



INVENTING NOSTALGIA FOR THE “GOLDEN AGE” OF THE NATIONAL MIDDLE AGES AND FEAR OF THE FUTURE: NATIONALISM, MEMORY AND PHOBIAS OF MEDIEVALISM AND FUTURISM IN JAPANESE MASS CULTURE

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Abstract

The author analyses features and trends within the development of medievalism and futurism in Japanese mass culture. Mass culture in Japan arose as one of many consequences of political, social and cultural modernization. Medievalism and futurism simplify ideas regarding the past or the future (futurism) and incorporate their elements into the mass culture. These cultural phenomena are analyzed in the context of the imagination of communities, the invention of traditions, and the simulation of classical heritage within a Japanese context. The author analyses cultural situations in which the intellectual discourse of mass culture develops along ethnic lines, while also acknowledging the contribution of modern technological civilization. Medievalism in the identity of modern Japanese mass culture actualizes the myth of the ethnographic "golden age" of medieval culture's feudal daimyo and samurai sub-culture. By contrast, futurism actualizes cultural phobias that are inspired by feelings of insecurity about the future of civilization. It is assumed that medievalism and futurism as forms of cultural escapism in Japanese popular culture arose as a consequence of the trauma of forced de-archaisation and de-feudalization, forced military and economic modernization, and the miraculous success of Japan's economic growth and expansion in the post-war era. The author believes that these factors actualized social discomfort and stimulated escapist practices. The author analyses these phenomena within the context of mass culture, believing that a consumer society requires reflection upon the national past in order to yield a visualization of its continuity with earlier social institutions.

Keywords

Japan; modernization; ethnicity; historical memory; cultural imitation/simulation; the invention of traditions; medievalism; futurism; popular culture



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ИЗОБРЕТАЯ НОСТАЛЬГИЮ ПО «ЗОЛОТОМУ ВЕКУ» НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО СРЕДНЕВЕКОВЬЯ И СТРАШАСЬ БУДУЩЕГО: НАЦИОНАЛИЗМ, ПАМЯТЬ И ФОБИИ МЕДИЕВАЛИЗМА И ФУТУРИЗМА ЯПОНСКОЙ МАССОВОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ

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Аннотация

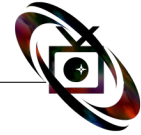
Автор анализирует особенности и векторы развития медиевализма и футуризма в современной японской массовой культуре. Массовая культура в Японии возникла и развивалась как одно из последствий политической, социальной и культурной модернизации страны. Автор полагает, что медиевализм и футуризм представляют собой упрощенные представления о прошлом (средние века) или будущем (футуризм), интегрированные в каноны воспроизводства массовой культуры. Поэтому, эти культурные явления анализируются в контекстах воображения сообществ, изобретения традиций, симуляции и имитации классического культурного наследия в японских национальных контекстах. Автор анализирует культурные ситуации, когда интеллектуальный дискурс массовой культуры развивается как этнический / национальный по своей природе, но активно использует потенциал современной технологической цивилизации общества потребления. Автор полагает, что медиевализм в идентичности современной японской массовой культуры актуализирует миф об этническом / этнографическом золотом веке средневековой культуры феодальных княжеств и самураев. Футуризм актуализирует социальные и культурные фобии, вдохновленные коллективными чувствами неуверенности в будущем цивилизации. Предполагается, что медиевализм и футуризм как формы культурного эскапизма в японской массовой культуре возникли как последствия травмы принудительной деархаизации и дефеодализации (вторая половина 19 - первая половина 20 века), форсированной военной и экономической модернизации (вторая половина 19 - первая половина 20 века), военной катастрофы (период второй мировой войны), послевоенного роста и японского экономического чуда (вторая половина 20 века). Автор полагает, что все эти факторы актуализировали социальный дискомфорт и стимулировали эскапистские культурные практики медиевализма и футуризма. Автор анализирует эти явления в контекстах массовой культуры, полагая, что общество потребления периодически имеет потребность в рефлексии относительно национального прошлого, что ведет к визуализации его преемственности с более ранними социальными институтами и актуализации этничности в формах, предлагаемых массовой культурой.

Ключевые слова

Япония; модернизация; этничность; историческая память; культурная имитация / симуляция; изобретение традиций; медиевализм; футуризм; массовая культура



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*...we have not been good friends with
the European Middle Ages... (Iguchi, 2010)*

*...as both non-origin and origin, the Middle Ages can
be everywhere, both medieval and postmodern,
and nowhere, sublime and redemptive... (Biddick, 1998, p. 84)*

INTRODUCTION

Japan belongs, on the one hand, to the number of countries that in the past were ambitious enough to form their own unique version of identity, based partly on geographical isolation from the rest of the world and partly on language and culture. On the other hand, Japan symbolizes the successful experience of non-European modernization, which allowed political elites to synthesize regional identities with Western development models. Modern actual historiography offers several modes of description and interpretation of this phenomenon (Cangià, 2010). Despite its secondary nature and external incentives, this modernization inspired synthesis of Japanese and European/American approaches to both cultural and intellectual developments. In historiography, it is known that Japan has a reputation as the most Western and even the most European country in the non-European and non-Western cultural and social geographies when compared to its neighboring countries. Therefore, Japan can be described and analyzed in the categories of historical and cultural frontiers in particular and situation of social frontiers in general; however, the problems of Japanese frontiers in Russian historiography are less studied (Pavlenko, 2017; 2018b; 2018a) than the same European social, cultural and intellectual situations, although in Western and Japanese humanities the frontier concept can be perceived as a historiographic transplant applicable enough to Western studies, while at the same time being too controversial for the analysis of Japanese situations (Hopson, 2018).

What are the main features of the Japanese cultural frontier?

The author believes that two features are important for defining the Japanese cultural frontier. Firstly, Japan is the only country outside of geographical Europe and the imagined West where social, economic and political institutions and relations can be described within the framework of a universal historical model of feudalism that emerged independently without Roman or barbaric influences since both of these factors were absent. Secondly, Japan in the modern world has a reputation as the most westernized and modernized non-European country (Gordon, 2013; Jansen, 2002), although this idea mutated into a cultural stereotype or even myth in recent years. In this context, Japan can be localized in the same imagining line with Germany, Italy, England, Sweden, Poland,



Latvia etc. which possess both historical (their own national in particular, but Western in general feudalisms and the Middle Ages) and technological (economic development) arguments for legitimizing their existence in a globalizing world where popular culture monopolized social change to become the only model of cultural development.

It is known that mass culture as a social organism operates in part under the auspices of clichés and stereotypes reproduced in various branches of a culture's leisure and entertainment industries. Medievalism and futurism – represented by serial idealizations and simplified interpretations of the Middle Ages and possible future worlds within the contexts of either historical, “feudal” or fantastic paradigms and their consequent products – are both universal attributes found within mass consumer culture.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE

An analysis of medievalism and futurism as grand narratives and forms of the heritage of “high culture” that have been integrated into the mass heterogeneous culture of a modern consumer society is this article's main purpose. The author will analyze these two forms of the social manifestation of consumer society found in national Japanese culture. Therefore, the objectives of the article can be summarized as follows: firstly, an analysis of the genesis of Japanese versions of medievalism and futurism; secondly, the adjustment of the concepts of “medievalism” and “futurism” in Japanese cultural and social realities; thirdly, an analysis of actual cultural situations where “medievalism” and “futurism” correlate and coexist with historical and political memories in modern realities of Japan – where mass culture determines collective preferences of citizens as professional consumers.

METHODS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Methods employed by the author in this article follows his historiographical predecessors, who have analyzed social and cultural changes and transformations as processes of the invention of traditions, production and promotion of meanings within the context of intellectual history and archaeology of ideas. These theoretical approaches provide scholars with possibilities to analyze cultural phenomena as they relate to the imagination of communities, the invention of traditions (Anderson, 1997), and the simulation and imitation of the classical cultural heritage found in Japanese national contexts. Therefore, the author presumes that the in-



vention of traditions became a factor of the development and progress of Japanese nationalism (Krupianko & Areshidze, 2012) and nationalist modernizations.

A consideration of medievalism and futurism found in Japanese popular culture as they relate to intellectual connections and interdependencies with social and historical memories, historical politics and attempts to overcome the traumatic experience of the past are among the topics poorly studied in comparison with other aspects of Japanese mass culture – including manga and the phenomenon of gangster cinema, etc. (Katasonova, 2012; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2012d). With regard to the cultural intertwining of medievalism with nationalism, and the dependence of cultural imagination upon identity transformations, these aspects are not often found in Russian historiography; nationalism has been documented, but mainly as a political phenomenon (Krupianko & Areshidze, 2012). Esther Liberman Cuenca, commenting on connections between invention of the Middle Ages in intellectual tradition and imagination of nationalism proposes that “institutions, practices, and identities that many ethno-nationalists claim as dating to medieval times actually have a much more recent provenance...medieval history...the early medieval period and its perception in the popular consciousness represent important sites for understanding recent...nationalist movements that stake their identities in nostalgia” (Cuenca, 2020). In foreign historiography for several decades, the dominant tendency has been to imagine Japanese nationalism as part of political discourse (Hardacre, 1997; Rieu, 2014; Sannosuke, 1971), and his political interpretations and explanations (Conroy, 1955; Farkas, 2013; Saaler, 2016) have become a universal modus for addressing and attempting to define Japanese nationalism.

As has been previously reported in the literature, nationalism expresses itself mainly in politics as a factor of modernization. Recent theoretical developments have revealed that modern historiography needs a new mode or even a language to communicate an understanding of nationalism’s history; however the common strategy used to study nationalism is modernism. Commenting on historiography in general terms, Russian historian Mihail Krom emphasizes that “the deconstruction of basic concepts that shaped the concept of history and historiography forced modern scholars into a very difficult situation: they can still develop private subjects, using the language of the sources for narrative building, but the conceptual apparatus for serious generalizations is clearly not enough” (Krom, 2013).



Evgenij Savitskij, a Russian historian, commenting on the simultaneous coexistence of several modus in historiography, believes that “dozens of American professional historians, philologists, and art historians publish books that would outrage a scholar educated with respect for the principle of historicism. These texts are little known in Russia because they look strange, not meeting the academic criteria that are still reproduced in Russian universities” (Savitskij, 2016). The author of this article presumes that this text can also be perceived as marginal both by Russian medievalists and *Nihonjinron* – if for the first ones it is an attempt to analyze something strange and non-academic, then for the second ones it is an attempt to attack the methodological orthodoxy of a professional institution and turn apparently frivolous problems into serious ones.

Two approaches, including modernism and constructivism, have been influential in this field because they propose universal language to define and describe nationalism as a paradigm. There is a rapidly growing literature that addresses the concept of nationalism, which indicates that it is still among the most influential factors of contemporary political, social, and cultural processes. As far as we know, no previous research has investigated nationalism as a factor for development of pop cultural trends including medievalism and science fiction mass literature. Despite decades of research, historians continue to debate the comparative significance of the roles of nationalist imagination and invention of new traditions. Therefore, the analysis of nationalism within the context of mass culture may be an attempt to avoid the extremes of either a modernist or primordial historiography. The literature provides no evidence of a consensus with regard to the genesis and nature of nationalism, which means that it can be explained from more than one angle.

The main problem is that the culturalization of nationalism rendered it too commonplace within contemporary mass culture. The author therefore agrees with the Belarus philosopher Piotra Barkoŭski, who believes that “today it is necessary to continue deconstructing – criticizing and re-defining the meanings that we lose as a result of the depoliticization of the political world, through the deculturalization of culture and the nihilization of thinking in modern society” (Barkoŭski, 2013, p. 95). The rise and fall of traditions as collective practices and strategies of cultural behavior and consequent social consumption became an important factor in the paradigm-changing processes that determined the main vectors and paths of cultural developments, including the crisis and erosion of high cultures replaced by mass, serial and consumer ones.



PRELIMINARY ORIENTATIONS IN SOURCES

The author offers an analysis of films and texts as two pillars of modern mass culture in Japan (Katasonova, 2012a) within the contexts of their presence in historical memories, as well as practices and strategies that form actual Japanese identities as direct extensions of earlier ones or transplants of similar Western cultural trends. Medievalism and futurism in Japan are presented in other forms of intellectual activities, including academic historiography and philosophy, however, the author has chosen to consider them beyond the scope of this article because they represent versions of high culture that were able to adapt to the society whereas pop culture became the more dominant influential force. The cultural trends of consumerism, on the one hand, and the heritage of high culture, on the other hand, co-exist and co-function in parallel. Therefore, if the academic versions of Japanese medievalism and futurism can be the subject of research, then they are best approached independently from an analysis of mass culture.

“MEDIEVALISM” AND “FUTURISM”: DEFINING THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF THE TEXT

Before analyzing medievalism and futurism as influences within Japan’s consumer culture, the author offers some key introductory remarks regarding the possible definitions necessary for a better understanding of this text.

What is medievalism and futurism in Japanese popular culture? Firstly, these two phenomena have one common feature – both medievalism and futurism emerged as products of the development of mass culture, although they are related to temporally and historically different cultural trends. The birth traumas of their genesis and early history of mass culture influenced them significantly. Secondly, neither medievalism nor futurism can be determined as attempts to form a true image of the Middle Ages or the future because they are servilist cultural trends in their nature. Medievalism and futurism serve the needs of their respective popular cultures. Therefore, thirdly, medievalism can be described as a system of beliefs and practices inspired by the Middle Ages of Japan or devotion to the traditional elements of that period, including Japanese architecture, literature, music, art, philosophy, martial arts, military ethics, etc. As for futurism, fourthly, the author perceives it as an alternative to medievalism based on the pervasive influence of technological progress, represented by actual serial cultural products – films, series, comics, and



mass literature in the science fiction genre. Fifthly, both medievalism and futurism as forms of mass culture are oriented toward a growing consumer market.

Historians and other intellectuals in Japan imagine history precisely as Japanese history, nevertheless, there are national traditions of European historical studies, but despite this fact, the assumptions of the Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak that “the predominance of the national paradigm in the writings of historians can be compared with the dominance of the positivist paradigm of Leopold Ranke's exodus” (Hrytsak & Semyonova, 2003) seems adequate to describe the Japanese historiographic situation. Mass or pop medievalism in the first decades of the 21st centuries became a successful form of marketization of the rudiments of a historical recollection of the Middle Ages, although Japan has its own traditions of academic medievalism (Keirstead, 1998; Kido, 1995), focused both on studies of national Japanese medieval history and feudalism, and on the western classical model of feudalism (Iguchi, 2011). The formal community of Japanese medievalists “Japan Society for Medieval European Studies” (“Seiyō chūsei gakkai”) is well institutionalized and publishes a magazine “Spicilegium”. The theoretical range of interpretations and explanations in academic medievalism is diverse, ranging from transplantations into Japanese social and cultural contexts of the ideas of the “Annals school” or other approaches (Asaji, 1995; Kanao, 1995; Miyamoto, 1995; Takayama, 1995; Tsurushima, 1995) to “new medievalism” (Ōkubo, 2008; Tanaka, 1996).

As for futurism, the author proposes that it is logical to determine it as the integration of relapses of an “archaic” cultural model (where the book was one of the systemic institutions of identity and reading was among important cultural practice) into the modern dominating type of mass culture. Medievalism and futurism in their dominant forms of films, series, and comics became twin brothers of modern mass consumption culture which quickly responded to cultural needs of consumers – responding to their changing preferences and offering cultural products that take into account collective interests in both medieval (feudal) and futuristic (fantastic) realms. The borderline or frontier character of Japanese culture is visible in several features of medievalism and futurism, including the borderline position at the junctions and intersections of mythology and traditional tales, romantic literature and medieval history, literature and cinema.

Modern stereotypes of popular culture present fantasy as a (pseudo) historical and adventure novel, where the characters act in non-existent worlds, stylized as a nationalized Japanese Middle Age. Actually, fantasy



became a form of social and cultural escapism because the imagination and invention of new frontier worlds became the common cultural strategy of Japanese medievalism and futurism, but the medievalist imagination in its Japanese version is not much different from Western medievalisms, actualizing mass and primitivised concepts and collective ideas about the Middle Ages and feudalism inherited from an earlier romantic tradition and genre of the historical novel. As for Japan, Japanese romantics (Doak, 1994) contributed to the genesis of medievalism, but their impact is not so noticeable when compared to Western influences of pop culture.

Almost any work belonging to the medievalist or futurist paradigm in modern Japanese popular culture provides numerous versions of the ethnic Middle Ages or the fantastic future imagined in the Japanese ethnic coordinate system. These worlds of Japanese feudal medievalism or fantastic futurism that do not exist in reality offer their possible historians many cases of frontier historical, political, cultural, social, ethnographic, economic and religious situations. Mass culture constructs its own medieval and future worlds for mass consumption. These two trends primitivised concepts and ideas about the Middle Ages and the future, with the significant difference being that medievalism mutates into an ethnographic positive utopia, and futurism becomes a repulsive fantastic dystopia.

SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF INTELLECTUAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF IDEAS IN JAPANESE MEDIEVALISM AND FUTURISM

Medievalism and futurism as trends in the history of Japanese intellectual discourse did not arise in a vacuum – the social and cultural contexts of Japanese history, starting from the middle of 19th century, predetermined the development trajectories of these trends. Japan, as the author of this article has already stated, was one of those non-Western countries where feudalism and its own Middle Ages existed. By the middle of the 19th century, Japan was not one of the fastest growing countries, but its isolation made it more vulnerable to external threats. In 1868 the Tokugawa regime ceased to exist and reproduced itself in social and political spheres because a group of samurai organized a coup d'état, occupied the Imperial Palace in Kyoto, and in fact inspired further radical transformation which changed Japan from a late feudal state to a new nation-state, dynamically changing and developing amid its neighboring more traditional countries.



Whereas feudal regional groups inspired successive events of 1868, historical logic led them to transform into modernizers of the state. The Tokugawa regime existed before 1868 and the new Meiji rule established in 1868 actualized two tendencies which were far removed from radical modernizing changes. The shogunate and its political opponents represented feudal society and so were feudal in nature with the only difference that the shogun and emperor appealed to different forms of class ideology. Therefore, the shogunate and the imperial regime were equally active in their attempts to use the glorious historical past to right and correct medieval traditions for political purposes. While the shogunate and the samurai who supported it were consistent in defending their viewpoint, the imperial regime preferred instead to adapt to new social and economic situations, which forced it to launch a mechanism of political and cultural modernization. Supporters of these changes imagined the Western model of the nation-state as an ideal example of the state organization that needed to be transplanted to Japan. Since the 1870s, Japan has become a state where elites reformed social, political and economic relations consistently and decisively, destroying the old and creating new ones.

According to Robert Hellyer and David Leheny, the new political class of Meiji Japan “initiated reforms that dismantled the politically diffuse feudal state in which samurai lords ruled over semi-independent domains and pledged personal loyalty to the Tokugawa shogun. Drawing inspiration from Western political structures, the leaders eliminated the domains, reorganizing Japan into regional administrative units headed by governors appointed by the new central government. They also eliminated the samurai class, who had served as the administrators of the domain governments, and instead developed an extensive central bureaucracy that acted in the name of Meiji, whose portrait was placed in schools” (Hellyer & Leheny, 2018).

In this regard, Japan followed the path that European states had already taken. Peasants and city dwellers with fuzzy and blurred forms of estates and local self-identity turned into political nations (Weber, 1976) with standardized and unified identities. Meiji Restoration forced the flywheel of social, political, cultural and intellectual transformations to move in concert; as a result, these changes inspired the simultaneous coexistence of two mutually exclusive trends – the desire for modernization and a technically developed future world, along with a nostalgia for the golden age of the ethnically correct and ideal feudal Japan of the national Middle Ages. Japanese nationalism was a product of radical social and political modernization. As a consequence, nationalist discourse did not in-



spire narratives about the golden age of the nation's Middle Ages – such narratives being less popular among nationalistic intellectuals than the now current ideas of territorial expansion or the promotion of Japanese ethnicity, the integration of external territories and the assimilation of minorities.

The history of Japan does not reveal outright a direct dependency and correlation between the social speeds of cultural change and the presence of medievalism in culture, yet it does demonstrate that medievalism and futurism actualized themselves as ideological reactions and futuristic fantastic radical legitimations of modernization. These trends became visible later than classical political ideologies because the discourse of pop culture was yet to come. Medievalism and futurism found in Japanese intellectualism of the 20th century arose as a form of political reaction. The defeat in World War II, perceived as a national and military catastrophe resulting from radical authoritarian and undemocratic modernization, stimulated the futuristic reflections of Japanese intellectuals at a time when the radical social modernizations of the Japanese economic resurrection combined with Western cultural influences became the main incentives for medievalism.

MEDIEVALISM AND FUTURISM AS RECURRENTS OF MODERN IN MASS CULTURAL SOCIETY

This study proposes as an informal compromise and agreement that Japan, like the European states in times prior, experienced its own historical Middle Ages, which generated unique institutions and relations that are feudal in nature, even though some authors are reticent to describe medieval Japan as a feudal country. Marianne O'Doherty, for example, emphasizes that “across much of Europe, the period of the fall of the Western Roman Empire can very broadly be associated with some significant social and political changes. Similarly, around 1500, major cultural, theological, technological, and political upheavals (the reformation, the popularization of print, encounters in the Americas) can, rightly or wrongly, be used as markers of significant change. But none of these matter at all in... Japan...” (O'Doherty, 2017); however, other viewpoints are nonetheless visible in the historiography.

Paul B. Sturtevant, commenting on the cultural and mental localization of the Japanese Middle Ages within the Western cultural and historiographical tradition, stresses that Japan has more in common with the European West in its medieval history because both of them were feudal for more than ten centuries when discussions about “Chinese Middle Ages” or “European Seven Warring States period” (Sturtevant, 2014) would be



almost meaningless and impossible. Western intellectuals more often use the concept of “medieval” (Glassman, 2012; Souyri, 2003; Turnbull, 2005) as a definition when they write about Japan, mapping it in the system of methodological coordinates usually employed in the analysis of European feudalism.

The adjective “medieval” is used to describe the social and economic institutions of Japanese society with regard to politics, land relations and dependency, lordship and vassalage, culture and religion during a time when Japanese society itself is imagined as “feudal” in its nature and structure. The subsequent social, political and cultural transformations yielded by modernization led to the formal westernization of Japanese cultural spaces, including the transplantation of the European model of university education. Such education in Japan entailed the institutionalization of science in its Western sense, including history and medieval studies as one of the areas in humanities. At the same time, modernization inspired the emergence of novel literary trends that were historically absent in previous Japanese culture.

The defeat of Japan in World War II and the subsequent modernization of the national economy with its integration into the global world market led to radical changes in the status and role of the country in the region, turning it into one of the most developed and westernized states in Asia. Inevitably, these processes stimulated changes and transformations in the cultural sphere, inspiring the emergence and further development of the local mass culture, which combined Japanese and Western features. As a result, Japanese popular culture (Iwabuchi, 2002; Silverberg, 2009; Tsutsui, 2010) was able to combine the national (Shirane & Suzuki, 2002; Surak, 2012; Yoshino, 1992), ethnic, and ethnographic colors of history and heritage with general trends and common tendencies in the development of popular culture (Ashmore, 2005).

If historiography in almost all societies is either subordinate to politics directly or dependent upon it (Lindner, 1996), then mass culture is prone to politicization and conceptualization as well. Therefore, market actors involved in the production of mass-cultural products in Japan use universal forms (comics, film, series, mass literature) that actualize the Japanese versions of medievalism or futurism; however, the result of this symbiosis is not unique despite the fact that a significant number of ethnic features remain identifiable (Starrs, 2004).

Sergei Ivanov, a Russian historian of Byzantium, believes that fantasy – being the sphere of dominance of medievalism – is “always the Middle Ages, but the Western Middle Ages. ‘Game of Thrones’ is entirely the Roman-Germanic Middle Ages. In fantasy, there is no place for stylization



under Byzantium. Byzantium fell into the image gap” (Ivanov, 2018). As for Japan in particular and Asia in general, these regions are less recognizable in the imagined worlds of Western medievalism, although Japanese mass literature has no deficit in texts imagining a nationalized and “Nipponified” Middle Ages.

Actually, Japanese medievalism and futurism as products of mass culture became part of the global or globalizing cultural project of pop culture (Ko, 2013). Consequently, Japanese ethnic-national features were sold successfully in the global markets of symbolic services and entertainment. Japanese collective motifs of individual heroes, on the one hand, present clearly and discreetly in some products of American and European popular culture (Kaori, 2011); while on the other hand, the Japanese cultural market remains open to American and European influences, which became inevitable in the global economy with its trends for further globalization.

JAPANESE CULTURAL REALITIES AND WESTERN MEDIEVALISM

The relative popularity and success in Japan of “The Game of Thrones” by George Martin (less modest than enthusiasm in Europe a few years earlier) became a real expression of this cultural openness (Bremer, 2017; Mckenna, 2016). George Martin not only allowed the translation of his books in Japanese and publish them in Japan but also collaborated with the company that specializes in the production of computer games in medieval style (Cooper, 2019; ‘GoT-Firstpost’, 2019).

“The Game of Thrones” generated numerous critical and laudatory responses in the Japanese media, inspiring a host of adaptations and nationalizations of the project varying from traditional Japanese manga (Nakano, 2004; Natsume, 2001; Shimizu, 2001; Suyama, 1968) to the universal genre of the series. At the historical moment when Western popular culture began its expansion into Asian markets, including Japan, Japanese pop culture (Kamachi, 1999) had several social and cultural institutions (Brenner, 2007; Macwilliams, 2008) that could assimilate the Western cultural impact and product by integrating them into Japanese social spaces and collective preferences.

Furthermore, Japanese entertainment industries managed to “digest” science fiction (Motoko, 2014) proposing new models of the futuristic world (Perper & Cornog, 2011), which were ethnically Japanese and aimed at Japanese consumers, yet they were also understandable for mass consumers in America, Europe and Russia whose ideas about Japan resonated with their own cultures’ numerous stereotypes about Japan as a



country of samurai and high technology. Japanese writers of the 20th century made a significant contribution to the institutionalization and subsequent strengthening of the medievalist myth in their own cultural identity. Imitating the canons of a highly literate modern culture while simultaneously being integrated into the needs of the Japanese market economy, some authors successfully adapted medieval Japanese plots to the needs of the emerging consumer society and its mass culture.

Intellectuals, as the Ukrainian historian Iryna Kolesnyk believes, “are always in the power field of politics. Some serve the needs of the authorities, like official historiographers of rulers, dynasties, countries, they even become architects of new states. Others do not demonstrate their political preferences and views openly. Some of the historians remove from power and state institutions deliberately... a true intellectual is always in opposition to power and the existing regime” (Kolesnyk, 2017, p. 9). Yet in the Japanese case, nationalism – defeated in World War II – became a symbol of consolidation and a universal code readable by consumers of mass culture.

As a consequence, the gradual actualization of the medieval motives as a social memory of the golden age of the national Japanese Middle Ages became inevitable. Eiji Yoshikawa (1892 – 1962), the Japanese writer, was responsible for the successes and progress of Japanese popular culture in the second half of the 20th century. His texts became attempts to simulate and imitate the traditional medieval Japanese narrative in modern literature, and the writer himself recognized the secondary nature of his books. Yoshikawa, being one of the founding fathers of mass literature, actually deconstructed the classical medieval heritage in order to adapt it to the needs of modern culture, focusing on the interests of possible readers of mass literature. Yoshikawa’s works belonged to popular culture and the Japanese film industry adapted them actively: his novels were filmed 13 times from 1954 to 1973. Thus, Yoshikawa was among the inspirers of the synthesis of medievalism with mass culture. Medievalist motifs are characteristic for some texts by Ryōtarō Shiba (1923 – 1996) and Shūsaku Endō (1923–1996) as well, but they are limited to samurai images that were easily recognizable and decoded by mass readers.

MEMORY OF THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE NATIONAL MIDDLE AGES AND POLITICAL NOSTALGIA

The integration of medievalism into the Japanese cultural canon is a direct result of what transpired during the second half of the 20th century. Writers and intellectuals of that time nationalized and Nipponified Western fiction. They combined it with Japanese political realities which in-



cluded socially significant and painful aspects of historical memory – militarized aesthetics (Ohnuki-Tierney, 2010), political militarism, and the survival of the experience of violent warfare, which is a sensitive and painful part of Japanese modern history (Nozaki, 2008; Person, 2020; Takenaka, 2015). “The Battleship Yamato” (Shunichi, 2013) was the most successful fiction assimilation project in Japanese cultural realities because it simulates, imitates and deciphers messages found in American popular culture, from the 1960s pioneering television series “Star Trek” conceived by Gene Roddenberry to the movie novena of “Star Wars” created by George Lucas in the 1970s and being completed in the 21st century.

Several attempts to combine the poetics of medievalism with fantastic discourse preceded “The Battleship Yamato”, but numerous cultural and intellectual works by Japanese writers from the periods known as “shintō to kakusan” (“infiltration and diffusion”) fueled the ascent of Japanese science fiction, which began to reference Western experience, melding it into Japanese national culture and bringing to modern consciousness the political and ideological problems important to society by framing them within a novel context. The trauma of war predetermined the growth of revisionist sentiments, making possible the simultaneous actualization of both modern political militaristic sensibilities and medieval ethnic nostalgia.

“Space Battleship Yamato” (“Uchū Senkan Yamato”, 1974-1975, 26 episodes), a Japanese science fiction anime series, is a successful Japanese project which combined values of nationalism and militarism with political nostalgia and intellectual reflections on historical Japan. “Space Battleship Yamato II” (“Uchū Senkan Yamato Tsū”) continued the previous project in 1978 and 1979. By 1980 the third part of franchise “Space Battleship Yamato III” (“Uchū Senkan Yamato Surī”) appeared. As for anime, “Space Battleship Yamato: The Movie” (“Uchū Senkan Yamato: Gekijōban”) directed by Leiji Matsumoto appeared in 1977 and became the first attempt to integrate the plot into the traditional Japanese canon. By 2017 one film and eight anime series based upon themes found in the original “Space Battleship Yamato” were also released. “Space Battleship Yamato” became the first step in pop culture’s transition from the traditional paradigm of super-hero to the Japanese space operas of the late 1970s which made visible the contradictions between the forced surrender of a country that had preserved its historical memory of the national Middle Ages and its military spirit. As a result, a new stereotype arose in Japanese popular culture. A non-belligerent country painfully and actively imagined and in-



vented alternative historical mediaeval and fantastic futurist realities. Japanese intellectuals in pacifist Japan (Mizuno, 2007) projected the trauma of defeat in World War II on mass culture.

The Japanese film industry tried several times to synthesize nostalgia for the collective social and cultural medievalism with the technological poetics of science fiction by fitting them into the universal language of mass culture. “The Sengokujieitai” (“Time Slip and Sengoku Self Defense Force”, 1979) and the “Sengoku Jieitai 1549” (“Samurai Commando: Mission 1549”, 2005) became attempts to reconcile the various cultural and social versions of historical Japanese memory in the form of military cooperation between medieval samurai and modern soldiers of the Japanese army.

These films became pop culture attempts to revise the “therapeutic function” of history. Intellectuals preferred to ignore this function of history, however they resort to recalling it whenever they “discuss aspects of the past that seemed useful to the nation” (Scherrer, 2009, p. 101). Nonetheless, such films are successful attempts to return to discussions about the benefit or harm of militarism in a state that, after World War II, was actually forbidden to restore armed forces. Mass culture in Japan, with regard to nationalism, emerged as a “modern project” because these pop culture influences suggested “replacing universal holiness with partial sacrilege as a result of an attempt to separate the sacred from every day in the structures of power” (Manchev, 2003).

In this intellectual environment, popular culture in Japan created ties with nationalism, replacing relapses of high culture with their mass simulations, integrating nationalist tendencies into the formally non-political contexts of post-modernity. These films yielded a greater visualization of Japanese nationalism (Gayle, 2004; Stockwin & Ampiah, 2017) and the traditions of militarism: in the situation of strong and stable external control and influence and the impossibility for Japan as the state to have its own national armed forces and take part in wars, film directors “sent” their heroes to the past, forcing them to become participants in real feudal clashes. While historians, according to British sociologist Anthony Smith, play significant and prominent roles among the inspirers of nationalism (Smith, 1992), cultural activists in the 20th century became important participants in the nationalist imagination as well. Their activities range from nationalist polemics to the imagination of communities and the invention of traditions for the masses turning into political or ethnic nations.



SOCIAL INJURIES OF HISTORICAL MEMORY IN POP CULTURE BETWEEN MILITARISM AND NOSTALGIA

“The Battleship Yamato”, directed by Takashi Yamazaki, imitated the political and ideological poetics of American projects such as “Star Trek” and “Star Wars”, transplanting their concepts into Japanese social, cultural and historical realities. “The Battleship Yamato” (Ashbaugh, 2010) emerged also as a political and ideological project because it contributed to the actualization of nationalism, the visualization of Japanese identity, the legitimization of politically incorrect nostalgia for medieval feudal Japan and the fighting spirit of the samurai (Benesch, 2016). However, this ideology, in fact, became a victim of discredit as a result of the defeat in the second world war; as a consequence, Japanese pop culture became adept at assimilating and integrating Western cultural content into its national canon, using it to grow the Japanese pop culture industry.

If “The Battleship Yamato” revealed hidden political nostalgia, then Japanese versions of “Game of Thrones” emerged as overt nostalgia for the golden age of feudal medieval Japan. In the Japanese case, popular culture develops in the same way as historiography – dependent upon nationalism – because, if “the past is perceived as something negative and a deviation from the 'normal' path, then the elites and society face the task of parting with the legacy and overcoming the negative experience inevitably, correcting their own development paths” (Lastoŭski, 2016, p. 37).

Therefore, societies that gained traumatic lessons from the experience of military defeat and political responsibility can use the past for “therapeutic correction of the present, destroying and transforming past” (Krastev, 2003). The intellectual, cultural and political elites of Europe in the 20th century solved such problems several times and the mechanisms of the decision were varied, ranging from the marginalization of unpleasant moments of the past to their migration from politics to the cultural sphere, including popular culture. If nationalism actualizes some of the birth traumas of historiography and exposes its dependence on the political situation, then the mass culture of Japan actualizes the features of extreme politicization, monopolization of the production of ideas and meanings, as well as a high degree of politicization (Cusco & Taki, 2003).

When the seminal installment of “The Battleship Yamato” was brought to the public in the 1960s, the historical memory of the war in Japan was still fresh, so its visualization – like the actualization of the memory of feudal Japan – could be perceived as a politically reactionary trend. The later installments of “The Battleship Yamato”, belonging to the pop-cultural paradigm, were consequently free to illustrate the political feelings and preferences of their creators. This project appealed to Japa-



nese nationalism in its cultural version. Any other attempts to synthesize the memory of the war with nostalgia for medieval feudal Japan became stable and visible phenomena within Japanese self-consciousness by the 2010s, yet intellectuals continued to imagine modern memory as distinct and different from the medieval feudal past.

The heroes of the latest version of “The Battleship Yamato”, on the one hand, formally symbolize all the positive aspects of human civilization because they fight against alien invaders; on the other hand, they remain Japanese. As a result, the project itself is a prime example of one more pop-cultural reflection on the past of medieval feudal Japan imagined as the golden age of samurai valor. This cultural situation became a mental preparation for the legitimization and actualization of new images of the Middle Ages in Japanese popular culture because they became too comfortable for intellectuals who were brave and decisive enough to appeal to nationalist feelings.

The nationalist call of intellectuals for the rehabilitation of national past was pop-cultural in context and nationalist in nature, but it was not less effective than the same efforts of Japanese nationalism supporters in the political sphere. In the era of nationalism, according to Russian historian Viktor Shnirelman, “nations become the main subjects of history, the primordialist approach endows them with extremely stable cultural characteristics, nationalists identify nations with ethnic groups whose roots are lost in immemorial times” (Shnirelman, 2003, p. 18). In post-World War II Japan, nationalism became a victim of moderate political and ideological marginalization. At the same time, the nationalist discourse dissipated, migrating from the political sphere into heterogeneous cultural spaces. Therefore, actors of the mass cultural market reacted to the ever-growing demand for content labeled as specifically nationalistic. These consumer preferences made it possible to turn some areas of mass culture into a new space where nationalist discourse became the dominant force.

MASS CULTURAL NATIONALISM: PROTECTING AND DEFENDING JAPANESE MEDIEVALISM

The roots and origins of modern Japanese medievalism can be found not only within the influence of the Western fantasy tradition, but also within Japanese political discussions that played a role no less important and significant. These transformations of collective ideas about the past and identity were impossible without the unique cultural experience that Japan gained in its attempts to create, its own national and partially ethicized version of mass culture, inspiring the emergence and development of the “taiga drama” phenomenon – the annual year-long historical



drama television series that includes “Minamoto no Yoshitsune” (1966), “Haru no Sakamichi” (1971), “Shin Heike Monogatari” (1972), “Kunitori Monogatari” (1973), “Dokuganryū Masamune” (1987) and others that actualized and visualized medieval motifs. Samurai cinema (Galloway, 2005; 2009; Silver, 1977) also known as “chambara” became a form of visualization of the medievalist of myth and its integration into modern culture as well.

The market version of Japanese medievalism coexists with invented traditions that actualize collective social and cultural memories of the Middle Ages. The Shingen-ko Festival, Esahi Ubagami Grand Shrine Festival, Matsue Warrior Procession, Date Musha (Samurai) Festival, Shizuoka Festival, Battle of Sekigahara Festival, Nobunaga festival parade, Hagi Jidai Festival are among medieval invented traditions in modern Japan, which is forced to coexist with Korean attempts to visualize Japanese medievalism in the globalizing world. In addition to festivals, numerous Japanese castles (Ōno-jō, Hakuhō-jō, Kakegawa-jō, Hirosaki-jō, Kaminoyama-jō, Chikiri-jō, Gifu-jō, Hikone-jō, and Hamamatsu-jō etc.) still exist as the monumental embodiment of medievalism.

External influences ranging from Western to neighboring regional (Korean) ones played a part in stimulating such cultural Japanese practices. The American-Japanese television miniseries “Shōgun” (1980), based on the same title novel of James Clavell (1921 – 1994), was among the first external incentives with internal Japanese motivation, because the project’s Japanese participants were interested in its financial success. If Japanese medievalism idealizes the Japanese Middle Ages positively, then Korean medievalism, by contrast, causes a negative impression in Japan. “Myeonglyang” (“The Admiral: Roaring Currents” in the English version, “Batoru ōshan kaijō kessen” in Japanese) reproduces, imitates and simulates the medieval Japanese entourage no less carefully than that portrayed within the Japanese film industry itself.

Despite the fact that the filmmakers paid considerable attention to the reconstruction of Japanese medieval features, Japanese cinema theatres did not show the film. They considered it on the one hand to be an expression of anti-Japanese sentiments held by its Korean creators – who did not hire Japanese actors but instead entrusted these roles to Koreans – while on the other hand, they considered it to be potentially politically dangerous because it might inspire the rise of Japanese ethnic nationalism. The Japanese reception of “Game of Thrones” resulted from changes in historical consciousness in the early decades of the 21st century. If the two previous centuries entered the history as epochs when “historians as authors of the historical narrative” invented “traditions that contributed



to the emergence of collective identities of national communities” (Sahanovič, 2010, p. 89), then the first two decades of the 21st century became the period when professional historians lost this monopoly and yielded it to popular culture.

If in the preceding periods “history could be a political commodity only in a logo-centric society”, then in a postmodern society “history becomes practically unnecessary. There is simply no history in such a system” (Kazakevič & Akudovič, 2006). The substitution of history with pop-cultural historical simulations, stylizations and imitations became inevitable, meaning that the “Game of Thrones” can be considered to be one of the decisive and determining factors in the process of changing the localization of historical memory and identity. Despite modern pop culture’s influence, history in Japan – as well as in neighboring states – nonetheless became a victim of politically and ideologically motivated manipulations.

Whereas in developing communist China the “tendency toward a nationalist reading of historical events” (Borah & Lomanov, 2009, p. 65) becomes more significant, in economically developed Japan perception of the past in a nationalistic spirit is still taken to be reprehensible. In this situation pop culture offers revisionist models of understanding the past, while nationalist perception becomes an indispensable element of alternative cultural and intellectual discourses. Therefore, the triumph of mass culture has changed the status of history in society, contributing to its mutation into the knowledge of “historical concepts in a world without a future” (Koposov, 2013, p. 57) because pop-cultural discourse uses the potential of frontier actively, rendering the division of time into the categories of past, present and future as a superfluous and unnecessary luxury of the post-modern era.

INVENTION OF TRADITIONS AND WESTERN POP CULTURAL UNIVERSALIES AND THEIR JAPANISATION

The moderate Nipponification of “Game of Thrones”, as expressed on the covers of Japanese editions of George Martin's book (Silva, 2017) and attempts to assimilate the heroes of the project visually in the style of traditional Japanese painting (Jones, 2015; “TARTGOT - SJT”, 2019) preceded radical transplantation of Martin's plot into Japanese national contexts.

In addition, Western fantasy as a form of medievalism became “a powerful vehicle for the dissemination of ‘medieval’ tropes in popular culture” (Cuenca, 2020) and as a result influenced the same cultural trends in Japan, inspiring some adaptations of European plots and their stylization in the contexts of medieval Japan (Minjie, 2019). While most European



and American historians (D’Arcens & Lynch, 2014; Young, 2015a, 2015b) define medievalism as a Western phenomenon exclusively, Japanese medievalism by contrast seems to be a secondary cultural phenomenon – resulting from globalization with its external influences and transplantation of “tropes” (Heermann, 2013) or “commonplaces” of Western fantasy into Japanese cultural contexts. Yet, some authors (Savage, 2013) believe that it is not popular in Japan because local consumers don’t understand it – they simply don’t need it, because the fantasy niche that it occupies in the Western book market in Japan is under stable control of local writers.

Despite its secondary nature in form, Japanese medievalism is original in its ethnic content. Japanese participants of the historical reenactment movement are active in their collective attempts to dramatize events in medieval history, focusing on the collective needs of Japanese consumers who are interested in such ethnic forms of mass show. History museums (such as the Tokugawa Art Museum), on the one hand, and armor and weapon manufacturers, on the other hand, inspire Japanese participants of medievalist shows on both academic and practical levels. Participants in this symbolic market of identity and memory earn real and significant incomes, showing that they are no less nationalistic than politicians because they are forced to resist Chinese competitors in their attempts to sell cheap fakes of Japanese samurai armor and weapons.

Despite the fact that historical reenactments in Japan (Tiffany, 2018) are less developed than similar cultural movements in Europe and America, and the general number of enthusiasts and groups (“Kabuto bugu kenkyū hozon-kai” or “Arms Research and Preservation Society”, “Seiō chūsei-shi jissen kenkyūkai avu-aron” or “Western Europe Medieval History Practice Study Group Avalon”, “Nihon katchū kiba kenkyūkai” or “Japanese Armored Horse Study Group”, “Kōshū washiki bajutsu tankyūkai” or “Koshu Japanese Equestrian Quest”, “Nihon zairai ma rekishi kenkyūkai” or “Japanese Traditional Horse History Study Group”) of the Samurai medieval reenactment in Russia and Europe is more than in Japan itself, reconstructionists’ activities have become an invented cultural tradition and social ritual. The first attempts to establish political and cultural invented medievalist traditions can be dated between 1920s and 1930s (Narroway, 2008) and 1950s and 1960s, when enthusiasts started to use historical sources in their collective and individual attempts to reconstruct costumes and objects of the Samurai era. “Association for the Research and Preservation of Japanese Helmets and Armor” (“Nihon Katchu Bugu Kenkyu Hozon Kai”, or NKBKHK, established in 1961) arose from such organizations specializing in the promotion of medievalism and its popularization in society when pop culture began to determine the main



vectors and paths of cultural development in a more active and aggressive fashion. NKBKHK published “Quarterly Magazine (Katchu Bugu Kenkyu)”, as well as annual Yearbooks and books focused on promoting Japanese medievalism and samurai culture from armor (Absolon, 2017; I. Bottomley, 2018a, 2018b; Ian Bottomley & Hopson, 1993; Cummins & Minami, 2018; Ogawa, 2013) to swords (Roach, 2014; Sinclair, 2018; Yoshihara, Kapp, & Kapp, 2012).

Since the 1970s, historical reenactment has become a mass movement, oriented both to the market and the entertainment of spectators and participants, which made it possible to rent historical costumes and weapons. The 1990s and 2000s inspired new changes in practices of historical reenactment, reducing the cost of the process and expanding the range of used materials, which varies from almost authentic metal and silk to mass plastic and synthetics. Therefore, historical reenactment risks becoming amateur role-playing games.

WESTERN “GAME OF THRONES” AND JAPANESE NATIONALIZATIONS

A new project of the Japanese film industry launched in 2019 became an attempt to nationalize Western medievalism. “Age of Samurai: Battle for Japan” (Andelane, 2019; Paur, 2019), with action taking place in a land that visually depicts Japanese medieval feudal traditions, became the Japanese version of the “Game of Thrones” series – but demonstrates a key difference from the original Western project. If the literary basis of “Game of Thrones” is George Martin's novel, which belongs to the classic fantasy canon imitating the Western European Middle Ages, then “Age of Samurai: Battle for Japan” appeals to Japanese feudal realities and claims with more historicity than “Game of Thrones”.

Commenting on the Western classic “Game of Thrones”, Robin Zlotnick believed that the project was successful in Europe and America, but its authors ignored the interests and preferences of Japanese viewers who understood it as “fun ... but ... totally fake” (Zlotnick, 2019). Cultural discrepancies, on the one hand, and a significant degree of integration of Japanese pop culture into the world, on the other hand, made possible the transplantation of “Game of Thrones” into Japanese cultural and historical contexts. The “medievalist” and “fantastic” in modern Japanese identity and popular culture co-exist as interdependent categories and invented traditions. It is logical to consider that the synthesis of medievalism and science fiction, focused on idealization of the feudal past and speculations about possible trajectories of future development, contributes to institu-



tionalizing a model of national Ethnofuturism in Japan. While this definition may be used to describe the cultural activities of intellectuals of minority groups, the Japanese do not belong to minorities.

As a result, the Japanese model of ethnofuturism has significant features. Ethnofuturism in Japan became a form of cultural ethnic nationalism; it does not preach the idea of survival and salvation of a nation – instead, it manifests and expresses itself in desires to actualize the historical past, imagined and invented within ethnic coordinate systems. Ethnofuturism in Japan synthesizes the values of medieval visualized ethnicity co-existing with pop culture fantasy film, comic and series projects that transplant Japanese identity into heterogeneous imagined worlds of a probable future. If Japan's defeat in World War II discredited the medieval ideals of the samurai spirit and military morale, and if pop culture assimilated the Middle Ages successfully, then Ethnofuturism emerges as an attempt to rehabilitate them both – although Japanese Ethnofuturism as a whole prefers to voice itself through the universal pop-culture languages of films, series and comics.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, this paper argued that imagination and invention became two influential trends in the development of the humanities during the last decades of the 20th century. Historians involved in various fields of modern humanities analyzed texts as literary works and demonstrated how such texts are efforts toward a collective deconstruction of historical, cultural, national and other experiences. The crisis of traditional culture, replaced and supplanted by popular culture, actualizes collective reflections on modern society's problems, which are expressed in both medievalism and futurism as grand narratives of the consumer society and its invented traditions.

The development of world literature in the 20th century inspired the progress of certain genres that serve as examples of a frontier because of their transitional or borderline nature. Medievalism and science fiction – two different trends focused on the imagination and construction of feudal or futuristic worlds – actualized critical trends in the development of the identity in societies where mass culture became the dominant means of systematizing cultural experience. The relationships between imagined and real historical, religious, social, political and cultural experiences is the first problem that scholars of Japanese medievalism and futurism face, because they imagined them as two cultural trends that claim to be para-



digms in the development of modern society. Japanese fantasy is just one genre that occupies a frontier position in modern literature and popular culture.

An analysis of numerous imagined or still imaging “medieval” and “futuristic” worlds, states, political regimes, systems and orders, generated by the explosion of various imaginations in popular culture, actualizes the interdisciplinary connections between medieval history and futurology. Nevertheless, we found that the performative turn in historiography and the triumph of the imaginative paradigm desacralised historical realities, which became political, social and intellectual constructs. This mutation was not possible without authoritarian experiments of the 20th century, which subordinated science fiction to the political and ideological needs of the elites and in fact desacralised the future.

In conclusion, it would appear that the desacralisation of history stimulated and inspired the triumph of the new Japanese culture, which offered the reader the same mass and accessible medievalisms and futurisms, represented by numerous imagined and invented worlds with their unique sociopolitical institutions, although such uniqueness was merely a formality since all such institutions and relationships are genetically rooted in prototypes that exist in real Japanese medieval or modern histories, historical experience, and national memory. These cultural strategies predetermined the basic systemic characteristics and features of the invented worlds of medievalism and futurism as forms of mass culture. The worlds invented and imagined by the authors of novels belonging to the medievalist or futuristic paradigms are frontier; in this situation, their works actualize the achievements and potential of several relative genres.

Medievalism, as a form of existence of Japanese cultural memory, is among the politically and ideologically difficult genres, but it is relatively popular among modern writers and readers who consume works within this particular genre as well as other genres. The main conclusions that can be drawn: the desacralisation of history and the collapse of the monopoly of academic historiography restored the myth and the romantic aura of the Middle Ages; and futurological speculations discredited fantasy and future worlds, which inevitably became projections of political and ideological preferences. These changes in interdisciplinary humanities and historiography were impossible without a performative turn that inspired a new interdisciplinary paradigm for the development of anthropology, archaeology, history and cultural studies.



The performative turn provides intellectuals with the possibility to realize that an analysis of the formal roles and various cultural, social, political, and economic behavioral strategies inspired by prescribed statuses is of utmost importance. Awareness and understanding of the performative nature of history led mass literature, comics, and the film industry to become Japanese forms of performance. Books and films in genres of medievalism or science fiction in modern mass culture in Japan became incentives for the development of new group identities that are performative in nature and mimic medieval feudal realities or simulate trajectories of their development in the future. Medieval and future worlds in these intellectual situations became cultural roles and invented traditions.

It was impossible to predict the historical triumph of fantasy without medievalism, nor the progress of fiction without authoritarianism – because, without the development of academic medievalism and non-democratic regimes with their interest in technical modernization, texts that can be localized on imagined maps of “the greater medievalism” or “futuristic project” discourse would have vegetated in the margins of literature and remained in the shadow of the giants of naturalism, realism, and modernism. Fantasy and science fiction forced medieval studies and futurology to mutate and turn into medievalism and futurism as elements of the mass culture canon.

Fantasy revived the myth of the Middle Ages as a golden age and satisfied the readers' demand for works that could free them from capitalism and other modern realities. Futuristic versions of science fiction portrayed worlds that ranged from the utopian to the dystopian. The escapist psychology of the mass reader and the iron logic of the capitalist book business combined forces to stimulate the constant growth of works in these genres in algebraic progression. Medievalism turned out to be more market-oriented than academic medieval studies, which nonetheless were, in fact, responsible for its genesis. Fantastic futurism showed greater ability to adapt than an academic reflection on the future.

In conclusion, an analysis of Japanese texts and other forms, practices, tactics and strategies that form the discourse of serial medievalism as a memory of the Middle Ages; together with an analysis of science fiction as memories of a possible future provides great promise within the context of interdisciplinary synthesis. Such combined analyses can provide intellectuals with an opportunity to use historical, social and economic sciences to deepen an understanding of the non-existent worlds of the Japanese Middle Ages and the future as frontiers between real histori-



cal facts, processes and institutions and invented and imagined (im)possible trajectories of social, political and economic changes of multiple worlds that once arose in medieval and futuristic discourses.

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