Chapter 9

Pokémon 151: Complicating *Kawaii*

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Introduction

This is an essay about the experience of encountering Pokémon in the first couple of years after the release of the video games here in the UK. The dichotomous paradigms of 'cute' and 'cool' that shape the zeitgeist of Pokémon[i] motivate academics to discussion the culture and reception of the game. I argue that by looking closely at the art of Pokémon we can begin to understand the complex rhetoric of the design, that oscillates between the poles of Japanese 'cute' and American 'cool.'

Three summers ago, one of my colleagues hosted a barbeque for faculty, friends and family at his large house in the countryside. In a rare glimmer of Welsh sunshine, it was a treat to see everyone having that special kind of fun, pinned somewhere in between total relaxation and best behaviour. Caught half asleep in my chair, a little voice called out and asked 'do you like *Pokémon*?' A young man aged around 6 years old had been directed by a knowing parent to talk to me, the computer games design faculty member. Substantially older and much more self-conscious about announcing my interests, 'of course' I tentatively replied. Though this was something of an understatement; I had been following Pokémon avidly from its first arrival in the late nineties; I knew the game inside-out, and rarely had an opportunity to talk about it (I certainly wasn't part of the core demographic.) What followed was an interrogation, maybe even a trial. My Poké-team, play style, knowledge and progression each charted under oath. Every word was met with a lightning riposte, both critical and superlative. It turned out I was pretty good, but I didn't know my 'tanks' from my 'sweepers,' and I had been compromising a competitive team with too many cute-but-weak Pokémon. With a churlish smile I accepted his criticisms.[ii]

I was left with my thoughts as the conversation came to a close. To date I had worn my otaku-dom like a badge of honour, a relatively resolved doxa from which my knowledge of Pokémon could be played. Away from 6 year-old Jude's electric scrutiny, I began to realise that I had neither the time nor the consciousness to fully apprehend all that the Pokémon universe had become. Nor could I comprehend the current Pokémon game in the same way he had. Yet in what seemed like an instant, the particular style of the game had expedited our conversation to a deep level. We were two seasoned adventurers taking for granted talk of terrain, made buoyant by shared experiences. To players of *Pokémon*, this immediacy is natural; the game asks of us all the same thing—to commit a certain amount thought, to inhabit its universe in a certain way.

I want to consider some of the issues that permeate that garden conversation with my young friend, not because we achieved any great meaningful insight into the game, but precisely because such exchanges *aren't* unique. Some of what I suggest here is relevant to the broader church of Japanese games design, and perhaps to the medium at large. It has become clear that committed conversations are a core part of the culture surrounding, penetrating, and issuing from the game. There is a 'big conversation' happening around virtually all successful videogames, comprising forum chatter, various kinds of fan-based creativity, complimentary retailing, bar-room banter and playground chants (Newman, 2008). Pokémon is particularly characterised by a reflexive emphasis on communication (*tsūshin*) which is keenly promoted by spokespersons and designers at Game Freak.

This ubiquity has lead critics including Koichi Iwabuchi[iii] to question the 'Japanese-ness' of Pokémon. He argues that the ubiquity of character media like Pokémon relies on the removal of the cultural traces connected to its production source, Japan. In this 'odorless', culturally neutralised form, Pokémon is able to succeed commercially and internationally in a way that distinctively Japanese media cannot. This principle underpins the ambiguous nature of Japanese media power in the 21st century, wherein the culture evoked by the commodity carries only a tenuous connection to the source. Citing Hoskins and Mirus[iv], Iwabuchi writes that

> …in contrast to the American dominance of world film markets, Japan's success derives from its exporting of "culturally neutral" commodities whose country of origin has nothing to do with "the way [that they work] and the satisfaction [that a consumer] obtains from usage". Hoskins and Mirus contrast the ease of export of culturally neutral commodities with the much greater difficulty of exporting products that are culturally embedded.[v]

In a myriad of ways, we are collectively "playing *with* videogames"[vi]; but when the reciprocity between game and player is finely tuned to provide maximal capital growth, eliciting vast amounts of constituent labour from players (and even some non-players), we need to ask the question—what do games want from us? How does game form interpellate the playing subject? Iwabuchi's final remarks situate Pokémon as propagating a consumerist ideology: 'Even if the origins of cultural products become increasingly insignificant and difficult to trace, the "Japaneseness" of Pokémon still does matter with regard to Japan's collusive role in generating cultural asymmetry on a global scale'[vii]. Such a sober view contrasts with the prevailing optimism of suggestions that, through Pokémon and other 'soft' cultural commodities, Japan is enjoying a new international visibility and that the demand for such commodities in turn disseminates Japanese aesthetic and cultural values to an international audience[viii].

Iwabuchi notes that as Pokémon was being prepared by Nintendo of America[ix] for international distribution, requests for designs of Pokémon to be changed were put forward, but ultimately rejected by the Japanese producers[x]. NOAs reformat of Pokémon for Western audiences is well understood and documented[xi], yet the refusal to compromise on the original designs implies that this Americanization is not totalising, but rather negotiated, and that the visual style is significant insofar as the character design is protected. This essay takes seriously the point at which commodity and design concept collide, and looks to those character drawings in close detail to understand better what

they can tell us about Pokémon aside from popular assumptions and the archetypal discussion of fandom and fads.

In asking such a question this chapter posits design analysis as a compliment to the ethnographic focus seen in the majority of Pokémon studies, and in so doing hopes to illuminate a burgeoning blind spot in the current academic research on Japanese videogames more generally. I refer to the examination of their visual styles, rhythms, animations, forms, material contemporaries and technological antecedents—fears of exoticism and misinterpretation have stalled the formal scrutiny of Japanese videogames, including Pokémon.

This chapter takes a long hard look at Pokémon, one of the largest and most profitable media franchises in the world. We can encounter Pokémon in virtually all major media forms, including animation for television, film, theme-park, and a huge variety of merchandise. At the root of the Pokémon universe is a series of videogames, created for Nintendo's handheld devices, first the Gameboy and later the DS. Pokémon games have appeared on a variety of other hardware systems, and often take the characters from the franchise into new gameplay contexts, emphasising a different facet of the largely consistent and continuous Pokémon universe. I am focusing on the two complimentary versions of the first game, *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Blue*, released in between 1996 and 1999 across all major territories. These games feature the "primary generation", that is, the first 151 Pokémon (there are now over 400 at last count).

From humble origins in Japan, Pokémon is now a global phenomenon. It has elicited considerable scholarly interest in recent years, and those in the English-speaking world have committed to the interpretation of Pokémon *culture* and its impact on children. Another body of literature has has been produced by the anti-Pokémon movement, which is predominantly made up of religiously motivated figureheads and parenting groups who are concerned by the perceived occult dimensions to the game.[xii]. It's ironic that literature coming from the religious critics employs (albeit attenuated) close analysis as a strategy to undermine and criticise the game, when conventional scholarly analysis of these games

hesitates from speaking about them in such a piecemeal way. For example, in condemnation of the game content, John Paul Jackson writes that:

> As players pit their Pokémon against one another, they are encouraged to use rage, poison, fire, etc. Furthermore, they can attack by sending a curse of amnesia, confusion, paralysis or sleep. Even species classified as outside the psychic category can attack with psychic powers such as hypnosis, mind reading, teleporting, and inflicting headaches on others.[xiii]

It is important to make a counter move toward this close description, in order to fully penetrate through to the inner workings and deep play. In the past few years, activity in the research around Pokémon culminated in the publication of two books, *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, an anthology of essays edited by Joseph Tobin[xiv], and later Anne Allison's monograph *Millenial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*[xv]. Considered together, these two publications comprise a substantial contribution to the academic interpretation and analysis of *Pokémon*. The study of the political economy of Pokémon is exhaustive, and the authors rightly position the game in the context of East Asian modernity and globalisation, as part of the mass-media 'recentring' around Japan's 'soft power'[xvi]. Both volumes however shy away from any direct discussion of the artistic ambition or visual style of the game series. The tendency in academia is to understand Pokémon through its social effects, though at the same time hesitating from scrutinising what is issuing from the cartridge to the LCD screen.

The game's original designer Satoshi Tajiri is often quoted talking about his original ambitions for Pokémon, mainly emphasising what motivated him and how he negotiated with Nintendo over time. In fact, when he is mentioned it tends to be through recourse to his original statements about the game's concept. To give an example, one particular anecdote is crucial to how the method with which the majority of scholars interpret the aesthetic of Pokémon. Tajiri recalls the urbanisation of his childhood play-spaces, and the loss of those overgrown, muddy hideaways that children love to explore. In particular, the

process of redevelopment deprived children of the excitement of catching bugs in the wild corners of the town. This anecdote chimes with the sentiments of animation film director Hayao Miyazaki, who likewise sourced one meaning of his work in the accelerating loss of the countryside to burgeoning urban sprawl. Bracketed by recourse to these same anecdotes, Allison summarises that:

> Tajiri has said that he had two major motivations in designing *Pokémon*. One was to create a challenging but playable game that would pique children's imaginations. The other was to give kids a means of relieving the stresses of growing up in a postindustrial society. Born in 1962, Tajiri shares the opinion of many in his generation that life for children today is hard. In this academic-record society, the pressure to study, compete, and perform starts as early as birth… In Tajiri's mind, the rewards of millennial Japan have come with a loss to humanity.[xvii]

While these stories give us a motivation for the game concept, they don't take us very much further when trying to understand the imagery of Pokémon—its characters, environments, patterns and grammar. Furthermore, one could suggest that the paradigmatic focus on Tajiri's explanation creates a totalising myth — of how gameplay in Pokémon recuperates his lost childhood experience for contemporary children. Reference to the conceptual beginnings of Pokémon; what we might call the *narrative of its development and play*; displace the problem of talking about the representational grammar and ludic patterns of the game. In his essay on such modern myths Roland Barthes remarks that: 'The fact that we cannot manage to achieve more than an unstable grasp of reality doubtless gives the measure of our present alienation: we constantly drift between the object and its de-mystification, powerless to render its wholeness"[xviii]. Unwilling to challenge this quandary, it seems a cursory reference to Tajiri's intension is sufficient for many scholars to determine the goings-on of Pokémon. For a game to have such a massive impact on digital visual culture, it must be more than a triumph of collective nostalgia and contemporary marketing. This chapter points out the centrality of *style*[xix] in the Pokémon universe, and how it's visual grammar, more than the collective nostalgia of its concept, play a crucial role in its widespread dissemination.

A chapter-length study doesn't provide the kind of space needed to undertake a comprehensive study of the aesthetic of Pokémon, so this chapter focuses in on the work of artist Ken Sugimori, who provided the vibrant designs for the original one-hundred and fifty one Pokémon. The same artwork illustrates the infamous Pokémon cards, scourge of children's pocket money —a separate game which shadowed the sudden boom in the popularity of the videogames and *animé* around the turn of the millennium. Sugimori doesn't appear in the current scholarly literature on Pokémon; this oversight betrays the orientation of the field toward more cultural and contextual analyses of videogames, since the work of contributing artists is conceived critically as less important than a presiding vision of the gameplay, and of game culture. In current Game Studies, game art assets—including pre-visualisation material, animation, and sound design—are often relegated as secondary considerations, yielding to contemporary efforts to qualitatively define the elusive "aesthetic of gameplay", autonomous from its surrounding audiovisual elements.

This chapter follows closely my research into the form and context of Namco's *Katamari Damacy* (2004) and the sequel *We Love Katamari* (2005), and the strong continuity I argued for between Japanese videogames and contemporary art.[xx] Continuing that comparison, I will look closely at the ways in which Sugimori's illustrations play a major role in the collective unconscious of Pokémon. In this respect Sugimori is to Tajiri's Pokémon what Sir John Tenniel's illustrations are to Lewis Carroll's *Alice Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*.*Glass*, Quentin Blake to Roald Dahl. The text and image are interleaved together in the imagination; Tajiri's gameplay and Sugimori's art sit together in that moment of first exposure. at the end of the millenium.

Ken Sugimori, *Pulseman* and Visual Style

In his essay "An Introduction to Otaku Movement"Movement" (2004) Thomas Lamarre suggests that the consumptive practices of the *otaku* incorporate a specific method of viewing in which parts of the character design are perceived in preference to the whole,

because of the sub-cultural continuities they signify[xxi]. In these discrete parts—*neko* (cat) ears, angel wings, priestess robes, a sleek fringe—an epistemology of fan knowledge manifests to stabilize a given design within a long stylistic continuity to which otaku culture is deeply committed. Lamarre writes that:

> 'As they compulsively replayed videos of such favourite series as *Macross*, they [the otaku] began to perceive differences in animation styles within and between episodes. The result was a new attention to what might be considered flaws, inconsistencies or trivial details by other viewers.[xxii]

The mimetic stylistic tradition of *mangaka* and the close scrutiny of the otaku produce two complimentary sides to a singular dynamic—intertextuality of style produced at points of both production *and* consumption. He adds that:

> '…these apparently insignificant details become part of the viewing experience, making the experience of viewing akin to scanning for information, rather than reading a story… In effect the peripheral becomes central; or rather there is a breakdown in the visual ordering of central and peripheral that results in a non-hierarchical visual field of information' (159).[xxiii]

Lamarre's identification of a widespread sensitivity to style in the *otaku* reception of *manga*, *anime* and videogames is important, as it reinforces the need to examine closely the visual fields created in these media, and in so doing critically reflect on the considerations made by fans. Since we still live in the trailing zeitgeist of *Pokémania*, it's hard to objectively see the artistic impact it has had; how do we separate fad from legacy? Surely this anxiety explains the absence of any reference to Sugimori in the literature on Pokémon. One of Tajiri's close friends, Sugimori continues to work as an artist and design consultant for Game Freak, the second-party developer for Nintendo founded in 1989 by Satoshi Tajiri.

The story of how Pokémon's characteristic visual style developed begins in an earlier Game Freak project, *Pulseman* (1994) which featured on the SEGA Mega Drive[xxiv] console.[xxv] *Pulseman* was only released in Japan, though a surge of interest in Game Freak vis-à-vis *Pokémon* has created a new market for the resale of *Pulseman* cartridges on auction-websites like ebay. The relatively unknown Pulseman game features many elements in common with Capcom's flagship franchise and current mascot *Mega Man* (a.k.a. *Rokkuman*, Rock Man). The background story describes how an ingenious computer scientist named Doc Yoshiyama creates a powerful female artificial intelligence, 'C-Life', and like Pygmalion and Galatea, he falls deeply in love with her. In fact he falls so madly in love that he downloads his consciousness into the computer system, and in that virtual Eden they make love, producing *Pulseman*. He is a human machine hybrid, able to live in the 'everyday' world as a material being, with the power to channel and transform into powerful bolts of electricity (the letter S of his namesake is depicted as an jagged lightning bolt on the title screen.) After a period of time Doc Yoshiyama emerges from his own computer system; obviously corrupted by the experience he declares that he is now the evil Doc Waruyama, and establishes a terrorist cell named the 'Galaxy Gang' who spread a wave of cyber-crime across the globe. *Pulseman* must therefore fight his father-creator, and preserve the world.

At the time of its release, *Pulseman* was praised in the Japanese gaming press for a sophisticated graphic style that pushed the boundaries of the SEGA hardware. Satoshi Tajiri and Ken Sugimori also worked alongside Junichi Masuda, the musician who would later score the theme music to Pokémon. The game was unanimously praised in well-known magazines such as Famitsu for its excellent character design, animation, sound and gameplay, and frequently compared to the SEGA classics *Sonic the Hedgehog* (1991) and *Ristar* (1994). When critics say that *Pulseman* is one of the best-looking games produced on the Mega Drive system, what are they specifically referring to? The answer to such a question helps us to leverage the importance of Ken Sugimori to the legacy of Pokémon.

The style of *Pulseman* signifies a long genealogy of character designs that operate at the core of Japanese contemporary visual culture. Beginning proper in the 1960s with Osamu Tezuka's *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu,* 1952) and Shotaro Ishinomori's *Cyborg 009* (*Saibōgu Zero-Zero-Nain,* 1964) manga, these characters feature in science fiction narratives as heroes fighting against faceless, sometimes occult, sometimes corporate forces. In their design what is most immediately apparent is the consistency of both the silhouette and the palette; red, black and yellow appear repeatedly across this range of characters. Earlier still Osamu Tezuka's social commentary manga *Ma-Chan* (1946) featured the same color scheme, penned in the period immediately after the Second World War. Tezuka's early interest in Disney animation practice suggest that the palette most probably has its origins in the early "living color" Mickey Mouse designs of the 1930s, whose iconic image had become a mainstay in the modern world. Philip Brophy writes that: "While Disney's work had by the 1950s grown progressively more idyllic, Tezuka's work grew equally more somber and reflective"[xxvi]. Echoing these Disney antecedents, *Pulseman* shows off a pair of large cartoony white gloves in the attract sequence of the game, which betray Sugimori's awareness of the tropes distilled in the tradition of the robot boy.

While there is no explicit connection between such characters and their narrative universes, the intertextuality of form signals the concern for tradition and expressions of respect held between designers from 1960 to the present. Beginning with *Cyborg 009*, we see how the lead-character Joe Shimamura (a.k.a. 'Cyborg 009') has the trademark 'cows-lick' fringe, which often occludes one of his eyes. The motif of sleek black hair and a windswept fringe appears in the recurrent character of "Rock" (*Rokuro Makube*) in the *manga* and *anime* works of Osamu Tezuka. As a kind of short-hand developed over time through its repeated use, the fringe signifies a delinquent character, of complex moral and ethical standing, and even more complex allegiance. Unlike the youthful 'Kenichi' archetype used by Tezuka, whose face is always shown clearly, with optimism and transparent emotion, Rock is a complex, shadowy character—perhaps Tezuka's most complex archetype. While he is perpetually depicted in the body of a young man, as "Detective Boy Rock Holmes" in the eponymous manga, or as "Mamoru Hoshino" in

Captain Ken (1950), his personality and themes have matured over the years, most notably becoming a sadistic and cynical terrorist in the film version of *Metropolis* (Rintaro, 2001) where Rock features as the adopted son of 'Duke Red' (himself another Tezuka archetype).

Silhouette

Pulseman doesn't have hair, recalling the super-*sentai*-styling of warriors like *Kamen Rider* and the *Power Rangers*; his helmet covers the majority of his head and face. The brow of the helmet cuts down at a sharp angle between the eyes, creating a pointed nose, and then curves up and back to create an elegant shark-fin, finally curving back round the head to a ducks-tail flick at the back. This elaborate construction is doubly coded, first for its sci- fi excess, but second, when considered *in silhouette* Ken Sugimori's design bears a strong similarity with that of heroes *Astro Boy* and *Cyborg 009*. In shadowy repose, the difference between successive generations of characters is minimized. The recurring form of the silhouette, like a plot of land inherited by many individuals, is cultivated in texture and color to create a sense of the contemporary, while staying the same in perimeter and shape. The shadow form of the character is the "permanent trait"[xxvii], which the colour therein forms the impermanent, changing aspect. In an interview with *Computer and Video Games* writer Stuart Bishop, Sugimori writes of the development process that "First we select an insect and after that we add essential elements to the insects to make it more like *Pokémon*, such as adding some hard shape to it, to be more like steel"[xxviii]. The history and precedent of existing designs weigh in on that choice of shape, making subsequent *Pokémon* stylistically continuous with their brothers and sisters. This is subtly expressed in silhouette. The shadow of a character actually became an ad-break featurette in the animated TV show, where audiences were asked to identified silhouetted Pokémon before the interval, and were given the answer afterwards.

Shadows play an important part in the appreciation of Japanese character design, and reflection on their value recalls the well-known essay by Junichirō Tanizaki, *In Praise of*

Shadows (*In'ei Raisan*), first published in 1933. In that same essay, he talks about the beauty of tarnished, worn objects, which hold a special appeal to the Japanese. He writes:

> Of course this 'sheen of antiquity' of which we hear so much is in fact the glow of grime. In both Chinese and Japanese the words denoting this glow describe a polish that comes of being touched over and over again, a sheen produced by the oils that naturally permeate an object over long years of handling – which is to say grime. If indeed 'elegance is frigid', it can as well be described as filthy. …we do love things that bear the marks of grime, soot, and weather, and we love the colors and the sheen that call to mind the past that made them. Living in these old houses is in some mysterious way a source of peace and repose.[xxix]

To see the texture of an object that has been handled signifies powerfully the relationship between the object and its attendant owner. That appealing patina lurks in the finish of Sugimori's concept drawings for *Pulseman*, and in the primary generation of *Pokémon*. Specifically, the designs consist of a black inked outline into which color is added with either watercolor or an acrylic ink wash. Sugimori is careful to allow for variance in the tone with areas of white in the primary generation drawings depicting subtle highlights. While the color is finely textured his approach means that it is not overly rich, and creates a patina that is very attractive to the eye. Existing only as illustration for the game and *Pokémon* cards, Sugimori's process is not compromised, but maintained through to publication. In this respect Sugimori's original design and concept drawings are at odds with the animated and merchandise-based manifestations of *Pokémon*, which rely on their shiny, bright surface to signify newness and compete for consumer attention. Regarding his process, Sugimori says:

> First I put white paper in front of me and draw a picture, and then I put film paper on top of it. Then I try to copy the pictures underneath, and try to make it more professional. And I do this over and over to practice [sic], then try to make it satisfactory. I also try to adjust the picture by taking the size of eyes and stuff, and try to make the picture more perfect by doing it over and over.[xxx]

This qualitative difference between Sugimori's work and that of his assistants has lead some fans to bemoan how Sugimori has been 'sidelined' in recent years in favor of newer artists whose work more closely resembles the animated and merchandised *Pokémon*.[xxxi] This kind of commentary recalls Lamarre's suggestions about *otaku* appreciation, where heavily invested fans scrutinize and compare contributions to the corpus of material making up the *Pokémon* universe at any one time. Sugimori's character designs for the 151 *Pokémon* deliberately use this complex texture and use of tone to describe form, and in so doing eschew the "Superflat" aesthetic of glossy magazine forms.

One important juncture exists between the humor and idiosyncratic emotion of the character designs and the artistic process. Sugimori comments that: "Many of the *Pokémon* characters first became loved because they were funny, that's why many people have supported it. And I'm sure that younger people will still support the *Pokémon* because it's funny"[xxxii]. While Sugimori's designs are accepted as some of the finest character design in games art to date, there are a number of peculiar ones which lead Kat Bailey to recently compile a list of the "Top 5 Lamest *Pokémon*"[xxxiii]. At the top of the lame list is one of the primary generation, 'Mr. Mime'—*Pokémon* number 122. Bailey writes that, "Mr. Mime makes you shake your head and question what reality we actually inhabit. Surely proto-human-clown-mime *Pokémon* don't arise in any ordinary universe"[xxxiv]. Nintendo's official website describes Mr. Mime as "…a pantomime expert that can create invisible but solid walls using miming gestures" (www.pokemon.com).

Heta-Uma

Designs by Sugimori such as Mr Mime evoke a complex reaction, for what they are and how they are depicted. We can see the skill in their construction, after overcoming the immediate weirdness of their design. This response recalls King Terry's[xxxv] '*heta-uma*' movement. Frederick L Schodt writes that:

> Terry's influence vastly exceeded his actually output as a cartoonist, for he appeared in Japan when formalism and realism were under attack, not only in comics, but society at large (deliberately amateurish comedy and music shows, for example, were wildly popular on television). Terry became the guru of a revolutionary art movement known in Japan as *heta-uma*, or "bad-good," which invigorated the comics world and subverted that of traditional illustration[xxxvi].

Heta-uma aesthetics are premised on Terry's observation that,

> '…that everyone starts as a "bad" artist and tries to become good. But simply becoming "good" is not enough. Artists who try too hard to become "good" begin to emphasize technique over soul, and then the life goes out of their drawings; their spirit fails to keep up with their technique.[xxxvii]

In the culture of *Pokémon*, the iconicity of Sugimori's designs for *Pokémon* such as Pikachu, Bulbasaur and Charmander elevate them to a point beyond criticism. In characters like Mr. Mime and Jynx, I suggest that Sugimori draws upon the surreal humour of *heta-uma*, in concert with his illustration technique, to create designs which oscillate between the poles of good and bad, and which under closer inspection reveal a complex genius at work. The knowing creation of such 'diversity' plays into the core theme of *Pokémon*, 'communication' (*tsūshin*), in that is invites the 'big conversation' between players to scrutinise and work through new *Pokémon* as they are released as part of successive games.

Beyond the still image, gesture and animation play an integral role in *Pokémon* and its antecedent *Pulseman*. Reviews of *Pulseman* collectively say that the game feels 'fast, but very solid, and responsive.' When you look at how the game is put together, and pay particular attention to the character and environment on-screen, certain qualities are apparent. There is a conscientious use of 'keys'. Animator Richard Williams rhetorically asks:

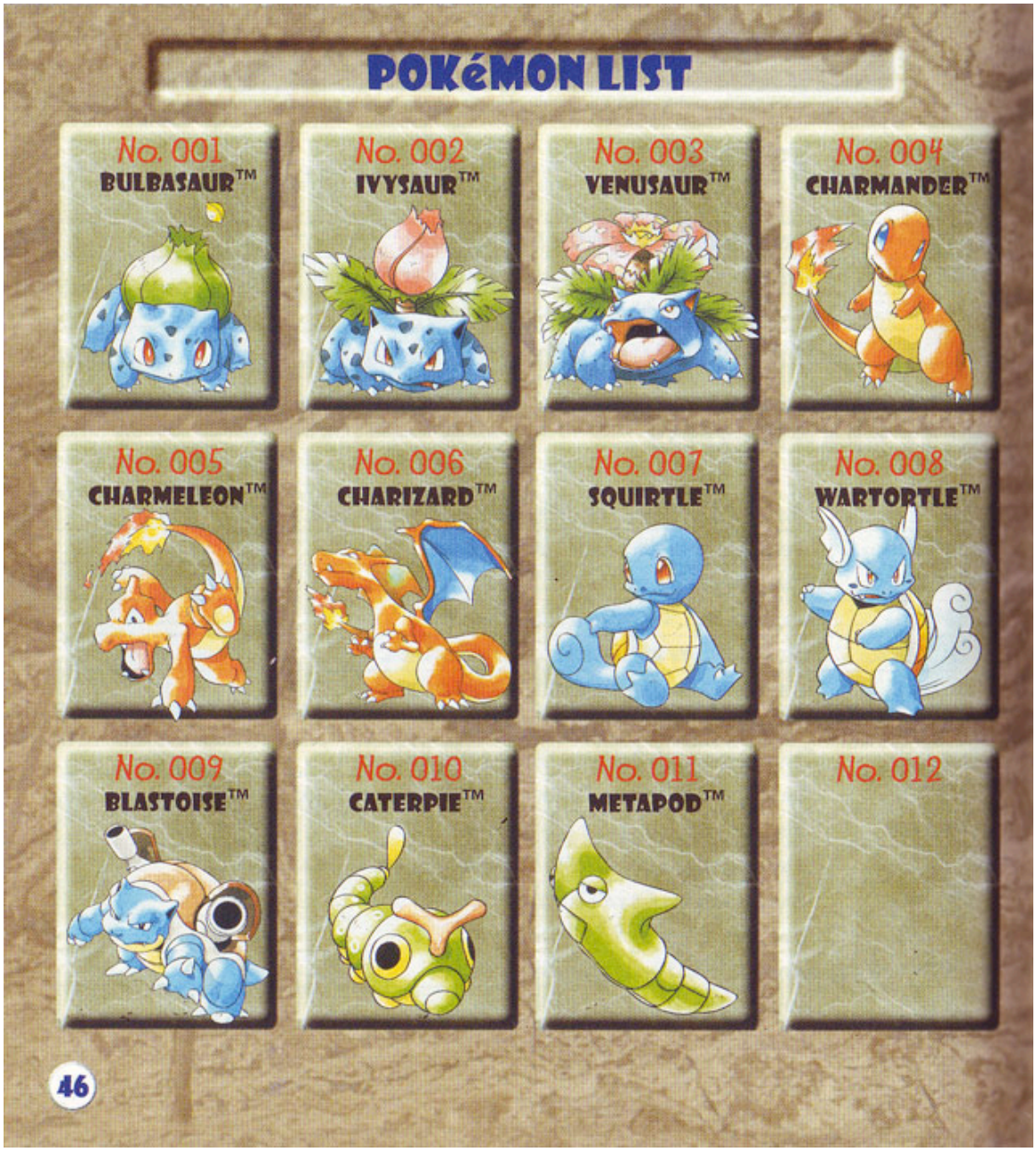
> Question: what is a key?

> Answer: the storytelling drawing. The drawing or drawings that show what is happening in the shot.[xxxviii]

As *Pulseman* falls through the air, we are given a pose that conveys something of his personality, his motivation, maybe even his agenda. When we see him gesture just before the title screen explodes, we are given another little snippet. Sugimori's use keys enables him to encapsulate story information in the design of the character, and in so doing transcend with the design the conundrum of how best to convey a narrative in videogame design[xxxix].

Toy, Repose, Counter-pose

Accompanying silhouette and *heta-uma*, the 'key' is crucial to appreciating the richness of Sugimori's 151 initial *Pokémon* designs. As both concept artist and animator, Sugimori has a complex appreciation for the key drawing, and all of the designs are keys, in that they contain the basic orthographic information about the character (the rudiments of its appearance) while at the same time giving an impression of their personality and demeanour. When you look across all 151 designs there are three emergent categories of pose, which subtly determine the story and how it is evoked. These categories are useful in that they help us gauge the changing meaning of *Pokémon* as they evolve.



[Figure 1] Photograph taken from Pokémon Blue (1999) Game Manual, Pal Release. © 1995, 1996, 1998 Nintendo/Creatures Inc./GAME FREAK, Inc.

I refer to the first stage as the 'toy' stage, and you might compare it to a cuddly toy, or a toy dog. The vast majority of *Pokémon* that have three stages of evolution see their first stage in this pose. The 'toy' emphasises irresistible cuteness, and the status of the *Pokémon*-as-object. The ratio of head to body is usually equal, and the short arms or legs are outstretched as if stuffed. In this stage the pupils of the *Pokémon* eyes are often

widely dilated to maximise cuteness, and its gaze is ubiquitous. It strongly connotes a 'to-be-looked-at-ness', and also a 'to-be-held-ness' emphasised by the lack of orientation in the movement of the design. It sits as an object, subject to our merciful attentions. It recalls the Willendorf Venus, an ancient fetish sculpture, optimised to fit into an owner's hand; in its vulnerability and lack of orientation (for instance as conveyed by crossed-eyes) it strongly connotes an unseen owner. In the bipedal upright *Pokémon* arms are often outstretched as if in the gesture of inviting and accepting a hug. Teetering forward, the arms also evoke the image of a baby taking its first steps. The original three, Bulbasaur, Charmander and Squirtle, are what I would categorise as classic 'toy' *Pokémon*.

The second category of *Pokémon* designs are those in 'repose'. In this second category, which usually refers to *Pokémon* which are in their second stage of evolution, but which can also include 'younger' and 'older' *Pokémon*, the character has grown larger and so the limbs are subtly posed. Yet, as in the bodies of adolescents, these characters contain either a frigid elegance or an awkwardness. In aesthetic terms, they are reminiscent of the 'odalisque' archetype in Orientalist art, the languid house-servants who return our gaze over a naked shoulder. The eyes of 'repose' *Pokémon* are smaller and more focused and often address us directly, though their bodily gestures betray the vestiges of immaturity or quirkiness. The recurrent visual elements of the *Pokémon* in repose recall the ambiguity evoked by the fringe of Tezuka's Rock archetype.

In Sugimori's design for the plant-*Pokémon* Oddish, we see the perfect expression of a 'toy' *Pokémon*, connoting pure cuteness, minimal and spherical, with a head of bright green leaves. Eventually Oddish evolves into the larger Vileplume, and the design shifts from toy to repose. Vileplume carries a large peculiar bloom on the top of its head, like a teetering sombrero. From under its tilted 'hat' the *Pokémon* looks directly at us, its red eye shining out from the shade. Its gesture remains open as in Oddish, as does the smile, but the tilting gesture of the plume suggests an added quality of ambiguity, a complex rhetoric evoked by the plant life Sugimori references. In the second state of the 'big three', now Ivysaur, Charmeleon and Wartortle, there is an interiority and seriousness to

their expression. In a Japanese art historical context, these designs evoke the ancient statues in Tōdai-ji Temple, of "Kōmoku-ten,'Kōmoku-ten, the guardian of the west of the four guardian kings, symbolizes the *un* of A-*un*. His expression is that of the spirit of power in reserve"[xl].

'Counter-pose' is the final category of *Pokémon* I have observed, and is largely limited to the final evolutionary stage of the character, or to legendary *Pokémon*. I take the term 'counter-pose' from the Italian contrapposto, meaning 'counterpoise'. As in the classic example, the counter-pose describes how the pose of the character simultaneously conveys a sense of relaxation and dynamism, and in so doing seats power firmly within the creature. In the final forms of the big three, Venusaur, Charizard and Blastoise, each stands in counter-pose, subtly orientating their weight onto one leg to suggest at potential movement, while looking through, or away from, the viewer. The eyes are the most resolved and human-like, and challenge the authority of the *Pokémon* trainer, alluding to the fact that at the end of the evolutionary chain emerges the proposition of *Pokémon* as autonomous from their trainer.

In this relatively simple introductory account, one can see how the initial designs created by Sugimori play a role in generating the big conversational zeitgeist among children and avid players around the world. The artistic direction of the character design creates a conceptual space in which opposing poles and qualitative differences can co-exist, where conventional binaries are triangulated by multiple possible associations (*jan-ken-pon*). As overlapping registers of complexity, the lines of logic that run through the primary generation of *Pokémon* interface with value considerations associated with directly with Sugimori's artistic technique. The key pose, texture and *heta-uma* patina that runs through the collection dynamically complicates their emotional and nostalgic register. Sugimori's original designs transcend the fad fashion cycle in that they suggest an intense worldly logic on their own terms (as style evoking consistency, begetting plausibility), and this in turn naturalises the integration of the game into everyday regimes of work and play. Pikachu is the only *Pokémon* able to transcend these categories, since it is only he (in the course of the *anime* at least) who doesn't succumb to the commodifying force of

Poké-ball capture. Anne Allison writes that he is "…the only *Pokémon* to remain outside a ball in the story—and therefore the currency of equivalence into which all the other monsters are convertible—Pikachu never gets "pocketed." Always more monster than thing it is forever visible and cute…"[xli]. Most importantly, cuteness (*kawaisa*) does not explain in a complete way the visual coding of Pokémon, but is something set into a context by evolution in the game, and the comparison of Pokémon along lines afforded by the Pokédex archive. Cuteness figures centrally in the ideological explanation of Pokémon, but like the myth of the designer's concept, *kawaii* has overshadowed the deep play at work in the game, and the changing charisma of the Pocket Monsters.

> …the only *Pokémon* to remain outside a ball in the story—and therefore the currency of equivalence into which all the other monsters are convertible—Pikachu never gets "pocketed." Always more monster than thing it is forever visible and cute…[xlii]

The Pokédex: Art, Evolution and Seriality

In *Pokémon*, as you cumulatively 'catch 'em all', your captive creatures are registered in a digital diary of sorts, the *Poké-dex*. Your mentor Professor Oak charges you with the task of travelling the world hunting for new species of *Pokémon*. This device contains a great deal of statistical and novel information about your *Pokémon*, and over the course of the series, the amount of information and its presentation has become more abstract. Allison has makes several critical insights into the Poké-dex and Poké-balls, the device with which *Pokémon* are captured. Comparing Disney illusionism to *Pokémon's* reflexivity, she writes that:

> *Pokémon's* artifice, by contrast, is fully exposed. Tajiri Satoshi, the main designer of the game, for example, speaks of how he aimed to create an "interesting new game" that mixed genres: portraying battles (as in action games) but with the "lines" of information and stories favored in role-playing games. The result is that *Pokémon* are represented on screen both figuratively (bodies with flying sparks,

> attacking vines, venomous poison) and computationally (by an analytic grid that measures the powers, strengths, and attack strategies of each party). This gives pocket monsters a double epistemology, known to players through sight (their material appearance out of the Poké-ball) and through data, or their statistical profile.[xliii]

Allison goes on to deftly examine the millennial capitalism at work in *Pokémon* as commodities, partially gifted, and then partially exchanged, in the course of play. However, let's hesitate on her observation that *Pokémon*, once they are codified by the Pokédex, become explicitly double coded, signified through abstract numeric data and through audiovisual representation. *Pokémon* are either over-determined or absent altogether. Like Schrödinger's cat in a box, when *Pokémon* are in their balls, are they there—alive or dead? The simple spheres, as seen on their HUD of the game screen, express an essential truth about all *Pokémon* in the game, and about the game more generally—it's absent, cold, mass-reproduced, infinite seriality. If we know anything from the analysis of Sugimori's artwork, it's that nothing is ever that simple—the distancing effects of serialisation must be in some internal tension with some aspect of the game form. I will return to this suggestion briefly.

Recently I argued for an appreciation of the serialised aesthetic in accordance with Marc Steinberg's notion of 'New Seriality' (2003) present in the works of artist Takashi Murakami[xliv]. I compared Murakami's oeuvre to *In We Love Katamari*, the game that essay discussed at length, where seriality took the form of long winding series of virtual commodities which you had to recover to form large constellations. By rolling the 'katamari', a giant ball of things, you quickly were picking up others, and in the process the katamari grows. I suggested this rapid process of caricatured consumption could in turn be read as an allegory of the *otaku* predicament in millennial Japanese (and perhaps global) culture. In *Pokémon*, the experience of seriality is much less immediate and not part of any explicit commentary by the games designer, as was in the case of Keita Takahashi at Namco.

The full measure of seriality in Pokémon comes as a consequence of a long period of play, where you have explored a substantial amount of the game, and laboured to gain a particular, rare Pokémon, of which there are many. In the course of attempting to capture a Pokémon with a particular demeanour, you will invariably catch several. While there are subtle nuances to the *Pokémon* in their statistical depiction, their representation remains the same for each of the apparent clones. For example, four grumpy Raticates tremble nervously in your options menu as you circle tirelessly trying to find the elusive Abra you want so much. In your storage facility back at the local Poké-centre, countless more sit in spherical stasis, alongside itinerant rows of Pidgies, Magikarp and Caterpies. This seriality is the symptom of long term play in Pokémon, an aggregate of failed and successful hunts, in which the player must discern which lucky pocket monster (from this relativizing hub) gets to receive the dedication of play that will ultimately personalise and make it.

The two epistemologies that Allison therefore identifies work simultaneously, but then, after a point, the function one after the other. Long term play (over a period of many tens of hours) produces the kind of independent otaku vision noted by Lamarre that covets the statistical over the representational, since it orientated more toward the game than the story, and as such makes clear the structures of power and competition. The distillation of value, from images to abstractions, is natural to all long term play of games, and it is in these diminished play experiences that games reveal some of their more complex, nuanced (and unanticipated) meanings[xlv]. In this respect, *Pokémon* are transformed into everyday objects, ready to be arranged as a form of strategy or tactic with which we can play. The Pokédex, a mosaic of collected *Pokémon*, is perhaps the definitive mechanic at work in the modern Japanese videogame. As you explore the island worlds of the various games of the franchise, you are able to observe, catch (and in some games photograph) the *Pokémon* inhabitants. They are collected and schematized into a systemic representation that reflexively highlights the comparative and iterative processes through which both they were designed by the production team and acquired by the player[xlvi].

Pokémon are serialized into the logic of the Pokédex, which transforms the longstanding

game conventions of serialization, which had previously been seen as limitations, into the fundamental mechanism of the game. As Jean Baudrillard suggests, the serialization of form is synonymous with the mechanization of production.[xlvii]. To look at serialized objects is to understand the mutual intelligibility between the agendas of production and consumption. The industrialization of post war Japan can uniquely understood through the proliferation of consumer culture and pop cultural forms from the late 1960s onwards. Large cultural shifts are metonymically expressed in the form and content animated television series, soaps, toys, comic books and so on.[xlviii]

Though Murakami's concept of SuperFlat is a discourse more than a coherent theory, it can help in explaining the presence and persistence of some of the tropes of gameworld production and consumption—in particular the repetition of assets with little or no variation, a 'mass-ornamental' aesthetic[xlix] synonymous with the release of *Space Invaders* (1978). For example, consider the sequence of identical aliens attacking in waves; subtle differences in pixel placement mark the identity of the different rows of invaders. The impact of mass production, media convergence and consumerism define the serial aesthetic. Mark Wolf has highlighted the contiguity of this early game aesthetic with the rise of abstraction in North American Abstraction of the 1960s, also implying that it is an accidental, technologically driven appearance:

> Although their simplicity was due to technological limitation and not the result of deliberate artistic choices, the minimal, often abstract graphics of early video games fit in rather well with trends in the art world during the 1960s … Early video game graphics, with their points, lines, and blocks of color, often on a black background coincided with minimalist, abstract styles of art.[l]

The concept of abstraction does not sufficiently account for the way in which the trope of repeated, serialized form functions in gameplay. Sugimori has described how simplistic graphic elements impact on gameplay. The question of realism and simplicity he describes recalls King Terry's *heta-uma* paradox, of knowing when something sits at the prime point between contradictory poles:

> The basic graphics may simultaneously limit and enhance gameplay, for example if a map is very realistic, it might become more complicated, and then it would be hard for players to understand where to go next. However, an unrealistic map may not work as a good guide, so some of the realistic graphics may cause some limitations to the games. That's why we have kept these graphics more simple this time, and also in the battle scenes, if we had made the back of the battle scenes more realistic, it might point out where the battle was and so when you draw, you have to be more precise. That's why we didn't make it complicated.[li]

In his analysis of Murakami's *DOB series*, Marc Steinberg suggests that the expressive potential of the work does not sit within particular elements, but rather in the relationship between works in a series, each bearing minor variations, and dominant consistencies, "…in subsuming the transformations between objects into a single plane of experience – the picture plane — become sites where the logic of relation, as an ontologically consistent yet invisible in-between, attains expression"[lii]. The evolved sequences and variations of Pokémon echo this sentiment, in that they show subtle continuities of form, which also simultaneously changing to take those forms in new directions. Precisely because of the subtle and seemingly irrational changes in *Pokémon*, it can be conceived in terms of Steinberg's 'new seriality'. He suggests that:

> …we think of seriality itself not so much as a typology of objects as a typology of the relations between objects. It is not the objects themselves that have changed in our era as much as it is the relations between them that have changed (it is these changes that in turn allow for the possibility of new products, and new trends; the change in seriality precedes the change in series).[liii]

The serial aesthetic is the *aesthetic of convergence*, a reading of the space between things and the hum of interest they generate collectively. They are unified by conceit or style, not necessarily ontology (see for instance the shift from apple computers to 'i' branding). In a history of videogames form, the serial aesthetic is *de rigeur*, immanent to the

processes of the medium. Assets (created items, textures, characters, sounds – all elements of the diegesis) are serialized from the outset (see *Space Invaders*) due to hardware limitations, replicating graphical information meant smaller memory usage and thus greater efficiency of form. Memory and storage capacity in games have grown exponentially, and while hardware limitations are always there, serialization has become so central to game form that it is maintained and endorsed as a component of the medium's aesthetic heart. Moving through a gameworld often amounts to a percussive disclosure of serialized forms, and this is one of several pleasures situated in the space between play and repetition. The game design process is inculcated with the role serialization plays in the structuring of gameplay, since it structures difference into the experience. It demarcates like for like, constructing an immediate signifier for social groups, bring cohesion to created assets. Subtle differences *within* the series then add complexity and depth. For instance, from early games design till present, color cycling has been used to stage differences within the gameplay.

In Pokémon, this simple color cycling is used to pick of incredibly rare 'shiny' Pokémon, which are collectively defined by their striking difference in from the norms of colour. Iterative changes and subtle variations in one aspect of the aesthetic become a cue for a complex set of assumptions regarding changes in time, place and difficulty. *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* came onto the original Gameboy at a time when the home console market had grown in processing power exponentially. The tiny 8-bit processor of the Gameboy was a technological step backwards, and yet, because Pokémon negotiated new serialized relations between the game object and others, including cards, merchandise TV cereals and film, it achieved considerable success. Steinberg writes:

> If the emergence of series is inseparable from the industrial era, it should come as no surprise that the form this seriality takes has changed with our postindustrial or information-capitalist times. Where for Baudrillard the relation between objects – along with the variation in colour or shape which differentiated them – played out within one object type (a toaster), in other words *within* the series. What is important now is rather the connections *between* series. It is the creation of relations

> between vacuum cleaner series and the car series, the pencil series and the toaster series that defines the shift in relations under information-capitalism. In short, it is the age of branding and convergence.[liv]

The serial aesthetic is synonymous with the onset of modernity; it is the industrialisation of aesthetics. For Barthes, the onset of industrialisation was evidenced in the decline of the eighteenth century Dandy, the narcissistic figure preoccupied by detail and decoration through ritual embellishment of 'authentic' original clothing. Detail would later provide the bourgeoisie with a means to subtly customise clothing and express distinction without disrupting the democratic ethos of industrialised aesthetics. The Dandy, connoisseurs of detail, could not recuperate the aura when clothing was no longer characterised by its uniqueness, and therefore not fit for the higher purpose of pageantry, "…all forms of behavior which bear witness to the profoundly creative, and no longer simply selective, idea that the *effects* of a form have to be thought through, that clothing is not simply an object to be used but is a prepared *object*"[lv]. Sugimori's designs, like the figure of the Dandy, signify most intensely precisely because of their contradistinction from the perfect commodity of the Poké-ball. Avid collection of the rare 'shiny' Pokémon enables players to give character to their assemblage/team of Pocket Monsters, to occupy a highly desirable minority amongst the player base.

Conclusion: Pokémon number 151

The serialisation of Pokémon is seen by many scholars as thorough and resolved, and certainly, in many of its tropes (such as the Poké-ball), *Pokémon* are perfectly shifting between streamlined commodity and cute fetish. I want to return to an earlier question about possible contradictions that exist in the serial commodification of *Pokémon*. Earlier I identified three categories in Sugimori's designs, the toy, the repose, and the counter-pose. I suggested that in the Pokémon defined as 'counter-pose', the story contained in Sugimori's key drawing evokes a complex agency.

The final Pokédex entry in Sugimori's primary generation is the aggressive MewTwo, Pokémon number 151. MewTwo was the hardest original *Pokémon* to catch, and required huge effort to bring him under your control. Once you had him, his psychic power would devastate any in the competition, but this was so totalising that in play against friends a separate rule would arise whereby it would be agreed that MewTwo wouldn't be used. The same goes for many of the Legendary Pokémon, including the three legendary birds, Moltres, Zapdos and Articuno. In the design of these 'counter-pose' Pokémon, Sugimori often evokes the monster design of the Japanese *tokusatsu* (special effects) film and television series, especially those since the 1950s, including Godzilla. He gives those monstrous yet familiar silhouettes from the past renewed agency in the form of eyes and expressions which cut through the viewer. Counter-pose Pokémon like MewTwo take a long time to find capture and care for. Third stage evolved Pokémon like Blastoise take a great deal of time to grow from humble beginnings. In these final forms, the serial commodification of Pokémon is problematized by the personal narrative of play, which amongst players is taken for granted.

The first category of Pokémon I identified, those of the 'toy' style, lend themselves to easy and immediate commodification. Their combat weakness makes them an easy capture in the game, and their appearance strongly connotes the inevitability of acquisition. The vast majority of them occur in the earliest stages of the game, and this fact perhaps tells us the most about why many scholars have assumed that the commodity metaphor of Pokémon is so totalizing. It takes time to get to the end of the game, a great deal of time. In these final phases of gameplay, the full implications of design and evolution are revealed, in parallel to the dénouement of the narrative. To fully appreciate the implications of the work of key artists like Sugimori in franchises like Pokémon, scholars must commit to playing games to their conclusion and beyond. The textuality of a game is individuated by play. A commitment to engaging with the ancillary artistic materials previsualizing and surrounding games is important, but also to the deeper structures of the games themselves need greater attention, since they provide a rich seam for new critical enquiry.

This paper was originally presented at the *IE2007 conference* in Melbourne, Australia. I am grateful for the comments and suggestions of Barry, Atkins, Dean Chan, Larissa Hjorth, Robin Hunicke, and Christian McCrea during the development of this chapter.

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[i] Koichi Iwabuchi, "How "Japanese" is Pokémon." In In *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, edited by Joseph Tobin (London: Duke University Press, 2004), 70-74.

[ii] I have argued elsewhere that 'One could even say that through the lens of play, the novice gamer and expert gamer are experiencing different media texts, individuated by their implicit competency… Competency of play is yoked to the textual richness of the gameworld'. David Surman, "Pleasure, Spectacle and Reward in Capcom's *Street Fighter* Series." In *Videogame, Player, Text*, edited by Barry Atkins and Tanya Krzywinkska (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 204-21.

[iii] Koichi Iwabuchi, "How "Japanese" is Pokémon."

[iv] Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus, "Reasons for the U.S. Dominance of the international trade in television programs," *Media, Culture and Society* 10: 499-515.

[v] Koichi Iwabuchi, "How "Japanese" is Pokémon.", 56-57.

[vi]James Newman, *Playing with Videogames* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[vii] Koichi Iwabuchi, "How "Japanese" is Pokémon.", 74.

[viii] Midori Matsui, ed, *The Age of Micropop: A New Generation of Japanese Artists* (Tokyo: Parco, 2007)

[ix] Hereafter referred to as NOA.

[x] Koichi Iwabuchi, "How "Japanese" is Pokémon.", 70.

[xi] Anne Allison, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination* (London: University of California Press, 2006).

[xii] Christine R. Yano, "Panic Attacks: Anti-Pokémon Voices in Global Markets." In *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, edited by Joseph Tobin (London: Duke University Press, 2004), 108-38.

[xiii] J. P. Jackson, Buying and Selling the Souls of our Children (London: Kingsway Publishing, 2000).

[xiv] Joseph Tobin, ed, *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon* (London: Duke University Press, 2004),

[xv] Anne Allison, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*

[xvi] Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (London: Duke University Press, 2002); Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

[xvii] . Allison, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination,* 201,

[xviii] Roland Barthes, Mythologies (London, Verso, 2000), 159.

[xix] For my expanded theory of game style in videogames see David Surman, "Style, Consistency and Plausibility in the *Fable* Gameworld." In *Animated 'Worlds'*, edited by Suzanne Buchan (London: John Libbey, 2006). This chapter follows closely my research into the form and context of Namco's *Katamari Damacy* (2004) and the sequel *We Love*

Katamari (2005), and the strong continuity I argued for between Japanese videogames and contemporary art (Surman, 2008).

[xx]David Surman, "Notes on Superflat and Its Expression in Videogames." *Refractory: a Journal of Entertainment Media* 13 (2008).

[xxi] Thomas Lamarre, "An Introduction to Otaku Movement" Entertext 4 no. 1 (2004): 151-187.

[xxii] Thomas Lamarre, "An Introduction to Otaku Movement," 158.

[xxiii] Thomas Lamarre, "An Introduction to Otaku Movement," 159.

[xxiv] SEGA Genesis in the United States.

[xxv] An excellent fan-authored page detailing various aspects of *Pulseman* can be found at: <http://volteccer.jvmwriter.org/index.shtml>; a Japanese-language resource can be found at <http://vc.sega.jp/vc_pulseman/>.

[xxvi] Philip Brophy, "Ocular excess: a semiotic morphology of cartoon eyes," *Art and Design* 12 no.3/4: 29

[xxvii] David Surman, "Animated Caricature: Notes on Superman, 1941-1943." *Entertext* 4, no. 1 (2004): 67-96.

[xxviii] Stuart Bishop, "Game Freak on *Pokémon*!" http://www.computerandvideogames.com/article.php?id=91965.

[xxix] Junichirō Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows* (London: Vintage Books, 2001), 20.

[xxx] Stuart Bishop, "Game Freak on *Pokémon*!" http://www.computerandvideogames.com/article.php?id=91965.

[xxxi] <http://www.pojo.com/features/Jan2003/Poke-26/art_of_pokemon_ii.htm>

[xxxii] Bishop, "Game Freak on *Pokémon*!" http://www.computerandvideogames.com/article.php?id=91965.

[xxxiii] <http://www.1up.com/do/feature?cId=3169539>

[xxxiv] Kat Bailey, "Top 5 Lamest Pokémon," http://www.1up.com/do/feature?cId=3169539

[xxxv] Schodt writes that 'Japanese manga are a wellspring of ideas for illustrators, graphic designers, and not surprisingly, for more than a few fine artists, many of whom dabbled in manga themselves. The one artist illustrator whose work exists in a continual symbiotic relationship with manga is Teruhiko Yumura, aka King Terry, Terry Johnson, and Flamina Terrino Gonzalez' (Frederick L. Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga*. (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996), 140.

[xxxvi] Frederick L. Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga*. (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996), 141.

[xxxvii] Frederick L. Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga*, 141-142.

[xxxviii] Richard Williams, The Animator's Survival Kit: A Working Manual of Methods, Principles and Formulas for Computer, Stop-Motion, Games and Classical Animators (London: Faber and Faber, 2001) 57.

[xxxix] In this respect, *Pokémon* can be compared to Jonathan Blow's independent game *Braid* (XBLA, 2008). *Braid* relies on vast tracts of text and an almost fauvist painterly style to connote a seriousness and narrative density. In the final version of the game however, the final animation contains very few keys and those that are present only convey extremity. While the lack of dress elements can be seen as part of the games overall impressionistic flavour, the burden of narrative exegesis in *Braid* ends up as so

much text on the screen, in a game which otherwise emphasises temporality and almost constant movement.

[xl] Gichin Funakoshi, *Karate-Dō Kyō-Han* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1973), 246.

[xli] Allison, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, 227-228.

[xlii] Allison, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, 227-228.

[xliii] Allison, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, 213-214.

[xliv] Surman, "Notes on Superflat and Its Expression in Videogames"

[xlv] Surman, "Animated Caricature: Notes on Superman, 1941-1943."

[xlvi] (Allison, 2006: 213-214).

[xlvii] Marc Steinberg, "Characterising a New Seriality: Murakami Takashi's Dob Project." *Parachute* 110 (2003): 90-109.

[xlviii] The wish fulfillment of the magical cat Doraemon, who can summon anything you need from his magic pocket, perhaps best expresses the direct way in which Japanese popular culture bore the weight of both post war frustration and interest in a potentially renewed sense of modernity.

[xlix] Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Chapters* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 75-88.

[l] Mark J. P. Wolf, The Medium of the Videogame (London: Routledge, 2001), 30.

[li] Bishop, "Game Freak on *Pokémon*!"

[lii] Steinberg, "Characterising a New Seriality: Murakami Takashi's Dob Project", 102.

[liii] Steinberg, "Characterising a New Seriality: Murakami Takashi's Dob Project", 93.

[liv] Steinberg, "Characterising a New Seriality: Murakami Takashi's Dob Project", 92.

[lv] Roland Barthes, *The Language of Fashion* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 67