence of a rather extraordinary kind of workplace in the whole of contemporary Japan. The workplace of animation production – often called *seisaku genba* (production site) in Japanese – referred as much to a physical studio space within the company as to a conceptual, aesthetic and productive place where things were created and came into being. In fact, *seisaku genba* is a generic Japanese term that refers to a vast range of production floors across manufacturing and construction industries, evoking a sense of immediacy to the site where productivity and creativity materialise by the fused force of people, machines, and computers. In this latter sense of the term, *seisaku genba* did not merely designate a particular studio function of the production company, but amply resonated with wider social imaginations about the space of creativity and production. It was as much a place within a company as a space within society and the social imaginary. The production floor of animation generated not only animations, but also aesthetic identities for those who worked on its *seisaku genba*.

Economic as well as educational background diverged among the workers. At Toei Animation, another production company, a son (male, early twenties) from a wealthy family that practiced dentistry worked alongside a son (male, late twenties) from a modest family whose father was a regional low-ranking civil servant in the

waterworks. At UTT, one production operator (male, mid twenties) was a university graduate whose father worked as a banker; his immediate boss (male, early twenties), in contrast, was a high school graduate whose father ‘could not support his family’.

What wove a language of shared identity among the young workers there was not so much their socio-economic ‘homogeneity’ but their future-oriented expectations about the work of animation production. As a heuristic, I tentatively address this mode of occupational aspiration as ‘aestheticisation of labour’ (c.f. Bauman 2005:33-34). This was a realm where the age-old ideologies of productivity merged and fused with the increasing salience of creativity in the social organisation and public imagination of how ideal labour should be in contemporary Japan. The significant corollary of such an encounter was rendering the cultural rise of Japanese animation a catalyst to transform socially and economically precarious jobs in the industry into something rather *desirable* for those attracted to animation making.

The production of commercial animation in Japan entailed a highly elaborate and complex division of professional labour. The dividing logic of this complex division was primarily *visual*. The workforce was thus divided principally between those who engaged in the actual production of visual materials and those who managed the visual production in terms of budget, cost, and schedule. To the former category of workforce belonged such personnel as directors, animators, background artists, film crews, editors, and so forth. To the latter category of managers belonged production operators, production managers, and producers, in ascending organisational order.

As I have stated a few times already, most of my informants in the field belonged to this latter category, and the majority further worked in the entry-level

management position called ‘production operator’ (*seisaku shinkou*). This was, in fact, the job I performed at two production companies where I worked as an intern/fieldworker. Mizuno-san, Murakami-san, Yokoyama-san, and Takeda-san in the above vignette all worked in this division, as did many others I discuss throughout later chapters. The ethnographic focus on the production operators in the context of animation production was thus doubly significant. Not only did the young operators find themselves excluded from what they came to consider more ‘normal’ 9-to-5 office work, they were also effectively barred from claims to creativity, which gave such an allure to recent policy discussions about animation and the creative industries more generally in Japan.

Under such circumstances, many of my informants often felt alienated from their own dreams of animation making, not necessarily because they were placed far away from it, but by virtue of their hapless implication in the production process. Yet this did not simply portray a straightforward picture of Marxian alienation, for work in the animation industry also gave them something more than that. In manufacturing animation as a cog in the machine, the work itself somewhat animated the workers as a source of enchantment. As I noted above, the production floor of animation was a complex space onto which multiple and often conflicting strands of work ethics, ideologies, discourses, and aesthetics of labour, productivity, aspirations, and creativity in contemporary Japan came to map themselves out. These then intersected deeply with the ways in which my informants lived and worked, often articulating the context in which they desired things for and from their lives. Work in the animation industry, in turn, for my informants was not simply a means to make a living, but – more often than not – a path for self-realisation and channels of aspirations, a way to reach out for something larger than a mere occupational life and economic being. In other words, work, for them,

was both a social idiom and practice to ‘re-evaluate their self-estimations as morally capable agents’ (Corsin Jimenez 2003:14).¹² The perilous effects of such individuation of the motivation for work, on the other hand, were of course that many people also burned out and, sooner or later, left the industry exhausted and disillusioned.

Part 2: Literature Review

1.2.1 Overview

In this section, I will first summarise the general research trajectory in the anthropology of work in Japan, revealing the overall historical significance of work both for Japanese society in general and the anthropologists of Japan since the start of the postwar decades. I will then show how a new arena of research has emerged in this field since the late 1990s, with regards to the historically salient but overlooked relationship between work, hopes, and personal and social fulfillments under the current socio-economic conditions in contemporary Japan. The literature on creativity that I will primarily engage with in this review is the phenomenological approach developed by Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold (2007) on creativity as ‘improvisation’. By summarising and showing the limit of this approach, I aim to demonstrate my own position that anthropological engagement with creativity must take into account the issues of labour, social relations of recognition, and political economy.

1.2.2 Socio-economic contexts 1950s-1990s and the anthropology of work in Japan

Compared with some other regions of the world, the anthropology of Japan may be considered unique in that, by the time Western anthropologists began academically professionalised ethnography of the nation during the early postwar years (Kelly 2005:137; e.g. Abegglen 1958; Dore 1958, but see for exception Embree 1939), there was already a rich accumulation of ethnological literature about Japan within Japan

penned by Japanese ethnologists (e.g. Yanagita 1910; c.f. Ivy 1995). In contrast to this Japanese ethnological literature (*minzoku-gaku*), the research foci of the (Anglophone) Western anthropologists were somewhat different in that they looked, in addition to rural areas (Embree 1939), the urban life (Dore 1958), and industrial and capitalist workplaces (Abegglen 1958).

Within English-language literature, James Abegglen's study of the large-scale Japanese factory in 1958 was the earliest of its kind in the anthropology of work in Japan (Hamada 2005; Ogasawara 1998; Roberson 1998; Turner 1995). As the Japanese economy entered a prolonged period of high growth in the 1960s, ethnographic studies of work and middle-class lifestyle (e.g. Rohlen 1974; Vogel 1963) thereon developed into a major research focus amongst Western-trained anthropologists, and works by Japanese scholars such as Nakane Chie (1970), published in both English and Japanese, soon caught up with this thriving field of cross-cultural investigation (e.g. DeVos and Wagatsuma 1973). In fact, the intensity of attention cast on the issues of economic life and organisation in and of Japan during the era of economic growth (1960s-1980s) was such that, writing in 1998, some forty years since Abegglen, James E. Roberson (1998:3) was able to observe that '[w]ork, workplace and workers in Japan have... been the objects of continuing worldwide interest.....'

In the 1990s, however, two major criticisms were leveled against this field. The first was an ethnographically oriented critique from later generations of anthropologists (Kondo 1990; Roberson 1998; Roberts 2005). The critics in this regard argued that the historically overt focus on large-scale corporations in the literature (e.g. Abegglen 1958; Nakane 1970; Rohlen 1974) did not reflect the lived actuality in the country, where 99.7% of companies in Japan are statistically classified as small- to medium-scale enterprises. The second criticism, in conjunction

with the first, is concerned more prominently with the transnational context of discourse and knowledge production regarding the notion of essentialistic ‘Japaneseness’, and the role that the culturalist explanation of Japanese work organisations played in their formations. This second field of criticism may be better known among the anthropologists of Japan as the critique of *nihonjiron* (Allison 1994; Goodman 2005).

As Roger Goodman (2005) has recently argued, the corpus of local literature usually referred to in the English-language scholarship as *nihonjinron* (theory of Japaneseness) emerged largely in tandem with the highly essentialised analysis of Japanese corporate life during the late 1980s, which was often propagated by Japanese multinationals themselves as a set of self-explanations for their international successes (c.f. Tsutsui 1998). Anne Allison (1994:79) has summarised the gist of *nihonjinron* theory as cohering around the idea that ‘...the culture of Japan is unique and that its cultural uniqueness explains divergent behaviors.’ The proponents of *nihonjinron* tend to 1) ‘position a Japanese behavior by stressing its differences from behaviors found in other cultures,’ and 2) ‘explain Japanese culture in the same terms that are used to describe it... as ways of behaving that are characteristically Japanese’ (ibid.). During the 1980s, the essentialistic language about Japanese culture seen in *nihonjinron* motivated the Japanese multinationals themselves to theorise and propagate culturally essentialist explanations for Japan’s economic success, which were then offered under the rubric of ‘Japanese-style management’ (Gordon 1998).

As the scholars cited above argue, the key here is that such essentialistic and culturalist characterisations of Japanese work and corporations were not limited to Japanese multinationals or domestic right-wing theorists within Japan. Rather, ‘the myth of the Japanese worker’ as ‘valuing group harmony over

individuality, company loyalty over self-advancement' was perceived as the real economic threat during the 1980s in Western Europe and the United States (Miller and Rose 2008:194). As such, the idioms and imaginaries of 'Japanese work' came to constitute a transnational discursive space onto which both Japanese and Western observers interactively mapped out the theories of Japanese economic success to varying degrees of essentialisation throughout this period.

It is thus critically important to remain fully cognizant of how work is never an isolated or separate economic domain in the anthropological study of it. More often than not, the discourses about work in Japan – and perhaps elsewhere across advanced capitalist societies – historically encompassed a far wider range of issues and topics, from the social making of personhood (Corsin Jimenez 2003) to the (essentialistic) construction of nationhood. Since the 1990s, many studies emerged with a much more expansive focus on work and labour in contemporary Japan. To cite several themes, they look, for instance, at the processual relationship between work and personhood (Hareven 1992; Kondo 1990; Martinez 2004); blue-collar workers in smaller factories (Roberson 1998; Turner 1995); volunteers (Nakano 2005; Stevens 1997); day labourers (Gill 2001; Stevens 1997); migrant workers in Japan (Faier 2007; Roth 2002; Tsuda 2003); a blurring boundary between work and play (Allison 1994); and the creative industries (Condry 2006; Kinsella 2000; Moeran 1996, 2006). The list of these works shows not only the extent to which work has continued to be a major nexus of research in the anthropology of Japan, but also how the sets of issues and questions they address have shifted accordingly as socio-economic conditions changed with the recessionary economy and increased global competition after the 1990s.

There are, by and large, two significant themes emerging from this current shift of emphasis in the literature for my research on the work in the animation

industry. The first of these is the focus on the social and personal meaning of work in contemporary Japanese society (Matthews 2007). To be sure, research that situates work in a more ethnographically nuanced manner, and in terms of how it intersected with other arenas of life in Japan, existed earlier (e.g. Plath 1983; see also Kelly 1991). What distinguishes more recent studies, such as that by Matthews (2007), in this regard is the extent to which both the idea and the structure of a standardised 'lifecourse' (Plath 1975, 1983, 1991) in society has fractured since the 1990s. What are the social and cultural terms in which work – and meaningful work – are imagined today?

Secondly, anthropologists and sociologists of Japan began paying more explicit attention to shifting ways in which work and working constitute the ideas and ideologies of personhood, with renewed interest in the concept of gender, particularly that of masculinity (Dasgupta 2007; Matthews 2003; Roberson 2003; Roberson and Suzuki 2003). Again, there is a sizable accumulation of research in literature on the relations between work and gender in Japanese workplaces and the formation of personhood (Kondo 1990; see also Ogasawara 1998). While early studies justifiably focused on the issues of inequality and power relations of gender to which women are subjected in workplaces and wider ideologies of work, more recent studies advance the earlier focus by attending critically to the heavily ideological connection between the hegemonic representation of work and hegemonic construction of masculinity as an (upper) middle-class (urban) white-collar worker through the postwar decades.

The developing focus on masculinity is, therefore, not a drawback from the waves of feminist critique in the 1990s. Rather, those works ethnographically demonstrate how the hegemonic ideals of masculinity subjugate not only women but also those men who cannot fit into such an elitist construction (Gill 2001; Matthews

2003). The studies in this regard saw a reinvigorated interest in the figure of *salaryman*, the most normative noun for male workers in Japan, as the hegemony not only of work, but also through it of masculinity and personhood, in the context of the politically sanctioned gender division of labour in postwar Japan (Dasgupta 2007). Historically, a *salaryman* referred to an elite section of urban male workers who had regular employment in large-scale corporations. He was defined ‘in terms of economic security, social status and sex role division’ (Roberson and Suzuki 2003:1), whose desirability as a husband (Vogel 1963:9-10) soon came to dominate the normative form of masculinity around the 1960s. Paying attention to this strong normalisation, Roberson and Suzuki (2003:4) revisit the earlier critique of *nihonjinron* in relation to the figure of *salaryman*, arguing that generalisations and essentialisation made in this genre were based largely on the observations of this male elite sector, which produced and reproduced the doxa of middle-class homogeneity in the image of a nuclear family headed by a salaryman and his homebound wife. While the decades-long recession since the 1990s and the ideological collapse of Japanese-style management has significantly challenged the validity of this salaryman doxa in practice and various media representations, the image of salaryman ‘as *ideal*, is influential in the identities and lifestyles of many others’ (ibid.:7, emphasis original).

In fact, it was against this image of salaryman as the normative worker that my informants in the animation industry often compared themselves, implicitly or expressly situating their trade as being outside the domain of ‘normal work’ (*futsū no shigoto*). While this dissociation from salaryman regularity could often be invoked positively in liaison with emerging neoliberal discourses of work and self-realisation in Japan today, their ongoing predicament in the animation industry constantly rendered their positive self-valuation simultaneously problematic.

In summary, it is said that scholars writing about work, labour and employment in Japan today share a common critical awareness and a starting point: that the meaning, experience and expectations of work transformed somewhat qualitatively as socio-economic conditions shifted in the 1990s. Thus, in her study of young males in the non-elite segment of Japanese society, sociologist Mary Brinton observes:

‘If Japan in the 1960s – 1980s was unusual in the extent to which people followed orderly life courses compared to many other countries, it was unusual as well in the speed and severity with which the foundation for these patterns – the availability of full-time employment for young men – disintegrated in the 1990s.’

(2001:19)

While Brinton’s schematic formulation of the epochal shift of work in Japan – from stabilised regularity to unpredictable deregulation – is a little problematic for reasons I discuss in the next section, such a sense of rupture between ‘now’ and ‘then’ is nonetheless an observation widely shared across many strata of society in Japan today (c.f. Miyazaki 2006:149-150). Certainly, this is the sense also produced and reproduced in the academic discourses of work and youth alike by current Japanese scholars (e.g. Kotani, Doi, Haga, and Asano 2010). Likewise, for my informants in the animation industry, the ‘now’ was characterised by a strong sense of uncertainty (c.f. Condry 2006:2; Matthews 2007).

1.2.3 Aspirational discourses of work

The shifting conditions of work in post-growth Japan since the 1990s have thus produced a set of corresponding social discourses of work, capable or incapable of engaging with the intensifying insecurity and what many see as the expanding inequality (e.g. Dore 2006; Shintani 2010). Indeed, the series of structural reforms (*kōzō kaikaku*) introduced and implemented by the Liberal Democratic Party in the late 1990s and early 2000s could be called, as many do, ‘neoliberal’ (*shin-jiyūshugi*) (Borovoy 2010; Komikawa 2010). The critique and the study of neoliberalism in anthropology now constitute an enormous literature (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Ferguson 2009; Greenhouse 2010), to an extent that the proliferation of this critique has recently resulted in the emergence of its own meta-critique. For instance, Andrew Kipnis (2007), coming from his research context of China, argues that the overt usage and invocation of neoliberalism as a critical device to explain away diverse contemporary conditions (and predicaments) rather undermines the value of analysis by obscuring ethnographic specificity. This is the point on which James Ferguson (2009) also bases his recent discussion of the place of neoliberalism in the anthropology of Africa, asking what ‘uses’ – both analytical and practical – it could actually have for the discipline.

It is now a common observation among scholars that the term ‘neoliberalism’ does not actually represent a coherent and singular set of ideologies or hegemony (Ferguson 2009; Harvey 2005; Kipnis 2007). Neoliberalism at least has two relatively distinct genealogies, going back either to the postwar intellectual formation in Germany of ‘ordoliberalism’, as an ethical liberal project counterpoised to Nazism (Rose 1999:137; Kipnis 2007), or to the macroeconomic doctrines of the Thatcher-Reagan era in Anglo-America since the 1980s (Harvey 2005). In his aforementioned paper, Ferguson (2009:170) indeed identifies several different uses to which the term ‘neoliberal’ has recently been put in scholastic and popular

discussions: neoliberalism as a strictly macroeconomic doctrine, as a liberal political project, as a gloss for exploitative global capitalism, etc. According to Ferguson (2009:171-2), those related yet varying understandings of neoliberalism tended to be construed in anthropology as: a) an outside/global force threatening the social/local communities and values, b) a global *cultural* formation of its own (referring especially to the work of Comaroff and Comaroff [2000]); and finally, c) as a kind of the technologies of the self (Foucault 1994), effective as a ‘specific mechanism of government and recognisable modes of *creating subjects*’ (ibid.: 171, emphasis added).

The ongoing debate regarding the analytical utility of neoliberalism per se in anthropology is not a topic I engage with in my project, but the anthropological engagement with neoliberalism has produced some important theoretical findings about the relationship between neoliberal discourses and the particular configuration of subjectivity and individuality they constitute. It is this perspective on neoliberalism in anthropological literature I wish mainly to engage with here. Hereon, when I write neoliberal or neoliberalism, I refer to a loose set of macroeconomic policies characterised by a strong commitment to privatisation and deregulation of the market, which has a deep impact on the form of the social and subjectivities of people who live amidst such socio-economic transformation (Mole 2010).

The key premise here is that neoliberalism does not only destroy or fragment the social; rather, its generative strength lies precisely in its capacity to *create* new sociality and moral qualifications (c.f. Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). In this respect, neoliberal discourses of work *are* moral discourses of labour, deeply related to how one should live and conduct oneself in the changing forms of contemporary economy and the lived world produced through it. In the Japanese

context, works by historian Victor Koschiman (2007) and anthropologist Hirokazu Miyazaki (2006, 2010) are apt examples that extrapolate the discursive emergence of a rather novel form of individuality (*kojin*) in neoliberalising socio-political discourses and economic reform policies in the country from the late 1990s onwards.

Koschiman (2007) has a historical focus and elaborates upon the changing relationship in postwar Japan between – in his terms – ‘authority and individual’ through the rise of volunteering discourses in the 1990s on a somewhat macro and discursive level. In contrast, Miyazaki’s (2006) ethnographic lens is set on the work-life trajectory of a financial investor he calls Tada (male, mid- to late forties), and particularly how ‘...prevalent economic ideas generate concrete effects’ (ibid.:151) in shaping and giving texture to Tada’s ‘hope’ in relation to his work between the late 1990s and the early 2000s. Both authors point to the series of structural reforms since the mid-1990s as the prominent socio-economic conditions, which they analyse as elaborating notable rearticulation of the social and ideological relations between work and subjectivity in Japan. In this respect, Miyazaki (2006:150) observes ethnographically how such reforms ‘have entailed a radical reconception of Japanese subjectivity and ultimately of Japanese society’ since the late 1990s. His studies on hope and work are what I will mainly engage with in the rest of this section.

The proponents of restructuring in the late 1990s articulated the rationale for multiple deregulations in domains such as finance and the labour market in terms of the acute need for a ‘strong individual’ (*tsuyoi kojīn*) to develop in Japan, who is ‘willing to take risks... and responsibility (*sekinin*) as the antidote to the ‘company man’ (*kaisha ningen*) devoted to the promotion of the collective interest of his company’ (Miyazaki 2006:150). Here, the ‘company man’ alluded to above is a clear reference to the figure of salaryman I have discussed earlier. The important

novelty in Miyazaki's analysis regarding this shift of social emphasis – again, from regularity to unpredictability – lies in the ways in which he discusses it in explicit relation to the emerging discourses of hope, both in the anthropological literature and in the ongoing ethnographic context of Japan (2006, 2010).

Taking note of how personal narratives of work tended to assume a form of revelation regarding one's true dreams in life, Miyazaki (2006) shows how Tada's dreams and hopes in his life have consistently been linked to and articulated by his relationship to his work. Miyazaki presents this mutual inter-articulation of work and hope in Tada as captured in an almost Sisyphean tension, in which each iteration of Tada's hope for new work is articulated as a new hope to eventually exit work for good. 'Note Tada's consistent vision of an exit from his present work,' writes Miyazaki (*ibid.*:160). 'All of Tada's dreams posited both a strong commitment to work and an equally strong hope for an exit.' From this, the intriguing direction in which Miyazaki takes his paper's discussion is to juxtapose Tada's antagonistic hope with regards to his relationship to work and financial capitalism, on the one hand, alongside the general impasse in critical social theories today to propose a substantial alternative to capitalism, on the other.

To a significant extent, I see much commonality in the ways in which Tada finds himself suspended between his two hopes of work – commitment and exit – and how my informants worked out their predicaments in the animation industry generally. Amidst inundating flows of work that stretched long past midnight, in the context of their immediate insecurity of employment, it was common amongst my informants to constantly talk of quitting one day and walking out of their work for good. Frequent expressions of the desire to leave work were nonetheless countered by equally impassioned commitment to it every other day, pointing to a similar tension in which my informants' visions of their future 'posited both a strong

commitment to work and an equally strong hope for an exit' (ibid.).

However, this is where I also part from Miyazaki (2006). I am a lot more reluctant to read this 'impasse' in my informants in finding a more meaningful and stabilised relationship to work along the wider meta-critical 'impasse' in social theory to find a meaningful critique of neoliberal capitalism writ large, like Miyazaki does with Tada. To make a connection between these two phenomena is to implicate both in some ways as consequential effects of neoliberalism. Though the importance and saliency of the notion of hope in contemporary public arenas could be observed across the world (e.g. Obama 2006), hope, as such, is neither historically specific nor ideologically particular to global capitalism or neoliberal discourses.¹³ This, in fact, is already implicitly observed in Miyazaki's discussion of hope elsewhere.

Miyazaki's (2004, 2006) more general discussion of hope can be summarised as his proposal to consider hope as a 'reorientation of knowledge' (2006:149). Elsewhere, he proposes that a significant problem in engaging with hope in anthropology and social theory is the retrospective orientation of scholarly knowledge formation, which is based on observation and contemplation of what has already happened. Hope, in contrast, implies forward and prospective orientation and expectation for what has *not yet* happened. In his words, our challenge is therefore 'how to overcome the incongruity between the retrospective orientation of philosophy as a contemplative form of knowledge and the prospective orientation of hope' (Miyazaki 2004:10). In a more ethnographically specific context (Miyazaki 2006), it could thus be rephrased that the tension in Tada's simultaneous hope to commit and leave work in the Japanese finance world also reflects this wider incongruity between observation of the present and expectation of the future, between contemplation and action.

I argue that such incongruity is a far more common condition than being

specifically neoliberal or particular to the late 1990s onward. The wealth of the Japanese ethnography suggests that the tension between the aspirational dimension of work (what it could possibly be) and the lived actuality of it (what it has been so far) has been a common aspect of labour, at least throughout the postwar decades in the country. Thomas Rohlen (1974), in his classic ethnography of a large regional bank in Japan, has already pointed to – albeit only implicitly in passing – such a tension existing among at least some of young regular employees in the bank. He writes:

‘Though the bank offers prestige it does not fulfill ambitions for such things as travel, social service, and adventure. One university graduate quit to become a lawyer, feeling that to be a more relevant career. A high school graduate quit to study on his own in the hope that he could eventually join an airline and go abroad. Another said he often thought of quitting to become a newspaper reporter, his ‘dream’ career abandoned on his father’s advice that banking was more secure.’

(Rohlen 1974:84)

The above paragraph was written in a context where Rohlen listed six major categories of reasons as to why some of the young bank employees wanted to quit or actually left work. The cited paragraph is the first major category of such reasons discussed by Rohlen, and is subheaded as ‘Dreams of a more interesting or more exciting life and work’ (ibid.:83). We can clearly see there, to continue with Miyazaki’s vocabulary, the iteration of hope in relation to work articulated as the desire to leave one’s current job in the hope of finding a better one.

Thus, I suggest that the presence of this kind of slippage between the

expectations and actuality of work has historically formed a broader part of an issue in the relationship between work and *individual fulfillments* throughout the decades in postwar Japan.¹⁴ In any case, it is more fitting to see my informants' conflicting relationships to their work in terms of this broader slippage, rather than framing it within specifically neoliberal conditions. This is especially so when we consider how precarity in employment has been the defining feature of work in the Japanese animation industry as far back as the early 1970s. Indeed, one of the consistent critiques in the anthropology of work in Japan over the past two decades has been that the kind of stability, regularity, and security of work and life enjoyed by so-called salarymen has in fact always been limited only to the urban elite segment who were employed in large corporations (Gill 2000; Kondo 1990; Roberts 2005; Roberson 1998). The majority of blue-collar and less prestigious white-collar workers in small- to medium-sized enterprises lived outside the lifetime employment or corporate welfarism that ironically came to define the so-called 'Japanese-style management' in the 1970s and the 1980s.

The rise of neoliberal reforms and discourses in the 1990s, therefore, did not create precarity per se, or the potentially conflicting relationship between work and individual fulfillments (c.f. Gill 2001). Rather, I contend that the salient effects of the neoliberal reforms over the past decade have made the socio-economic precarity and connectivity between work and individual fulfillments perniciously explicit, giving the pursuit of the latter strong moral qualifications. As I will detail in Chapter 4, the specific rhetorical trope with which the young animation makers expressed their expectations about personal and social fulfillment through work on the production floor, rather than in the language of hope, was 'doing what you love' (*suki na koto*).

While the tropes of 'hope' and 'doing what you love' undoubtedly both express a salient sense of the 'prospective momentum' (Miyazaki 2003, 2004, 2006),

unlike Miyazaki's financial investor (2006), 'doing what you love' for my animation workers did not entail the methodological 'reorientation of knowledge' that Miyazaki raises elsewhere as critical to the contemporary constitution of 'hope'. Rather than a hopeful strategy, 'doing what you love' was *a way of being* for my informants, which, however, invited more questions than answers in the context of precarious labour in the Japanese animation industry. The locus of fulfillment in the work of animation was therefore always ambiguous, and it is the study of this relationship between work and fulfillment that my ethnography of commercial animation production addresses and which contributes most acutely to the existing anthropological literature of work in Japan.

1.2.4 Creativity, animation production, labour

In the first part of the introduction, I identified the celebratory discourses of Japanese animation and the rising saliency of the notion of creativity as the forces driving the major rearticulation of this relationship between work, hope, and fulfillment in the animation industry today. In the final section of this literature review, I am going to delineate where my ethnography stands in relation to the existing anthropological literature on creativity. In doing so, I will also attempt to show how the anthropological investigation of creativity in my research context ties in ethnographically with the study of the relationship between work and contemporary socio-economic change in Japan.

Creativity as a research topic in anthropology is a relatively recent development, but the recent surge of interests within the discipline clearly reflects the exponentially increasing significance given to the place of creativity across advanced capitalist societies the world over (Liep 2001). In recognition of this, rather

than treating creativity as a kind of positivistic entity or innate human capacity, anthropologists have taken to the critique of the concept as a particularly Euro-American construct (Hallam & Ingold 2007; Harvey and Strathern 2005; Hirsch and Strathern 2004). Based on this shared critical concern, the recent development in the anthropology of creativity can be grouped largely in terms of two different approaches.

The first is a political economy approach, which often links the global saliency of the notion of creativity to the globalising regime of intellectual property rights and the problems of ownership in collective cultural productions (Brown 2003; Geismar 2005; Leach 2003, 2004, 2007a; Myers 2005; Strathern 2006). For example, anthropologist Michael Brown (2003) examines the copyright infringement lawsuit between Aboriginal artist Johnny Bulun Bulun of the Ganalbingu community vs. R & T Textiles Pty Ltd. In court, what could have been a simple case of copyright infringement by R & T Textiles became enmeshed with an expansive contestation from the Ganalbingu community that encompassed a much larger scope of Aboriginal way of life, such as the issues of land repatriation originally 'unrelated' to the copyright piracy. This is due to the fact that, among the Aborigines, the act of image production is not something for which a creative individual is solely responsible. Rather, it is embedded in the ritual economy of knowledge and the flow of social relationships thereby created, which unfold in the context of the ancestral landscape. Thus, anthropologists who take the political economy approach often share a common interest in the ways in which creativity, as the globalising Euro-American category, intersects with local practices and social relations of production, circulation, and consumption, paying close attention to the incompatibilities and interstices between the two regimes (c.f. Geismar 2005).

Those anthropologists who take the second approach to creativity adopt a

more phenomenological perspective, though they share the same critical concern with the first group in understanding creativity as a particularly problematic Western conception. This phenomenological approach to creativity is proposed and best exemplified by the recent research volume *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation* edited by Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold (2007).

Hallam and Ingold propose to understand the expressions of creativity not as a temporal breakthrough to which we look back by retrospective contemplation, but as ongoing actions of ‘improvisation’. This, they define, as the interactive unfolding of ‘skill’ (Ingold 2000) in the prospective progression of time. The rhetoric of innovation or novelty, they maintain, implies the backward reading of time in which things and actions are evaluated in comparison with similar occurrences of the past in retrospective inspection. The perspective of improvisation, as put forth by Hallam and Ingold, reads time *forward*. Building much on Ingold’s earlier critique of the modernist dichotomy between mind and body in Western social theory (2000), Hallam and Ingold (2007) argue that the notion of creativity as something original, innovative, and singular is too limiting for it to be useful in anthropology (ibid.:10-11). They argue that creativity is ‘not a faculty of disembodied mind’ (ibid.:12), but rather that:

‘...[the] quality of the outcome depends at every moment on the exercise of care, judgment and dexterity. The practitioners have continually to make fine adjustments to keep on course, in response to a sensitive monitoring of the conditions of the task as it unfolds.’

(ibid.:13)

Hallam and Ingold's (2007) critique of the conventional notion of creativity, and their proposition to rethink it in terms of improvisation, is therefore theoretically linked directly with Tim Ingold's (2000) earlier theorisation of 'skill' in his magnum opus, *The Perception of the Environment*. 'Skill' for Ingold is not merely a techno-physical capacity, but the acquisition of skills – what he calls 'enskillment' – is a process of simultaneous socialisation and cultural reproduction (Ingold 2000:353). The Ingoldian approach postulates that 'technical skills are themselves constituted within the matrix of social relations' (2000:289), in which skilled production is much more than a merely mechanical operation. The concept of skill works here as the bridge between the ideal and the material, collapsing the rigid distinctions between the body, mind, and the environment in the process of skillful production. The production process of artifacts is never an isolated action, but is always situated in the wider web of social relations and ecological surroundings. It is against this theoretical backdrop that Hallam and Ingold (2007) propose the anthropological understanding of creativity as 'improvisation'.

Whereas the political economy approach to creativity extends the ongoing ethnographic engagement with the globalising regime of intellectual property rights, it is said that the phenomenological approach put forth by Hallam and Ingold (2007) marks a notable threshold in the anthropological study of creativity. It shifts, among other issues, analytical focus from the critique of creativity as a Euro-American construct to anthropological theorisation of the creative processes that does not depend on the Euro-American/modern dichotomy between the subject and the object. However, this is not to say that the phenomenological approach is without shortcomings, especially when considered as an ethnographic method to locate creativity. Here I will point to three such potential problems and subsequently clarify where my ethnography stands vis-à-vis these two schools of approach in the

anthropology of creativity.

Firstly, the theoretical strength of the improvisation approach could also be its potential weakness due to its strong phenomenological focus as set out by Hallam and Ingold. For instance, the overt attention to the very processes of improvisatory action alone could potentially obscure the wider context of social recognition and relations in which each valuation of action is embedded and constituted. With the phenomenological approach to creativity, any practices of skillful production may be by definition recognised as creative insofar as they retain the characteristics of improvisatory actions; however, as Ingold (2000:289) himself maintains in the different context above, skills are also themselves constituted in and of social relations. The phenomenological approach can demonstrate how the executions of differential skills are all appreciable as creative actions (i.e. improvisation), but it fails to engage with the ways in which different skills are evaluated differently and often hierarchically in the local political economy of value. Some actions may be considered more creative than others in the given social context.

Although it is not intended as a direct critique of the phenomenological approach, James Leach's (2007a) discussion of differentiation and encompassment of creative agency in the experimental collaboration project between artists and scientists can serve here as an apposite case in point.¹⁵ Leach examines the political economy of crediting in the project called the New Technology Art Fellowship (NTAF), where a group of artists were invited to work with a group of scientists based at Cambridge University. While the project resulted in some collaboratively produced objects, the rift between the artists and the scientists became apparent at the moment of these objects' exposure to the public,. The core of the problem was that, although the scientists provided critical and necessary technological skills for the artists in the collaborative production, the artists dominated the claims to

creativity in the exhibition, and the audience could only recognise the artists as the subjects of creative agency.

In his paper, Leach (ibid.:179-180) situates this as a variant of the ontological problem in Euro-American ways of thinking about the relationship between persons and objects. In his words, '[h]ow is it that an art work, or indeed a piece of technology, becomes exclusively associated with one artist or technologist?' (ibid.:180). Leach calls this exclusive association of the given artifact to the given person, despite their collaborative production and multiple inputs, the 'process of encompassment'. The ethnographic recognition of the process of encompassment (of creative agency) in a context such as NTAF inevitably leads anthropologists into the 'realm of claims and ownership' (ibid.). In other words, by involving the presence of the public, there was clearly a local political economy of value operative during the NTAF exhibition in which the artists' input was considered more creatively valuable than the scientists'. As Leach notes, '[t]he status of the artist in the gallery exposition is already a kind of claim, a claim over the creation of the object on display' (ibid.).

While the differential creative values given to 'artistic' and 'technical' processes may be self-evident in terms of the conventionally Euro-American evaluation of creativity, it is precisely against such an understanding that Hallam and Ingold (2007) propose the adaptation of creativity as improvisation. Using this approach, one can appreciate how the technical process itself could be an improvisatory and situated action, but this does not explain how the technical input was devaluated vis-à-vis the artists' performance at NTAF in the wider political economy and social relations of recognition. In this respect, we cannot entirely avoid engaging with the Euro-American and conventional definition of creativity – e.g. novel ideas as projected/objectified in tangible expressions such as writing, images,

objects, etc. by singular individuals – for those discourses of creativity do indeed have material social effects.

Secondly, Ingold's (2000) theorisation of skill, and Hallam and Ingold's (2007) reworking of creativity as improvisation, both exhibit an implicit bias toward a romanticised ecological environment in which situated skillful actions are theorised to unfold (c.f. Miller 2007). What happens, however, for those production and skillful practices that take place in environments such as industrialised factories or capitalist workplaces? Ingold (2000:323-338) clearly indicates in his earlier writings on skill that such situated actions do happen in those industrial and capitalist environments, making the following critical observation:

‘[R]ather than simply operating a technology, the activity of industrial workers consists in *coping with machines*. And viewed in this light, such activity not only belongs to them, but also calls for a good measure of skill, of a kind that can only be acquired through experience on the job.’

(ibid.:332, emphasis original)

It is still a skilful and socially situated practice. What becomes at stake, therefore, is not so much an ontological difference between bodily practices in capitalist or non-capitalist workplace – what Ingold chooses to call ‘taskscape’ (ibid.:326) – but rather the political economy of value and the evaluation of skills that ideologically separate the two practices. In Ingold's words:

“Western or commodity-based institutional and ideological framework... seeks at every turn to deny the reality of situated social experience.’

(ibid.:338)

Nonetheless, the attention to political economy and capitalist contexts of production recede from his analytical frames in later chapters in *The Perception of the Environment*, where he prefers to use organic metaphors such as ‘growing’ (Ingold 2000:339) in approaching the practices of skillful production and making of artifacts. This is a shame, considering how Ingold never explicitly denies that his theories of skill are applicable to capitalist societies, especially when anthropologists such as Cristian Grasseni (2007) successfully incorporate his theory of skill in analyses of non-traditional context, such as the reading of brain scan images in advanced medical practices (Ropestoff 2007).

My third point, therefore, rests on the observation of a more general difficulty, to borrow Webb Keane’s felicitous phrase, ‘to work at the intersection of political economy and phenomenology’ (2007:11). Although I have somewhat artificially contrasted and emphasised the difference between the two approaches, this was mainly done for the sake of clarity, not to indicate that there is an ongoing debate occurring between them in the anthropological literature at present. For one, both the political economy and the phenomenological approaches start from a shared critical concern about the globalising regime and discourses of creativity predicated upon the Western model of individual creators and the legal mechanism of owning creativity (Leach 2003, 2007b) the world over. While the phenomenological approach is a powerful theoretical and methodological tool to counter such a singularising conceptualisation of creativity based on the Western model, it encounters relative difficulty in engaging with the ways in which the former model comes to exert such a powerful impact on how we initially imagine creativity.

In this regard, it is perhaps now apt to clarify my own stance vis-à-vis the political economy and the phenomenological approaches. Initially, I take the political economy approach to my ethnography of commercial animation production. However, whereas many anthropologists who approach creativity via political economy have done so through the ethnography of intellectual property rights, I choose a different path, situating the creativity in my research context as a variant of neoliberal discourses of labour. Based on this analytical strategy, I am going to attend to the study of labour and creativity on two levels.

Firstly, in Japan and elsewhere in advanced capitalist societies today, the discourses and the social valuation of creativity appear to have a deep affinity with the popular neoliberal discourses of self-realisation and transformation (c.f. Lofgren and Willim 2005), ideally achieved through the commitment to pecuniary labour that utilises an individual's creative inputs. It is an emerging way of appreciating and appropriating an individual's work and economic contribution to society. This observation ties in with the moral dimension of neoliberalism and how it makes neoliberal subjectivity – at least on the surface – appear ideologically rather attractive and even aesthetic. If the neoliberal macroeconomic policies progressively blur the classic boundary between society and economy by permeating the former with the entrepreneurial model of the self and governance (Rose 1999:142-143), the popular notion of the 'creative class' such as we see in Florida (2003) proposes a new configuration of the social through the image of risk-taking, responsible, creative, and inspired individuals. For those implicated in such a creative economy, an ethnography of creativity could be resituated also as an ethnography of labour.

Based on this recognition, secondly, I turn to the ethnographically specific political economy of creativity enacted and constructed through the extensive division of labour in production relations in the Japanese animation industry. This

stems from the sense in which, far from being a transcendent human agency or value under advanced liberal capitalism, the creative process as understood on the production floor of animation was embedded in the specificity of visual, material, and technological processes in production. Instead of addressing creativity in general as the driving force of animation production, people talked about the particularities of the production processes in specific relation to pertinent production resources, most notably budget and time, in the context of commerce. On this level, intriguingly, the idea of the pursuit of creativity in general, as in ‘art for art’s sake’, was persistently depreciated on the production floor for the sake of getting everyday work done.

Thus, at this juncture, the anthropology of work, labour, and creativity merged in my research context and produced a complex ethnographic picture in which creativity as a global neoliberal discourse, national cultural discourses about anime, material and visual processes of animation production, and the social and economic precarity in the labour of commercial animation all fused into the lived world of the young animation makers on the production floor.

Part 3: Methodology

1.3.1 Overview of the field sites and fieldwork

Between the autumn of 2009 and the summer of 2010, I carried out 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in the commercial animation industry in Tokyo, Japan. There are 300 to 400 animation production companies estimated to be operative in the country, of which roughly 280 to 360 are concentrated in Tokyo (accounting for 80 to 90 per cent of the entire industry). Most companies operate as specialist studios and, as such, subcontractors in different production processes, such as filming, background drawings, colouring, key animation drawings, and so forth. The specialist studios receive parts of production works from a couple to a few dozen original contractors in the industry, who in turn also receive production orders from much larger corporations in outside industries such as TV, publishing, distribution, and advertising. Today, it is more often the case that these huge outside corporations form a partnership to finance the commercial production of animations. Within the animation industry, therefore, the predominant majority of production companies exist as small- to medium-scale enterprises.

Geographically, the Japanese animation industry is concentrated in western Tokyo, spreading to non-metropolitan areas and also to the fringes of neighboring Saitama Prefecture. This geographical agglomeration is a reflection of the closely-knit production networks, as well as individual freelancers, that span the multitude of subcontracting specialist studios in forming the (metaphorical) ‘production line’ of Japanese animation. However, mention is due here that this

production network – or assemblage – also extends transnationally, far beyond the confinement of western Tokyo. Large overseas subcontractors across East Asia and Southeast Asia, such as in China, South Korea, and the Philippines, are an indispensable part of the production process of commercial animations today in Japan – in the sense that the whole industry would collapse without them.

Demographically, the Japanese animation industry is a young industry by the mean age of workers, with more than 70 per cent of the total workforce made up of men and women in their twenties and thirties. In terms of gender, men comprised the majority of workers in their thirties, forties and fifties, but among those in their twenties, the gender ratio was almost fifty-fifty. The average annual income in the industry in 2007 was ¥2.5 million (approx. £19,500, where £1 = ¥128). In the same year, the national average of annual income in Japan was ¥4.3 million (approx. £33,500). The wage difference within the animation industry is substantial. In 2007, 19.9 per cent of the industry workforce earned less than ¥1 million (£7,820), and a staggering 52.2 per cent of the total workforce was found to be earning below the national poverty line, defined as half the national median income (roughly ¥2.2 million = £17,100). At the same time, 22.1 per cent of workers also earned more than ¥4 million (approx. £31,200), which was closer to the national average.

The principal method I undertook during fieldwork was participant observation. As my key interests were the work and production processes of Japanese animation, I gained access to three animation production companies as an interning researcher and worked on the production floor alongside other professional animation workers. The companies I worked with were Toei Animation, Toei Animation Philippines (TAP), and UTT.¹⁶ Of the three, Toei Animation and UTT were the studios with which I spent substantial periods of my fieldwork from

October 2009 until March 2010 (Toei), and from April 2010 until the end of August 2010 (UTT). During February 2010, I made a field trip to the Toei Animation Philippines studio, Toei's overseas subsidiary located in Manila, for a period of two weeks in order to conduct extensive interviews of Filipino animators and workers based there. Finally, in March 2010, I carried out extensive archival research at the National Diet Library in Tokyo, focusing on the archive of newspaper reports relating to the history of animation in Japan from the early 20th century onward, but with more emphasis placed on the postwar decades as the formative period in which the commercial animation industry emerged in the country. A table of the chronological progression of my fieldwork, and maps of Japan and Tokyo, are to be found below.

Month/Year	Schedule
Oct.2009	Start Participant Observation (P.O.) at Toei Animation
Nov.2009	
Dec.2009	
Jan.2010	
Feb.2010	
Mar.2010	End P.O. at Toei. Start Archival Research at National Diet Library
Apr.2010	Start Participant Observation (P.O.) at UTT
May 2010	
Jun.2010	
Jul.2010	
Aug.2010	
Sept.2010	End of P.O. at UTT (by the end of Aug.)
Oct.2010	Preliminary analysis, organisation, and coding of fieldwork data
Nov.2010	Return to Oxford

Figure 1.1 Fieldwork Timeline

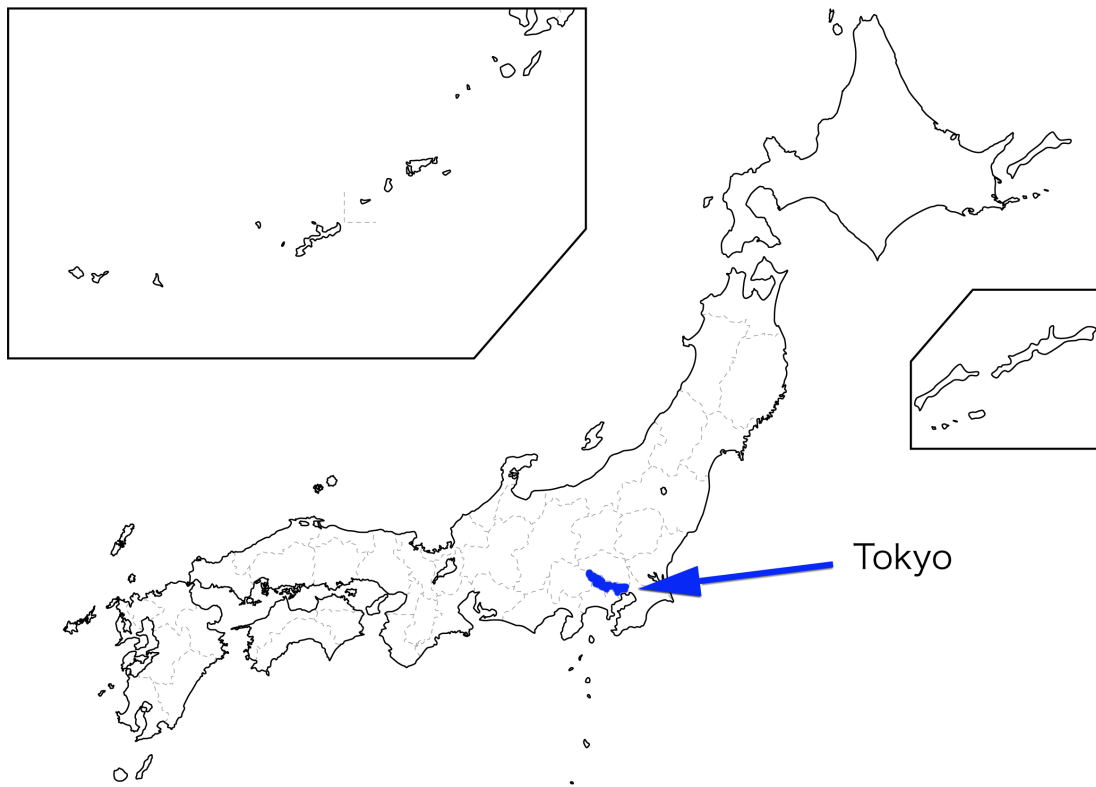


Figure 1.2 Map of Japan

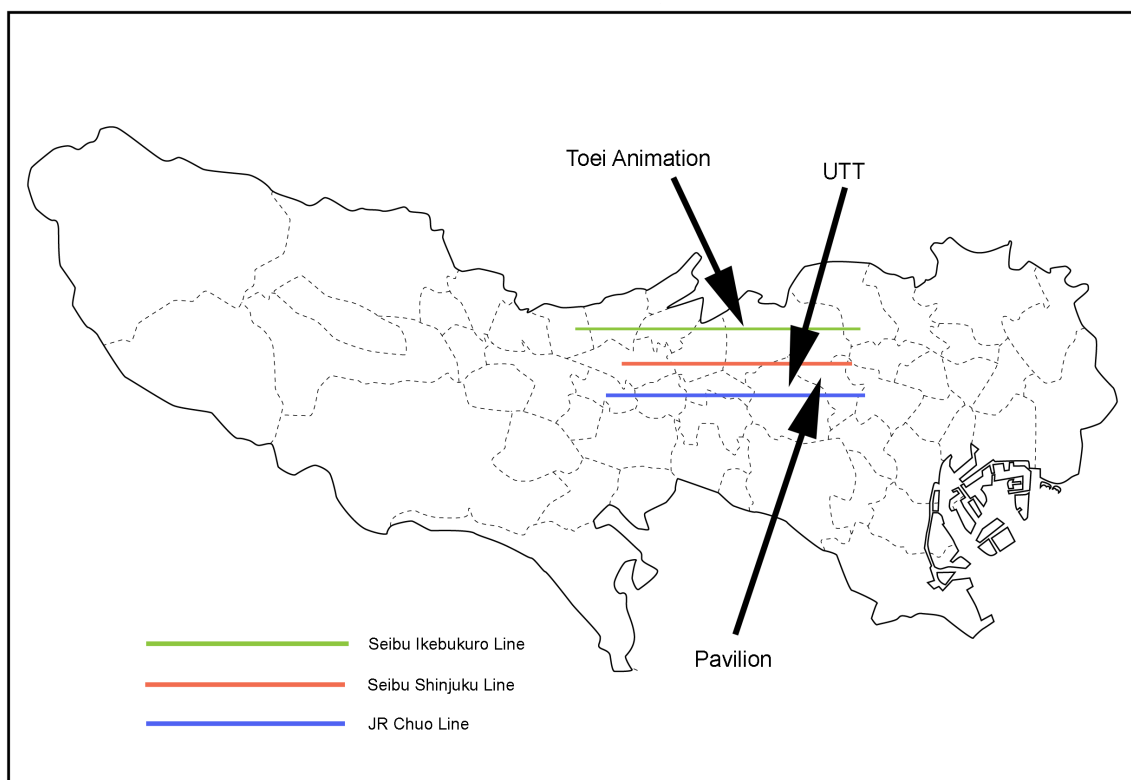


Figure 1.3 Map of Tokyo

1.3.2 Discussion of the method used and its implication for the thesis

As noted above, the principal fieldwork method I employed was participant observation. This was as much a conscious methodological choice as a necessity. In the cases of Toei Animation and UTT, where I spent most of the fieldwork period, participant observation was pragmatically the sole research method available to me due to the following circumstances. Firstly, under the research contracts I exchanged with Toei and UTT, I entered their studios as an ‘intern’. At Toei Animation, this meant I was to undertake their On-the-Job-Training (OJT) designed for novices entering the industry for the first time, which solely consisted of doing the actual work of animation production with and under an assigned supervisor. At Toei, I therefore spent my first three months intensely working on an episode of an animated TV show, which was eventually broadcast on the 31st of January, 2010. Both at Toei and UTT, I worked in the production division called ‘production operation’ (*seisaku shrinkō*, or just *seisaku*), whose work consisted of management of the production schedule and any other tasks deemed creatively or visually peripheral to the main production process.

The labour of animation production demands excessively long work hours regardless of the division one works in. On average, from 9 a.m. until 8 p.m. or later, I was constantly battling with tasks given to me as a novice in training, which left me with neither control nor time to do anything other than the OJT at Toei. I also entered UTT’s studio as an intern, but there I did not work on the production of any specific project; instead, I was there as a kind of general assistant to everyone on the production floor. While the different terms of access I was given at Toei and UTT has resulted in notably distinct kinds of qualitative data, as far as my everyday routine in the field was concerned I had very little time – sometimes virtually no time at all –

to do anything but participate and observe in what was occurring at any given time at either location. I will return to discuss the different kinds of data I collected at Toei and UTT shortly.

Additionally, entering the studios as a novice intern, placed me in the lowest strata of workplace hierarchy, both formally and informally. At Toei in particular, it was certainly not uncommon for me to get shouted at when I did something wrong; I was required to speak respectfully to practically everyone and was expected to follow any kind of work-related orders at any given time. The initial experience led to a sense of strong alienation for me, as I was completely on my own without any discerning sense of control over what was unfolding before and through me in the field. Very fortunately for both my well-being and research, this feeling gradually but steadily evolved into the building of rapport and shared identity with members of the production team over a few months. However, even though my marked identity as an anthropological researcher was somewhat diluted over this period, my newly gained identity as the 'latest member of the company' (*shinjin*) remained stable, and the presence of this formal and informal internal hierarchy made it impossible for me – or so it very strongly felt – to conduct formal interviews or negotiate more expansive research access, such as auditing executive meetings, in the context of the workplace.

Furthermore, there were legal and technical complications of copyright as well as the problem of visual identification. Animation production was a fully commercial endeavour, and all production-related visual materials in the studio spaces were copyright protected. This has had some implications for the publication of my research. While Toei Animation agreed to have their corporate identity disclosed in my thesis, and allowed me to present the production-related visual documents I had managed to collect with express permission, UTT declined to be

identified. As the specific animation shows that I worked on while at UTT have direct connections to their true corporate identity (the same goes for Toei, of course), this has detracted from my ability to substantially discuss the production processes and writing of production ethnography at UTT here. While more generic discussions of the processes have certainly been possible, this compares unfavorably to the more direct and visual discussions that have been made possible with materials from Toei.

On a superficial level, this may lead to an overall impression that the thesis is dominated by materials from Toei Animation, despite the fact that I spent a similar length of time at UTT doing participant observation. However, this does not indicate that the thesis is written only from my accounts of fieldwork carried out at Toei Animation. Even when chapters refer expressly to findings from Toei, the accounts I present are written with the invaluable benefit of having spent another four months at UTT subsequent to Toei. The presence of UTT findings is also evident when I move from the most immediate ethnographic accounts of what happened on the Toei production floor to make, for instance, more general but still very ethnographic observations about the work in the animation industry writ large.

The type of participant observation I undertook with UTT was notably different from that which I did with Toei in one respect: I was not assigned to work on any specific production project. Practically, this has meant two things for my data collection. Firstly, as I was to work there as a general assistant to everyone (from photocopying to preparation for meetings), it provided me with a great opportunity to have a more general view of the studio and observe things that unfolded in the routine and everyday context of work at UTT. Secondly, however, the fact that I was not working on any specific production project somewhat paradoxically led to me 'hanging out' a lot longer in the studio space, enabling me to chat and engage with the people around me on more friendly and relaxed terms. At UTT, it was certainly

not uncommon for me to stay in the studio until the final minutes to catch the last train of the day, meaning sometime before or around midnight.

These two things at UTT stood in marked contrast to my experience at Toei, where I had constantly been heavily occupied only with the production project I was assigned to handle; there, I had wanted to leave the studio as soon as the day's work was done around 8 or 9 p.m. To operationalise this difference somewhat schematically for the sake of clarity: while I was able to gain extremely rich details of the production process of commercial animation at Toei, I could collect further data regarding how the studio space itself was constituted at the matrices of such multiple and ongoing production processes at UTT. That is, I was able to gather highly qualitative data regarding what anyone implicated in the production process of commercial animation may subjectively experience at Toei. At UTT, however, being outside this process but inside the studio space allowed me to observe in contrast how my colleagues dealt with it and interacted with others in the midst of such intense processes.

Thus, I understand my fieldwork with Toei and UTT to be highly complementary to one another. An objection may be raised with regards to the relatively short period of time – four to five months – I spent at each studio. While I concede the four months could be considered short in the timeframe of a 'typical' and 'classic' Malinowskian participant observation, I also defend my practice in the following terms. Firstly, there was an issue of access and the negotiation of access. Conducting a longer amount of participant observation research – say, 12 months – in either of these two studios was impractical, for they both indicated they could not take me on as an 'intern' much longer than four months. At Toei, this was clearly put to me, in writing, in the form of the research contract we exchanged. As for UTT, the terms were a little more flexible, but the first research contract I exchanged with

them stated that the ‘internship’ was only to last for a month. My eventually spending four months with UTT was a result of the constant negotiation I had initiated since my research began in April 2010. At any rate, the end of the formal research contract did not mean the severing of any research ties. To the contrary, I kept many of the personal ties and friendships I made with the people I worked with at Toei and UTT, meeting regularly to discuss, over food or drink, work and animation more casually. At the time of writing this, these relations are alive and ongoing.

Secondly, I do not define my project as a corporate or organisational ethnography. My research focus was on animation production, and how people worked their lives out in the social and economic context of animation industry. Neither workplace relations nor organisational dynamics alone constituted my ‘field’. In this respect, having carried out two participant observations in two different studios and in two quite different styles gave my project a clear comparative and methodological advantage. It is in this sense I maintain that, even though the thesis appears to be dominated by findings from Toei Animation, it is written with the deep and clear benefits of having been part of UTT after Toei.

1.3.3 Debates on the notions of ‘nativity’ and ‘field’

As I have just mentioned the notion of ‘field’ above, it may be apt here to discuss how I conceptualise it in my research. Today, it has become increasingly common for anthropologists to criticise the notion of the ethnographic field site as a transparent and unproblematic empirical space simply existing ‘out there’ (Candea 2007; Falzon 2009; Hage 2005). As an ongoing concern sparked in the 1980s (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986), anthropologists have gradually taken to the understanding that the

cultural geographies of the field site were being socially produced in relations of power (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). In this respect, what has been considered important in recent years has therefore been the recognition that both the researcher and the researched take part in the social production of the ethnographic field, and that 'ethnographers take responsibility for their production of their field site' (Falzon 2009:10). Needless to say, this does not mean that the field site physically disappears after the ethnographer leaves. Rather, the spatial identification of any place as an ethnographic location depends in a large part on the framing of the ethnographer as such.

One of the most iconic crystallisations of this critical and social construction approach to the notion of the ethnographic field site has been the idea of 'multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus 1995). From individual life histories to virtual reality, the conceptual expansion since the mid-1990s of anthropological understanding and methodology in defining an ethnographic field site has in turn led to an incredible diversification of subjects and objects as approachable topics for anthropological engagement (Candea 2007:170). In this sense, the notion of multiplicity introduced to the (spatial) concept of 'field' by Marcus (1995) has clearly entailed not only the simple 'multi-sited' character of contemporary fieldwork, but also the multiplication of possible anthropological objects (Candea 2007).

In fact, the extensive valorisation and application of the concept of 'multi-sited' ethnography to anthropological fieldwork over the past 16 years or so has recently seen the rise of its critique (Falzon 2009). The critics, themselves anthropologists, argue for instance that the 'multi-sited' approach has simply become a 'buzzword' (Hage 2005), or that the multi-sited nature of fieldwork does not necessarily guarantee a better output just because it has more sites than a single location (Candea 2007).

As I carried out my fieldwork in the Japanese animation industry as a 'Japanese' doctoral student, and it involved multiple sites not only within Tokyo but also in the Philippines, I wish to close the discussion of the methodology aspect of my fieldwork by reflecting on the notions of 'multi-sitedness' and 'nativity' herein. As will shortly be made evident, the notions of 'nativity' and '(multiple) field' are intimately affiliated with one another. Following what George Marcus (1995) has done to the notion of singularised fieldwork location, I will argue the notion of 'nativity' must be separated and multiplied from its singularised association with a given 'nationality' or 'culture'.

Historically speaking, when the notion of the 'native anthropologist' first became a topic of debate in the 1970s, it was primarily discussed as a methodological conundrum (Bakalaki 1997:502). Between the classic ideal of attaining a 'native's point of view' (Malinowski 2007[1922]:56) and the taboo of completely 'going native' (Sluka and Robben 2007:13-14), the question was how to balance 'objectivity' with the intimate cultural knowledge of a native researcher. The focus of discussion then gradually shifted toward epistemological and political discourse in the 1980s and the 1990s, reflecting the sea change regarding the conceptualisation of field site and ethnography. As Jeffrey Sluka and Antonius Robben noted similarly but in different words, '[t]he postmodern critique of fieldwork and its compassionate reaction have stimulated new conceptions of what constitutes 'the field' and ethnography' (Sluka and Robben 2007:24). Critics have carefully examined how ideas of 'otherness' have historically been constructed in anthropology through the processes of fieldwork and objectification of ethnographic sites vis-à-vis the implicit Euro-American identity of the author/anthropologist. The imagery of positivistic boundaries separating 'anthropologists' from 'natives', 'home' from the 'field', 'the self' from 'the other', mediated by the spatial metaphors of ethnographic field, are now all too problematic

to operationalise in contemporary anthropological research. But how did such an epistemological shift on the part of anthropology actually play out in the routine context of the fieldwork in my own case?

To be sure, the critical shift in anthropological theorising of ‘field’ and ‘nativity’ in no way detracted from my informants, both in the Tokyo and the Filipino studios, recognising me and dealing with me as a ‘Japanese’ researcher. In contesting the notion of ‘nativity’ I am not trying to dismiss that my being ‘Japanese’ had no implications throughout my fieldwork, for such a claim is straightforwardly false. In fact, Toei Animation had previously accepted a doctoral student in business studies from the United States as an interning researcher, and this student, as one company executive confided in me when I first met him, ‘had caused a havoc’ in the studio. Her poor command of Japanese made it impossible for her to work on her own, and people had to attend to her all the time like she was some kind of an important guest. Since I was Japanese, he noted, he was not worried about me in that respect. In such a context, my being Japanese was clearly a significant levy in gaining research access from the production company. On the other hand, my Japanese background also clearly restricted me from asking some innocuous bold questions in many occasions, a common technique in anthropological fieldwork, for I was supposed to be ‘in the know’ already to some significant extent. In this regard, I felt strong social pressure *not* to ask any ‘stupid’ questions and *conform* to the matrices of expectations about me as a Japanese intern within the Japanese workplace.

However, in talking about my Japanese background and ‘nativity’, I do not want to build my discussion on the list of pros and cons of ‘being a Japanese’ in the anthropology of Japan (c.f. Kuwayama 2003). Rather, I would like to point to a subtle disparity that I noticed in the field between ‘Japaneseness’ and ‘nativity’ more

generally. In short, for my informants, these two categories did not necessarily correspond. Here, I would like to cite from my opening vignette in the first part of the introduction. As Mizuno-san at UTT once mentioned, he had thought anthropology was a study of ‘native’ people but *not that of Japanese animation makers*. From a classic anthropological perspective, I was a native anthropologist studying my native land and people, because ‘nativity’ was constructed vis-à-vis spatialised otherness and transparent Euro-American identity. For my informants, neither them nor I were ‘natives’, but we were both ‘Japanese’, while they were ‘animation makers’ and I was the ‘anthropologist’.

I argue that there is a subtle but critically significant differentiation people *ethnographically* make between their own sense of identity and the universalising and oppressive category of ‘nativity’. Mizuno-san’s question and surprise did not stem from his sudden realisation that he could be considered a ‘native’, but that the anthropologist, being the student of ‘nativity’ in his understanding, was in fact studying *something else* – Japanese animation. This, I insist, is clearly not Mizuno-san’s problem but an anthropological one, which vividly exposes the conceptual ineptitude of ‘native anthropology’ as it was discussed in the 1970s and gradually abandoned as the disciplinary understanding of the ‘field’ expanded and became more open-ended. The same change must be brought to the notion of ‘nativity’ more explicitly. I am a Japanese anthropologist, but I could also be called a British anthropologist in that my entire anthropological training and commitment rests with the British school of social anthropology, studying firstly at universities in Manchester and then at Oxford and, at the time of writing, having lived in Britain for ten years since I was 18.

The entangled and disjunctive relationship between my Japanese identity and ‘nativity’ in my fieldwork came to its most vivid fore when I made a field trip to

the Philippines in February 2010. At Toei Animation Philippines (TAP), Toei's subsidiary and largest overseas subcontractor, Filipino animators produced approximately 70 per cent of the lower-stream production process known as the 'IB-TP'. Over the period of two weeks that I spent at TAP, I conducted extensive semi-structured interviews with 27 Filipino animation makers. I wanted to find out how they understood their own work and positionality in the production process at TAP vis-à-vis the creative domination by the Tokyo studio and their structural and geographical 'peripherisation' in the production assemblage.

One issue that constantly came up, somewhat unexpectedly for me, was the issue of 'cultural difference'. Because 'Filipino culture' was different from 'Japanese culture', they said, the elements of 'Japanese culture' encoded in the visualising process of animation production sometimes presented them with an unexpected source of 'errors' and 'retakes'. I discuss this extensively in Chapter 6. What I want to draw from this, briefly, is how they situated me in this scheme of differentiation between Filipino and the Japanese cultures. To put it in question form: when a 'native anthropologist' of Japan goes to the Philippines as part of his 'multi-sited' fieldwork, is he still a 'native'?

While the unabashed positivism in the question is as confusing as it is confused, it is enough to once again illustrate my point that I was considered 'Japanese' but never a 'native' in the Philippines. Likewise for the Filipino animators, they did not think of themselves as 'natives'. It was rather because they were *Filipino* that elements of what they considered to be straight objectifications of 'Japanese culture' in the animation presented them with some difficulties at times. Furthermore, to the Filipino studio, I was a Japanese who spoke fluent English and came from the UK (due to my affiliation with Oxford University), doing research in Toei's Tokyo headquarters. What was most significant in my conduction of research

at TAP amongst those heterogeneous affiliations was neither my being Japanese nor my studentship at Oxford, but my ongoing research contract with Toei Japan. I was received at TAP as a *guest from Tokyo*, and this association with the higher office in corporate hierarchy had given me a kind of research access unimaginable in Toei's Tokyo studio. The extensive semi-structured interviews I was able to carry out were a straightforward objectification of this political economy. In a disturbing and gross inversion of my positionality within Toei Tokyo, I was suddenly one of the more powerful players at TAP. It was in fact unnerving to realise how, during one interview, my interviewee clearly appeared and sounded intimidated to be questioned by myself.

Again, it would be dishonest if I were to insist that this sudden inversion of power and political economy had nothing to do with the larger political economy between Japan and the Philippines in the geopolitics and history of the Asia-Pacific, of which my Japanese citizenship must have played a role during my brief encounters with interviewees. And yet, had I just been to visit TAP as a Japanese tourist (the Filipino studio from time to time accepts local tours), I would not have been able to interview any of the people I did. In relative terms, the corporate association with Toei Animation Japan was far more salient than my national affiliation with the Japanese state in this process.

1.3.4 Summary

To summarise, I do not present my fieldwork as forming part of 'native anthropology', even though it is given with full recognition that this research is that of an anthropology of Japan, carried out by a Japanese doctoral student. My sole contact point with this defunct category throughout my project is found in the previous

section, where I used my fieldwork experience and observation to expose its rigid positivism and problematic categorisations of the anthropological self and the other. The concept of ‘native anthropology’ itself is no longer productive, not only for this particular research but in the consideration of any anthropological projects undertaken today. ‘Nativity’, furthermore, is in itself a universalising category. Just because ‘I’ could be considered a ‘native’ researcher in the context of the anthropology of Japan, this does not at all mean that I myself identify with this category of universal ‘nativity’. I can only speak for my informants in the Japanese animation industry, but none of those I got to know well considered themselves ‘natives’, though they had a relatively clear and unquestioned sense of being Japanese and having a Japanese identity.

As I have shown, there was a subtle but ethnographically substantial difference between these two categories. I have discussed various occasions in which the divergence and convergence of my socially constructed national affiliation with the Japanese state and naturalistic construction of culture impacted ways in which I interacted with informants, both in Tokyo and Manila. I do not at all deny that my Japanese background influenced the terms of those interactions during my fieldwork. However, I do intend to balance this statement by adding: every background anthropologists bring to their fieldwork *will* impact any ways in which they interact with their informants. To say my Japanese background influenced how my Japanese informants received me, in this sense, is rather tautologous.

Likewise, although my fieldwork may be called ‘multi-sited’ in the conventional sense of the term, I do not necessarily conceptualise my field trip to the Philippines as such. The TAP studio in the Philippines had been part of Toei’s animation production network for nearly two decades by the time I arrived there in February 2010. Even though this network incorporated geographically distant

locations across Tokyo and Manila, the two production points were physically connected by an undersea fiber optic network cable. The presence of the Filipino studio was constantly discernible within the Tokyo studio, for it was the most substantial production hub for Toei; people constantly worked with those in the Philippines as part of the everyday work routine on the Tokyo end of the optical fiber connection. It was even possible to call the Filipino studio from the Tokyo studio using Toei's four-digit internal company number. In this respect, I submit that the defining ethnographic characteristics of the relationship between Toei and TAP studios was neither geographical distance nor cultural difference per se, but how the Tokyo studio 'encompassed' (Leach 2007a) and subsumed the TAP studio under it, both creatively and with regards to the claims of overall authorship in the relation of economic and legal ownership of production (see Chapter 6 for more detail about this).

The imagery of 'multi-sitedness' primarily points to the spatial notion of expansion (Candea 2007; Falzon 2009). While the outsourcing of production works to the Philippines does stand for this kind of geographic expansion of the production flow, the move from Tokyo to Manila was also and more saliently conceptualised in terms of *temporal* progression of the production at both ends of the field. At Toei, when the given project left Tokyo, the move primarily signified the project's nearing completion, for it was only when production reached the lower-stream processes (i.e. labour-intensive parts) that it was moved overseas.

As there should be multiple ways of articulating and understanding the different relationalities anthropologists have to their research and the people they work with, there could be multiple ways of conceptualising and defining different 'multi-sitedness' in one's fieldwork. In my project, neither my Japanese affiliation nor my geographic extension was a defining characteristic of my fieldwork. Rather, I

wish to frame my fieldwork in terms of two different but equally significant participant observations I carried out in Toei's Tokyo studio and UTT, respectively, and the relations and friendships I built with my informants through them.

In this respect, I even argue that what may be considered 'weakness' in my field data, such as various biases within the terms of standard social science research criteria, could also be rearticulated in terms of specifically anthropological 'strength'. I here discuss two such biases. Firstly, the majority of my informants in both studios were young males in their twenties and thirties, with a significant proportion in their mid- to late twenties. Although gender was not the dimension I intended to explore in this research to begin with, the presence of gender bias in my fieldwork was likely to be inevitable, and anyone interested in the gendered dimension of contemporary work in Japan generally, or the creative/entertainment industries more specifically, may be disappointed. Secondly, as I have already noted, my participant observation took place in the production division called 'production operation', which was on the non-visual, management side of production. This was the inevitable consequence of my comprehensive lack of drawing and other relevant visual skills, which prohibited me from being involved in the actual visual production of commercial animation. As a result, most qualitative data I collected from my actual work experience with others on the production floor, came from the work of *managers*, as opposed to those of creators such as animators, directors, or scriptwriters.

The concentration of data from male workers in the management side of animation production could be considered biased. However, as has been frequently argued, what may be called relative narrowness of vision and relative limitedness in quantitative scope does not necessarily prevent anthropologists from achieving deep analytical insights. Rather, such particularities of perspective are precisely what

give anthropology its disciplinary strength: they reflect the incredible diversity of lived actualities in the world firsthand, which can only be achieved through the in-depth, patient and, at times, intuitively counterproductive living and doing of long-term fieldwork.

With regards to my own case, the *coherence*, for instance, in my participation to the management side of production throughout has afforded me just such a unique ethnographic perspective, both during fieldwork and in the process of writing up. Speaking recently in favour of a single location and 'bounded' fieldwork vis-à-vis multi-sited ethnography, anthropologist Matei Candea (2007:180) presciently argued that:

'The *decision* to bound off a site for the study of 'something else', with all the blind-spots and limitations which this implies, is a productive form of methodological asceticism. To limit ourselves to arbitrary locations, geographic or otherwise... gives us something to strive against, a locus whose incompleteness and contingency provide a counterpoint from which to challenge the imagined totality of 'cultural formations.'

(2007:180, emphasis original)

The limitations assigned to me on the production floor to the management and non-visual works of animation production alone may have been an arbitrary necessity in starting my participant observation. But this arbitrary positionality I first acquired without choice at the start of my fieldwork has gradually transformed, especially in the process of writing up, into a critical vantage point to rethink the relationship between labour and creativity explicitly in terms of political economy. In

this sense, my experience as the novice ‘production operator’ (*seisaku shrinkō*) not only shaped my fieldwork but also the whole structure and the contour of my thesis. And it is the stories of those production operators I worked with in the Japanese animation industry I am here to recount and analyse in the succeeding chapters.

Notes

¹ *Shabushabu* is a fondue-style Japanese dish, in which people dip thinly sliced meat – typically beef or pork – and an array of leafy vegetables into a boiling hot pot to cook and eat with a variety of seasonings and sauces. The word ‘shabushabu’ is an onomatopoeia that refers to the action of the diner when he or she puts the thinly sliced meat in the pot and flips it around in the boiling water to cook.

² UTT is a pseudonym. Although it was one of the larger production companies within the animation industry, it would be classified on a corporate scale as Small and Medium-size Enterprise (SMEs) in national comparison.

³ Toei Animation is a real company name. The treatment of company identities in this thesis depends on the types of research permission contracts I exchanged with companies in gaining access. In the case of Toei Animation, I was given permission to release their real identity as well as their animation-related visual materials, for the release of the latter was virtually tantamount to the exposure of the former. In the case of UTT, they declined to be identified; it was one of the conditions for granting me research access that I keep their identity concealed.

⁴ In its most neutral iteration, *otaku* is a term that refers to a dedicated fan of consumer subcultures, such as anime and manga, in Japan. Increasingly, the word has also been adapted by fans of Japanese animation abroad. With the cultural rise of anime in the 2000s, ‘otaku’ has seen an interesting diversification of social meaning in Japan, but the word initially had a perniciously negative connotation, explicitly linked with ideas about social pathology, when it first entered the public arena in the late 1980s (see Kinsella 2000:128-138).

⁵ <http://web.mit.edu/condry/www/>, accessed 9 September 2011

⁶ *Animator Rōdō Hakusho* (Japan Animation Creators Association 2009)

⁷ The average income in the industry in 2007 was ¥2.5 million (approx. £19,500, where £1 =

¥128). The national average income in the same year, by comparison, was ¥4.3 million (£33,500). According to the survey, 19.9 per cent of animation makers earned less than ¥1 million (£7,820) in 2007, and the annual income of 32.3 per cent did not reach ¥2 million. There are two factors that could have led to this staggeringly high rate of relative poverty. Firstly, *Animator Rōdō Hakusho* surveyed workers in the creative divisions (see Chapter 2) of the animation industry, most notably animators and directors, who are typically freelancers. The survey therefore did not include workers in the management division, who are on temporary contracts but are nonetheless paid by salary (around ¥2 million). Secondly, the lower- and the lowest-earning groups in the survey tend to concentrate dominantly among early career animators, whose turnover rate is correspondingly high. Historically, the low income and particularly high turnover rate among early career animators functioned as a kind of ‘selection process’ in the industry, in which only those who were ‘skilled enough’ could survive and start making a living (animators are paid by unit price). This second point indicates that not all of those who were 52.2 per cent below the relative poverty line in the given year were living in *perpetual* relative poverty. In contrast, 22.1 per cent of workers earned more than ¥4 million (approx. £31200) in the same survey. That said, it can be concluded that the figures in the survey do show a higher and wider distribution of relative poverty amongst animation makers.

⁸ Förster, M. and M. Mira d'Ercole. 2005. ‘Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries in the Second Half of the 1990s’. *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 22, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/882106484586>, accessed 27 June 2012.

⁹ While not all animations are anime, I hope the synonymous use of these two words is relatively straightforward in the context of this thesis. In addition, the interchangeable use of ‘animation’ and ‘anime’ is also a descriptive strategy, so that to avoid giving a rhetorical impression that the latter is somewhat essentially ‘Japanese’ and therefore different from the former.

¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary (Online), <http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2277/view/Entry/7785?redirectedFrom=animation#eid>, accessed 17 Sept. 2012

¹¹ Here I am not saying Adorno (as well as Horkheimer) was himself ignorant of this internal contradiction in 'bourgeois art' – to the contrary, he was acutely cognizant of it (see Adorno and Horkheimer 1969:103). The larger argument of Adorno and Horkheimer was that 'art', unlike its contemporary cultural commodities, has been part of the historical dialectic of progress. The culture industry was critiqued, not simply because it was a lesser form of serious art – such an argument would have presupposed the importance of what it aimed to prove – but the lack of dialectic movement in entertainment commodities *necessarily* produced the very distinction with autonomous art. The separation is therefore not the reason, but the result of their difference. That said, it is of course still possible to subject Adorno to the same critique of the modernist bias and ethnocentricity, for the very notion of (Hegelian) 'dialectic' itself cannot exit the frame of European enlightenment from which it came forth.

¹² In such circumstances, the conditions of their predicaments often in fact seemed to enhance their sense of being a moral and responsible 'social person' (*shakaijin*), a modality of attaining adulthood through work (*shigoto*) and employment in Japan.

¹³ See Kipnis 2008 for a similar critique regarding the use of 'audit culture' as the paradigmatic neoliberal conditions in the anthropology of China.

¹⁴ It is possible to trace the socially articulated relation between work and aspiration in the anthropology of work in Japan back to Ezra Vogel's 1963 ethnography of the emerging urban middle class, where the word *salaryman* allegedly entered the anthropological literature for the first time (Roberson and Suzuki 2003:1). Vogel (1963:9) writes how a *salaryman* in large corporations, with his security of employment and regularity of work life, represented a 'bright new life' in late 1950s and early 1960s Japan. Vogel found anthropological study of the *salaryman* to be important at the time, because [t]he importance of studying salaryman is not only for understanding this group per se but for *understanding the aspirations of other Japanese*' (ibid.: 9-10; emphasis added).

¹⁵ Leach's original intention in his paper was to provide a critique of Alfred Gell's theory of the abduction of agency and the particular imagining of creativity therein through the ethnography of NTAF.

¹⁶ UTT is a pseudonym. Confidentiality was part of the research agreement in my gaining access to their studio.

Chapter 2

Workplace of Animation: An Ethnography

2.1 A day in Golden Week

Summer in Japan arrives around early May. Sandwiched by the blooming of *sakura* a few weeks earlier and the dawn of the rainy season a few weeks later, it is a happy season for many. The weather brings freedom from the occasional chills of April, but the stifling humidity of June is yet to come. As the falling petals of cherry blossoms give way to the exuberant green of radiant new leaves, millions after millions of people enter Golden Week, a series of consecutive national holidays between the 29th of April and the 5th of May.

During the first week of May 2010, the exciting mood of the early summer holiday season had even appeared to greet the production floors of the Japanese animation industry. Not that many young animation makers could afford, in terms of either time or money, to go on a holiday. Rather, the work hours in the studio had become even more erratic and uneven than usual. For one, when I arrived at a studio that I call UTT in this thesis around the noon on Tuesday, the 4th of May, there was only one person (male, late-forties, director of Computer Graphics [CG] section) working. There were no other directors, no animators, not even production operators to be seen in the studio. After I greeted the CG director Shibata-san briefly, therefore, I went to sit at my desk in the *seisaku* (production management) section, not particularly knowing what to do. It was a beautiful day outside.

The western fringe of metropolitan Tokyo is a hotbed of Japanese animation. There, some 80 to 90 per cent of the domestic production capacity agglomerates, with virtually all major production companies in the industry located along the three parallel railway lines that run from Shinjuku and Ikebukuro westward (into cities of western Tokyo), and other cities of Saitama Prefecture (see Chapter 1-3). UTT studio is located in the northern end of Suginami Ward, where it borders Nerima Ward above and Musashino City to the west, some 15 minutes' train ride away from the towering skyscrapers of the Shinjuku commercial and business district. UTT was one of the larger production companies in the industry and, when I joined the studio in April 2010, it was in the middle of producing a show aimed mostly at boys of primary-school age. For this production project, UTT hosted a total of 29 staff in-house: 7 managers (1 production desk and 6 production operators) and 23 creators (2 general co-directors, 7 directors, 2 CG artists, 1 colour director and 11 key animators), with the majority of production processes were subcontracted to outside freelancers, specialist studios in Tokyo and Fukushima Prefecture, as well as overseas subcontractors in mainland China.

The workday at UTT usually began very slowly around 11:00 or 12:00, while evenings often stretched indefinitely until they merged with the early morning. Even though this meant one could not expect to see the studio filled with people at such an 'early' time of the day, for there to be almost no sign of anyone at all by the early afternoon on that early May day – only one other person – was certainly peculiar. It was not until when Murakami-san (male, late twenties, production operator) finally turned up sometime past 2:00 p.m. that the management section of the studio was finally populated by someone other than the intern fieldworker. 'Ah, I see you are reading *Gothic Spirits*¹ there,' Murakami-san greeted me, seeing I was reading a series of manga comic by that title, which I had found piled up on the

bottom shelf of the filing cabinet in front of my desk. 'Ugh, my trauma's properly flashing back now....' Murakami-san said half-jokingly but with a tone of voice that also sounded half-serious. *Gothic Spirits* was a show UTT previously produced for a late-teens audience, with a wider East Asian market in view. As many others in the studio were to tell me in later months, the project had a very severe production schedule towards the end, which eventually forced the staff to work 24/7, with only a few hours available for sleep every day.

It was a very slow and uneventful day at UTT. In the early evening around 4:00 p.m., another operator, Iwata-san (male, late twenties) showed up. On seeing his arrival, however, Murakami-san actually left the studio. 'So, as you see, this is more the case than usual on Sundays or national holidays in the studio,' Iwata-san shrugged, referring to the near-empty studio. He explained that while people did tend to show up to work regardless, many did not do so until very late in the day. As if to prove his point, several more creators (three directors and a general director) arrived sometime after 7:00 p.m. One of the directors (Sasakawa-san, male, late thirties) later came to have a chat with us in the management section, complaining that he was having a hard time concentrating on his work. UTT is usually full of life, with desks almost fully attended by 9:00 p.m. in the evening, and the quietness of the studio that day felt almost eerie.

I left sometime after 9:00 p.m. On my way to the nearest train station, I saw another production operator, Taneda-san (female, early twenties), walking down the other side of the street on her way to UTT. The street was dim and she was listening to her iPod, so she did not notice me when we walked past each other. As I saw her walk on and disappear towards the studio, I wondered whether other operators and creators would be also turning up later the night. My hunch was indeed verified when I arrived at an empty studio again the following morning, to

find signs that other people had also shown up later the night before. I should not have been surprised, after four months of participant observation with another production company; many animation makers were, at least in some respects, more akin to the free-spirited creatures of the night than the 9-5 workers of the day.

2.2 Ethnography and the creative industries debate

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed ethnography of the social relations of everyday production in the workplace of commercial animation in Japan. My aims, both descriptive and comparative, relate to two overlapping contexts. Firstly, within the specific subfield of the anthropology of Japan, there is a nearly overwhelming accumulation of ethnographic literature of Japanese workplace (see Chapter 1-2), but if we are to look for industry-specific ethnographies, those on the so-called cultural or creative industries remain relatively few and in between (but see Condry 2006; Kinsella 2000; Moeran 1996). Brian Moeran's 1996 work on the Japanese advertising industry was arguably the earliest of its kind, although by the time Moeran was writing in the mid-1990s the term 'creative industries' did not yet exist (but see his later work in 2005 and 2006). Sharon Kinsella's *Adult Manga* (2000) provided a penetrating exposition of mass culture in Japan through the lens of *manga* (comics) industry, while Ian Condry's *Hip-hop Japan* (2006) approached the entangled phenomena of cultural globalisation through the ethnography of the Japanese music industry's hip-hop scene. In the most specific sense, therefore, an ethnography of commercial animation production fits into this relative lacuna in the anthropology of Japan (and anthropology more generally) alongside these works. Moeran (1996) and Kinsella (2000) are of particular interest here, as in many ways Japan's animation industry historically developed as a subcontracting industry to

the far larger advertising and publishing (especially *manga*) industries, producing primarily televisual content since the 1970s.

Secondly, and more broadly, my aim is inter-disciplinary. In Britain, research on the creative or cultural industries over the past decade has enjoyed cross-disciplinary fertilisation across sociology, cultural studies, human geography, and media and communication studies (cf. e.g. Banks 2007; de Pauter 2011; Harney 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008; McRobbie 2002, 2011; Miller 2009; Wissinger 2007). While these studies all share a solid empirical focus with fine critical attention to the conditions of labour in those industries (e.g. fashion, TV, advertising etc.), anthropology generally has yet to make a definite contribution to this fertile inter-disciplinary endeavour. Drawing inspiration from those researches, I thus hope to facilitate a comparative angle, not only between the British and the Japanese creative industries, but also between anthropology and other social sciences disciplines engaged with issues of labour under the global regime of what has been called the ‘creative economy’ (de Pauter 2011; McRobbie 2002). For instance, there is a striking similarity in the rhetoric with which workers in the Japanese animation industry justify and make sense of their socio-economic precariousness and how the British fashion workers rationalise their relative predicaments in the deregulated labour market (McRobbie 2002: 521). In facing their insecurities, Japanese animation makers, as much as British fashion designers, extensively mobilise the language of liberal freedom, of self-realisation, evincing their belief that pursuing what one feels passionate about and loves doing in the domains of work and employment are important to a sense of who they are.

Just how much is this similarity between the British and the Japanese industries due to the respective reaches of global discourses of ‘creativity’ and the neoliberalisation of labour? More specifically for my research context (Japan), to

what extent do those discourses of creative and liberal self-realisation actually repeat and recycle the pre-existent workplace cultures and ethics well-documented in the Japan literature, which historically mobilised many (primarily male) corporate workers between the 1960s and the 1990s to commit to work at all social and personal costs? While these questions will be more fully engaged in later chapters (see Chapter 4 in particular), the detailed ethnographic exposition presented in this chapter will first lay the groundwork for later historical and contemporary analyses of industry structure and labour in the Japanese animation industry.

Speaking of commonalities on a different note, anthropologists who have worked in the context of commercial production, from Indian advertising (Mazzarella 2003) to US video gaming (Malaby 2009), and including the Japanese advertising, music and *manga* industries (see above), have consistently pointed to the significant tensions between the creative and the management divisions of industry firms. This ‘art-commerce relation’ (Banks 2007: 6-14), in turn, forms a central nexus of debate in the inter-disciplinary literature, in the context of how best to understand, analyse, and theorise the character of labour being undertaken in the creative and cultural industries today (though mostly in Britain). On one hand, scholars have emphasised the extensive lack of job security, long work hours, and low pay for the majority of workers in those industries, and connected these conditions to those of the wider post-industrial and neoliberal labour market more generally (de Pauter 2011; Ross 2003; Wissinger 2007).

On the other hand, while agreeing with the critical importance of recognising the precarious and exploitative labour conditions in the creative industries, others have however raised some objections to confusing the specific character of labour in fashion, advertising, film, TV, publishing etc. with those in the

general labour market (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008; Miller 2009). Angela McRobbie's (2011: 69-71) critique of Elizabeth Wissinger (2007) throws their concerns into sharp relief: can one really singularly compare the insecurity of high-end fashion models with that of underemployed workers in health care or manufacturing? The intent of the criticism is of course not to denounce the former as frivolous, i.e., of not being 'real' work (cf. Banks 2007: 8), but rather to drive home the analytical point that one needs to attend to actual and ethnographic specificities of work in each of those cultural and creative industries before making generalising claims about the precarity of their labour (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008).

This chapter thus aims to engage with and enrich this inter-disciplinary but Eurocentric debate by bringing in not just another case study but one from the contrastive and different cultural, historical and economic context. In doing so, it also contributes to the more specialist literature on work within the anthropology of Japan. Finally, as I discussed in Chapter 1, this ethnography contributes to the creative industry debate with a rare focus on the *managers*, as opposed to the creatives, who are implicated in the commercial production of animation in the Japanese industry.

In what follows, I adapt a descriptive strategy of gradually zooming in from the macro to micro context in an account of commercial animation production in Japan.² That is, I start off from a general description of the industry and business structure, then gradually narrow the focus to eventually arrive at the embedded voices and experiences of specific production operators at a particular production company, namely UTT. Between these two perspectival poles, I discuss various aspects and levels of the production process, most notably focusing on the above-mentioned 'art-commerce relation' as it plays out in the context of Japanese animation from the perspective of young production operators. One advantage of this

‘zooming in’ method is that it enables me to ethnographically capture at various levels how the political economy and structures of commercial animation intersect with the lived and experiential dimension of labour on the production floor.

In order to achieve this, I interject several quotes of stories told by the animation makers themselves to my discussion of workplace relations in later sections of this chapter, which I collected in situ during my time at UTT. While I do not present those lengthy quotes from my informants as an unmediated window into their subjective experience of everyday work, nor as paradigmatic cases of worker experience inside the Japanese animation industry writ large, the specificities and particularities of their voices, even though edited and represented through my authorship, enliven the distilled exposition of the patterns that is to precede them in the earlier sections of this chapter.

2.3 Business and industry structure of the Japanese animation industry

The commercial production of animation in Japan takes a complex division of labour (Figure 2.1). On average, the production of a TV animation episode in the standard half-hour format usually mobilises more than one hundred workers over a production period usually ranging from one to several months (but occasionally less than one month), depending on a given production schedule. The yearly broadcasting cycle of television animation serials is divided into four quarters of roughly three months each. The broadcasting length of a given series varies from project to project, but in the past decade series with durations of either one quarter (12 to 13 episodes) or two quarters (24 to 26 episodes) have become more standardised. For such projects, the total number of workers involved in production will amount up to several hundreds. In order to deliver episodes to meet weekly television broadcasting

schedules, a production company in the midst of ongoing series may be simultaneously producing multiple episodes, from five, six to ten or more in accordance with its production capacity, at any given time.

The cost of production per episode also varies from project to project, but on average ranges between ¥12 million (£92000) to ¥17 million (£130000) today, bringing the total production cost of a single-quarter series to the range of ¥156 million (£1.2 million) to ¥221 million (£1.7 million), and twice that for a two-quarter series.³ For the small and medium-sized enterprises that make up the dominant majority of the Japanese animation industry, these are overwhelming sums of investment to keep running for two or four times every year. The very nature of business in the visual entertainment industry in general, where the same formula for a hit cannot be replicated more than a few times at best, further complicates the successful running of animation business.

Out of the three to four hundred production companies in the industry, no more than dozen studios are independently capable of the financial mobilisation of this calibre. The rest operate as subcontractors on various levels, either as 1) original (sub)contractors (*moto-uke*) who receive production orders directly from the financiers (i.e. a partnership of large corporations from TV, advertising, publishing, toy, and other outside industries); or, as 2) specialist studios (*shita-uke*) who receive subcontracting orders for particular production processes (e.g. Background Art, Key Animation). These specialist studios often subcontract part of their received production work to further subcontractors (*mago-uke*). The resultant structure of this economics is that the further down the relations of subcontracting, the further exacerbate the working conditions. For certain labour-intensive processes, most notably In-Betweening and Colouring (IB-TP), outsourcing to overseas subcontractors in China, South Korea, and Southeast Asia has now become the *de*

facto standard, accounting for approximately seventy per cent of such processes. The extensive networks and relations of subcontracting are of a historical formation, linked with the development of commercial television animation production since the early 1960s. This is also true of overseas subcontracting, which began as far back as the early 1970s (see Chapter 3).

The common business model for the financiers to recoup returns is through copyright merchandising and licensing. The vast number of production companies who operate as subcontractors are excluded from these channels of profit, whose relations are complicated and restricted further by the fact that the majority of commercial animations being produced in Japan today are based on content originating in other platforms such as *manga* (comics), (young adult) novels, and video games. Studios without copyright operate on a financial tightrope, balancing between the actually incurred cost of production and production orders paid in by either the financiers (in case of *moto-uke*), or by contractors one level above them (for *shita-uke* or *mago-uke*).

The extensive subcontracting relations between studios in the industry is paralleled in the extensive network of freelancing among the thousands of individual animators and directors, nearly all of whom work simultaneously on temporary project-specific contracts with multiple studios at various levels at any given time. As contract workers in an extremely fluid labour market (see Chapter 3 for its historical formation), they are without much job security, social security, or income stability. It is difficult to estimate the total market size of the animation industry inclusive of merchandising and licensing profits, because the merchandising profits are usually claimed by the outside corporations that retain the copyright of productions. Statistics for the visual production business itself, i.e. the sum of production orders paid in to studios by the financiers, exists, and the estimated

market value of the animation industry totalled at ¥2.4 trillion (£18 billion) in 2007.⁴

2.4 Production operators and the division of labour

The basic unit of animation production is called a ‘cut,’ which simultaneously means two things on the production floor. Firstly, a cut in animation, as in live action, refers to a single unit of animated footage. An animated film, in turn, is the total sum of its composite cuts. Imagine, for instance, an animated sequence in which a girl walks into her local café and orders a latte. Suppose the scene is depicted as a series of three related sequences of action: the first sequence shows the girl walking through the glass door. The second follows her as she moves over to the counter, and the third sequence depicts a frontal view of the girl’s face and chest as she orders her latte. Those three sequences will make up Cut 1, Cut 2, and Cut 3. Generally speaking, an average half-hour episode of animation in Japan is composed of approximately 300 cuts.

A cut on the production flow of animation also refers to a physical bundle of animation drawings. Using the above example, Cut 1 would consist of a dozen paper drawings depicting the girl’s movement as she walks into the café. In the context of everyday work in an animation production studio, ‘cut’ is usually used in this second sense. These drawings are usually kept in numbered A3 sized ‘cut envelops’ (e.g. from Cut 1 to Cut n). This dual existence – visual and material – gradually merges as the cuts proceed through production, most saliently when they are filmed and turned into an animated film.

One of the most common ways of characterising the production process of animation in the industry was to conceptualise it as a ‘stream’ (*nagare*). One may

better understand this by looking at the production flow chart in Figure 2.1 (see Appendix 1 for a detailed explanation of each process). At the top of the chart is 'Project Planning', and at the bottom is 'Product Delivery'. At the Project Planning phase, there are only ideas, words, and communications for a new animation show. By the time the production reaches 'Project Delivery,' those ideas are fully visualised, produced, and materialised as a complete animated film. What happens in between these two production stages – the planning and the delivery – is the gradual process of visualisation whereby corresponding production division for each production process contribute different components of visual labour to the animation cuts. In this, the production process of animation was locally conceptualised as metaphorical 'stream' (*nagare*) of production divisions along which the animation cuts flowed as represented in Figure 2.1. The incremental processes of visualisation and the enhancement of different visual qualities is clearly visible as the animation cuts travel along the production stream. The figures below are actual production materials from the project called *Fresh Precure* at Toei animation, on whose production I participated as a fieldworker.⁵

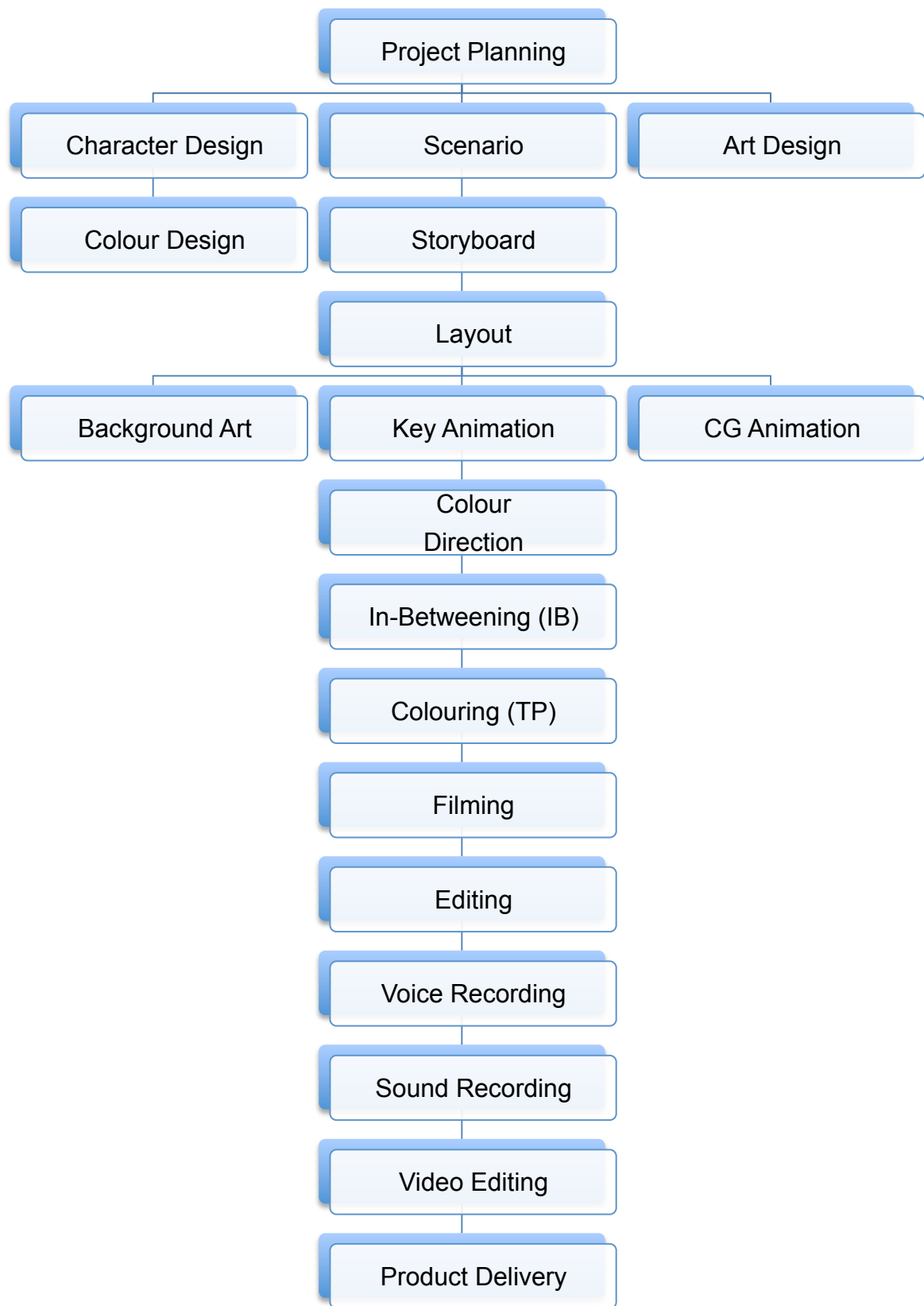


Figure 2.1 Production Flow Chart

決定稿

2008. 10. 15

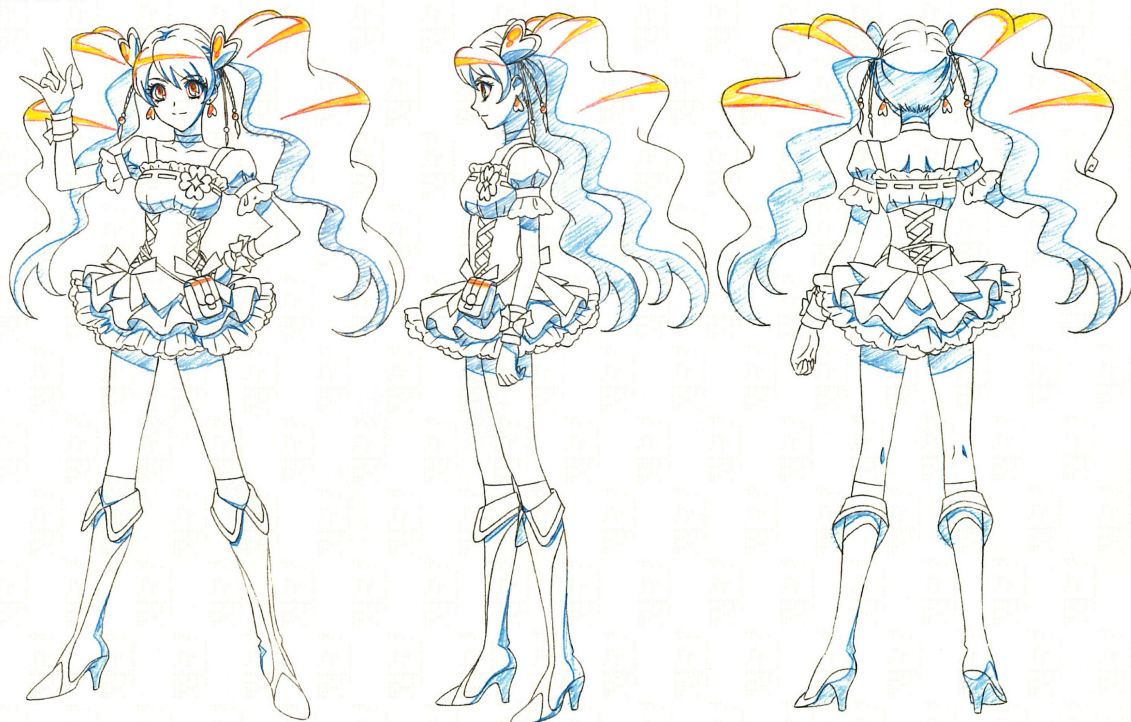


Figure 2.2 Character Production Design, ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

No.	HD Standard Size	内容	セリフ・効果	TIME	MUSIC
S. C.					
1 / 1		雨雲がとうやうやく 暗雲の洋食館... (ビルで雨か 降ります) T.B.	バック (SE) コロ コロ ...		
2		チャウは遠くへ でT.B (密着)		2+12	
3		浅い井戸T.B 緊張... アッ	(アッ)ー 「この食堂の地下に ある不幸のゲージ」 を破壊すれば...」 (ピーン) 「もうジャンクションが」 ジャンクションにはいる車 はないのか...」	7+12	
4		緊張の ジャンクション アッ	(ジャンク) 「でも、中には 一サカ...」	2+12	
		アッ	(アッ)ー 「大丈夫...! みんなのカを合わせ れば、 きっと...!!」	6+0 (18+12)	

Figure 2.3 An excerpt from Storyboard, ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

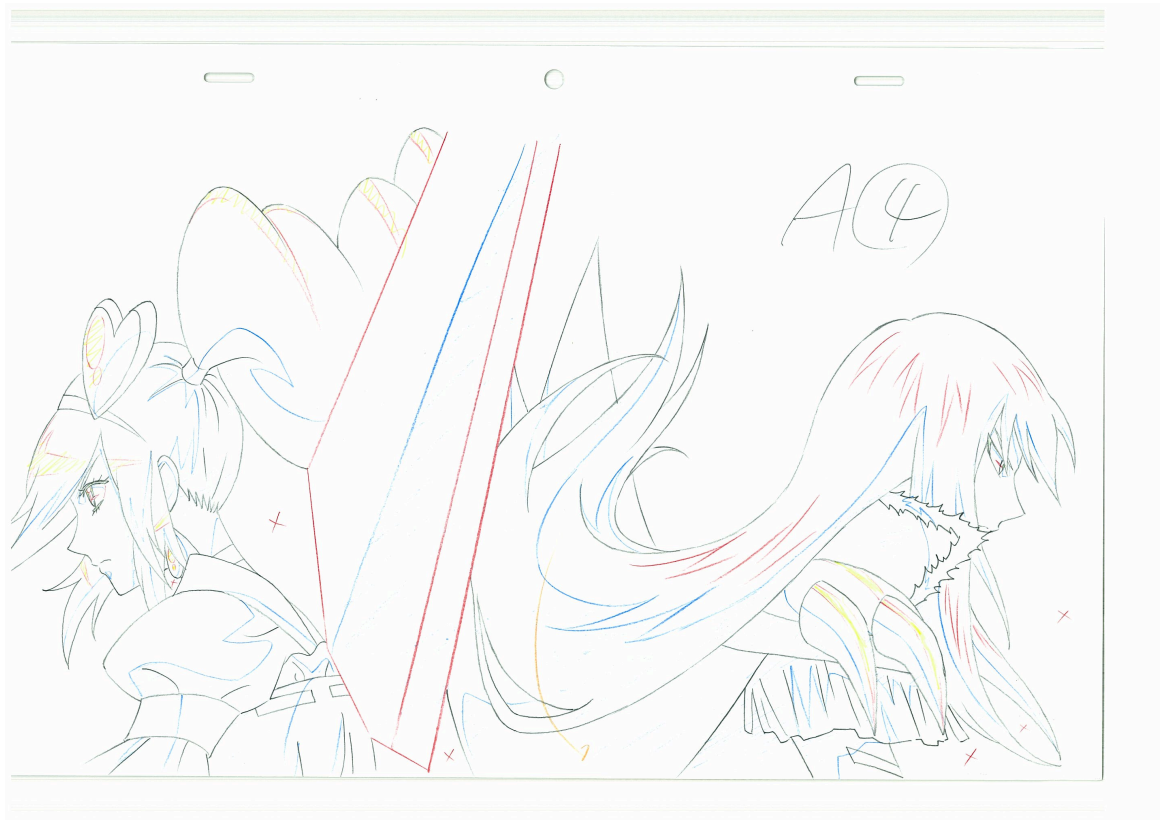


Figure 2.4 Key Animation, ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

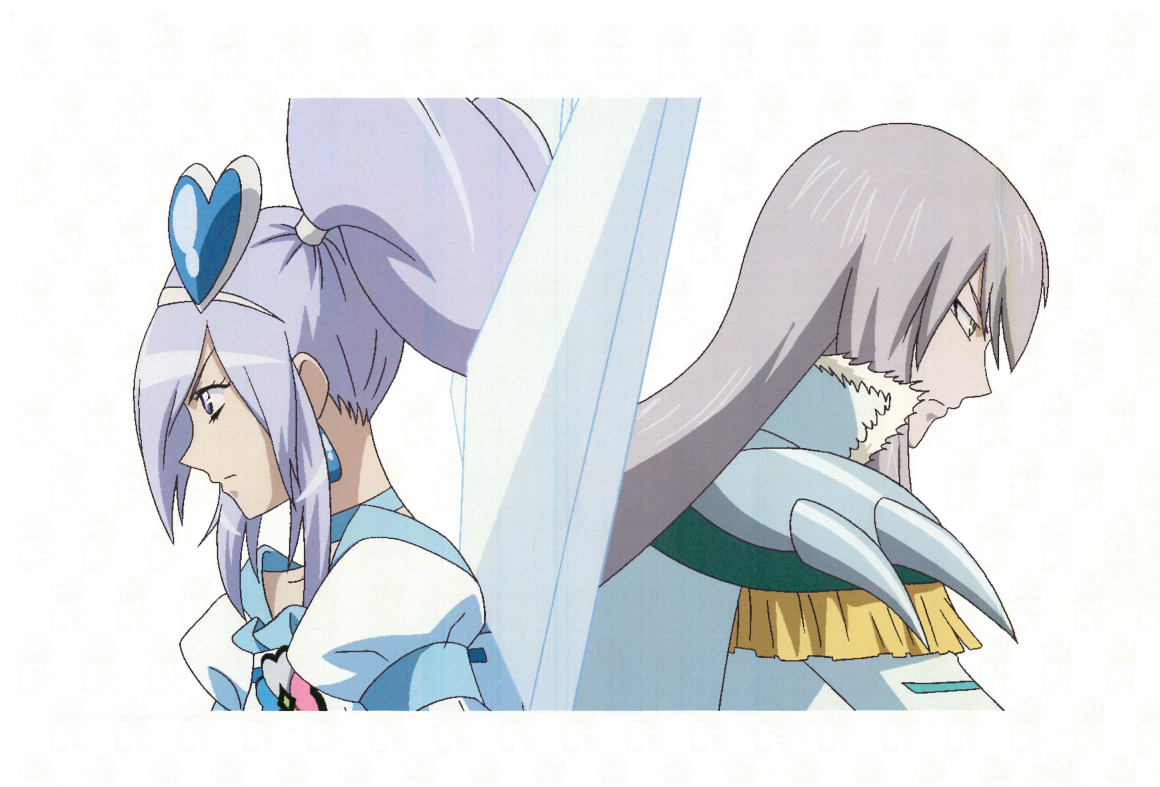


Figure 2.5 Colouring (TP), ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

Having showcased the several graphic representations of the production process, I would like to take the reader back to Figure 2.1 again, for I deliberately omitted one crucial explanation regarding how to read this production chart. As I note elsewhere in the thesis, the key division of labour in commercial animation is not between different visual production sections but that between the visual creators and the management staff. But where, for instance, do the production operators – the division of the entry-level management staff with whom I worked throughout fieldwork – fit into this chart? The main function of operators on the production floor consists of the handling of the production schedule on an everyday basis. Operators coordinate closely between creators in different production divisions, physically moving animation cuts back and forth between the main studio and subcontracting specialist studios and freelancers across western Tokyo.

Figure 2.1, on the other hand, is a standard way of representing the processes of animation production in the Japanese industry. One can find common iterations of this chart in a wide variety of publications, from popular *anime* magazines to more specialist textbooks of animation making. The extent to which this flowchart is the standardised representation of animation production is suggested by how, in explaining the details of the production process, one operator at Toei (a male in his mid-twenties) actually drew his version of the chart for me on my first day (Figure 2.6). Figure 2.6 is in Japanese, and there are minor variations from Figure 2.1, but the basic flow is the same. The common absence – or omission – of production operators speaks eloquently to two things. Firstly, to reiterate my point, the production of animation is paradigmatically understood and conceptualised as the visual production of animation cuts. Secondly, however, the conspicuous absence of the operators also points inversely to its proportional significance in the overall production process. Let me explain this second point below.

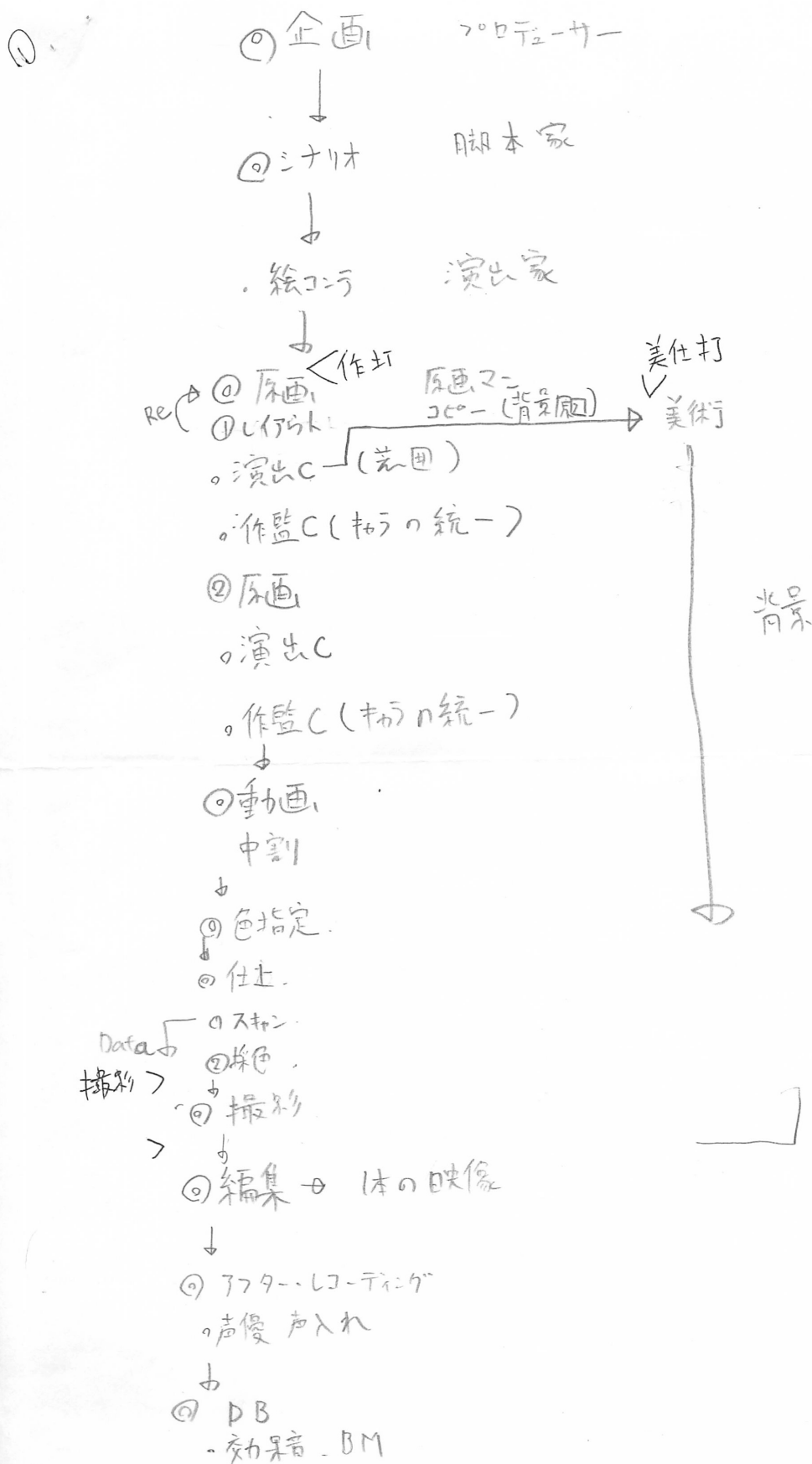


Figure 2.6 Hand drawn representation of the animation production flow

If one looks carefully at the chart, it is not only the production operator that appears to be absent, but also the most – arguably – canonical role within the creative production: *the director*. In my analysis, the directorial function in the creative visual production resists representation in Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.6 because the director's agency influences each and every process in the creative divisions and cannot therefore be conceptually contained within a singular locus, like a box. The same point can be made for the influence of the operator on the creative production process. Because he or she works closely with the director to ensure that all visual processes are completed on time, their labour cannot be represented within a singularly contained locus either. In this respect, an apt way of recognising the agency of the operators in the production flow chart is therefore to think of them as the *lines connecting each box of visual division*.

Production operators thus occupy an iconically paradoxical position within the production apparatus (see also Chapter 5). They are one of the three most substantial nexuses of animation production alongside the directors and the animators,⁶ but because theirs is not *visual* labour, they receive scarce critical recognition once the final animation is broadcast and released to the market. When dedicated fans discuss or praise their favourite *anime*, they may do so from many different angles, such as the technical quality of animation (a salute to the animators), overall visual and narrative composition of the show (hats off to the director), beautiful background drawings (thanks to the BG artists), powerful voice-acting (the voice actors), engaging sound tracks (the composer) and so forth. It is extremely unlikely, however, that the work of the production operators is similarly appreciated, since their labour is neither visually nor audibly present in the final animation.

On one hand, I would suggest this lack of recognition is in line with the

popular and globalising political economy of creativity and the legal imagination of intellectual property (copyright), in which creativity tends to be imagined only in terms of the individual loci of ‘artists’ (Leach 2007a). On the other, however, it is also rather difficult for an average audience to accurately evaluate the degree of impact which the labour of the operators can make to an overall quality of animation in a subtly diffused and expansive way. Using the remaining space of this chapter, then, I will try to describe precisely the everyday labour experience of production operators in the commercial animation workplace. Doing so, I maintain, shall also uncover the political economy of creativity in commercial animation production.

2.5 Workplace of animation

Formal and informal hierarchy

The principal responsibility of the production operators in the division of labour is the successful management of the production schedule. As this entails rigorous coordination and close communication between a range of creators in the visual divisions – most notably with director(s) and animators – the everyday work of production operators effectively took the form of a heavy and prolonged ‘emotional labour’ on the production floor. The concept of emotional labour was first developed by the sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983) in her study of the service work in the US airline industry. In a celebrated passage, Hochschild (ibid: 7) defines the emotional labour as:

‘This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others.... This kind of labor

calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality.’

Originally intended as a sociological analytic to systematically critique what Hochschild saw as an intensifying demand for emotional sacrifice placed upon workers in the rapidly expanding US service sector economy in the early 1980s, some scholars working on creative industries in Britain have recently drawn on this concept in an attempt to specify and distinguish between different characters of labour performed by the workers, not only across different creative industries (e.g. TV, fashion etc.), but also within the same industry along the workplace hierarchy.⁷ In this chapter I employ ‘emotional labour’ to refer to an aspect of intense *communication* that the production operators have to carry out with the director(s) and animators, which frequently implicated the former to craft a specifically and strategically *subordinate* personality in order to manoeuvre creators into getting their work done as fast as possible inside a crunched production schedule.

The daily work of production operator mainly revolves around two recurrent and incessant tasks: the solicitation of drawings (i.e. animation cuts) from animators, and getting them checked by the director (see Appendix 1). As freelancing animators are dispersed over the wide area of western Tokyo, operators drive back and forth on a daily basis, collecting animation cuts and delivering them to the main production studio. When the director has checked each and every cut, the operators bring them back to the animators for further work.⁸ Though only rarely explicitly acknowledged, this frequent interaction with the director and the animators under constant temporal pressure exacts a heavy emotional toll, precisely because the production operators were on the lowest end of the workplace hierarchy in any given production project.

One site where such hierarchy became observable was in the physical comportment of the production operators. When discussing the schedule or other production-related concerns with the director, for instance, production operators often changed their tones of voice – consciously or otherwise – to adopt a particularly soft-spoken and complaisant manner, which usually involved a complex use of honorifics. The pitch of the voice is slightly raised, but the overall tone is noticeably softened; this is a subtle shift, but to an accustomed ear the audible cue is clear enough. The speaker is deliberately *crafting* a particular type of voice and a specific manner of speech. It is as if one cannot help being slightly tense, from fear of upsetting one's interlocutor. For the brief duration of such an exchange, typically in the main studio space, the operator who approaches the director stands while the director sits working at a desk. The operator may leave the desk with a quick bow, albeit casual, saying – though the saying itself is also customary and standardised in the industry – *yoroshiku onegai shimasu* (thank you so much for your commitment). Likewise, when an operator is on the phone, one can usually tell if he or she is speaking with *their* animators (i.e. the ones participating in the operator's episode) for similar cues: softened up voice, crafted thankful tone, sandwiched by social laughter. For the operators, communication with the creators is part of their everyday work, but that daily interaction always is carried out through specifically crafted gestures, manners of speech, and display of gratitude in asking the creators to get their work done. Although creators, too, employ workplace honorifics and comportment in their verbal and physical interactions, neither directors nor animators seem to feel the same extent of pressures to be complaisant.

The hierarchical relation between the operators and the creators is manifest not only in how the former conduct themselves around the latter, but also in how this power relation translates into differences in working hours and time

management. While varying by project as well as across different production periods within a single project, the work hours of production operators average between twelve and eighteen hours a day. While several hours are spent each day driving, the remaining eight to twelve hours do not necessarily all go into frantically juggling an avalanche of work (unless one is facing immediate production deadlines). During less busy time of the day – or the evening – what the operators at work do is to spend time *waiting (machi)*—i.e., on standby. This may sound like a rather benign part of the work, but waiting-as-work can become really taxing when it has to be done at half past two in the morning simply because the director happens to be a night owl and still at work in the studio at that time. Even though the director does not usually need the operator waiting right by the side to do her own work, the operator is expected to be on standby in the studio, *just in case* the director needed him for some schedule or technical design related discussions of the production (as the directors are freelancing with multiple projects, they do not necessarily fully memorise all design specificities of the shows they work on). The particular workplace custom of the animation industry is also such that the operators must show by action how much they need the creators to do the visual work for them. With the directors, this often boils down to the operators having to pull an all-nighter in the studio during the crunch time, just to show that they seriously require the work to be done as soon as possible, even though there is nothing the operators could do other than waiting.

Potentially more demanding terms apply to the operator-animator relation in this respect. Given the pressurising nature of production schedule, it is often the case that the operator has to drive immediately to an animator's workplace (be it his/her apartment or a different studio) upon notification that their cuts (i.e. drawings) being ready. Animation cuts ready for the next production phase are

called *agari* ('up', or 'finished' cuts). Again, although such notification is basically good news for the operator, a conflicting tension may arise when such calls come in around half past two in the morning when the operator was just about to wrap up for the day. Furthermore, what if a few animators called simultaneously in one night, who were located separately from each other by a long distance across western Tokyo? In the industry, the daily long drive by the operators to move animation cuts back and forth is called *kaishū*, meaning 'collection,' and constitutes one of the more labour-intensive aspects of the job, arguably the most important one as well. An operator who is absent when a director needs him is excused if the reason for his absence was the 'collection.' As one production operator (male, late twenties) succinctly put it, 'an operator who cannot drive is completely useless.'⁹

Driving up to an animator immediately when the latter says the drawings are ready is not always necessary, but contingent factors often contribute to the situation being inevitable. Chief among the usual suspects is scheduling: when the production is literally racing against time, collecting the finished animation cuts as soon and fast as possible becomes an imperative for the operator, no matter what time of day. Another is prioritisation. Unless hired at the top level of production (e.g. general chief animator or character designer), animators usually work on multiple projects simultaneously. A situation arises when all the projects she works on are being produced under equally considerable temporal strains, whereby she needs to find ways to prioritise between them. A significant clue for the animator in this prioritisation is the level of desperation evinced by the operators of respective projects. An operator thus risks having his production side-tracked if he fails to come to collect the drawings as soon as they are done, since this could give an impression that his schedule is not as desperate as others, and the animator may decide to allocate her attention more fully to a different project. This is fine so far as the

production actually has some temporal leeway, but if not, losing the animator's priority could have troublesome consequences. Finally, and quite irrespective of the matter of prioritisation, an animator may simply *demand* that an operator comes to collect his work as soon as he has finished. In such cases, the operator has little choice but to comply.

Given their critical role in the production process, how did this subordinate positionality of the production operators come about in the division of labour? A key to understanding this lies in its correspondence to specific patterns of age and visual skill in the everyday business of production. The Japanese animation industry is a youthful industry in the sense that approximately seventy per cent of the total workforce is composed of men and women in their twenties (approx. 45 per cent) and thirties (approx. 26 per cent).¹⁰ The demographic pyramid of the animation industry is therefore wide at the base, but narrows rapidly, and tilts increasingly towards the male side with age.¹¹ This generational structure creates a situation in which virtually everyone who held major creative posts in the division of labour was senior, both in terms of age and career, to production operators, who do entry-level management work. The vertical relation of seniority thus mapped out across the manager-creator axis, is further complicated by the organisational structure springing from the particular nature of the manager-creator axis in the context of creative visual production.

Thomas Malaby's discussion of 'the hierarchy of creation' (2009: 124) in the context of the US video game industry is particularly relevant to illustrate this point. In his ethnography of a video game company Linden Lab, makers of a well-known online game *Second Life*, Malaby found a tension comparable to the management-creative dynamic described above existing between what he calls 'developers' (programmers and others who directly create and manipulate the

existing gaming platform) and ‘nondevelopers’ (who work in divisions such as administration and marketing) (ibid: 107-124). The official management philosophy in Linden Lab discursively preferred an organisationally horizontal approach to decision-making and performance evaluation, but in the actual context of game development employees’ outputs were evaluated on locally conceived scales of creativity within the studio that were hierarchical in character. As Malaby (2009: 122) observed, the ‘...developers’ projects were in some sense paradigmatic of creativity...’ against which the ‘...nondevelopers often found themselves beholden to the interests and schedules of the developers...’ (ibid: 123). Employees’ outputs were in reality differentiated in terms of this locally enacted hierarchy of creation into classes of different creative significance.

Malaby’s concept of the hierarchy of creation applies well to the context of Japanese animation industry. As described above, the production processes of commercial animation are locally conceptualised as the incremental performance of visual labour from the upper-stream divisions to the lower-stream divisions. In this, animation production was paradigmatically the visual production of animation cuts. Since operators’ output in the production process did not partake in the visualisation process itself, this ‘exclusion’ enacted a second order of workplace hierarchy based on the embodied visual capacities, alongside seniority, between operators and creators on the production floor level.¹² Following Malaby, I address this combined hierarchical structure as a *creative hierarchy* in the workplace of animation in the Japanese industry, in which—as we have seen—production operators take on the lowest positionality.

The strong imbalance of bargaining power between operators and other creators frequently made it difficult for the former to fulfil their responsibilities, as the management of the schedule on the production floor boiled down to the effective

management and orchestration of relevant creative personnel. Yet, the production operators lacked this most basic capacity as a manager, which is to give directions and assign short- and long-term goals to team members effectively with organisationally backed up legitimacy. Drawing up a plausible production plan ahead of time was not in itself such a demanding task; problems emerged as a result of difficulties in making the others work according to the plan, and making sure everyone stuck with it. This latter challenge almost always faltered, throwing off the schedule. Devoid of power but having to manage nonetheless, operators resort to plingging, asking, cajoling, urging, coaxing, begging, encouraging, exhorting, pressing, and imploring their teams to meet their production milestones. This dynamic transforms everyday interactions and communications with creators into a nexus of considerable emotional strain and often overwhelming stress, compounded by a very physical sense of exhaustion coming from lack of sleep, overwork and lengthy drives every day.

The studio space

UTT's studio occupied the ground floor office space attached to a residential building in western Tokyo.¹³ Inside the studio were a L-shaped open space, with a small meeting room, a unisex toilet and a barely functional kitchen with a fridge and a microwave. Nothing on the front entrance, an anonymous beige steel door protected by an electronic combination lock, indicated that the space was rented to an animation production company. The back door of the studio connected directly to the car park, however, where the company-owned blue Toyota Vitz and light green Suzuki had the 'UTT' logo printed clearly on the sides. The L-shaped space was divided by two tall cabinet shelves into three separate spaces, one for the

management staff (*seisaku*), another for the director and the animators, and the last as the CG section with several workstations for common use. Management occupied the bottom end of the L-shape, half of which was walled off for the kitchen and the toilet, and the two creative divisions made use of the remaining oblong space.

The meeting room was regularly occupied for various production-related functions, but when there was no meeting in session, especially in the early hours of the morning, people made use of the space for impromptu ‘power naps’. It also featured a large flat-screen television, connected to a high-end laptop, a HDD recorder, and a PlayStation 3. This equipment (excepting the last) was used for an important production function known as ‘Rush Check,’ which frequently took place toward the end of the production flow, when the directors checked those animation cuts that were ‘filmed’ and turned into animated footage for the first time. When no one was using the room past midnight, operators sometimes killed time there by playing card games, watching a Blu-Ray on the PlayStation 3 or the latest weekly *anime* on the HDD recorder, until they next needed to drive out to a collection.

My description of the pattern of interaction between operators and creators notwithstanding, the management section of the UTT studio was by far the most lively and cheerful part of the workplace. This could be attributed to the closeness of age and a simple sense of ‘being in the same boat’ together. The ages of these five men and one woman were all within five years of each other; they all liked *anime*, games, *manga*, and their associated subculture, and experienced the ‘ordeal’ of work more or less equally. In contrast, the personnel in the creative divisions saw a far greater variation in age—the youngest animators and CG designers were in the early twenties, but the oldest director seemed to be in his late fifties or even early sixties, while many others were in-between. Different work patterns also contributed to this contrast. While operators on standby (*machi*) often had an hour or two to kill,

and were free to have spontaneous conversations, directors and animators worked individually on their own projects, in their semi-isolated workspaces, usually listening to the personal music players or at times even watching a movie on portable DVD players.

These spatial arrangements make it easy to distinguish between management divisions and creative divisions in an animation studio. There are other visual cues: while a management section is filled with standard office desks, telephone handsets and laptop terminals, desks in creative divisions are known as ‘animation desks’ (*genga tsukue*), which feature various purpose-built shelves and a built-in light table on the working surface, usually complemented with an avalanche of drawings and other production-related documents. Some animators liked to display and adorn their desks with toys and figurine collections. Different working patterns, habits, age distribution, and spatial arrangements, in turn, also lead to a contrastable *acoustic* ambience between the two divisions. At any given hour of the day, the management division is more likely to have people talking and chatting, whether among themselves or on the phone. Telephone handsets are allocated on most operators’ desks, and representatives from a great variety of subcontracting specialist studios constantly rang them up to discuss schedule and other things. Whenever the phones rang (they were office handsets all sharing the same number), the operators did not waste many seconds before answering the call. In fact, the operators often competed playfully to be the first to answer the phone the moment it rang. The fact that they were making a game out of such mundane daily tasks, I suggest, could attest to the kind of workplace atmosphere there was present in the UTT’s management division. This cheery and youthfully upbeat mood that *sometimes* filled the young operators in the workplace may in fact serve as an important ethnographic remainder throughout this thesis about the spirited aspect

of animation work, despite the severity of work hours, insecurity of employment, low pay, concrete lack of prospects, and the emotional strains of being a production operator. In contrast, the quiet sounds of individual focus and concentration filled the spaces of creative visual production at UTT day and night.

Telling it like it is

It was the last day of April, as I was getting ready to leave early around 8:30 pm in the evening, when Yokoyama-san (male, mid-twenties, production operator) asked me if I had any particular plans for the rest of the evening. Not only was it a Friday, but it was also the first day of the Golden Week. As I said I made no plans, Yokoyama-san suggested a quick drink in a nearby *izakaya* when he was done. I had only started my participant observation at UTT a few weeks previously, and this was the first time anyone had invited me out ‘after hours’ – if such a temporal concept still made any meaningful sense in the studio. He had another hour or so of work before he could call it a day, and it was closer to 10:00 pm before we left the studio. Before we did so however, Yokoyama-san had to explain why he was wrapping up ‘so early’ in the night to his boss, Fukuda-san (male, early thirties, production desk), who agreed that it would be a good idea to get to know ‘the new guy’ over a drink. Unfortunately, all other operators were still in the middle of handling their work – not unusual for 10:00 pm – and could not join us. As we settled in at the Japanese-style bar near the train station, Yokoyama-san started talking about his work in poignant and fragmented details, no doubt helped by the reviving quench of crisply chilled beer.¹⁴

In this subsection, beginning with an account of Yokoyama-san’s perspective, I intend to elaborate the phenomenological dimension of the political

economy of creativity as lived and worked out from his particular point of view, by replicating as faithfully as possible in writing what Yokoyama-san had said about his work and his experience of the operator-creator hierarchy. In the second part of the subsection, I juxtapose many more stories I collected in the field, which I loosely class as comic anecdotes of the operators' plights. These anecdotal stories belong to a contextually different kind of storytelling than the frank and straightforward critiques we are to see in Yokoyama-san. As I will elaborate shortly, they had correspondingly different social and spatial contexts, and produced their effects accordingly in the organisation – and particularly the division – of labour between managers and creators. The length of the first monologue below may reflect the emotional intensity the work bore upon Yokoyama-san. While I by no means wish to present his case as representative of the whole of industry, I hope interjecting Yokoyama-san's first-person narrative here brings more ethnographic depth to the analytically distilled patterns of interaction that I have been developing on the production floor so far.

Unless you're the kind of person who is, like, thrilled to be handling raw animation drawings before anyone get to see them, or just generally happy by the simple fact of working in the industry, I think it's really hard to keep working as an operator. For me, I wasn't particularly thrilled by the prospect of working as one. I wanted to work—how can I put it—somewhere near the distribution channels of anime, not on the production floor necessarily. But then, I thought knowing how things are actually produced won't hurt me, so I decided in the end to work at this company. You see, so if I can work on the distribution, I am not dying to stay with

UTT.

The production floor is different, but in the upper management, there are lots of old people here at UTT. It's really unclear how your prospect is going to be as an operator, because there are all those people up there clogging your future [promotions].

Many directors with UTT at the moment used to be operators themselves. These people had been treated very badly by their directors in their time, and now is their turn to demand nasty things from the current operators. You see, the work of a production operator, to tell you the truth, if we could just focus on our own share of work and that alone, then it's not gonna eat up so much of our time. You can sure go home every day. But then, say, the directors demand that you be on standby whenever they are working, or the animators demand that you be on standby when they are working elsewhere. Think of it! Especially the directors! They don't even try to stay a minute longer in the studio when their work's finished, but they expect *us* to hold on for as long as it takes them to finish up. Who do they think they are! What's with all this waiting, seriously?

[I mention how one operator from my previous studio once called animators 'bohemians' (*asobi-nin*). Yokoyama-san nods in agreement]. You know, when major game titles are released, like *Dragon Quest IX* or *Final Fantasy XIII*, doesn't matter what, so many animators just disappear. They don't turn up at work, completely out of touch, clearly to play the video game. Others also disappear suddenly before important deadlines. You discuss with them, tell them over and over that you need such and such drawings ready by such and such a date. And that means nothing. Doesn't matter how many messages you leave on

their phones, they deliberately ignore your calls. What the hell! You know, I see it's only fair to acknowledge how us operators often demand crazy things from them too, like bringing cuts to animators and say we want them ready by tomorrow, but still....

[Talking of one particular top animator he used to work for]. OK, this chief animator was not so crazy, but he had such a foul mouth. Mind you, he did his work properly and everything. But, like, he often jotted down really disdainful comments to his team of animators, when he thought the quality of the drawings submitted was particularly bad. 'How can you draw like this are you a retard?' he would really jot down something like that. So my job in there, really, was carefully erasing 'are you are a retard?' bit from the drawings and move them on!

All in all, I do not care enough to put everything I have and everything I am into this work. My old man's a banker, and he isn't particularly happy that I am doing this kind of work. Plus, if I really were to change work, I would likely be able to get more pay, proper weekends, and even some promotions over years. Seriously, in those respects, there is nothing rewarding about being a production operator.

Man, it's anything other than this idea that animators think [the operator is] lower (*shita*), directors think [the operator is] lower (*shita*) that pisses me off! The operator's job, it's hard but I can do it, but then, on the production floor (*genba*), everyone seems to work with that idea [of hierarchy between operators and creators] as if that's their entitlement. But then, other people often don't see it as I do, and think it's me who's got an attitude. My boss once told me I should really swallow my pride, but then, what's the point of working on like that?

In recent years, scholars in organisational studies have turned to discussing the intricate place which stories (gossips, anecdotes, jokes etc.) occupy in mediating personal and social relations in a given (corporate) organisation. One of the findings from this literature is that storytelling, as an action, not only enables workers to make sense of their organisational experience, but also functions as a hub of social relations within their organisational life (cf. Boje 2008; Gabriel 2000; Weick 1995). A number of Japan anthropologists who did research in corporate settings have also reported the significance of storytelling and the circulation of shared stories in their milieu as having observable ethnographic and social effects (Kondo 1990; Moeran 2006; Ogasawara 1998).

Both Kondo (1991) and Ogasawara (1998) point to the use of gossip and back-talk as a means through which those in the lower strata of corporate hierarchy (women, in their ethnographies) could attempt to restore their sense of self-esteem, and symbolically subvert the significance of such hierarchy in doing so. Kondo (1991) discusses how long-time female part-timers frankly criticised the structurally privileged male ‘artisans’ among themselves in a small confectionary company (Kondo 1991), and Ogasawara (1998) likewise notes the ways in which female employees in large corporations – known as ‘office ladies’ – often mobilised rumours and other informal means against their ideologically favoured male counterparts.

In my fieldwork, the majority of stories I collected came from men mostly in their twenties and thirties in the lower-ranking management positions, but some also from higher-ranking creators. In discussing those stories, however, I shall be careful *not* to present them necessarily in the narrative frame of resistance or challenge to an established hierarchy, especially the short anecdotes I am to discuss now. The anecdotes of operators frequently had comic effects and a deliberate touch

of comedy, even when the actual content of what was being told might not seem so funny, or actually rather serious, to an outsider. The plights of production operators were a staple genre among many anecdotal stories that circulated in and through the studios; and more significantly, such stories were sometimes told also by the creators, especially those directors who once worked as production operators themselves in the early stages of their career. Consider the following anecdote related by Iwata-san, a male operator in his late-twenties at UTT. He positioned the tale as belonging to a friend of a friend as he told it to the mixed audience of a few directors and a few operators one windy summer evening in late May.

OK, so let me just put it this way: this guy [a production operator] was completely overworked and dishevelled. One night he was driving, he fell asleep in the speeding vehicle, not because he was silly but his body couldn't cope with the lack of sleep anymore. The next thing, naturally, was that he found himself in a car accident. The company car was on fire, and he barely fled it still unsure what happened exactly. When the police arrived to the scene, he was discovered deep asleep, holding the animation cuts he just collected like they were his life's treasure!

'What an exemplary operator!' was the joking remark the tale immediately received from Nonaka-san, one of the two general directors at UTT in his early forties. The crowd laughed, not because his position in the creative hierarchy forced them, but because everyone could sense the poignant irony he had infused in that snappy comment. We were standing outside the front entrance of UTT, and there were myself, Iwata-san, Nonaka-san, and Kusunoki-san, a male director in his mid-forties. Nonaka-san then instantly followed up Iwata-san's story with his own:

Here's another one from 'car accident' stories. You know, when the general director of ***** [a famous TV animation series produced by UTT] was still an operator himself, he also wrecked a vehicle like that. He escaped out of the burning thing, and sat down trembling not knowing what to do. The police soon came, but one of the officers, on seeing the state he was in, forcibly grabbed his left arm and demanded, 'You! Spill out at once which drug you were on!!'

Many of the anecdotal stories were presented within the narrative conventions of hearsay or 'once upon a time'-type recollection, and managers and creators were both as eager as each other to tell their stories when the situation was conducive to such pastime. The particular exchange of anecdotes in the above example started off as I and Kusunoki-san were standing outside, waiting for a car to take us to a nearby branch studio of UTT. I was holding a box and a pile of drawing papers in my arms, and when Nonaka-san came out for a cigarette and saw me standing there, he asked me why I did not put the papers on the bench. I explained that because it was very windy, I was worried the papers might get blown away. This triggered Kusunoki-san's memory, who had been sitting on the bench quietly up until that time. 'You know, this is a story I heard years ago...':

Kusunoki-san: This operator was walking hurriedly with his arm full of animation cuts in a very windy day. Of course, the papers got blown away when the whirlwind hit him. Everyone from the studio had to run after the drawings after that, but several of them were never found...

Nonaka-san: Oh so they lost them? Jeez, were they in-between animations or key

animations? I mean, if they were key animations then they wouldn't have been so many in number...

Kusunoki-san: Well, that's correct, but if you lost key animations, that's a lot more severe in terms of actual damage to the production, you know. In-between animations can be redrawn relatively easily based on the key animations, but [imagine] asking the animator [to redraw the same key animations] again....

Nonaka-san: I guess you're right. Ha! I bet the operator faced some serious consequences.

Here, note how the exchange between the two directors did not focus so much on what exactly happened in the anecdotal event – Kusunoki-san in the end did not specify whether the lost drawings were key animations or in-between animations, and Nonaka-san did not seem to care either. Instead, the exchange quickly focused on the operator who lost the drawings in the wind, who must have faced 'some serious consequences.' This first exchange inspired Kusunoki-san to continue:

When a different operator just collected a bunch of background art drawings in his armful, he couldn't open the car door like that so he placed the drawings *on* the car for the time being. You know what's coming now, right? He then started the car, the background art blowing away behind as he sped on...

Just as Kusunoki-san was concluding, Iwata-san came out of the studio and joined us for the end of the story. After the three of us voiced the empathic 'nooooo!' to the conclusion of the anecdote, Iwata-san asked if we were talking about 'operators'

legends,’ and took the floor with his own story (see the initial story in this section above). ‘*Densetsu no shinkō*’ was what Iwata-san said in Japanese, where ‘*densetsu*’ would literally translate as ‘legends,’ but the original Japanese, used in such a context, also retained a noticeably comic connotation. For animation makers, I argue, making such comical impression, often in the form of self-deprecating humour, was precisely the point of telling these stories amongst themselves, explicating the funny side of their plights.

My intention in discussing those stories here – first the monologue from Yokoyama-san, and then those from Nonaka-san, Kusunoki-san and Iwata-san respectively in shorter skits – however, is neither to contrast Yokoyama-san as a particularly bitter operator and Iwata-san as someone who understands humour, nor to portray Kusunoki-san and Nonaka-san as the creators who know what it is like being a production operator (even though they likely do, for both of them once worked as the operator themselves). Rather, I am here trying to elaborate on the following ethnographic observations.

The first of these concerns the temporary emergence of a ‘bridge’ between the management and the creative divisions in an everyday context. Comedic anecdotes about the operators’ plights told to a mixed audience of managers and creators create a sentiment and narrative of shared identity in the moment of their exchange, embedded in *that* moment. Think of the ‘nooooo!’ reaction given by both Iwata-san and Nonaka-san at Kusunoki-san’s story of the absent-minded operator who started the car. I had joined in the same ‘nooooo!’ chorus myself, without even realising it. The comedic narratives of the operators’ predicaments, told in the right time and the right place, momentarily united those who partook in them from the both sides of the production.

In contrast, longer monologues, or even straightforward criticisms, are told

by operators *only* to other operators. Every operator engaged with these ‘complaints’ to different degrees, typically outside the studio space, and their exchange had an effect of consolidating operators’ sense of ‘being in the same boat,’ by making explicit the creative hierarchy that divides the operators from the creators in the everyday work. The phenomenological – or experiential – dimension of the ‘gap’ between the management and the creative divisions, for the production operators, therefore constantly shrank *and* expanded. Like the ebb and flow of waves, it constituted the rhythm of everyday work on the production floor and affected how operators interacted with their ‘superior’ creators in everyday work. In this, however, the formal hierarchy based on the notion of embodied creative capacities fundamentally stood uncontested.

2.6 Conclusion: political economy of the tension

In terms of the character and particularities of the management-creativity divide, the operator-creator relation in the Japanese animation industry stands in a marked contrast to the editor-manga artist relation observed in the Japanese *manga* (comic) industry by Sharon Kinsella (2000), in two otherwise very proximate industries.¹⁵ Kinsella also observes a notable tension between editors and manga artists in the context of commercial publishing (ibid: 8-10), but in her case it was usually the editors who held the upper hand in the communication and negotiation processes between the two parties. Kinsella writes of the relation:

‘Editor-artist tensions have been generated from three main sources: it is the most basic task of editors to impose work discipline on artists; editors enforce deadlines and standards of quality.... The second source of tension has been a struggle over the

contents of manga: while editors have seen manga as a product they are manufacturing for profit, artists have seen manga as a form of culture which belongs to them... The third element....is that of *social class*.....the relationship between artists and editors has been the contemporary focus of ever more isolated, and outmoded strands of anti-bourgeois consciousness.'

(ibid: 9, emphasis added)

With the ideological formation of mass middle-class society in Japan from the 1980s, she adds that:

'Editors have begun to carry out new layers of intellectual and creative work, *pushing manga artists to the periphery of the creative process.*'

(ibid: 10, emphasis added)

What accounts for this vast difference between the animation and the manga industries? Kinsella's analytical interjection of class in the editor-manga artist relation is an interesting one, and may partially explain the disparity between the two industries in this respect. Unlike the production operators who are contract employees (*keiyaku shain*) in small to medium-size companies (i.e. animation studios), the editors who work in manga publishing tend to be full-time employees (*seishain*) of Japan's largest publishing houses, in which comics represent just one branch of a vast enterprise. The substantial difference in the scale of capital between animation production companies and large-scale publishers can also be seen, for instance, in the fact that the publishers usually form part of the consortium of

financiers who place production orders to the largest of animation studios. Kinsella (2000: 12) notes that the editors in the publishing houses are ‘relatively wealthy, highly-educated and privileged individuals,’ who would readily qualify as the hegemonic upper middle-class ‘salaryman’ (see Chapter 1.2) in the strict sense of the term. To borrow from Bourdieu (1984), then, there is a notable disparity between the editors and the manga artists in terms of social, cultural, and economic capital, especially when the latter *receives* work from the former, who usually dominates the channels for commercial publication (unless of course the artists become best-selling ‘stars,’ which would substantially redraw the power relation).

In the animation industry, the similar disparity in capital between managers and creators is not so clearly observed. It was not until the current decade that large studios started recruiting exclusively from university graduates. While there are now more and more degree holders among twenty-something managers *and* creators, those who hold power, being of an earlier generation, may or may not be university graduates. On the production floor, any wider political economy of educational pedigree was implicitly dismissed on the basis that a bachelor’s degree had nothing to do with visual production process *per se* and *drawing* well in particular, especially among the creators, was seen to be of greater importance. The tacit formation of a creative hierarchy on the production floor, then, may inadvertently also serve as a counter-discourse to the wider social economy of educational credentials (*gakureki*) in Japan, as a kind of parallel meritocracy based on embodied skill.¹⁶

More clues to the operator-creator relation in the Japanese animation industry may be found in terms of the structure in the division of labour itself. Unlike Kinsella’s manga editors, who appear to simultaneously encompass the functions of *producer* and ground-level *operator* on the management side of

production, those functions in the animation industry were divided among three separate managerial positions occupied by three different individuals in three different orders of rank: ‘producer’ as top-level manager, ‘production desk’ at mid-level, and ‘production operator’ as entry-level manager. The division of labour in the commercial animation production is far more complex and extensive than that in the commercial manga publishing. Even though the majority of ‘manga artists’ have adopted a studio production system today (Kinsella 2000: 52), an internal division of creative locus remains at most between the main artist and her several assistant drawers, in which the monopoly on creative credit often goes unquestioned to the main manga *artist* (i.e. as the socially and legally recognised author).

In commercial animation, while the flow of capital and the apparatus of copyright readily permit the clear demarcation of legal and economic ownership of a given production, any attempt to pinpoint the ‘most significant’ creative visual input (e.g. director vs. script writer, character designer vs. background art director, chief animator vs. key animator) was at best highly elusive. Every single worker in all of the creative divisions perform their differentiated visual labour on the *same* cuts over and over, as the production progresses and moves into next visual stages. On the management side, as the production operator collects, delivers, and moves around those animation cuts, the production desk supervises the team of production operators to make sure every episode handled by his operators will deliver in time. One level above the operator(s), the production desk usually has the power, at least in theory, to hire and fire animators, allocate human resources (i.e. creators) between different episodes, and set the overall production schedule of the *whole series* to which both the operators and the creators ideally adhere as best they can. At the highest level of the management hierarchy on the production floor, the producer – again, in theory at least – even has the power to fire the general director

should there arise irreconcilable business *and* creative conflict with the studio. It is in this sense that I noted earlier the overall relation between the management and the creative division in the animation industry as being not necessarily hierarchical. Yet seen from the perspective of those who work on the bottom end of this organisational endeavour, the lived dimension of work assumes a considerable degree of strain, stress, and a sense of powerlessness in the face of the unstoppable flow of time and an unmanageable crowd of creators.

Notes

¹ This is a pseudonymous title I made up to protect the corporate identity of UTT.

² Other than that this kind of descriptive strategy can give a relatively comprehensive picture of the animation industry, it may also create an illusion of wholeness to the described field site, and giving such an impression is what I shall strive to avoid at all costs. Nonetheless, the gradual advancement from the general to the particular (and back to the general) has been a powerful convention of anthropological writing, and an attempt at a comprehensive description, especially for subject matters that have not yet been studied extensively ethnographically (i.e. animation production), could in itself be a useful endeavour even risking the danger of illusory holism.

³ £1 = ¥130, 29/03/2012

⁴ *Dejitaru Contentsu Hakusho 2009* (White Paper for Digital Contents 2009), p76

⁵ Translation Figure 2.6 are available in Appendix 2.

⁶ Here I specifically refer to the artists who work in the section titled 'Key Animation' in the chart of Figure 2.1. For more see Appendix 1.

⁷ Sociologists David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker (2008), for example, have recently argued that the work of junior-ranking assistant television producers, in particular, is best analysed as a variant of emotional labour. Hesmondhalgh and Baker studied the production of a BBC talent show involving the tournament-based audition of 'ordinary' people to perform on television, with winning performances to be accompanied by a documentary-style sketch of contestants' daily lives. While higher ranking producers needed only to coordinate with subordinates in mobilizing the production, lower ranking producers communicated closely with the potential performers, often having to ride the intense emotional rollercoaster involved in the televised audition. Junior producers were 'instructed by the series producer to elicit the strongest possible versions of the emotions that the contestant is feeling' (ibid: 108) for the most dramatic talent show content, and thus bore the brunt of the occasional nervous and angry outbreaks by the auditioning performers.

⁸ Animators are further divided between chief animator(s) and key animators, where the chief animator functions as the ‘quality checker’ of key animation drawings. Cuts first checked by the director are then delivered to the chief animator for visual corrections (fixing characters’ facial expressions, adjusting awkwardly drawn movements, perspectives and so forth). This iterative stage of drawing, checking, and redrawing between the director, chief animator, and key animators is generally called the ‘animation period (*sakuga kikan*)’, and takes up a substantial proportion of the production schedule (ranging from a few to eight or more weeks). This period corresponds with the processes labelled ‘Layout’ and ‘Key Animation’ in Figure 2.1.

⁹ If there was one qualification that production companies deem absolutely necessary in recruiting an operator, it was the driving licence; educational qualifications, i.e. whether the applicant had a four-year or two-year university degree, a high school graduate, or a higher education college diploma, were in practice secondary. Even though larger studios clearly preferred the four-year university graduates today, what is the use of a BA if the operator couldn’t drive!

¹⁰ *Animator Rodo Hakusho 2009* (Animator Labour Whitepaper 2009), by Japan Animation Creators Association (JANICA).

¹¹ While the *overall* gender ratio of the industry workforce is roughly 3 men to 2 women,,the majority of female workers are concentrated in the 20–29 age cohort. Additionally, as the ‘main’ positions (e.g. general director, character designer, art director) at the original contractor companies (*moto-uke* or above) tend to be occupied by senior staff, and as female workers tend to be more well-represented in the creative divisions (e.g. animation, background art, colouring), of subcontracting specialist studios, the management division at all levels are effectively dominated by male workers. Among in-house staff at UTT in 2010, Taneda-san (see above) was the only woman out of seven managers. There were further three female early-career animators (all in early-to-mid-twenties), a colour designer (early thirties), and two directors (both early forties).

¹² The logical—and also ethnographic—consequence of this implicit differentiation based on relative embodiment of skills, in turn, is that it also exists *amongst different creators* in different divisions, in which the directors and the animators in the upper-stream of

production flow usually came on top. The different and hierarchical relationality across the different creative divisions and individual creators, however, was much downplayed and subtly ignored often for the smoother orchestration of visual production amongst the creators themselves.

¹³ The building was of a so-called '*mansion*' type in Japan, which, like many other ground-floor spaces of urban housing of this type in the country, had originally been built as a rental office space for small enterprises

¹⁴ Social drinking practices have long been a touchstone within the anthropology of Japan. In a recent summary, Eyal Ben-Ari (2002) has demonstrated how anthropologists have ultimately brought a functionalist understanding to bear upon it, sometimes in spite of their own analytical perspectives. According to Ben-Ari, anthropologists such as Ezra Vogel (1963), Thomas Rohlen (1974) looked at drinking – and communal drinking in festive occasions in particular – primarily in terms of its effects on building social solidarity (Ben-Ari 2002: 130), whereas scholars like Takie Lebra and Joy Hendry focused more on its socially transgressive character, in which 'the individual reveals aspects of the self as they are stripped of all face and social masks' (ibid: 138).

Since the time of Vogel (1963: 28), casual drinking practices among male (corporate) workers have also often discussed for their leisurely character in the 'after hours', when men have 'the chance of relaxation after the tension and competition in the office...' (Nakane 1970: 124). By the 1990s, Moeran's (1996) other ethnography on Japanese advertising industry observed how after hours drinking was not simply recreational, and that important business deals were often discussed and sealed in company-funded drinking sessions between representatives of the host and the client companies. Anne Allison (1994), bringing this line of work-play amalgamation analysis into sharper ethnographic focus, has also noted how many of her (elite) corporate male employee informants understood and insisted such business-oriented, company-funded, and often heterosexually-suggestive drink sessions at Tokyo's chic 'hostess bars' were an inevitable part of their work.

¹⁵ Drawing on Kinsella, I can attest that the two industries are very much akin to each other in other ways – e.g. root division between editors and manga artist, further division of labour within the artists, relations of subcontracting in different production phases and so forth. As

I detail in Chapter 3, since the late 1960s when the animation industry primarily became the *television* animation industry, the manga industry has consistently provided an abundant stream of ‘original stories’ from which the animation production were to be adapted. In the history of Japanese animation industry, many of the most celebrated *anime* works, such as *Dragonball Z* (1986 - 1996), *Sailormoon* (1992 - 1997), *Tiger Mask* (1969 - 1971), *Tetsuwan Atomu* (1963 - 1966), are all based on the original manga.

¹⁶ See Kondo 1990: esp. 229-257 for the discussion of micro-politics of ‘skill’ in the workplace power relations.

Chapter 3

History of Japanese animation industry

3.1 The wider picture

‘There is something really Japanese about it. Technically speaking, you know, a similar style of animation could be produced by Chinese or Korean studios these days. But I wonder if there is something more than just technical about Japanese anime; something almost like spirit (*omoi*).’ The speaker, Okita-san, was a senior manager in his early fifties and had worked in the industry for more than twenty years when we met. His hair was already beginning to turn grey, but rather than this being a sign that he had been worn down by years of hard work, Okita-san usually wore an amicable smile which reflected his kind and cordial personality. We were in his private office, a relatively large room in a studio located on the 7th floor of a high-rise building. Sitting opposite him, I was frantically jotting down notes during our interview when he said this.

In analytical terms, what he said may appear a straightforward expression of *nihonjinron* in its popularised iteration, transporting the postulate that there is an essential and mythical ‘Japanese’ spirit to the context of animation production. But in saying this, Okita-san did not at all sound like he was given to chauvinistic ideas about ‘Japanese culture’ or the ‘Japanese nation’ like the proponents of corporate *nihonjinron* and Japanese-style management during the heyday of the Japanese economy (Gordon 1998). Instead, it sounded as though Okita-san had just let slip a

personal sentiment, based on his decades of experience in the industry, to a young Japanese doctoral student who was eager to understand his point of view; Okita-san told me how he felt about animation making simply, perhaps, because he was a nice person.

Writing about the relationality and construction of Corsican identity, anthropologist Matei Candea (2010: 5) recently suggested that ‘...*there is nothing ‘mere’ about construction*’ (emphasis original). Candea (ibid: 4) writes:

‘To claim that things are constructed is not to somehow negate their reality, any more than seeing a building site negates the reality of the building which later comes to stand there.... [T]his real constructivism would not insist condescendingly upon the emotional importance of identities to participants, nor would it praise them as a fake but politically useful ‘strategic essentialism,’ nor even insist that their being socially constructed is fine because everything is social constructed (i.e. unreal).’

The analytical attitude which Candea discusses under the rubric of ‘real constructivism’ is a challenge I also take up when grappling with the cultural positionality of ‘Japanese’ anime. Since the birth of the industry in the late 1950s, its history has been one in which the discursive environment never remained static but has shifted constantly through the years. In my own fieldwork, Okita-san’s reflection about anime’s Japanese spirit was further complicated by three factors. Firstly, I found that the view that ‘anime’ has a distinctive and transparent ‘Japanese’ essence was *not* unanimously held amongst animation makers in the industry.¹ Secondly, the context in which our interview unfolded shows the complexity and ambiguity of Okita-san’s comment: he had worked nearly twenty years at Toei Animation’s

Filipino subsidiary in Manila. When this exchange took place, we were both in the Philippines, and Okita-san was speaking from the perspective of Toei's largest overseas subcontractor. Finally, his reflection was highly nuanced and ambiguous, for Okita-san followed his reflection on the unique Japanese spirit of anime by questioning his own views: 'I might think that only because I am Japanese...'

I shall deal with the issues surrounding cultural/national identity and difference in production outsourcing more thoroughly in Chapter 6. In this chapter I aim to distil some of the historical and organisational factors which led to the complex discursive positioning of animation we see today in Japanese media and cultural discourse. In doing so, I intend to offer a critical discussion of ways in which to approach 'Japanese animation' as an anthropological research topic.

In her critical commentary on a certain tendency in cultural studies of anime and manga in western academia, the German scholar of Japanese studies Jacqueline Berndt observed that '...academic theses and papers [published abroad] often give the impression that while manga [and anime] may serve as a mirror for various social and cultural discourses [in Japan], neither the media-specific aspects of comics [and animations] nor the Japanese discourse on comics [and animations] need to be taken into account' (2008: 295). Further she writes:

'...they frequently treat these animated movies as mirrors of Japanese culture, assuming the existence of a homogenous audience, and often implicitly comparing them to Disney products, but they rarely locate them within the history and present variety of animation in Japan.'

(ibid: 296-7)

In this chapter I seek to bring into conversation Candea's 'real constructivist' approach to cultural identity and Berndt's 'empirical deconstructivist' approach to the presumed cultural identity of anime from a historical perspective, and to move the issues of labour and production to the fore of discussion. Following Berndt, I shall provide a historically grounded critique of the view of anime as 'mirrors of Japanese culture'. Instead I will argue that it was the technique and technological changes in the organisation of production which led most directly to stylistic change and the formation of the current appearance of 'Japanese' anime today. This chapter covers the whole of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st, but pays particular attention to changes that have occurred since the early 1960s, the decade in which the industry shifted its production drastically away from cinematic releases towards the weekly cycle of television broadcasting.

This shift toward TV production led to an extensive mobilisation of subcontracting and individual freelancing in production relations by the early 1970s. This brought about a high flexibility in labour at the price of intense insecurity and precarity, and the loss of regular employment more generally in the Japanese animation industry. The second aim of the chapter is, therefore, to trace this historical change in the internal labour market to show how animation work was characterised by underemployment long before the legal deregulation of employment in Japan became a heated focus of public debate in and around the 2000s.

The third and final objective of this chapter is to document and analyse historical changes in critical public discourse surrounding animation in Japan since the early 1970s, when TV animation became a mainstay of household entertainment, especially for children. In recognition of today's celebratory narratives about the globalisation of Japanese animation, both in academic discussions and in Japanese governmental and media discourse, I seek to provide a corrective and show how the

cultural standing of anime in Japan itself has historically been complex, contingent, and at times downright stigmatising.

3.2 Early period: 1890s to the 1950s

In his succinct historical account, Gilles Poitras offers two overlapping definitions for ‘anime’. The first is: ‘simply the word used by the Japanese for all animation, without regard to its nation of origin’ (2008: 48). The second, which Poitras takes as his working definition, is to understand the term as ‘refer[ing] specifically to Japanese animation’ outside Japan (ibid). With these definitions, Poitras then succinctly summarises the ‘history of anime’ as follows:

‘Anime has no special origin; it comes from the same nineteenth-century roots that all animation comes from. In the Meiji era, which spanned the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a rich flow of *technical and artistic knowledge* between the Japanese, European, and American cultures.’

(ibid: 49, emphasis added)

The importance of Poitras’s sober narrative must be understood first in the context that historical accounting of ‘Japanese animation’ is often either characterised by excessive historicisation or reductionist ahistoricity (c.f. Berndt 2007, 2008). In the case of the former, the origin of anime (and manga) is often traced to pre-modern cultural practices and artefacts, such as, most notably, *ukiyo*e woodblock prints of the Edo period in the 18th century. In the case of the latter – reductionist ahistoricity – the historical precedents and technological development which led to contemporary

conventions in Japanese animation are entirely neglected in favour of textual analyses of consumption and interpretations of the text/images in isolation.

Common to these approaches, I argue, is the implicit tendency to epistemologically situate anime exclusively as a set of visual signs and codes. If anime is primarily understood as a kind of ‘visual text’, it may at least make epistemological sense to compare it to *ukiyo*e woodblock prints. Such comparison or historical linking may be done in terms of, say, unique designs or visual styles of deformation. Although such comparison between different historical contexts may be rooted in a sound analytical premise, all too often the multiple layers of continuity and disjuncture between the mid-18th century and early 21st century Japan are collapsed or simply not considered. To compare these two classes of artefacts as if they belong to a collapsed time-space in a common analytical present is to commit a grave historical reductionism.

The current visual style of anime is a result, more than anything, of internal historical change in industrial relations and production technologies which developed from previously existent stylistic conventions. Animation – or *ukiyo*e for that matter – has never been a purely disembodied or isolated set of images and narratives. Visual quality is merely the most salient aspect of their material existence as artefacts. Animations stem from the specific and particular time-spaces in which they were produced and consumed, and most crucially, embedded in particular social, political and *technological* relations of production.

It is important to realise that the technical principle of animation, the mechanism through which the illusion of life and motion is produced, is fundamentally no different from film, and these two media belong squarely to the same modern visual technologies which emerged in western Europe during the late 19th century. Film split the seamless continuity of the lived world into twenty-four

frames of still photography per second. When projected serially over the course of a second, the sequence of those 24 still images create the illusion of motion. In theory, animation just supplants photographic stills with drawings which are then filmed using an animation camera (Figure 3.1).²

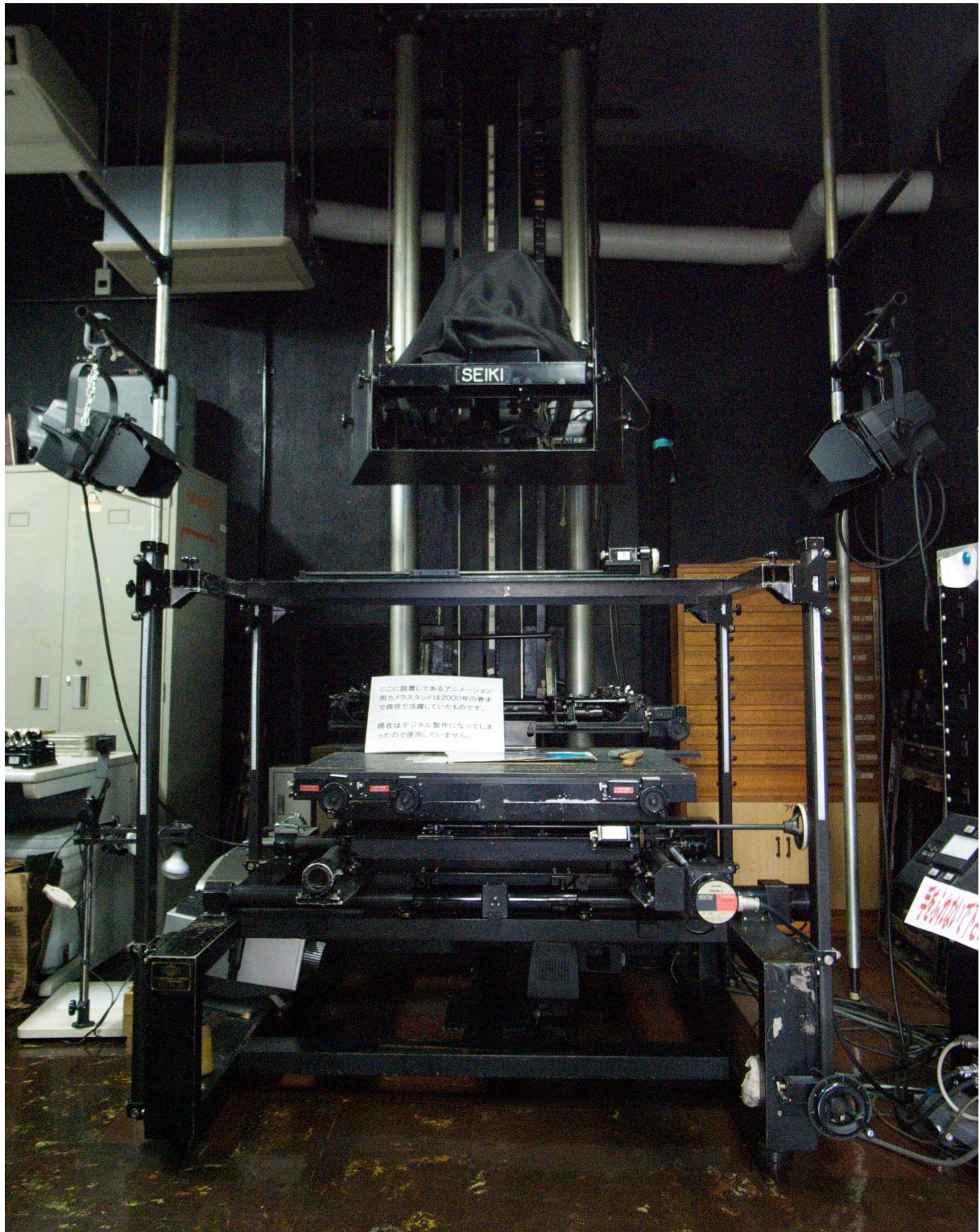


Figure 3.1 Animation Camera

Thus, animation is a form of film, not merely because it is a drawn version of a motion picture, but because it makes similar use of camera and film to create the illusion of movement. The film reels of live-action and animation are indistinguishable as physical objects. It is precisely in this sense that anime ‘comes from the same nineteenth-century roots’ (Poitras: *ibid*), in common not only with animation worldwide, but with other modern visual technologies such as film and photography.

The introduction of modern animation and animation techniques to Japan occurred in the early 20th century. Film – and cinema – first arrived here in November 1896, and the first animated content was imported and shown during the spring of 1909 at Asakusa Imperial Theatre in Tokyo. This was an American production presented under the Japanese title *Nippaaru no Henkei*, ‘Transformation of Nippearu’. The first domestic animation had to wait several more years, however, until 1917 when three separate Japanese animators released their respective works in central Tokyo. Shimokawa Hokuten at Japan Natural Colour Motion Picture Company produced ‘*Imokawa Mukuzou Genkan Ban no Maki*’ (The Tale of Imokawa Mukuzou the Gate Keeper, Figure 3.2), Kitayama Seitarou at Japan Motion Picture Company released ‘*Sarukani Gassen*’ (Monkey and Crab Wars, Figure 3.3), and finally Terauchi Junichi at Kobayashi & Co. presented ‘*Hanawa Hekonai Meitou no Maki*’ (The Tale of Hanawa Hekonai and the Fine Sword, Figure 3.4). Unfortunately, no footage survives from these earliest of works. What may be tentatively suggested from the surviving stills (Figure 3.2, 3.3, 3.4), however, is that the earliest works of animation in Japan resembled neither the dynamic deformation and caricature of *ukiyo*e nor the characteristic styles of later anime such as the ‘large size of character’s eyes’ or hair which is ‘very unnatural in colors’ (Poitras 2008: 62).



Figure 3.2 *Imokawa Mukuzou Genkan Ban no Maki*



Figure 3.3 *Sarukani Gassen*



Figure 3.4 *Hanawa Hekonai Meitou no Maki*³

To generalise somewhat, two main attributes characterised the works of animation produced from the late 1910s through to the late 1950s, the early period of the industry in Japan. One, the works during this period were all short animations produced by individuals or small teams. Indeed, the scope of commercial mobilisation was so small, with productions revolving around individuals or severely financially limited studios, that even the application of the term 'industry' may in fact be misleading. One important exception was the 1945 production '*Momotarou: Umi no Shinpei*' (Momotarou: The Divine Soldier of the Sea) by Seo Mitsuyo. '*Momotarou: Umi no Shipei*' was funded by the imperial military in the context of wartime propaganda. The significance of this production in its historical context lies

in the fact that '*Momotarou*' marked the first domestic feature-length animation release in the country. It was, also, the first case where substantial capital and human resources were mobilised for production. Yet, in the context of war and its aftermaths, the birth of an animation industry proper did not occur for another ten years, when Toei Douga (now Toei Animation) was established in 1956.

Toei Douga was founded in 1956 as a subsidiary/group company of the film production corporation Toei. Okawa Hiroshi, the founder and the first President of Toei Douga, also served as the President of Toei group. As the leader of the first large scale commercial animation production studio in Japan, Okawa was clearly aware of the presence and influence of Disney, and one of Toei Douga's mission statements was to eventually become the Disney of the Orient. Okawa's ambition was to eventually redress:

'what is often pointed out as the defect of film as the export industry in Japan, which is marked by the use of Japanese language and their weak international quality (*hi-kokusaisei*). It is expected that animation, which enchants by drawings and motion, could transcend these problems and contribute to the expansion [of the film industry] onto the international market.'

(Okawa, cited in Watanabe and Yamaguchi 1977: 61, my translation)

Note here that Okawa's goal was not so much to accumulate critical acclaim or artistic reputation, which certain segments of Japanese cinema were already beginning to gather in Europe; but rather to expand to overseas markets for financial gain. To put the foundation of Toei Douga in its historical context, 1956 was two years after Akira Kurosawa's '*Seven Samurai*' was recognised at the Venice Film

Festival. It was also two years into the beginning of the High Economic Growth (1954-1973) period that was propelling Japan into a society with an emerging 'new middle class' (c.f. Vogel 1963). Professional and fully commercialised animators – and other industry professionals for that matter – were coming into existence just when, in the words of Ezra Vogel, the 'salary man' as the hero of the new middle class was beginning – and only still beginning – to parade into the socio-economic mainstream.

Toei Douga's first feature-length animation in 1958, *Hakujaden* (The Tale of the White Serpent), marked the first full colour and fully commercial feature release in the country. *Hakujaden* chronicled the love story between a girl called Hakujoushi, who was the human manifestation of a white snake spirit, and a boy called Shusen, a human student. The story was based on well-known Chinese folklore. Toei Douga spent 40 million yen (= US\$11,000, where \$1=¥360 in 1958) on production; financial mobilisation of this scale for a fully commercial and private business initiative was hitherto unheard of in the Japanese animation industry. The animation opened nationwide on the 21st of December 1958, and became the first feature-length Japanese animation to be exported to overseas markets and submitted to international film festivals. It won, among others, the 9th Berlin Citizenry Cultural award and the special award at the Venice International Children's Film Festival. It was exported to Southeast Asia, Germany and Latin America, scooping some US\$95,000 overseas.

Hakujaden was remarkable also in terms of the methods and technologies it employed in the production process. For the painting and the filming process, thin transparent sheets of celluloid, usually just called 'cels', were used in combination with the newly imported 'multi-plane camera' first designed and used by Disney. Although other Japanese productions had used cels prior to *Hakujaden*, these in

combination with the multi-plane camera in the production of colour animation was never done before, and paved way for a new technology of animation in the country. The cels' transparent background made redundant the necessity to draw a background for every piece of animation drawing, and the multiple planes on the new camera made it possible to place separate cels at different levels but facing the same lens, thereby creating depth of field in the filmed animation. The method – called 'cel animation' – enabled animators to, for the first time, composite different layers of animation cels and the background drawing into a single frame of picture in the filming process, and while it significantly reduced the labour of drawing, it drastically improved the quality of animated images.

The multi-plane camera was developed and first used by Disney in their production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1938). The film, of course, was the first fully coloured feature-length animation in the world. This cel animation method, which was adapted by Toei Douga in Japan some twenty years later, remained the technological backbone of commercial animation production both in Japan and the world until the 1990s.

It is notable that the animation which was a founding stone for the later industry was in fact a bricolage of Chinese folklore and American technology, and points tellingly to animation's heterogeneous and transnational development in Japan and elsewhere in the 20th century.

As significant as the technological shift were changes in the social and economic organisation of production. Not only did Toei Douga finance a production budget of 40 million yen, the production process of *Hakujaden* mobilised approximately one hundred staff in a clearly demarcated division of labour. The workforce was divided into managerial personnel and visual creators, and the latter were further divided into key animators, assisting (aka In-Betweening) animators,

tracers, painters (aka colourists), background artists, director(s) and so forth. Like the technology of cel animation itself, this new, professionalised and clearly demarcated division of labour served as the model for the commercial organisation of animation production.

The history of the animation industry between 1956 through to 1963 *is* the history of Toei Douga. During this period, Toei Douga was the one and only production studio that was a credible mass market commercial initiative. It was the only studio producing commercial feature-length releases nationwide, and singlehandedly developed the socio-economic organisation that could – for the first time in history – be properly called an animation *industry* in Japan.

The late 1950s and the early 1960s are often remembered as the golden era of Japanese cinema more generally. Directors such as Akira Kurosawa was still in their prime, and countless other directors and studios were producing countless other popular films in the mainstream of mass market entertainment. This was all to change, however, with the massification of television in the 1960s after it was first introduced to Japan in 1953. The overwhelming popularity of TV broadcasting and the black-and-white television set during the 1960s is captured well by the phrase ‘three treasures’, which included it, alongside the washing machine and vacuum cleaner, among the new status symbols of the emerging middle class society associated with the rise of salaried male workers in secure employment (Vogel 1963: 72; see also Dasgupta 2007: 278-9). The socio-economic as well as the cultural significance of owning a TV set came hand in hand with the irresistible enchantment of broadcast television itself, and this was to redraw the contours of the film and animation industries. Interestingly, television had an impact on both film and animation in many ways, but the effects manifested notably differently. Whereas the film industry went through a difficult period of decline from the mid- to late 1960s

onwards, the animation industry redefined itself primarily as a *TV* industry.

The introduction of television to animation, and especially the alignment of animation's production cycle with the weekly televisual broadcasting cycle, transformed the visual outlook of the animations produced in Japan in the early 1960s. Indeed, this change – the start of commercial animation for television – in 1963 may be considered a historic watershed in the stylistic development of Japanese animation. Although to use such language is to contradict the critical framework I have been developing, it may be said that animations had become more 'anime-like' since this time on.

3.3 TV animation and the 1960s

Although animation was already broadcast on television by the early 1960s, the programmes were mostly imports from the United States. Hanna-Barbera's 1960 production *The Flintstones*, in particular, was popular amongst Japanese audiences, and according to Yamaguchi and Watanabe (1977), it was the success of this American animation which gave the momentum to the production of domestic TV animation in Japan, which finally crystallised in the broadcasting of *Tetsuwan Atom* ('Astro Boy') in 1963.⁴

Tetsuwan Atomu was based on the popular manga artist Tezuka Osamu's existing manga of the same name, and was directed by Tezuka himself through his newly founded animation production studio, Mushi Production. *Atomu* was produced and put on air at a time when the loci of commercial mass entertainment was rapidly shifting from cinema to television. Caught in this wider historical current, the success of *Tetsuwan Atomu* was nothing short of phenomenal. The first episode, broadcast on the 1st of January 1963, gained ratings of 27.4%, which shot up to

34.6% by the sixth episode broadcast, and averaged at around 30% until the end of its run on the 31st of December 1966 after 193 episodes. Its highest ratings were recorded for episode 84, at 40.7%, which remains to this day the highest rating TV animation broadcast has achieved in Japan.

The spectacular success of *Tetsuwan Atomu* brought about tectonic changes to the social, economic and technological organisations of animation production in the industry. By November of the year *Atomu* went on air, Toei Douga followed with its first TV animation series called *Okami Shone Ken* ('Wolf Boy Ken'). Within a few years, several other production companies had followed suit. By 1965, merely two years since the start of *Tetsuwan Atomu*, the annual number of serialised TV animation productions had reached thirteen (Y. Yamaguchi 2004: 90). The rapid expansion of serialised TV animation production, alongside the sudden increase in the number of production studios, brought about a serious labour shortage in the industry, and this became entangled with the mirroring issues of rising labour and production cost.

Before *Tetsuwan Atomu* went on air in 1963, Toei Douga was virtually the only animation studio in the country producing mass-market commercial releases. What this entailed was that, prior to the founding of Mushi Production in 1962, the vast majority of capable and professional animators were concentrated within Toei Douga's studios. Although Mushi Production primarily recruited and trained its own animators, the phenomenon of resource drain from Toei to Mushi Production did take place throughout the 1960s. Even though Mushi Production itself had already boosted to 230 employees by 1964, the shortage of animators was nonetheless still considered a perennial problem (Y. Yamaguchi 2004: 90).

This shortage was in the context of an industry now burgeoning with commercial studios for TV animation production. Large players such as Toei and

Mushi had to suffer resource drains, as well as regular employees (*shain*) constantly ‘temping’ with smaller production studios for extra income.

In hindsight, the phenomenal success of *Tetsuwan Atomu* and the rapid expansion of TV animation were tantamount to cutting the Gordian knot, leading to substantial destabilisation of both employment and the management base in the animation industry. This was because, as hindsight tells us, the production of *Tetsuwan Atomu* in the early 1960s did not so much resolve as sidestep the organisational, as well as financial, difficulties in mobilising the production of half-hour length animation on a weekly basis. According to Yasuo Yamaguchi (2004: 75), ‘many people had considered the production of TV animation before [*Tetsuwan Atomu*], but they all *had to* abandon the idea when they faced the problems of production time and production cost’ (my translation, emphasis added).

For example, by the early 1960s, it would have taken Toei Douga about eighteen months and some 200-300 staff to produce a feature-length animation for the production cost of roughly 60 million yen (Y. Yamaguchi: *ibid*). If they were to produce a weekly half-hour animation for TV using the same method and organisation, the production of a single episode would have required at least 100 staff over six months, resulting in a production cost of roughly 30 million yen per episode (*ibid*). To put those figures in perspective, the average production cost of *non*-animation, half-hour length content for TV at the time in Japan was said to be between 500,000 to 600,000 yen. Thus there was, in terms of cost alone, the problem of narrowing a gap of 2.5 million yen in budgeting every week. Even though the issue of cost could have been resolved, there was another drawback: the tight production schedule, coupled with limited human resources. If it took one hundred staff six months to produce a half-hour episode, how long in advance – and how many staff – would the production need to meet delivery deadlines on a weekly basis?

In order for Mushi Production to clear those conditions for the weekly production of *Tetsuwan Atomu*, drastic revisions in the fundamental organisation of production system were necessary. One such revision, which was to characterise virtually all TV animations to be produced commercially in Japan thereafter, was the shift from Disney style ‘full animation’ to a highly adapted version of ‘limited animation’ methods.

In technical terms, ‘full animation’ was the method systematised and mobilised by Disney in their canonical feature-length releases such as *Snow White* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1941), *Bambi* (1942) and so forth. True to the logic of the motion picture, full animation employs twenty-four different animation drawings per second to animate the entire sequence of the animated feature.⁵ In contrast, limited animation was popularised as an abridged technique of the full animation method, also in the United States around 1950s, as a cost-cutting and timesaving device. The limited animation method does not require 24 different drawings per second; instead, it makes do with an average of 12 or 8 frames of animation drawings per second.⁶

In the context of the Japanese industry, *Hakujaden* and other feature-length releases by Toei Douga in the late 1950s and the early 1960s employed an animation method closest to the ‘full animation’ as defined in terms of the early Disney production system. Yet, technically speaking, *Hakujaden* was a cross between full and limited animation methods, for it used 12 frames per second drawings as a standard technique, only occasionally increasing to the full 24 frames per second key animations (Y. Yamaguchi 2004: 75). As we have seen, however, even this hybrid system was deemed unfit for the continuous weekly production of half-hour animation episodes.

In this context, Mushi Production went ahead with an almost revolutionary

reworking of the existing limited animation techniques. First, the animation drawings were to be used, on average, only for eight frames per second (called *sankoma-uchi*, or simply *sankoma*). Secondly, body parts of characters were divided into different cel layers, and only those parts that were deemed necessary to be moving were animated (called *seru wake*). A good example of this would be a close-up shot of a character speaking: the face would be still and only her mouth would be moving (ie animated) on screen (called *kuchi paku*). Thirdly, when a character was depicted as moving through space, the background drawing was slid across instead of the character being actually animated as moving through the background (called *suraido*). Directors often sought to create scenes where no animation was required at all e.g. landscape shots, still drawings of characters (called *tome*), etc. Certain common sequences, such as a character waving, smiling, walking and so forth were ‘stocked’ and re-used repeatedly over episodes (called *banku*). To compensate for the significant lack of actual motion and animation on the screen, the animation as a whole tended to be made up of rapid succession of short, fast ‘cuts’,⁷ with around 300 cuts per episode.

These techniques, among others, were invented and mobilised through trial and error during the ongoing production of *Tetsuwan Atomu*. As a result, according to Yasushi Watanabe and Katsunori Yamaguchi (1977: 161), ‘although [Mushi Production] spent about six thousand animation drawings for the first episode [of *Tetsuwan Atomu*], they managed to reduce the number to approximately three thousand drawings by the fifth episode’ (my translation). In a way, the adaptation to and the invention of new limited animation methods were carried out so as to make animation as *still* as possible, minimising both production cost and the production time. The resultant ‘animation’ in *Tetsuwan Atomu* was remarkably trashy, yet its reception in the mass market was enthusiastic, and the high ratings and sales

figures in related merchandise reflected its popularity. Just as the film industry was about to go into decline during the 1960s, the success of *Tetsuwan Atomu* turned the tide for the Japanese animation industry and signalled a move away from Disney style feature-length full animation towards *Atomu* style limited TV animation.

Stylistically, *Atomu*'s limited animation method led to a fortuitous affinity between serialised TV animation and another visual mass entertainment platform in the publishing called *manga* (c.f. Kinsella 2000). The radically simplified animation style was able to accommodate the complex character designs developed within the manga industry, and the complex designs in turn helped to intensify the scanty visual quality of TV animation where motion was kept to a bare minimum. Adaptation of serial manga into serialised TV animation, which *Tetsuwan Atomu* also pioneered, could minimise the time and cost necessary for original character design as well as story development. TV animations based on the original manga comics in turn provided publishers and manga artists with an unprecedented channel of revenue and advertisement. With the rise of *Tetsuwan Atomu*, the manga industry was hereon to become the backbone of TV animation production, and this mutually beneficial relationship between the two industries continues to this day.

The technical and organisational adaptation to a highly revised form of the limited animation method, coupled with the stylistic intimacy with contemporary manga designs, fused to produce the clear forerunner of what is today called 'Japanese anime' in the early to the mid 1960s. From *Tetsuwan Atomu* onwards, the visual style of commercial TV animation produced in Japan became – to go back to my earlier contention – more recognisably 'anime-like'. This stylistic transformation thus did not owe so much to an esoteric and contrived connection to *ukiyo*e or mythical or 'essential' qualities in Japanese 'culture'. Rather, it was the drastic shift in the technical and socio-economic organisation of production systems that most

directly brought about this stylistic shift and visual emergence.

3.4 Work and labour in the animation industry since the 1960s

While Mushi Production succeeded technically in serialising the weekly production of half-hour animation for TV broadcasting, it did not fare as well in financial terms. Even with the revised limited animation method, the actual production cost of *Tetsuwan Atomu* was estimated at around 1.5 million per episode (Y. Yamaguchi 2004: 100), while the production contract between Fuji Television and Mushi Production was signed with only 550,000 yen as the paid-in production order (ibid). Even though the show's formidable success in merchandising temporarily rendered this net deficit of 1 million yen per episode a virtual non-issue, the disparity between incurred production costs and the paid-in production budget (*seisaku sazon*) was to take an eventual toll on the management of the company. Mushi Production, after all its spectacular success, went bankrupt in 1973. Since its inception, it had been the second largest commercial animation production company in Japan after Toei.

During its four years of production and broadcasting, *Tetsuwan Atomu* was reported to have yielded around 500 million yen in merchandising revenue for Mushi Production. And yet, when the programme finished in 1967, the company was left with a net deficit of 150 million yen (Y. Yamaguchi 2004: 100). Without exaggeration, the company was trapped in a vicious circle in which, despite its incredible popularity, the more it produced the further it acquired debt. 'This reality of net deficit between the provided production budget and the actual production cost,' writes Yamaguchi (2004: 100), 'is a structural problem that continues to paralyse the animation industry today. Productions that do not succeed in relevant merchandising or overseas export only leave the production companies with

mounting debt.'

The animation industry's entry into the TV business in the 1960s quickly and inadvertently turned animation into one of many sub-genres of available content for television. What this meant in effect was that the animation industry became subsumed by the TV industry, and began receiving orders as if the entire industry worked as a subcontractor for the TV broadcasters. Considering how there was virtually only Toei Douga before Mushi Production and *Tetuswan Atomu* came on the scene in 1963, one may go so far as to argue that the basic contours of the commercial animation industry in Japan were more or less articulated entirely through its structural relationship to TV and related industries during this period.

The implications were diverse and consequential to the socio-economic organisation of animation production. Firstly, production companies entering the TV animation business had to accept a comparatively meagre production budget from buyers. Studios either had to predicate the production within that remit, or try to recoup deficits from elsewhere. Yet merchandising was only possible when the production studio actually retained or partially retained the copyright. This was often not the case when many production companies simply received production orders as (sub-)contractors; the common practice of adapting from the original manga stories further complicated the issue of rights. In broad terms, studios which were too small to take part in financing the production were left out of the structure of merchandising revenue.

Even when production companies were large enough to partly or fully finance their productions, in itself an exceptional circumstance, merchandising success was an elusive holy grail. For example, although Toei Douga had produced animation for TV alongside feature-length animation since 1963, the studio's first large-scale monetising success did not come until 1972-73 when it produced a series

called *Mazinger Z*. The show featured a boy protagonist piloting a gigantic robot in his effort to save the world from evil forces. The robot, in recognition of the show's high ratings, was later manufactured into a toy for boys and became Toei's first mass market merchandising success based on their existing productions.

Throughout the 1960s, producers were beginning to realise what shaky ground the industry and their business actually stood on. In the first instance, the existence of a substantial net deficit between the contracted budget and actual cost presented a fundamental problem for a viable business. In these circumstances, I argue two factors further complicated the situation.

The first was rising labour costs, reflecting the overall growth in national economy and general increase in affluence. The second was the growing desire for creativity among professionalised animators and others. Both factors played out in the specific context of commercial animation production, and placed incredible financial strains on the management of Toei Douga and Mushi Production in the form of accruing deficits. As we have seen, the inevitable consequence of these developments for Mushi Production was bankruptcy in 1973. Toei Douga, too, only barely survived through a considerable top-down restructuring that led to crushing labour disputes, culminating in a five-month lockout of the studio in 1972.

Since the beginning, the commercial production of animation was a highly labour intensive endeavour at Toei Douga as it was to become elsewhere. The production of *Hakujaden* in 1958 had already exacted a round of excessive overtime from workers, particularly towards the film's completion. In response to the demanding nature of the work, approximately 140 workers gathered to form a labour union at Toei Douga studio as early as 1959. This first attempt at unionisation, however, was forestalled by the company management in conjunction with the parent company, Toei. By the time the studio produced its third

feature-length animation release in 1960, the working conditions were such that ‘the monthly overtime for each worker averaged around eighty-eight hours’ (Watanabe and Yamaguchi 1977: 73). The animation division was among the worst affected by overwork to make delivery on schedule. ‘Out of sixty animators,’ write Watanabe and Yamaguchi (ibid), ‘seven fell ill with appendicitis, one with liver damage, another with a duodenal ulcer, and the last one struck down by tuberculosis in the course of a year....’ In 1961 the labour union was formed at the second attempt with 270 members.

The labour intensive aspect of production was further complicated by various other factors. Firstly, although labour shortage was a perennial issue, the company could not just hire anyone to augment the workforce: it needed those who had certain creative skills, from animation drawing to colouring. Secondly, until the early 1960s, large production studios like Toei hired their workers as *seishain*; full-time, regular, and salaried employees. Under postwar Japanese employment customs, even for a company whose finance was already stretched to limit, this meant an implicit agreement on long-term job security for a few hundred workers, with incremental increases in wages every year. Toei stopped hiring on a regular full-time basis after 1963, but this was not enough to contain rising labour costs. According to Y. Yamaguchi (2004: 99), the aggregate wages of full-time employees at Toei Douga doubled during the 1960s.

The newly formed union at Toei Douga was a very active and dynamic organisation, which sought not only to win better working conditions, but in so doing, many members aspired to make better and more creative animation. Toei’s active labour union throughout the 1960s could be seen as remarkable in a socio-political climate of high economic growth, in which many labour unions across industries were switching to accept cooperative capital-labour relations in pursuit of

productivity and shared benefits (Gordon 1993, 1998).

The most severe confrontation between the management and the union at Toei occurred in 1972. In July that year, facing a worsening financial situation, the company proposed an early retirement programme to cut 150 jobs through voluntary resignation. If achieved, the downsizing would nearly halve the number of employees at the studio. The significant point here is that the union objected to the move not only on the grounds of protecting jobs, but also argued the plan raised a creative and a *moral* problem for animation production.

One union leader was quoted as saying: ‘since the mass production of TV animation began around 1965, the quality of animation [at Toei] began depreciating as a result of the efforts to reduce cost. The cost reduction, so it seems, is all that the management cares about’ (Shidara Hiroshi, cited in Watanabe and Yamaguchi 1977: 131). An anonymous union member is also reported to have said: ‘We used to pride ourselves that we formed part of children’s cultural world [*zidou bunka*] through our animations... So-called ‘rationalisation’ [*gorika*] aims to reduce the quality of animation even for feature-length releases, rendering them to look just like another TV animation. If this downsizing [referring to the voluntary resignation package] happens, *it would be impossible to produce respectable animations [ie anime] anymore*’ (Emphasis added, cited in Watanabe and Yamaguchi 1977: 131).

Many members of the union at Toei Douga were young and aspiring individuals who had high expectations and stakes in the future of animation in Japan. Through most of the 1960s, the organisation was led by talents such as Hayao Miyazaki, Yasuo Otsuka, and Isao Takahata, who left the company (and the union) before 1972, but went on to create defining works for the development and critical success of ‘Japanese animation’ elsewhere in the industry.⁸ Those people, and countless others like them did not simply come to Toei to get a good job, but to

take part in animation production, and to *create* animation themselves. For them, work was never a simple means for living, a trading of labour in exchange for wages.

Thus, the lockout of 1972 at Toei Douga, alongside the bankruptcy of Mushi Production in 1973, not only exposed the fundamental financial instability of commercial animation production, but also the potentially insurmountable tension between management and creativity. When the lockout ended after five months, nineteen union members were forcibly laid off, while over one hundred more resigned and left the company. In the meantime the studio facility had been vacated, the management carried on with ongoing production and deliveries of TV animation shows by fully mobilising the network of smaller outside studios through subcontracting. Somewhat ironically, then, the labour movement for better working conditions and higher-quality animation inadvertently helped to establish a production system that heavily exploited subcontracting relations to further minimise cost and financial risk.

Since the early 1970s, Toei Douga's hitherto internally maintained division of labour became increasingly externalised to smaller outside studios specialising in different production divisions (e.g. key animation, In-Betweening and colouring, background art, filming and so forth). Simultaneously, the flow of production work, which had been physically contained within the Toei Douga studio, became spatially mapped onto the network connecting specialist studios across western Tokyo, where the majority of the animation production companies were located. The incorporation of subcontracting relations as the division of labour rapidly developed throughout the second half of the 1960s. With Toei Douga now joining in, the intricate interlocking of studios through subcontracting relations had virtually become the norm by the early 1970s.

Those smaller studios neither intended nor could afford regular

employment to animators; the further down the chain of subcontracting, the worse the working conditions. Wages were now paid at pre-agreed unit rates for each production process, and many worked either as freelancers moving from project to project, or as studio employees on temporary contracts. Increasingly through the 1970s, many people were working without job security, meaningful wage increase increments, corporate welfare, or social security such as unemployment benefits and even health insurance at times. When I arrived in 2009, those conditions still structured the relations of production, labour market and the forms of employment in the Japanese animation industry.

3.5 Rise of critical discourses from 1970s to 1990s

By the 1970s, ‘anime’ – or ‘*terebi manga*’ (‘TV manga’) as it was then popularly called – had become a prime entertainment platform for children in Japan. The industry’s structurally inherent production deficit, in turn, often pressed the producers and sponsors alike to look to recoup potential or actual loss elsewhere in merchandising even in the planning stages. Throughout the 1970s, this resulted in toy manufacturers emerging as major sponsors of TV animation production. The notable success of *Mazinger Z* (1972-73) in licensed toy merchandising propelled this inter-industrial relation into a business formula, and it is no coincidence that this period has seen, among others, the flourishing of shows aimed at boys and featuring gigantic robots.

By the mid 1970s, approximately twenty shows were being broadcast on TV. They were concentrated in the time slots between 5:00 pm and 8:00 pm, and the most popular ones attained ratings approaching 30% (*Asahi Shibun*, 23 August 1976). Themes ranged from sport, science fiction and robots to fairy tales, comedies

and so forth. Alongside this popularity, critical commentaries regarding animation's influence upon children and its apparent commercialism began to be publicised in the media. On the 25th of March 1975, *Asahi Shinbun* published a strongly phrased letter in the readers' page, from a teacher based in Kawasaki city, Kanagawa Prefecture. 'As a teacher, I detest those adults who produce vulgar and harmful television, magazines and manga for children...' the letter opened. 'These things have no end today. They pound upon and devastate the innocent minds of children.... In other countries, children are nurtured as a precious 'national treasure'; in Japan the adults look at them as the source of moneymaking and exploit them, with no constraints....'

The castigating tone of the letter caught the attention of the readership, and *Asahi* organised a follow-up column a month later, detailing the reactions and responses that the original letter stirred (*Asahi Shibun*, 25 April 1975). Among the respondents was Tezuka Osamu, the creator of *Tetsuwan Atomu* and one of the most renowned manga artists of the time. With nuanced and – in a way – deflecting apologia, Tezuka observed that '...the times in which we live today have changed a lot and become a lot more complex since the time of *Tetsuwan Atomu*. Children too have changed, become more thoughtful, and do not now think in terms of simplified black-or-white. The way forward for anime is to remain faithful to the shifting time and values, and to see and draw the society as seen through the eyes of children...'

Public criticism of TV animation became a sporadic yet continuing current into the 1980s. On the 18th of February 1982, *Asahi Shinbun* reported that anger was mounting among female viewers regarding the show *Maicching Machiko Sensei* (Oh No Miss. Machiko, 1981-1983). *Maicching...* was a variation of school comedy that featured, among others, slapstick and crude erotic humour at a private school. 'Boys smack the breasts of young female teachers, and flower-printed panties flash

on screen....' reported the article. '[R]ecently, a rally was organised in Kyoto to form an 'Association to Protest against *Maichhing*....' The association has issued a public complaint to demand the TV station and [the original] manga publisher to pull out the show off air and stop the sales of manga.' The shared concern among the participants was summarised in the paper as to 'scrap *ecchi bangumi* [sexually suggestive shows] targeted for children.'

This public criticism in no way came singularly from concerned viewers alone. For example, Toei Douga labour union participated in a protest rally in 1982 to stop Toei from proceeding with the production of a feature-length animation film called *The Near-Future War 198X*. The film, the rally's participants said, 'depicts a scene in which hundreds and thousands of citizens get killed as if they were in *Invader Game*...' (*Asahi Shinbun*, 10 January 1982).

Although a stereotypical representation of 'Japanese anime' in Euro-America may conjure up an image-world in which violence and eroticisation of (young) woman regularly takes place, and to some extent this is true, the industry's public relations history in Japan also shows that it has long been fraught with debates regarding what should or should not go into animation, especially from the 1970s onwards (for a history of debates on manga, see Kinsella 2000: 139-161). While the extent to which such debates have actually impacted the industry and the content of animation is another issue, the concerns about anime, and especially its moral influences upon 'children' and 'society', continued to provide occasional topics for heated public reaction throughout the 1980s.

In many ways, increased public attention to the content of TV animation points to the extent to which it had established its presence in Japanese media and in society by the early 1980s. As a general tendency, concerns expressed and debated during this period either implicitly or explicitly espoused a view that the audience

for animation was largely made up of ‘children’.⁹ The debates therefore tended to focus strongly on how to protect the viewers – children – from ‘vulgar’, ‘moneymaking’, ‘erotic’ or ‘violent’ influences. This social imaginary of an innocent audience, however, was to change toward the end of the 1980s.

In August of 1989, a man called Miyazaki Tsutomu (26) was arrested on allegations of murdering four young girls aged between four to seven. As the shocking details of the crime flooded the national media, a chain of escalating reports ensued on Miyazaki’s pathological personality and behaviour. What followed, as Sharon Kinsella (2000: 126) tentatively suggested, fell nothing short of a national ‘moral panic’, not only about the reportedly deranged character of the killer, but also on the moral state of the society that produced him.

Headlines such as ‘pathology latent in alienation’ (*Asahi Shinbun*, 11 August 1989), ‘people are just ‘objects’ (ibid, 14 August 1989), ‘a face with no sign of emotions’ (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, 11 August 1989) saturated the newspapers, and ‘[a] heavily symbolic debate ensued Miyazaki’s arrest...’ (Kinsella 2000: 127).

‘...his alienation and lack of substantial social relationships featured as the ultimate cause of his anti-social behaviour. The apparent lack of close parenting given to him by his mother and father, his subsequent immersion into a fantasy world....were posited as the serial causes of his serial murders.’

(ibid)

A series of unexpected consequences were due for the animation and manga industries, producers, fans, and consumers alike in the wake of the Miyazaki case (c.f. Kinsella 2000: 126-129). From day one, Miyazaki’s abnormality and despicable

crime were explicitly linked with his penchant for anime and manga. The photograph of Miyazaki's room, published with captions like 'his friends are anime videos' (ibid), quickly came to symbolise the pathology of the man.

In due time, the Miyazaki case brought about a strong social stigmatisation of mature (male) audiences of anime.¹⁰ This was a viewership most of the Japanese public did not know existed, or care about until the wake of the crime. The intensity of the moral panic and public speculation regarding this newly discovered segment of the animation audience was such that, in the months following the arrest, an almost entirely distinct social label was invented and propagated in the media. These adult males came to be called '*otaku*'. Although the term itself had existed prior to the Miyazaki case,¹¹ it quickly acquired a pernicious connotation thereafter (Condry 2006: 125). On the 5th of September 1989, *Yomiuri Shinbun* described *otaku* as those youth who '...avoid human interactions and bury themselves in the self-secluded world of anime, video, and toys,' more or less replicating the language employed to describe the character of the serial killer.

Detailing the social impacts of the Miyazaki case in her study of the Japanese manga industry, Sharon Kinsella (2000: 129) noted that:

'[o]taku came to mean, in the first instance Miyazaki, in the second instance, all amateur manga artists and fans, and in the third instance all Japanese youth in their entirety... The sense that this unsociable otaku generation was multiplying and threatening to take over the whole of society was strong.'

A similar discursive phenomenon engulfed anime and its fans simultaneously. *Otaku* gained saliency as a socio-cultural stereotype precisely because, as every prevalent stereotype does, the concept captured a set of essentialised behavioural

patterns which it helped into social recognition in the first place, and discursively reified. After Miyazaki, the social imaginary of the animation viewership was polarised between ‘innocent children’ on the one hand and pathological and socially alienated *otaku* consumers on the other. At its most extreme, during the early 1990s, the latter came to be seen as tantamount to possessed by latent criminality and perverted sexuality.

3.6 Anime in culture and anime in policy around the 2000s

During the late 1990s, however, Japanese cultural discourses surrounding animation began to take a different trajectory. This period saw the resurgence of interest in the Japanese press regarding animation’s overseas sales. Among others, what spurred such resurgence was the commercial and critical success of certain titles in the US market. ‘Japanese animation film *Ghost in the Shell* topped the Billboard video sales ranking in the United States for the first time in history [of exported Japanese video.]’ Nishijima Takeo, an editor at *Asahi Shinbun*, wrote in a feature article titled *Japanese anime: up-and-coming landscape* in 1996.

‘Internationalisation [*kokusaika*] of Japanese anime has not stopped at North America, reaching markets across Europe and Asia. Alongside *karate* and *Karaoke*, it has come to make up modern *Japonism*. Juxtaposing sex and violence, robots and girls, and of course transformations, from ‘*Sailor Moon*’ to ‘*Evangelion*,’ here we ask what really constitutes Japanese anime...’

(*Asahi Shinbun*, 6 September 1996).

The emerging re-appraisal of animation did not come only from its record of long-established exports or its newly discovered popularity, however. It was also in tune with a mobilisation in the manga industry, which sought to raise manga's status from a mass entertainment commodity to a form of Japanese culture during the 1990s (Kinsella 2000: 91-97). 'The concept of manga as culture which should be displayed in museums,' writes Kinsella (ibid: 95), 'spread with extraordinary speed and was linked in particular to home-town regeneration projects [of the time]'. Separately but concomitantly, about a dozen regional museums had installed displays featuring established individual manga artists by 1998 (ibid). The drive for this institutionalised acceptance as 'culture' complemented and was accompanied by another movement to intellectualise manga through academic institutionalisation. 'By 1997 14 universities and colleges offered some forms of teaching in manga studies...' (ibid).

In this cultural climate, press coverage such as that in *Asahi* quoted above emphasised how Japanese animation films were now attracting a wave of critical acclaim abroad, and began arguing, into the 2000s, that the global popularity of anime represented the extent of Japanese (popular) culture(s). A timely Academy Award and the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2002 for Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* fortuitously contributed to this narrative trend, and the occasion was lauded as the moment that '...[the world] finally recognised the true strength of Japanese anime' (*Asahi Shinbun*, 19 February 2002). Since the early 2000s, it has become not extraordinary for phrases such as 'a culture that Japan proudly presents (*nihon no hokoru bunka*)' (*Asahi Shinbun*, 31 March 2003) to be used in the press to describe Japanese animation.

The newly formed celebratory narrative was encouraged also by the far-reaching commercial success of shows such as *Pokemon*, whose estimated global

market scale reached around \$38.4b in 2004 (*Asahi Shinbun*, 1 June 2004). The culturalisation of anime was thus contemporaneous with the rising economic expectation of it in the world market and for the Japanese national economy. What was unique about this recent development was that such expectations were nevertheless subsumed into cultural rhetoric, and politicians and policy makers explicitly caught on to this. In 2003, the then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said, 'it is not only the manufacturing with which Japan leads the world. Japanese culture such as cinema and anime are also held highly across the world, and they create impacts that reach beyond economy. We strive towards building a nation whose wealth thrives on art and culture.'¹²

Around the early 2000s, these emergent cultural discourses around animation found a felicitous conjuncture with political discourse, and fused seamlessly with the increasing concern of the Japanese government to invigorate and re-establish industries in a post-industrial knowledge economy. In 2002, under the auspices of Koizumi, the Committee for Intellectual Property Strategy¹³ published the Outline for Intellectual Property Strategy (*Chiteki-zaisan-senryaku-taikou*).¹⁴ According to the Outline, '[m]aking Japan an intellectual-property-based nation means expressly establishing a national direction which places emphasis on inventions and creation, and in which the production of intangible assets is recognised as the foundation of industry' (cited and translated in Condry 2006: 98, abridged). That is,

'With limited natural resources and high labour cost, it is imperative to have the perspective of an intellectual-property-based-nation so as to reinvigorate the national economy and society. Wealth is to be produced from the strategic creation, protection and use of outstanding inventions, production methods, design, brands,

music, film, television programmes, animation and other content.'

(My translation)¹⁵

Note here how 'animation' is juxtaposed alongside 'music', 'film', 'design' and so forth under the rubric of 'content'. During this period, industries such as music, film, animation and others, which may have been called 'culture industries' or 'entertainment industries' in the past, were increasingly re-conceptualised and represented as forming part of Japan's 'content industries' (*kontentsu sangyou*). In the Japanese usage, 'content' is another way of referring to copyrighted intellectual properties, and the designated contour of 'content industries' within the Japanese economy virtually corresponds with what are more commonly called creative industries (Florida 2002; Hartley 2005) elsewhere in advanced capitalist economies.

The Japanese government's embrace of creativity and innovation as the new catalyst for economic growth in the 21st century formed part of a larger sea change in policymaking across the old industrialised countries. The 'intellectual-property-based nation' was, among others, Japan's response to the challenges raised by various socio-economic manifestations of deindustrialisation and globalisation, notably the (further) expansion of the service-sectors and decline in manufacturing jobs. The proposition of the 'intellectual-property-based nation' thereby conceptually cleared and explicated that link between economy and culture which had hitherto only been tacitly acknowledged in the discourses around Japanese animation in the late 1990s.

Thus, just as its cultural standing was apparently on the rise within the Japanese media in the 2000s, the animation industry suddenly found itself singled out by the government and others as the strategic vanguard of new national growth.

In this political and economic climate, animation and other content of popular culture came to be labelled a 'cultural export' of the nation by the government (MacWilliams 2008: 15). In such a formulation, the rising cultural profile of anime within the Japanese media found its corresponding political and economic expression, turning the discursive presence of Japanese animation into a complex nexus of political, economic and cultural expectations.

What, however, had been happening to the animation industry in the meantime, and to the people who worked on the actual production floor? By the mid-1970s, the labour market for the Japanese animation industry was already characterised by severe employment insecurity and poverty-level wages. This, as we have seen, was the result of economic restructuring and re-organisation of production system through the predominance of subcontracting in the early 1970s. Many characteristics of the so-called 'Japanese employment system' (Roberson 1998; Roth 2002), such as (the ideal of) lifetime employment, seniority-based promotion, incremental wage increase, corporate health insurance and welfare, company-based labour unions, which had championed the ideology of an all-middle-class Japan in the 1980s, had evaporated in the industry by as early as the mid-1970s. Despite this substantial deregulation of labour, the structurally inherent net production deficit continued to cripple the management of production companies. It trickled down from the top to the bottom studios in the industry, but impacted the smaller, sub-contractor, companies most severely. Work hours were long, but wages were disproportionately low. There was no institutional guarantee that people could keep their jobs for a sustainably long period of time, let alone realise a comfortable middle-class lifestyle.

In an unstructured interview, one senior manager (male, early fifties) at a

large production company recollected how the 1980s was ‘such a miserable, really difficult time.’ According to him, it was as though the entire industry did not benefit from the high economic growth era and then was left out of the bubble economy completely. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw an acceleration of outsourcing to overseas subcontractors for labour intensive but less creatively demanding processes in the lower stream of production. Cheaper labour cost was the prime economic rationale, but it was also evident by the early 1990s that there were simply not enough people within the Japanese industry to do everything domestically.

The process which was most outsourced was called IB-TP (*dou-shi*). This was composed of two different processes, In-Betweening and Trace and Painting. Traditionally, In-Betweening was a production phase in which low-skilled novice animators added extra animation drawings to smooth out the existing sequence of key animation, which were already drawn by skilled and experienced animators. In Trace and Paint, complete animation drawings were traced onto cels, and then painted sheet by sheet using human hands only. As the average number of cels used during one episode of TV animation ranged anywhere between 3,000 and 6,000 and often higher, one can imagine the tedious and labour intensive extent of tracing and painting such a large number of cels manually every week.

The late 1990s and the early 2000s saw a key technological change: the digitisation of the lower stream of the production process. In the late 1990s, following the rapid improvement of the technical capacity of personal computers, studios started digitising part(s) of the animation production process. For instance, Toei digitised the Trace and Paint process, arguably the most labour intensive division, in 1997. This digitisation had subtle but far-reaching ramifications in the organisation of production and work in the animation industry, where divisions of the production process were closely interlocked with each other.

As this was the case, the digitisation of Trace and Paint process *necessitated* the digitisation of the filming process, which immediately followed the TP. As cels were no longer used in the colouring process, the existing filming system based on the physical filming of physical cels had to change. The multi-plane animation camera was thus displaced by digital composition on computers, which forced the existing filming engineers either to leave or re-train from scratch. By the early 2000s, the entire industry had switched to digital TP and filming. Since the Trace and Paint process was digitised, the In-Betweening, a process immediately before it, is today in the process of being digitised. Where In-Betweening is still carried out on paper, the new process of Scanning and Digitisation was introduced between IB and TP. In cases where IB is done domestically but TP outsourced overseas, it is often the digitised data only that are sent to international subcontractor(s).

The digitisation by and around the early 2000s also produced among animation workers the most salient sense of a *generational* gap in today's industry. In 2009, workers over thirty years of age still mostly knew how things were done in the time of non-digital production, called '*anarogu*' (analogue). Those who were younger than that, often only knew the '*dejitaru*' (digital) production system. Although the sense of generational divide was not always pronounced or acrimonious, the time of non-digital production did get invoked occasionally by older practitioners as much in nostalgia as to support a claim to senior authority in the trade. The past was remembered, in short, as the time when the work was even harder. This kind of narrative that links superior work ethic to the past, however, must also be situated carefully, as it often develops into a workplace discourse that normalises the status quo as something which has already been improved.

In summary, many people I talked to on the production floor held rather

ambiguous views on the increased attention to anime since the early 2000s. Critical comments were often voiced on political and cultural fronts equally. While some offered an outright dismissal of the entire idea of anime's policy implications – anime as part of the new Japanese growth, anime as part of 'intellectual-property-based nation' strategy etc. – others questioned the language and rhetoric of culturalisation of anime. The varying views and opinions on the production floor nonetheless tended to share one common perspective, which was of scepticism regarding the current discourses about anime's global success and its potential policy implications for the wider Japanese national economy and cultural diplomacy.

3.7 Conclusion

Since its inception in the early 20th century, the history of Japanese animation now spans a period of nearly a century, and any attempt at narrating such a long running phenomenon within a single chapter is necessarily bound to be selective. For this reason, I divided this chapter into two semi-independent parts, which were nonetheless connected in terms of the chronological order and succession.

In the first half of this chapter, I narrated the history of animation and animation industry in Japan from the early 20th century to the mid-1970s, during which period, I argued, the contemporary basis and forms of both the Japanese industry and Japanese animation came into existence and consolidated gradually. I then temporally shifted the historical focus away from production to discourses surrounding anime's consumption in Japanese media and popular culture. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the Japanese discourses regarding the place of anime in society were often fraught with mounting public criticism of anime's assumed corrupting influence upon children. Past the 1990s, in the wake of the Miyazaki case,

the social imaginary of anime consumption acquired an altogether different magnitude of negative associations in the figure of the paedophilic serial murderer. Those negative connotations lived on into the 2000s, and anime's place in the domestic array of popular culture is today clearly marginalised, a fact so often simply ignored in the celebratory narratives of anime's contemporary globalisation.

To the best of my knowledge, a historical account of Japanese animation in terms of the industry's history and the socio-economic and technological organisation of production, does not yet exist in English language scholarship. Indeed, in the current research literature, the historical focus, or the very notion of 'history' itself, has often been a moot point. The relative lack of accessible historical accounts, in turn, may have partially contributed to the recent dominance of textual and synchronic analysis of anime in Japanese studies more generally. While such literary oriented studies have no doubt produced interesting theoretical insights and analyses about anime, their concomitant tendency to divorce anime from its actual relations of production and consumption, and make synchronic claims about Japanese society or culture based on it, is a concern for those trained in the more empirical traditions such as anthropology or sociology (e.g. Allison 2006: 32). The lack of historical perspective is also problematic, as the visibility of anime as an emerging form of popular visual culture globally became more and more apparent into the 2000s (c.f. Brown 2006; Tsutsui 2006). The current global spread of anime arose from the continuing economic endeavour of sustained exports over the decades. Yet explanations were instead sought in factors such as the 'cultural strength' of anime in a way that essentialises both anime and Japanese culture.

It is at this juncture that my historical narrative finally meets the ethnographic findings from my fieldwork. Those celebratory discourses of anime globalisation were clearly divorced from the ethnographic reality I encountered on

the production floor. Ongoing economic difficulties and insecure employment characterise the lives of those who work in the Japanese animation industry today, and as I note elsewhere in this thesis, the animation workers themselves were critical of the rise of the cultural and political profile of anime *outside* the industry, in domains such as policymaking and the media. In this respect, scholars, too, have so far failed consistently to take into account the lived perspectives of the people who work to produce Japanese anime. In the next chapter, therefore, I return my ethnographic focus to today's young animation makers, and in particular discuss what it takes to be working under such severe and demanding labour conditions in the midst of highly complex cultural discourses about anime on the one hand, and rapidly changing social ideals of work and employment in 21st century Japan on the other.

Notes

¹ One of my chief informants (Tanabe-san from Chapter 4) once went so far as to say that, for him, ‘what’s often said about the uniqueness of Japanese animation is after all originally *American*. I don’t buy that stuff about anime being ‘distinctively Japanese (*nihon dokutoku*)’!’

² An important change to note here is that since the late 1990s the animation production process in Japan has become digitised. This means that physical film rolls are no longer used, and the animation camera is replaced with digital composition on computers using software such as Retas and Adobe After Effects. I shall examine the implications of this later in my thesis.

³ Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 are reproduced from *Animage Henshubu*. 1979. *70 Years of Theatrical Films*. Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten

⁴ *Tetsuwan Atomu* was not the first ever domestically produced animation to be broadcast on television. Prior to *Atomu*, animations were sometimes made used of in TV advertisements as well as in short sketches between programmes. Notably, NHK broadcast an animation programme called ‘*Mittsu no Ohanashi*’ (The Three Tales) in 1960, which was the first half-hour domestic animation show on TV in Japan. This, however, was only made and shown as standalone one-off content. In 1961, Fuji Television serialised a show called ‘Instant History’; again, each episode only lasted for a minute.

⁵ Definitions and interpretations of what ‘full animation’ is and should mean vary among commentators. In contrast to the definition I use, another is that it animates everything that appears on screen that should be moving. In this definition, it is not necessary for the feature to have different drawings per 24 frames; instead, every piece of background as well as characters that are deemed alive or in motion need to be animated. The technical difference is that, in the former definition (24 drawings per second), background objects such as leaves and plants need not be animated all of the time so long as characters are animated that way. In the latter definition, so far as every object on the screen that should be in motion is animated, characters do not need to be animated with 24 drawings per second all of the time.

⁶ Limited animation is still filmed on the 24 frame per second basis. However, limited animation keeps the same drawings for two to three frames consecutively, as opposed to every frame having different drawings in the full animation method.

⁷ A cut is the smallest unit of animated drama, whose succession makes up the overall episode. Often, a cut depicts a single action contained within continuous camerawork. For example, when character A and character B are conversing, the camera may depict the close-up of A, then change to the close-up of B, and finally show the long shot of the two characters in the background. In such a scene, the close-ups of A and B, as well as their long shot, each makes up one cut, making the entire sequence composed of the three successive cuts.

⁸ Among the young leaders of the union were names such as Miyazaki Hayao and Takahata Isao. Decades later, these two would found Studio Ghibli, arguably the most commercially successful and critically acclaimed animation studio in contemporary Japan, specialising in feature-length theatre releases.

⁹ This view was not necessarily always consistent with the expanding audience base of animation during this period. Shows such as *UchuSenkan Yamato* (1974) and *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979), though they both suffered low ratings initially, ultimately gained notable popularity among viewers in their mid to late teens, and reaching out to university students.

¹⁰ For equally severe and nearly criminalising impacts on manga and certain manga fans, see Kinsella (2000: 126-129)

¹¹ The word ‘otaku’ was used by fans of amateur manga (see Kinsella 2000: 126-131) to refer to each other during the mid 1980s.

¹² Junichiro Koizumi, General-Policy Speech (*shoshin hyomei enzetsu*), 26th of September 2003.

¹³ The committee was comprised of such a range of political authorities as the Prime Minister, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, the IT Minister, the Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, to mention several representative members.

¹⁴ <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/titeki/kettei/020703taikou.html#0-0>, accessed 2nd of August 2011.

¹⁵ From ‘concerns regarding the decreasing industrial competitiveness,’ Chapter 1 Current Trends and Issues, in *Chiteki-zaisan-senryaku-taikou*, at <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/titeki/kettei/020703taikou.html#1-1>, accessed 2nd of August 2011.

Chapter 4

Dreams That Don't Add Up: Disconnect and neoliberal discourses in the Japanese animation industry

4.1 Karuizawa, 6 December 2009

The night was dark and the air crisp outside the speeding car. It had stopped raining earlier, but the sky was covered with thick layers of cloud, and all I could see through the window were the shadows of trees, swaying calmly in the cold winter breeze. We were driving on the winding asphalt motorway in the vicinity of Karuizawa mountain resort, and nothing indicative of life seemed to appear against the winter's chill surface. The atmosphere inside the car was warm and invitingly quiet. I was then only into the second month of my fieldwork with Toei Animation, one of Japan's premier animation studios known for world famous *anime* such as *Dragonball Z* and *Sailormoon*. That night, the 6th of December 2009, we were on our way back from a company weekend trip at Karuizawa resort. In the car there were myself, Tanabe-san (male, late twenties) and Abe-san (female, early thirties). The trip was organised by and for the company's internal production team on a series called *Fresh Precure*, which features four middle-school girls who transform into battling super heroines as the protagonists. The series primarily targets young girls aged between four and seven years, and hammered out aggregate market sales of approximately ¥10.5 billion (£83 million) in toy merchandising for the 2009 fiscal year.

This excursion was first suggested by Zako-san (male, early thirties), the director of *Fresh Precure*, for the benefit of the production team. Much of the burden of actually planning the trip and making sure it materialised, however, fell upon the shoulders of Tanabe-san, who worked in a section of the management division called ‘production operation’ (*seisaku shinkō*) within the *Fresh Precure* project. Workers in the management division deal with the non-visual aspects of animation production, notably budget and production schedule. ‘Production operators’ are entry-level clerks who manage the production schedule on the shop floor level and make sure each episode is delivered to TV broadcasters on time. This was the work I came to perform as a company intern at Toei, and throughout my fieldwork Tanabe-san served as my supervisor in the *Fresh Precure* project. Together, Tanabe-san and I managed the production of the 50th episode of *Fresh Precure*.

The amount of effort Tanabe-san put into making the company trip a success for others, and the dedication and hard work he had shown during the excursion, were nothing less than heroic. Not only did he almost singlehandedly organise the entire trip, he was the one to forgo the opportunity to sink into a deeply refreshing local *onsen* (hot spring spa). When the chills of the mountain winter properly got to our bones in the evening, he instead went grocery shopping for an *enkai* (party) for the others. Tanabe-san was the first one to arrive at the company in the early morning to pick up rental cars for the excursion. The only free time he had was when everyone was let loose in a shopping outlet for a couple of hours during the mid-afternoon. During this time, he managed to buy a present for his girlfriend, and this was the only saving grace of a recreational company trip which, for him, was filled with more work. ‘It was the hardest I had to endure since entering this company,’ Tanabe-san later joked when we were back in the studio. ‘I couldn’t even dip into an *onsen*!’

‘It’s a tough business being a *salaryman*,’ Tanabe-san also said that night at the beginning of our return journey, referring to the variety of responsibilities he had to handle day and night. For anthropologists of Japan, it goes without saying how densely loaded with meaning the term ‘salaryman’ has been throughout the postwar decades. Its shifting semantic significance and discursive dynamics in the male domains of work since the 1960s have been well documented and discussed by a generation of anthropologists (Vogel 1963; Rohlen 1974; Allison 1994; Dasgupta 2007). William Kelly (1993) noted almost two decades ago that the ‘workplace’, alongside ‘school’ and ‘household’, were the major institutional foci patterning social lives of people in post-war Japan. Against this anthropological backdrop, Tanabe-san’s comment that night got me wondering if the trope of the salaryman provided him with an idiom with which to succinctly express, and through which to understand, his situated relationship to work.

This chapter discusses the subjective and lived dimension of labour on the production floor of commercial animation in Japan. In stark contrast to the popular narratives of globalisation that emerged in the 2000s (c.f. Allison 2006: 1-35), the workplace of Japanese animation was characterised by excessive workloads and a pervasive sense of job insecurity. Facing heightened uncertainty and socio-economic precarity, many animation makers cited doing ‘what you love’ (*suki na koto*) and living for ‘dreams’ as the chief reasons the work of animation was important for them and why they remained in the industry despite its difficult conditions. Yet, in the everyday dealings and doings of the work, my informants often expressed a longing for more secure and stable forms of employment. Such longing for security, stability and certainty can be situated in the wider social context of 21st century Japan, where a decades-long recession since the early 1990s and labour market deregulation have produced an increasing number of young people in precarious

forms of employment: young people who are ‘lost’, so to speak, in the transition from education to work (Brinton 2011).

In this chapter, I will first describe everyday work in the precure staffroom, my workplace at Toei Animation. I will then discuss how the conditions of overwork in the animation industry differ, both historically and socio-economically, from the type of work and life represented by culturally salient worker figures such as the salaryman in post-war Japanese society. In the following and concluding sections, I will link those observations to ongoing debates in anthropological studies around neoliberalism and the processes of subject formation.

Important topics that lie beyond the ethnographic and theoretical frame of this chapter include the discourses and embedded discussions of creativity in commercial animation production, and the specific visual and material practices which go into the actual visual production of animation on the production floor. I deal with both these topics in the next chapter. The decision to separate the discussion of the creative aspect of work in the animation industry itself comes from my ethnographic observation that ‘creativity’, as an abstract concept, was hardly mentioned in the everyday context of getting work done in the studios. Instead, when ‘creativity’ was invoked, it was always in specific material and visual references to the ongoing processes of production. By eschewing these topics, my aim in this chapter is to ethnographically explore the sense of heightened uncertainty and insecurity with which young animation makers navigate their lives in the social, cultural and economic context of contemporary Japan.

4.2 Precure staffroom

Toei Animation is located in Higashi Oizumi area of Nerima Ward on the western

fringe of metropolitan Tokyo. Although barely visible on the cityscape, these western areas of Tokyo, together with eastern cities in Saitama Prefecture, form a dense agglomeration of commercial animation production in Japan. Almost 90 per cent of the domestic production capacity is concentrated in this area, with an estimated three hundred production companies in operation. The majority of the production companies in the industry are small subcontracting specialist studios. By comparison, Toei Animation is almost disproportionately large. Its main studio is a three-sided, three-story concrete building with another three-story annex running outside the main building. To the best of my knowledge, no other animation studio in Japan hosts a physical studio of this size. The oldest wing of the three-sided building was built in 1956, and its completion marked the de-facto birth of the commercial animation industry in the country. It was on the first floor of this old concrete building where the production division for *Fresh Precure* project was located, and was referred to in the company as the ‘precure staffroom’.

With the *Precure* project arguably the most popular *anime* series for young girls in Japan, this nondescript building also functioned as one of the premier ‘dream factories’ for children across the country. This was the heart of the machine that generated annual sales of more than £80 million in the Japanese toy market. However, for the headquarters of a year long production of this calibre, which employed a formidable assemblage of tens of domestic subcontractors, several partner companies, some overseas outsourcing destinations, and another several hundred



Figure 4.1 Precure Staffroom, photo taken by the author

individuals, the precure staffroom appeared rather small and almost disproportionately contained (Figure 4.1). The staffroom only hosted three production operators, the production manager, two assistant directors, the head director and several other directors who worked for the head director. In many ways, this was a plain reminder that much of the labour intensive process of visual production took place outside headquarters, testifying to the tight web of subcontracting and production outsourcing that makes up commercial animation production in Japan today.

On my way to the precure staffroom in the mornings, I would often find a white-haired middle-aged man sleeping on the couch in the communal smoking

space on the first floor. Sometimes, when I walked into the precure staffroom, Kagami-san, a female assistant director in her early twenties from Hokkaido, would be asleep at her desk in the unlit staffroom. On sunny days, the sunshine would pour into the corridors through the windows. My day would usually begin by cleaning up the entire staffroom before – ideally – anyone turned up.

The day for a production operator was often long. On normal days, I would arrive at 9:00 and work nearly non-stop until 20:00 or 21:00. There were two breaks during the official work hours of the company (9:00 – 17:45), the first at lunchtime (12:30 – 13:30) and the second in the mid-afternoon (15:45 – 16:00). However, operators and young assistant directors in the precure production division tended to finish lunch as quickly as they could (at times in a matter of minutes) and virtually no one took the mid-afternoon break. It was normal to forgo lunch altogether during busy days, and I myself gave up many lunches in the face of the inundation of work on my desk. As it later turned out, the regular work hours I experienced in the precure staffroom were exceptional compared to the ‘typical’ industry work routine elsewhere, where people would more likely turn up sometime past noon and remain at work until two, three, or four in the morning.

People in the studio often referred to the production process as *nagare*, meaning a stream which shall never be stopped until the production reaches delivery. The tropic inference of ‘stream’ was apposite, for frequently I felt as though I was struggling against a current which I had no power to control. As a ‘production operator’ I was expected to let the production flow seamlessly, but having been thrown into the work without training or understanding, I had almost no clue as to what I was expected to do. This sometimes caused other people in the studio to lose their tempers with me. By being confused myself I was confusing others, and worse, I was preventing their work from getting done and clogging the flow of production.

Among the first people who turned up in the morning was Nakatani-san, a male assistant director in his early twenties from Saitama. Nakatani-san started at Toei Animation in April 2009 in the same year group as Tanabe-san. Before starting here he studied animation at Toei Animation Institute, which was owned and operated by Toei and located across the street from the company. As a *shinjin* (new employee) assistant director, Nakatani-san had a strong work ethic combined with a quiet but committed personality. After his arrival in the morning he would hardly leave his desk for more than half an hour, and worked well into the night, often past midnight. Though he was still only into his sixth month working for the company when we met in October 2009, Nakatani-san already seemed to have gained respect in the staffroom for his talent and dedication to hard work. Soon, his seemingly unfaltering efforts and perseverance came to impress me deeply. Towards the end of my internship, I finally brought myself to ask Nakatani-san directly how he could possibly endure working as he did. ‘Now, it’s just that – I am a *shinjin* (new employee), you know?’ he said. ‘I definitely don’t want to carry on like this for ever (*zutto konnano ha yada*).’

At times compared negatively with Nakatani-san was Kagami-san (female, early twenties), an assistant director in the precure staffroom. Kagami-san was in her third year at Toei and one of three women working in the staffroom. She was also the assistant director for episode 50, and as such we – Tanabe-san, Kagami-san and I – worked closely on a day-to-day basis in the production of the final episode of *Fresh Precure*. To my eye, Kagami-san, too, seemed to be a very hard working person. She remained in the staffroom regularly well past midnight and sometimes also overnight, even though the practice of working without sleep in busy times is by no means extraordinary in the animation industry. As I noted above, I often found Kagami-san at her desk in the morning, exhausted and sleeping, appearing to have

passed out from pulling an all-nighter. She sometimes left a Post-It note on her iMac before she went home to take a quick bath, only to come back later to resume work in the late evening. One of more memorable notes she left said: *‘Temporarily Gone Home For a Bath. Please ring me if not back in an hour for that means I will have have passed out in the bath.’*

No one, therefore, questioned the fact that she worked long hours. The problem for some, however, was Kagami-san’s perceived lack of ‘speed’. I noted earlier that the production process was often conceptualised as a flow, *nagare*. The primary responsibility of production operators is to keep this flow going and never to let it stop before the production reaches delivery. To a significant extent, this held true for other creative personnel in the production. *Te ga hayai*, ‘having a fast hand’, was a widely used compliment across the industry to praise the skill of animators and the directors. The notion of speed merged with the concept of skill, and this was particularly conspicuous in the discussion of animators by operators. One very senior executive at Toei once went so far as to say he had never come across a truly talented animator who was also a slow drawer. Although the association of speed with skill was not as prominent in the understanding of directorial prowess, ‘slowness’ was never appreciated for directors, even though more time spent often equated better quality of animation. Time, alongside talent and budget, was considered one of the most scarce production resources. A ‘slow’ worker tended to clog up the flow of production by letting cuts to pile up on their desk. This was exactly what happened with Kagami-san in the production of episode 50. Having a slow hand and letting work pile up on my desk, despite my best efforts, was usually how I also induced great frustration in Tanabe-san, my supervisor.

Most people in the precure staffroom lived within the walking distance of the company. The practice was particularly common among production operators

employed by Toei, and young animators and assistant directors who had exclusive working contracts with the studio. Although timetables are more generous in Tokyo than in other cities of Japan, public transport does stop some time after midnight. Living in the vicinity of the company was, therefore, virtually necessary if one wished to go home after work, however late or early in the morning. Tales of overwork abounded. Zako-san (male, early thirties), the director, somewhat fondly recollected how he could not go home to sleep for about a third of a year when he was still an assistant director. 'When I started working here, I rented an apartment a couple of train stations away from the studio. I thought, you know, it would be nice to keep some distance from the company. Well, a big mistake. Each year, from November till February or March, work became so much that I could not wrap up in time for the last train.'

The weekends – Saturday and Sunday – were officially marked as off-days on the company calendar and so the production schedule. In practice, however, everyone turned up on Saturdays, and those with tight schedules also worked on Sundays. National holidays were virtually no holidays at all. In December 2009, for instance, everyone in the pre-cure staffroom worked straight through Christmas. At the risk of generalising, it is safe to note that production operators across the industry carve out an average of about 12 hours a day, which extends up to 18 hours at the busiest times. During such periods, according to one operator, 'you don't go to sleep; you just pass out.' Pernicious lack of sleep often led to car accidents, of which horror stories circulated amongst the operators in the industry.

The work hours of animators and directors varied greatly, for their workload was contingent upon their reputations in their personal business network(s) as freelancers. However, for those with a regular flow of work, the weekly hours likely rivalled or temporarily exceeded those of operators. Faced with

imminent production deadlines it was common for creative personnel to work through their waking hours for days at a time. The employment situations were said to be more tumultuous for animators and directors, for they were not salaried employees and their incomes were based on unit price pay (*tanka-sei*). Thus their work hours did not have a direct correlation with their income.

Across the management–creative divide, then, the overall picture was one in which the experience of poverty and struggle was distributed and shared more or less equally, especially among young workers (see Chapter 1 Note 7 for statistics). In moments of self-reflection, many production operators often referred to jobs outside the animation industry as ‘normal work’ (*hutsu no shigoto*), and companies outside the animation business as ‘normal companies’ (*hutsu no kaisha*), expressing their desire to work more like a ‘normal person’ (*hutsu no hito*).¹

4.3 Imagining work and the future in Japan

Tales of overwork, however, are not in themselves novel findings in the research context of Japan. To the contrary, they land on well-trodden ground and verge in fact on cliché. One such trope of excessive work, which Tanabe-san alluded to earlier, is the stereotype of the overworked corporate male worker called the ‘salaryman’ in the literature (e.g. Allison 1994). Following the lead of my informants who described their work as *outside* the domain of ‘normal’ work, in this section I briefly turn to discuss ways in which this once dominant worker figure in postwar Japan intersected with the ways in which my informants in the animation industry situated their relationship to animation making.

In various iterations of the contemporary stereotype, a salaryman today is someone who ‘must commute vast distances from his cramped family apartment to

the same boring workplace everyday' (Gill 2001: 156), noted for 'their sacrifice of themselves to the organizations they work for' (Matthews 2003: 111), and as middle-class university graduates, 'display qualities of loyalty, diligence, dedication' (Dasgupta 2007: 279) to work at all costs. The extent to which this personified cultural idiom and representation of (excessive) work has penetrated Japanese popular parlance is such that even though 'salaryman' initially referred to a limited segment of elite corporate employees (and technically still does), the term now has 'wider applications, including non-private sector and non-white-collar employees' (Dasgupta 2007: 274). In this more expansive application of the term, the salaryman may be taken as a figural presence who stands in for another socio-culturally salient trope of the 'mainstream' (*churyu*) (c.f. Condry 2006: 97; Gill 2001: 147; Roberts 2005: 108) in Japanese society.

One thing that may be pointed to here is the shifting relation between work, aspiration and individual fulfilment in Japanese public discourse about the salaryman and other representations of work today (Matthews 2003, 2007). According to Ezra Vogel's classic ethnography (1963), the salaryman came to represent the 'bright new life' (Vogel 1963: 9; c.f. Roberson and Suzuki 2003: 1) in the era of high economic growth by championing the socio-economic security, stability and regularity of lifetime employment in large corporate organisations (see also Rohlen 1974). From the early 1960s to the late 1980s, the image of the well-educated and self-sacrificial male corporate worker crystallised into the 'ideologies of nation, class and sexuality in Japan' (Roberson and Suzuki 2003: 5). This ideologically charged model of the sacrificial corporate worker gradually fused into essentialistic nationalist discourses about Japan's cultural uniqueness, where it served as a rationale for the nation's economic success throughout the 1980s² (c.f. Goodman 2005; Hamada 2005; Robertson 2005).

Following the long recession, domestic financial crisis and series of structural reforms (*kozo kaikaku*) in the 1990s and the 2000s, however, the strong normativity and domination of the salaryman model in the social imaginaries of labour came under increasing scrutiny within Japanese society (Matthews 2003, 2007; Roberts 2005). One place such questioning and contestation of the dominant model was produced and consumed over the past two decades was in popular visual culture, such as comics and television, where continuous parodies and caricatures of the salaryman continue to be elaborated today³ (Gill 2007: 314; Roberson and Suzuki 2003:7; c.f. Condry 2006: 2-3). Concomitant to this symbolic decline of the salaryman model were the often emotionally laden public debates regarding the gradual dissipation of ‘mainstream society’ (*churyu shakai*), where talk of the ‘winners’ and the ‘losers’ in the series of corporate restructuring (e.g. layoffs, stronger performance auditing (*seika shugi*) etc.) became rampant in the early 2000s (Roberts 2005: 120). In the face of the rising sense of general uncertainty (Gill 2001: 196), however, it could also be argued that the longing for stability and security intensified in the 21st century.

Thus, the discursive development regarding cultural expectations of work under the ongoing economic challenges faced in contemporary Japan has really followed two channels. On the one hand, politico-economic discourses that hail the neoliberal vision of ‘risk-taking and strong individuals’ began to dominate public debate on economic reforms in the early 2000s (Miyazaki 2010). On the other hand, the series of labour market deregulations implemented during the same period produced a large pool of underemployed workers whose vulnerability was made even more socially pernicious by a discourse which emphasised their individual responsibility in managing employment.⁴ The general decline in secure employment since the 1990s led to increasing numbers trapped in temporary work or

unemployment, and facing the structural difficulties in transitioning to more regular forms of employment (Brinton 2011; Komikawa 2010; Toivonen 2011).

As several scholars have pointed out, the segment of the population most severely affected by these structural and discursive changes in Japan since the 1990s has in fact been young people (Brinton 2011; Genda 2005; Honda and Hirai 2007; Takahara 2007). Between 1992 and 2007, the percentage of young workers in irregular employment increased from 18 per cent to 71.8 per cent for 15- to 19-year-olds, from 10 per cent to 43.2 per cent for 20- to 24-year-olds, and from 10 per cent to 28 per cent for 25- to 29-year-olds.⁵ In the meantime, after much national soul-searching, '[m]iddle-aged male workers [in regular employment] were largely protected while the youngest and oldest male workers, along with women, suffered the brunt of the negative impact' (Brinton 2011: 26).

Today, the predicament of these precariously employed or unemployed young workers forms a nexus of morally charged public debate in Japan regarding what socially and politically desirable forms of work and employment could and should be (c.f. Honda, Naito, Goto 2006). This development is an indication, I argue, that even though the cultural specificity and political significance of the salaryman model may have been crippled, the desire for social and economic security continues to hold contemporary relevance in Japanese society.

While the extensive casualisation of labour in the animation industry long preceded the recessionary economy in the 1990s (Chapter 3), given the complex social, economic, political and cultural textures that surround contemporary discourses of work, the attitude of animation makers to the salaryman model appeared fundamentally ambiguous. While many of my informants dissociated themselves from it, Tanabe-san (see above), amongst others, vaguely compared himself to the salaryman as a cultural model of work ethic when faced with what

appeared an absurd chain of tasks in the company recreational trip. When others expressed the desire to work more like a ‘normal person’, what they seemed to imply by ‘normal’ was an idealised figure of a corporate office worker who could work regular hours, take weekends off and had a secure long-term job contract.⁶

In the phenomenological and experiential dimension of the everyday, it was as if their work became their life and their life became their work. While many of these young workers came to the industry in one way or another to realise their dreams of becoming an animation maker, the severe working conditions and socio-economic precarity often contributed to a feeling that things did not add up quite so neatly on the production floor. What became so problematic for the young animation makers at such reflexive moments was therefore a general sense of anxiety about the desired future. This was a sense of disconnect that, no matter how hard they tried, the kind of the present in which they lived did not necessarily lead to the kind of the future for which they worked themselves out.

4.4 Dreams, disconnect and what you love

In thinking ethnographically about this temporal disconnect between the experienced present and the envisioned future in the domains of contemporary work and labour, two popular Japanese phrases come to my mind. Often invoked and cited by many on the production floor, those expressions are *yume* and *suki na koto*. *Yume* in Japanese means ‘dream’, and as in the English counterpart, it is used to refer both to a mental phenomenon during sleep and a long-term career objective in life. *Suki na koto* is a phrase, and in literal translation means ‘things you like’, or ‘what you love’.

The two expressions address aspirations for the future through the idioms

of *potential* work and employment. In the everyday use of these phrases, both *yume* and *suki na koto* connote the ephemeral and unattainable. *Yume* retains its meaning of dream during sleep and comes with strong connotations of temporality, unreasonableness and fantasticality; *suki na koto* pertains to non-committal inspiration and implies a flamboyant separation from the expectations and obligations of the everyday. *Suki na koto wo suru*, ‘to do what you love’, is thus often understood as escapism from the real world by engaging with non-consequential and fantastical hobbies and non-monetary productivity. To pursue one’s dream, *yume wo ou*, is likewise often considered a sign of spectacular immaturity and, in extreme cases, an idiosyncratic act of symbolic economic suicide.

The associations with liminality and fantasy these two expressions vividly invoke are thus socially linked with the characteristics of youth. Pupils in elementary schools are actively encouraged to have dreams and find things they like doing. Many, however, are forced to abandon childish illusions of becoming a footballer, a pop singer or a prime minister as they graduate high school or enter university and gradually learn the hard lessons of life. The social and discursive significance of these notions in the domains of contemporary labour were brought home to me by two very different categories of people in Tokyo during my fieldwork. The first person was an estate agent who helped me find an apartment in Koenji area of Suginami-Ward in the summer of 2009, where I was to live for the duration of my fieldwork. In the course of our casual conversation I mentioned I was a doctoral student in anthropology and about to conduct fieldwork in the animation industry for the coming year. I hastened to add that I was afraid I might be trashing my life doing this, for the employment prospects for new anthropology PhDs in academic departments anywhere in the world currently appeared discouraging to say the least. In the act of expected politeness, he countered my performed humility

with the following words: ‘but you must be happy doing what you love (*suki na koto dekiru no ha shiawase*).’

I clearly remember that phrase, *suki na koto dekiru no ha shiawase*, for almost the same words were uttered to me by Tanabe-san at Toei Animation later in the autumn of the same year. I was still in the second week of my internship in the precure staffroom, but my share of everyday work was already getting harder and harder. That night as I was getting ready to leave, Tanabe-san walked over to my desk and told me to arrive at 9:00 in the morning from the next day on. Up to that point, I was only required to come sometime past 10:00, for – in the words of one senior executive who arranged my internship – no one would be around before 11:00 in the studio space. It was demanded I arrive by the start of company’s official work hours, however, because my pace of work was so slow that I was clogging up the flow of production. I must have looked particularly dishevelled and miserable at this suggestion. Tanabe-san was, however, determined, and added the following statement to close the conversation.

‘You see, this is something you came here to ask for. At the end of the day you must be happy doing what you love (*suki na koto yatteru n dakara shiawase dayo*).’

You must be happy doing what you love. What Tanabe-san referred to as my *suki na koto* in that context, of course, was the doctoral study in anthropology and the ethnographic fieldwork on animation production. This, conversely, was also the logic given to me over and over by many people as to why they remained in the animation industry despite its adverse conditions. ‘People talk and write about how terrible things are in this industry,’ one episode director (male, late-thirties) once wanted to clarify: ‘But, you see, we are all here because we want to do what we do. I want you

to understand – so far as that is concerned, we are not used like slaves.’

‘You talk of temporary workers and social problems,’ another production operator said to me, a little irritated. ‘That’s not the point at all. I would appreciate if my salary went up even by a little, but that’s not the point either. I have my dream (*yume ga aru kara*), and I work for that, even if sometimes the work becomes a bit too much.’ As one middle-management personnel of the same company put it, laughing but with a discernible sense of pride: ‘no one comes to this industry to make money!’

What gradually emerged through such statements were salient contemporary discourses of ‘self-responsibility’ (*jiko-sekinin*) within Japan (Komikawa 2010; Koschiman 2007; Miyazaki 2010; Shintani 2010) and ideas about the moral entrepreneurship of the self more globally (Rofel 2007; Rose 1999; Salomonsson 2005; Urciuoli 2008, 2010). Because one knowingly chose to work in the animation industry to pursue one’s dreams, one has responsibility to the choice made. To take up one’s *suki na koto* (what you love) as one’s vocation is to expose one’s life to the whimsical instability of life. But one has chosen to take the risk: this being the case, one has to be more responsible and a lot stronger, and there is no one else to blame but oneself should the endeavour begin to falter.

While such motivation and rationalisation seem a typical instantiation of neoliberal ideologies and neoliberal subject formation, my intention is to argue against such a straightforward interpretation. But before bringing to a conclusion this discussion of dreams and responsibility in relation to subjectivity and work in the animation industry, I would like to go back for the last time to the story of Tanabe-san, who was a pivotal presence during my fieldwork at Toei Animation. Tanabe-san was my assigned supervisor, strict *senpai*, erratic boss, responsible colleague, and as we worked through to finally produce one animation episode of

Fresh Precure, he became – dare I say – above all a friend.

It was a cold winter evening in December as we walked to the company canteen for free meals leftover from lunch, when Tanabe-san started talking almost to himself: ‘Dude, I’m just fed up with this work. Aren’t there easier ones somewhere else? Look, there is a security guard in his security hut. That one looks easy enough....’ By the time I arrived at Toei Animation, Tanabe-san was 26 year old and had just entered the company the past April as a *shinjin*, new employee. In a country where the transition from education to full employment is immediate and en-masse due to the historical formation of labour market structure, twenty-six was an unusually late age for a new graduate to join a company.

Tanabe-san was born and grew up in Niigata Prefecture in the coastal area of northern Japan. The region is known for rice cultivation, heavy winter snowfall, and more recently also for the controversy surrounding Tokyo Electric Power Company’s nuclear plants which were severely damaged in the wake of the 2007 regional earthquake. Tanabe-san once said that the equality of educational opportunity is a white lie in Japan, and in order to stand a decent chance in university entrance examination he had to go some distance to a high school in a nearby city. He left Niigata for Tokyo to attend a private university, and told me that he hadn’t been home for a few years now. ‘It’s just such a hassle to go back,’ he once said. Having studied oceanography at university, he initially became a high school biology teacher, which often provided fodder for jokes for his same-year colleagues at Toei. Tanabe-san soon decided teaching was not what he wanted to spend the rest of his life doing. Having quit the job he went back into education, this time to a private specialist college for animation production. ‘Before I went to university, I made this promise with my parents,’ Tanabe-san told me. ‘I would attend university and gain a

degree as they insisted. But after that, we agreed that I would be free to do things I liked (*suki na koto*).’ What he aspired to do was film: not to act in, but to produce. The aspiration remained with him through all his first years at university, and became even stronger once he landed a teaching job at a high school.

I gathered that he taught only for a several months at the high school. In looking back, Tanabe-san told me that the weight of responsibility he felt in the everyday handling of the job was quite overwhelming. ‘You know, there were thirty or forty students in the classroom, and I was meant to be the one responsible for their education and life beyond. You [referring to me] say this work [production operator] is overwhelming, but really it’s just handling a few hundreds animation cuts [bundles of paper drawings] – the pressure simply can’t compare with teaching and being responsible for actual people.’ In fact, this was a point Tanabe-san liked to make again and again whenever he thought my morale was going down in face of the overwhelming flow of work. He noted the fact that I was registered in a doctoral programme, and repeated how I too would start teaching one day at a university. ‘Then the weight of responsibility you’ll have to shoulder is just incomparable with what you are doing now. Think about it.’ I had entered the precure staffroom as a doctoral researcher in anthropology, but for Tanabe-san, I was first and foremost a student internee. As such, I was someone in need of proper supervision, not only for everyday work at Toei but also on a more general level as someone in a transitory time-space between education and work.

In popular Japanese parlance, the phrase *shakai ni deru* (to enter society) is used to refer to those youth who enter the labour market after school, which marks a transition in life course towards social adulthood (Brinton 2011). The word *shakaijin*, meaning a ‘social person’, is widely used to designate socially responsible personhood, and is coterminous with the status of full-time employment as that

which enables the new graduates to produce values in society and economy (Dasgupta 2007: 275). In the popular making of *shakaijin*, *shigoto* (work) thus assumes a paramount position, in the sense that ‘...the language and imagery of labour have become part and parcel of what makes a person today...’ (Cosrin Jimenez 2003: 14). The moral realm of work is thus characterised by idioms of responsibility and socially desirable forms of personhood (Kondo 1990), which are to be distinguished from the realm of education, which is illuminated by the liminal and fantastical idioms of untenable dreams and aspirations. *Shakaijin* is one who works, not the one who dreams.

However, in real life no boundaries are so rigid and clear-cut. Even though the domains of education and work are institutionally demarcated, the boundary between dream/aspirations and responsibility is much less stark and many pursue work that simultaneously fulfils their dreams. The socially salient tropic association between doing *suki na koto* as work and happiness is a prime manifestation of such formation, as we have seen above (c.f. Abe 2006). In any case, as we have seen, the socio-political and economic significance of work in contemporary Japan – and perhaps elsewhere in liberal capitalist democracies (e.g. Arendt 1998; Bauman 2005; Beck 2000) – is densely loaded with critical multiplicity and potentially conflicting meanings. The anthropological mission then is not to stabilise its semantics but to ethnographically document the complexity as it is.

The complexity of work, life and their lived expectations is richly evident in Tanabe-san’s tales of how he ended up as a production operator at Toei Animation. Having quit teaching, Tanabe-san went to see his former supervisor in oceanography at his alma mater. ‘I went to discuss my dream of film-making with my teacher,’ he said. ‘But there, he told me if I were to make films in Japan, *then I should turn to animation rather than live-action*. I thought about it well and entered a specialist

college for animation making instead of live-action.’ This decision, however, was to produce a deep tension in him. For, although he chose animation to fulfil his life’s passion to produce film, he loathed the ideas of ‘anime’ and especially its association with the subcultural identity popularly known as *otaku*.

At the risk of simplification, *otaku* is a negative social and (male) stereotype that became pervasive since the late 1980s after the serial murder of little girls was found to be committed by a 26-year-old man obsessed with (pornographic) manga and anime. The term is associated with ideas of social exclusion, arrested development and pathological sexuality, and used generally for asocial male consumers of manga and anime (Condry 2006: 113; Kinsella 2000: 128-138). The development of the term since the mid-1990s to the late 2000s has been such that the *otaku* identity today is not necessarily invoked negatively, especially when discussed in relation with anime’s popularity in Euro-America (Toivonen and Imoto 2011:13-15). However, the undesirable connotation remains, and Tanabe-san was discouraged by animation’s association with it.

Tanabe-san’s all time favourite film was the 1996 Hollywood blockbuster *The Rock*, and its director Michael Bay was someone he aspired as a role model. From time to time, Tanabe-san often said that what he actually wanted to do was Hollywood-style blockbuster entertainment; animation production fell short of his expectations in many ways. By virtue of having chosen anime as my research topic, and studying in the UK, Tanabe-san often joked I was a Japanese representative of *otaku* there. ‘You see, those anime that you and others say are really good, I actually completely fail to see their points. I can’t tell what’s so good about them,’ he once confided, during one of many drives to a subcontracting animation studio to deliver and collect cuts. ‘I actually don’t find this work inspiring at all....’ The negative comments about animation production and work Tanabe-san sometimes made while

in a more reflective and personal mode of communication were in marked contrast to his committed attitude to work and responsibility when he was trying to teach me a lesson as a failing internee.

Here, rather than seeing this as expressive of a problematic contradiction within Tanabe-san, I take his comments about work ethnographically as they are. That is, to accept at the outset that he was equally and simultaneously animated and disillusioned by work and the pursuit of a career in animation production, and take this as my analytical starting point. Even though this is a clear contradiction in terms of formal logic, I argue that, intuitively speaking, it makes a lot more sense that he was ambivalent about the life choice he made between the stability of a teaching career and his aspirations of film-making, especially when animation was not at all what he set out to do. Nonetheless, he was among the most committed personnel in the precure staffroom to the production of *Fresh Precure*, and took real pride in doing his job responsibly and delivering animation to the awaiting children. His motivations were however coexistent with his anxiety and general uncertainty about the future. ‘What do *you* think a production operator can become?’ Tanabe-san once asked me, letting his worries show about the limitation of prospects in the animation industry and of his life in general. In so doing, one thing is certain that he did not expect the answer to come from the novice ethnographer.

4.5 Embracing neoliberalism?

As I mentioned in the opening section of this chapter, *Fresh Precure* chronicled a story of four middle school girls who transformed into battling super heroines called ‘precure’. The evil force they confront hails from a parallel world called *Labyrinth*, who wants to put the world under their totalising domination. Precures thus fight to

confront *Labyrinth*, standing for the vision of happiness based on freedom, true feelings, and doing things one truly loves doing (for these four girls, this is dance). ‘Let’s get happy together!’ precures proclaim, and the fifty episodes later, the evil is defeated and a happy ending befalls everyone in the show.

Is it ironic that the anime for children that questioned the true meaning of happiness in life – though in a simplified evil-versus-good kind of way – was produced by grown men and women, the majority of whom lived in pernicious forms of social and economic precarity? Beyond the production team of *Fresh Precure*, and across the production companies I did fieldwork with, people dropped time to time that the Japanese animation industry was ‘built upon everyone’s goodwill’ (*minna no koi de naritatte iru*). People contributed their labour because it was how they wanted to live, but the industry, as one middle level manager cynically flipped it around, ‘devoured the goodwill of the people’ (*minna no koi wo musabori kuu*).

Today, the trope of dreams, what one *wants* to do, and the responsibility that stems from such a desire, have become an influential social discourse of labour in Japan and for the younger generation in particular⁷ (Abe 2006; Katase 2010; Matthews 2003, 2007; Miyazaki 2006, 2010). The language of dreams and self-realisation, in turn, constitutes an important dimension of the emerging forms of subjectivity in ‘the culture of neoliberalism’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 304), which ‘produce[s] desire and expectation on a global scale... yet to decrease the certainty of work or the security of persons’ (ibid: 298). My point here, however, is that people in the animation industry fully saw the cynical and pernicious side of such ‘neoliberal’ discourses, and were also often painfully aware of their social and economic costs.

In this respect, the case of my Japanese animation makers is somewhat different from Peter Chan’s (2008) study of the faltering middle-class Mexicans, who

‘realign[ed] their work lives along neoliberal lines’ (ibid: 430) to turn the tide in the face of worsening socio-economic conditions under Mexico’s structural adjustment. Chan chronicles a story of a woman called Esperanza, who was compelled to seek employment after her husband was severely injured in a car accident, so as to keep up her family’s middle-class lifestyle and consumption patterns. Esperanza starts a small business as a ‘multilevel marketer’ who buys nutritional supplements wholesale from the health product multinational called Omnilife and individually retails them through her personal sales network (ibid: 429-430). What attracted Esperanza to this entrepreneurial relationship was not only the vision of wealth that the multinational’s PR division promised, but also that ‘its rhetoric of entrepreneurship and decentralisation resonated strongly with the logic of the neoliberal solutions the country [Mexico] pursued’ (ibid: 430). What follows is a rich ethnographic accounting of ‘how completely Esperanza had internalized the tenets of neoliberalism’ (ibid), so much so that when it became evident that Esperanza’s multilevel marketing was yielding more loss than gain, she asserted that “*This* [Omnilife multilevel marketing] doesn’t fail. *We* do.” (ibid: 438).

The conclusion Chan derives from these observations is of differential responses to neoliberal change along class lines. While anthropologists working on Latin America have rightly focused on the zones of resistance and ongoing struggle against the neoliberal practices amongst the ‘popular classes’ (ibid: 441), Chan argues, the middle-class citizens such as Esperanza ‘view the ascendancy of the market as an opportunity.’ Rather than opposing neoliberalisation as merely renewed rhetoric and practices of ongoing exploitation, the strategy of million other middle-class Mexicans like Esperanza ‘has been to *embrace* neoliberal reforms’ (Chan 2008: 446, emphasis added).

The idea that differentially positioned subjects in a given political economy

react differently to the policies of deregulation, withdrawal of welfare, marketisation of health and education, among others, is well documented in Hirokazu Miyazaki's ethnography of Japanese financial traders (2006). Miyazaki chronicles a story of a Japanese security trader called Tada, who, having deeply absorbed the neoliberal language of strong individuals and self-responsibility in Japan, struggles to re-articulate his relationship to work and capitalism along those lines in a series of frustrating life experiments (c.f. Chapter 1). Among Miyazaki's objectives in exploring Tada's relationship to neoliberal reforms in Japan is thus 'to investigate how certain economic concepts and neoliberal ideas may serve as sources of hope...' (2006: 151). Although this is to take the liberty of interpretation, as Miyazaki himself does not address class explicitly in his paper, the (upper) middle-class positionality of Tada is evident from the fact that he can see the neoliberal realignment itself as a source of (economic) hope, coupled with his high annual income (ibid: 151, 153) and educational pedigree (ibid: 154). The differential positionality of Miyazaki's financial traders to the neoliberal discourses of individual responsibility and realisation thus compares contrastively to my case of young animation makers and their condition of soul-searching precarity.

By briefly discussing the analytics of 'class', my objective here is not to explicitly explore the disguised dimension of class inequality in the language of individual realisation and other neoliberal policies (c.f. Harvey 2005; also Brinton 2011). Rather, with the juxtaposition of arbitrary subject positions like Mexican entrepreneurs, Japanese financial traders and animation makers, I want to draw attention to the commonality across those cases regarding the relationship(s) between work and its expected fulfilments in the neoliberal political economy. I contend that the three life stories all converge on one reference point: a subtle – or blatant – sense of disconnect between the social realities in which they live and the

future expectations towards which neoliberal discourses oriented them. Esperanza's (Chan 2008) will to keep up her middle-class lifestyle, Tada's (Miyazaki 2006) hope to emerge as a stronger and more meaningful individual, and Tanabe-san's struggle to keep up with his own dreams, all point to the ethnographic presence of this kind of experiential disconnect.

The point has, in turn, been noted and elaborated by anthropologists working across a variety of ethnographic circumstances affected by global neoliberal discourses and transformation (e.g. Jeffrey 2010; Mains 2007; Rofel 2007), that while exciting and invigorating deep motivational desires toward a different kind of future, these neoliberal conditions have simultaneously 'constrained the possibility of realizing these aspirations' (Mains 2007: 663). Taking this to be a common symptom, and provided that '[t]he current moment has been referred to as a 'neoliberal world order' (ibid: 670), why would anyone 'accept neoliberalism as the ruling order?' (Rofel 2007: 20). Attempts to make sense of this paradoxical condition of neoliberal capitalism have been numerous in contemporary social theory, and many scholars have paid critical attention to the vast processes of contemporary governance which create a subjectivity that willingly embraces such a condition (c.f. Rofel 2007: 17).

Michel Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' (1984: 225) has been particularly influential in shaping contemporary theories regarding the processes of subject formation under (neo)liberal capitalist democracy (Ellison 2009: 83; Richard and Rudnycky 2009: 58-59). Foucault (1984: 225) defines governmentality as a site of 'encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those [technologies] of the self', in which a subject is not to be understood as a fixed substance. Rather, '[i]t is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself' (ibid: 290). The modern operation of power becomes conterminous with the production of subjectivity that accepts it. Contemporary governmentality scholars

such as Nikolas Rose (1999; also Rose and Miller 2008) draw on this critical Foucaultian insight to articulate the terms under which contemporary Western European societies are governed. In their words, ‘our own ideas of the human subject as individuated, choosing, with capacities of self-reflection and a striving for autonomy, is a result of practices of subjectification’ (Rose and Miller 2008: 8), and ‘the birth of a new ethic of the active, choosing, responsible, autonomous individual’ (ibid: 18) was central to the constitution of neoliberal – what they call ‘advanced liberal’ – governmentality.⁸ At the risk of gross simplification, they argue citizens willingly let themselves be governed without experiencing the governance as coercion on freedom (c.f. Rose 1999).

While these accounts of neoliberal governance and subject formation are compelling, they are also universalistic, and one is led to wonder if the governmentality theory of neoliberalism actually reflects the diverse ethnographic realities in which people negotiate the ‘birth of a new ethic’. It is precisely against this type of grand narratives of neoliberalisation, whose main tenets are derived from observations from Western Europe or the United States, that anthropologists have recently come to sustained ethnographic critiques (Ellison 2009; Kipnis 2007, 2008; Mains 2007; Mole 2008, 2010; Rofel 2007; Shever 2008). While in agreement about the importance of developing a substantial critique of neoliberal/global capitalism in anthropology, those scholars nonetheless argue, in various ways, that ethnographic complexities and nuanced actualities must take precedence over theoretical commitments. This is because ‘the picture of liberalization and deregulation is much more nuanced and complicated than might appear at first glance’ (Richland 2009: 172).

With this ethnographic commitment, anthropologists who challenge the grand narratives of neoliberalism have looked at and examined, among others, the

reinvigorated significance of kin relations in processes of assumed individualisation in Ethiopia and Argentina (Ellison 2009; Shever 2008); dimensions of desire, emotion and affect in calling forth economic change in Mexico, Indonesia, Italy and the United States (Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009; Yanagisako 2002; Zaloom 2004, 2009); the ongoing penetration of nationalism in a presumably global neoliberal discourse in China (Rofel 2007: esp. 1-30); and the inchoate and incomplete processes of the neoliberal projects themselves in China and Italy (Kipnis 2007, 2008; Mole 2010). In the meantime, Karen Ho (2005, 2009), who studies investment banking in Wall Street, cautions against giving too much credit to ‘capitalism’s omnipotence’ (Ho 2005: 68) in shaping the contemporary world. ‘In the rush to confront and depict the powerful impact of Western global hegemony,’ she writes (ibid), ‘they [social and cultural theorists] have often neglected the power-laden political effects of their own representations of this hegemony.’ This means, first and foremost, anthropologists should always start from ‘what people say, what they do, and how the two things relate to *each other*’ (Kipnis 2008: 284, emphasis added), and not, a priori, how neoliberalism today mediates this relationship.

4.6 Conclusion

Based on my ethnography of the Japanese animation industry, the issue with the theories of neoliberal subject formation I engage with here is the critical emphasis placed on the notion of ‘wilfulness’ of subjects to participate in such processes. In looking at the heterogeneous processes of subject formation, the grand theories of neoliberalism such as ‘governmentality’, I argue, tend to overemphasise the desire and active willingness of the affected subjects to commit to unstable neoliberal conditions. In doing so, they tend to conceive of the processes of subjectification only

in terms of the active and explicit desires of becoming. While such desires no doubt occupy the constitutive dimension of subjectification, this leaves out the wider processes of self-doubt, disaffection and disillusionment from the focus of theorisation. Yet, these may be even more salient features of the experiences and formations of subjectivities in the neoliberal economy today (e.g. Jeffrey 2010; Mains 2007).

Going back to the life story of Tanabe-san, an issue I want to tackle here is, therefore, how the disconnect between his experienced present and desired future nonetheless appeared to motivate him to *just hang on*. Tanabe-san may have been disillusioned in doing what he thought he loved doing, but he still believed in the importance of doing it, even though he – and many others like him – could see the exploitative precarity of the animation industry and the language of self-realisation. But far from achieving a sense of a stronger ‘neoliberal’ self, I argue, their sense of themselves was made much more ambiguous and problematic precisely because of their commitments and the discourses that sanctified such desires. In this, ‘the industry devouring the goodwill of people’ was a clear allegory of the harmful political economy, and pointed to the awareness of wider structural problems produced by the social aesthetics of dreams and discourses of self-realisation in the social and economic context of commercial animation production in Japan. Such a nuanced contingency cannot be simply attributed to an either-or of willing or unwilling, autonomous or coerced, hopeful or disillusioned, desiring or cynical subjectivities.

Earlier, I noted my analytical reluctance to read my informants’ remarks about dreams, animation making, and their acceptance of precarity in terms of the straightforward manifestation of the ongoing neoliberalisation of Japanese society (e.g. Borovoy 2010). Now I believe I am in a better position to give an account of it. I

certainly do not deny the discourses of work they identified exhibited features of neoliberal subject formation (c.f. Rofel 2007), but it is not the case that they endorsed these features as if they were puppets of the neoliberal change ongoing in Japan and elsewhere. In this respect, the Japanese society itself, I may go so far as to suggest, was at odds with the processes of neoliberalisation.

What my ethnography shows, instead, is that the circumstances of neoliberalisation are complex, ambiguous and disparate, rather than singular or uniform in a prefigured way. They affect different domains of society and economy differently in contemporary Japan.⁹ In the animation industry, the aesthetics and desire for what one loves doing (*suki na koto*) coexisted with a quiet longing for a more stable and secure lifestyle. While the former may be called a 'neoliberal' orientation to work and labour, the latter could be understood as an outlived cultural iteration of the image of 'salaryman' life course (c.f. Plath 1983). My informants clearly chose the life of the former, but this did not mean the latter figuration of life was irrelevant. It was not 'either or': both were important. Caught in the midst of such complexity, they worked their lives out on the production floor of animation, facing the disjointed visions of the future ahead.

Notes

¹ Even though this is not the line of analysis I pursue in my research, such location of normality *outside* one's subjective and immediate domain is interesting in itself for revisiting the old debate in the anthropology of Japan regarding the analytical utility of cultural notions like *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside) in conceptualising corporate practices (e.g. Nakane 1970; see Kondo 1990: 119-218 for its sustained critique).

² Successive waves of anthropological research have thus consistently demonstrated that the realm of white-collar work in large corporations occupies only a limited space in the lived world of work and social realities in Japan (Gill 2001; Kondo 1990; Roberson 1998; Roberts 1994; Roth 2002; Turner 1995). Whereas earlier studies (e.g. Abegglen 1958; Rohlen 1974; Vogel 1963) tended to overemphasise worker loyalty and overall stability based on so-called lifetime employment in Japan (Roberson 1998), later research shows such security and stability in the worker 'lifecourse' (c.f. Plath 1975; 1983; 1991) was never experienced by those employed in smaller enterprises (Gill 2007: 313; Roberts 2005: 120).

³ An example is the sphere of popular visual culture, such as '*manga* (comics) and television' (Gill 2007: 314; Roberson and Suzuki 2003:7; c.f. Condry 2006: 2-3). Animation, too, has often been a space for the production of salaryman caricature. For instance, Satoshi Kon's critically acclaimed Sci-Fi animation *Paprika* (2006), though primarily a film about the erosion of dreams into reality, depicts an iconic sequence in a nightmare world where a long line of middle aged salarymen jump off the tall office building screaming 'it's show time!'

⁴ One such deregulation, which led to spectacular consequences in recent years, was the 2004 revision of the Worker Dispatch Law, which allowed staffing agencies to dispatch

temporary workers to factory production lines across the manufacturing industry for the first time. As tens of thousands of such workers were laid off in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent production adjustments, a highly visible public protest was organised in Tokyo's central Hibiya Park. The rally was held to coincide with the end of the year holiday season (*nenmatsu nenshi*), and the image of laid-off workers who lacked not only jobs but also shelter as they entered the new year sparked public debates around the causes and locus of responsibility for such unemployment; see e.g. <http://www.nhk.or.jp/special/onair/090207.html>

⁵ *Seishōnen Hakusho 2007* (White Paper for Young People 2007).

⁶ Ironically, this was precisely how Vogel (1963: 9-10) described the emerging lifestyle of the new middle class in Tokyo represented by the 'salaryman' nearly four decades earlier:

'The young Japanese girl hopes to marry a salary man even if his salary were lower because his life is steady, he has leisure time, and she can be *free of the anxieties* and work connected with independent business.' (Emphasis added)

By 1990s, however, the stereotype of salaryman turned into something more fraught, of tired workaholics in large companies (Roberson and Suzuki 2003: 1).

⁷ Indeed, many critical developments in the study of labour in contemporary Japan have taken the form of youth studies (Asano 2010; Honda 2009; Inoue 2008; Komikawa 2010; Shintani 2010).

⁸ A different school of scholars reached similar conclusions by drawing not on Foucault but Max Weber. In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2005) expound on the need for analytical iteration of the Weberian concept of the 'spirit of capitalism', arguing for its relevance to better comprehend the contemporary conditions of advanced capitalism. They redefine the spirit of capitalism as that which 'in justifying and conferring a meaning on it, help[s] to elicit the good will of those on whom it is

based, and ensure their engagement' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 12). In this,

'The spirit of capitalism is precisely the set of beliefs associated with the capitalist order that helps to justify this order and, by legitimating them, to sustain the forms of action and predispositions compatible with it. These justification, whether general or practical, local or global, expressed in terms of virtue or justice, support the performance of more or less unpleasant tasks and, more generally, adhesion to a lifestyle conducive to the capitalist order.'

(ibid: 10)

⁹ As I show in Chapter 3, the deregulated internal labour market and casualised labour force in the Japanese animation industry have existed since at least the late 1960s due to its own particular economic factors and socio-technological organisation of production (c.f. Chapter 3). The precarity with which my informants lived was therefore not directly caused by the structural reforms in the late 1990s and the 2000s.

Chapter 5

Seeing through Numbers, or Auditing Creativity

5.1. Executive encounter of an ethnographic character

On the 5th of January 2010, I met the president of Toei Animation, Mr. Hiroshi Takahashi, in person for the first and the last time. After the brief New Year holiday between the 29th of December and the 3rd of January, the company officially resumed business on the 4th of January, and the annual company-wide New Year ceremony was organised on the following day. Although this event must have been advertised well in advance, I was not aware of it until the last moment, when someone from the General Affairs department called into the precure staffroom sometime before 10:00 am to remind us of the procedure. Some of us, including myself, were already in the middle of handling a dozen animation cuts, but almost everyone except one director stopped at once and hurried for the conference room located on the second floor. My first reaction to the call, nevertheless, was to get my work done; it was a sort of categorical imperative at Toei that no production operator (*seisaku shrinkō*) should let animation cuts pile up at his or her desk, and by January I had thoroughly internalised this implicit norm. On seeing me not moving from the desk, however, one of my *senpai* (senior colleague) called out to leave the work, for ‘that could be done later!’ This was how I realised the meeting was not just about casual New Year greetings.

When we arrived at the second floor, the conference room was properly set

up for the occasion. Most people were already seated on the meticulously arranged folding chairs, and they all faced the stage, where, to my surprise, Toei Animation's board of executives was lined up. It was the first time I actually saw all the members of the upper management at Toei Animation, many of whom usually worked in the company office located in the Shinjuku area of central Tokyo, which was more conveniently located to coordinate with large outside corporations such as publishers and TV broadcasters. Somewhat humbled, I hurried in quietly, and found myself seated in the last row furthest away from the stage, alongside other junior members of the precure production team. The New Year ceremony soon started with president Hiroshi Takahashi's opening speech.

Looking back, I cannot clearly recollect what exactly I had expected from the president's speech, but, as it turned out, it definitely centred on a rather unexpected set of issues, at least for an ethnographer accustomed to the everyday handling of practical work on the production floor. 'We have struggled continuously from the financial crisis in the post-Lehman world economy since 2008,' Mr. Takahashi said after a brief New Year greeting. 'The severity of the financial downturn certainly surrounded our [animation] industry too, and reflecting that, the company had to set a lot stricter budget for production throughout the year 2009.' During the 2009 fiscal year sales of Toei Animation had struggled to meet the set targets in each quarter so far, and Mr. Takahashi went on to point out how the company performance had suffered exactly five years ago, during the 2004 fiscal year. 'However, when this happened five years ago, you [addressing the company crowd] have really shown the extent of the company's strength, and in the four years that followed, Toei Animation has consistently achieved the annual turnover of 20 billion yen.'¹ The later focus of his speech, which went on for more than twenty minutes, was consistently on the critical importance of again achieving an annual

turnover of ¥20 billion in the current fiscal year, and how incredibly significant that would be for the company and all of ‘us’ for next years to come.

The speech certainly weaved a nuanced narrative across various parables, episodes and shared company history, but the central point of the president’s presentation was unequivocal: Toei Animation *must* earn more than ¥20 billion this year. What baffled me in the conference room that day, therefore, was how fixated the president – and the upper management behind him – seemed on the figure of 20 billion. My bafflement no doubt stemmed partly from naivety: in looking back, it makes sense that the upper management of a publicly traded company had an explicit concern with the company turnover. And yet, Toei Animation’s official PR line I had been familiar with up to that point seemed more or less singularly concerned with the audience of its commercial animation, namely ‘children’. Statements such as ‘for the sake of children’ or ‘providing for children’s dreams’ not only served a useful PR strategy, they were often repeated by the practitioners themselves on the production floor. Both managers and directors alike asserted that theirs was a work delivered for children. This, at least when the formal presentation of their worker selves was concerned, seemed a real source of pride for the animation makers at Toei. Mr. Takahashi’s address at the New Year ceremony, in contrast, exposed a completely different kind of audience in this picture: the shareholders of Toei stocks. Were the company’s annual turnover to sink below the ¥20 billion, what would the shareholders do to their shares?

When the vice presidential speech, which followed the president’s opening speech, finally ended, the ceremony proceeded to a more casual social gathering complemented with soft drinks and light snacks. Many employees went back to work, but some of the executives were still seen to hang around in the room, and it was then that Tanabe-san, my work supervisor, suddenly suggested that I walk over to

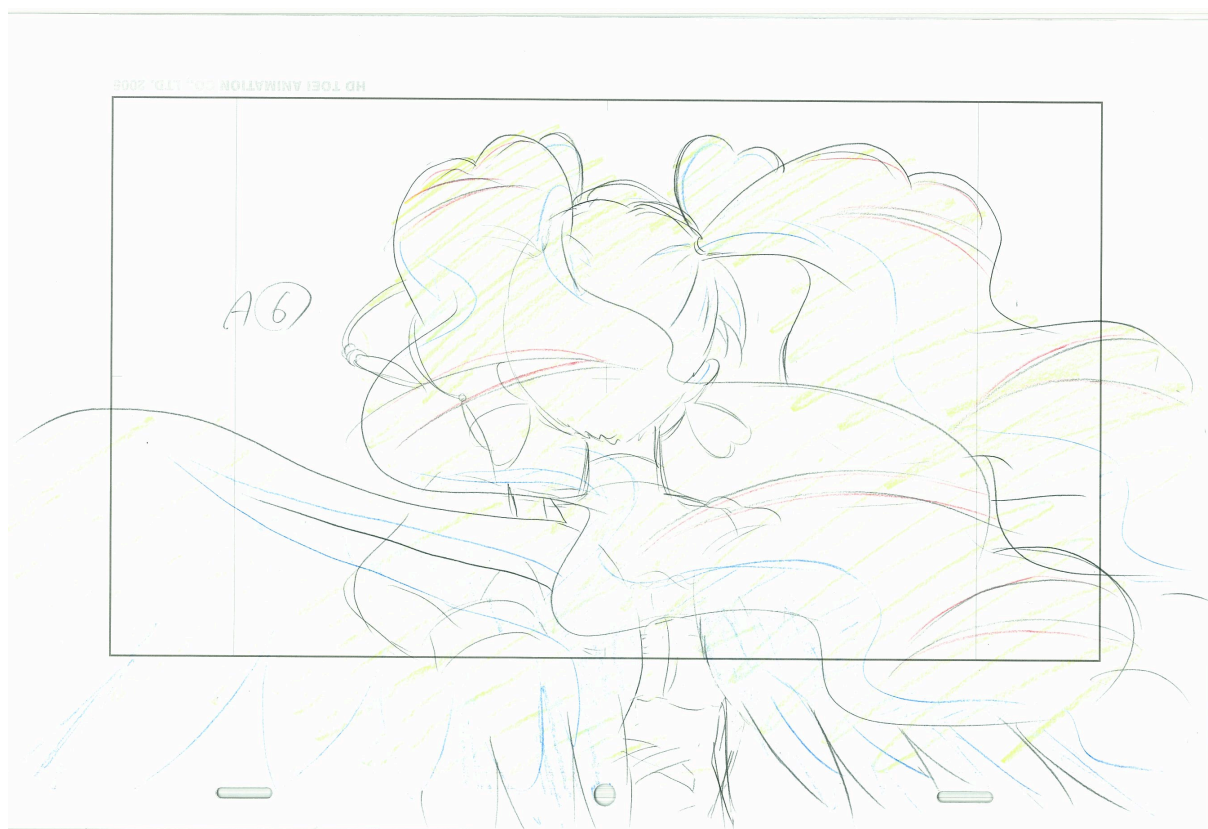
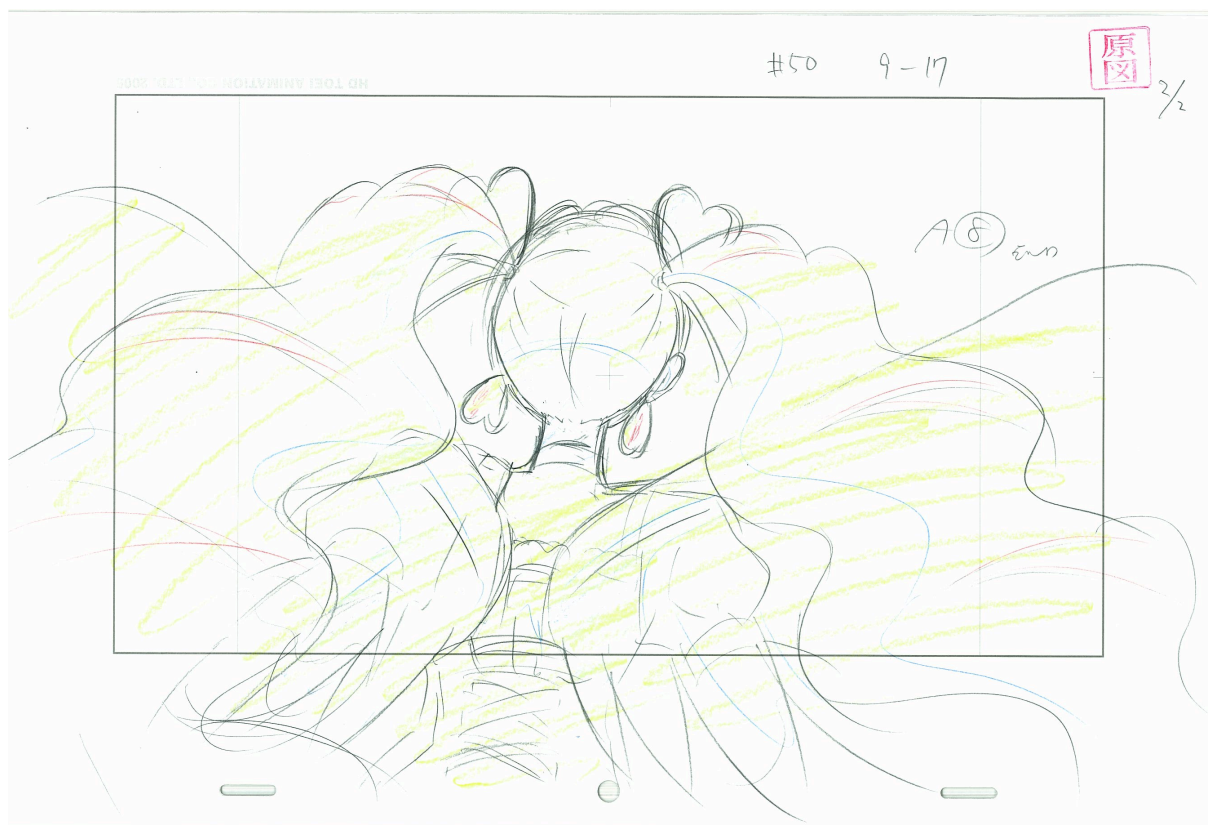
the president and introduce myself. Contrary to good ethnographic practice, I initially hesitated – having internalised the company’s workplace hierarchy, walking over to the company president to strike up a conversation just like that felt like a breach of good conduct. Thankfully, Tanabe-san was insistent, and he brought me over to Mr. Takahashi, and dared to introduce me to him. But before we had a chance to properly explain who we were, Mr. Takahashi was quick to seize the moment, recognising that we were younger members of Toei’s production division. ‘Very excited to meet the young staff like yourselves!’ the president said, generously offering his hand to us. ‘It is all thanks to people like you *who create* [that we thrive as a company].’ And then, referring to himself and others in the upper management at Toei, Mr. Takahashi crisply summarised their positionality to the animation making on the production floor level: ‘You know,’ he said, ‘*we are the ones who see through numbers (ware ware ha suuji de miru ningen dakara)*.’

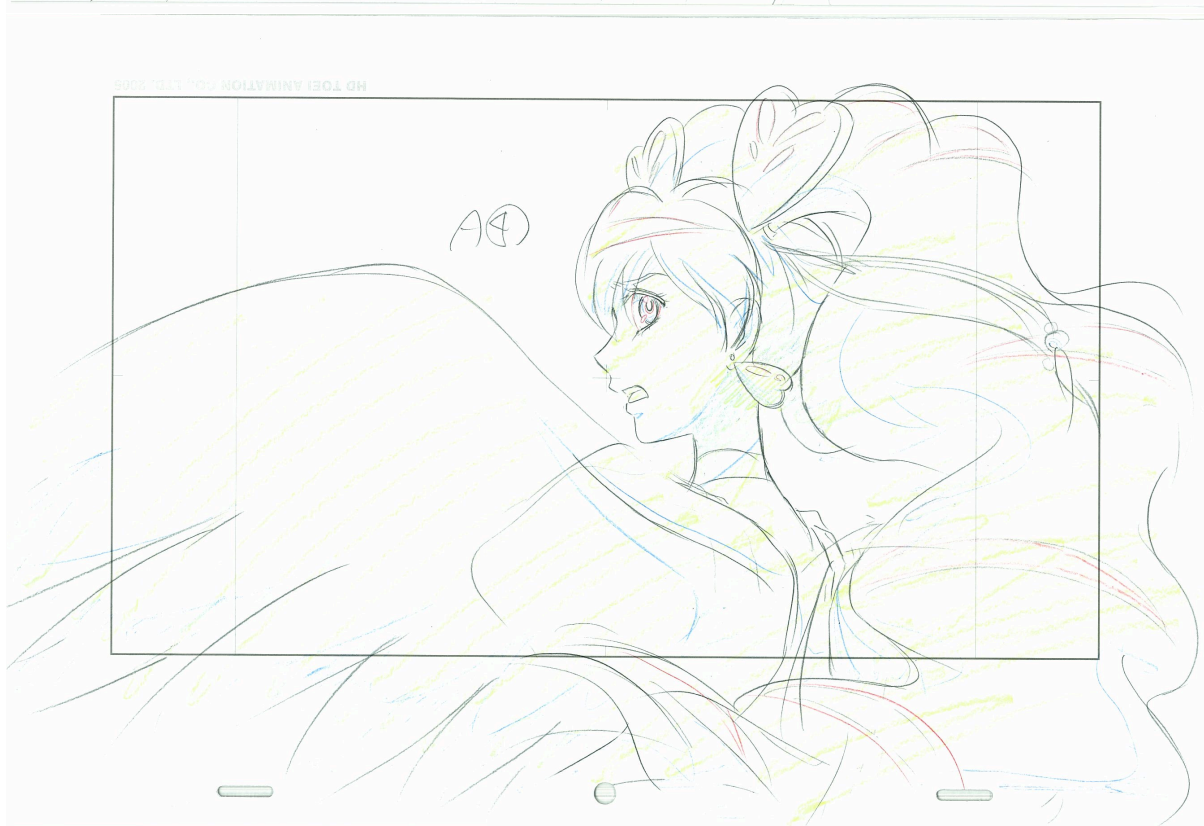
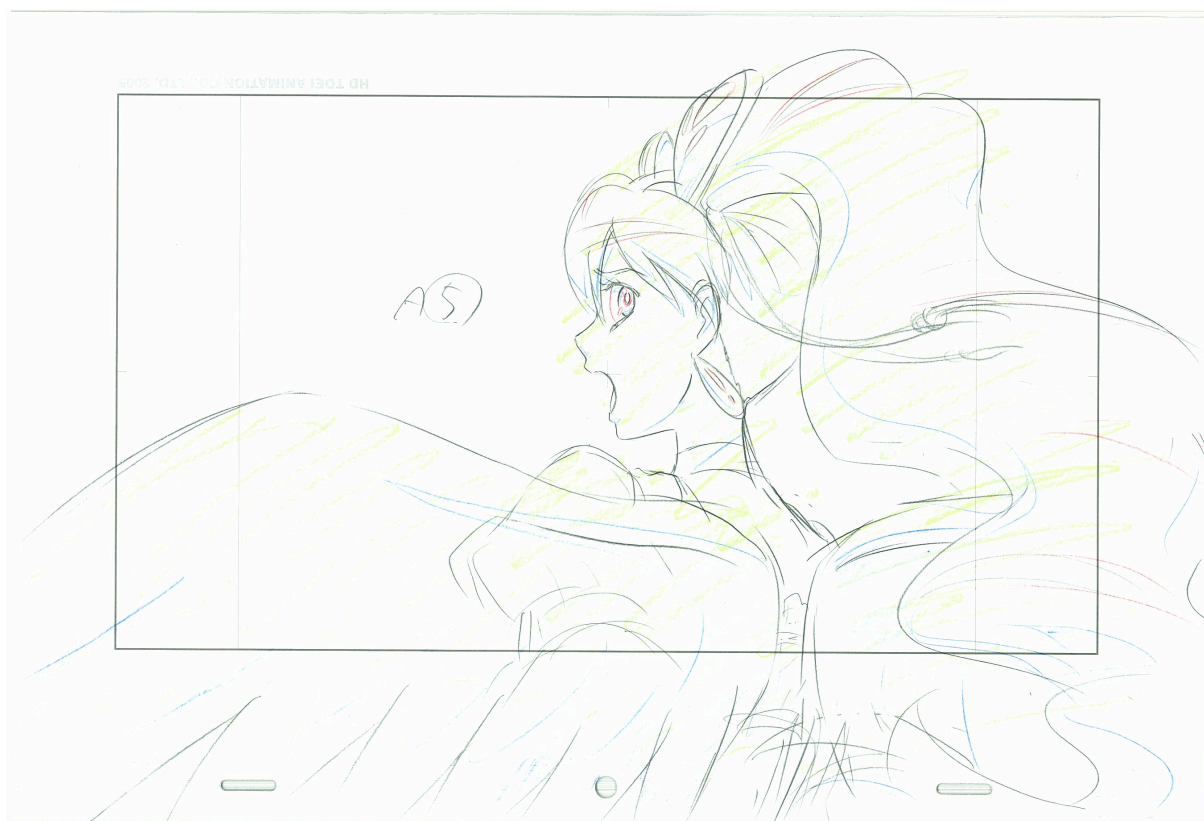
5.2. Seeing through numbers

This chapter is about seeing animation through numbers, or the accounting of creativity in the context of commercial animation production. My descriptive strategy is to approach this peculiar expression – ‘seeing through numbers’ – by setting out two generic questions and then attempting to answer them ethnographically. How does one see animation through numbers, and what does it take to be able to do so? These two questions relate fundamentally to the commercial context of Japanese animation production, and how it is carried out in the social and economic foci of production companies in today’s industry. As the division of labour in the production company is primarily organised along the two poles of the management and the creative personnel (c.f. Chapter 2), peculiar expressions – and

practices – like ‘seeing through numbers’ (*suuji de miru*) induce us to attend to the disconnect in perspectives that these two primary divisions bring upon the process of production. The detailed ethnographic exposition of this particular way of *seeing*, therefore, enables us to explicate the specific political economy of creativity operative in the context of commercial animation production in Japan.

This chapter could be taken as an ethnographic exposition of the theoretical critique of Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam’s (2007) phenomenological approach to creativity which I developed in Chapter 1. Having this as the background, however, my main theoretical purpose in this chapter is to engage with and contribute to recent research literature in anthropology on numbers, auditing, and accountability, and to think about its possible convergence with work on creativity in the context of commercial animation production. For reasons I will elaborate in the conclusion, I shall argue that the anthropology of accountability, which has had an increased presence in the literature, is only partially complete as a critical project to grapple with what some anthropologists term the rise of neoliberal governmentality. But, to begin, consider the following example from episode 50 of *Fresh Precure*.





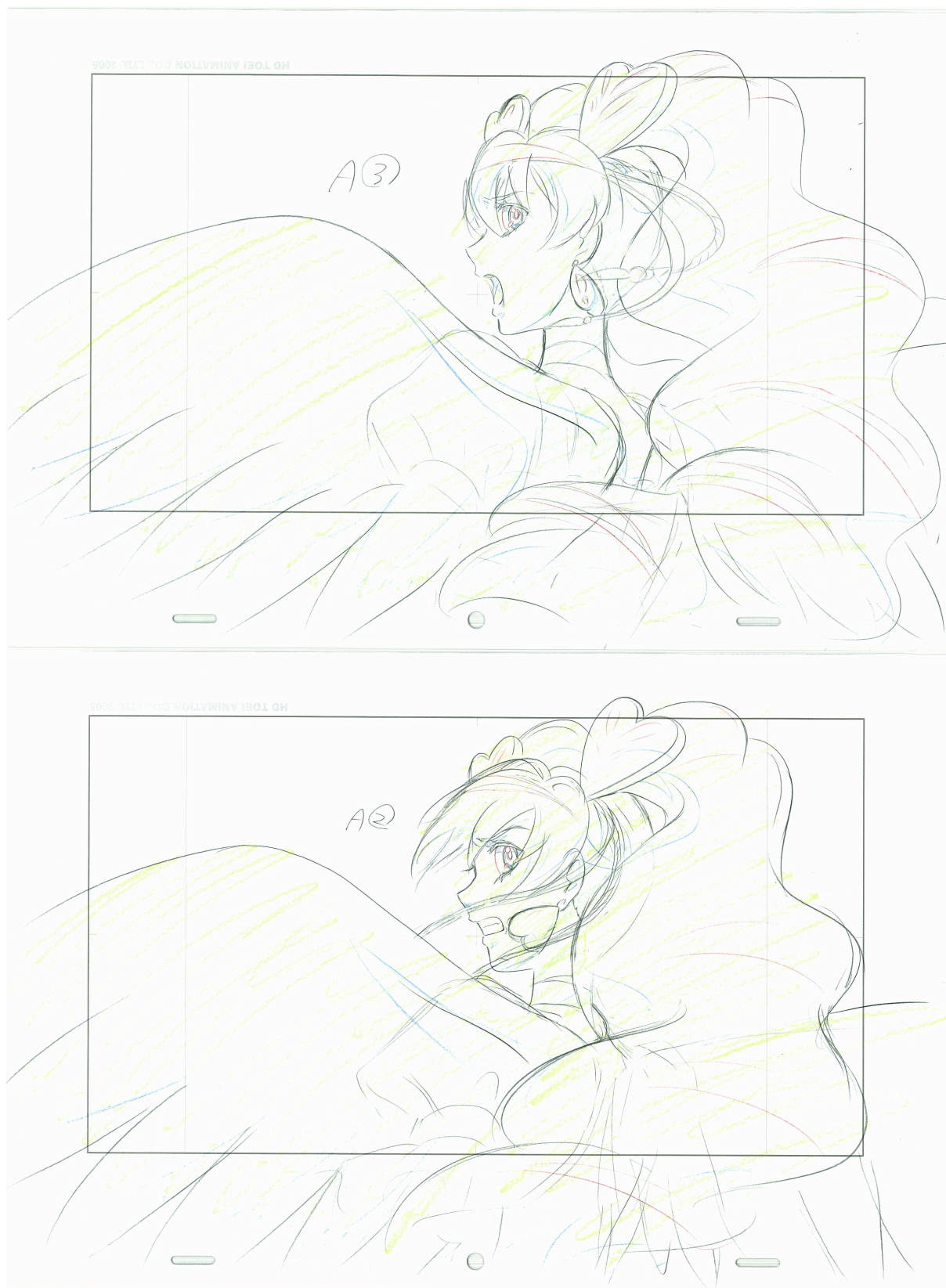


Figure 5.1 Rough key animation, © Toei Animation All rights reserved

Figure 5.1 depicts a sequence of key animation drawings from Cut 9-17 of *Fresh Precure* episode 50.² It shows a quick action of a character called *Cure Peach* looking back over her shoulder. Those fine drawings were done by a young female animator in her early twenties called Ike Misaski. Although she is yet to make her name known in the animation industry, I remember feeling captivated when holding the physical drawings of this cut in my hands, especially by the piercing eyes crafted on the character's face. As I state elsewhere (but see esp. Chapter 2), the elaborate division of commercial animation production is more or less singularly structured around the physical and visual production of animation cuts. Animators and directors occupy two of the paradigmatic positions in this production assemblage, but the production operators, whose mission is the management of schedule, do not take direct part in the material and visual creation of the animation cuts.

From Key Animation, Background Art and CG Animation to Colouring, Filming and Voice Acting, a great range of heterogeneously skilled practitioners (or 'creators') perform their differentiated and indispensable labour on a single cut as it moves through the visual production process (see Chapter 2 Figure 2.1). Passing through each step, the animation cut incrementally acquires an extra layer of added visual quality, information and enrichment. A more apparent example of this occurs when the cut goes through the Colouring section, and the drawings are embellished with colour for the first time in the production process. While some visual production work may be less noticeable or apparent than others to a layperson's eye, and an average audience only sees the finalised animation on TV or DVD, the practitioners in each production process know what they are doing and how they are moving forth the production of animation by adding their visual labour. In doing so – and this is the point I wish to make explicit – the practitioners in the visual animation

production process fundamentally see their labour in terms of the actual bundle of animation drawings, *visually*, as we see in Figure 5.1.

How does one then see animation production through numbers? This is where the management side of production enters the picture, and centres on the everyday labour of production operators such as myself in the field and Tanabe-san. For schedule management and various other purposes of accounting, the production operators record all meaningfully quantifiable information about animation cuts in the production process into the management database, the *shukei-hyo* (production record). By drawing on the production record of the episode 50, which I constructed as the episode's operator alongside Tanabe-san, it does indeed become possible to see Cut 9-17 through numbers. It appears as shown in Figure 5.2, in the form of an Excel spreadsheet. The highlighted 151st row in the spreadsheet *is* Cut 9-17. One way of reading it is that the cut used a total of 14 animation drawings, with a duration of 1 second and 18 frames, which entered the production process on the 11th of November 2009 and reached the final phases of visual production – In-Betweening and Colouring – on the 5th of January 2010. The last date recorded for Cut 9-17 could well mean that it was one of the dozen cuts I was handling when I hurried off to the company's New Year meeting.

The *shukei-hyo* is an exhaustive documentation of the production process compiled for each and every cut in a given episode as the production goes forward on a day-to-day basis. Primarily, *shukei-hyo* records 1) the start and the end dates for each production process a cut goes through (e.g. Key Animation), and 2) the number of drawings used in each and all animation cuts. As Figure 5.2 shows, each column in the spreadsheet represents a different production phase, and is arranged horizontally in the order in which the production progresses. The four digit numbers in each cell represent calendar dates in the mm/dd format. Each row in the

spreadsheet represents individual animation cuts. The rightward movement from one column to the next within a single row therefore represents the flow of internal production time for individual animation cuts. It is because of this database that I can tell with certainty that the production of episode 50 began on the 19th of October 2009 and ended on the 21st of January 2010. There were a total of 332 animation cuts in the episode, for which we used 5,591 animation drawings. Ike-san, who is mentioned above, animated 54 cuts, and so on. In these respects, the *shukei-hyo* is an exact numerical representation of animation cuts in a given production, and the meticulously recorded representation of the production process itself. In the context of everyday work, the compilation of this database was often coterminous with the operation of the production by the production operators.

A151																			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
116 5-4(21)	11 11	11 18	11 20	11 20	11 20	11 30													
117 6-1(9-1)	11 11	11 19	11 27	11 27	11 27	11 30			3 12 15	01 04	3 12 16	11 27	12 16	12 16	12 24	01 06	01 13		
118 6-2	11 11	11 21	12 03	12 03	12 03	12 09			40 12 15	40 12 16	12 03	12 16	12 03	12 16	12 24	01 06			
119 6-3	11 11	11 21	12 03	12 03	12 03	12 09			16 12 15	16 12 16	12 03	12 16	12 03	12 16	12 24	01 06			
120 6-4	11 11	11 21	12 03	12 03	12 03	12 11			18 12 15	18 12 16	12 03	12 16	12 03	12 16	12 24	01 06			
121 6-5	11 11	11 21	12 03	12 03	12 03	12 11			18 12 15	18 12 16	12 03	12 16	12 03	12 16	12 24	01 06			
122 6-6	11 11	11 25	12 03	12 03	12 03	12 11			16 12 15	16 12 16	12 03	12 16	12 03	12 16	12 24	01 06			
123 6-7	11 11	11 25	12 03	12 03	12 03	12 11			16 12 15	16 12 16	12 03	12 16	12 03	12 16	12 24	01 06			
124 6-8	11 11	11 25	12 03	12 03	12 03	12 11			16 12 15	16 12 16	12 03	12 16	12 03	12 16	12 24	01 06			
125 6-9	11 11	11 25	12 15	12 15	12 15	12 30			4 01 05	4 01 05	12 15			01 05					
126 7 SceneA																			
127 8-1	11 11	11 28	11 30	11 30	11 30	11 30	12 30		11 01 04	11 01 04	11 30	01 04	01 04	01 12	01 12	01 13			
128 8-2	11 11	11 24	11 30	11 30	11 30	11 30	01 04		8 01 05	8 01 05	11 30	01 05	01 05						
129 8-3	11 11	12 16	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	01 04		12 01 05	12 01 05	12 17	01 05	01 05						
130 8-4	11 11	12 16	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	01 04		16 01 05	16 01 05	12 17	01 05	01 05	01 12	01 12	01 13			
131 8-5	11 11	12 16	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	01 04		12 01 05	12 01 05	12 17	01 05	01 05						
132 8-6	11 11	11 26	11 30	11 30	11 30	11 30	01 05		19 01 07	19 01 12	11 30			01 12	01 12	01 13			
133 8-7	11 11	12 16	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	01 05		8 01 07	8 01 12	12 17								
134 8-8	11 11	12 16	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	01 05		15 01 07	15 01 12	12 17								
135 9-1(6-1)	11 11	11 19	11 27	11 27	11 27	11 30	12 07		2 12 15	12 16	11 27	12 16	12 16	12 24	01 12	01 06			
136 9-2	11 11	11 27	11 30	11 30	11 30	11 30	12 07		2 12 15	13 12 21	11 30	12 16	12 21	01 12	01 13				
137 9-3(9-31)	11 11	11 30	12 02	12 02	12 02	12 02	12 09		20 12 15	20 01 12	12 02								
138 9-4	11 11	11 30	12 02	12 02	12 02	12 10			13 12 15	12 01 05	12 02	01 05	01 05						
139 9-5(9-32)	11 11	12 02	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 30		2 01 04	2 01 04	12 17	01 04	01 04	01 12	01 12	01 13			
140 9-6	11 11	12 02	12 07	12 07	12 07	12 09	12 10		1 12 15	1 12 16	12 07	12 16	12 07	12 16	12 24	01 06			
141 9-7	11 11	11 27	11 30	11 30	11 30	11 30	12 07		2 12 15	2 12 16	11 30	12 16	12 07	12 16	12 24	01 06			
142 9-8	11 11	11 27	11 30	11 30	11 30	11 30	12 07		11 12 15	10 12 16	11 30	12 16	12 07	12 16	12 24	01 06			
143 9-9 全吐ル	11 11	11 30	12 02	12 02	12 02	12 02	12 09		11 12 15	13 12 16	12 02	12 16	12 02	12 16	12 24	01 06			
144 9-10	11 11	11 18	12 30	12 30	12 30	12 30	01 08		01 09	01 11	12 30			01 05	01 13				
145 9-11	11 11	12 04	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 14	01 04		3 01 05	3 01 05	12 14	01 05	01 05						
146 9-12	11 11	12 04	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 14	01 04		13 01 05	13 01 05	12 14	01 05	01 05						
147 9-13	11 11	12 07	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 14	01 04		14 01 05	14 01 05	12 14	01 05	01 05						
148 9-14	11 11	12 10	12 16	12 16	12 16	12 16	01 04		38 01 05	38 01 05	12 16	01 05	01 05						
149 9-15	11 11	11 18	12 30	12 30	12 30	12 30	01 08		01 09	01 11	12 30								
150 9-16	11 11	12 04	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 14	01 04		20 01 05	20 01 05	12 14	01 05	01 05						
151 9-17	11 11	12 04	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 14	01 04		14 01 05	14 01 05	12 14	01 05	01 05						
152 9-18	11 11	12 07	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 14	01 04		1 01 05	1 01 05	12 14	01 05	01 05	01 13					
153 9-19	11 11	12 07	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 14	01 04		16 01 05	16 01 05	12 14	01 05	01 05						
154 9-20	11 11	12 10	12 16	12 16	12 16	12 16	01 11		25 01 12	25 01 13	12 16	01 11	01 11						
155 9-21 (10-21)	11 11	12 10	12 16	12 16	12 16	12 16	01 04		8 01 05	12 01 05	12 16	01 05	01 05						
156 9-22	11 11	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	01 08		20	01 11	01 09								
157 9-23	11 11	12 10	12 16	12 16	12 16	12 16	01 08		92 01 09	50 01 11	12 16								
158 9-24	11 11	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	12 17	01 04		25 01 05	20 01 05	12 17	01 05	01 05						
159 9-25	11 11	11 18	12 30	12 30	12 30	12 30	01 08		01 09	01 11	12 30								
160 9-26	11 11	11 27	11 30	11 30	11 30	11 30	12 10		12 12 15	12 12 16	11 30	12 16	12 16	12 24	01 06				
161 9-27	11 11	12 07	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 30		22 01 04	18 01 04	12 14	01 04	01 04						
162 9-28	11 11	12 07	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 14	12 30		12 01 04	11 01 04	12 14	01 04	01 04						
163 9-29a	DN	12 23	12 23	12 23	12 23	12 23			12 23	12 23	12 23	12 23	12 23	12 23					

Figure 5.2 Numerical representation of Cut 9-17 and others

Recording of the dates and the numbers of drawings in *shukei-hyo* was critical for the management of the production schedule and accounting of production cost respectively, not only just as the pragmatic reminder for the production operator but also in the wider context of business for Toei Animation as the production company. First the schedule: *Fresh Precure* was a weekly TV animation series, comprising of 50 episodes broadcast over the course of a year between February 2009 and January 2010 at 8:30 am on Sunday mornings. As the weekly broadcasting cycle, once set by the broadcaster (Asahi Broadcasting Corporation), is categorical, this implicated the precure staffroom in the regular cycle of beating the delivery deadlines *every single week*. Failing to comply with this delivery cycle resulted in a forbidding penalty payment, which would not only be a substantial blow to company finances but a deadly tarnish on its *reputation* as the production company. What broadcaster would want to place orders to studios that cannot even deliver in time?

In the industry, the failure to meet a deadline is addressed by the verb *otosu*, literally meaning ‘to drop’ or ‘to fall’, and is almost tantamount to absolute failure. The expression is widely used among the operators in the everyday handling of their work as a reminder for what should never happen. It is also a common narrative device in telling stories about particularly difficult productions they had to handle in their careers: the closer a given production was to *otosu* (fall) in delivery, the crazier the context of production work would become. The pervasiveness of this expression in the industry is in neat contrast to the extreme rarity of actual instances where a studio failed to produce an episode in time. No one at Toei Animation could actually think of an instance where the company failed thus. The popularity of the expression could thus be taken as symbolic of the extent to which the management of production schedule and deadlines are made into an explicit

imperative in the context of everyday work. This explicit temporal consciousness, enacted by the existence of categorical deadlines – the weekly TV broadcasting cycle – was unanimously shared across staff on both the management and the creative sides of production.

If creative personnel, such as animators, are not concerned as much with the general management of the overall production schedule, they are sensitive and attuned to the actual time they are allotted in the ongoing schedule to work on the drawings. The length of time an animator can devote to the crafting of animation is directly reflected in the visual quality of that animation cut. High visual quality in key animation was critically important for the animators. Not only was the showcasing of skilled craft satisfactory in its own right, the quality of work one was capable of producing within the available schedule often bore a direct relation to professional reputation and the supply of constant work as a freelancer. Time was thus usually considered the most scarce production resource in the context of everyday production.

In terms of the actual animation produced, the role of the production operators was peripheral to the main body of visual creation. Yet, as those in charge of the management of the production schedule, the labour of the operators may be understood to be as critical as the visual process itself when one considers that the production is situated in the wider context of commerce and contracts of regular deliveries. Without them, as one senior animator at Toei put it, ‘we can’t get our work done.’ The importance of the non-visual operators in the production process is manifest also in the vernacular speech on the production floor. The managerial division of labour in the industry was unanimously called *seisaku*, which literally means ‘production’. The production operator, in the original Japanese, was called *seisaku shinkou*, which, if translated literally, means ‘production progression’. In the

colloquial use of the local parlance, the operators were thus addressed simply as *shinkou*, the ‘progression’. A director looking for a production operator, for instance, would simply ask: ‘Where’s the progression?’

In my observation, this identification of production operators with the progression of production was metaphorically apposite, for they were the ones who physically carried animation cuts across different divisions as the production progressed. As the production process of commercial animation entailed extensive outsourcing to specialist studios, this necessitated frequent driving back and forth between the main studio and outside sub-contractors. Tanabe-san and I routinely drove every day to subcontracting studios, bringing animation cuts back and forth for the production of episode 50. In this sense, the physical movement of operators reflected the conceptual and real flow of the production process. As we have seen in Chapter 2, however, the critical significance of the role played by the production operators is not necessarily reflected in the workplace hierarchy that articulates the terms of interaction between the operators and the creators, most notably the director and animators. The generally low and junior position of the production operators commands them to adopt a subservient attitude to those creators, turning everyday interactions with directors and animators into pernicious loci of emotional labour which they must perform to push the production process forward by coaxing, cajoling and begging them to get their work done as fast as possible.

At Toei, the dates and periods of each production process recorded in *shukei-hyo* formed an intense nexus of attention among the management staff on the production floor. Those dates did not only represent the temporary progression of production and the time remaining till the delivery deadline, they subjected the operators themselves to a numerical evaluation of their day-to-day labour. While the operators usually worked by themselves on their own initiative, they also worked

under the auspices of their immediate boss at the production desk, whose responsibility, among others, was to make sure *all* episodes handled by his several operators were produced on time. For each production team (called ‘staffroom’) there was one production desk and producer, under whom the operators worked on the pragmatics of the everyday production. While the producer of the staffroom worked as an intermediary between her animation project and other partner corporations in outside industries (e.g. broadcasters, toy manufacturers, etc.), the production desk was the company’s internal mediator between the staffroom and higher management. Thus, as the operators reported the everyday progress of their individual episodes to the production desk, the production desk reported the overall production of the animation project to the production department, which included the production manager and the production director. Above the production director sat the board of executives, many of whom, including the president, had separate offices in Toei’s Shinjuku office.

Although the executives did not concern themselves with the numbers on everyday production, for people in the production department, up to the level of the production director, the accurate comprehension of such numbers were central to the everyday handling of their jobs, albeit on different levels and scales of responsibilities and abstraction. Toward this end, the sharing of the numerical information collected and constructed by the production operators from the ground up was critical. How was this done? While I just used *Microsoft Excel* to construct my *shukei-hyo* as the company’s intern/fieldworker, full-fledged production operators at Toei were all assigned laptop terminals connected to the company’s internal central server called the *AS System*.³ The *AS System* (colloquially called ‘*eisu*’ on the production floor) was a specialised database construction software. Its basic function was similar to that of *Excel*, but it had two critical additional features,

tied with the construction of two contrasting numerical expressions of the single animation production process.

The first of these came from its multi-access server function, whereby any piece of information added by operator A to his *shukei-hyo* was accessible and visible to other operators, production desks and higher managers, and vice versa. By allowing access to the basic production database for everyone by everyone on the management side of production, the *AS System* was, in effect, the digital iteration of the Benthamite *panopticon* as elaborated by Foucault (1977). Although the mutual nature of visibility undoubtedly complicates this concept, here the central tenet of the panopticon for Foucault is maintained in that those at the top of the management hierarchy could just look at the database without being seen by the lower management workers. Whatever numerical information the upper management handled outside the *AS System* ‘up there’, in contrast, was not at all visible to the production operators.

Secondly, from the perspective of the operators, the most notable feature of the *AS System* was tied to the generation of a daily production report called *nippou-hyo* (daily report), which they submitted to the production desk at the end of the working day. *Nippou-hyo* was a bundled function of the *AS System*, and allowed the user to convert the entire production database into a *synoptic* representation of the ongoing production down to a single document page (Figure 5.4). Compare Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4. *Shukei-hyo* is first and foremost an all-encompassing database. It is a numerically exact replication of the visual contents of animation cuts, but the sheer richness of the data makes it difficult to gain a bird’s eye perspective on the production schedule; one has to inspect it carefully. *Shukei-hyo* was useful when one needed specific information about a particular cut in close detail, e.g. when Cut X-XX entered the Key Animation section, it was easy to find out

how long it had been there, and how many drawings it was likely to be given etc. This numerical richness obstructed an easy overview of a production as a whole and *nippou-hyo* provided this missing functionality.

On *nippou-hyo*, the numerical details of individual cuts are gone in favour of the agglomerated production status of all cuts in terms of their production phases. For example, Figure 5.4 is a *nippou-hyo* of *Fresh Precure* episode 50 from the 11th of December 2009. We can see on the report that by then all 332 cuts of the episode had been sent for layout work to animators, and 203 were finished and had arrived. Of these 203 layout cuts, the episode director had checked 139, and those were brought to the chief animator for correction. From the 139 cuts that passed the director's check, 138 were moved forward to key animation phase. Of the 138 cuts, 49 cuts of key animation were 'up' (*agari*), 23 of which were now undergoing the correction process by the chief animator, and so forth. The percentage indicated in the fourth column shows the completion rate of each production process. According to this *nippou-hyo*, the layout process was already 100 percent complete by the 11th of December. Thus, if *shukei-hyo* (the production record) was a numerical representation of the status of the actual visual production, *nippou-hyo* (the daily report) entailed a further abstraction of vision in creating a synoptic legibility of that visual process on a single piece of paper (c.f. Scott1998).

No	表示件数 = 332 S-C CG R	元注先	原画 渡し	原画 元注 秒数	原画 上り 枚数	原画 上り	原画 作画	原画 終了	原画 予定 枚数	原画 上り 秒数	作画 渡し 秒数	作画 渡し 枚数	背景 原画	原画 予定	原画 元注 秒数
101	4 - 22		11/20	2+00	12	11/27	12/15	12/16	0	3+00	2+00	12	11/20		0
102	4 - 23		11/20	3+00	56	11/25	12/24	12/25	0	3+00	3+00	55	11/20		0
103	4 - 24		11/20	3+00	23	11/30	12/15	12/16	0	3+00	3+00	27	11/20		0
104	4 - 25		11/20	3+00	19	11/30	12/15	12/16	0	3+00	3+00	29	11/20		0
105	4 - 26A		11/20	4+00	0				0	0+00	0+00	0	11/20		0
106	4 - 26B		11/20	0+00	0				0	0+00	0+00	0	11/20		0
107	4 - 27		11/30	2+12	8	12/11	12/24	12/25	0	2+12	2+12	13	11/30		0
108	4 - 28		12/30	2+12	0				0	0+00	0+00	0	11/27		0
109	5 - 1		11/27	2+00	0	12/22	12/24	12/24	0	2+00	2+00	0	11/27		0
110	5 - 2		11/18	1+12	17	12/24	12/30	1/04	0	1+12	1+12	17	11/18		0
111	5 - 3		11/18	2+12	0	12/22	12/24	12/24	0	2+12	2+12	0	11/18		0
112	5 - 4		11/20	2+12	0	1/04	1/04		0	2+12	2+12	0	11/20		0
113	6 - 1		11/27	5+12	3	11/30	12/15	12/16	0	5+12	5+12	3	11/27		0
114	6 - 2		12/03	2+00	40	12/09	12/15	12/16	0	2+00	2+00	40	12/03		0
115	6 - 3		12/03	2+00	16	12/09	12/15	12/16	0	2+00	2+00	16	12/03		0
116	6 - 4		12/03	2+00	18	12/11	12/15	12/16	0	2+00	2+00	18	12/03		0
117	6 - 5		12/03	2+00	18	12/11	12/15	12/16	0	2+00	2+00	18	12/03		0
118	6 - 6		12/03	2+00	16	12/11	12/15	12/16	0	2+00	2+00	16	12/03		0
119	6 - 7		12/03	2+00	16	12/11	12/15	12/16	0	2+00	2+00	16	12/03		0
120	6 - 8		12/03	3+00	16	12/11	12/15	12/16	0	3+00	3+00	16	12/03		0
121	6 - 9		12/15	3+12	0	12/30	1/04		0	0+00	0+00	0	12/15		0
122	8 - 1		11/30	3+00	11	12/30	1/04		0	3+00	3+00	11	11/30		0
123	8 - 2		11/30	3+00	8	1/04			0	3+00	0+00	0	11/30		0
124	8 - 3		12/17	2+00	12	1/04			0	2+00	0+00	0	12/17		0
125	8 - 4		12/17	2+00	16	1/04			0	2+00	0+00	0	12/17		0
126	8 - 5		12/17	4+00	12	1/04			0	4+00	0+00	0	12/17		0
127	8 - 6		11/30	5+00	0				0	0+00	0+00	0	11/30		0
128	8 - 7		12/17	3+00	0				0	0+00	0+00	0	12/17		0
129	8 - 8		12/17	2+00	0				0	0+00	0+00	0	12/17		0
130	9 - 1		11/27	15+00	0	11/30	12/15	12/16	0	15+00	15+00	0	11/27		0
131	9 - 2		11/30	5+00	2	12/07	12/15	12/21	0	5+00	5+00	13	11/30		0
132	9 - 3		12/02	14+00	20	12/09	12/15		0	14+00	14+00	20	12/02		0
133	9 - 4		12/07	3+00	13	12/09	12/15		0	3+00	3+00	12	12/02		0
134	9 - 5		12/17	4+00	2	12/30	1/04		0	4+00	4+00	2	12/17		0
135	9 - 6		12/09	4+12	1	12/09	12/15	12/16	0	4+12	4+12	1	12/07		0
136	9 - 7		11/30	9+00	2	12/07	12/15	12/16	0	9+00	9+00	2	11/30		0
137	9 - 8		11/30	15+00	11	12/07	12/15	12/16	0	15+00	15+00	10	11/30		0
138	9 - 9		12/02	4+00	11	12/09	12/15		0	4+00	4+00	13	12/02		0
139	9 - 10		12/30	1+00	0				0	0+00	0+00	0			0
140	9 - 11		12/14	4+00	3	1/04			0	4+00	0+00	0	12/14		0
141	9 - 12		12/14	3+12	13	1/04			0	3+12	0+00	0	12/14		0
142	9 - 13		12/14	3+00	14	1/04			0	3+00	0+00	0	12/14		0
143	9 - 14		12/16	5+12	38	1/04			0	5+12	0+00	0	12/16		0
144	9 - 15		12/30	4+00	0				0	0+00	0+00	0			0
145	9 - 16		12/14	2+18	20	1/04			0	2+18	0+00	0	12/14		0
146	9 - 17		12/14	1+18	14	1/04			0	1+18	0+00	0	12/14		0
147	9 - 18		12/14	2+00	1	1/04			0	2+00	0+00	0	12/14		0
148	9 - 19		12/14	3+00	16	1/04			0	3+00	0+00	0	12/14		0
149	9 - 20		12/16	4+00	0				0	0+00	0+00	0	12/16		0
150	9 - 21		12/16	3+00	8	1/04			0	3+00	0+00	0	12/16		0

Figure 5.3 The AS System database⁴ (Shukei-hyo), ©Toei Animation

	基本量	本日計	累計	%	中間残	基本量残	7-7 累計	予定進捗量	%	実績進捗量	%	実績遅間量	%	実績遅間量	%
1/777 渡シ	332	0	332	100.0		0	0								
1/777 上-D	332	4	203	61.1		129	0								
1/777 作監	332	0	139	41.8		193	0								
原画 発注	332	0	138	41.5		194	0								
秒数	1,245+0	0+0	508+12	40.8		736+12	0+0								
原画 上-D	332	3	49	14.7		283	0								
秒数	1,245+0	14+0	225+0	18.0	283+12	1,020+0	0+0								
原画 作監渡	3,500	15	717	20.4		2,783	0								
秒数	3,500	0	23	6.9		309	0								
原画 終了	332	0	22	6.6		310	0								
秒数	3,500	0	349	9.9		3,151	0								
動画 発注	332	0	1	0.3	48	331	0								
秒数	3,500	0	0	0.0	0	3,500	0								
動画 上-D	332	0	1	0.3	0	331	0								
秒数	3,500	0	0	0.0	0	3,500	0								
原画 出シ	332	0	139	41.8		193	0								
BG L/O 発注	332	0	0	0.0		332	0								
BG L/O 上-D	332	0	0	0.0		332	0								
背景 発注	332	0	0	0.0	139	332	0								
背景 上-D	332	0	0	0.0	0	332	0								
仕上 発注	332	0	1	0.3	0	331	0								
秒数	3,500	0	0	0.0	0	3,500	0								
仕上 上-D	332	0	1	0.3	0	331	0								
秒数	3,500	0	0	0.0	0	3,500	0								
撮影 BG 出	332	0	0	0.0		332	0								
秒数	1,245+0	0+0	0+0	0.0		1,245+0	0+0								
撮影出シ	332	0	0	0.0		332	0								
秒数	1,245+0	0+0	0+0	0.0		1,245+0	0+0								
撮影上-D	332	0	0	0.0	0	332	0								
秒数	1,245+0	0+0	0+0	0.0	0+0	1,245+0	0+0								

Figure 5.4 Nippou-hyo produced by the AS System, ©Toei Animation

5.3 Commercial animation production

Of all the numbers contained in *shukei-hyo* (the production record) and *nippou-hyo* (the daily report), arguably the most significant was the number of animation drawings used so far in a given production. At Toei Animation, there was a strictly enforced production policy known as the ‘3,500 limit’ for each TV animation episode. This was the maximum number of animation drawings permitted by the company’s upper management for use in a given episode. The containment of animation drawings below the 3,500 limit was considered the primary responsibility of episode directors, for it was they who held final visual control on the number of drawings in individual episodes. The operators assisted the directors by providing them with numerical information about the drawings used so far in the episode.

In Figure 5.4, we see two numbers in the key animation section circled with a red pencil. These are my markings. The first shows the number of key animation cuts – 49 – that are turned up by the animators. The second one, 717, tells us the number of animation drawings contained in those 49 key animation cuts. The percentages underlined next to the two numbers – 14.7 and 20.4 – indicate how much they account of the total of 332 cuts and the 3,500 drawings permitted. In this *nippou-hyo* of the 11th of December, the completion rate of key animation cuts is 14.7 percent (49 out 332), but that of total animation drawings is already 20.4 percent (717 out of 3,500). Since the percentage of the animation drawings used in the 49 cuts vis-à-vis the 3,500 limit (20.4 percent) was higher than the completion rate of key animation cuts (14.7 percent), the production was on course to exceed the 3,500 limit.

True to this prediction, Zako-san (the general director and the episode’s

acting director), Tanabe-san and I (the episode's operators) ended up using 5,591 animation drawings in the process of producing *Fresh Precure* episode 50. The extent to which the animation drawings are meticulously counted, turned into a panoptic database (*shukei-hyo*), and inspected on a day-to-day basis through synoptic production reports (*nippou-hyo*) shows the high degree to which Toei Animation's management cares about these numbers. In fact, one of the very first things I was taught in the precure staffroom as an interning operator concerned this management – and containment – of animation drawings below the 3,500 limit. Under such circumstances, the excess by more than 2,000 drawings in episode 50 was almost spectacular.

How did this come about? In my observation, the upper management's enforcement of the 3,500 drawing limit on the production floor was an ethnographically paradigmatic instance where the creative visual production became directly entangled with the commercial business operation of animation-making at Toei and in the Japanese animation industry writ large. As a rule, there was a positive correlation between the visual quality of animation and the physical quantity of animation drawings used in a given episode. Thus, to increase the quality of animation, one of the easiest things a director could do was to increase the number of animation drawings. But a trade-off also existed between quality and cost, and this was the basis on which the company management set the 3,500 limit as a production policy. Whereas key animators were paid by the number of animation cuts they drew, the next process practitioners such as in-betweeners (lower level animators who provide added smoothing animations) and colourists (those who add colour) were paid in terms of the number of animation drawings they worked on (which each animation cut contained). The use of a higher number of drawings thus had a direct bearing on the production schedule, for more work to

draw meant more time needed, and time, in this specific aspect of commercial animation production, was also money.

This numerical abstraction of the visual production process was largely due to the very nature of animation making as a commercial enterprise. Toei's upper management took the 3,500 limit policy seriously, and did not hesitate to penalise directors – and, to lesser extent, operators – who failed to comply. Under normal circumstances, therefore, keeping track of the 3,500 limit was in the common interest of both directors and operators. In the production of episode 50, however, Zako-san appeared much more concerned with enhancing animation quality than with keeping the number of drawings within the designated company limit. Episode 50 was the final episode of *Fresh Precure*, for which Zako-san had acted as the general director throughout the most of year 2009-2010. As someone who led the visual side of the *Fresh Precure* project, he seemed to have a lot of emotional investment in the series, and – as he told us after the production was complete – he was determined to give higher than usual production values to the final episode.

This was understandable. Directors, like the animators in the previous section, often felt an emotional attachment and had a professional stake in the episodes they worked on. After all, like the animators whose skills were evaluated on the kinds of animation they could draw, the kind of episodes that the directors could craft, both visually and in terms of building narrative, had a direct bearing upon their reputation as professionals in the industry. In this respect, the tension between quality and cost in determining the number of drawings in a given episode was a fine one for the directors, for their professional reputation could swing towards either of the two poles. On one hand, as a professional creator of animation, the directors might habitually orient their focus on the enhancement of visual quality and building better animation in everyday work. On the other hand, as freelancers paid

on a contractual basis by production companies, the directors' commercial reputations were contingent upon what they could manage *within* the designated frames of budget and schedule. Consider the following reflection from one of the top directors (male, late fifties) at Toei:

[About the 3,500 limit] you know, if you just direct an episode normally, it's unreasonable to expect that [the drawings] will naturally be below 3,500. But the 3,500 limit has been the company policy and everyone effectively has to work with that. Then we should also make an effort in figuring out what we can do within that limit. You see, by adding 1,500 or more drawings on top of the 3,500, it's not that the overall animation become incredibly fantastic. It's just not, because there is so much more to directing than just spending more drawings. [The overall quality of animation] is, fundamentally, more to do with how we craft the storyboard, and how we construct each and all animation cuts with a clear directorial intention and purpose.

A veteran female director (late forties), who was working at UTT when I met her but had previously held a position at Toei, said in contrast:

Ok, so what if I actually make an effort and reduce the number of drawings in my episode by a large margin. And let the production finish quickly and without a hassle. You see, that would surely please the management (*seisaku*), but then what happens for me after I do such a low quality work? What would my colleagues [other directors] think of me when they look at it? [They could be thinking] 'Wow, she really sucked up to the management!' and if that happens, how will I get my next round of work [as a freelancer]? You see, it's not that you do

things favourably in terms of the management perspective that you get your next job as a director. At least in my personal experience, it's the opposite: you do some real good work and then you get noticed. People want to work with you. That's how I got this work here now [referring to her current contract with UTT]

As a general observation, the operators disliked creators – especially animators – who spent too much time perfecting their craft at the expenses of other factors of production, most notably the available schedule. This must be understood in the context of the twelve to fifteen hours of labour that the operators had to put into the production management every day. As much of the key animation process was subcontracted to specialist studios and individual animators working across the vast area of western Tokyo, a significant part of the day to day work of the production operators consisted of driving back and forth between different animators and the main production company. The time they spend in front of the steering wheel could range anywhere between two to six hours a day, which during busy periods could stretch to eight hours or more.

Referring to the extensive driving every day in moving the animation cuts back and forth, Tanabe-san once likened the production flow to a factory production line. And in this metaphorical factory of animation, he said, 'we [the operators] are the conveyer belt.' This factory metaphor, which was prevalent across the animation industry, in turn heightened the sense of 'absurdity' the management staff at times felt with certain creators who spent too much time on performing their share of labour. Just what kind of factory workers would stop the entire conveyer belt so they could perfect the single nail they were responsible for hammering in? On the other hand, this did not of course mean *all* creative processes in the production were conceptualised as irrelevant by the people working on the management side. Rather,

what mattered critically was the commercial context of production in which all animation makers were embedded, and the particular configuration of professionalism such a context produced in the everyday workplace. Consider the following reflection by another male operator in his mid twenties, on the creative processes in the commercial production more generally:

I think, spending as much time as you want [on animation making] to achieve higher and higher quality [just for the sake of it], that's what amateurs and students do. Once you become a professional, things are different – it really should be more about achieving even higher quality within a specifically designated timeframe. As far as people I know are concerned, they [both managers and creators alike] find particular pride in the fact that they are working in the commercial production, really. You know, devoting yourself and your time to whatever you want to make for no matter what, that's what students (*gakusei*) do [he is here referring to the students in animation making colleges, schools and courses].

The relegation of the blind pursuit of quality to the domain of amateurism and 'studentship' (itself a lesser social category when pitted against the wage earning adults – *shakaijin* – in Japanese cultural parlance; see Chapter 4) was a commonly employed rhetoric, and it pointed inversely to the behavioural standard the managers hoped to expect from top level creators in the production divisions such as directors and key animators. As we can glimpse in the above quote from the senior male director at Toei, such an idea of working within a set limit was, in turn, a common iteration of professionalism also internalised by many creators themselves, to a certain extent. As another middle level director (male, late thirties) at Toei reiterated, 'your capacity as a director should really be more about what you can do

within the designated limit of production.’ The generally unfavourable view on the production floor regarding the free and unrestrained exploration of creativity can be also glimpsed from the following examples.

It was striking how one production desk at Toei once casually said that what directors actually do in the production process is really ‘more like a wank (*onanii jan*)’. The implication was that, because the directors pragmatically and structurally had the biggest space for their creative exploration and expression in the overall division of labour, their creative prowess was often prone to interpretation as unsavoury self-indulgence. At first, I thought this was just bad language. It turned out, however, that this implicit association between general creativity and masturbation was a lot more prevalent than I thought, particularly when the management staff thought the visual staff in the upper stream of production flow (e.g. directors and animators) were doing their work as – for the lack of better expression – ‘art for art’s sake’.

‘It’s not as if we are masturbating (*masturbation shiteru wake ja nain da*),’ one producer at UTT maintained during our first meeting, reflecting on his view of what commercial animation production ought to be about.⁵ Animation production was first and foremost ‘work’, and ‘real work’ at that. Anyone who brings in elements to production that purely give them pleasure from creating, without much relevance to the market or the overall quality of animation as a product, was to be dismissed. What emerges here, as I have been arguing, is a very specific formation of professionalism and even aesthetics of commerce. Creativity writ large was only valued so far as it bore relevance to the market, and more importantly, when it suited the everyday pragmatism of going about animation making. Professional animation makers had to put in every effort possible to make their product (*sakuhin*) better, precisely because their product was a commodity (*shohin*) sold on the market

– but in doing so they should never exceed the limit beyond which creative work just becomes simple artistic pleasure.⁶ ‘We are getting paid for this! (*okane moratte yatten dakara*)’ was a proud reminder people on both sides of production often repeated. In this configuration of localised meanings, creativity in the sense that it is one of the most praised and idealised forms of human agency in the Euro-American context (Harvey and Strathern 2005) was prone to be interpreted as masturbation.⁷

The quantification of the visual process through numerical records in terms of time and numbers of drawings thus brings to the fore the awareness of commercial production in everyday work on the production floor, especially for the staff in the management division. This in turn resulted in an interesting tension concerning the conceptual location of ‘creativity’ in animation making across the industry. At Toei for instance, creativity was deeply ingrained in the company’s mission statement and PR lines. It is what the studio strives to achieve and let thrive in all corners of the corporate enterprise: ‘To become the ‘creative corporation’ that gives hope and dreams to children and people all around the world.’⁸ In practice, however, it seemed that every management practice, effort, intervention and measure was put in force precisely to contain and curtail the spontaneous growth of creative processes on the production floor. Free creative growth was conterminous with contingency, and the upper management really strived for strict bureaucratic control of the entire production process.

Measures such as the 3,500 drawing limit tied with the numerical production records were clear instances of a desire to cap creativity through static and fixed rationality. *Seeing through numbers*, in this respect, was key to constructing just such bureaucratic legibility and means for *managing* the flow of the creative visual processes. Furthermore, as a locus of commercial animation production, those numerical indicators and objectives also gave credence to the

embedded and somewhat normative occupational discourses of professionalism – creating within limits – across the animation industry.

All that said, I have so far only focused on the organisational and discursive levels of production and how those numbers played out descriptively. Before closing this chapter, therefore, the next logical – and anthropological – step is to ask the following question: In the everyday practices of highly complex, contingent and entangled production work, just how effective or successful actually were these numbers on the ground? In the next section, I am going to explore *how these numbers actually happened* on the production floor, from the perspective of the production operators.

5.4 Counting contingencies

Although the existence of *shukei-hyo* (the production record) and *nippou-hyo* (the daily report) may give the impression that the production was subject to meticulous and rational control, nothing was further from the lived reality of the operators. On the production floor, we were constantly faced with all sorts of emerging and unexpected contingencies that were at once difficult to contain or even simply comprehend or rationalise. The examples of such contingencies below may read like a list of anecdotes, but I have observed one and all of them happen either to my colleagues or to myself during my fieldwork at Toei and UTT: Just when you are racing against time and needed it the most, all company owned cars are miraculously out of petrol so you have to waste 20 minutes by driving to the nearby petrol station before you can deliver that crucial animation cut to the subcontracting studio. The director just won't listen to your desperate plea to contain the number of animation drawings. Animators say they will have their cuts ready by tomorrow,

and they are never ready by tomorrow (and this keeps on for a week). Some animators literally *disappear* before important deadlines. Or an animation cut goes missing: you don't want to believe it, but you just can't find *that* cut you were sure was lying around somewhere only a few hours earlier.

Although this is my own analogy and not the one I collected from the field, one may picture the actual everyday work of the production operators in terms of running around with buckets full of water in vain to quell the multiple but minor bushfires in a vast field. Just when you think you finally have one fire under control, several others simultaneously appear to ravage the field. It is therefore critical to recognise that the numbers I have been discussing above, which are taken as an accurate representation of the production process by the upper management, are actually collected under a vast array of unpredictable contingencies by production operators who are, so to speak, on fire. The implication is that those numbers of animation making, stored in the production record and represented in the daily report, are not after all so unequivocal and infallible a *fact* as numbers in general are taken to be under modern epistemology (c.f. Poovey 1998).

How do the operators actually collect the number of drawings used in each cut? They count up manually for each of the hundreds of animation cuts. Figure 5.5 is a production material called the *timesheet*, and it is an indispensable element of an animation cut. The chief body of the animation cut is a bundle of animation drawings, but by themselves, those drawings are just loosely assorted depictions of sequential motion on paper. The timesheet gives those drawings definite relationality with one another by precisely ordering each drawing in progressive temporal frames. The exact temporal direction on the timesheet is critical for later production processes such as, most notably, Filming (see Chapter 2 Figure 2.1). It is by looking at the timesheet, which is collaboratively crafted by the director and the

key animators, that the operator counts up the number of drawings used in that cut. Without going into too much technical detail, I will explain the basics of how this is done below.

The timesheet can be read both vertically and horizontally. From the top to the bottom, each small square contained in the vertical columns on the left side of the sheet represents the progression of time (each small square is called *koma*, meaning a frame, where one frame is one twenty-fourth of a second). The horizontal row separated by letters A, B, C, D..., which intersects with the vertical columns, stands for different layers of animation. Since three different layers are used in Cut 10-14 (Figure 5.5), to count the drawings, one attends to the three vertical columns under A, B and C. On the timesheet, circled numbers represent key animations, whereas ticks between the circled numbers are in-betweening animations. Here are the three basic rules.

1) Key animations (circled numbers) and in-betweening animations (ticks) are counted separately for each column of layers, and added up in the end. For instance, in Column A, there is only one drawing used, which is ①. This ① in Column A is different from the other ① in Column B and C.

2) Each tick in between key animation drawings are counted as one drawing, but when the sequence of ticks are repeated between the same key animations for the second time, those ticks are not counted. For example, in Column B, there are five in-betweening animations (ticks) between the key animations ① and ②, making up for seven animation drawings to begin with. After the key animation ②, however, there are the same number of ticks (in-betweening animation) descending towards the key animation ①. This indicates the first animation sequence from key animation ① and ② are repeated in reverse order for the next sequence from ② and ①. As this is the reverse movement using the same animation drawings, they should not be counted.

3) The same circled numbers repeated within the same vertical column

mean they are the same drawings, and not counted. In Column C, three key animation drawings (1, 2, 3) are written in many times in a sequential order. This just means the same drawings are reused in different orders and timing, so they need not be counted twice. Incidentally, the key animation drawings in Column C are not circled, but this does not mean anything special. Sometimes, directors (and animators) circle key animations, other times they do not. Following those rules, we can now count the number of animation drawings used in Cut 10-14: the total is 11.

The operators count up drawings in the given animation cut twice over a separate time period. The first time they count the numbers is when key animators turn in drawings for the first time. After this, the newly worked out cut is passed onto the director for checking, and it is at this stage that the director can work to reduce and contain the number of animation drawings. After the director has done this, the cut is returned to the operator. The operator counts up the drawings in the same cut for the second time, as the director will have altered the number specification on the timesheet. Going back to the example of *Fresh Precure* episode 50, which used some 2,000 more animation drawings than the designated 3,500 limit, it was during this process that the director kept inscribing more and more in-between animations to enhance the technical smoothness of the final animation.

Counting on the timesheet, as opposed to counting the actual drawings, is necessary, because the total number of drawings to be used in the cut is predetermined *before* the in-betweening animations are physically drawn and added. What this implies is that, in principle, the numbers of animation drawings written into *shukei-hyo* (the production record) by the operators are, at least by the time of their input, still only *hypothetical* numbers. The factuality of those hypothetical numbers is further compromised by the operators who always have to count them in a rush under perennial overwork and lack of time. Yet, the counting of animation

drawings demands a fair amount of attention and concentration if it is to be done accurately. Although the example in Figure 5.5 is relatively straightforward, there were many more complicated ones used in episode 50. It is also not uncommon for a complex animation cut to contain more than one hundred drawings. Taking those circumstances into account, it is rather easy to *miscount*. ‘Never talk to an operator who’s counting’ was a tacit but well-kept rule, as such interference would create a muddle of this task. In fact, inadvertent miscounting was so common that it was one of more audacious public secrets among operators on the production floor that the numbers put into the database were always already a little inaccurate.

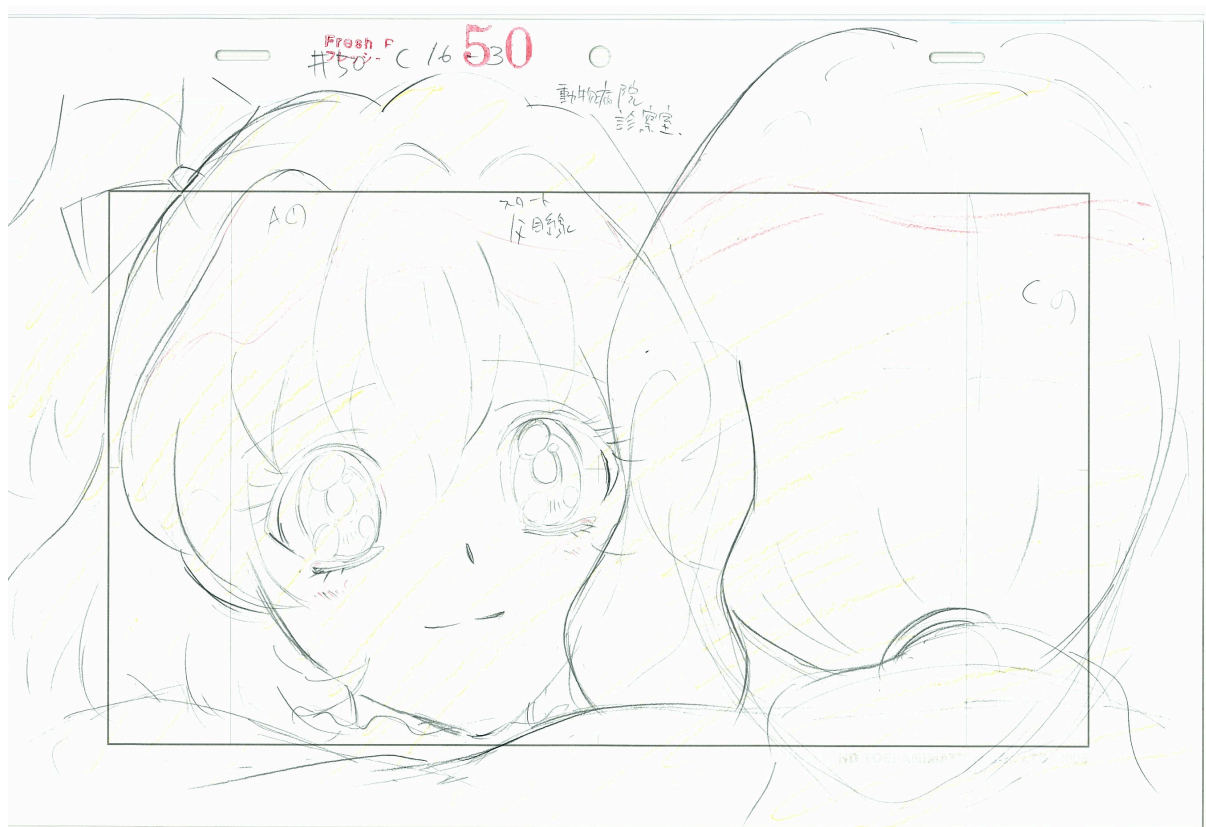


Figure 5.6 Rough Key Animation, ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

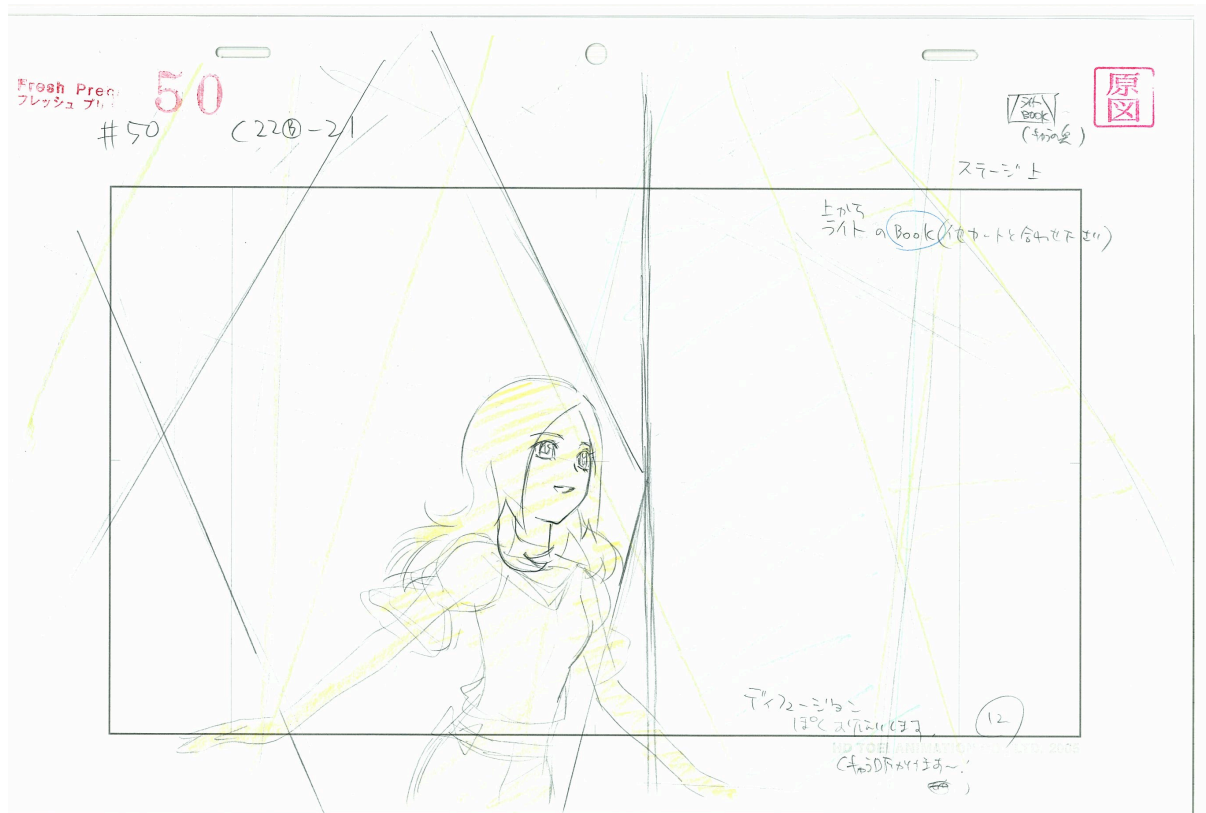


Figure 5.7 Rough Key Animation, ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

There was a further complication to the assumed transparency of the production record on the epistemological level. This concerned a rather obvious character of *visual* animation production. I believe it is safe to say one of the fundamental principles in mathematics is that two identical numbers have an identical numerical value (e.g. number four and number four have got to be $4 = 4$, neither $4 > 4$ nor $4 < 4$). This did not always apply to the numerical record in *shukei-hyo*, where the same numbers could mean different things. Consider the following. Cut 16-3 (Figure 5.6) depicts a headshot of one of the heroines hugging another character. Cut 22b-21 (Figure 5.7), in contrast, depicts another heroine dancing on stage. Both cuts contain exactly the same number of drawings (28), but for the animators, Cut 16-3 was considerably easier to draw than Cut 22b-21. Compared with the relatively still headshot, the animation of the dancing body requires careful attention to the muscle, bones and joints of the human body, as well as a superior skill in drawing them in sequential and vivacious motion which must also look ‘pretty’ (*Fresh Precure* is a show marketed to young girls). Similarly, there is a very real difference between spending one hundred drawings to animate a simple head and shoulder shot of a character talking, and using the same number of drawings for an elaborate explosion of a complex architecture. While any operator would consider the latter only reasonable, the use of one hundred drawings in the former case is unlikely to go unnoticed, to say the least. On the database, however, these two cuts will only register the identical one hundred. The quantitative indications on the production record thus often failed to capture the intricacies of the qualitative drawing processes of visual animation production, and every production operator knew this as a kind of tacit and embodied knowledge.

At this juncture, therefore, I would like to return again to the position of the

production operator in the production divisions, especially in terms of the difference in perspective between the management and the creative staff. As I noted in the beginning, the operators occupied the lowest rank within the management division, and worked directly on the production floor facing directors and animators. What this formal hierarchy effectively entailed was that the operators, because they worked on the production floor *with* the creators but *from* the management side, were the only people in a production blessed with *double vision*. It is not that the operators added any visual labour to the animation cuts, but almost every aspect of their production labour involved handling animation cuts which were worked on by different creative personnel through the production flow. As much as they saw through numbers, as they worked to collect and build the production record, they also inevitably learned to see the production visually through actual animation drawings. That the operators could also see production *visually* meant there were occasions in which alliances were formed between operators and creators. Consider the following exchange between the operator A and the director B in the precure staffroom:

Director B: Hey, wanna make this episode a good [anime]?

Operator A: Sure. That goes without saying.

Director B: Well you know what that means then. Let's spend more drawings!

Operator A: [Shrugging and laughing]

When the above conversation took place, the episode on which these two were working already exceeded the 3,500 limit by approximately 700 drawings. In the end, the total number of excess drawings reached nearly 1,000, and both the director and the operator received severe reprimands from the upper management, which could

reflect badly on their annual performance assessment in the company. In respect to this, the operator, after giving a series of criticisms, defended the director:

But *that* episode, it had a problem already as a script. It contained three, separate, and independent battle scenes.⁹ What could he [the director] do? In that respect, to be fair, it was a really hard episode to contain the number of drawings.....

Likewise, when the director for episode 50 started using an alarming number of animation drawings, this was, if not given a blind eye, then certainly regarded sympathetically by Tanabe-san, the episode's official operator. It was, after all, the last episode of the show (*saishu-wa*) in which Zako-san (the general director) had a lot of personal investment. When episode 50 finally reached delivery, having spent an excess of 2,000 drawings, Zako-san thus joked how his head 'might get blown off' (*kubi ga tobu*, a Japanese expression for 'to be given the boot'). In the end, this did not happen, but other directors have not been so fortunate. For instance, the above-mentioned director B had a history of overspending the drawing numbers in his episodes. As a result, the upper management decided to temporarily demote him to *assistant* director, during which period he had to tolerate working under someone else despite his years of experience as a full-fledged director at Toei.

On the production floor of commercial animation, numbers in the record did not necessarily add up. Or rather, there was a critical fissure between the ways in which the quantification of the production process transformed drawings into numbers on the one hand, and how the actual animation drawings visually constituted that same process on the other. The critical point to note here is that this is not a question of which version of the production – the numerical record or the visual drawings – was more real or 'true'. In the loci of commercial production, the

products (animation) had to be as visually enchanting as financially viable. Even though the constitutive process of animation production was the visual making of animation cuts, the numbers collected along the way did produce their own social and material effects. The director being relegated on the basis of the recorded production statistics is just one such example, but more significantly, for those in the upper echelons of the company management, such statistics were all they could see of any production. The opening remark by the president Hiroshi Takahashi that they (the executives) were ‘the ones who see through numbers’ thus encapsulated this tenuous relationship between numbers and creative visual production.

5.5 Conclusion: auditing creativity

A picture may speak a thousand words, but in certain circumstances it fell short of convincing the board of company executives. I do not wish to give the impression that the upper management of Toei Animation did not care about the quality of animation that the company produced. They did, of course, but what is more pertinent for this chapter is that at the same time such qualities needed to be accounted for by certain combinations of numbers. Even in this, however, numbers had very different qualities and contexts depending on what they meant, where they appeared and how they were produced.

In the recent research literature, the anthropologist of finance Caitlin Zaloom (2003, 2006) observed a similar representational fissure between what numbers are taken to perform and what they actually do in her ethnography of the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT). Zaloom (2003) invites her readers to shift the analytical focus away from the numbers as the paradigmatic site of modern rationality and ‘knowledge *production*’ (ibid: 2, emphasis original), to look at them in

terms of the ways in which they are actually *consumed* in concrete social and material contexts. The trading pit of the CBOT is just such a site of entangled numerical consumption for Zaloom, where the traders:

‘look for clues to the direction of the market by observing the numbers. At the same time, the short time frames of futures trading introduce a fundamental instability and uncertainty into economic judgments based on these numbers.’

(ibid)

Zaloom contrasts the highly contingent and unstable market indicators with the popularly and scholastically prevailing notion of ‘firm numbers’, which ‘work in the service of accountability and objectivity, acting as tools of standardization and commensuration’ (2003: 2). The CBOT’s trading pit is a highly charged masculine workplace and a theatre for public contestation, where restrained deliberation must be replaced by brunt forces of aggressive competition and powerfully calibrated performances of ‘asociality’ (2006: 113). The auditory inundation of bidding shouts and the spatial (and the very physical) politics of occupying a particular trading spot in the crowded pit never allows the process of bidding to be a disembodied exchange of numerical monetary values. Rather, each trader must act out a ferocious competitive confidence, shouting louder than anyone else, be in the right place at the right time, physically out-gesture *his* competitors. Whereas market indicators can never be divorced from the perilous contingency of the future profit in the CBOT, the bids in the pit are fully embodied action, where the same numerical bids are never treated as being identical. The numbers are ambiguous, and the numbers are ‘embodied’ (2003: 6).

The larger ethnographic claim Zaloom is building here, of course, is that such contingent, embodied and ‘ambiguous numbers’ (2003, 2006) occur in one of the paradigmatic sites for global productions of market rationality, the Chicago Board of Trade. For the purpose of this chapter, the analytics of ambiguous numbers provides an important critical ethnographic observation about the function of unequivocal commensuration that numbers have historically been theorised to facilitate in social sciences more generally (but see for its critique Maurer 2002, 2005, 2006), and the processes of *auditing creativity* more specifically in my ethnographic context.

In anthropology, the regime and practices of audit have recently emerged as major research foci for those who, in one way or the other, work in or with complex large-scale organisations in liberal or liberalising capitalist societies across the world (Brenneis 2006; Davis 1999; Kipnis 2008; Maurer 2002; Merry 2011; Miller and Carrier 1998; Shore and Wright 2000; Strathern 2000). The research in this field criss-crosses public and private institutions equally in principle, but the paradigmatic ethnographic site in which the anthropology of accountability developed so far has arguably been the domain of higher education, and the anthropology departments in the British universities in particular (see Strathern 2000). Terms such as ‘audit culture’ (Strathern 2000) may denote a wide range of sentiments, regimes and practices, but key among them is the critical sense that the singularising quantitative accounting of heterogeneous qualities and performances has shown notable expansion from spheres such as finance (where it originated) to areas like health and education over the past few decades (Shore and Wright 2000: 58-59). This expansion becomes a notable critical development because many commentators see in these new ‘audit regimes’ (Strathern 2000: 2) a particularly contemporary site of ethical formation, where ‘the financial and the moral meet in....[their] rendering of accountability’ (ibid). For Cris Shore and Susan Wright, this

rise of new auditing in public spheres, with the corresponding formation of a specifically market-oriented notion of ‘accountability’, points to the increasing dominance of ‘neo-liberal governmentality’ (2000: 61) in British higher education.

Anthropological critiques of the now dominant regime of numerical performance auditing in university departments of both teaching and research (e.g. TQA and RAE/REF) are fascinating for the purpose of this chapter, precisely because they register a comparable emotional and professional tension in seeing – and therefore subjecting to control – qualitative endeavour (research, animation) through quantitative indicators (a 4* rating, 3,500 animation drawings), as I have explored in the Japanese animation production. In this regard, it is telling how John Davis, in his presidential address at the Royal Anthropological Institute, expressly identified ‘academic anthropologists as *creators*’ (1999: 5, emphasis added). The address, titled ‘Administering creativity’, discussed the rise of audit regimes in British academia in the terms I described above, and pitted the creator-anthropologists against the auditor-bureaucrats of HEFCE.

In the existing literature on accountability, especially those set out by Starthern (2000) and the analytics of ‘audit culture’, there exists an implicit tendency to posit numerical auditing diametrically opposed to certain qualities of liberal ideals such as academic freedom, scholarly independence, and intellectual creativity. While those are the values we all hold dear, it is critically important to realise that the saliency of the notion of creativity in contemporary capitalist societies today is itself contemporaneous with the rise of what Shore and Wright (ibid) call the ‘neo-liberal governmentality’ during the past two decades. Seen from this perspective, I argue, the increasing presence of creativity and numerical accountability across advanced capitalist societies today represents two sides of the same coin. The ideals of creativity and use of numbers as a device of governance both

stem from the same 19th century (utilitarian) liberalism. In this regard, ‘neo-liberal’ processes of performance auditing and liberal values such as creativity do not necessarily contradict one another.

I suggest one way to see a fuller articulation of the relationship between creativity and numerical accounting in the contemporary world is actually to shift our focus *away* from sites where the audit regime is said to be expanding (e.g. education, health), to sites where such practices have long defined the processes of creative endeavours: e.g. the so-called creative industries (e.g. de Pueter 2011; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008; McRobbie 2002). In the context of the animation industry in Japan, the auditing of visual production has been something animation makers have always done since the industry fully emerged in the country around the late 1950s¹⁰ (see Chapter 3), and whose importance is not entirely to do with the rise of ‘neo-liberal governmentality’ (c.f. Kipnis 2008).

In putting forth the analogy of ‘anthropologist-as-a-creator’ in a self-acknowledged romanticist manner, Davis made one critical observation that is often lacking in theoretically sophisticated critiques of performance auditing such as Strathern (2000) or Shore and Wright (2000): the very perspective of actual auditors who labour to produce the basis for such numbers. This perspective, in turn, is precisely what my ethnography of *seeing through numbers* in the Japanese animation industry adds to the existing debate in the anthropology of audit and accountability. Drawing on the work of Michael Herzfeld on bureaucracy, Davis (1999: 7) notes that:

‘We know that bureaucracies work not because they are perfect machines of rationality but because they are permeated by social relations, hierarchies and understandings that are not part of the idealised schemata of relations between roles

that are represented in organograms.’

What my findings from the commercial animation industry in this chapter further elaborate, alongside Zaloom’s ethnography of ambiguous numbers in the global financial market, is that the numbers thus produced – or consumed – in the actual social relations of bureaucratic or economic organisations, which are themselves embedded and entangled, are already contingent and unstable (Thedvall 2012). Like Herzfeld’s (1993, 2005) bureaucrats, far from being omnipotent agents of rationality, the production operators in the Japanese animation industry properly ‘muddle[d] through’ (2005: 374) entwined production contingencies and the political economy of the commercial animation. If auditing creativity became problematic on the production floor, it was not necessarily because numbers stood in perpetual opposition to creativity. Rather, the animation makers involved in this particular way of seeing on the ground were already aware that this was, at best, an ambiguous method of translation between quality and quantity. Of course, this observation in itself does not explain why or how numbers, once produced and presented in certain embedded ways, come to partake of such powers of persuasion in contemporary societies. I do, however, hope to have shown in this chapter that the anthropological critique of auditing needs to go beyond seeing a simple opposition between numbers and other liberal values such as creativity.

Notes

¹ Approximately £156 billion, where £1 = ¥128, on 29/02/2012.

² To be terminologically more precise, the sequence of drawings I present here are called ‘rough key animation’, and technically still not a complete set of key animation. Rough key animation is a sketch of an animated movement before the lines are cleaned up and processed as the finalised key animation.

³ Tanabe-san, my supervisor, constructed his *shukei-hyo* database alongside mine on *The AS System*. Although we shared virtually the same numerical information in our respective database, it is Tanabe-san’s *AS* version which was the official database of *Fresh Precure* episode 50.

⁴ The redacted parts in this figure are the names of subcontractor companies.

⁵ Considered under a different light, this association of artistic self-expression with masturbation may also point to the highly gendered dimension of animation work, combined with a specific workplace culture and organisational hierarchy in particular. The connection between masturbation and creativity virtually all came from men in the middle-level management or above, and no female managers I had a chance to work with made this connection. In suggesting the link between this expression and the middle-level male management, I should also add that I rarely came across women working at that level or above (i.e. production desks or producers) during my fieldwork.

⁶ One way to make sense of this strong emphasis on the commercial character of production may be to look at the cultural history of *consumption* specific to animation and the animation industry in Japan over the past twenty years (see Chapter 3). The wake of the Miyazaki case dealt a severe symbolic blow to the thriving fan subculture of anime and manga known as *doujin* in the early 1990s (see Kinsella 2000). At the risk of generalising, *doujin* is a practice of amateur publication of fan-made parody/ fictions of already existing commercial titles. Usually produced in the form of privately printed and bound magazines,

books and booklets (i.e. without ISBN code and such), dedicated amateur producers of those fan fictions gather in organised events to sell, exchange and interact with other dedicated fans. In the words of sociologist Sharon Kinsella (2000: 12), after Miyazaki, those '[a]mateur manga fans....became the targets of a nation-wide panic about the murderous anti-social effects of involvement with violent and erotic....manga and animation.'

This explicit discursive demarcation of the sphere of consumption and amateur fan fiction as the site of potential and actual pathology, however, entailed an important tacit implication that the sphere of production and professional commercial activities may be altogether different and exempt from such pernicious associations. As Kinsella (2000: 133) documents, established commercial publishers of manga in the early 1990s aggressively pursued this boundary-making between the amateur and professional domains of manga production and consumption. I suggest that the animation industry, being intimately bound with the manga publishing (see Chapter 3), did not remain unaffected by this project of conceptually separating production from consumption, professionals from amateurs, and commerce from fan activity, rendering work and labour in the commercial sector an important locus of self-legitimation.

⁷ In so stating, I am not trying to make a general claim here that the Euro-American conceptualisation of creativity was construed as pejorative self-indulgence in Japanese cultural thinking. I have neither the evidence nor the intention to make such a broad and essentialist argument. I strictly limit my discussion here to the specific ethnographic context of the workplace of animation production.

⁸ My translation, <http://corp.toei-anim.co.jp/company/> accessed 12 March 2012.

⁹ The battle scenes, or action sequences, require a substantially larger number of drawings to be animated effectively. For this reason, usually the *Precure* series only had one battle scene per episode.

¹⁰ In fact, there is a relatively well-documented observation in ethnographies of the so-called creative or cultural industries that the tension between the creative processes and the management structure forms the constitutive character of those industries. This is not only so in Japanese advertising (Moeran 1996, 2006), music (Condry 2006), or publishing industries (Kinsella 2000), but also in Indian advertising (Mazzarella 2003) or the US video

game industry (Malaby 2009), to mention but a few.

Chapter 6

Making animation Japanese: culture and creativity in the political economy of international subcontracting

6.1 To the other side of production

On the 1st of February 2010, the participant observation fieldwork I had been conducting on the production process of Japanese animation in Tokyo took me to Manila, the Philippines. That morning, I arrived as usual at the Toei Animation studio in Tokyo around 10:00. Shigeta-san (female, early forties, interpreter and administrator) at the overseas production division had booked me on a Japan Airlines flight from Narita to Manila International Airport. I was now into my final month of internship/fieldwork with Toei Animation, having worked as an operator on episode 50 of *Fresh Precure* with and under the supervision of Tanabe-san (see Chapter 4).

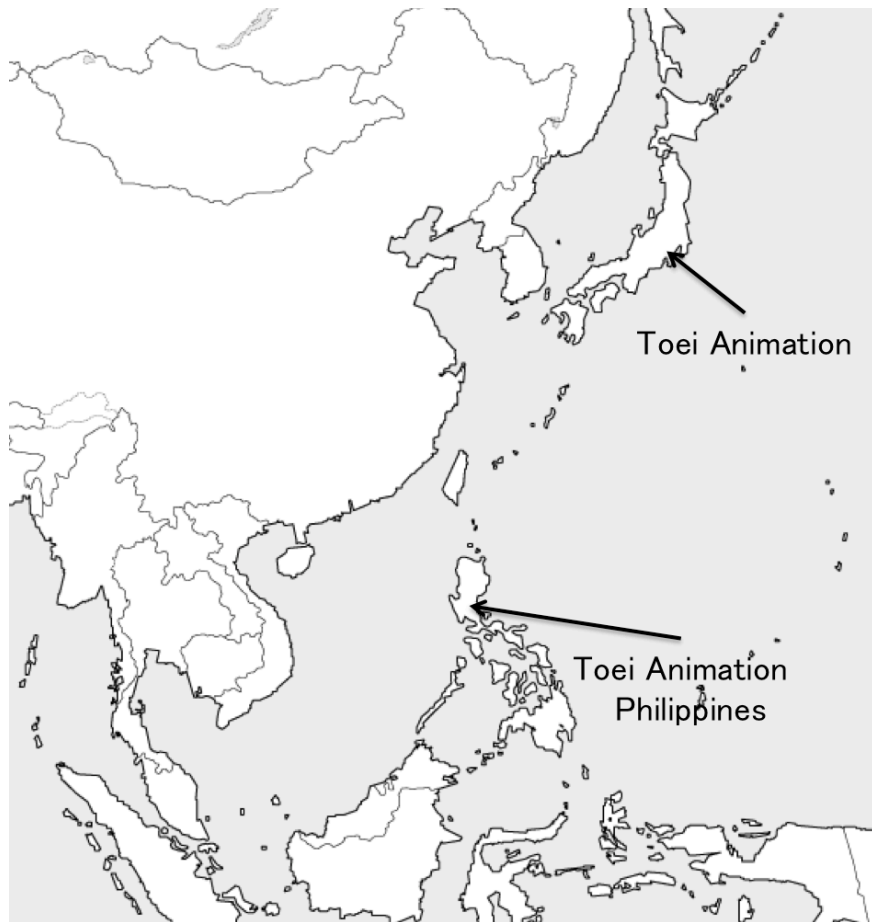


Figure 6.1 Toei Animation and Toei Animation Philippines

Having left Toei Animation around 11:45, it was at about 14:00 that I finally arrived at Narita International Airport. Several hours of waiting, two security checks and the border control later, my flight finally departed on time at 18:45. Flying between Tokyo and Manila took roughly four and a half hours; the time difference between the two cities being one hour, I landed in the Philippines some time before 22:00. My destination was Toei Animation Philippines (TAP), Toei's largest overseas subsidiary and a vital hub of the IB-TP processes in its production assemblage (an explanation of 'IB-TP' is given below). I had spent practically all day travelling, and by the time I finally lay down in Toei's company-leased accommodation in Manila, it

was already approaching midnight.

In a way, the ethnography of the present chapter pivots around this journey between Toei Animation and Toei Animation Philippines, which spanned some 3,000 kilometres and took me almost half a day to complete. But this is not about my movements *per se*; rather, it is about the transnational production of animation cuts. The very route I followed on the 1st of February 2010 was more or less the same circuit around which hundreds of animation cuts flew between the two studios every day. In fact, this movement of animation cuts in and out of Japan, in both physical and digitised forms, made up a rather regular, routine, and mundane part of daily animation production within Toei's expansive subcontracting relations. This extensive use of production outsourcing forms the main focus of this chapter.

Outsourcing to large-scale subcontractors in East and Southeast Asian locations slowly took off in early years of the 1970s as a cost reduction strategy, and by 2010 had long been a key part of the animation production flow in the Japanese industry. Throughout my internship in the *Fresh Precure* project, Toei Animation Philippines (TAP) had been a ubiquitous part of the 'taskscape' (c.f. Ingold 2000) of everyday production in the precure staffroom. An undersea optical fibre network physically connected the two studios, and TAP's critical presence as the key subcontractor in Toei's production system meant that the latter's people worked with the Filipino subsidiary on a day-to-day basis. Thanks to the undersea cables, it was even possible to call TAP using the company's four-digit internal phone number. While the subcontracting relation between Toei and TAP occurred through multiple layers of mediation and communication in the context of *Fresh Precure* production, the physical distance felt much less pronounced, at least on the experiential level in the precure staffroom.

By emphasising the technologically mediated proximity between the two

Toei studios, however, I do not mean to imply that my findings subscribe neatly to so-called time-space compression theories of globalisation (e.g. Harvey 1990). Often theorised as a salient condition of advanced capitalism, the idea of time-space compression posits that advanced technologies of communication and transportation render our experience of (vast) distance less and less significant in everyday life, where it is understood to be an objective and global process.

Whereas the sense of proximity did appear to be a relevant aspect of everyday work between the two studios, my analysis of Tokyo-Manila outsourcing suggests that their relation should not be simplistically understood in terms of time-space compression. As shall become clear, this is because the experience of proximity turned out to be qualitatively different and contingent depending on which side of the subcontracting relation one stood. That is to say, even if advanced communication technologies made the physical distance between the two studios less relevant in the conventional sense, *location still mattered* in the political economy of international subcontracting.

In this chapter, I aim to explicate how these differences surfaced in the processes of outsourcing, and attend in particular to how they were experienced and theorised by the Filipino animation makers who were the junior partners in international subcontracting. The materials I discuss are largely drawn from my two week fieldtrip to Toei Animation Philippines (TAP), where I conducted extensive semi-structured interviews with a total of twenty-seven Filipino animation makers.¹ What happens when part of production work goes overseas during the flow of daily commercial production? I pay careful attention to the details of assumptions, mediations, and procedures during the visualisation process between Tokyo and Manila, and especially how – and when – this process failed.

On the one hand, practitioners on both sides of production readily pointed to ‘cultural difference’ between Japan and the Philippines as the prime culprit for errors in outsourced production. Between Toei and TAP, ‘cultural difference’ was not only a speculative explanation for possible production errors, but for those who actually experienced unexpected errors, it was an embodied and hard-earned lesson of international subcontracting. On the other hand, as I will show, visualisation errors are not in themselves unique or limited to the outsourcing process. Detected errors in visualisation are called ‘retakes’ in the Japanese industry. While the examples of retakes I discuss in this chapter are predominantly ones which seem characteristically ‘cultural’ in their origin, I wish to resist the understanding that these retakes stem inherently from the cultural differences between Japan and the Philippines in a fixed and bounded manner. This is for a reason, and I shall take a brief detour to clarify it.

Debates are ongoing in anthropology today about the presence of ‘culture’ in our discipline, and especially how it is now localised, theorised, and employed by the very peoples we study and learn from (Candea 2010; Miyazaki 2004: 131; Sahlins 1999). As Marshall Sahlins (1999: 401) observed more than ten years ago, the crux of the dilemma today is that almost ‘...everyone got ‘culture’.’ This everyone’s ‘culture’, however, is often the kind of concept and definition that anthropologists sought to eliminate from their lexicon from the late 1980s (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986): it is one constructed out of the particular historical and political contexts of the present, yet is presented as an unchanging and ahistorical essence. My analytical stance toward this dilemma is as I laid out in the opening of Chapter 2. I draw inspiration from Matei Candea’s proposition of what he calls ‘real constructivism’. To cite it again:

‘To claim that things are constructed is not to somehow negate their reality, any more than seeing a building site negates the reality of the building which later comes to stand there.... [T]his real constructivism would not insist condescendingly upon the emotional importance of identities to participants, nor would it praise them as a fake but politically useful ‘strategic essentialism’, nor even insist that their being socially constructed is fine because everything is social constructed (i.e. unreal).’

Candea (2010: 4)

In expressing my caveat about the local understanding of cultural difference, I do not wish to suggest that difference did not exist between Tokyo and Manila, or worse still, ‘culture’ as understood by the Filipino and Japanese practitioners was somehow ‘lesser’ in terms of analytical sophistication. Differences did exist between the two studios; but in my view, culture was neither the only nor the most critical difference between them. In this chapter, therefore, I aim to diffuse the locus of difference between Tokyo and Manila from culture alone to a wider consideration of positionality and creativity in the political economy between them. After all, TAP was not merely a Filipino subcontractor but an owned-subsidiary of Toei Animation. TAP’s position was fixed in the relation of subcontracting to *always* work on creatively less demanding tasks compared to Toei. Caught in this political economy, the Filipino practitioners – and *only the Filipino practitioners* – experienced the issues of cultural difference also as potential or actual disruptions to their creativity. In what follows, I will try to show how this international division of labour between Tokyo and Manila was also a *creative* division of labour in which the upper-stream visualisation processes were dominated by Toei’s Tokyo studio.

6.2 Outsourcing production

As I note elsewhere in the thesis, commercial animation production in Japan entails a geographically expansive but disjointed spatial network of many subcontracting specialist studios. The large area of western Tokyo itself exists as the seabed of creative visual production, on which animation cuts physically flow across multiple points in the geographically disjointed production network. For certain labour intensive production divisions, the vast, spatially disjointed network stretches far beyond western Tokyo and reaches the shores of East and Southeast Asia in search of cheap labour.

Within the matrices of subcontracting relations at Toei, and the industry at large, most pertinent to this outsourcing were the divisions called IB-TP (In-Betweening, Trace and Paint; see Figure 6.2). Within Toei Animation, a sub-section in the management division called the Overseas IB-TP was responsible for this process. The aforementioned Shigeta-san, for instance, worked in this section as an administrative interpreter between Manila and Tokyo at the Tokyo end. Without going into too much technical detail, In-Betweening, Trace and Paint are the three finalising processes in the lower-stream of the animation production flow, in which key animation drawings are ‘smoothed out’ by additional ‘in-between’ drawings, digitised, and finally given colours for digital composition (i.e. filming).

Animators who take part in the In-Betweening (IB) process are called ‘in-betweeners’ and differentiated from those in Key Animation, the division immediately above In-Betweening. The relationship between the two classes of animators is clearly hierarchical and based on skill and the differential need for creativity. While key animators create the animation by drawing the key sequences

of action, the job of the in-betweeners is to trace those key animation drawings first and then add assisting drawings *in-between* the key animations. Since in-between drawings are crafted based on an already drawn key animation sequence, as a rule the in-betweening process requires less skill or creative imagination (see Appendix 1 for more). It is, therefore, the least skilled and experienced of animators (i.e. novices just entering the trade) who work in the IB division, where the in-betweening process also functions as on-the-job training for future key animators.

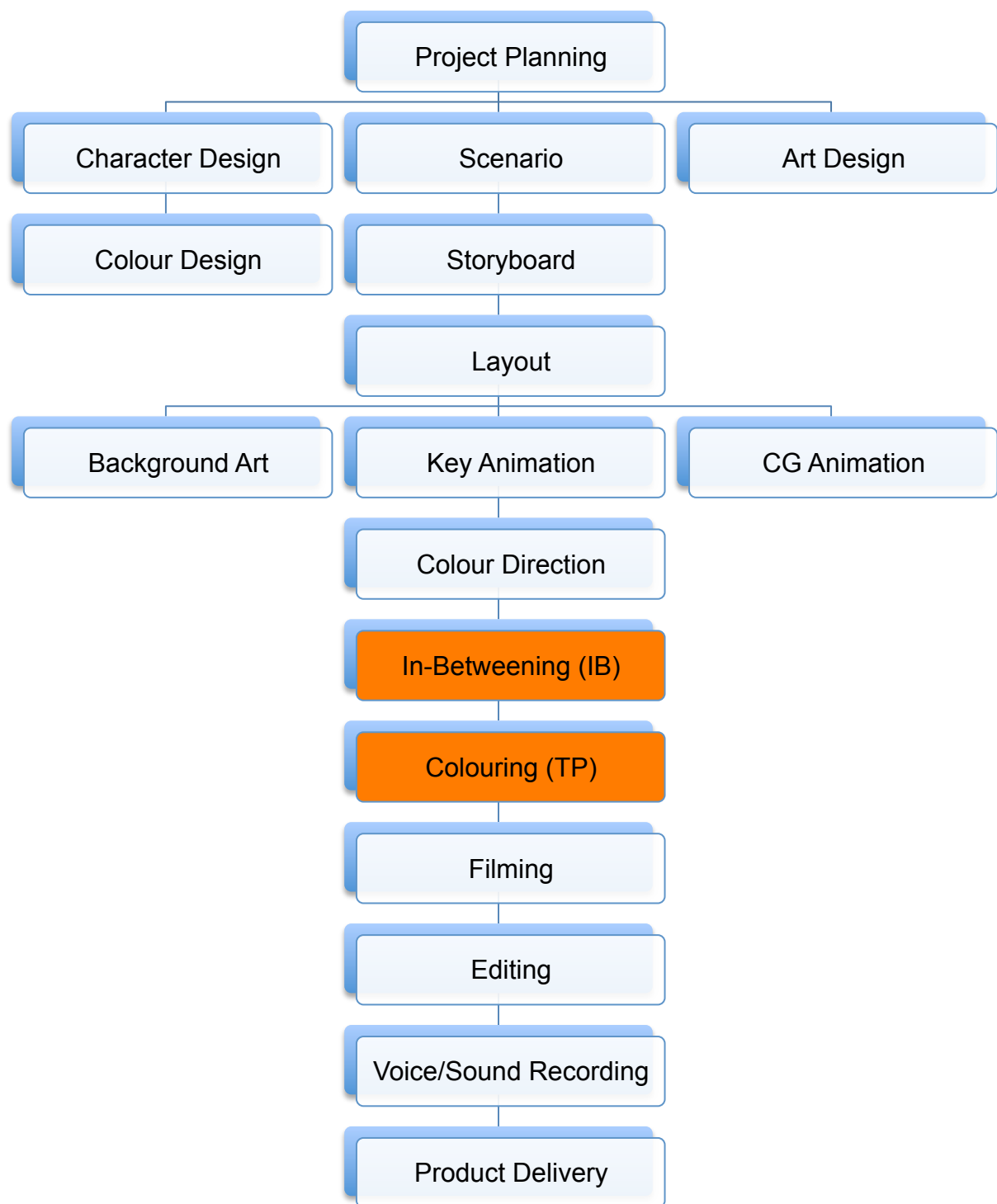


Figure 6.2 Production Flow Chart and IB-TP

Depending on circumstances, in-betweening may be done digitally or on paper. At TAP, the majority of the IB process was carried out on computers with the aid of an advanced pen tablet. Trace and Paint artists (TP artists) then added colours to the digitised IB drawings using specialist software, a keyboard and a mouse. The term ‘trace’ in the TP process is a rhetorical legacy of the era of analogue cel animation, whereby the TP artists first had to ‘copy’ (i.e. trace) paper IB drawings onto animation cels before they could paint colours onto the transparent celluloid sheets. This analogue method had ceased completely by the early 2000s in the Japanese industry (see Chapter 3), and Toei spearheaded this digitisation of production in tandem with TAP.

Whether analogue or digital, IB-TP comprises the most labour intensive processes in commercial animation production, and its outsourcing had tentatively begun by the mid-1970s. There are a few socio-technical and economic explanations for this. Firstly, when key animations are turned into finalised digitised IB, the number of drawings more than trebles or quadruples (it is this number that the production operators count on the timesheet and put into the production database; see Chapter 5). Since the in-betweeners not only add the assisting animation drawings but also physically trace, copy and replace all the key animation drawings, a few to several thousand drawings need to be completed during the IB process. Even though it is technically less challenging than key animation, the sheer quantity of drawings required renders it necessary to mobilise a substantial number of animators. The problem of quantity also characterises the TP process, in which there are a few to several dozen different colour parts to be painted *per sheet* for each of the thousands of IB (Figure 6.3).

Secondly, there is the issue of severely limited time. In today’s Japanese

animation industry, the bulk of the available production schedule is consumed by two canonical upper-stream production processes: ‘storyboard’ and ‘key animation’ (see Appendix 1). By the time animation cuts reach the IB-TP phase, the delivery timeline is so crunched that it is necessary to mobilise large numbers of practitioners into these divisions. But the procurement of such a large number of in-betweeners and TP artists domestically is highly constrained, to say the least, in the Japanese animation industry today.

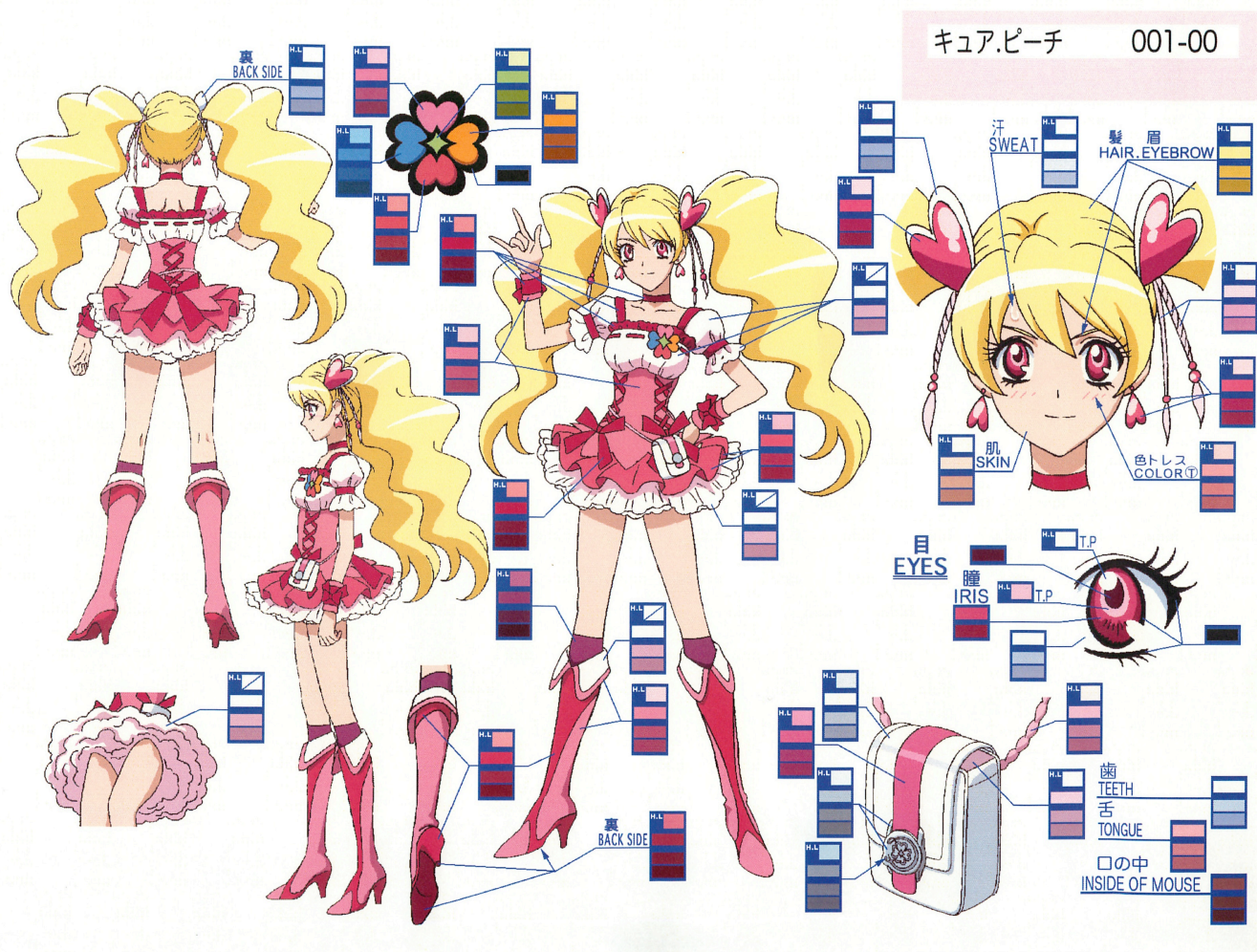


Figure 6.3 Character Colour Chart, ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

This leads, thirdly, to the issue of income. IB-TP, and especially In-Betweening, is the poorest division in the Japanese industry. Pay is based on the unit price of each IB drawing, usually around ¥250 (£2). Based on this unit price, for a novice animator to earn ¥200,000 (£1,520) monthly, roughly equivalent to the salary for new university graduates, she would have to draw 800 IBs every month. In a division where one is usually promoted to a key animator when one starts drawing 500 IBs per month, such a high number is often unrealistic. As a result, approximately fifty per cent of in-betweeners in Japan earned less than ¥1 million

(¥7,600), and the forty percent who earned more than this did not reach the ¥2 million (£15,200) mark in 2009.²

Those circumstances – the severe shortage of production time, substantial demand for a large quantity of production, and unfavourable terms of labour – contributed to the gradual shift of production to nearby overseas locations over the past three decades. The place of IB-TP in the animation production process is therefore a paradoxical one in today's industry. On one hand, in-betweening, and especially TP, are considered two of the less creatively and technically demanding visualisation tasks in the lower-stream of the production flow. On the other hand, however, the quality of IB-TP has a direct and causative bearing upon the technical visual quality of the final animation, and it is also the drawings done during these processes which are eventually filmed and broadcast. At the time of my fieldwork (2009-2010), approximately seventy per cent of IB-TP work in the Japanese industry was outsourced to overseas subcontractors across China, South Korea and Southeast Asia. Within Toei, seventy per cent of all IB-TP processes were outsourced to Toei Animation Philippines.

6.3 Made in translation

Toei Animation Philippines (TAP) was by no means a small studio. In the years after it started life as a small joint initiative between Toei and a local Filipino company in 1986, its business grew steadily and substantially. In the Philippines, the local animation industry emerged rather suddenly in the early 1980s when a disparate cohort of foreign animation studios took interest in the country's English speaking and 'cost effective' workforce to outsource some of the most labour intensive processes (i.e. IB-TP). The move was initiated by an Australian company called

Burbank Studios in 1983, which was followed by others, including major American houses such as Hanna-Barbera Productions (known among others for the production of *Tom and Jerry*).

Toei first began outsourcing their TP work to South Korea in 1976, but the steady rise in labour costs soon made the company look still further offshore, into Southeast Asia. The Japanese studio's entry into a subcontracting partnership with the Filipino company in the mid-1980s needs to be understood in the context of an already established outsourcing circuit, for Toei as the sender and Filipino subcontractors as the receivers of animation work. As the older cohort of workers at TAP attested, it was not unusual during the late 1980s and 1990s for skilled Filipino animators to keep switching between Japanese and American production houses.

TAP began in the mid-1980s as only one small subcontractor among other foreign subsidiaries, with only 25 TP artists. By the time of my visit in 2010, it hosted a total of 269 workers, comprising 163 employees, 99 contractual freelancers, and 4 interns, and was now a wholly owned subsidiary and chief subcontractor of the parent company in Tokyo. As an animation studio, it now had five major production divisions: Key Animation, In-Betweening (IB), Background Art (BG), CG (Computer Graphics), Trace and Paint (TP) and was capable of hammering out up to 50,000 IB-TPs per month, roughly corresponding to 10-14 episodes of TV animation a month. So far as the IB-TP production capacity was concerned, therefore, TAP was a far larger production studio than the parent company. Yet it was the Tokyo studio of Toei which dominated the upper-stream processes of visualisation, such as character design, storyboard, key animation and, above all, the director and producer functions.

TAP had moved around Metro Manila as it continued to expand throughout the 1990s, and at the time of my visit was located on the 7th floor of a high-rise

commercial building in Eastwood city, a 17 hectare commercial and residential district developed by the Philippines' Megaworld Corporation in the late 1990s. In an interesting contrast to the Toei Tokyo studio, which was housed in an old concrete building dating back to the late 1950s, the high-rise building TAP occupied was a thoroughly modern construction completed only in 2003. The entire length of the studio floor space was sectioned into production divisions, where each section hosted impeccable arrays of Windows PCs, a testament to the highly digitised production of today. Two of the largest divisions (IB and TP) were located right at the centre in a large rectangular space along whose sides ran the corridors connecting IB-TP with the rest of the studio. The whole of the 7th floor – and no doubt the rest of the high-rise building – was heavily air-conditioned, to the extent that I always wore a thin jumper even when it was over 25 degrees outside. Catches of endless upbeat pop songs drifted through the otherwise business-like white corridors all day and added to the characteristic ambience of the Filipino studio when compared to Toei Japan. Many tapestries and posters of past Toei productions hung on the walls of the outer corridor by the main studio entrance.

As a Japanese 'guest' from the parent company Toei, I was given a desk inside TAP's Japanese staffroom (JSR), which was responsible for mediation, translation and communication between the Tokyo and Manila studios in tandem with a team of four trilingual Filipino interpreters. The two Japanese staff stationed in the JSR were Sasakawa-san (male, late thirties, assistant director), and Okita-san (male, early fifties) who also acted as the president of Toei Animation Philippines. He was one of the very first employees at Toei who were sent to work in the Filipino subcontractor, and by 2010, Okita-san had been at TAP for nearly 18 years, during which time he also married locally. Sasakawa-san, in contrast, was an assistant director who had moved back and forth between the two studios but was

still primarily based in Tokyo. While Okita-san was conversant with Tagalog and English, Sasakawa-san could only speak Japanese, and the daily round of work within the Japanese staffroom thus depended on Jocelyn (female, early thirties), a trilingual Filipina interpreter who accompanied Sasakawa-san to practically every production meeting and translated production design materials (Figure 6.4).



Figure 6.4 Jocelyn's Translation of Production Design

©2010 Pretty Cures All Stars the Movie 2 Production Committee

When the drawing work was dispatched from Tokyo, the Japanese directors based in the Tokyo studio and the Japanese assistant director (Sasakawa-san) stationed in Manila would hold a production meeting over the videoconferencing system. During

this initial meeting, all the necessary creative directions were passed on to the Japanese staff at TAP. Jocelyn accompanied Sasakawa-san at all such directorial meetings and , after this initial meeting the two held another production meeting with Filipino animators, effectively replicating their previous one with the Japanese director(s).

As someone who had worked on the creative/visual side of animation production at Toei for many years, Sasakawa-san was well versed in the nuances and textures of the creative and technical visual directions given by Tokyo directors, but he could only speak Japanese. Jocelyn, by contrast, spoke Japanese, English and Tagalog fluently but had only a limited knowledge of the technical details of animation production. Thus, in the communication process between Tokyo and Manila, Sasakawa-san and Jocelyn worked together to mediate the complex creative directions from the Japanese directors to the Filipino animators; while Sasakawa-san interpreted the technicality of directions to Jocelyn, she then translated them into English or Tagalog to the Filipino animators. In this, effectively the same production meeting was convened twice, revolving around the pair as the hub of communication, in which the message passed through not only a linguistic boundary but also one of embodied knowledge, technical expertise, and practical experience.

Although it is to run a risk of positivistic reduction, the flow of communication between Tokyo and Manila could be conceptually summarised in the diagram below (Figure 6.5).

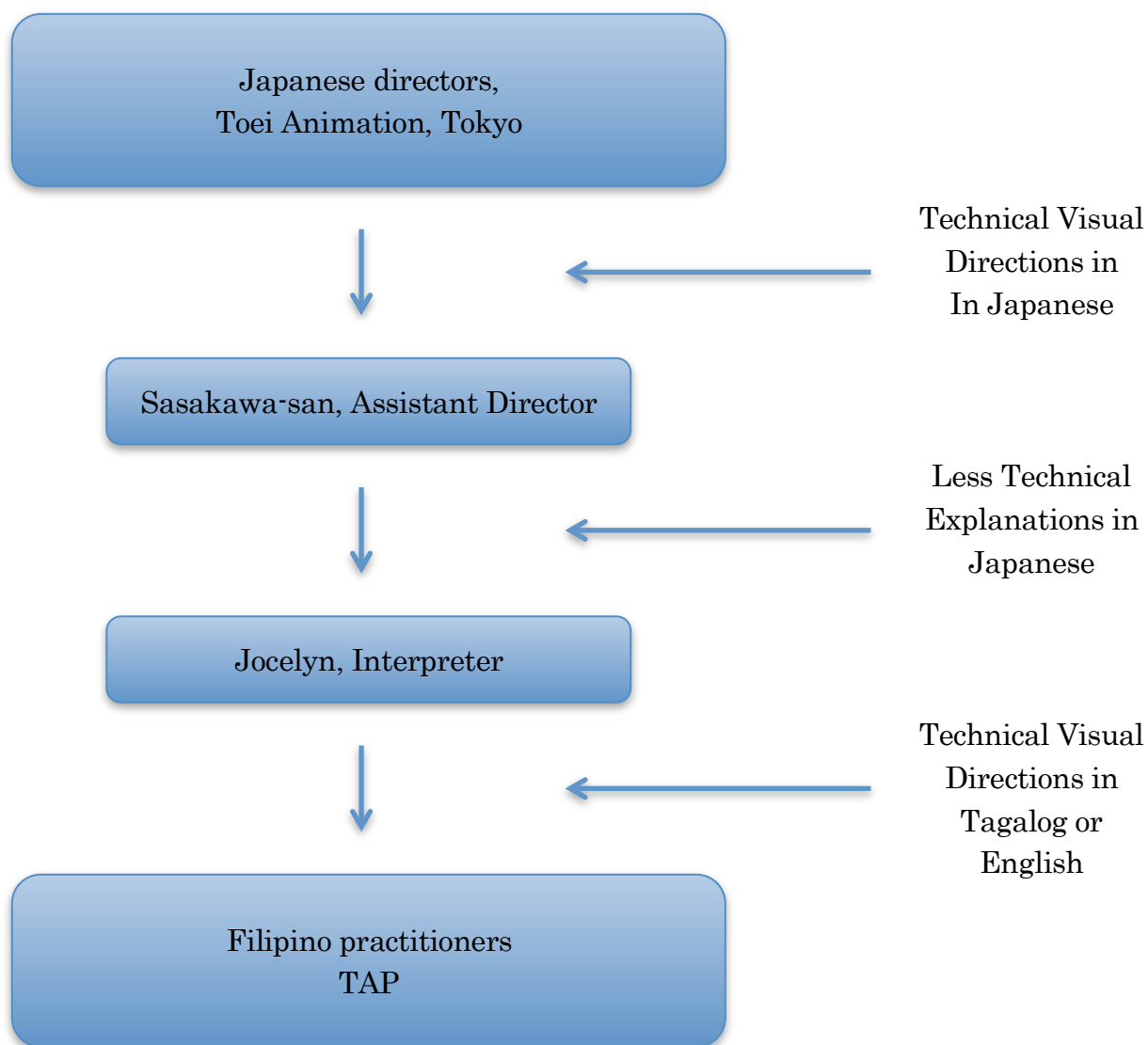


Figure 6.5 Buffers in communication between Toei and TAP

We are here beginning to witness the complex layers of communication, translation and interpretation constantly taking place as part of production outsourcing from Japan to the Philippines. These intricate layers of mediation, however, were not necessarily peculiar to the outsourcing process per se. The Japanese animation industry that agglomerated in Tokyo was itself made up of an entangled web of subcontracting. In this respect, successful management of communication was a key aspect of the directorial function in the animation production flow, regardless of

whether the work was subcontracted to a studio inside or outside Japan. However, more barriers stood between Tokyo and Manila than between Tokyo and other Japanese companies, and the layers of mediation often resulted in the production being lost in translation. Such traces of miscommunication usually and primarily manifested themselves *visually* during the production process.

In the industry, errors in visualisation were termed ‘retakes’, and retake cuts were sent back to the production division from which the error was determined to originate. The identification of such retakes in a given episode was an important responsibility of the episode’s director, and also functioned as a core mechanism of quality control. Formally this was done systematically in meetings called ‘rush checks’ during the final production processes, when paper drawings of animation cuts were digitised and filmed into animation footage. But occasions for detecting and calling retakes were in no way limited to these such formalised procedures, and more minor ‘corrections’ were frequently requested in earlier production phases such as during key animation.

Take the key animation phase of *Fresh Precure* episode 50 production, for instance. Cut 2-18 was drawn by a key animator called Hamaguchi-san (male, early twenties) at a subcontracting studio a half-hour drive from Toei (Figure 6.6). In his original drawing, Hamaguchi-san blacked out the characters’ eyes, a common technique and visual cue to invoke a dramatic tension in the given scene in Japanese animation. In checking the cut, Zako-san (the director), however, decided against those blacked out eyes. To have this directorial ‘correction’ reflected in subsequent stages of the visualisation process, he inserted a green sheet of paper called *enshutsu-shu* (directorial correction sheet), and drew in the eyes himself as a rough visual indicator (Figure 6.7). The note he left on the sheet reads: ‘Sorry here. Even though these characters will be rather small on screen, the blacked out eyes are

looking rather scary, so I would like the eyes drawn properly. Sorry for the hassle.'

In the customary practice of everyday production, after the initial production meeting – called the 'key animation meeting' – the director and the key animators usually no longer met in person. When the need for correspondence arose, the exchange was managed via written and drawn messages on the animation cut, mediated by the production operator in charge of the episode. This was not because the value of face-to-face communication was downplayed in the production process, but that the web of subcontracting across spatially separated studios simply rendered casual or frequent meetings between the director and key animators unrealistic.

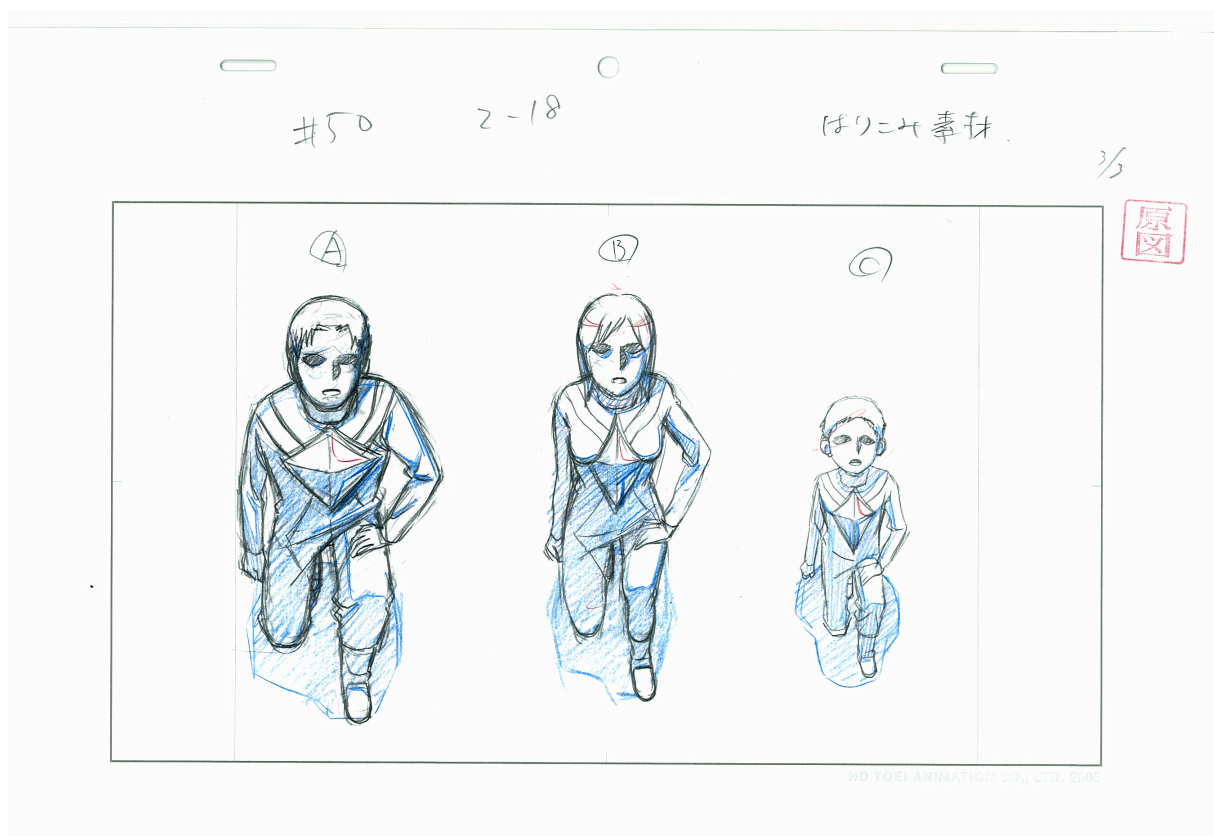


Figure 6.6 Cut 2-18, ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

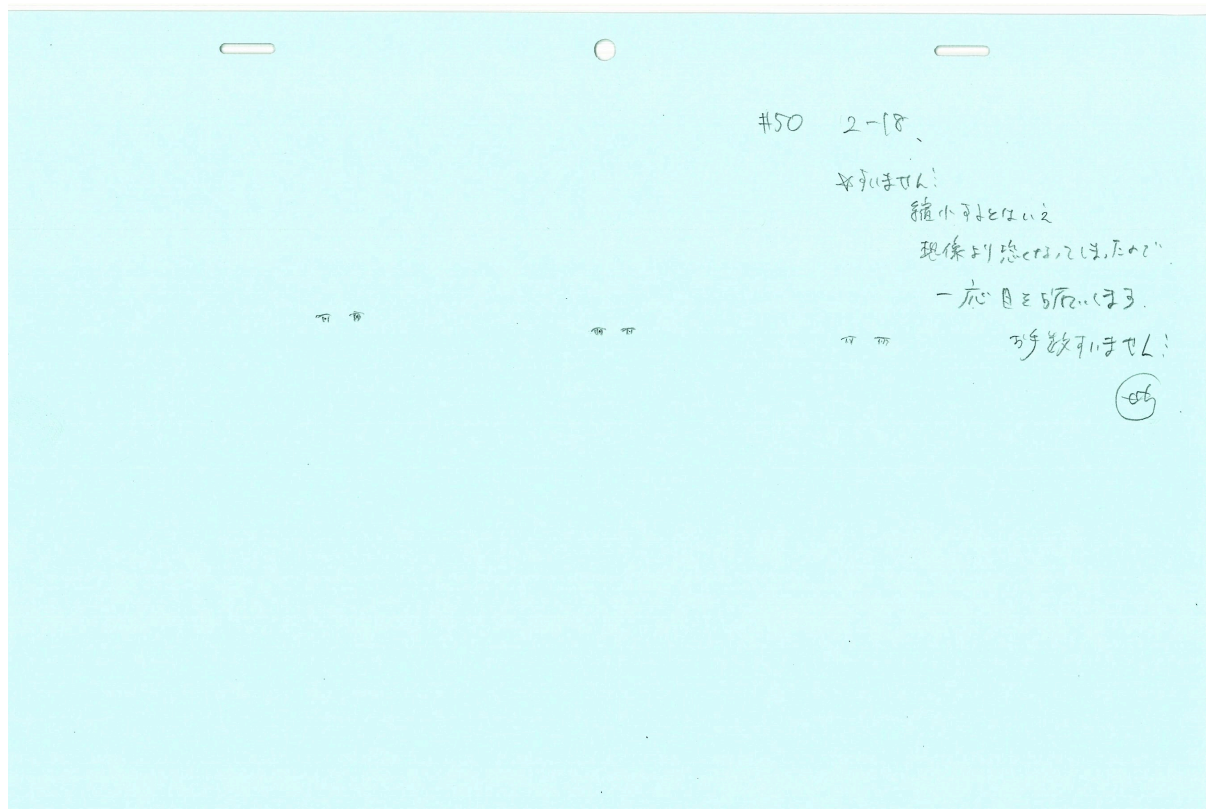


Figure 6.7 Director's Correction, ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

Minor retakes such as these were neither alien nor rare in the production process. As most communication between creators took place via written or drawn notes after the initial production meetings, the potential for misunderstanding was implicit in the process itself. From the perspective of quality control, the director's responsibility took on the form of a persistent search for visualisation errors which indexed the traces of miscommunication across production divisions. Some directors even actively created retakes from time to time, when there were no technical errors in the cut itself but where minor tweaks would visibly improve the overall quality. Retakes were a built-in part of the animation production process and, in principle, occurred whether the subcontractor was Japanese or Filipino.

That said, more layers of communication did increase the possibility of mismanaged visualisation, and when retakes were called in during the outsourcing process, the errors detected were prone to be interpreted in terms of the 'cultural differences' between Japan and the Philippines. This tended to be a consensus view among Filipino and Japanese practitioners alike. As one Filipino translator at TAP (male, early thirties) explained to me *in Japanese*, '*kokumin sei no chigai*' (difference in national characters) sometimes presented them with many practical difficulties in getting the work done. Okita-san, in similar vein, often also elaborated on '*bunka no chigai*' (cultural difference), to account for unexpected irregularities he encountered throughout his years with TAP. But what were those retakes like in the Filipino studio? And in what ways did they index the 'cultural difference' between Japan and the Philippines?

Whilst the standardised technical directions in lower-stream processes such as in-betweening were highly schematised (Figure 6.8), cultural contingency often surfaced, firstly, when upper-stream processes such as key animation were

outsourced to a select group of skilled Filipino animators. Take the case of Marlon. In his early fifties, Marlon was one of the most accomplished animators at TAP, having worked almost 20 years with the studio and the only Filipino animator entrusted with the position of ‘chief key animator’ (i.e. the head animator in the given episode production who provides visual ‘corrections’ to other key animators’ drawings) in the *Fresh Precure* project. Marlon’s reputation revolved around his commitment to work and his discipline, manifested in the speed with which he produced high quality key animation drawings. This had won him much respect and trust from young operators and directors at Toei’s Tokyo studio.

色がえ	EXCEP. COLOR
特殊彩色	SPECIAL PAINT
ウラトレス	REVERSE T P
オモテウラ2種 T P	N & R T P
セルバレ注意	P TO EDGE
ハイライト	H.L.
ハイコントラスト	HIGH CONTRAST
シルエット	SILHOUETTE
長セル	LONG CEL
上タップ	TOP PEG
下タップ	BOTTOM PEG
上下タップ	TOP & BOTTOM PEG
涙	TEARS
汗	SWEAT
歯	TEETH
舌	TONGUE
肌	SKIN
髪	HAIR

Figure 6.8 Technical Directions in Translation, ©Toei Animation

Marlon's combination of maturity, discipline, and skill went against the negative stereotypes surrounding of highly skilled animators in the Japanese industry (see Chapter 2), and amongst those who respected him was Tanabe-san (see Chapter 4), my internship supervisor. 'Make sure you don't ask stupid questions of Marlon-san,' Tanabe-san warned me when he learned I was going to TAP. He had previously worked with Marlon as the chief key animator in the production of episode 43 (which I had also worked on as a trainee), and had come to hold in high regard the Filipino animator he had never met or talked directly to in person.

With a career spanning two decades at Toei's largest subcontracting hub, Marlon's curriculum vitae was far from straightforward, however, and one of the issues he had encountered as a novice key animator was that of 'cultural difference'. In a series of semi-structured interviews, Marlon reflected on one such incident when his key animation cut was sent back to him from Tokyo as a retake. In the cut, Marlon animated a female character drinking a cup of tea, in which he drew the character picking up a *yunomi* (a Japanese tea cup) using one hand. The heroine then took a gulp. The retake direction from Tokyo was to 1) draw her picking up the *yunomi* using both hands, and 2) have her take a slow sip rather than a gulp. The original key animation sequence, according to Marlon, was considered by Japanese directors as 'unmannered' for that particular female character.

He also spoke about the different approaches in animating running sequences. In drawing running characters, Marlon said, he tended to draw the sequence with a strong and athletic running form. However, this sometimes resulted in retakes being called when the character concerned was female and the directors asked him to 'make her run more 'lady-like''. Indeed, the representation of femininity sometimes presented TAP animators and staff with odd difficulties in visual

communication with the Japanese directors in Tokyo. As David, the aforementioned Filipino interpreter (male, early thirties) put it, culturally specific directions to animate characters ‘lady-like’ (*onna rashiku*) or ‘cute’ (*kawaiku*) often resulted in retakes being called from Tokyo. In general when a Japanese director draws a storyboard, he is not necessarily thinking about the elongated path of communication that its visualisation will traverse between Japan and the Philippines (e.g. Figure 6.9).

No. 4		東映アニメーション株式会社		
S.	C.	内 容	TIME	MUSIC
19		 階段の下へももかを 押しやって行く She's going to Momoka, down the stairs.	えりか(OFF)「はい！」 Erika (OFF) "Aright!"	248
		 キッチン 冷蔵庫を開けるえりか Erika opens the refrigerator at the kitchen.		
10				142
		 牛乳を取り出して She took the milk.	えりか「もう、朝から慌ただしい んだから」 Erika "oh my, why so early to panic"	
		 ドアを閉めるえりか Erika closes the door.		
		 えりか、声がした方を見る Erika turns towards the voice.	ももか(OFF) 「うん、これでいいわ」 Momoka (OFF) "Yeah, i like this"	540

Figure 6.9 Translated Storyboard, ©Toei Animation All rights reserved

The habitual movements of daily life often seemed to result in retakes. Jocelyn, the Filipina interpreter, reflected on a particular key animation sequence in the *Fresh Precure* production, in which the heroine came home and walked straight into the house – without taking her shoes off, as would be absolutely required in a Japanese home. She also recalled an occasion when Marlon animated a character buttoning up her shirt. The action itself was finely executed, but the position of the buttons on the shirt had to be redrawn. In the Philippines, Jocelyn said, shirts for both men and women have buttons on the right side, whereas in Japan women's shirts have the buttons on the left.

When such visual directions reached TAP, if indeed they were provided at all, the Filipino interpreters often had to engage with the double task of 'cultural' as well as linguistic translation. An example discussed by Jocelyn was that of drawing *kakigōri* in key animation. What one is to draw when asked to draw such a thing? Is it actually a thing? What does it even look like? *Kakigōri* is a type of Japanese cold sweet enjoyed during the summer months: a heap of finely shaved ice flakes with colourful syrups drizzled on top, and served typically in a bowl. As with ice cream sellers in Britain, special vans appear in family-oriented public spaces such as parks and amusement complexes throughout the summer, selling, among other ice-chilled treats, the *kakigōri*. These are socio-cultural 'facts' of which everyone is reasonably expected to have first hand 'knowledge' of in Japan.

In general, the visual cues in the storyboard were often not detailed enough to draw full key animation sequences, which was why additional production design drawings accompanied the storyboard to provide precise visual references. These, however, often left out what was assumed to be obvious, and directions for 'mundane' items such as *kakigōri* sometimes travelled to Manila without clear design

specifications. How could anyone not know *kakigōri*?

‘It’s very difficult to explain what *kakigōri* is to Filipino animators,’ said Jocelyn. Just explaining what it was or showing a picture, furthermore, did not necessarily mean the animators could draw it. Verbal explanations, and even images, could not substitute for a shared embodied experience, which was what animators really needed to draw. What is it like to eat *kakigōri*? How would the character react to the experience? How sweet, or how cold, is it? Would it give you a headache when you eat too fast? How should one animate such a scene? Jocelyn’s usual strategy in this kind of mediation was therefore to find an analogous Filipino equivalent which was, if not exactly it, close enough for the animators to get ‘it’. In the case of *kakigōri*, Jocelyn told her animators it was just like *halo halo*, a similar cold dessert popular in the Philippines.

On the TAP production floor, these peculiarities were apt to be construed as peculiarities of the Japanese aspect of the animation. Some of these examples may appear to be comical manifestations of miscommunication between the Japanese and the Filipino studios, but as my interviews proceeded, I gradually came to realise how such discussion of cultural difference at TAP was often subtly fused with a quiet desire for recognition in the production process. In both creative and economic terms, Toei Animation and TAP operated in a hierarchical relationship: TAP was a subsidiary, a subcontractor, while Toei Animation did the project planning and other forms of primary design work. Their hope of creating a properly *Filipino* production one day at TAP gradually emerged as a common topic of discussion in interviews, where such a pronounced aspiration for an all-Filipino anime tended to be stronger among younger animation makers, along with a handful of senior key animators and managers.

6.4 Animated in the Philippines

Although talk of anime's globalisation is recent, the Japanese animation industry has had a long and continuous history of export, which started with the foundation of Toei Animation in 1956 with its feature-length productions. The first domestically produced TV animation, *Tetsuwan Atomu*, appeared in 1963 and it was already exported to the United States as *Astro Boy* the same year. By the mid-1970s, the export market had grown to cover large parts of continental Europe, North and South America, and East and Southeast Asia. Although the early successes in countries like Italy and France tend to dominate the popular media history of anime in Japan, the reception these Japanese 'cartoons' enjoyed in East and Southeast Asia was, perhaps, more significant in the wider historical context of commercial Japanese animation. As I noted earlier, the mid-1970s was also the time when Tokyo-based production houses started to outsource lower-stream production work to Asian subcontractors, and during the 1990s countries such as South Korea and the Philippines simultaneously became major international hubs for the *production* as well as *consumption* of Japanese animation.

During my interviews the implications of this historical context were mapped out generationally among the TAP animation makers, whose career trajectories ranged over two decades since the studio's founding in 1986. By and large, older practitioners who joined in the late 1980s to work on lower-stream processes cited their need to support their families and the better pay offered by the Japanese subsidiary compared to that in the general labour market as their chief rationale for working here. Younger practitioners, on the other hand, who grew up watching popular Toei shows such as *Dragonball Z* (1989-1996) and *Sailor Moon* (1992-1997) often said that becoming professional drawers or making it into the

animation industry was the bigger drive.

Take Analyn Cruz, a young female background (BG) artist in her early twenties, who felt a little disappointed that there was still no 'Filipino animation, done by Filipino animators, based on Filipino comics.' Analyn joined TAP in 2009 after six months at an advertising agency in Manila making Flash based animations for the web, and said she knew she always wanted to work in animation. Without a degree from an art school, Analyn taught herself to draw, saying that the joy she derived from drawing was 'a talent given to me.' While she enjoyed drawing backgrounds for Toei's premier productions such as *One Piece* (1999-present), her long-term ambition was to turn her yet-to-be crafted original story into an original Filipino show. That said, she was also a big fan of Japanese anime.

The ease with which Analyn navigated the visual and cultural landscape of anime's international fan base was apparent in the extent of her familiarity with such fan practices as *dōjin* (Analyn used the Japanese word). *Dōjin* is a relatively well-studied topic among scholars of Japanese popular visual culture, which means the amateur production of fan art and comics (see for instance Kinsella 2000). 'I like Zoro and Luffy in particular,' she told me, referring to two male lead characters from *One Piece*. In her fan fiction, she transposed the original world of *One Piece*, a fantastical version of the 16th century Age of Exploration, into a contemporary Japanese high school. This is a well-known fan fiction subgenre in Japan, and is called *gakuen-mono* (school-isation). Analyn's sister also shared her passion, and 'cosplayed' characters from shows such as *Naruto* and *Gintama*.³

Analyn was certainly not exceptional amongst the younger cohort of TAP employees. In-betweeners like Daniel Reyes (male, mid-twenties) fondly remembered watching Toei's *Dragonball Z* as a boy growing up in 1990s Manila, much as I did as a boy growing up in 1990s Kyoto, and remarked that 'knowing I'm

part of the production to create anime’ was the best part of his job. As the 31 year-old male TP artist Felicismo Quinto simply put it, he was – or they were – ‘an anime fan.’

The ways in which such comments by young Filipino animation makers intersected with the wider socio-economic and cultural landscape in the Philippines today, let alone how such structural forces subtly manifested in the Filipino studio, is not something on which I am able to provide elaborate ethnographic commentary. What I *can* point to however is that the young practitioners’ attitudes to animation-making differed meaningfully from those of the older cohort of practitioners.

When Irene Flores got a job as a TP drawer in 1989, at what was still a joint initiative between Toei and the Filipino company, she was 19 years old, and her prime anxiety was not whether she could make it as an animator, but how she could support her natal family, or even start her own some day. She eventually realised these ambitions, over twenty years with TAP, during which she married and had two children, who were 13 and 11 years of age at the time of the interview. Even though crunched production schedules often forced her to work overtime, Irene said she was satisfied with her job, and hoped the subcontracting work at TAP continued to expand so that one day her children could also get jobs here.

Grace Aquino, an experienced female in-betweener in her late forties, said that the flexible work schedule and being able to control her work was what she liked best about the job. At TAP, in-betweening animators had a quota of 18 IB drawings per day. Combined with constant delivery deadlines and a never-ending flow of work from Tokyo, the daily quota often taxed less-skilled younger in-betweeners, but Grace could turn it to her own advantage. When she was done with the 18 IB drawings, she was free to leave work early, and spend more time with

her family. For this reason, in a characteristic contrast to the standardised career path for animators in Japan, Grace actually *preferred not to become a key animator*. The pay was good and the hours were manageable, and like Irene, she had not come to TAP more than a decade ago with the hope of becoming an animation maker.

In the previous section, I discussed some examples of visualisation errors that represented the experience of ‘cultural difference’ between the Philippines and Japan on the TAP production floor. For someone like Okita-san the issue of ‘cultural difference’ was a routine fact he had to deal with as part of being on the receiving end of outsourcing. In contrast, what the cases of Analyn, Daniel, Irene and Grace indicate is that that difference also existed *between* the Filipino staff members. For young staff like Analyn, who came to TAP *in order to become* an animation maker, mastering the Japan-specific aspects of drawing was simultaneously a sign she was pursuing her dream successfully and a reminder that she was still only subcontracting for someone else’s work. I now turn to this positional difference between the two studios.

During our casual conversations in the Japanese staffroom, I once asked Jocelyn what the most enjoyable part of her work was. In response, Jocelyn casually said that ‘there wasn’t much [fun].’ ‘It’s just like any other work,’ she said, then paused a moment before continuing in Japanese: ‘recognition *tte iun desuka?* *I guess it’s called ‘recognition’?*’ As she was an interpreter/translator based in TAP’s Japanese staffroom, the news sometimes arrived at Jocelyn’s desk from Tokyo that Toei’s directors were particularly impressed by the work done by Marlon – TAP’s top animator – and his Filipino team. She would then go and tell Marlon. Occasions like these often made Jocelyn glad that she was working as a mediator between TAP and Toei. In a separate interview, Marlon himself also mentioned this ‘recognition’ from

the Tokyo studio as one of his chief sources of motivation in handling everyday work.

As a highly regarded animator, he was one of a dozen chief animators selected to perform quality control of key animation for *Fresh Precure*. The rest were all Japanese animators based in Tokyo. Marlon could thus be considered the highest achieving creator at TAP, whose work and position as a Filipino chief key animator pushed the boundary of a subcontracting relation which had initially been conceived as a way to build a cheaper workforce. Careers such as Marlon's may also be considered success stories by Japanese standards. Of the few thousand animators working in Tokyo, only a small proportion rise to become a chief animator for studios like Toei. For Okita-san, who had overseen the growth of the Filipino studio over the past two decades, however, this also reflected the frustrating glass ceiling between TAP and Toei.

'Of course he had talent, but more than talent he worked hard, worked very, very hard,' Okita-san said of Marlon. 'In a way, it is really unfortunate – it took him so long to become a key animator. With a career like his, if he had been working in Japan I wouldn't be surprised if he had already become a top animator who does the designing work.'

Marlon joined TAP in 1989 when the studio was still jointly owned by the Filipino company. This, coincidentally, was also the year Okita-san was first dispatched to the Philippines from Toei's Tokyo studio. Since childhood, Marlon enjoyed watching animation, both Japanese and American. As much as these shows entertained the young Marlon, they also stimulated his curiosity as to how drawn characters could be made to move as though they were alive. This prompted him to start playing around with drawing and creating stories of his own. Marlon started to work as a part-time comic illustrator at the age of seventeen. Within a year, his brother Noel told Marlon that an animation studio in Manila was looking to hire

skilled Filipino drawers.

1989, furthermore, was when Toei started looking beyond the TP process in the Philippines, and began developing a programme to train local drawers to eventually outsource the in-betweening process. Marlon thus joined TAP (though this was not yet its name) at this key early stage as Toei's all round subcontractor, and part of the first batch of trained in-betweeners at the Filipino studio. His talent must have been quickly apparent, and as early as 1990 Marlon made his first trip to Tokyo for further training as an IB quality checker. On his return, he was also entrusted with the responsibilities of a local assistant director, and mediated between TAP's interpreter and the other Filipino animators while supervising the technical processes of visualisation.

Throughout the 1990s, Marlon moved back and forth between roles as an in-betweening animator and an assistant director before eventually becoming a key animator in 2001. Looking back at the first half of his career, Marlon reflected that 'studio was my second home'. The work was demanding and the Tokyo studio appeared to give him much responsibility for the commitment and the dedication he had shown. As a result, Marlon regularly worked overtime, and once or twice a week he actually slept at the studio. On the whole, he recollected, he spent more time at work than with his family, which he started when he met his wife, Fatima, who was also a TP artist at the studio.

Interestingly, Marlon's life history as a tale of advancement in one's craft through hard work and dedication is strongly reminiscent of the kind of master narrative Dorrine Kondo (1990) documented of contemporary Japanese artisans in Tokyo's traditional sweets industry nearly two decades ago. Unlike Kondo's master artisans, however, Marlon's career advancement had not led him to the very top of his field yet, as Okita-san rather critically suggested, because of the glass-ceiling

above Marlon and TAP as overseas *subcontractors* within Toei's trans-Asian production network.

The hierarchical character of the relation between TAP and Toei Animation was also manifest in the research access I was granted at TAP. For instance, I never really had the chance to systematically interview animators in Japan. As a production operator, I was in constant touch with animators at Toei, but because I was *the* production operator and recognised as such, it was extremely difficult for me to initiate anything approximating an interview. As I was overburdened with my share of production work, so were the animators with theirs, and the possibility of just 'hanging out' was simply beyond my wildest dreams. Any such attempt was considered an unacceptable blockage in the production flow which risked breaching delivery deadlines. I eventually grew rather terrified of how everyone – hypothetically at least – could start shouting at me for anything I had done wrong on the production floor.

The situation was drastically different in Manila. At TAP, I was received, not only as a doctoral researcher but as a company guest from Toei's Tokyo headquarters. On my first day there, the Filipino executives took me out for a nice lunch at company expense. Suddenly, I was an insider from the powerful parent company, and this yielded research access I could never have dreamt of at Toei's Tokyo studio. My request to systematically interview the creative staff was met from day one. Vivian-san, a TAP administrator and interpreter, promptly selected potential interviewees, secured an interview room, and organised schedules for each of the selected employees, all on my behalf. She then assigned me one of their interpreters, who were essential – and scarce – human resources of TAP's everyday workflow, in case any of the interviewees did not speak fluent English! I was given almost free access to the studio, treated with respect, and – much to my relief –

discharged from the pressure to control the flow of production and not disrupt the workflow of others. Tanabe-san's warning to me before I left for TAP, that I should not bother others with stupid questions, seemed a distant echo.⁴

By travelling in reverse along the flow of production from Tokyo to Manila, I somehow found myself standing at the other end of the power relation. If the drawing retakes I discussed above indexed existing cultural differences between the Philippines and Japan for the practitioners at TAP, for me, the twenty-seven recorded interviews from this brief fieldtrip were a straightforward objectification of this political economy between the two studios.

6.5 Conclusion

In the everyday business of getting the work done, Toei was dependent on TAP's production capacity, especially for IB-TP. However, in terms of the formal corporate relationship, TAP and Toei did not stand on an equal footing. TAP was a subsidiary and, first and foremost, a subcontractor. I have mentioned how, throughout the production of *Fresh Precure* episode 50, TAP was a ubiquitous presence in the production system yet almost completely absent from the Japanese production floor. Whereas the production operators at Toei production floor could temporarily forget about what went on at TAP, the reverse was never possible at the Filipino end. The staff at TAP had to make sure that the linguistic, technical and cultural mediation necessary in the outsourced production work was processed correctly so as to deliver work back in good time. By the time subcontracted work was returned to the Tokyo studio, however, the extent of effort and care that went into it at TAP was virtually imperceptible.

As a theory of origination, the modern notion of creativity projects an image

of a talented individual who works alone to exert her creative agency to bring novel artefacts into tangible existence. Throughout the 19th century, this conception of authorship came to gradually constitute the philosophical substratum of the legal framework of copyright law in Western Europe (Coombe 1994; Strathern 1999). Reflecting this, the recent anthropological engagement with creativity as a particularly Euro-American construct has concentrated on challenging this individualist construction of the author/artist. There is now a wealth of ethnographic literature documenting the tension between the Euro-American institution of intellectual property rights and local relations of cultural productions the world over (Brown 2003; Geismar 2005; Leach 2004, 2007b; Myers 2005; Strathern 2006). In this vein, anthropologists have argued the legal framework of copyright produces an ethnocentric model of ownership that conflicts with and disrupts the locally embedded relations of collective production.

In my view, behind this critique lies a wider recognition among these anthropologists that the current expansion of the discourses of creativity reintroduces an older debate in anthropology about the tension between ‘capitalist’ and ‘non-capitalist’ societies. What I would add here is that when the issue at stake is the recognition of creative agency, this tension is no longer unique to the classic boundary between ‘western’ and ‘non-western’ or ‘capitalist’ and ‘non-capitalist’ societies. The relationship between Japan and the Philippines I describe in this chapter hardly aligns with these simple oppositions. But if it does not comport with classic models, in what terms should we understand the relationship between Toei Animation and Toei Animation Philippines?

In critiquing the recent shift in anthropology to move away from ‘culture’ as its core analytical concern, Marshall Sahlins (1999: 414) ironically observed that ‘anthropologists have been to so much trouble of late denying the existence of

cultural boundaries just when so many peoples are being called upon to mark them.’ In this chapter, I do not deny the existence of a cultural boundary between Toei and TAP, but argue that culture was not the only, or even the most critical, difference between the Japanese and Filipino animation makers working in Tokyo and Manila. It was, rather, the political economy between the two studios in the relation of international subcontracting, and especially on which side of this political economy one found oneself working as an animation maker.

Notes

¹ At TAP, I carried out extensive semi-structured interviews with 27 Filipino animation makers, who worked in all six major production divisions at the subcontractor. With help from TAP's administrative office, interviewees were selected from the five major creative divisions of the studio (Key Animation, IB, TP, Background Art, CG). Approximately five interviewees were selected from each division, and two Filipino translators based at TAP were also interviewed. Considering TAP's history of over 20 years, attention was paid to further dividing the five interviewees into three groups according to their duration of employment: those with 20 years' experience, those with 10 years' experience, and those with less than 3 years' experience. In addition to those in the creative divisions, I interviewed three Filipino translators, who formed the sixth major division within the studio as key administrators between Manila and Tokyo.

² *Animator Rodo Hakusho (White Paper for Labour in Animation) 2009, Japan Animation Creators Association*

³ *Naruto* (2002-present) is a popular anime series, a historical fantasy based in a version of Japan in which groups of young ninjas engage in a series of battles and adventures. *Naruto* is the name of the protagonist boy ninja, and the series is based on an original manga of the same name (1999-present). *Gintama* (2006-2010) is likewise a popular anime series whose genre may be called a historical sci-fi comedy. The show features characters who look like samurais from Edo period Japan, but the world they inhabit is a mixture of 18th century Japan and space age technology. *Gintama*, like *Naruto*, is based on a popular original manga with the same title (2004-present).

⁴ I discuss the negative downside of being implicated in this power relation in more detail in Chapter 1.3.3

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Animation, disillusion, and self-realisation

7.1 Ethnography of animation production

This thesis about commercial animation production in Tokyo coalesced into two interrelated ethnographic foci: first, on detailing the ways in which young animation makers worked on the production floor; and second, on explicating how visual processes of animation making unfolded within the commercial context of production and the complex division of labour therein. The principal division in the production process existed along the axis of managers and creators, and I developed my ethnographic narrative primarily based on the perspectives of young production operators, who were on the lowest end of the management division. The analytical loci of my ethnography, in turn, were labour and creativity in the Japanese animation industry. Methodologically, I aimed to combine phenomenological and political economy approaches to the study of labour and creativity in the everyday workplace of commercial animation production in Japan.

One of the major arguments of this thesis is that the anthropological study of creativity needs to pay particular attention not only to creative practices and processes, but also to the political economy of creativity that structures such practices and processes in the given social and economic context. As I have observed throughout the preceding chapters, while all practitioners, divisions, and studios in the Japanese animation industry were ideologically presented as equal and

necessary, in practice some actors were more important and powerful than others, based on the different capacities and characteristics of visual labour they brought to production. The clearest way in which this informal hierarchy manifested itself was the relationship between production operators and directors/animators in everyday production.

By employing the term ‘political economy of creativity’, therefore, I intend firstly to address this informal pattern of social relations on the production floor, which was situationally enacted and based upon hierarchically evaluated creative capacities of practitioners in different divisions of labour. As each practitioner embodied such differential visual capacities, the micro context of everyday visual production in the studio was itself the site on which this hierarchy was engendered also on a phenomenological level.

Secondly, I use the term to refer to the wider structure of creativity – legal and economic institutions such as intellectual property laws – as well as global liberal discourses and tacit popular understandings, which define the social contour of creative agency and set the limit of recognition of creativity as such.¹ The very division between management and creativity in the Japanese animation industry (and other creative industries elsewhere) is a *prima facie* case of this structural limit of creative recognition, where the associational exclusion of managers from creativity is taken for granted precisely because they are the managers.

My emphases on the political economy were thus coupled with attention to particularities of labour and its historical and economic contexts in the Japanese animation industry. From the perspective of young production operators on the everyday production floor, I explored the lived and experiential dimensions of the creative economy of animation making.

In Chapter 1, I drew on the ethnographically observable disjuncture between the production floors of Japanese animation, on the one hand, and how anime's 'globalisation' has been discussed in Japanese media and policy discourses as well as in academic literature of Japanese studies, on the other. During fieldwork, I found that these kinds of celebratory globalisation narratives largely deflected the actual social and economic conditions under which Japanese animations have been, and continue to be, produced. As a contrastive undercurrent to the popular narratives of international success, feelings of fatigue, overwork, and anxiety often characterised the moods of my informants on the production floor, which reflected the widespread socio-economic insecurity of employment in the animation industry. While the young animation makers appeared to accept the crippling precarity as a necessary condition of being an animation maker in Japan – and therefore, also, as the necessary condition for the realisation of their dreams – the harsh conditions of everyday work did often push them to moments of self-doubt, regret, and dispiriting disillusion. In many ways, it was this sense of telling disjuncture – between representation and practice, dreams and reality, the future and the present – which seemed to make up the work of animation making in Japan and characterised and informed the ethnographic perspective of the chapters that followed.

In Chapter 2, I turned to discuss the manager-creator relation in the workplace of an animation studio. The primary divisions of managers and creators were equally critical components of commercial production; however, where the production operators (the lowest-ranking managers) were concerned, this relation was structurally hierarchical and privileged the creators. The chief responsibility of operators in the production process was the management of the production schedule. In order to fulfill this responsibility, the young operators *had to* craft subservient manners and personalities to solicit drawings from the upper-stream creators such

as directors and animators. As the production operators lacked the visual skills to actually work on animation cuts, they were necessarily dependent upon other creators to perform visual labour in order for them to successfully manage the production schedule. Through this process, the differentially embodied visual capacity (or its lack thereof) between managers and creators enacted what I addressed as a ‘creative hierarchy’ in the workplace of Japanese animation.

Beyond the Japanese animation industry, the division between management and creativity is a constitutive and common organising locus of labour in the creative industries more generally. According to the research literature on the creative industries, workers in these industries share a highly aspirational attitude and motivation toward work under pressingly precarious conditions of employment.²

While the main body of Chapter 2 was largely descriptive in that it aimed to distill a pattern of social relations between the managers (production operators) and creators in the animation industry, it also attempted to pave the way for answering wider questions about commonality and difference of labour between Japanese animation and the creative industries in a broader sense. Much like the creative workers in other parts of the world, such as the British fashion industry (McRobbie 2002), self-realisation – and the pursuit of dreams – through work was a major motivational locus for many animation makers I came to know well during my fieldwork in Tokyo. To what extent is this parallel in Japanese and British creative industries – individualised aspirational workers in highly flexible labour markets – a product of global forces such as neoliberalism? In what ways, in turn, are the current conditions of labour in the Japanese animation industry a continuation of the historical conditions of labour that once characterised workplace cultures and customs within Japan?

The ways of engaging with such questions are not necessarily singular. In

Chapter 3, alongside the general aim of detailing the industry's history, I therefore sought to reevaluate the relationship between creative labour, socio-economic precariousness, and neoliberal shifts from a historical angle in the context of Japan. At the risk of oversimplification, the sociological literature on the (British) creative industries posits a view of creative work as one of the paradigmatic – if not exclusive – sites of neoliberal labour and socio-economic transformation (e.g. de Peuter 2011; Gill and Pratt 2008; Miller 2009). Two generally overlapping contexts of subjectivity and economic structure are emphasised in this observation: a prominent role given to aspiration and autonomy in choosing one's work, and a highly deregulated labour market based on extensive internships, subcontracting, project-based contracts, and freelancing. The lived dimension of work in any such industry, in turn, is a harsh actuality and precarity of employment where the majority of workers 'toil in relatively anonymous enterprises, either living off the erratic incomes from 'projects' or more conventionally on low or subsistence-level wages' (Banks 2007:10).

These features largely characterised contemporary conditions of labour in the Japanese animation industry, but the historical structuring of such conditions also revealed an important divergence from the standard neoliberal model viewed in the aforementioned literature. Although the first wave of neoliberal reform in Japan had already taken place with the Nakasone administration during the 1980s (Komikawa 2010:19; Koschiman 2007:519), the neoliberal reform (*shin-jiyushugi*) that has become the focus of heated public debates in recent years in the country refers to the series of deregulations under the Koizumi administration during the early 2000s (e.g. the 2004 expansion of dispatch workers to the manufacturing sectors). It was in this latter period that casualisation of labour became a widely acknowledged problem of social exclusion (Borovoy 2010), despite being coupled with the mounting discourses of 'self-realisation' (*jiko-jitsugen*) and 'self-responsibility'

(*jiko-sekinin*) in choosing one's employment (Miyazaki 2010:239).³

In contrast, the labour market in the Japanese animation industry had been deregulated as early as the mid-1960s as a consequence of internal structural change in the organisation of production, which followed the dawn of TV animation production. This historical divergence indicates that in the Japanese animation industry, the structural emergence of labour precarity itself was largely independent of the series of neoliberal reforms that took place in the country, first in the 1980s and more conspicuously in the 2000s. My analysis of the Japanese animation industry vis-à-vis the global neoliberal model of labour and the creative industries is therefore a highly contingent and complex one. Firstly, my ethnography agrees with the literature arguing that the industry's labour market today shows significant resemblance to the neoliberal model of 'precarious employment situation' (de Peuter 2011:418). Yet conversely, the specific history of labour in the animation industry shows that its precariousness chronologically preceded the neoliberal reforms in the country. This notwithstanding, the 'self-realisation' discourses of labour – what many scholars see as a characteristic corollary of neoliberalisation – were well observed among my informants during fieldwork.

In Chapter 4, I further elaborated on this historical disconnect between structure and discourse, observing that my informants' dreams and aspirations for the liberatory potentials of the new economy were nonetheless coexistent with a longing for the regulated stability of secure long-term employment during the heyday of the Japanese economy (1960s-1980s). I set my focus of analysis acutely on the subjective and aspirational dimension of labour, and attempted to engage my ethnographic findings with the ongoing debates in the research literature on neoliberal subject formation in anthropology and social theory. Based on the ethnographic accounting of Tanabe-san, who was simultaneously inspired *and*

disillusioned by his dream of animation making, I argued that the recent theories of neoliberal subject formation tended to place too much emphasis on the active and unquestioning participation of subjects in such processes. This observation is critically different from simply discovering ‘resistance’ among the young animation makers to the ideal of self-realisation through work; precisely because they did *not* ‘resist’ the ideologies of following their dreams and ‘doing what you love,’ they found themselves in a difficult, narrow path of life toward their desired futures.

In Chapter 5, I revisited the manager-creator division in commercial animation, this time turning to the perspectival difference it created between those in each role. While the managers tended to view and conceptualise the process of visual production in terms of quantifiable information that accompanied animation cuts (e.g. number of drawings) to construct a database, the creators saw and acted upon animation cuts in a primarily visual manner. The perspectival difference between managers and creators on the production floor therefore played out along numerical and visual ways of seeing and acting on animation production. I explored the significance and consequence of giving numerical accounting of the creative visual process in the context of commercial animation production in Japan, and engaged my ethnography with the anthropological literature on accountability and auditing. I argued that the anthropology of accountability needs to go beyond merely seeing an opposition between numbers and other qualitative processes, such as creativity, and closed the chapter by discussing the rather ambiguous boundaries separating the numerical accounting and visual processes in my ethnographic context of commercial animation.

In Chapter 6, I engaged with emergent properties of difference in the relation of international subcontracting between Toei’s Japanese and Filipino studios. The chapter presented a detailed ethnographic portrait of the processes that

take place when portions of drawing works are outsourced from Tokyo to Manila in the daily production flow. The extensive outsourcing of the lower-stream divisions called IB-TP is a routinised process in the Japanese industry today, but it is a barely noted aspect in recent academic texts regarding the globalisation of Japanese animation. My ethnography uncovered intricate layers of communication and translation between Japanese directors and Filipino animators. When translation failed during the outsourcing process, and ‘retakes’ were sent back from Tokyo, such instances were often understood as testimonies to cultural difference between Japan and the Philippines on the production floor of Toei Animation Philippines (TAP). Simultaneously, however, my ethnography found that ‘culture’ was not the only meaningful difference between the Japanese and Filipino studios in this international subcontracting relation. Young Filipino animators often perceived the Japanese aspects of drawing they subcontracted from Tokyo not only as a technical problem, but also as a cap placed upon their creative capacity as aspiring animation makers. They nurtured the desire to work on a properly ‘Filipino’ production one day, but such a prospect appeared unfeasible, at least for the time being, in the ongoing subcontracting relation where TAP was an owned subsidiary of Toei Animation. Based on these observations, I argued that political economy was a more significant factor than ‘culture’ in producing different subject positions between Tokyo and Manila in the ongoing outsourcing relation.

As I discussed briefly in the literature review section of Chapter 1, I propose the understanding of creativity as a particular discourse of labour in contemporary Japan and advanced capitalist societies more broadly. This move follows my discussion of two contrastive approaches in anthropology to the study of creativity: Ingold’s skill-oriented phenomenological analysis of creativity as an improvisatory

process, on the one hand, and ethnographies of intellectual property rights that challenge the legally defined notion of ‘creation’ as a particularly problematic Euro-American construct, on the other. As I maintain, these two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive or exhaustive of perspectives in the study of creativity in anthropology. Works by James Leach (2007a, 2007b), for instance, successfully incorporate the process-oriented focus on creative practices with context-oriented analysis in which the creativity of such practices are socially evaluated in given social relations (see Chapter 1.2.4). Likewise, by placing labour centre stage in my ethnography of creative visual production in the Japanese animation industry, I seek to enrich the literature on creativity in anthropology by merging it with the literature on the anthropology of work in Japan.

Thinking ethnographically about creativity in terms of labour inevitably brings one to face the issues of political economy in any context. The ethnographic study of everyday work in creative industries, I argue, makes this connection manifestly explicit. In my approach, labour, thus, *is* the intersection between phenomenology and the political economy of creativity. The analyses I develop of the creative hierarchy (Chapter 2), the perspectival disjuncture between the managers and the creators (Chapter 5), or the subjective and experiential aspects of these structures on the everyday production floor (Chapter 4) are the particular cases in point: *because I cast phenomenological attention upon the experiential dimension of labour*, I am able to explicate, from their lived experiences, the wider structure of political economy that antagonises production operators in the Japanese animation industry.

Even though the overall analytical framework of my ethnography – as I stated in Chapter 1 – is tilted toward the political economy approach, my focal point is not about comparative weighing of the strengths and weaknesses of these

approaches. Rather, the phenomenological and political economy perspectives are both indispensable to ethnography and anthropological study more broadly. To reiterate my critique in Chapter 1, the only issue I take with the improvisation-focused approach of Hallam and Ingold (2007) is that the rigid formulation of creativity as an improvisatory performance of skills may in the final analysis produce more challenges than clarification of creativity in settings such as creative industries. As much as it is an improvisatory potential of human action and imagination, creativity is also an apparatus of domination and capital (see esp. Chapter 6).

Research in the creative industries could in fact form a third dimension of approach to the study of creativity in anthropology, but anthropologists who have done research in these settings have not yet focused on this topic centrally. The research on the relationship between creativity and labour has been conducted largely outside the bounds of anthropology in disciplines such as sociology, yet as I note above, the sociologists working in these fields tend to overemphasise the theoretical explanation for labour precarity as part of the processes of neoliberalisation. While this is a line of analysis I concur with broadly, my ethnography also finds an important counterpoint to its analytical model: the relationship between the labour conditions of the animation industry and the neoliberalisation of Japanese society has not been simply causal or contemporaneous.

This last point brings me to discuss the notion of ‘self-realisation’ itself in the Japanese context, particularly – albeit briefly – its relation to the pedagogies of selfhood in a longer historical trajectory in the country. While the contemporary popular notion of ‘self-realisation’ I observed among the animation makers bore clear marks of Western liberalism in its commitment to the ideals of autonomy and the

freedom of self-expression, in Japan an idea that the best possible self is, and ought to be, *cultivated* through vigilant and continuous discipline and acts directed toward oneself finds a deeper historical and philosophical parallel in the teachings of more broadly East Asian schools of Confucian thought. Historically, the systematic effects of Confucianism upon Japanese thought had long been far more sporadic and intermittent than those of Buddhism in terms of their social, political, and intellectual impacts; however, as Japanese scholars note, by the early 18th century Confucianism – especially the neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi – established its presence in Tokugawa Japan as the ideology of the ruling class, i.e. *samurai* (Watanabe 2010).

The idea and practices of ‘self-cultivation’ are central to the core of Confucian teachings, which posit a positive isomorphism between the cultivated self (of the ruler) and the state of society and polity more generally: by cultivating an ideal self – with disciplined conducts, learned tastes, and higher codes of ethics – one also engenders a better society. After the Restoration of 1868, the Meiji modernisers (themselves former *samurai*) officially eschewed the explicitly ‘Eastern’ language of Confucianism in favor of approximating the Prussian-style nation-state under imperial rule, but the very spirit of political slogans chosen by the Meiji officials to popularise industrial modernisation – such as *Risshin Shusse* – carried a critical epistemological parallel to the older Confucian ideology. Although the phrase itself simply means ‘to elect oneself and rise through society’, the strong undercurrent to this slogan through Japanese industrialisation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was an explicit presumption that by modernising oneself, one modernised the nation, with an added flavor of enthusiastic nationalism.

I argue that this particular image of the isomorphic relation between selfhood and community writ large has extended into 21st century Japanese society (c.f. Daniels 2010:89), and that the Confucian notion of self-cultivation has long come

to constitute one of the pedagogical cores of selfhood in the country. Sharon Kinsella's 2000 discussion of the moral panic regarding the anime- and manga-obsessed serial killer Miyazaki Tsutomu (see Chapter 3), I submit, is a negative case in point: she observed how Japanese media commentators decried that the degenerate character of the killer directly *reflected* the degenerate state of society from which he sprung in late-1980s Japan. Indeed, prior to the proliferation of neoliberal self-realisation discourses in the 2000s, pedagogies of self-cultivation prevailed in workplace ideologies, articulating the relationship between the self and work during the final decade of economic growth in Japan (Kondo 1987, 1990).

The saliently neoliberal discourses of self-realisation in today's Japanese context thus find a clear ideological forerunner in the ideologies of neo-Confucian self-cultivation.⁴ Of course, my point here is not to argue that the respective political tenets of Confucianism and (Euro-American) liberalism have been virtually interchangeable with one another in Japan throughout its modern history.⁵ Such an argument grossly and fundamentally misunderstands some true ontological differences between the two ideologies.⁶ Rather, I attempt here a speculative explanation by way of opening up arenas for further research: on the level of popular practice, 'neo'liberal discourses of self-realisation have seen such a proliferation in 21st century Japan *possibly* because many ideas contained within these discourses were deeply resonant with a culturally existent framework of the articulation of selfhood and its relationship to society in contexts such as the modern workplace.

Therefore, what is needed in the anthropological study of creativity and labour, in contexts such as the creative industries, is to go beyond a powerful but singularising and synchronic master narrative such as neoliberalism – attending instead to the contemporary specificities and historical particularities of the given industry – and to develop an analytical perspective that takes the experiences of

those who actually live and work in that industry as starting points of any analysis. Anthropology excels in both of these respects, and my ethnography of the Japanese animation industry has sought to achieve a fine balance between the lived dimension of animation work on the production floor, on the one hand, and the wider social, economic, and historic forces that have structured it, on the other. Before bringing this conclusion to a close, then, I will return for a final time to discuss the ways in which overwork and socio-economic insecurity shaped, and intersected, with the aspirations and uncertainty felt by young animation makers in Tokyo.

7.2 Anthropology of animation and disillusion

It was an early Saturday evening on the 19th of December 2009; Tanabe-san (male, mid-twenties, production operator), Hosoda-san (male, mid-twenties, production operator), Nakatani-san (male, early twenties, assistant director), and I were in the *seisaku* corner of the Precure staffroom. All four of us, except Nakatani-san, were on temporary standby (*machi*) in the intermittent lull of work at the time. Hosoda-san was talking about how he felt when he started work for the first time on the production floor:

‘When I saw real animation cuts for the first time in the studio, I felt like I uncovered a secret treasure [*takara mono*] before me. I remember thinking – this is how anime gets made!’

Hosoda-san was sitting comfortably in his chair. The tone of his voice sounded as if he had suddenly decided to confide in us something important, even something precious. Yet no sooner had he finished the last sentence when he almost chuckled,

ending his recollection rather abruptly:

‘But I’ve changed so much since.’

In his third year of work at Toei, Hosoda-san was already considered by many to be a highly competent production operator. He was never rude, but had a matter-of-fact attitude in the workplace; valuing his private time outside work whenever possible, Hosoda-san rarely bothered to socialise with his colleagues in company-organised drinks (*nomikai*) and such. He was very proficient in getting work done fast, however, and this proficiency was how I – and perhaps others in the staffroom also – initially came to understand him. He seemed to prefer to give an air of calculated nonchalance, and when there were no more tasks to be done for the day, he would just leave the studio – sometimes as early as 8:00 p.m. The Japanese words ‘*takara mono*’ (treasure) Hosoda-san had used to refer to the animation cuts, therefore, sounded almost unfittingly naïve for someone like him, at least as I had come to know him up to that point. But before I could say anything further to elaborate, Hosoda-san immediately retracted his statement, by way of pointing out how he had ‘changed so much since.’

Precisely *why* he has changed so much over the three years in the industry, however, is a complex question that would possibly defy any easy schematisation as a definitive and clear-cut answer. For as much as it is an empirical question derived from the specificities of my ethnographic context, I believe it also relates to a much wider human condition: how is it that we often find ourselves bound by conditions that we spontaneously set upon ourselves? Why did it *have to* be animation making, for Hosoda-san, Tanabe-san, or countless other animation makers to attain a fuller realisation of their lives, and therefore, a sense of who they were, as

twenty-something men and women living and working in Tokyo at the end of the first decade of the 21st century?

The brief exchange I had with Hosoda-san that day, I suggest, speaks directly to the theme of animation and disillusion among young animation makers in Japan, which I raised as the general theme of this thesis in Chapter 1. Since the experience of simultaneous animation and disillusion in work itself is a topic I explored at length in Chapter 4, here I would use this space to think about how this theme relates to anthropology more generally by way of extending the discussion. This, I propose, involves thinking more systematically about the role of incomprehension and inexplicability in shaping our everyday experiences and expectations regarding who we believe ourselves to be. Let me start by reflecting upon my fieldwork experience of working on the production floor of Japanese animation.

As I noted in Chapter 1, the first few months of my participant observation fieldwork were an experience characterised by a strong sense of alienation, which stemmed from my failure to perform the tasks I was given to handle as a trainee production operator. I was frequently incapable of comprehending many of the occurrences that went on in the studio around me, the topics that people discussed, or the actions that others performed with such care, dexterity, and focus. Experientially, work became a consuming and overwhelming chain of never-ending tasks, and as such a source of considerable emotional strain and trepidation. Much as I was excited and inspired to be doing fieldwork, I was anxious, and I was exhausted.

On the one hand, the experience of such exhaustion in the midst of the re-socialisation process into the everyday milieu of fieldwork settings is an oft-observed phenomenon among anthropologists, especially first-time fieldworkers.

I am therefore aware that my feelings of initial anxiety and fatigue during this period, based on this account alone, cannot be situated as something ethnographically unique to the processes of animation production work itself. On the other hand, however, as I gradually became more used to my confusion and experiential incomprehension, two further issues appeared to be the case regarding the nature of production work, especially for production operators. Firstly, physical and emotional stress from overwork, and the feeling that things did not quite add up, in fact, turned out to be much more commonly shared experiences among more experienced operators (Chapter 4). In relation to this, secondly, the production operators worked with people, things, and processes that were primarily out of their control: on an abstract level, dealing with contingency appeared to constitute the core of their everyday work in the studio.

Writing about the centrality of indeterminacy in everyday social life in the context of Greek gambling, anthropologist Thomas Malaby has recently asserted, referring to the work of Michael Jackson, that ‘the anthropologist’s preoccupation with regularity, pattern, system, and structure has to be seen as less an objective reflection of social reality than a comment on his personal and professional need for certitude and order’ (Jackson 1989:15, cited in Malaby 2003:11). In anthropology, analytically calibrated attention to the indeterminate, contingent, and ambiguous in human life may partially hark back to the ‘writing culture’ debates in the late 1980s. While an apparent disconnect between the anthropologist’s representation as artificially patterned and the experiential actuality of observed social life as a mess constitutes the undercurrent of perennial methodological challenges of ethnographic writing, the recognition of ‘indeterminacy itself as a feature of human experience’ (Malaby 2004:xi) is one consistent with a wider methodological trend across qualitative social sciences today.

Recently, sociologist John Law (2004) has thus proposed to drastically rethink the relationship between sociological methods in general and the social world they help to explicate. Law (ibid.:7) asks: '[w]hat might social science inquiry look like in a world that is an unformed but generative producer of realities?' His premise is that 'methods [and] their rules... not only describe but also help to *produce* the reality that they understand' (ibid.:5, emphasis added). A coherent rational analysis that the social sciences submit is therefore not necessarily a truer reflection of the phenomena they describe, but may be determined and *caused* by the very methods implicated in the description. Even though such a troubled relationship between methods and (sociological) knowledge has long been an entrenched problem regarding the place of 'difference' and the politics of representation in anthropology (Candea 2010:2-5, 58-64; Miyazaki 2004:131), what Law attempts here is also a meta-methodological and an *agnostic* proposition. 'That is, events and processes are not simply complex in the sense that they are technically difficult to grasp (though this is certainly often the case). Rather, they are also complex because they *necessarily exceed our capacity to know them*' (2004:7, emphasis original). His methodological thesis, therefore, is that '...(social) science should also be trying to make and know realities that are vague and indefinite *because much of the world is enacted in that way*' (ibid.:14, emphasis original).

My emphasis on ambiguity, complexity, and contingency as key factors of experience in the Japanese animation industry is also inspired by the recent work of Inge Daniels (2010:183) in the context of the anthropology of Japan, who argued for the importance of 'messiness, ambiguity and frictions' in everyday domestic life in contemporary Japan. Daniels found that the material culture of the lived household in Japan is characterised by sustained efforts to contain the potential or actual disarray of ever-accumulating domestic objects, such as annually mass-exchanged

gifts, which can neither be stored nor divested of easily. For Daniels (ibid.:183-195), this messiness of material reality in the Japanese home is a lived reflection of equally ambiguous and conflicting family ideologies in Japanese society today, in which an ideal of family based on 'patrilineal blood ties with an emphasis on filial piety' (ibid.:183) closely coexists with an ideal of family based on 'affective relationships between autonomous individuals' (ibid.). Refusing to class these ideals in terms of simplistic conflict between Japanese and Western ways of life, she suggests that 'the two family models... and the two ideologies on which they are based are in constant dialogue with each other' (ibid.:184).

By way of drawing a parallel with Daniels' ethnography of the contemporary Japanese household, I contend that Law's methodological proposition to situate complexities as they are resonates rather well with my ethnography of the contemporary Japanese workplace. In the world of the Japanese animation industry, the fact that things did not always make sense was part of the ethnographic texture that I got to participate in and experience in the field; such an experience of uncertainty, in turn, was a salient feature of work and life for the young animation makers themselves.⁷ The incessant flow of production and the race against deadlines overworked my informants on the production floor, and edged them at times to moments of disillusioned self-reflection. The socio-economic instability of careers and employment in the animation industry rendered their visions of the future elusive, and catalysed their dreams and aspirations into 'flexible' and casualised labour. Even though the structural cause for their predicament could be explicated in terms of the historical changes in the labour market, to actually live through it is altogether a different experience, which involves a contradiction between what should be and what just *is*. This latter disconnect cannot simply be explained away, because the problem features subjectivity centrally as its base. It is

about aspirations, expectations, dreams, hopes, and desires, on the one hand, and their irreconcilable fissure with the status quo, on the other.

To present something as experientially inexplicable in the lived reality of the ethnographic world, therefore, is not to abandon the anthropological responsibility for rigorous ethnographic analysis. To accept that we sometimes fail to make sense of something is not necessarily a regressive retreat into the sphere of mysticism. Rather, such fissures between experience and meaning are often what give our lives more depth and richness. Life's inexplicability is in itself meaningful, and there must be anthropological ways in which such inexplicability can retain an analytical place in ethnography. For those young animation makers I came to know well in Tokyo between 2009 and 2010, the work of animation making eventually constituted a sense of who they were on and off the production floor, and by constituting their sense of the present, the work of animation in turn articulated the feel for a not-so-distant, desired, but ever so uncertain future. My emphasis on the simultaneous states of animation and disillusion as the characteristic experience of work in the animation industry has therefore sought to capture this meaningful amalgamation of aspiration and disenchantment of labour among young animation makers in contemporary urban Japan.

Notes

¹ This second usage is close to what Howard Becker (1982) meant by the sociology of art and ‘art worlds’ in particular: the network of people, objects, discourses, and institutions (art dealers, critics, distributors, market, etc.) that produces and sustains the given ‘art’ as ‘art’ (c.f. Cox 2003; Moeran 1997).

² In the words of Angela McRobbie (2002:516), ‘[c]reative work increasingly follows the neo-liberal model, governed by the values of entrepreneurialism, individualisation and reliance on commercial sponsorship.’ This was a kind of situation where ‘work has become an important source for self-actualisation’ (ibid.:518), in which ‘more and more young people opt for the insecurity of careers in media, culture or art in the hope of success. In fields like film-making or fashion design there is a euphoric sense among practitioners of by-passing tradition, pre-empting conscription into the dullness of 9-5 and evading the constraints of institutional processes’ (ibid.:521).

³ This casualisation needs to be placed in the context of the decade-long recession in the Japanese economy. In the national labour market, where entry to secure long-term employment is highly limited to the transitory period from education to work (Honda 2005), the segment of the workforce that has been worst affected by the economic downturn since the early 1990s is newly graduated young workers. The significant proliferation of underemployment among youth is really a two-way process of the ongoing structural change that began in the 1990s. As many firms sought to redress their balance sheets, not by laying off existing protected employees but by cutting down on new recruits, the path for transition to secure employment became more and more limited for less qualified graduates in particular. The labour market deregulation in the 2000s thus hit this segment of the young workforce the hardest. In the Japanese media and political discourses, however, this two-way casualisation of labour has tended to be conflated and confused with the problem of motivation *inherent* amongst underemployed youth (Brinton 2011; Honda, Asano, Goto 2006).

⁴ Although such an examination would go beyond the limit of this thesis, one ought also to

pay careful historical attention to the extent to which the tenets and beliefs of Western liberalism themselves might have largely *indigenised* in contemporary Japan through its long history of absorption, rejection, and engagement with Western intellectual tradition since the late 19th century.

⁵ Whereas Confucianism – originating in 6th century BC China – doctrinally posits, in the final analysis, the absolute authority of familial and paternal power over its subjects, the latter, especially the social contract theory of John Locke (*Two Treatises of Government*) in the late 17th century, was formulated specifically to refute the right of the absolute monarchy and the paternal power that was part of the rights of the sovereign (Rawls 2007).

⁶ Indeed, many anthropologists have recently turned to the concept of ‘self-cultivation’ in contexts such as the anthropology of Islam, precisely to provide a grounded ethnographic critique of the universalist and normative aspects of Western liberalism (Hamdy 2009; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005; Mittermaier 2012; Schielke 2009; Simon 2009). Saba Mahmood (2005) operationalises this concept to counteract what she address as ‘normative liberal assumptions about human nature’ (Mahmood 2005:5), which ontologically privileges the ‘desire for autonomy and self-expression’ (ibid.:8), in Euro-American discourse of Islam. Mahmood’s ethnographic setting is the women’s *conservative* Islamist movement in Egypt. This movement endorses, among others, women’s orthodox position in society under paternalistic Islamic pedagogies.

In typical Western feminist terms, Mahmood’s devout Muslim women are said to engage in practices and beliefs that directly contradict – and further negate – their freedom and autonomy from the paternal structure of religion; by putting forth the idea of ‘the cultivation of the virtuous self’ (ibid.:2), Mahmood critiques this interpretation and attempts, analytically, to salvage the theoretically alternative articulation of agency *within* conservative Muslim practices for the women concerned. For Mahmood, the concept of ‘self-cultivation’ is therefore implicitly thrust against the liberal ideal of ‘self-realisation,’ whose project can only be complete with the fuller attainment of autonomy and self-expression.

Importantly, the conceptual genealogy of self-cultivation in the terms employed by Mahmood and other anthropologists of Islam is not Confucian but Aristotelian, particularly the virtue ethics of the latter, with which the Islamic world has had intellectual engagement throughout the course of centuries (Mahmood 2005:135-137).

However, the discussion of this alternative (i.e. non-Confucian) self-cultivation in the context of the anthropology of Islam is germane to my discussion of self-realisation and its genealogical link to Confucian self-cultivation in the Japanese context, because contemporary scholars who discuss Aristotelian self-cultivation in Islamic contexts (e.g. Mahmood 2005:17-29) and those who work on the saliency of self-realisation in liberal capitalist societies (e.g. governmentality theorists, see Chapter 4) both make heavy use of Michel Foucault (e.g. 1994) and his ideas about ‘the care for the self’ (Rabinow 1994:xxiv).

⁷ The agnostic view that the complexities of phenomena may exceed our capacity for rationalisation, *as a methodological standpoint*, is different from the longstanding dualism in Western metaphysics between knowable sensations and unknowable reality, or the replication of ‘philosophical idealism’, as Law himself (ibid.:7-9) elaborates. What is critical in this agnostic position is always to pursue the finest analytical balance, which neither compromises the ethical responsibility of anthropologists nor abandons the vocational obligation of scholars to tenacious intellectual efforts at all times.

Appendix 1

The production process of commercial animation

In this section, I will provide general explanations of the production process of commercial animation based on the production flow chart (Figure A.1) I have used throughout this thesis. As seen in Figure A.1, the complex division of labour in animation production is generally organized into three different production phases: 1) Preproduction, 2) Production, and 3) Postproduction. As the flow of production from the beginning (upper-stream divisions) to the end (lower-stream divisions) is a long and incremental process of visualisation, these three production phases can be understood as the distinctive developmental stages of the visualisation process. In summary, the Preproduction phase covers the period from when production exists only as potential ideas to when it becomes concretised for actual visual production; the Production phase is the period in which the majority of drawing work is carried out; and the Postproduction phase begins when the drawings are filmed and become ready for various editing processes before the product delivery. The work of production operators is most intensive when animation cuts are in the Production phase; as such, the majority of production ethnography in the main chapters revolved around the processes during this phase. In what follows, I will also refer readers to the main chapters where appropriate for relevant or more detailed descriptions. Unless otherwise specified, the process I describe in this appendix is based on the production process at Toei Animation. Barring minor variations,

however, the production divisions and process of commercial animation are standardised across the industry.

Project planning (Preproduction)

In the Preproduction phase, many materials are still predominantly non-visual. During the early stages of preproduction, plans and ideas are mainly exchanged verbally – by way of casual conversation between producers and scenario writers, directors, designers, TV or advertising personnel, and so forth. The casual communication of ideas can take many and various forms: in organised meetings, brainstorming sessions, and likely also in numerous arranged drinks (*nomikai*). In the early phases of Preproduction, it is usually the case that no one, including the chief producer, knows if the ideas they are developing can be developed into actual production. Securing a timeslot in a TV network is of course an imperative, but in doing so the producer also needs to convince potential financiers (i.e. toy companies, DVD distributors, publishing companies, music companies, advertising agencies – these vary depending on the project) to provide a production budget, and it is very hard to tell which comes first in the process.

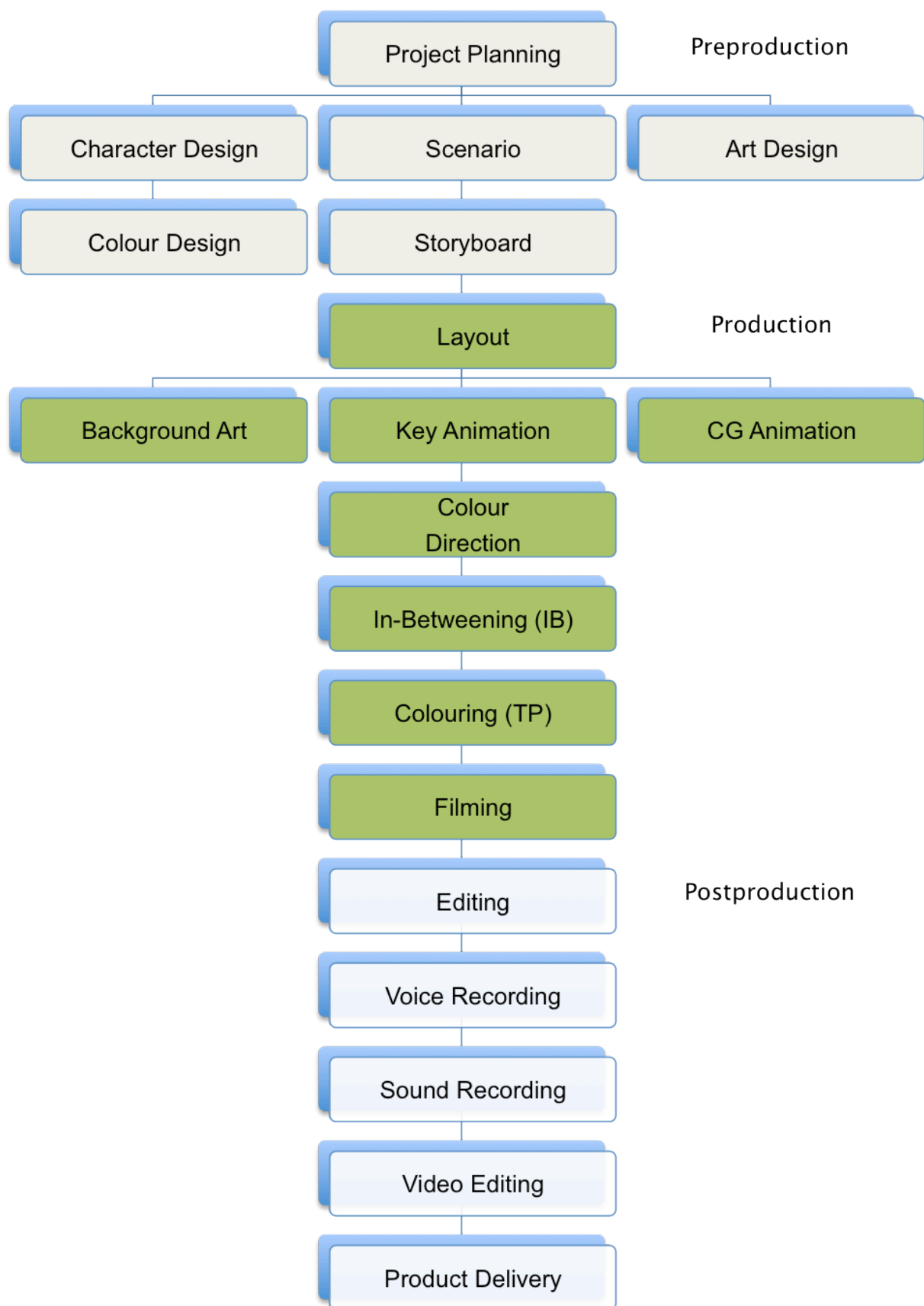


Figure A.1 Production Flow Chart

Scenario and designs (Preproduction)

Once the project proposal is given a ‘go’ sign, the subsequent processes become far more concretised, for it then becomes a matter of working extensively on production designs and the scenario. It usually takes a team of writers to work on the scripts, with a chief scriptwriter working on the general plotline as well as on individual episodes. Finished scripts are then brought to a scenario meeting, where they are discussed extensively between producer(s), director(s), writers, and often other representatives from corporate investors. Past the elusive proposal stage, the scenario writing is considered by many as the first critical step toward visual production, and as such the starting point of the actual production process.

Simultaneously to scriptwriting, production designs are also worked out in order to visually substantiate the plot by giving shape to characters, objects, stages, landscapes, and many other aspects of the storyline that have hitherto been made of ideas and words. In animation making, there are two classes of production designs pertinent to the process: character design and background art design. This separation in design processes between characters, which move, and the background, which doesn’t, already reflects the elaborate division of labour in commercial production. While a character designer works on the former, a background art (BG) director is in charge of the latter, which shows that character animation and the drawing of background art are two completely different processes. Alongside the scenario, character design is arguably the most important process during the Preproduction phase, which oftentimes directly impacts the performance of the show in its release to the market. In many ways, character design can be considered the pinnacle of the amount of creative control an animator can exert in the production project, and only a limited number of top animators can fulfil this role. Once the

script is finalised through a scenario meeting, it is then worked out into a storyboard.

Storyboard (Preproduction)

The crafting of the storyboard also involves multiple creative inputs. As was the case in the scenario meeting, the general director oversees this process, but the actual creators who construct the storyboard may be different specialised artists. In serialised commercial animation production, it is impossible for the general director to actually direct all episodes of the series on his or her own, so the general director works with several episode directors who work on his or her behalf. The storyboard is usually drawn either by these episode directors for their individual episodes, or passed over to a storyboard artist. In both cases, the general director checks these storyboards and provides corrections and alterations where he or she deems fit or necessary.

The storyboard is a visualisation of the finalised script for a given episode of the show, and is the single most important reference in the creative side of production thereon. It serves as the blueprint for final visual output, and also the means through which to make sure the director's executive intentions are reflected in the final animation. In standard format, a TV animation movie in Japan is approximately 24 minutes in length, excluding adverts, within a half-hour time slot on a TV network. In the production process, the 24 minutes of animated footage is divided in terms of 'animation cuts'. A cut in animation, just like its live-action counterpart, is the depiction of a sequence of action that makes up the smallest unit of animated footage (see Chapter 2). An episode of TV animation in Japan is usually made up of approximately 300 animation cuts in total. Subtracting 3 minutes

usually used for the opening and the ending sequences, on simple average one animation cut would consist of roughly 4.2 seconds of action. In animation production, a second is not the smallest unit of time; it is further divided in terms of frames, with 24 frames making up one second. Impressionistically, the mean of 4.2 seconds for a given single cut is a relatively accurate reflection of how long a cut lasts in the actual production, though the length may greatly vary from, say, only 12 frames to some 15-30 seconds or even a minute or more. Following these, a finalised storyboard has 1) a relatively detailed visual depiction of each cut in chronological order, and 2) a predetermined duration of those cuts in the format of 'seconds + frames'.

Controlling time by the split of a second is crucial in animation, for it is the sequence of these frame-based, stop-motion drawings done by animators that create the illusion of life when filmed and shown. It is, then, no exaggeration to state that both animators and directors work in terms of frames of a second in their visual construction and directorial control of animation making. The episode director goes to great effort in controlling and creating a coherent flow of internal time by way of the sequence of 300 cuts of action within an animated episode. Once the storyboard is complete and checked by the General Director, it marks the beginning of the Production phase, which constitutes the substantial body of animation production itself, both visually and in terms of the time required. It is also from this phase onward that a production operator directly attends to the management of the production process.

Layout and key animation (Production)

An animation cut is made of: 1) timesheet, 2) layout, 3) key animation, and

occasionally also 4) in-between animation. Once the storyboard is finalised, a so-called 'animation meeting' is organised by a production operator responsible for that specific episode. In the case of Toei Animation, the participating members consisted of: the episode director (ED), the assistant episode director (AED), the chief animator, a team of key animators, and the production operator. The meeting primarily begins with the episode director explaining chronologically the flow of action as drawn on the storyboard, starting from Cut 1 and ending with, say, Cut 321. The main functions of the meeting are twofold. The first is so the episode director (ED) can communicate face-to-face with animators the directorial intentions of each cut by explaining orally how he or she wants them drawn and animated. To accomplish this, the ED often explained characters' backgrounds, the progression of the storyline, specific emotional development within characters, the general dramatic tensions, etc. Animators are usually free to ask questions, but I found that they tended to remain listening while the ED spoke, and only asked questions at the end of the meeting. The general atmosphere of the animation meeting is such that it is predominantly the episode director who does the speaking, and the remaining participants are often busy jotting down notes on their storyboards.

The second important function of the meeting is to allocate cuts to participating animators. The key animators are usually paid by the unit price of a cut they draw. Thus, how many cuts one works on, as well as relative ease or difficulty in animating the required action in a given cut, contributes to determining their level of income during the period in which they work on a specific episode. The amount of work hours and the intensity of artistic demands required to draw a given cut is therefore taken seriously by animators. This is because, regardless of if it were a cut consisting of a still frame of a person smiling, or one depicting a sequence of prolonged large-scale explosions of complex architecture, the amount of

remuneration remains identical. After the animation meeting is organised, the production moves into *sakuga kikan*, an ‘animation period.’

Cuts in animation production come into being after the animation meeting is held, when animators start turning up their first layout with the corresponding timesheet (see Chapter 6 for more explanation), to be checked by the episode director. In contrast to simply being a drawn representation in the storyboard, an animation cut acquires its first independent physical facets and existence during this initial stage of the animation period. If the storyboard is the blueprint for the entire animation episode, then the timesheet and layout function in the same manner for each individual cut. The same key animator typically draws the layout and key animation in succession, but the layouts need to be ‘checked’ by the directors before they can be turned into the full key animation.

Layout and key animation ‘checks’ (Production)

During production, animation cuts periodically go through quality control processes called ‘checks’. For instance, the script written by the scenario writer is ‘checked’ during the aforementioned scenario meeting, and the storyboard drawn by the episode director (or the storyboard artist) is ‘checked’ by the general director before it is introduced in the animation meeting. At Toei, when the layout of an animation cut is first handed in by the key animator, it is ‘checked’ by three different creative personnel: the episode director (ED), the assistant episode director (AED), and the chief animator.¹ As I noted above, the ‘checks’ during the animation period take place twice for the layout and the key animation over the span of a few to several weeks.

The layout is the first substantial visual indication of how a filmed cut will

look in its final instance, and it is extremely important for the episode director to check during this stage if the cut is going in the ‘right’ direction. Put broadly, the episode director checks how the given sequence of action in the cut ‘fits’ with other sequential actions in neighbouring cuts, and ensures that the overall directorial intentions of the episode are coherently manifest in each of the cuts. Should the episode director find something in need of a correction, he may either request a ‘retake’, which means the cut is brought back to the key animator who did the layout, or insert a ‘correction’ sheet, based on which either the chief animator or the key animator works on the corrections before the key animation check (see below).

The job of the assistant episode director in this is primarily to assist the episode director, the duties of which mostly focus on processing the technical direction given by the ED. When the AED passes the animation cuts, they are brought over to the chief animator, who will check them and provide visual corrections to the drawn animation sequences where necessary. The flow of animation cut across different personnel and divisions can be written down as: key animator → episode director → assistant episode director → chief animator. After the chief animator checks the layout, the cut finally returns to the same key animator to be drawn into the full key animation; when the latter is done, the ‘check’ process is repeated for the second time. Incidentally, it is the production operator who moves the animation cuts back and forth between these personnel, who are often located in different areas across western Tokyo.

Background art (Production)

There is, however, another process involved in the above sequence. Once the assistant episode director checks the layout and releases the cut to the production

operator, he or she then starts working on a material called 'background art [BG] layout' before delivering the cut to the chief animator. In essence, the BG layout is a photocopied replica of the original layout that has been checked by the directors. As the layout technically determines the camera frame and the perspectival relation of animated characters to the background in the cut, after this stage it becomes possible to start working on the background art drawing. To make the BG layout, the production operator first photocopies the original layout, and then adds colours to the photocopied version using red, blue, green, and yellow coloured pencils. The different colours are used to mark off the parts to be drawn by the animator (i.e. the moving part of the cut) and the actual background (for which the BG division is responsible). The duplication of the layout is a necessary step toward the simultaneous production of key animation and background art, which are both integral parts of the final animation but are worked on separately in the production process.

IB-TP and filming (Production)

When the key animation is finalised, production moves to the IB-TP division, where 'In-Betweening' animations are added to the key animation drawings. The 'TP' in IB-TP stands for 'Trace and Paint', in which the animation drawings are given colours for the first time. The animators who work on the layout and key animation on the one hand, and the In-Betweening animation on the other, are typically different people. The IB animation is usually done by early career animators still learning the craft in the industry, and together with TP (colouring), the IB-TP comprises the most labour-intensive process in the animation production process.

When the production reaches the IB-TP division, two things happen. Firstly,

the majority of IB-TP work is today outsourced to overseas subcontractors across South Korea, China, and various locations in Southeast Asia. In the case of Toei Animation, the greater part of IB-TP work is outsourced to their subsidiary in the Philippines (for further explanation of IB-TP, see Chapter 6). Secondly, during this stage of production, the animation cuts all become *digitised*. The precise timing of digitisation during the IB-TP processes is case by case and also depends on where the work was subcontracted, but when the cuts returned to Toei, all cuts existed as digitised data after IB-TP. Either the cuts are all scanned at the start of the In-Betweening process (in this case, the IB was worked out digitally on computer), or by the beginning of the TP process. Regardless, *all* of the TP (colouring) process is done digitally today and there is no exception or variation in this respect. The filming process in today's production, therefore, is effectively a process of digital composition on computers and involves neither a camera nor film. The digitisation of production in the Japanese industry took place circa 2000 (for more on this, see Chapter 3).

Editing and 'raw material filming' (Postproduction)

Editing can begin when all animation cuts have been filmed digitally. In the formal production flow, this marks the entrance into the Postproduction phase. During editing, all of the hitherto disparately animated, coloured, and filmed cuts are put together for the first time to form a single animated episode of 24 minutes in length. For this reason, editing may be considered the most significant juncture in the production process. After this process is complete, it becomes possible to start working on the auditory side of animation production, most notably voice acting.

Writing about the editing process alongside the formalised production flow

chart, however, is a rather problematic undertaking, for this is the process where the formal representation of the production (e.g. Figure A.1) diverges most manifestly from the actual processes on the production floor. To write about it ethnographically accurately (i.e. as I observed and experienced it) is to interrupt the linear descriptive narrative contained in the flow chart for most parts of Production phase processes. In short, even though ‘editing’ is represented as an aspect of the Postproduction process, which takes place after all animation cuts are past IB-TP and digitally filmed, this is simply not the case. In the actual cases I observed at Toei and UTT, the majority of animation cuts were still in the layout and key animation processes when they reached editing.

How can animation cuts that are still in the key animation processes be edited as filmed animated footage? The procedure that enables the unfinished animation cuts to be filmed for editing is called ‘raw material filming’ (*gensatsu*) in the industry. The ‘raw material’ usually refers to incompletely processed cuts that are still at the layout or key animation stages; as these are still assortments of line drawings on paper, production operators scan them all on a photocopier and send them off to a separate filming process, hence the name ‘raw material filming’. The raw material filming produces animated footage that is made up of black-and-white key animation drawings, without In-Betweening drawings and colours. Here, the key animation drawings are forcibly filmed so that they can enter the editing procedure; raw animation filming is therefore a temporary and expedient solution to edit animation cuts that are not yet ready.

There are various and contingent factors contributing to the occurrence of the raw material filming in the production process. The primary reason is a constrained production schedule. Animation production has a categorical delivery deadline calibrated to the TV broadcasting cycle. In order to meet this deadline, it

has become more or less necessary in the industry today to push forward the editing process. It is important to remember that one episode of TV animation is made up of approximately 300 animation cuts on average, and each of these 300 cuts is unique and different. This means that, when the visual production of animation cuts begins in the Production phase, the 300 cuts progress through the production process *all at a different pace*. Looking in retrospect from the endpoint of ‘product delivery’, the standardised production flow chart is accurate in that all cuts eventually *will have* traversed the represented production divisions. However, in the midst of the actual production process, such as editing, the animation cuts are not at all abreast with one another in terms of progression status. Given the time constraints, it is pragmatically impossible to wait for all cuts to become fully processed digital film footage before editing.

Incidentally, preparation for raw material filming is one of the most menial production tasks that the production operators carry out, which involves substantial scanning of all animation cuts – timesheet, layout, key animation – that are not yet processed as IB-TP. Combined with BG layout making, these two photocopier-related tasks force the operators to stand in front of the machine for multiple hours at a time during the busy period.

‘Rushes’, voice and sound recording, and video editing (Postproduction)

After the edited footage is produced, voice and sound recording takes place, always in this order, over the span of a few weeks. The sound recording happens after the voice recording because it is part of a process in which the sound engineer mixes the recorded voices, sound effects, and background music to finalise the auditory aspect of the animation.

Critical in this schematised flow from editing to product delivery during the Postproduction phase is another quality control process called ‘rushes’. The ‘rushes’ originally refer to the first prints of a movie produced in live-action film. In the Japanese animation industry, ‘rushes’, or a rush, means a process of quality control when digitised TP data are filmed (i.e. digitally composed) for the first time. For this reason, a rush check can be organized *before* editing, when some animation cuts reach the IB-TP stage and become digitised animation footage in time, but mostly, rush checks occur simultaneously with other postproduction processes – notably voice and sound recording processes – *after* editing.

A rush check is the last quality control procedure before the produced animation reaches the delivery stage. As such, a range of creators participates in this important process: the episode director (ED), the assistant episode director (AED), the colour director, the background art (BG) director, and often also the chief animator. The number of animation cuts examined during the rush checks varies from a dozen to several dozen cuts, but the cuts usually turn up not in the order sequenced in the storyboard, but on a ‘first come, first served’ basis. One session typically lasts half an hour to an hour, during which time the directors closely watch the freshly filmed footage for errors and parts that could be improved. The animation cuts that do not pass the rush check are sent back to the relevant production divisions and repeat segments of Production phase processes.

It is during this period in which the footage of raw material filming is gradually replaced by the filmed footage of properly processed animation cuts. When production passes the sound recording, with freshly added voice and sound effects, the production reaches the final process, called video editing. Video editing processes the animation into TV broadcasting format and inserts staff credits in the opening and ending sequences. By this time, all raw material filming footage and ‘retake’

cuts during the rush checks will have been processed and re-processed. After video editing, the production is complete and the product is finally delivered to the broadcaster.

Notes

¹ The position of assistant episode director (AED) is not a standardised production division across the industry. Although it was an established division with Toei Animation's production flow, I found that it was more common, among other production studios, to have the episode director only.

Appendix 2

Translation of Figures in Japanese

Chapter 2 Figure 7

The particular production operator who drew this chart for me was Tanabe-san (see Chapter 4). Tanabe-san's flow chart is more detailed and complete compared with the one in Chapter 2 Figure 1, with the insertion of micro-processes in between divisions and occasionally also job titles of workers responsible for each division. *Note that the original flow chart was a two-page document, but in Figure 7 only the first page is represented in order to keep it within the scope of a single page in the chapter.* See also Appendix 1 for explanations of these processes.

- Project Planning (Producer)

- Scenario (Scenario writers)

- Storyboard (Director)

- 1) Key Animation (Key animators)

 - Layout

 - Director Check

 - BG Layout

 - Background Art

 - Chief Animator Check

- 2) Key Animation (2nd round after Layout)

 - Director Check

 - Chief Animator Check

- In-Betweening

 - Adding additional animations

- Colour Direction

- IB-TP Division

 - Scanning

 - Colouring

- Filming

- Editing

- After-Recording

 - Voice Acting

- Dubbing

 - Sound Effects, BGM, etc.

(End of flowchart in Figure 7)

Bibliography

Abe, Masahiro. 2006. *Sakushu Sareru Wakamono tachi: Bike bin rider ha mita*. Tokyo: Shueisha Bunko

Abegglen, James. 1958. *The Japanese Factory: aspects of its social organization*. Illinois: Free Press

Adorno, Theodore. 1991. 'On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening.' In J. M. (eds.), *Theodore W Adorno, The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*. London: Routledge Classics

Adorno, Theodore, and Horkheimer, Max. 1969. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Continuum

Allison, Anne. 2006. *Millennial Monsters: Japanese toys and the global imagination*. Berkeley: University California Press

----- 1994. *Nightwork: Sexuality, pleasure and corporate masculinity in a Tokyo hostess club*. Chicago: Chicago University Press

Arendt, Hannah. 1998. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Bakalaki, Alexandra. 1997. 'Students, Natives, Colleagues: Encounters in Academia and In the Field'. *Cultural Anthropology* 12(4): 502-526

Banks, Mark. 2007. *The Politics of Cultural Work*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2005. *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*. Berkshire: Open University Press

Beck, Ulrich. 2000. *The brave new world of work*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Becker, Howard. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Berndt, Jaqueline. 2008. 'Considering Manga Discourse: Location, ambiguity, historicity'. In M. W. MacWilliams, (eds.), *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the world of manga and anime*. London: M. E. Sharpe.

----- 2007. Review: Steven T. Brown, ed., *Cinema Anime*. Critical

Engagements with Japanese Animation. New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2006'.
The Japanese Journal of Animation Studies 8(1): 49-51

Bernstein, J. M. 1991. 'Introduction'. In Bernstein, J. M. (eds.), *Theodore W Adorno, The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*. London: Routledge Classics

Boje, David, M. 2008. *Storytelling Organisations*. London: Sage Publications

Boltanski, Luc and Chiapello, Eve. 2005. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Verso.

Borovoy, Amy. 2010. 'Japan as Mirror: Neoliberalism's promise and costs'. IN Greenhouse, Carol (eds.), *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Brinton, Mary C. 2011. *Lost in Transition: youth, work, and industry in postindustrial Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brenneis, Don. 2006. 'Reforming Promise'. In Riles, Annelise. (eds.), *Documents: Artifacts of modern knowledge*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Brown, Michael F. 2003. *Who Owns the Native Culture?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

----- 1998. 'Can culture be copyrighted?' *Current Anthropology* 39(2): 193-222

Brown, Steven T. 2006. 'Screening Anime.' In Brown, Stephen T (eds.), *Cinema anime*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Candea, Matei. 2010. *Corsican Fragments: Difference, Knowledge, Fieldwork*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

----- 2007. Arbitrary locations: in defense of the bounded field-site. *The Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S)* 13: 167-184

Chan, Peter S. 2008. 'Consuming Class: Multilevel Marketers in Neoliberal Mexico. *Cultural Anthropology* 23(3): 429-452

Clifford, James and Marcus, George (eds.). 1986. *Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Comaroff, Jean and Comaroff, John. 2000. 'Millennial Capitalism: First thoughts on a second coming'. *Public Culture* 12(2): 291-343

Condry, Ian. 2006. *Hip-hop Japan: Rap and the path of cultural globalisation*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Coombe, Rosemary J. 1994. 'Challenging Paternity: Histories of copyright'. *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 6: 397-422

Cox, Rupert. 2003. *The Zen Arts: An anthropological study of the culture of aesthetic forms in Japan*. London: RoutledgeCurzon

Daniels, Inge. 2010. *The Japanese House: Material culture in the modern home*. Oxford: Berg

Dasgupta, Romit. 2007. 'Creating Corporate Warriors: The "salaryman" and masculinity in Japan.' IN Martinez, D. P. (eds.), *Modern Japanese Culture and Society Vol2*. London: Routledge

Davis, John. 1999. 'Administering creativity'. *Anthropology Today* 15(2): 4-9

de Peuter, Greig. 2011. 'Creative economy and labor precarity: A contested convergence'. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 35(4) 417-425

DeVos, G. A and Wagastuma, H. 1973. 'The entrepreneurial mentality of lower-class urban Japanese in manufacturing industries'. IN G. A. DeVos (eds.), *Socialization for Achievement*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dore, Ronald. 2006. *Dare no Tame no Kaisha ni Suruka*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho
----- 1958. *City Life in Japan: A study of a Tokyo ward*. London: Routledge and Paul

Ellison, James. 2009. 'Governmentality and the Family: Neoliberal choices and emergent kin relations in Southern Ethiopia'. *American Anthropologist* 111(1): 81-92

Embree, John. 1939. *Suye Mura: A Japanese Village*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Faier, Lieba. 2007. 'Filipina migrants in rural Japan and their professions of love'. *American Ethnologist* 34(1): 148-162

Falzon, Mark-Anthony. 2009. 'Introduction. Multi-sited ethnography: theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research'. In Falzon, Mark-Anthony (eds.), *Multi-sited ethnography: theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research*. London: Ashgate

Ferguson, James. 2009. 'The Uses of Neoliberalism'. *Antipode* 41 (S1): 166-184

Florida, Richard. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books

Foucault, Michel. 1994. *Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954 - 1984, Volume 1. Rabinow, P (eds.)*. London: Penguin Books.

Gabriel, Yiannis. 2000. *Storytelling in Organisations: Facts, fictions, and fantasies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Geismar, Heider. 2005. Copyright in Contest. *American Ethnologist* 32(3) 437-459

Gell, Alfred. 1998. *Art and Agency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Genda, Yuji. 2005. *Shigoto no Nakano Aimai na Huan*. Tokyo: Chuō Kōron Shinsha

Gill, Rosalind, and Pratt, Andy. 2008. 'In the Social Factory?: Immaterial labour, precariousness and cultural work'. *Theory, Culture and Society* 25(7-8): 1-30

Gill, Tom. 2001. *Men of Uncertainty: The social organization of day labourers*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Goodman, Roger. 2005. 'Making majority culture'. In Robertson, J. (eds.), *A Companion to the anthropology of Japan*. Oxford: Blackwells Publishing

Gordon, Andrew. 1998. 'The invention of Japanese-style labor management'. IN Vlastos, Stephen (eds.), *Mirror of Modernity: invented traditions of modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press

----- 1993. 'Contests for the Workplace'. In Gordon, Andrew (eds.), *Postwar Japan as History*. California: University of California Press.

Graeber, David. 2001. *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value*. New York:

Palgrave.

Grasseni, Cristina. 2007. 'Introduction'. In C. Grasseni (eds.), *Skilled Vision: Between apprenticeship and standards*. Oxford: Berghahn Books

Greenhouse, Carol J. 2010. 'Introduction'. IN Greenhouse, Carol (eds.), *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. 2007[1992]. 'Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference'. In A. J. Sluka and A. C. G. M. Robben (eds.), *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An anthropological reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Hage, Chassan. 2005. A not so multi-sited ethnography of a not so imagined community. *Anthropological Theory* 5(4): 463-475

Hallam, Elizabeth, and Ingold, Tim. 2007. 'Creativity and Cultural Improvisation: An introduction'. In Ingold and Hallam (eds.), *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. Oxford: Berg

Hamada, Tomoko. 2005. 'The anthropology of Japanese Corporate Management'. In Robertson, J. (eds.), *A Companion to the anthropology of Japan*. Oxford: Blackwells Publishing

Hamdy, Sherine F. 2009. 'Islam, Fatalism, and Medical Intervention: Lessons from Egypt on the cultivation of forbearance (*sabr*) and reliance on God (*Tawakku*)'. *Anthropological Quarterly* 82(1): 173-196

Hareven, Tamara K. 1992. 'The festival work as leisure: The traditional craftsmen of Gion festival'. In J. Clagione, D. Francis, and D. Nugent (eds.), *Workers' Expressions: Beyond accommodation and resistance*. New York: SUNY Press

Harney, Stefano. 2010. 'Creative Industries Debate'. *Cultural Studies* 42(3): 431-444

Hartley, John. 2005. 'Creative industries'. In J. Hartley (eds.) *Creative Industries*. London: Blackwell Publishing

Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

----- 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Harvey, P. and Strathern, M. 2005. 'Afterword'. *Cambridge Anthropology* 25(2): 108-110

Herzfeld, Michael. 2005. 'Political Optics and the Occlusion of Intimate Knowledge'. *American Anthropologist* 107(3): 369-376

----- 1993. *Social Production of Indifference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Hesmondhalgh, David and Baker, Sarah. 2008. 'Creative work and emotional labour in the television industry'. *Theory, Culture and Society* 25 (7-8): 97-118

Hirschkind, Charles. 2006. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ho, Karen. 2009. 'Disciplining Investment Bankers, Disciplining the Economy: Wall street's institutional culture of crisis and the downsizing of "corporate America"'. *American Anthropologist* 111(2) 177-189

----- 2005. 'Situating Global Capitalism: A view from Wall Street investment banks'. *Cultural Anthropology* 20(1): 68-96

Hochschild, Arlie Russel. 2003 [1983]. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Honda, Yuki. 2009. *Kyoiku no Shokugyo-teki Igi*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho

Honda, Yuki and Hirai, Hideyuki. 2007. 'Wakamono ni Miru Genjitsu/Wakamono ga Miru Genjitsu'. In Honda, Yuki (eds.), *Wakamono no Rōdō to Seikatsu Sekai*. Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten

Honda, Yuki, Naitou, Asao and Gotou, Kazutomo. 2006. *Niito tte Iuna!* Tokyo: Kobunsha Shinsho

Ingold, Tim. 2000. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling, and skill*. London: Routledge

Ingold, Tim. 1996. (eds.), *Key Debates in Anthropology*. London: Routledge

Inoue, Hideo. 2008. Wakamono wo Meguru Shakaihosho Seisaku no Genjo to Kadai. IN Wakita, Shigeru, Inoue, Hideo, and Kinoshita, Hideo (eds.), *Wakamono no Koyo Shakai Hosho: Shutai Keisei to Seido Seisaku no Kadai*. Tokyo: Nihon Hyoron Sha

Ivy, Marilyn. 1993. 'Formations of Mass Culture'. In Gordon, Andrew (eds.), *Postwar Japan as History*. California: University of California Press.

Ivy, Marilyn. 1995. *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jackson, Michael. 1989. *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical empiricism and ethnographic inquiry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Jeffrey, Craig. 2010. 'Timepass: Youth, class, and time among unemployed young men in India.' *American Ethnologist* (37)3: 465-481

Jimenez, Alberto Corsin. 2003. 'Working out personhood: Notes on labour and its anthropology'. *Anthropology Today* 19(5): 14-7

Katase, Kazuo. 2010. Kaiso Shakai no nakano Wakamono tach.. IN Kotani, Satsohi, Doi, Takashi, Haga, Manabu, and Asano Tomohiko (eds.), *Wakamono no Genzai: Rodo*. Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Centre

Keane, Webb. 2007. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and fetish in the mission encounter*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kelly, William W. 2005. 'Fear and Loathing of Americans doing Japan anthropology'. In Hendry, Joy. and Wong, Heung Wah (eds.), *Dismantling the East-West Dichotomy: Essays in honour of Jan van Bremen*. London: Routledge

----- 1993. 'Finding a Place in Metropolitan Japan: Ideologies, institutions, and everyday life'. In. A. Gordon (eds.), *Postwar Japan as History*. Berkley: University of California Press.

----- 1991. 'Directions in the anthropology of contemporary Japan'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20:395-431

Kinsella, Sharon. 2000. *Adult Manga: Culture and power in contemporary Japanese society*. Surrey: Curzon Press

Kipnis, Andrew. 2008. 'Neoliberal Governmentality, socialist legacy, or technologies of governing?' *American Ethnologist* 35(2): 275-289

----- 2007. 'Neoliberalism reified: *suzhi* discourse and tropes of neoliberalism in the People's Republic of China. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* 13: 383-400

Komikawa, Koichiro. 2010. 'Wakamono Jiritsu Chosen Plan' Iko no Wakamono Shiensaku no Doko to Kadai – Career Kyoiku Seisaku wo Chushin ni. *Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Zasshi* 602:1

Kondo, Dorinne K. 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, gender, and discourses of identity in a Japanese workplace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

----- 1987. 'Creating an Ideal Self: Theories of selfhood and pedagogy at a Japanese ethics retreat'. *Ethos* 15(3): 241-272

Koschiman, J Victor. 2007. 'Authority and Individual'. IN Tsutsui, William (eds.), *A Companion to Japanese History*. London: Blackwell Publishing

Kotani, Satsohi, Doi, Takashi, Haga, Manabu, and Asano Tomohiko 2010. (eds.), *Wakamono no Genzai: Rodo*. Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Centre

Kuwayama, Takeo. 2003. 'Natives' as Dialogic Partners: Some thoughts on Native Anthropology. *Anthropology Today* 19(1): 8-13

Leach, James. 2007a. 'Differentiation and Encompassment: A critique of Alfred Gell's theory of the abduction of creativity'. In A. Henare, M. Holbraad and S. Wastell (eds.), *Thinking Through Things*. Oxford: Routledge

----- 2007b. 'Creativity, Subjectivity and the Dynamic of Possessive Individualism'. In T. Ingold and E. Hallam (eds.), *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. Oxford: Berg

----- 2004. 'Modes of Creativity'. In M. Strathern and E. Hirsch (eds.), *Transactions and creations: property debates and the stimulus of Melanesia*, Oxford: Berghahn.

----- 2003. *Creative Land: Place and procreation on the Rai coast of Papua New Guinea*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Law, John. 2004. *After Method: Mess in social science research*. London: Routledge

Liep, John. 2001. 'Introduction'. In J. Liep (eds.), *Locating Cultural Creativity*. London: Pluto Press

Lofgren, Ovar and Willim, Robert. 2005. 'Introduction: The mandrake mode'. In Lofgren, Orvar and Willim, Robert (eds.), *Magic, Culture and the New Economy*. Oxford: Berg

MacWilliams, Mark W. 2008. 'Introduction'. In M. W. Williams, (eds.), *Japanese*

Visual Culture: Explorations in the world of manga and anime. London: M. E. Sharpe.

Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamist revival and the feminist subject.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press

Mains, Daniel. 2007. 'Neoliberal times: Progress, boredom, and shame among young men in urban Ethiopia'. *American Ethnologist* 34(4): 659-673

Malaby, Thomas M. 2009. *Making Virtual Worlds: Linden Lab and Second Life.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press

----- 2003. *Gambling Life: Dealing in contingency in a Greek city.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 2007[1922]. 'The method and scope of anthropological fieldwork. In Robben, Antonius C. G. M. and Sluka, Jeffery A. (eds.), *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An anthropological reader.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Marcus, George. 1995. 'Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95-117

Martinez, D. P. 2004. *Identity and Ritual in a Japanese Diving Village.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Matthews, Gordon. 2007. 'Seeking a Career, Finding a Job'. IN Martinez, D. P. (eds.), *Modern Japanese Culture and Society Vol2.* London: Routledge

Matthews, Gordon. 2007. 'Seeking a Career, Finding a Job'. IN Martinez, D. P. (eds.), *Modern Japanese Culture and Society Vol2.* London: Routledge

----- 2003. 'Can 'a real man' live for his family?' IN Roberson, James E and Suzuki, Nobue (eds.), *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the salaryman doxa.* London: Routledge

Maurer, Bill. 2006. 'The anthropology of Money'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35: 15-36

----- 2005. *Mutual Life, Limited: Islamic banking, alternative currencies, lateral reason.* Princeton: Princeton University Press

----- 2002. 'Anthropological and accounting knowledge in Islamic banking and finance: rethinking critical accounts.' *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* 8: 645-667

- Mazzarella, William. *Forthcoming*. 'Why is Adorno so Repulsive?' In Elkins, James and Montgomery, Harper (eds.), *Beyond the Aesthetic and Anti-Aesthetic*.
- 2003. *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and globalization in contemporary India*. Durham: Duke University Press
- McRobbie, Angela. 2011. 'Reflections on Feminism, Immaterial Labour and the Post-Fordist Regime'. *New Formations* 70(4): 60-76
- 2002. 'Clubs to Companies: Notes on the decline of political culture in speeded up creative work'. *Cultural Studies* 16(4): 516-531
- Merry, Sally Engle. 2011. 'Measuring the World: indicators, Human rights, and global governance.' *Current Anthropology* 52 S3: S83-S95
- Miller, Daniel. 2007. "Stone Age or Plastic Age?". *Archeological dialogues* 14(1): 23-27
- Miller, Daniel, and Carrier, James G. 1998. *Virtualism: A new political economy*. Oxford: Berg.
- Miller, Toby. 2009. 'From Creative to Cultural Industries: Not all industries are cultural, and no industries are creative.' *Cultural Studies* 23(1): 88-99
- Mittermaier, Amira. 2012. 'Dreams from Elsewhere: Muslim subjectivities beyond the trope of self-cultivation.' *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* 18: 247-265
- Miyazaki, Hirokazu. 2010. 'Temporality of No Hope'. IN Greenhouse, Carol (eds.), *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- 2006. 'Economy of Dreams: Hope in global capitalism and its critiques'. *Cultural Anthropology* 21(2): 147-172
- 2004. *The Method of Hope: Anthropology, philosophy, and Fijian knowledge*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Moeran, Brian. 2006. *Ethnography at Work*. London: Routledge
- 1997. *Folk Art Potters of Japan: Beyond an anthropology of aesthetics*. Surrey: Curzon
- 1996. *A Japanese Advertising Agency: Anthropology of media and markets*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press
- Mole, Noelle J. 2010. 'Precarious Subjects: Anticipating Neoliberalism in Northern

Italy's Workplace'. *American Anthropologist* 112(1): 38-53

----- 2008, 'Living it on the skin: Italian states, working illness'. *American ethnologist* 35(2) 189-210

Moore, Henrietta. 2004. 'Global anxieties: Concept-metaphors and pre-theoretical commitments in anthropology'. *Anthropological Theory* 4: 71-88

Myers, Fred. 2005. 'Some Properties of Art and Culture'. In Daniel Miller. (eds.) *Materiality*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Nakane, Chie. 1970. *Japanese Society*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson

Nakano, Lynne Y. 2005. *Community Volunteers in Japan: Everyday stories of social change*. London: Routledge

Obama, Barack. 2006. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on reclaiming the American dream*. New York: Crown Publishers

Ogasawara, Yuko. 1998. *Office Ladies and Salaried Men: Power, Gender, and Work in Japanese Companies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Plath, David W. 1991. 'Timely Engagements: The burden of biographical address'. In S. Formanek and S. Linhart (eds.), *Japanese Biographies: Life histories, life cycles, life stages*. Druck: Radinger, Schibbs

----- 1983. 'Introduction: Life is just a Job Resume?'. In D. Plath (eds.), *Work and Lifecourse in Japan*. New York: SUNY Press.

----- 1975. 'Introduction'. In D. Plath (eds.) *Adult Episodes in Japan*. Leiden: E. J. Brill

Poitras, Gilles. 2008. 'Contemporary Anime in Japanese Pop Culture'. In M. W. Williams, (eds.), *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the world of manga and anime*. London: M. E. Sharpe.

Poovey, Mary. 1998. *A History of the Modern Fact: problems of knowledge in the sciences of wealth and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Rabinow, Paul. 1994. 'Introduction'. In Rabinow, Paul (eds.), *Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954 – 1984, Volume 1*. London: Penguin Books

Rawls, John. 2007. *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Richard, Analise, and Rudnycky, Daromir. 'Economies of Affect'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15: 57-77

Richland, Justin B. 2009. 'On Neoliberalism and Other Social Diseases: The 2008 sociocultural anthropology year review.' *American Anthropologist* 111(2): 170-176

Rohlen, Thomas P. 1974. *For Harmony and Strength: Japanese white-collar organization in anthropological perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Roberts, Glenda S. 2005. 'Shifting contours of class and status'. In Robertson, J. (eds.), *A Companion to the anthropology of Japan*. Oxford: Blackwells Publishing

Roberson, James E. 2003. 'Japanese working class masculinities: marginalized complicity'. In Roberson, James E and Suzuki, Nobue (eds.), *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the salaryman doxa*. London: Routledge

----- 1998. *Japanese Working Class Lives*. London: Routledge

Roberson, James E. and Suzuki, Nobue. 2003. 'Introduction'. IN Roberson, James E and Suzuki, Nobue (eds.), *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the salaryman doxa*. London: Routledge

Robertson, Jennifer. 2005. 'Introduction: Putting and keeping Japan in anthropology'. In Robertson, J. (eds.), *A Companion to the anthropology of Japan*. Oxford: Blackwells Publishing

Roepstorff, Andreas. 2007. 'Navigating the Brainscape: When knowing becomes seeing'. In C. Grasseni (eds.), *Skilled Vision: Between apprenticeship and standards*. Oxford: Berghahn Books

Rofel, Lisa. 2007. *Desiring China: Experiments in neoliberalism, sexuality, and public culture*. Durham: Duke university press

Rose, Nikolas. 1999. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, Nikolas and Miller, Peter. 2008. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Ross, Andrew. 2003. *No Collar: The Humane workplace and its hidden costs*. New

York: Basic Books

Roth, Joshua Hotaka. 2002. *Brokered Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Migrants in Japan*. London: Cornell University Press

Sahlins, Marshall. 1999. 'Two or Three Things That I Know about Culture'. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* 5: 399-421

Salomonsson, Karin. 2005. 'Flexible, Adaptable, Employable: Ethics for a new labour market'. In Lofgren, Orvar and Willim, Robert (eds.), *Magic, Culture and the New Economy*. Oxford: Berg

Schielke, Samuli. 2009. 'Being good in ramadan: ambivalence, fragmentation, and the moral self in the lives of young Egyptians'. *The Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)*, S24-S40

Shever, Elana. 2008. 'Neoliberal Associations: Property, company, and family in the Argentine oil fields'. *American Ethnologist* 35(4): 701-716

Shintani, Shuhei. 2010. 'Atarashii Kaikyū Bunka he no Setsuzoku'. IN Kotani, Satsohi, Doi, Takashi, Haga, Manabu, and Asano Tomohiko (eds.), *Wakmono no Gengazai: Rodo*. Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Centre

Shore, Cris and Wright, Susan. 2000. 'Coercive accountability: The rise of audit culture in higher education.' In Strathern, Marilyn (eds.), *Audit Cultures: Anthropological studies in accountability, ethics and the academy*

Simon, Gregory M. 2009. 'The soul freed of cares?: Islamic prayer, subjectivity, and the contradictions of moral selfhood in Minangkabau, Indonesia'. *American Ethnologist* 36(2): 258-275

Stevens, Caroline S.. 1997. *On the Margins of Japanese Society: Volunteers and the welfare of the urban underclass*. London: Routledge

Strathern, Maryling. 2006. 'Intellectual property and rights: an anthropological perspective'. In C Tilley et al (eds). *Handbook of material culture*. London: Sage Publications.

----- 2000. 'New accountabilities: Anthropological studies in audit, ethics and academy'. In Strathern, Marilyn (eds.), *Audit Cultures: Anthropological studies in accountability, ethics and the academy*

- 1999. *Property, Substance and Effect*. London: Athlone Press
- Strathern, M. and Hirsch, E. 2004. "Introduction". In M. Strathern and E. Hirsch (eds.) *Transactions and Creations*. Oxford: Berghan Books
- Sluka, Jeffrey A. and Robben, Antonius C. G. M.. 2007. 'Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology: An introduction'. In Robben, Antonius C. G. M. and Sluka, Jeffery A. (eds.), *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An anthropological reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- Tachibanaki, Toshiaki. 2006. *Kakusa Shakai*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho
- Takahara, Motoaki. 2007. 'Nihon Tokushusei-ron no Nijū no Isan'. In Honda, Yuki (eds.), *Wakamono no Rōdō to Seikatsu Sekai*. Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten
- Theedvall, Renita. 2012. 'Negotiating impartial indicators: putting transparency into practice in the EU. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* 18: 311-329
- Toivonen and Imoto. 2011. 'Making Sense of Youth Problems'. In Goodman, Roger, Imoto, Yuki, and Toivonen, Tuukka (eds.), *The Sociology of Japanese Youth*
- Tsuda, T. 2003. *Stranger in the Ethnic Homeland*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Tsutsui, William M. 2006. 'Introduction'. In W. M. Tsutsui and M. Ito (eds.), *In Godzilla's Footsteps: Japanese popular culture on the global stage*. New York: Palgrave
- 1998. *Manufacturing Ideology: Scientific management in twentieth-century Japan*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press
- Turner, Christena L. 1995. *Japanese Workers in Protest: An ethnography of consciousness and experience*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Urciuoli, Bonnie. 2010. 'Neoliberal education: Preparing the student for the new workplace'. IN Greenhouse, Carol (eds.), *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press
- 2008. 'Skills and selves in the new workplace'. *American Ethnologist* 35(2): 211-228
- Vogel, Ezra. 1979. *Japan as Number One*. Cambdrige: Harvard Unviersity Press

----- 1963. *Japan's New Middle Class: The salary man and his family in a Tokyo suburb*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Watanabe, Hiroshi. 2010. *Nihon Seiji Shisōshi: 17 – 19 Seiki*. Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai

Watanabe, Yasushi, and Yamaguchi, Katsunori. 1977. *Nihon Animation Eiga-Shi*. Tokyo: Yubun-Sha

Weick, Karl E. 1995. *Sensemaking in Organisations*. London: Sage Publications

Wissinger, Elizabeth. 2007. 'Modelling a way of life: Immaterial and affective labour in the Fashion Modelling industry.' *ephemera* 7(1): 250-269

Xiang, Biao. 2007. *Global "Body Shopping": An Indian labor system in the Information Technology industry*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Yamaguchi, Yasuo. 2004. *Nihon no Anime Zen-shi: Sekai wo Seishita Nihon Anime no Kiseki*. Tokyo: Ten Books

Yanagisako, Sylvia Junk. 2002. *Producing Culture and Capital: Family firms in Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Yanagita, Kunio. 1976 [1910]. *Tono Monogatari*. Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko

Zaloom, Caitlin. 2009. 'How to read the future: The yield curve, affect, and financial prediction'. *Public Culture* 21:2 245-268

----- 2006. *Out of The Pits: Traders and technology from Chicago to London*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

----- 2004. 'The Productive Life of Risk'. *Cultural Anthropology* 19(3): 365-391

----- 2003. 'Ambiguous numbers: Trading technologies and interpretation in financial markets'. *American Ethnologist* 30(2): 1-15