

RISING SUN, IRON CROSS – MILITARY GERMANY IN JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE

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Abstract: Diverse depictions of the WWII German army exist in Japanese popular culture. This essay will explore the origins of the Japanese fandom devoted to German military technology and also the way that authors have (re)produced stereotypes related to German culture and traditions in their portrayals of wartime Germany. Finally, using examples by authors Tezuka Osamu and Aramaki Yoshio, this essay will identify the representation of both Japanese and German war crimes in Japanese manga and popular fiction as a significant discursive trend that calls into question assumptions about anti-war thought in contemporary Japan.

INTRODUCTION

Political commentator and philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1929–) wrote that “[t]here is the obligation incumbent upon us in Germany [...] to keep alive, without distortion, and not only in an intellectual form, the memory of the sufferings of those who were murdered by German hands” (Habermas 1987: 233). In many ways, this statement captures the attitude toward Nazi history that has taken root in postwar Germany, and indeed, worldwide. What Habermas refers to is the necessity for the representation of Nazi cruelties outside of intellectual discourse and in the popular sphere. Popular expression, however, is diverse by its very nature and the militaristic Germany of WWII has been depicted in different ways, both inside and outside of Germany. It has been argued, for example, that the idea of the United States of America as the heroic vanquisher of the Nazi terror has had a major impact on the way that many Americans perceive the global role of their nation (Fujiwara 2001: 3–10). The image of Nazi Germany as a force of evil and the US as a force of justice has become an iconic part of American popular discourse. Perhaps as a result, depictions of wartime Germany permeate US popular culture. Any chain bookstore in the US carries many books devoted to the German Army, especially its technological innovations. Among academics and indeed, among most savvy and critical viewers, the History Channel, a cable TV broadcast service, is jokingly referred to as the “Hitler Channel” because of the relatively large portion of its programming devoted to Nazi and German military history. A fascination with Hitler alone cannot explain this pervasiveness,

and it is evident that an apolitical interest in German military technology also has a major part to play.

Japanese popular culture shares this interest in Nazi era German Army, but the images that appear are very different from those in the United States. The clear good versus evil dichotomy that dominates American discourse is largely avoided; indeed, condemnation of Nazi racism and the atrocities committed under the regime has become a significant part of Japanese anti-war discourse. *The Diary of Anne Frank* has long been considered a classic in Japan; Anne herself is the subject of many biographies aimed at young readers and the story was made into a Japanese animated film, *Anne no nikki* [The diary of Anne], released in 1995. In addition, some of Japan's most prominent anti-war writers such as Saotome Katsumoto (1932-) have written prolifically about Auschwitz and the Holocaust (Saotome 2001). In many ways, however, as in the US example, these peace-promoting works are somewhat upstaged by the sheer ubiquity of popular offerings that present the German Army of WWII and especially its technology as something attractive and marketable.

There exists in Japan what are commonly referred to as "military fans". There are military fans of all ages and from all levels of society but most are interested mainly in German technology and weapons; for example, books with titles like *Doitsu himitsu heiki* [German Secret Weapons] cater to this fandom. The editor of this particular work writes in the afterword that "I don't think that German secret weapon 'mania' will be able to get enough of this book" (Nogi 2000: 199). The Japanese-English term "mania" (i.e., "maniac,") refers to an obsessed fan of some subject (a fanatic). Titles like this one demonstrate that there are fans who are primarily interested in German military technology and that works on the subject are consciously and directly marketed toward this group. There are literally hundreds of books, most easily available at mainstream booksellers that cater to this market. Dozens more appear every year.

The attention given to German weapons of war in Japan is quite unique in that publishing on German military technology is more prolific than that devoted to American, Russian, or British weaponry. The number of books and magazines that profile German weapons rivals and perhaps even surpasses that devoted to Japanese military technology. Mino Masahiro, author of a variety of books about the technology of WWII, partially explains the reasons behind this. In the introduction of his *Doitsugun no heiki hikaku kenkyū* [A Comparative Study of German Weapons] he asks, "Where was the true 'Military Technology Superpower'? The more you investigate, the more you study, the more the shadow of Germany's Third Reich comes up before you" (Mino 1997: 3). The idea of Germany, particularly the Germany of the Nazi period as a true "Military Technology Su-

perpower” is fascinating to readers and significant in Japanese popular culture.

The concept of a “fandom” is not only a useful means for interpreting the reception of works about German military technology but also for understanding their production. *Doitsu sensha hattatsu-shi* [A History of the Development of German Tanks] author Saiki Nobuo, for example, indicated that his reason for writing the work was simply that he “really likes strange tanks [...]. However, I eventually came to realize that in order to have fun with the strange ones, it is necessary to know about the normal ones” (Saiki 1999: 229). He describes *Doitsu sensha hattatsu-shi* as “an entryway for tank fans” (Saiki 1999: 229), thus showing that the authors themselves are also members of this “military fandom.”

The existence of this popular trend in Japan has even influenced how foreign, and even German, works on Germany’s wartime history are received and interpreted. The German film, *Stalingrad* directed by Joseph Vilsmaier and released in 1993, unquestionably a harrowing polemic on the inhumanity of war and the German military hierarchy, means something very different to Japanese military fans. The book *Tettei bunseki – Sensō eiga 100!* [In-depth Analysis – The War Movie 100!], for example, praises the realism of the movie but complains that “[i]f they are going to show that level of detail, I want them to hunt up and use a T-34/76 tank” (Ōkubo 2003: 46). For author Ōkubo Yoshinobu the movie is not about the human characters, it is about the technology of war.

While many of these perspectives on German military history are restricted largely to a very narrow fan culture, others have diffused into the mainstream. Despite their prevalence, however, images of the WWII German Army in Japanese popular culture are not restricted to technology and weaponry. The descriptions of castles, fine wines, and a noble military tradition going back to the Middle Ages that dominate contemporary Japanese-language tourist guidebooks on Germany are also a significant part of the discourse on Germany’s fighting men of WWII. This manufactured “German-ness” is important in Japanese popular culture and, like images of Germany as a “Military Technology Superpower,” often conveniently ignores the country’s Nazi past.

This essay will examine the origins of Japanese fandom centered around German militarism and will explore both the terms used to discuss the German Army of WWII in Japanese popular culture as well as the use of those same terms within the discourse on Japan’s own war experience. From psychic Hitlers to modern day “black knights,” the fanciful depiction of the WWII German Army in Japanese popular culture can only be described as strikingly varied. While generalization is impossible, uses of the German Army in Japanese popular culture since the “military

boom” of the late 1950s and early 1960s demonstrate a specific thematic pattern. The glorification, perhaps even “romanticization” of German military technology is pronounced, as is the tendency to draw upon older military traditions and the imagery associated with them. No less important, however, are interpretations of the German Army that are an integral part of efforts to examine war crimes, both as global phenomena and as a means of exploring the historical memory of Germany’s past as well as Japan’s present.

Habermas’ admonishment to the German people could also be applied to official discourse on Japan’s own history of war; Japanese textbooks before the 1990s often tried to downplay Japanese atrocities and aggression (Gluck 1993: 84). Interestingly, however, the same cannot be said of popular culture. For example, overt associations between and condemnation of German and Japanese wartime atrocities are present in the many popular sources that exist outside of what Habermas described as the “intellectual form.” When portraying Germany’s war, Japanese authors are not only creating fantasies about a foreign culture; they are also contributing to the discourse on historical memory in contemporary Japan. In short, in the works of some important authors, the construction of “the German Other” becomes a debate about self, much in the way that Edward Said describes the phenomenon in his now classic book, *Orientalism*. For Said, the construction of the Arab Other in European discourse imposes an image of exoticism, irrationality and decadence on the peoples of the Middle East as a justification for colonial domination (Said 1985: 3). Japanese discourse about military Germany is somewhat different; it does not impose on the Other only a sense of irreconcilable foreignness, i. e. an exoticism based on technology and the tradition of the European knight. Instead, the Other becomes a way of looking at and questioning self. The examples of 1980s and 1990s popular culture presented in this essay are from a Japan undergoing globalization in both economic and cultural terms. Within this context, the German Other became a powerful mirror for self-reflection.

THE “MILITARY TECHNOLOGY SUPERPOWER”

Images of Germany’s war machine began to be seen frequently in Japanese popular culture from the late 1950s when the first “military boom” took place; the focus, in most cases, was on Japanese war technology. The famous battleship *Yamato* and the equally well-known *Zero* fighter plane were hugely popular among Japanese children (Natsume 1997: 30–34). Equally popular, however, was the tank. The German tank forces, undis-

putedly the most powerful ones of the WWII era, captured the imagination of Japanese children. Tamiya Mokei, Japan's largest military model maker, built its empire on the back of military model kits, a line that started with a 1:35 scale German tank in 1961 (Tamiya 2000: 1). These proved to be a spectacular hit with Japanese children and over time, German weapons came to make up the majority of Tamiya's military kits and became a significant industry in Japan (Tamiya 2000: 1).

In addition to models, the popularity of German weapons is also exemplified by manga like Mochizuki Mikiya's *Nisei butai monogatari* [The Tale of the Japanese American Force] (Mochizuki 2001). Mochizuki was one of the most popular manga artists of the 1960s and is best known for his police action manga, like the hit *Wairudo 7* [Wild 7]. The *Nisei butai monogatari* series, which first ran in the magazine *Shōnen Gahō* [Boy's Illustrated] from 1963 onwards, focuses on members of the US Army's all-Japanese-American unit and their battles against Germany in Europe and Africa. Other installments ran in different magazines for the rest of the decade and into the 1970s, with a brief revival in the 1980s. A review of the significance of *Nisei butai monogatari* to the history of manga, contained in publishing house Shūeisha's 2001 re-release of the series, makes the point that the history of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team was not very well known in Japan until it was popularized by Mochizuki's manga (Mochizuki 2001: 228). Mochizuki's work also helped to further popularize German military technology. Despite the fact that the series ostensibly deals mainly with the American forces, the focus is definitely on the weapons of the German side. Noted military manga illustrator Komatsuzaki Shigeru remarks, "I think that Mochizuki was the first to accurately portray the German Army in Japanese comics" (Komatsuzaki 2001: 234). He also argues that Mochizuki must have spent a great deal of effort gathering photographs, plans and other materials in order to achieve the great level of accuracy in his depictions of German military hardware (Komatsuzaki 2001: 234). Komatsuzaki himself gained a place at the forefront of the military boom by providing the box cover illustrations for famed model-maker Tamiya. These images, like those presented in Mochizuki's manga, were a significant selling point for young Japanese.

Nisei butai monogatari is a landmark in the depiction of the German Army in Japanese popular culture; Mochizuki proved time and time again that his interest in wartime Germany lay solely in the combat capabilities of the German forces. The combat scenes are somewhat cartoonish, but the military technology is drawn in as realistic manner as possible within the limits of Mochizuki's chosen style. Mochizuki's depiction of human characters was influenced by the stylized pattern established by postwar manga pioneers like Tezuka Osamu (1928–1989), but his drawings of tanks and

other weapons at times approach photo-realism. This stylistic choice fits in with the overall character of the series, which does not seek to depict combat and warfare in a realistic manner but rather to use the fascinating military technology of WWII as a backdrop for a typical adventure story. The series is filled with daring escapes, firefights in German castles and African ruins, as well as raids to steal German tanks or set off avalanches to stall a German advance. The series' take on warfare is by no means realistic or even serious and the depiction of the German forces reflects this.

In this entertainment and technology-based formula, there is little room for serious considerations of the larger implications of Germany's war. The SS, for example, is described in the following way: "In Nazi Germany, the regular army was called the 'National Defense Force' [...]. There was also a separate force, the guards [SS] directly under Hitler. These guards were a collection of particularly excellent fighting men" (Mochizuki 2001: 9). A detailed description of their insignia and uniforms follows. In short, the SS are simply described as being an elite force. Mainly, they are foils for the Japanese-American characters and an excuse to bring "Tiger" tanks and other popular equipment into the story—at the expense of more serious discussion.

Because of manga like *Nisei butai monogatari* and the plastic model industry, which created the popularity of German tanks, a fandom devoted to the German Army grew up in the Japan of the 1960s. The apolitical nature of this fandom is mirrored by similar depictions of Japan's wars in the popular culture of the same period. Manga like *Shidenkai no taka* [Hawk of the Shidenkai] as well as big budget films like *Taiheiyō no arashi* [Storm of the Pacific] (1960) and *Taiheiyō no tsubasa* [Wings of the Pacific] (1963) also show great interest in the technology of killing. It is clear that, in counterpoint to mainstream anti-war trends in Japanese thought, a fascination with weapons had become a significant part of the Japanese popular milieu. Germany was brought into this pattern of representation and eventually grew into an important part of it.

THE WAY OF THE KNIGHT

In the early 1970s, Japanese war manga underwent significant change, thanks in part to the efforts of popular artist Matsumoto Reiji and his *Senjō* [Battlefield] series, published in a variety of forms throughout the decade and into the 1980s. Matsumoto was born in Kurume in Fukuoka Prefecture in 1938. His father was involved in army aviation and he became interested in military technology from an early age. Matsumoto's war man-

ga focuses on a diverse array of WWII subjects, but the central characters are invariably Japanese or German. The stories, always told in single chapters rather than in a long narrative arc, usually end in tragedy; a number of critics have interpreted this tendency as anti-war sentiment. Matsumoto himself commented that “[i]t is not acceptable to depict the death of people lightly” (Matsumoto 1997b: 324). This is an approach that contrasts markedly with earlier storytelling styles like that employed by Mochizuki in *Nisei butai monogatari*.

Despite the fact that Matsumoto’s manga have obvious anti-war undertones and a notable focus on character, he is unable to escape completely from the conventions of the genre and his own military fandom. Matsumoto has been quoted as saying, “I’m a technology ‘mania’” (Anzai 1999: 51). The *Senjō* series reflects this in that each installment of the manga is centered on a piece of technology. German tanks and aircraft appear consistently in the series. For example, the story *Yūrei gundan* [The Ghost Division] is subtitled “The Ghost Elephant” in English, a reference to a relatively obscure German tank destroyer featured heavily in the chapter (Matsumoto 1997c: 36).

Roman, a Japanese term analogous with “romance,” is a word that has been associated with Matsumoto’s work in a variety of contexts (Ujō 2004: 149). While it can be argued that his depictions of military technology are romantic in character, some of the content goes far beyond this. Castles, heraldry and wine appear as frequent motifs in the chapters relating to Germany. These are the same stock images of “German tradition” marketed in Japanese travel guides and have romantic implications in Matsumoto’s work as well. Invented, manufactured “tradition” has a great effect on Matsumoto’s recreation of Germany’s war. He evokes what he sees as “German tradition” and the persistent efforts of individuals to preserve it even in wartime. The chapter *Sōhatsu no kishi* [Knights of the Twin-engine], for example, features English and German fighter aircraft adorned with the family crests of their pilots engaging in a stylized WWII era joust (Matsumoto 1998b: 295). Machineguns replace lances, and the German pilot tells his fiancé: “I doubt that I will return alive. However, don’t weep. This is the fate of one who has inherited the blood of knights” (Matsumoto 1998b: 322). Both pilots are killed in their final duel. Matsumoto draws a knight returning to a distant castle and has the German pilot’s lover comment: “He’s finally gone to the place where the souls of his ancestors rest” (Matsumoto, 1998a: 335). This medieval imagery is evoked even more directly in other chapters like “Berurin no kurokishi” [The Black Knight of Berlin] (Matsumoto 1997a: 208).

All of the comics by Matsumoto that feature German heroes share this element. However, these types of images appear most clearly as a manu-

facturing of “cultural” images and a representation of “the Other” in the chapter *Waga seishun no Arukadia* [My Youth in Arcadia] (Matsumoto 1998c: 141). This story became the basis for the animated science fiction film of the same name and is unique among Matsumoto’s war stories because he actually has Japanese and German characters discuss their respective traditions. A German ace, Phantom F. Harlock, is the central character. As in *Sōhatsu no kishi*, the idea of military tradition being transferred by bloodline is important to him (Matsumoto 1998c: 145). A Japanese engineer, Daiba, has come to Germany by submarine in order to carry out research. Daiba tells Harlock that he has come to exchange technology; when Harlock suggests that Germany has nothing to learn from Japan, Daiba defends his country’s technology by describing the superiority of the *Zero* fighter. The *Zero* – a famous Japanese warplane and arguably the best fighter in the world in 1941 and 1942 – has been cause for pride among Japanese military fans since the early 1950s. In any case, Harlock is impressed and responds that, judging by Daiba’s pride in the *Zero*, he must have samurai roots. Daiba says that this is not the case and that his family is descended from farmers (Matsumoto 1998c: 162–170).

In Matsumoto’s manga, Germany is associated with nobility and the tradition of the knight while Japan, perhaps contrary to expectation in a military setting, is associated with the *hyakushō*, or farmer’s tradition. The contrast is also evident in Matsumoto’s art style. The German heroes are all tall and suitably dashing. Most of the Japanese characters, on the other hand, are drawn in the short, squat “everyman” style that Matsumoto perfected in his spoof of Japanese college life, *Otoko oidon* [I’m a Man] (Matsumoto 1996). The Japanese military elite who saw themselves as the inheritors of Japan’s martial tradition have little place in Matsumoto’s manga because of the strong associations in Japanese popular culture between this group and a foolish, losing war that brought suffering to the Japanese people and others. However Matsumoto, because of his self-proclaimed romantic view of Germany, is able to overlook the Nazi past and focus exclusively on the romantic Germany of castles, chivalry, jousts, and red wine as his WWII era knights passionately speak of their ancestors.

Implicit in this contrast is the idea that for Germany, the past and tradition are something real and tangible in the present; in Japan, “tradition” is only an ill-defined connection to poverty and the land, albeit one with a certain naïve purity and dignity. In many ways, this construction reflects common *Nihonjin-ron* discourses of Japanese and the “European other” (Dale 1986). Japan is painted as being small and resource-poor, but ultimately able to catch up with and eventually surpass Europe because of simple virtues and hard work. In the framework created by Matsumoto, the European tradition is entirely more glorious. This “tour book” image

of Europe, of course, is paralleled by the way that “traditional” Japan is depicted in much of the rest of the world. *Bushidō*, for example, is often perceived outside of Japan as a homogeneous and unchanging example of “Japanese culture” and is sometimes used to praise the valor of the Japanese fighting man – but it is also perceived as negative. For example, Iris Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking – The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, the most popular and influential, albeit disputed, book about Japanese wartime atrocities to appear in recent years, reports that “experts have attributed Japanese wartime atrocities to Japanese culture itself” (Chang 1998: 54). The accuracy of Chang’s conclusions have been challenged by academics in a variety of contexts but her work is still cited as authoritative by journalists interested in presenting an easily understood, essentialized interpretation of wartime Japan. While Matsumoto’s approach to Germany is not nearly so condescending, it is an equally essentialized construction of “culture” that creates a vision of WWII Europe quite unlike those that exist outside of Japan.

In Matsumoto’s manga, romantic praise of the German tradition (i. e. a manufactured “German-ness” defined in relation to “Japanese-ness”) replaces any serious attempt at commentary about Nazi history. This is not to say, however, that Matsumoto has betrayed what he himself describes as the anti-war sentiment in his writing. Matsumoto has created a variety of works and his manga output runs into the tens of thousands of pages. By the early 1980s, it became increasingly clear that he had begun to reconsider many of the assumptions inherent in his earlier *Senjō* manga. While his reliance on stereotyped “German-ness” continued, this process of self-evaluation led Matsumoto to pen several stories probing the nature of “military fandom.”

Fugaku no ita tokoro [The Place Where the Fugaku Was] (1981) is unique among Matsumoto’s war stories in that he himself is the main character. He begins by writing, “I’ve always lived by drawing manga [...] however, am I really a manga artist? Always, throughout every day, I sit at my desk” (Matsumoto 1998a: 205). Struggling for inspiration, Matsumoto sets out to visit his favorite bookshop. He feels out of sorts, nothing is as he remembers it, even though he has gone to the store hundreds of times. He finds a magazine with pictures of the Fugaku – a WWII era Japanese heavy bomber that never got beyond the initial planning stages. He says, “The Fugaku was stopped in the planning stages – it’s a phantom. Not a single plane was ever built [...]. There is no way that a picture can exist!” (Matsumoto 1998a: 216). The book he is reading contains details about the Fugaku attacking New York, and Matsumoto begins to wonder if he is reading the pamphlet for a science fiction film. He finds, however, that the war now has very different ending from how he remembers it. He also

finds in the manga corner a work by himself that he does not remember drawing. He is told that the author went missing while on a trip to Africa. While Matsumoto never fills in the details of this alternate reality, it becomes clear that this is in no way a positive fantasy. Going outside, the manga artist sees a Fugaku with his own eyes. Matsumoto is in the midst of “military fan” euphoria, but the daughter of the bookstore owner tells him that the population of Japan is now only about 30 million, and he soon discovers that Japan is occupied by what looks like a German Army (Matsumoto 1998a: 224–229). Confronted by the enormity of these revelations, he comes back to the present.

After the manga artist’s dimensional slip is over, the work takes a decidedly different direction. As he is sitting at a coffee shop he hears two young men, patterned on the same character design that Matsumoto uses for himself, talking about WWII. One suggests that if the Germans had had a jet fighter just a few years earlier, the result of the war could have been very different. His companion says, “If the Fugaku had been completed just three years earlier I think that the military situation in the Pacific would have changed. Just once, I want to see a real Fugaku” (Matsumoto 1998a: 230). All Matsumoto can think is: “If the end of the war had been just a year later only 30 million Japanese would be left [...]” (Matsumoto 1998a: 230–231).

The ending of the manga is left deliberately vague but it is clear that the German Army and its weapons are being used for a very different purpose than in Matsumoto’s earlier works. Matsumoto explicitly questions the nature of “military fandom” and the value of creating exciting war fiction and alternate continuities in general. In the early 1980s, Matsumoto wrote works that played up the horrific costs of war. In doing so, he openly criticized the tendency of “military fans,” himself included, to obsess about the weapons of war without considering their results. Germany and its technology are at the center of this anti-war look at military technology and military fandom. The approach that Matsumoto takes in *Fugaku no ita tokoro* is an illustration of how diverse the use of Germany’s military past has been in Japanese popular culture, even in the work of an author who had, in the past, romanticized the technology of killing.

VICTIMS AND VICTIMIZERS

The serious content of some manga in the early 1980s began to attract equally serious critical attention. This is perhaps best evidenced by the decision of *Shūkan Bunshun*, a weekly magazine well known for its serialized literature and current affairs editorials, to begin running a manga se-

ries in its pages. Tezuka Osamu's *Adorufu ni tsugu* [English: *Adolf*] became popular, not only because of its critical laurels, which included winning the Kōdansha Manga Prize in 1986, but also because of its serious subject matter, which included frank depictions of wartime atrocities and the handling of complex issues of race and identity (Tezuka 1992a).

Tezuka Osamu, even before his death in 1989, was considered to be the most important and influential graphic artist of Japan's postwar period. Tezuka was born near Osaka in 1928 and earned a medical degree from Osaka University before deciding to follow his dream and pursue a career as a manga artist. He experienced the firebombing of Osaka in 1945 and this left him with a profound mistrust of militarism. His 1947 manga *Shin takarajima* [English: *New Treasure Island*] became a huge hit and effectively launched him to stardom. He is perhaps best known, however, for the world famous *Tetsuwan Atomu* [English: *Astro Boy*] and *Janguru taitai* [English: *Kimba the White Lion*]. These works for children have enjoyed enormous popularity, but Tezuka began to tackle more adult projects from the 1970s, including a life of Buddha and the medical drama *Burakku Jakku* [English: *Black Jack*]. *Adorufu ni tsugu*, however, is unique among Tezuka's works of that period because of its serious treatment of 20th century history. The manga is framed as a mystery story and does not focus on the battlefield. Despite this fact, however, it remains one of the most powerful depictions of WWII era Germany in Japanese graphic art. In his critique of the Nazis, and by fabricating a complex background story concerning Hitler's Jewish origins, Tezuka created a story built completely upon the principle of attacking racist ideas.

In *Adorufu ni tsugu*, Tezuka looks at the problem of race and identity through the character of Adolf Kaufman, a half-German, half-Japanese youth who embraces Nazi ideology for a variety of purposes but is unable to apply its racist aspects to either himself or to his Japanese mother, whom he continues to consider an ideal of beauty and humanity. This sense of confusion leads Kaufman to join the Hitler Youth in search of answers; he eventually commits several terrible acts of rape and murder, including the brutal execution of the father of his Jewish childhood friend, Adolf Kamil. Instead of images of powerful military technology or the legacy of chivalry as a representation of Germany's past, Nazi atrocities are a major theme.

Critics have focused largely on the manga's treatment of Nazi violence and racial thinking, but *Adorufu ni tsugu* condemns all forms of racism and intolerance (Tezuka 1992b: 242–246). Growing up in Kobe, Adolf Kaufman is bullied by Japanese children because of his mixed heritage. This behavior is shown in a very negative light (Tezuka 1992a: 114). The handling of Japan's racist ideology and violent acts in the 1930s and 1940s does not end with the experience of Adolf Kamil and Adolf Kaufman, however, as

frequent associations are drawn between Japanese racism and attitudes prevalent in Nazi Germany. Describing Japan's war with China, Tezuka reports that "[i]n the homeland, this was called a 'holy war'" (Tezuka 1992a: 142). He goes on to explain how "[p]eople sank into the depths of the quagmire of insanity" (Tezuka 1992b: 8-9) and finally, perhaps to balance his depiction of German atrocities, how "[c]ountless thousands, countless tens of thousands of ordinary citizens were shot, impaled or cut down for practice and even women and children were called spies or guerrillas and butchered one after another" (Tezuka 1992b: 9). Depicted are piles of corpses, including dead and dying children. These are followed by images showing the execution of Chinese captives by Japanese officers. From the references to countless dead and heartless murders of women and children to the graphic images depicting them, Tezuka's portrayal of the Nanking Massacre is every bit as horrific as his evocation of the Nazi terror elsewhere in the work.

While Matsumoto's war manga tries, at times, to describe the nobility of German military traditions, Tezuka does the opposite, drawing connections between Nazi and Japanese atrocities in order to communicate a more complete anti-war message. Many prominent scholars have concluded that in the early 1980s, any discussion of war crimes in Japan was rare and revisionist historiography was on the rise. For example, cultural historian Carol Gluck attempts to define Japanese perspectives on the wars of the 1930s and 1940s in the context of the textbook controversy of the early 1980s. Gluck notes that in the 1960s, revisionist works such as *Affirmation of the Greater East Asian War* (1964) by writer and literature critic Hayashi Fusao failed to gain public acceptance but in the 1980s "an outbreak of revision in official history suggested that the public threshold of historical rhetoric might have lowered" (Gluck 1993: 84) because of the fact that "[i]n 1982 government-approved textbooks softened the language of Japan's 'invasion' of China into an 'advance'" (Gluck 1993: 84). Nothing is written, however, about popular works like those of Tezuka Osamu. Discussing anime and manga specifically, Japanese literature scholar Susan Napier has also suggested that "[a]s many scholars have pointed out, the Japanese version of World War II may generally be described as a 'victim's history', in which the Japanese people were seen as helpless victims of a corrupt and evil conspiracy between their government and military" (Napier 2001: 162). However *Adorufu ni tsugu*, a product of Japan's most popular manga artist, shows how limited these types of arguments are. As a counterpoint to government views that, in the early 1980s, sought to downplay Japan's wartime past, popular sources like *Adorufu ni tsugu* have dealt directly with Japanese atrocities and the bloody, aggressive nature of Japan's "Fifteen Year War." The discussion

and depiction of Nazi atrocities in Japanese popular culture has become an important part of anti-war discourse. What is unique about the Japanese case, however, is the way that authors like Tezuka have used German war crimes as an opportunity to communicate similar parts of Japan's own past. In Tezuka's manga Germany is not a criminal "other" but instead an important catalyst in a larger pattern of self-reflection. Yoshida Yutaka, a Japanese academic who has written extensively on the representation of Japanese war crimes in popular and political discourse during the postwar period, has argued that the 1980s saw a significant shift in Japanese political rhetoric toward an *acknowledgment* of wartime aggression and atrocities. He suggests that a shift in public opinion lies behind this change and it is evident that popular and widely read works like Tezuka's *Adorufu ni tsugu* had a significant role to play in ending the silence surrounding Japan's wartime past (Yoshida 1995: 166–169).

A NEW "MILITARY BOOM"

While Tezuka's *Adorufu ni tsugu* is a popular and critically acclaimed manga series and an important part of the life's work of Japan's "God of Comics," manga of this kind are rare. Toward the late 1980s, a new "military boom," similar to the one that took place in the 1950s and 1960s, made itself felt in Japanese popular culture. Non-fiction works on military technology, a new type of fantasy "simulation" war novel, and war manga more in the tradition of Mochizuki than Tezuka began to flood Japanese bookstores.

Shintani Kaoru was one of the most popular manga artists of the 1980s. Shintani was born near Osaka in 1951 and worked as an assistant to Matsumoto Reiji in the 1970s. He became popular with the release the war series *Eria 88* [*Area 88*], which tells the story of a Japanese commercial pilot pressed into fighting as a mercenary flier in the Middle East. Shintani's ultra-realistic drawings of jet aircraft won him many followers from the "military fan" community just as his soft, effeminate character designs and melodramatic storytelling brought him mainstream attention. Shintani is famous not only for his depiction of modern war, however, as he also penned the *Battlefield Roman* series, which are WWII shorts featuring a variety of technological fantasies. In the story *Yūrei sentōki* [The Ghost Fighter], for example, Shintani indulges in what is perhaps some of the most extreme wishful thinking of any war manga creator – by placing a Japanese "Zero" fighter into the skies over Germany (Shintani 1988: 37).

The "Roman" in the title of the series refers to "romance" and Shintani's series presents themes similar to those handled by Matsumoto Reiji in the

1970s. The “Waffen SS” chapter, released in 1989, for example, presents male bonding on the battlefield as SS Lieutenant Bekkle and American prisoner Lieutenant Savage talk about the loved ones that they have lost in the war (Shintani 1995: 12–13). Savage lost his brother at Normandy and Bekkle his sister in an air raid. The portrayal of war in the “Battlefield Roman” series does not always live up to that title; discussions like the one between Bekkle and Savage clearly show war as a sad, tragic affair. Conspicuously absent, however, is any serious discussion of what type of organization the SS was and the war crimes the group is associated with. As the story continues, the soldiers begin to debate their responsibility to protect local villagers from a group of deserters and criminals. The bandits murder a young boy and the Americans and SS soldiers eventually decide to fight against them together (Shintani 1995: 20). All are killed defending the village, save Lieutenant Savage who says before Bekkle’s grave “*Waffen* is German from ‘protect’ isn’t it [...]. The SS for protection [...]. That’s good” (Shintani 1995: 56). The SS depicted in this manga is a “Tiger” tank unit designed to showcase German military technology against a storyboard that is essentially an adventure piece little different from Mochizuki Mikiya’s *Nisei butai monogatari*. In short, the discursive trends that emerged in respect to the German army in the 1960s were still important in the 1980s – technology was in the forefront, while more complex considerations of issues such as wartime atrocities were pushed to the side.

In the late 1980s, non-fiction works devoted to the German army of WWII also began to flood Japanese bookstores. In 1988, Karl Alman’s *Panzer vor* was translated into Japanese by Tomioka Yoshikatsu and released through publishing house Dai Nippon Kaiga. Tomioka wrote in the conclusion of this edition that “[i]t will soon be 43 years since the end of WWII. An immense number of war records have been published during that time but [...] there are very few that center on the tank and the individual hero [...] especially about the ‘tank kingdom’ – Germany” (Tomioka 1988: 272). Tomioka’s reference to Germany as the “tank kingdom” is notable, as is the assertion that the lack of Japanese books that focus on the “individual hero” and the WWII German forces is somehow a terrible oversight. In any case, this perceived oversight was soon taken care of by market forces. Another example from the flood of releases during this period, which takes a very different look at German weaponry is *Kisō tengai heiki* [Fantastic Weapons] by Tani Yukio, essentially a science fiction technical manual. The work contains descriptions of fantasy weapons, like a “Sturm Tiger” sporting a 38 cm rocket launcher, and a “Lightening Tiger” with less armor and dramatically increased mobility (Tani 1995: 206).

The type of fantasy marketed in a work like *Kisō tengai heiki* has its parallels in popular fiction as well. In the early 1980s, author Hiyama Yoshi-

aki is said to have launched what is typically referred to as the “war simulation” genre of Japanese pulp fiction. “War simulations” are really war fantasies involving time travel, psychic powers, new, fantastic technologies, and alternate endings to WWII. By the end of the decade, dozens of such novels had appeared, and their popularity continued to grow in the 1990s. Explaining the appeal of “simulation” writing, Hiyama commented that “through entertainment, I want to revise the view that Japan was all bad, i. e. the ‘Tokyo Trial vision of history’” (Yoshida 1995: 219). In short, this type of fantasy has revisionist and nationalistic overtones.

Some notable “simulation” novels have shied away from rewriting the history of the Pacific War and have instead sought to win readers by bringing Japan and Germany into conflict. In the series *Reddo san, burakku kurosu* [Red Sun, Black Cross], North America is under siege by the German forces (Satō 1994). Washington has fallen and the capital of the United States has been moved to Los Angeles. Japan is allied with Britain, prepared to begin a fight with the Germans in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean in support of an effort to recover Europe from the Germans.

The story takes place in 1948. The novel is designed to appeal to fans of air combat. The main attraction is a second-generation Shinden type jet fighter on the Japanese side. The book includes the standard elaborate descriptions of its features and capabilities, from its color and markings to a description of the aircraft’s propulsion system (Satō 1994: 217, 227). There is also a rather elaborate summary of its evolution and its advantages over the real jet fighters of the WWII era such as the Me262, a nod to fans of German military technology and an indication of why the Germans are featured in the novel in the first place.

Also present is the type of cultural generalization made popular by Matsumoto in the 1970s. Discussion of atrocities is completely overshadowed by comments about the romantic side of the German “tradition.” Satō describes German Army General Erwin Rommel, for example, as a German knight. The author’s idealized conception of the SS and German honor codes are expressed in the dialogue: “At that time, among the SS, there was no day that we didn’t speak of Rommel’s nobility [...] this was true even among the general SS, of which I was a part” (Satō 1994: 232–233).

But despite the obvious respect being paid to Rommel and the German military tradition in general, the German side in *Reddo san, burakku kurosu* appears mainly as a stock enemy and a manifestation of military technology and certain cultural stereotypes. This two-dimensional portrayal of WWII era Germany is common in the “simulation” genre and Japanese popular culture in general.

SIMULATING HISTORY

Beginning in 1994, a series of three direct to video releases based on installments of Matsumoto Reiji's *Senjō* manga series was released. The first installment, *Za kokupitto* [The Cockpit], directed by Kawajiri Yoshiaki, tells the story of a German fighter pilot ordered to fly the new Ta-152 H-1 aircraft to escort a captured American bomber. The Ta-152 fulfils the audience's desire for exotic military technology, and Kawajiri himself commented in an interview included with the video release that the opportunity to animate a realistic WWII era dogfight is what attracted him to the project. In addition, Reindars, the German fighter pilot, is clearly cast in Matsumoto's "noble knight" mode. What is more interesting about the work, however, is the way that it subverts its obvious commercialization of military technology to deliver a significant anti-war message. Reindars discovers that his old mentor and the mentor's daughter, a former flame, have succeeded in developing an atomic bomb. This is the cargo that he has been recruited to protect. His ex-lover begs him to make sure that the weapon, described as cruel and inhuman, never reaches its destination. She and her father are to be passengers in the American bomber, but both have resolved to sacrifice themselves if they can prevent the bomb from being used. Reindars is torn between his impulse to save his mentor and ex-lover and his desire to ensure that the atomic bomb will never be used. Reindars decides to leave the bomber to be shot down by British fighters. He is saddened by the deaths of his loved ones and knows that his reputation is ruined, but is proud that he refused to sell his soul to the devil.

The story presented in *Za kokupitto* is fantasy but its real world meaning is clear – the use of atomic weapons is dishonorable and evil, an idea that fits in with the anti-war, anti-nuclear weapon movement in Japan's post-war history. It also expresses the so-called *higaisha ishiki* or "victim's consciousness" that has developed in Japan since WWII. Japan has been the only nation to be the victim of an atomic strike, and *Za kokupitto* capitalizes on this to send a potent anti-war statement even though the work emphasizes exotic military technology and the spectacle of aerial combat. The criticism of America is implicit yet obvious. The use of WWII Germany as the aggressor is a thinly veiled challenge to the American view that the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan was morally justified.

Za kokupitto, through creative use of a European setting and German characters, communicates anti-war ideas by drawing upon the image of the atomic bomb and its immediate association with the suffering of the people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This theme is easily understandable within the context of *higaisha ishiki*. But despite the dominant role that this concept plays in the interpretation of Japanese anti-war discourse outside

of Japan, this is only one side of a heterogeneous popular culture. Tezuka Osamu's *Adorufu ni tsugu* for example includes the *kagaisha* or "victimizer's" perspective in a mainstream, and indeed, enduringly popular work. The association of Nazi violence with atrocities committed by the Japanese Army in Asia is an important narrative strategy that is by no means restricted to Tezuka's work. In fact, this type of association is an important thematic device in what is considered to be the most popular "simulation" novel franchise of the 1990s.

Konpeki no kantai [Deep Blue Fleet] and *Gyokujutsu no kantai* [Fleet of the Rising Sun], by author Aramaki Yoshio, are not only the bestselling "simulation" novel series of the 1990s but have been remade into popular anime and manga series as well. Aramaki was born in Hokkaido in 1933. Following a career as an architect and art gallery curator, Aramaki became famous first as a science fiction author and later for his war "simulation" works. Both series take place in the same alternate WWII timeline in which prominent figures from actual history are reborn with foreknowledge of how the war situation will develop. The story, running in the thousands of pages, is extremely complex, and it is instructive to refer to one of the many plot summaries included in the novels themselves:

September 1947 – In the America of the "alternate world," the coup by the generals has succeeded. President Truman, under the control of the "shadow government," has resigned and Eisenhower has been sworn in. In October, the Japanese-American Peace Treaty was signed, and the all out war between Japan and the United States that began with the declaration of war on December 8, 1941 was now directed at Germany's Third Reich. "Occult Spiritual Imperial King" Hitler, using his "psi-power," has been causing terror across the entire Asian region with violent whirlwinds (Aramaki 1994: 11).

The work bends the war situation into a plot typical of Japanese science fiction or fantasy. Hitler becomes something of a stereotypical "dark king" character; the Nazis and the atrocities committed during their time in power are recreated in a fantastic "evil empire" mode.

In the *Kantai* series, fantasy elements combine with technology fandom to form a package that transcended the traditional audience for war simulation and became a mainstream hit. The series has an important technological focus. Author Aramaki wrote that "The 'incredible super battleship' *Yamato Takeru* that appears in the *Gyokujutsu no kantai* part of the series is the real hero of the story" (Aramaki 1992a: 202). The German technology that appears in the series is also treated in this way; it seems that the very reason for pitting Japan against Germany is to force a marketable clash of war machines. In this sense, the *Kantai* series contains material

similar to earlier interpretations of Germany as a “Military Technology Superpower.”

Also typical of the author’s approach is the same romanticization of the fighting men of the past that is expressed in many other examples of the “war fantasy” genre. The Japanese fleet commander talks to a captive German U-Boat commander and says: “Just as you German soldiers have the spirit of Prussian chivalry, we have the spirit of *bushidō*” (Aramaki 1993: 99). Thus the two are able to speak as friends despite the fact that their countries are at war.

Beneath all of this, however, are more important reasons for bringing the Japanese and German sides into conflict in a fantasy setting. Condemnation of Nazi ideology is a significant part of the series. It is Hitler’s desire to establish Aryan control over the entire world, a desire that pits Germany against a Japan which, in the context of the series, is interested in creating a world based on liberty, international friendship and particularly the brotherhood between races. At first glance, this philosophy seems to fit closely with “simulation” novel pioneer Hiyama Yoshikazu’s statement about using entertainment as a medium for revising history (quoted above). It also seems, to no small degree, a reflection of the wartime “Greater East Asia” ideology. Upon closer reading of the entire series and the expressed intentions of author Aramaki himself, however, the *Kantai* series story and the author’s accompanying comments give a very different perspective on Japan’s past.

The German “evil empire” depicted in the *Kantai* series provides an effective counterpoint to the reconsideration of Japan’s past. The Japan interested in racial harmony and international cooperation and opposed to a Germany aiming to crush these ideals is not an affirmation of Japan’s wartime history but a criticism of it. Germany appears as an evil force; Japan as a good one, the values of its leaders in line with real-world United Nations ideals. However, it is not the same sort of good versus evil dialectic that exists in American popular culture. The Japan that appears in the *Kantai* series is not an idealized vision of Japan’s past but an ideal for Japan at present. Aramaki draws parallels between Japan’s wartime past and the image of the German “evil empire,” providing his readers grounds for serious reflection. Aramaki writes, “[d]uring that war, we Japanese did many deeply sinful things [...]. For example, there is the Nanking incident, the comfort women and forced labor. In the postwar period, we Japanese have either forgotten or not learned that we were victimizers too” (Aramaki 1992b: 197–198). In effect, the Japan that appears in the novels contrasts dramatically with both Nazi Germany and real Japanese history. Guided by Aramaki’s editorial comments, readers are encouraged to consider Japan’s past and think seriously about Japan as victimizer.

Aramaki makes explicit reference to the most controversial of all Japanese atrocities, the Nanking massacre. He writes, “In reality, horrific, barbaric acts were carried out against defenseless civilians [...]. On top of that, these acts were committed by average draftees. Depending on the situation, humans can become beasts. We humans have a kind of dual character – we can become angels or devils” (Aramaki 1992b: 198). While these may seem like difficult, indeed disturbing, ideas to deal with in a popular “simulation” fantasy novel, Aramaki’s approach is a testament both to the diversity of the genre and its ability to take on serious issues. Like Matsumoto Reiji’s questioning of “military fandom” and Tezuka Osamu’s dramatic association of Japanese and Nazi atrocities, Aramaki demonstrates this important facet of German wartime images in Japanese popular culture. This questioning of Japan’s militaristic past is made possible by connecting Germany’s “dual character” under Hitler with the similar duality in Japan’s own history.

Aramaki also makes it quite clear that his alternate version of WWII is intended as a form of contemporary political commentary: “In both series, while I write the past, I’m really trying to write the present. While I use science fiction methods to rewrite history, I’m really asking what Japan and the Japanese should be in the future” (Aramaki 1992a: 200). The idea that Japan should play a more responsible, constructive role in world affairs is a staple of left-wing criticism in Japan at present; Aramaki follows this school of thought by contrasting Japan with the image of Germany in the *Kantai* series. Additionally, Aramaki’s writings demonstrate the problems inherent in interpretations of postwar Japanese history based solely upon the *higaisha* (victim’s) paradigm. His books, as do the manga of Tezuka Osamu, show a clearly articulated *kagaisha* (victimizer’s) perspective, as well as the variety of contexts in which WWII era Germany can appear in Japanese popular culture.

CONCLUSION

Depictions of a militaristic Germany with superior technology and romantic connections to an old and noble tradition are such an entrenched part of Japanese popular culture that they have transcended the WWII context entirely and have proven to be a formative influence on Japan’s futuristic science fiction as well. Matsumoto Reiji’s iconic 1974 animated television series *Uchū senkan Yamato* [English: *Space Battleship Yamato*] pits Earth against the empire of Gamalus, aliens who bear undeniably Germanic characteristics. The worthy rival of *Yamato* captain Okita is Dommel, clearly a loosely disguised “Rommel.” Likewise, the imperial forces

in Tanaka Yoshiki's epic space opera *Ginga eiyū densetsu* [Legend of the Galactic Heroes], a multi-volume series that ranks among the most popular works of Japanese science fiction, are clearly based on Japanese ideas of German society (Tanaka 1997). In the dozens of related novels and animated videos that have been released, most of the names and titles are indeed written in German. These types of "futuristic" images, along with similar manifestations of WWII era Germany, are probably the most popular depictions of the nation in Japanese popular culture. However, as has been demonstrated, there are other, equally potent, portrayals of Germany.

In popular culture, images of the past are created for various purposes. In Japan, Germany's wartime history is used to present powerful military technology and to evoke a romantic vision of the German fighting man, both of which have considerable fan appeal and marketability. However, these white-washed, arguably pro-war discursive trends are not the only interpretations of Germany's war. Some, like Matsumoto's *Za Kokupitto* and the 1994 video based upon it, are subversive and include forceful anti-war perspectives in an ostensibly pro-war formula. Others, like Tezuka Osamu and Aramaki Yoshio, use Nazi misdeeds for comparison and contrast respectively. They share the common goal of using German history to paint Japan's own war atrocities and racist ideology in a negative light, thus bringing them to the attention of readers. As significant examples like *Adorufu ni tsugu* and the *Kantai* series demonstrate, condemnations of Nazi atrocities in manga and popular novels often appear in concert with a similar condemnation of Japanese militarism.

Each of the manufactured pasts discussed in this article is important. Germany's military reputation still looms large in the Japanese imagination today. In Japan, as in other countries like the United States, a fandom devoted to German military technology and fascinated by the character of the German fighting man exists alongside mainstream anti-Nazi thought. In Japan, however, where Germany is not viewed within a simplistic good versus evil dialectic, this discourse has come to have a profoundly different character. Some works that clearly market military technology as a major selling point subvert that formula in an effort to communicate anti-war ideas to readers. These anti-war ideas do not present Japanese people only as victims but also explore the idea of the Japanese as victimizers. Works like Ian Buruma's *The Wages of Guilt – Memories of War in Germany and Japan* have suggested that Germany has directly confronted its wartime past while few such efforts have been made in Japan (Buruma 2002). Given the use of images of wartime Germany to criticize both Nazi and Japanese behavior in the popular works discussed in this paper, however,

one must question Buruma's assumption that "victim's consciousness" is the only way to interpret postwar Japanese thought.

Germany's wartime history has long been an important component of anti-war thought in Japan. As this article has demonstrated, however, this does not merely consist of a one-sided condemnation of the Nazi regime. Important parallels with Japan's own past are drawn as well. Japanese popular culture encompasses heterogeneous images of war, of German history and culture, and of Japan's past. Romanticized images of war and military technology exist side by side with frank depictions of Japanese atrocities in a discourse that has produced an image of the Japanese side as victimizers as well as victims. This has been accomplished on a popular level in Japan by individuals like Tezuka Osamu, the country's most popular comic artist, and Arakami Yoshio, one of its most popular science fiction authors. Jürgen Habermas' comment, quoted at the beginning of this paper, demonstrates a wisdom that transcends the European context and is indeed applicable to Japan as well. Habermas challenges popular discourse to preserve knowledge of past horrors and to play a responsible role in shaping historical memory. From the discussion of the works presented here, it is clear that Japanese popular culture has done much to meet the challenge that Habermas presents.

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