TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Making It Real: Fiction, Desire, and the Queerness of the Beautiful Fighting Girl

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As anyone with even a passing familiarity with Japanese popular culture can attest, the fictional worlds of anime and manga are teeming with prepubescent girls fighting to save the world. Sometimes overtly sexualized, always intensely cute, and often a mixture of both, the "beautiful fighting girl" in all her many guises has acquired superstar status in the Japanese cultural imagination. Sailor Moon, Nausicaä, Kiki, Princess Knight: the list goes on and on. Saitō Tamaki's book *Beautiful Fighting Girl* asks what the emergence and proliferation of this iconic figure can tell us about the genres of anime and manga in which she appears, about the sexuality of those who produce and consume her, and about the shifting borders between reality and fiction in an image-soaked world.

Most analyses of the beautiful fighting girl tend to conform to one of two perspectives. For some critics, her emergence is a welcome sign of female empowerment, or at least a Japanese version of "girl power."[1] As Susan Napier writes in her exhaustive account of Japanese anime, series such as *Cutey Honey* and *Sailor Moon,* both of which fall under Saitō's definition of the beautiful fighting girl genre,

> show images of powerful women (albeit highly sexualized in the case of *Cutey Honey*) that anticipate genuine, although small, changes in women's empowerment over the last two decades and certainly suggest alternatives to the notion of Japanese women as passive and domesticated.[2]

Spunky girl superheroes are surely preferable to damsels in distress. But as the creeping qualifiers in Napier's prose ("albeit highly sexualized," "anticipate," "genuine, although small") suggest, the beautiful fighting girl

is not an unambiguous icon of feminist empowerment. Napier's slight discomfort turns to outright hostility in other critics, for whom the beautiful fighting girl's hypersexualized and borderline pedophilic image is a symptom of precisely the opposite: the continuing objectification and infantilization of women in Japanese society.[3] This polarization of attitudes toward her is perhaps the beautiful fighting girl's most definitive characteristic. As Anne Allison writes in a masterful account of the phenomenon that is Sailor Moon, "This fable of fierce flesh, as I call it—girls who show off their bodies yet are fierce fighters just like male superheroes—defies easy categorization as either (or simply) a feminist or sexist script."[4]

No doubt a large part of what makes the beautiful fighting girl so difficult to categorize has to do with how she confounds certain mimetic understandings of cultural production that underpin both the feminist and the sexist interpretations. Both assume, in other words, that she is in some sense a *reflection* of the status of girls and women in Japan. Studying the beautiful fighting girl, then, is understood as a way to get at the reality of women's lives in the culture that produced her. What these analyses often miss, however, is that the beautiful fighting girl is also a fictional creature in her own right, and one capable of fulfilling functions other than straightforward representation. She is inscribed, moreover, within certain generic parameters and flourishes only in certain media, specifically those of anime and manga, and more recently computer games. If she were simply a representation of a certain social reality or ideology (be it feminist, misogynist, or otherwise), we would expect to find her in all sorts of media, including not only anime and manga but also novels, films, and theater. But just as the "final female" is inherently tied to the horror genre or the femme fatale to noir, the beautiful fighting girl is most at home in the "drawn" worlds of anime and manga. Why is that? What is the special affinity between the beautiful fighting girl and these media forms? What does she have to tell us about the psychic space of contemporary Japanese popular culture? If there is more to her than what one critic has called "a mirror of girls' dreams," is there someone else whose dreams she might reflect?[5]

As a practicing psychiatrist in the Lacanian tradition with a keen interest in media culture, Saitō Tamaki was uniquely positioned to tackle these questions when he wrote *Beautiful Fighting Girl* more than a decade ago, and his ideas are still reverberating among cultural theorists in Japan today. Saitō reads the beautiful fighting girl not as a reflection

of the status or the desires of women but as an autonomous object of desire, an imaginary "phallic girl" whose unbridled *jouissance* lends reality to the fictional spaces she inhabits. Saitō reconstructs her origins in the pleasurable but disorienting experience of being sexually aroused by a drawn image of a beautiful girl with no referent in reality. He locates this primal scene in the childhood of the pioneering anime director Miyazaki Hayao, the creator of works like *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, Princess Mononoke,* and *Kiki's Delivery Service,* all of which feature beautiful fighting girls.[6] Miyazaki has said that he was first inspired to make anime by the film *Panda and the Magic Serpent* (*Hakuja den,* 1958), Japan's first color feature-length anime, and Saitō hypothesizes that the young Miyazaki was caught off guard by a sexual attraction to the film's heroine. The girl (actually the spirit of a white serpent named Bai-Niang) was an impossible object, a fictional creature who therefore "contained already within her the occasion for loss"—yet Miyazaki desired her. This experience of being "made to experience pleasure against his will by a fictional construct" constituted a trauma for Miyazaki. Because unresolved traumas can only be repeated, for Miyazaki this meant the creation of a whole string of beautiful fighting girls in his own works. While Miyazaki tends to insist on the wholesomeness of his works and to disavow any sexual component, in Saitō's analysis the appeal of Miyazaki's beautiful fighting girls has everything to do with sexuality. Insofar as their repetition perpetuates a libidinal attachment to a fictional construct, they also challenge us to rethink our understanding of the ontological status of fiction in the visual register.

In Saitō's reading, then, the beautiful fighting girl is not a reflection of a sociological reality or even of a desire for a certain reality but a perverse fantasy that functions to recathect and invest with a new reality, to "animate," as it were, a sexual object that threatens to dissolve into fiction. This perverse work of animation is there for all to see in Miyazaki's creative output and has been reenacted countless times among generations of otaku, that much-maligned group of anime and manga makers and fans for whom the beautiful fighting girl represents an unattainable yet irresistible sexual object. As Saitō writes, "A generation traumatized by anime creates its own works that repeat the wound. That wound is taken over and repeated by the next generation." The original title of Saitō's book is *A Psychoanalysis of the Beautiful Fighting Girl,* but it might just as well be titled *A Psychoanalysis of the Otaku.*[7] Understood as the image of the otaku's founding trauma, the conflicting interpretations of the

beautiful fighting girl as both feminist and misogynist at once become easier to explain. She is empowered by her status as a sex object, her reality vouchsafed by her sex appeal. She may be a creature of male desire having nothing to do with actual women, but, once called into existence by otaku fantasy, she takes on an existence of her own that forces us to rethink our definition of reality itself.

Some readers may be pleased to hear that Saitō's book contains much more than dense Lacanian analyses. Behind the theory, which is concentrated mostly in chapters 1 and 6 (which deal with the otaku and the beautiful fighting girl, respectively), is an enormous amount of textual, clinical, and historical research, much of which has also made it into the middle chapters, although not always in a fully digested form. It is, in other words, quite a baggy monster of a book. In addition to a theory of otaku sexuality, it includes an analysis of the characteristic temporality and "high-context" nature of anime and manga, a fascinating defense of their monoglossic nature versus novelistic polyphony, an exhaustive genealogy of the beautiful fighting girl (including thirteen subgenres), a brief biography and analysis of the American outsider artist Henry Darger (whom Saitō sees as a sort of ancestor of the otaku), and a collection of interviews with otaku both inside and outside Japan. Not all of its arguments are made with the same level of rigor, nor are they all equally convincing.[8] But together they represent a sustained and serious attempt to understand the otaku and, by understanding them, to think interesting thoughts about the relations between fiction and the real world in today's media environment. The very messiness of the book's approach, as Azuma Hiroki notes in the commentary, is "a function of the author's zeal and the labor pains from birthing a new paradigm." And indeed, the book has been hugely influential in Japan, modeling a new approach to the study of popular culture and sparking debates that are still ongoing today.

Although Saitō concerns himself in *Beautiful Fighting Girl* exclusively with heterosexual male otaku, there are of course many different kinds of otaku, many of whom are women. A sizable proportion of female otaku enjoy populating their fantasy lives with more or less idealized gay male relationships. Saitō has addressed this complicated issue of so-called *yaoi* culture elsewhere, as have many other critics. Here I simply note that while this book is limited to male heterosexual otaku, considering both male fans of the beautiful fighting girl and female fans of the "boys' love" genre as variations of otaku can be helpful in understanding both phenomena: just as the beautiful fighting girl has little to do with actual

women or girls, the beautiful gay boys favored by female otaku have very little to do with "real" gay men.[9] To insist on an identity-based understanding of representation when analyzing either phenomenon is to miss the complex play of identification and desire that brings these figures to life and makes them so much more than they seem.

Defining the Otaku

Who exactly are the otaku? The term refers on the most basic level to passionate fans of anime, manga, and computer games. They are known for their facility with computer technology and for their encyclopedic, even fetishistic, knowledge of particular strains of visual culture.[10] Most commentators agree that the otaku emerge historically as a new sociological type sometime in the 1970s in the vacuum left by a hegemonic mainstream culture and the sub- and countercultures that opposed it. Defined more by their tastes than their actions or convictions, the otaku are the precocious children of postmodern consumerist society.

A more precise definition than that would be impossible because the otaku have become such a highly contested (and therefore fascinating) category. As Melek Ortabasi suggests, the figure of the male otaku is akin to the prewar *moga*, or "modern girl," in that he is both a lived identity and a media creation that crystallizes all sorts of social anxieties.[11] In the case of the otaku, these are about gender, sexuality, national identity, and normative development, all highly charged issues that cause the discourse about them to shift wildly back and forth between shame and pride.

First the pride. Okada Toshio, the self-proclaimed "Otaku King" who emerged in the 1990s as the chief spokesman for the otaku and proponent of so-called otakuology, has put forward the most complimentary definition of the otaku. This is to be expected, since he is himself what Saitō calls an "elite otaku." As a founder of the hugely successful anime studio Gainax and the cocreator of some of the most important anime in the otaku canon, Okada has every reason to be proud of otaku culture.[12] He defines the otaku as, among other things, "a new human type born in the twentieth century... with an extremely evolved visual sensibility."[13] He traces their history back to early fans of televised anime who prided themselves on being able to distinguish the pictorial styles of individual producers of anime images. The more subtle the distinctions, the more pleasure it gave the otaku to make them, and they took pride in being something more than passive consumers of mass-produced

entertainment, capable of spotting value and difference where others saw only monotony. As connoisseurs, Okada claimed, they traced their roots to premodern arbiters of taste like tea ceremony founder Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591), who was famous for his ability to proclaim a broken teacup more valuable than a whole one.[14]

Other proponents of otaku culture, such as Ōtsuka Eiji and Morikawa Kaichirō, have written of the extraordinary power of otaku taste to create communities, to transform urban space, to upend capitalist relations of production and consumption, and to challenge American cultural hegemony.[15] These claims, which Thomas Lamarre has collectively labeled the "Gainax discourse," after Okada's company, shade very quickly into utopian thinking, evoking "the distributive visual field of anime to make claims for the end of all hierarchies—those of history, of modernity, and of the subject."[16] This is heady stuff, and there are many elements of otaku culture that are in fact quite radical. As Lamarre also argues, however, the emphasis on historical rupture and Japanese cultural uniqueness in many of these texts keeps what could have been a *theory* of what is truly new about otaku culture from developing beyond the level of a *discourse* on otaku, and Japanese, identity. Otaku pride, moreover, can take rather extreme forms. Here, for example, is Okada in 1996: "At this moment the country of Japan could disappear and world culture wouldn't suffer a bit. The only exception to this is 'otaku culture.' [Japanese] Anime, manga, and computer games are sought after by people all over the world."[17] Such hyperbolic, and often narcissistic, celebrations of otaku culture are perhaps not so surprising, however, insofar as they come in reaction to successive waves of fear and loathing from mainstream Japanese society, for whom the otaku are anything but exemplary postmodern subjects or heirs of the best of Japanese culture.

From the perspective of mainstream Japanese culture, the otaku have a reputation for being undersocialized, unhealthily obsessive, and unable to distinguish between fiction and reality. When Miyazaki Tsutomu, who later turned out to be a fan of pornographic "rorikon" anime, was found to have murdered and partially cannibalized four little girls in 1989, the idea of the otaku as pedophile and psychopath was cemented in the public imagination.[18] As a result, many find it hard to accept that the otaku's passion for the beautiful fighting girl is limited to the realm of fiction and fantasy and does not translate into actual pedophilia. Sensationalizing news accounts of otaku who prefer so-called 2-D love over the real thing, moreover, are taken at face value as evidence of a pathetic developmental

failure, and the challenge posed by otaku culture to the normative trajectory from childhood into adulthood can seem like a rejection of the future itself.[19] Even Morikawa, who writes quite sympathetically about the otaku in general, insists that they are characterized by what he calls "an inclination toward failure" *(dame shikō)*.[20]

Beautiful Fighting Girl intervenes in this highly polarized discourse to put the otaku back on a continuum with the rest of humanity. For Saitō, the otaku have a great deal to teach us about how to survive and flourish in our media-saturated environment. They are distinguished not by their *inability* to distinguish reality from fiction but by their *ability* to take pleasure in multiple levels of fictionality and to recognize that everyday reality itself is a kind of fiction. In an essay published just after *Beautiful Fighting Girl,* he wrote:

> Otaku seek value in fictionality itself, but they are also extremely sensitive to different levels of fictionality. From within our increasingly mediatized environment, it is already difficult to draw a clear distinction between reality and fiction. It is no longer a matter of deciding whether we are seeing one or the other, but of judging which level of fiction something represents.[21]

The otaku's attitude toward fiction accords very well with Jacques Lacan's understanding of the imaginary nature of experiential reality and can be a healthy adaptive strategy as well. Unlike obsessive fans who abandon themselves wantonly to their passions, the otaku maintain a detached and ironic perspective toward the objects of their fascination. Unlike their close relatives the maniacs, who covet objects that take material form (such as stamps or coins), the otaku are drawn to entirely fictional objects (such as anime characters) that they seek to "possess" by fictionalizing them further in narratives of their own creation. But the most important characteristic of Saitō's otaku is their ability to eroticize fictional characters. It is the otaku's sexuality, then, that really distinguishes them for Saitō. He explores it using Lacanian psychoanalysis, which may not be to everyone's taste, but he does so without the slightest trace of moralizing judgment, which is refreshing and long overdue.

Saitō's focus on the otaku's sexuality has provoked quite a bit of criticism, most famously from the media critic Azuma Hiroki, as I discuss later. But it is also Saitō's most important contribution to our understanding of otaku culture. His Lacanian approach is also particularly well suited to analyzing otaku and the beautiful fighting girl for two interrelated reasons. First, it offers powerful tools with which to understand how the

proliferation of new media forms has come to trouble the distinction between fiction and reality. Second, it makes it possible to describe otaku sexuality in a language that does not pathologize and acknowledges their ability to derive pleasure from fictional images in the fundamentally perverse imaginary space of anime and manga.

Lacan as Media Theorist

How does Lacanian theory understand the difference between "reality" and "fiction"? As is well known, Lacan posits a tripartite model for understanding human subjectivity. The Symbolic is the realm of language and the law; the Imaginary is the realm of images and appearances; and the Real is the unmediated and hence unimaginable "raw material" of reality, the perception of which would be too traumatic for us to bear. In Saitō's account of Lacan, our experience of what we know as reality takes place only in the Imaginary. It is also in the Imaginary that we experience everything else—*including fiction* and other images and perceptions—all mediated and regulated by Symbolic forms such as language and law. As Saitō writes, "It is here [in the Imaginary] that 'meaning' and 'experiences' are possible." For this reason, Saitō makes it clear from the outset that his discussion of the otaku focuses exclusively on the realm of the Imaginary. This is because, in Lacanian theory—*as in the otaku's world*—reality (unlike the Real) is understood as an imaginary phenomenon. Imaginary objects exist right alongside our perception of "everyday reality," and to the extent that we are able to cathect them, or invest them with libido, they are no less "real" in terms of their psychic effect on us. The only thing that distinguishes imaginary forms and constructs from what we understand in commonsense terms as everyday reality, Saitō writes, is our consciousness of them as being mediated in some way. Everyday reality, conversely, is "nothing more than a set of experiences that emerge from a consciousness of not being mediated." From Saitō's Lacanian perspective, then, there is no ontological distinction between "reality" and "fiction." It is only a matter of the perception of the absence or presence of mediation.

Lacan's theory of the imaginary nature of reality, then, is itself a theory of media that turns out to be very useful for understanding and coping with our hypermediated world. The proliferation of modern media forms has led to an unprecedented expansion of the realm of the Imaginary. With television, newspapers, film, anime, manga, and—of course, the Internet—we now have access to a virtually unlimited store of images and ideas, all competing with "everyday reality" for our attention. Some of us experience this as enriching and exciting, while others find it threatening or overwhelming. As the realm of the Imaginary expands because of the proliferation of media, some of us may feel that the ability of the Symbolic to structure and unify the Imaginary is threatened. Since the (always illusory) unity of the subject is maintained by what Lacan calls the *phallus*, this threat may even be experienced as a kind of castration anxiety. The panicked desire to reinstate the Symbolic in the face of an onslaught of images that threaten to undermine the distinction between the real and the fictional can thus take the form of an anxiety over sexual norms and gender conformity. This is one reason that Saitō insists that sexuality is key to understanding both otaku culture and the reactions it provokes in mainstream society.

From this perspective, another possible definition of the otaku would be: those who take the most pleasure in and are most knowledgeable about this expansion of the Imaginary. While the rest of us may feel overwhelmed and awash in a flood of images and information, the otaku revel in it. As mentioned earlier, Saitō argues that the litmus test for a real otaku is whether they can be genuinely sexually excited by a drawn image. He writes,

> When a person is sexually excited by the image of a woman in an anime, they may be taken aback at first, but they are already infected by the otaku bug. This is the crucial dividing point. How is it possible for a drawing of a woman to become a sexual object?
>
> "What is it about this impossible object, this woman that I cannot even touch, that could possibly attract me?" This sort of question reverberates in the back of the otaku's mind. A kind of analytical perspective on his or her own sexuality yields not an answer to this question but rather a determination of the fictionality and the communal nature of sex itself. "Sex" is broken down within the framework of fiction and then put back together again. In this respect one could say that the otaku undergoes hystericization: the otaku's acts of narrative take the form of eternally unanswerable questions posed toward his or her own sexuality. And the narratives of hysterics cannot help but induce from us all manner of interpretations. This is of course what has led me to the present analysis.

This explosion of "acts of narrative" instigated by the otaku's hysteria leads to the obsessive replication of the beautiful fighting girl theme

as discussed earlier in the case of Miyazaki Hayao. Her "fighting" is the perverse expression of the projected and inverted hysteria of the male otaku whose fantasy she embodies. The hysteria is "inverted" because, while the hysteric expresses the trauma of sexuality by somaticizing it, the beautiful fighting girl seems to have experienced no trauma at all; her battles are not about revenge or even about justice. They are an expression of an unrepressed and de-instrumentalized sexuality. She fights for no discernible reason. She is the embodiment of the phallus and of pure *jouissance,* as it can exist only in the space of fiction and of infantile polymorphous perversion. As an embodiment of the Lacanian phallus, she offers a way out of the oedipal circuits of desire and lack, rivalry and revenge. She is the emblem of the otaku's "perversion."

Otaku Perversion

It should be emphasized here that "perversion" in Lacanian psychoanalysis is not an insult. It is a structural characteristic of all human sexuality, related to the mechanism of disavowal. As Bruce Fink writes, "It is evidence of the functioning of this mechanism—not this or that sexual behavior in itself—that leads the analyst to diagnose someone as perverse. Thus, in psychoanalysis 'perversion' is not a derogatory term, used to stigmatize people for engaging in sexual behaviors different from the norm."[22]

What is it that the otaku disavow? For Saitō this would of course be the fictionality of the beautiful fighting girl and, by extension, the ontological distinction between fiction and reality more generally. While our normative understanding of sexuality insists that it must have an object in the real world (preferably of the opposite sex) and that anything else can only be a "transitional" object, Saitō's otaku recognize that, to the extent that the "real world" is itself part of the Imaginary, there is no intrinsic difference between desiring a drawn or animated image and desiring an actual human being.[23] The otaku's ability to eroticize fictional objects, moreover, perfectly exemplifies Lacan's understanding of *all* sexuality as a fantasy and an illusion. If the proliferation of new media and the emergence of the Internet have meant that the "virtual" world has started to become just as meaningful as the "real" one, the otaku are there to tell us that this is nothing new.[24] Sometimes we do not want to hear this. And this, Saitō suggests, is a major source of the visceral contempt and derision with which the otaku are often treated.[25]

If society tends to repress the phantasmic aspects of sexuality, the otaku celebrate it. Their ability to eroticize imaginary objects, Saitō argues, has made them better equipped to cope in a media-saturated postmodern society in which the distinction between fiction and reality is increasingly problematic. In a world in which the Imaginary threatens to overwhelm the Symbolic,[26] along with the phallus that serves as its guarantee, the fantasy of the "phallic girl" is the otaku's way of holding on to a sense of reality. His perversion is a kind of ontological anchor; it is his salvation—and it could be ours as well. "For the world to be *real,*" Saitō writes, "it must be sufficiently electrified by desire. A world not given depth by desire, no matter how exactingly it is drawn, will always be flat and impersonal, like a backdrop in the theater. But once that world takes on a sexual charge, it will attain a level of reality, no matter how shoddily it is drawn."

Saitō's positive view of otaku sexuality has the enormous merit of making it intellectually interesting and heading off the stupefying forces of stigmatization. Its value is all the greater in a cultural context in which many want nothing more than to "castrate" the otaku by inserting them into a developmental narrative and insisting that the objects of their affection are merely transitional ones that they must eventually outgrow. Such was the message, for example, of *Train Man (Densha otoko),* the hugely popular media phenomenon about an otaku who inadvertently saves a girl from a harasser on a train and ends up discovering true love, thereby "graduating" from his otaku identity.[27] Although the *Train Man* phenomenon postdates the publication of *Beautiful Fighting Girl,* Saitō has been very outspoken in his opposition to what he calls "the same old calls for otaku just to 'accept reality and grow up' and 'acknowledge the gap between the real and the ideal.'" For Saitō, the perversion of the otaku, their insistence on holding on to their transitional object forever, is precisely the lesson that they have to teach us.

It is important to understand that this is not the same as saying that the fictional object is *the only* object the otaku can love, nor does it mean that he or she cannot tell the difference between real and imaginary objects of desire. Being an otaku says nothing about one's ability to love another human being, and one's taste in *fictional* sex is not necessarily predictive of the kind of sex one actually wants to have. Saitō would no doubt agree with the queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who included in a long and wonderfully nonnormative list of all the ways in which people's sexuality can be different the following item: "Many people have their richest mental/emotional involvement with sexual acts

that they don't do, or even don't *want* to do."[28] Saitō argues that their ability to inhabit "multiple orientations," a sort of nonpathological form of dissociative personality disorder, means that otaku are perfectly capable of conducting a richly perverse fantasy life while maintaining an utterly "normal" and pedestrian sex life in their day-to-day lives. Which form of sexuality represents their "true nature," however, is a matter of indifference to Saitō. As their fantasies lead them to proliferate multiple fictional worlds, the effect is to dehierarchize the relation between fantasy and reality.

It is important to remember that Saitō makes this argument about the otaku's "normality" partly to defend the otaku against those who revile them as perverts and pedophiles, which in some cases perhaps leads him to overstate his case. In his recent book *The Anime Machine*, Thomas Lamarre is extremely critical of Saitō's eagerness to assert the otaku's normality, characterizing his "agenda" as saying, "let your fantasies run wild as long as they lead you back to bed with your socially legitimate partner."[29] While Lamarre's critique is characteristically brilliant in many ways,[30] this claim strikes me as a serious mischaracterization of Saitō's position. Saitō may *describe* the real-life sexuality of the otaku he knows as tending toward the heterosexual and the vanilla, but he never *prescribes* that it be so. For Saitō, the reality-producing charge of the beautiful fighting girl sparks across the gap between the otaku's actual heterosexual "wholesomeness" and the polymorphous perversity of their fantasies, but neither pole is privileged or pathologized.

I have addressed Lamarre's critique here because I want to stress that, contrary to the impression he gives, there is much in Saitō's book that students of sexuality and queer theory will find both useful and exciting. Cast as unnatural and perverse, and devalued because unrelated to reproduction, there is something decidedly queer about otaku sexuality, and Saitō's book offers a truly loving account of it. In their ability to eroticize fiction, Saitō's otaku decouple sexual desire from social identities and naturalized bodies in ways that queer theorists will find fascinating. His understanding of fictionality as a multilayered phenomenon rather than simply "the opposite of reality," and therefore trivial or immature, is a useful way to get beyond binary thinking and normative theories of development. It is also a way to understand not just what fiction is but how it works in and on the world. In his critique of Saitō mentioned earlier, Lamarre describes Saitō's work as "a quasi-Jungian apologia for the force of creative fantasy."[31] But readers will find that there is much more

to Saitō's analysis of fiction and sexuality than the sort of mystic humanism this implies. The wellspring of the otaku's multiple fictional worlds lies not in the depths of the human soul but in the abyss of the Lacanian Real. As Saitō writes, "What I call the 'plurality of (imaginary) reality' *(sōzōteki genjitsu no fukusūsei)* has its origin and derives its potential from the positing of the Real. Without that it is nothing more than a variant of the idea that fantasy is all that exists." Far from the mindless relativism of "the idea that fantasy is all that exists" or a simplistic celebration of creativity, Saitō's work takes fiction seriously. As such it helps us understand how, in Michael Moon's words, "play and pleasure—which in our society frequently get relegated to the domain of an ostensibly 'temporary escape from reality'—can demand engagement with some of our own and other people's most disturbing feelings, memories, and desires, and can also invite and withstand rigorous analysis."[32]

In addition to Sedgwick and Moon, there is one more foundational queer theorist whose work seems relevant to Saitō's. While Lamarre may be right to take issue with Saitō's overemphasis on the otaku's "normal" heterosexuality in real life, Saitō still gets credit for battling what Judith Butler famously argued was a much more insidious form of heteronormativity. She called it "melancholic heterosexuality" and argued that it formed the psychic basis for naturalizing the body itself. "The conflation of desire with the real—" she argued in *Gender Trouble*, "that is, the belief that it is parts of the body, the 'literal' penis, the 'literal' vagina, which cause pleasure and desire—is precisely the kind of literalizing fantasy characteristic of the syndrome of melancholic heterosexuality."[33] Melancholic heterosexuality, for Butler, is the result of a taboo against homosexuality that precedes even the heterosexual incest taboo and plays a key role in forming our sense of inhabiting sexed bodies. She argues that the oedipal injunction against incestuous desire for the opposite-sex parent is preceded by a taboo against desiring the same-sex parent. The force of this taboo is such that the loss itself cannot be acknowledged, and this unmourned loss of the same-sex parent as an object of desire causes the subject to introject and identify with that object in place of desiring it. This identification, Butler suggests, sets the same-sex parent up inside the subject as the source of the felt "reality" of our sexed bodies. In her words, "The disavowed homosexuality at the base of melancholic heterosexuality reemerges as the self-evident anatomical facticity of sex."[34] This suggests that insofar as resistance to the otaku's fictionalization of desire typically manifests itself in the form of an insistence on the material facticity

of bodies (i.e., "people need a good slap in the face!"),[35] that resistance may itself be rooted in one of the psychic foundations of heteronormativity. Although Saitō does not make this argument himself, his articulate defense of the otaku against those who insist that desire must be rooted in real bodies suggests the critically queer potential of otaku sexuality.

Debate with Azuma

Hiroki Azuma's *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* has a very different take on the otaku from Saitō's, and the differences are revealing of the relevance of Saitō's approach to queer theory.[36] As readers of Azuma's book know, he barely touches on sexuality and focuses more on social theory and historical analysis. He sees in the otaku's way of producing and consuming anime and manga an "animalizing postmodernity." "Animalization," a term Azuma borrows from the neo-Hegelian philosopher Alexandre Kojève, involves a model of subjectivity based not on desire for an other who is always just out of reach but on the optative fulfillment of discrete and satiable "needs." In the case of the otaku starting in the 1990s, these "needs" are fulfilled by affectively charged qualities, called *moe,* of anime or manga characters (such as maid's costumes or cat ears) that have little or nothing to do with the narratives in which they appear. Azuma's otaku has no use for the "person," understood in a complex intersubjective sense. Nor is he interested in the twists and turns of narrative development. All he needs to be satisfied are the superficial trappings of character. As Azuma describes his dystopic vision, " 'becoming animal' means the erasure of this kind of intersubjective structure and the arrival of a situation in which each person closes various lack-satisfaction circuits" (87). Because these circuits are so easily closed ("it is essentially a matter of nerves"), they never develop to the level of a full-blown "sexuality" such as S/M, homosexuality, or even fetishism. "In most cases the sexual awareness of the otaku does not reach that level in any way" (89). Azuma's argument, then, is not just that otaku cannot be analyzed in terms of sexuality but that the otaku *do not have* a sexuality, that they herald the end of sexuality. For Azuma, the otaku are "database animals" who have given up on sexuality as an intersubjective experience. While Saitō sees otaku sexuality as an adaptive strategy perfectly suited for life in postmodern society, Azuma sees it as a symptom of animalization, a marker not only of the end of sexuality but the end of the "human" as well.

The difference between Saitō and Azuma, then, comes down to how they understand sexuality: for Azuma it is fundamentally about a relation to the other, which means that the otaku don't have it. For Saitō, it is imaginary from start to finish, so the otaku exemplify it. In a three-person discussion among Saitō, Azuma, and the feminist critic Kotani Mari held in 2002, the contrast between Saitō and Azuma is clearly on display.[37] When Azuma insists that the satisfaction the otaku derive from imaginary sex partners is nothing more than bodily pleasure that doesn't rise to the level of sexuality, Kotani counters that many otaku have actually "come out" and thereby proclaimed a sort of sexual identity that does indeed rise to the level of sexuality. Azuma responds:

> AZUMA: But in the end, masturbating to a picture doesn't add up to anything [Shikashi, somo somo, e de onanii shite mo nan de mo nai deshō] . . .
>
> SAITŌ: But of course it does! (laughs) [nan de mo naku wa nai darō!]
>
> AZUMA: No, it doesn't. There is a huge difference between masturbation and actual sex acts . . .
>
> KOTANI: Is there really such a huge difference? I really don't get men (laughs).
>
> AZUMA: Isn't masturbation an extension of oral auto-eroticism? Like thumb sucking? Of course it might depend on the specific masturbatory act you're talking about. But still, in the sexual relation you have an other, and in that sense it is completely different from auto-eroticism.
>
> SAITŌ: No, no. Remember that there is no sexual relation.
>
> AZUMA: This sort of thing is what makes you Lacanians crazy (laughs). In any case, I don't think there's much point in talking about this.
>
> SAITŌ: I wonder why you are so determined to laugh this off? (laughs) I'm going to stick to my psychoanalytic guns and insist that masturbation and sex are the same thing from an analytic perspective.[38]

Here, in a nutshell, is the core debate over otaku sexuality. Kotani, a committed feminist and longtime advocate of otaku and *yaoi* fantasy as legitimate forms of sexuality, stresses the political and performative dimensions of sexuality, arguing that if you "come out" as an otaku who likes to masturbate to pictures, that is your sexuality—to which you have a right—and it is no one else's business to decide whether it's "real" sexuality or not. Her generally sex-positive attitude also puts her in the same camp as Saitō when he argues that there is no way to strictly distinguish between masturbation and "real" sex.[39]

Azuma takes a very different position. His dismissive attitude toward masturbation (it "doesn't add up to anything") and his appeal to Freud's developmental teleology of sexuality (defining masturbation as akin to oral sexuality and therefore primitive) register as attempts to counter the de-instrumentalization of sexuality being proposed by Saitō and Kotani.[40] When Saitō picks up on this and starts to psychoanalyze Azuma himself ("I wonder why you are so determined to laugh this off?"), it is clear that he is suggesting that Azuma finds the idea of imaginary sexuality somehow threatening. As if to confirm Saitō's intuition, a moment later Azuma resorts to the supposed biological ground of "actual" sex.

"I want to talk about the 'animalistic' dimension. The dimension in which men and women just have sex and multiply. The egg and the sperm come together, the womb swells, and babies get pumped out. Can you really talk about sexuality *(sei)* without including this dimension?"[41]

Saitō's initial response to this is a commonsensical, "Of course you can't." But then he immediately returns to his Lacanian position, arguing that biological reproduction is actually part of the Real, cannot be symbolized, and so stands outside sexuality as he understands it. One sees in this exchange something quite crucial about both Azuma and Saitō. Azuma's critique of the otaku as "animalized" causes him to resort to a knee-jerk appeal to biological essentialism as a reaffirmation of the human (i.e., the relation to the "other"), while in Saitō's Lacanian approach the otaku's perversion (his disavowal of the distinction between fiction and the real) does not threaten his status as a human being but actually confirms it. While Saitō is genuinely interested in otaku sexuality, Azuma, for all his fascination with the postmodern, seems bothered by it. Their approaches to the phenomenon of *moe* are also telling in this regard. While Azuma sees in *moe* a symptom of the decline of "grand narratives" and a derailment of subjectivity-producing desire, Saitō's Lacanian approach makes it possible for him to read it not just as another example of Baudrillardian postmodernity but as a strategy by which the otaku is able to experience and conceptualize his own desire in reflexive and performative terms. In distinguishing between the love the otaku have for their objects and that of the "maniac" for theirs, he writes,

> The passion of the otaku is more performative than that of the maniac. Otaku are in communication with other otaku through the code of "passion." They are certainly not cool or disinterested, but neither do they completely lose themselves when indulging in their passion. This sort of slightly

> "canted stance toward passion" is very closely related to the essence of the otaku's "affinity for fictional constructs." Later we will see how perfectly the expression "X-*moe*" describes this.

Although many accounts of the otaku, including Azuma's, tend to emphasize their compulsive and obsessive attachment to their objects, in Saitō's account they have room for community, irony, and self-reflexivity. Like a good queer theorist, Saitō chooses to find something new and positive in otaku sexuality rather than read it as a symptom of cultural decline.

Since the invention of the printing press, new media forms have caused people to fear losing touch with reality. Not long after Gutenberg, Cervantes founded the novel genre by thematizing this very issue in a highly self-reflexive fashion by creating a protagonist unable to distinguish between fact and fiction. The question being asked in these debates over the otaku and their sexuality could be said to boil down to this: Are the otaku, like Don Quixote, so fooled by new media that they believe their Dulcinea is real, despite everything? Or are they like Cervantes and his ideal reader—fully aware of her fictionality, but nonetheless entranced, able to laugh at Don Quixote but also to love him and laugh with him? No doubt they are somewhere in between the two. And Saitō's work, like Cervantes's, reminds us that there is a little otaku in all of us.

toward the structural relationships between narratives and computer games. In the bigger picture, since our first meeting in 1999, Saitō and I have been united in the struggle to articulate a more robust and diverse analytic paradigm through which to study the world of the otaku.

Had it not been for the appearance of its "elder sister," *Beautiful Fighting Girl, Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* could never have been written. In that respect, and despite any differences we may have on individual points, I think of Saitō as a friend and ally who opened the way for a new field of critique in the twenty-first century. I hope he will forgive my presumption in thinking he feels the same way about me. I look forward to a new generation of critics emerging from among those of you who pick up this book to continue the conversation that we have begun.

"Commentary" written for inclusion in the paperback edition (2006) of Beautiful Fighting Girl.

NOTES

Translator's Introduction

1 "Girl Power! Shojo Manga!" was in fact the title of a traveling exhibition on postwar Japanese girls' comics put together by Masami Toku in 2005. The choice of title suggests the centrality of the "fighting girl" trope to the genre. See Masami Toku, "Shojo Manga! Girls' Comics! A Mirror of Girls' Dreams," *Mechademia* 2 (2007). The emphasis on empowerment is also common among American feminist academics writing on the related phenomenon of "tough girls" in popular culture in the United States (such as Wonder Woman or, more recently, Buffy the Vampire Slayer). See Sherrie A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture, Feminist Cultural Studies, the Media, and Political Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); and Elyce Rae Helford, *Fantasy Girls: Gender in the New Universe of Science Fiction and Fantasy Television* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

2 Susan Jolliffe Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*, updated ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 33.

3 See, for example, Kimiko Akita, "Cuteness: The Sexual Commodification of Women in the Japanese Media," in *Women and the Media: Diverse Perspectives*, ed. Theresa Carilli and Jane Campbell (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2005), 44–57.

4 Anne Allison, "Fierce Flesh: Sexy Schoolgirls in the Action Fantasy of *Sailor Moon*," in *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 137. Allison's reading of *Sailor Moon*, although not psychoanalytic and focused mostly on her girl fans, ends up in interesting proximity to Saitō's thesis: "*Sailor Moon* is a harbinger of a consumer demand/product based on transformation, fragmentation, and polymorphous perversity" (161).

5 Masami, "Shojo Manga! Girls' Comics!"

6 The "primal scene," of course, as Sigmund Freud uses the concept, is understood as a retroactive construction of analysis that may or may not have actually occurred but around which meaning and memories have accumulated. Thus while Saitō's

theory is certainly vulnerable to the criticism that it cannot be true because he has no way to know what was going on in Miyazaki's head as a boy, Saitō would no doubt respond, in Freudian fashion, that the fantasy is valid psychoanalytically as long as it has explanatory power. The question of the reality of the primal scene has interesting connections to the "reality" of the otaku's fantasies, discussed below. On this question in Freud, see "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis (1918 [1914])," in *"An Infantile Neurosis" and Other Works,* ed. and trans. James Strachey, vol. 17 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1995), 57–60.

7 Miyazaki himself has been famously cool toward the otaku community, but Saitō hints that this may be a case of like disliking like.

8 No doubt for some readers one of the more problematic of Saitō's claims will be his schematic division between what he calls "Japanese space" and "Western space," where the former is characterized by (among other things) a tolerance for erotic drawn images and the latter by a puritanical aversion to them. While the distinction he draws is fascinating and of significant theoretical interest, mapping it onto "Japan" as a whole and an undifferentiated, transhistorical "West" reduces the argument to yet another theory of Japanese particularism.

9 See Saitō Tamaki, "Otaku Sexuality," in *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime,* ed. Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., and Takayuki Tatsumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). This piece also includes a useful introductory note by Kotani Mari on *yaoi.* On the tension between "yaoi" culture and "real" gay males during the 1990s, see Keith Vincent, "A Japanese Electra and Her Queer Progeny," *Mechademia* 2 (2007): 64–82. On the beautiful boy in *yaoi* as a source of identification for lesbians, see James Welker, "Beautiful, Borrowed, and Bent: 'Boys' Love' as Girls' Love in Shōjo Manga," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 31, no. 3 (2006): 841–70. And for an English translation of a fascinating metafictional exploration in manga form of the female otaku (also known as "fujoshi"), see Natsumi Konjoh, *Fujoshi Rumi* [Female otaku Rumi], vol. 1 (New York: Media Blasters, 2008).

10 Morikawa Kaichirō points out that the close connection between information technology and otaku culture is apparent from the fact that Akihabara, the computer and electronics district of Tokyo, transformed in the 1990s into a mecca for otaku-related products such as girl games, figurines, and anime DVDs. See his *Shuto no tanjō: Moeru toshi Akihabara* [Birth of the hobby capital: The budding city of Akihabara] (Gentōsha Bunko, 2003).

11 See Melek Ortabasi, "National History as Otaku Fantasy: Satoshi Kon's *Millennium Actress,*" in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime,* ed. Mark W. MacWilliams (Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 2008), especially 277–83.

12 Such as the Daicon IV opening video (1983), which was shown on a continuous loop at "Little Boy," Murakami Takashi's exhibition of otaku culture (2005), and the feature-length *Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honneamise* (*Ōritsu uchūgun Oneamisu no tsubasa,* 1987).

13 Okada Toshio, *Otakugaku nyūmon* [Introduction to otaku studies] (Ōta Shuppan, 1996), 14.

14 Ibid., 356–57.

15 See Ōtsuka Eiji, *Monogatari shōhi-ron: "Bikkuriman" no shinwagaku* [Theory of narrative consumption: Studies in the "Bikkuriman" myth] (Chikuma Bunko, 1989); and Ōtsuka, *"Otaku" no seishinshi: 1980 nendai ron* [A psychological history of the otaku: 1980s theory] (Kōdansha Gendai Shinsho, 2004); see also Morikawa, *Shuto no tanjō.*

16 Thomas Lamarre, "An Introduction to Otaku Movement," in *Japan after Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present,* ed. Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootunian (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006).

17 Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon,* 349.

18 [The "Lolita complex," or *rorikon* (also spelled lolicon), is a pop-cultural term used to describe men who are sexually attracted to young girls or, more typically, to images of young girls. It is also used to describe the images themselves as well as the genres in which they are featured. It is a reference to the fictional prepubescent girl named Lolita who so obsessed the protagonist of Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita.* While it can be and is used pejoratively in Japanese, it is not unheard-of for men to use it to describe themselves, and it does not trigger the same horrified reaction that a term like *pedophile* does in the United States or Europe. This is probably because it is generally understood to be a sexual fantasy that exists and can be satisfied in the realm of fiction.—Trans.]

19 One of Okada's more intriguing arguments is that otaku culture is perfectly suited to a postmodern culture in which the distinction between children and adults no longer holds. Unfortunately, however, his argument quickly devolves into Japanese cultural exceptionalism when he goes on to claim that Japanese culture is unique for its tradition of treating children like adults, as in the kabuki and Noh tradition of putting very young children on stage. While the child in "the West" was at best an imperfect adult and at worse a source of chaos and perversion, the Japanese, he claims, have always seen in the child nothing less than "the fundamental image of humanity *[kongenteki na ningenzō]*" (Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon,* 350).

20 See the interview in *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture,* ed. Takashi Murakami (New York: Japan Society/New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 176.

21 Saitō, "Otaku Sexuality," 227. I have slightly adapted Christopher Bolton's English translation: Bolton translates "reality and fiction" *(genjitsu to kyokō)* in the second sentence with the Lacanian terms "the real" and "the imaginary." In this translation we have reserved the Lacanian terms for those instances where Saitō uses the suffix *–kai.* Hence "genjitsu" we have rendered as "reality" and "genjitsu-kai" as "the Real."

22 Bruce Fink, "Perversion," in *Perversion and the Social Relation,* ed. Molly Anne Rothenberg, Dennis Foster, and Slavoj Žižek (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 40.

23 As I discuss later, this is not the same as saying that the otaku cannot *distinguish* between real and imaginary objects of desire. Recently, however, some critics in Japan have started to argue that sex is better had in the head anyway and that the attempt to make it real not only leads to inevitable disappointment but means

buying into a debased and commodified ideology of romantic love. Honda Tōru calls it "romantic capitalism" and advocates instead what he calls "intracerebral love." See his *Moeru otoko* [*Moe* man] (Chikuma Shinsho, 2005) and *Nōnai ren'ai no susume* [An encouragement of intracerebral love] (Kadokawa Gakugei Shuppan, 2007).

24 As Lacanian otaku Slavoj Žižek put it in an interview dating from about the same time that Saitō was writing, "I think what is so horrible about virtual sex is not: My god before we had a real partner whom we touched, embraced, squeezed, and now you just masturbate in front of the screen or you don't even masturbate, you just enjoy knowing that maybe the other enjoys it through the screen or whatever. The point is we become aware of how there never was real sex" ("Hysteria and Cyberspace: Interview with Slavoj Žižek," *Telepolis*, July 10, 1998, http://www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/2/2492/1.html [accessed May 21, 2010]).

25 A good example of the revulsion inspired by otaku culture in the United States can be found in the reader responses to an article in the *New York Times* that discussed the phenomenon (in Japan) of "two-dimensional love" in which some otaku choose imaginary, drawn partners over "real" girlfriends. As one respondent wrote, "I can't remember reading about anything as revolting as the subject matter of Lisa Katayama's 'Phenomenon.' Please tell me that I'm not the only one who thinks that a 37-year-old man (Nisan) obsessed by a caricature of a childlike girl dressed in a bikini is sick and twisted" (Denise Orengo, letter to the editor, *New York Times Magazine*, August 7, 2009). And another, from the Web site, "This is a sad and pathetic statement on our devolving culture and society. People need a good slap in the face and need to come back to reality instead of relying on materialism to be happy" (Eric, Seattle, Washington, July 24, 2009). For the original article, which unlike many articles in the *Times* belonging to the genre of "Aren't the Japanese Weird?" was a well-researched and sympathetic piece that resisted the temptation to pathologize, see Lisa Katayama, "Love in 2-D," *New York Times*, July 26, 2009.

26 Of course, given that the Imaginary is all that we can experience or perceive to begin with, it has always in a sense "overwhelmed" the Symbolic. It is the unprecedented expansion of the Imaginary caused by media saturation that creates the sense of crisis.

27 Lamarre calls the *Densha otoko* narrative a "reactionary panic formation" against the threat of otaku sexuality ("Platonic Sex: Perversion and Shōjo Anime [Part Two]," *animation: an interdisciplinary journal* 2, no. 1 [2007]: 13). More recently and provocatively, Christophe Thouny has argued that while the "grand narrative" of *Densha otoko* "stages a desire to escape from the closed world of the otaku to become part of a heteronormative consumerist social structure," its original online version also "stage[s] the collective production of the narrative itself" among the community of 2-channelers to produce a kind of ecstatic disavowal and delay of closure ("Waiting for the Messiah: The Becoming-Myth of Evangelion and Densha otoko," *Mechademia* 4 [2009]: 122).

28 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 25.

29 Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 256.

30 Particularly on target is Lamarre's discussion of the way Saitō's strict Lacanianism leads him into a simplistic account of the asymmetry of male and female desire.

31 Ibid.

32 I quote from Moon's unpublished manuscript, "Darger's Resources," which is forthcoming from Duke University Press. Thanks to Michael for letting me read it and for sharing his thoughts and enthusiasm about Saitō's work as well. Thanks also to Jonathan Goldberg and the members of Goldberg and Moon's spring 2010 graduate seminar on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick at Emory University for taking the time to read and discuss the manuscript and this introduction with me and confirming my sense that there is much in Saitō's work for queer theorists to appreciate.

33 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 71.

34 Ibid.

35 See note 25.

36 *Dōbutsukasuru posuto modan: Otaku kara mita Nihon shakai* (Kodansha, 2001), translated by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono as *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

37 "Posuto modan/otaku/sekushuariti," in *Mōjō genron F kai*, 131–96.

38 Ibid., 186–87.

39 Kotani and Saitō are also in accord with Sedgwick's view on the importance of letting people determine for themselves the nature of their own sexuality: "To alienate conclusively, *definitionally*, from anyone on any theoretical ground the authority to describe and name their own sexual desire is a terribly consequential seizure. In this century, in which sexuality has been made expressive of the essence of both identity and knowledge, it may represent the most intimate violence possible" (Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 26).

40 It is worth noting that for a critic who is so fascinated by the otaku's deconstruction of grand narratives, Azuma himself is something of a compulsive narrator, be it in the form of constant periodizing of otaku generations or, as Lamarre has also suggested, of the development of media technologies. It could be argued that his celebration of the otaku's overcoming of the temporality of modernity is rooted in an equally powerful attachment to narrative teleology.

41 "Posuto modan/otaku/sekushuariti," 187.

Preface

1 [A major premise of this book is that the spread of new media has forced us to think in new ways about how we distinguish between reality and fiction. In Japanese, the word used for "reality" since at least the nineteenth century is the Sino-Japanese compound *genjitsu*. As is often the case in Japanese, however, the Sino-Japanese term exists alongside more recent imports from English that, rather than being simply synonyms, have taken on slightly variant meanings. Thus the words *riariti* and *riaru* (transliterations of the English words ***reality*** and ***real***) tend