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Preface: War/Time

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Preface

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WAR/TIME

In advanced consumer societies, we are used to thinking of war as a disruption of the normal state of affairs, as an irruption of irrational violence and destruction into an otherwise peaceful condition. Because we associate our peace with exhausting yet safety-enhanced cycles of production and consumption, we have become accustomed to thinking of war as the opposite of productivity—war as destruction in opposition to production, war as something different from the everyday violence of our workaday lives, which happens at a distance, in other places and times, seen on screens. We are liable to acknowledge that war makes for profits, that there are and always have been war profiteers, but we are unlikely to grasp how the increasingly fragile prosperity of the United States and its client states might be predicated upon war, because we still think war in opposition to peace, prosperity, productivity.

But there are arguments for, and demonstrations of, a state of affairs in which war constitutes the very ground of our productivity and prosperity. Chalmers Johnson, for instance, argues that the United States economy (and thus that of its client states) has become a form of military Keynesianism, in which “the making and selling of weaponry has become our way of life.”¹ Simply put, war-related technologies and military bases are a major worldwide employer and growth industry, and a highly regulated one at that. On a related tack, Naomi Klein’s discussions of disaster capitalism have shown how contemporary American-articulated global capitalism deliberately builds



disaster into the business of producing of wealth. War and natural disasters do not disrupt the cycles of production and consumption but on the contrary spur them.² If Johnson and Klein are right, this military-driven economy and disaster capitalism have material limits, which are already visible on the horizon in the deepening ecological and economic crises of this destruction-centered productivity.

Maybe this is why so many of our entertainments dwell on apocalypse, Armageddon, genocide, and the Holocaust—not merely because we delight in spectacles of mayhem and destruction but also because we long to discover the material limit of this current state of affairs and to find something new in its ruination. But the imagination typically falters on the verge of apocalypse, as if it is not entirely possible or desirable to dispense with the current state of affairs, not quite yet, for maybe we continue to hold out hope for its sustainability.

Michel Foucault's writings on war put a different, somewhat alarming twist on such problems. He inverted Karl von Clausewitz's dictum that war is only a branch of political activity, to challenge any residual commitment to the idea that war happens only when politics fails. Foucault suggested instead that war is the permanent basis of all modern institutions of power. Where our received wisdom posits war as a disruption of the normally peaceful order of things, Foucault saw that, in modern times, the implementation of various fields of rationality had made for a situation in which "society must be defended." Consequently, not only is war the basis for modern institutions of power but also, conversely, war becomes a technology of social control.

Like any modality or technology of social control, war too has its dream. Foucault offered this vision: "Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the eighteenth century; but there was also the military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility."³

Today, as neoconservative regimes and neoliberal corporate interests readily dispense with or easily bypass the social contract (constitutions, parliaments, basic rights to peaceful protest, etc.) and the utopian aspirations associated with them, and as we find ourselves caught up in indefinitely progressive forms of training (retooling ourselves to implement the next generations and latest wrinkles in information and communications technologies), it seems as if we are already living the military dream of society, preternaturally

fascinated with our relation to mechanisms that appear, at least initially, to be postmechanistic (cyborgs, thinking computers, sentient robots, swarm intelligence) yet that frequently betray a profound commitment to mechanistic philosophies, fragmenting and dispersing them, reinscribing them in the guise of deconstructing them. Such cyber-entities are not postmechanistic in the sense of coming after or moving beyond the mechanistic; they are postmechanistic in the sense that the modern technological condition finally appears as irrevocable as it is indefensible and unlivable.

Such an evocation of Johnson's, Klein's, and Foucault's perspective on the contemporary situation may appear unduly bleak and pessimistic to some readers, for it implies that today we can no longer afford to think of society or productivity or prosperity apart from war, to the point that war and everyday life are inseparable, and both our daily time or temporality and our historical moment are conditioned in war. Yet, if we take Johnson, Klein, or Foucault at their word despite their differences in emphasis, we must also acknowledge a gap implicit in this condition—which is not wartime but *war/time*, not an equation of war and the everyday but a self-propelling operative condition in which war acts as a control on the everyday time of orderly social productivity, while that everyday time spurs the spread of war, of its technologies (weapons) and its networks (bases). The project of this volume is to locate, explore, and critically inhabit the gap implicit in *war/time* wherever it appears.

Because the emphasis of this volume is on manga, anime, and associated fan activities, and thus on Japan, the *war/time* gap will appear in distinctive locations and modalities. Across a number of the essays, for instance, appears an emphasis on the Japanese experience of World War II and on the legacy of Japanese empire and militarism. The essays grouped under the rubric “Legacies of Sovereignty” look at the relation between national sovereignty and war in very different ways. Here questions arise about the agency of manga artists in the context of the wartime mobilization of artists to produce military propaganda (Rei Okamoto Inouye), about the internalization of military modes of behavior in children, as critically exposed in Takahata Isao's *Grave of the Fireflies* (Wendy Goldberg), and about how temporality of Japanese colonialism and its historical moment reappears in ShinKai Makoto's *The Place Promised in Our Early Days* (Gavin Walker). The different emphases in these essays merit close attention: where Goldberg finds in animation a thoroughly effective critique of blind patriotism, Inouye's account poses questions about how manga art, in its resistance to commodification, entered fully into wartime nationalism. In other words, in its resistance to temporality of mechanical reproduction that had come to characterize everyday life in the 1930s,

manga art actively bridged the gap between war and everyday life. Walker goes even further, showing how the war/time gap turns into an affective loop in ShinKai Makoto's animation, evoking colonial conflict only to channel it into an affectively closed system of sovereign identity.

The essays under the heading "Control Room" look at relations between war and technologies of social control. Tom Looser demonstrates how the experience of war becomes the foundational logic of contemporary political and social life in the works of Oshii Mamoru, stressing the importance of the production of worlds in which death no longer serves as an operative limit for the imagination of political risk and social conflict. Mark Anderson directs attention to Oshii Mamoru's presentation in *Patlabor 2* of how postwar politics thoroughly compromised Japanese sovereignty, stressing how Oshii's films, even if they remain overtly committed to the logic of sovereignty, invite us to think media not as a realm of representation but as a theater of operations. Looking first at *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, Christophe Thouny's essay explores how the destructiveness of war (apocalypse) becomes an everyday reality, which, in the context of *Densha otoko*, he links to communication technologies (connectivity). Between apocalypse and connectivity, between war and the everyday temporalities of communications, emerges a distinctive spatiotemporal configuration, which Thouny dubs the waiting room. Michael Fisch also examines the role of war in *Densha otoko*, beginning with metaphors of war only to discover that such metaphors depend on technologically generated intervals or spacing, which link the space of the train (the mobilization of commuters) to the spectacle of war (the media mobilization of the populace). In sum, across this group of essays, the war/time gap is associated with media spaces that allow war to act as social control, while everyday life, as life, loses its capacity to place a limit on conflict. The result is a proliferation of quasi-apocalyptic space-times or control rooms.

Dennis Washburn emphasizes in his discussion of video games and media convergence how the ubiquity and simultaneity of media networks have radically transformed the experience of space and time and thus of history and memory. Rather than a total eradication of history and memory, however, Washburn looks for new formats for storytelling in which gameplay implies different modalities of time and memory, particularly in *Final Fantasy X*. In contrast, Michael Dylan Foster finds familiar modalities of nostalgia and commemoration in the context of contradictions that have arisen around the transformation of manga artist Mizuki Shigeru's hometown into a tourist memorial dedicated to his works, their critique of war, and to forgotten patterns of everyday life. Sheng-mei Ma's essay looks at how different manga

writers have sought to come to terms with the trauma of Japan's defeat in World War II. Here, too, we see an analytic effort to insert a gap between war and temporality, between military destruction and everyday life. But, where fading memory and nostalgia imply some manner of psychological separation or cognitive distance, trauma implies an eternally present injury, prone to displacement and reenactment—as characterized in manga writer Kobayashi Yoshinori's notorious defense of war.

As a mode of regulated difference, genre complicates questions about the gap between wartime and everyday temporality. In particular, in war and combat genres, the dynamics of battle must be continually renewed, at once familiar yet subtly different from past and future instances. Zilia Papp, for instance, traces various versions of *Yōkai daisensō*, showing how master genre bender Miike Takashi exploits genre conventions to political ends very different from those of his predecessors. At the same time, as Takayuki Tatsumi demonstrates, genres are frequently formed transnationally. Tatsumi explores how the cultural misunderstanding inherent in transnational interactions allows genre to go beyond regulated difference or the repetition of the same, suggesting that the transnational dynamics of the ninja genre result in hybridization, both at the level of human and machine, and at the level of cultures. Similarly, Rebecca Suter is interested in how the figure of the girl knight serves to challenge received genre expectations about the relations between war and gender identity. The explorations of generic difference in the essays under the heading “Genre Violence” thus stand in stark contrast to previous essays that stressed war as a technology of social control. They bring forth a moment or site of “deregulation” within generic repetition. Where many of the prior essays see such moments or sites as those where control finds its material point of leverage, these essays affirm the generativity of cultural production, stressing in effect the force of everyday novelty over social mechanisms.

The final group of essays, “Mobilization/Domestication,” explores the interaction of wartime mobilization and cultural domestication. Christine Marran takes up the manga adaptation of Numa Shōzō's famous novel, *Human Cattle Yapoo*, in which the Western domestication of Japan, especially as configured in the postwar American Occupation of Japan but also in the experience of Japanese wartime mobilization, is displaced onto the sado-masochistic paradigm of white women cruelly engineering yellow men for their greater pleasure. Here, as Marran points out, the pleasure of domination and submission make for a feedback loop between racial domestication and imperial mobilization. Marco Pellitteri looks at giant robots in Japanese animations as symbolic of Japan's relation to the United States. Significantly,

he finds that Japanese and American warriors tend to join forces to combat alien invaders. In other words, the peace between, or reconciliation of, Japan and the United States is frequently predicated upon total war, which appears as the condition for social harmony. Finally, highlighting the class warfare implicit in Kobayashi Yoshinori's apologia for Japanese militarization, Mark Driscoll considers the possibility for countermobilization in the face of the ascendancy and apparent victory of neoconservative agenda. Popular culture, he demonstrates, presents possibilities for countermobilizations based in everyday consumption, particularly when power disparities such as between classes become visible. Driscoll thus acknowledges the stakes implicit in all these studies of war/time in the context of Japanese manga, animation, and popular culture: can such forms of expression open the gap where wartime enacts social control of everyday life and culture, inviting fans and fan communities to consider the politics inherent in their practices, spurring new movements of countermemory, counterhistory, and countermobilization?

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Notes

1. Chalmers Johnson and Tom Engelhardt, "A Tomdispatch Interview with Chalmers Johnson, Pt. 2," at <http://www.tomdispatch.com> (accessed March 22, 2006).
2. For an overview of the key ideas that later appear in the book *Shock Doctrine* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2007), see Naomi Klein, "The Rise of Disaster Capitalism," *The Nation*, May 2, 2005.
3. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 169.