

Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 58 | Number 2 | October 2024 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2024.330

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Playing with the Classics, Playing the Classics—The Cyborg Ninja Genji in the Video Game *Overwatch*

Małgorzata Karolina Citko-DuPlantis

The American video game developer Blizzard Entertainment, Inc. released a video game titled *Overwatch* in 2016. Until then, not many individuals outside Japan heard of the term “Genji” 源氏 apart from Japanese studies scholars and students. Nowadays the cyborg ninja Genji from *Overwatch* is the first result when entering “Genji” in the Google search engine in the U.S. and many European countries, no matter if the search is meant to look up the famous male character of *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (The tale of Genji, 1008), or the Genji/Minamoto clan that won in the Genpei War 源平合戦 (1180–1185), or neither.¹ Google’s result ranking system is designed to “present the most relevant, useful results,” and many web visitors tend to think that the top results in search engines are the most authentic. It demonstrates the immense impact of the newly created meaning of the term “Genji” for the global community, and especially younger generations of gamers who are, or soon will be part of a college student cohort.² Serious scholarly consideration is necessary to reveal how this new cyborg ninja Genji affects the global image of premodern Japanese culture. Thanks to *Overwatch*, Genji as a character and hero is nowadays more famous and cooler (in the sense of the “Cool Japan” strategy) than ever before. The question is whether, with the emergence of the cyborg ninja Genji, the classical Genji character and the Genji clan and their stories became more obscure, overshadowed, and replaced, or if they simply exist in parallel to the *Overwatch* Genji.

Acknowledging that humanity lives in the era of Neomedievalism as discussed by Umberto Eco, who states, “if one does not trust ‘literature,’ one should at least trust pop culture,” I recognize contemporary societies’ fascination with the Middle Ages.³ The unifying impact of technology and the tendency for never-ending updates without much consideration for the



New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.



This journal is published by the [University Library System, University of Pittsburgh](#) as part of its [D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program](#) and is cosponsored by the [University of Pittsburgh Press](#).

“original” source(s), noticeable in the making of the cyborg ninja Genji, have been some of the most apparent examples of Neomedievalism, a trend so far not widely recognized in Japanese studies.

In this article, I demonstrate that since the release of *Overwatch*, the term “Genji” has gained a new meaning and Genji as a character and/or hero has been modified significantly enough to make a substantial impact on how younger generations access and view elements of premodern Japanese culture. Following the section about Blizzard and the making of *Overwatch*, I analyze multiple identities of *Overwatch*’s cyborg ninja Genji and discuss the potential consequences of risky reorganizations of the classical content for global popular culture and the future of the Japanese Cultural Studies as a field. Considering whether *Overwatch*’s Genji is a result of Neomedievalism and gamification of the Middle Ages or techno-Orientalism, a product of de-Japanization and dehumanization or globalization and transnationalism, I reveal that it is possible to analyze this hero from various perspectives, as there are many layers contained into the cyborg ninja Genji’s transnational identity.⁴ The article ends with a section about the potential value of paying more attention to video games in Japanese studies, and several resources that should assist in the incorporation of video games in the classroom.

How Blizzard Made *Overwatch*

Blizzard Entertainment, Inc. is an American video game developer established in 1991 in Irvine, California, by three graduates of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA): Michael Morhaime, Frank Pearce, and Allen Adham. Blizzard is renowned for a few successful video games: *Warcraft* (1994), *Diablo* (1997), *StarCraft* (1998), and *Overwatch*, and defines itself as “an industry-leading developer responsible for the most epic games in the market.”⁵ Since 2005, the game developer has been organizing its own gaming convention, BlizzCon; in 2023, it was one of the most-watched conventions on Twitch (est. 2011).⁶ It is a subsidiary of Activision Blizzard, Inc., which has grown into the biggest gaming company by market capitalization, standing at \$59.91 billion in January 2023.⁷ In October 2023, Microsoft acquired Activision Blizzard for \$68.7 billion, moving it into the Microsoft Gaming division.⁸

Overwatch is a team-based multiplayer first-person shooter game that assigns players into two teams of six (or five in *Overwatch 2*), with each player selecting from a large roster of characters called “heroes” with unique abilities. Teams work to complete map-specific objectives within

a limited time and play matches against other teams. *Overwatch 2* was released in October 2022 and is free to use. Playable in both casual and competitive modes, the game received universal acclaim from critics due to its accessibility, diverse appeal of its hero characters, and cartoonish art style. During the first year of *Overwatch*'s release, Blizzard reported more than \$1 billion in revenue.⁹ At the Game Awards 2016, *Overwatch* won Game of the Year, Best Multiplayer Game, and Best Esports Game awards; Blizzard won Best Game Direction for *Overwatch*.¹⁰ In June 2024, it was revealed that *Overwatch 2* reached 100 million lifetime players.¹¹ *Overwatch* has also been a popular Esport (competitive gaming), with Blizzard funding and producing the global Overwatch League.¹² Many gamers consider it to be among the greatest video games ever made.

Overwatch is set on fictionalized Earth circa thirty years after the Omnic Crisis which refers to a decade-long war between the self-aware robots known as omnics and humanity. Created as Artificial Intelligence (AI), omnics were to assist the humans in manufacturing and achieving economic equality worldwide. The Omnic Crisis started when omniums—massive and automated factories governed by self-improving software algorithms, originally developed by the Omnica Corporation but shut down due to malfunctioning and fraud—mysteriously reactivated and started to build armies of military-grade omnics, deploying the newly generated technologies against various countries. No nation alone could fight against the growing omnic army, so the United Nations (UN) launched an organization named Overwatch consisting of the best operatives around the globe. In a world attacked by hostile robots, Overwatch was designed to combat threats and restore order. After it put an end to the Omnic Crisis, the organization became renowned for its heroes (one of whom is the cyborg ninja Genji) and evolved into a global peacekeeping force, but it fell into disgrace due to allegations of corruption, high-profile mission failures caused by negligence, and human rights violations. The UN shut down Overwatch, declaring its activity illegal. Since then, the world fell into chaos and tensions between humans and omnics reemerged in Russia, resulting in the Second Omnic Crisis which is the timeframe of when the game takes place. One of the organization's members, Winston, who is a genetically engineered gorilla, reactivates Overwatch regardless of the potential legal consequences.¹³

The making of *Overwatch* started with Blizzard's decision to cancel the massively multiplayer online role-playing game *Titan*, which the developer had been working on for many years.¹⁴ The main creators of

Overwatch—lead game director Jeff Kaplan, lead writer Michael Chu, and principal game designer Scott Mercer—used elements of *Titan* in Blizzard’s newest video game.¹⁵ Michael Chu, who left Blizzard in 2020, states that *Overwatch* was made quickly and that he sketched the large narrative, leaving the blanks to other members of the team to fill in. Chu emphasizes his appreciation for and usage of archetypes, suggesting that commonly known symbols, images, and patterns of behavior were the basis for the creation of many heroes in *Overwatch*. However, Chu does not reveal in much detail what the sources of inspiration were in the making process of the game, only implying that Blizzard invited novelists and comic book writers to assist in designing the *Overwatch* universe and heroes.¹⁶ It suggests that no scholars nor experts in cultural studies were involved in the making of the game and the cyborg ninja Genji character.

In addition, while Jeff Kaplan and the associate writer for *Overwatch*, Alyssa Wong, studied creative writing, not much is known about Michael Chu’s education at UCLA. However, Chu mentions the impact of Japanese role-playing games (RPGs), such as *Fainaru fantaji VI* ファイナルファンタジー (*Final Fantasy VI*, 1994) on his career choices.¹⁷ Moreover, the three founders of Blizzard have degrees in computer science and/or engineering. Thus, Blizzard’s leadership and the main designers for *Overwatch* were not formally trained in cultural, Asian, or Japanese studies. How the characters were thus created is veiled in mystery. Blizzard is unwilling to reveal much information about the making process of *Overwatch* and the Genji character; I contacted the PR team of *Overwatch* to find out more about how the game was created, but I never received any replies. I also reached out to Michael Chu who replied to my original message but after I provided him with more detailed questions, he did not respond again. The video game developers and designers are acting as the gatekeepers of knowledge about the creative processes of their various commercial products, which is not uncommon in the business sector. Indeed, as Shane Schweitzer, Rachel L. Ruttan, and Adam Waytz suggest, secrets provide their keepers with power and control over knowledge that is not easily accessible.¹⁸

***Overwatch* as the Game Changer for “Genji”**

Shimada Genji (シマダ・ゲンジ) in *Overwatch* is a Japanese cyborg ninja who was trained by female sword master Yamagami Asa (ヤマガミ・アサ). Before becoming a cyborg, he lived a luxurious and privileged life as a notorious playboy. His family, involved in criminal activities which

Genji is not interested in pursuing, considered his lifestyle to be a liability. His older brother Hanzō (ハンゾー), named likely after Hattori Hanzō 服部半蔵 (1542–1596) who was one of Tokugawa Ieyasu’s 徳川家康 (1542–1616) generals, resents Genji for his unwillingness to take a more active role in the family business. Their confrontation ends in a fight which leaves Genji barely alive. When the organization Overwatch finds Genji, it offers to save him and rebuild his body with mechanical parts in exchange for Genji’s help to combat the Shimada clan. Once Genji is put through a process of extensive cyberization and becomes a cyborg, he joins Overwatch and is part of the international team in an optimistic future; once he dismantles his family’s criminal empire, Genji continues to participate in more complex missions. However, when the organization Overwatch falls from grace, Genji becomes conflicted about his cyborg identity and abandons it to wander the world in search of the meaning of life. After many years, Genji meets the omnic monk named Zenyatta who becomes his mentor, and Genji eventually reconciles himself as both a human and a machine. After meeting his older brother again and letting Hanzō know that he forgives him, Genji rejoins the group Overwatch.¹⁹



Figure 1: Genji in *Overwatch*. Author’s screenshot Aug. 5, 2024.

Genji and Hanzō were meant to be one hero, but the makers of *Overwatch* decided to split him into two characters because they created too much content for just one character.²⁰ Michael Chu reveals that the

idea for two brothers originated in *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (2011) which is a Japanese-language American documentary directed by David Gelb. The documentary has a subplot about two brothers, and Michael Chu seems to have liked the plot of an older brother having to inherit the family business while the younger brother is free to do whatever he wishes. Genji is the younger brother who does not have any pressure from the family, which triggers a conflict between him and his brother.²¹ The cyborg ninja Genji is generally liked and described by the gamers as enjoyable, though difficult to play. His advantages include high mobility, good aim, and dealing damage, but he is also best at fighting mid-range, not a team player, and of low health (fragile).²² Possessing conflicting features, Genji is thus not a one-dimensional character. Despite being an “offense hero,” he goes through an identity crisis, and he often requests healing from a Support hero using a voice line “I need healing,” which demonstrates Genji’s fragility.²³

In mid-February 2023, to celebrate Valentine’s Day, *Overwatch 2* released a non-canonical dating simulator entitled *Loverwatch: Love Never Dies*, in which the cyborg ninja Genji was one of the characters available for the players to date (see Figure 2).²⁴ *Loverwatch* recreates the cyborg ninja hero as an iteration of the classical Genji—a man with whom one desires to have a relationship.



Figure 2: Genji in *Loverwatch: Love Never Dies*. Author’s screenshot, Feb. 20, 2023.

Similarities with the famous male character from *Genji monogatari* include descent from well-established families, luxurious lives, and

playboy lifestyles but also sensitivity, identity crises, and self-exile. *Fandom* (est. 2004) acknowledges that the name Genji may be a reference to the character from *Genji monogatari*.²⁵ Nevertheless, Genji in *Overwatch* seems to be more of a warrior and is thus more medieval than classical in character.²⁶ For example, the cyborg ninja Genji's meeting with an omnic monk named Zenyatta is reminiscent of the young Minamoto no Yoshitsune's 源義経 (1159–1189) encounter with an outcast monk Benkei 弁慶, as presented in various medieval Japanese literary works, such as *Gikeiki* 義経記 (Record of Yoshitsune, 1400–1450) and the *nō* play *Hashi Benkei* 橋弁慶 (*Benkei on the Bridge*, fifteenth century).²⁷ The meeting between Yoshitsune and Benkei is recreated in modern popular media, such as manga and anime *Hi no tori* 火の鳥 (*Phoenix*, 1954–1988, 1980–2020) by Tezuka Osamu 手塚治虫 (1928–1989), while the video game *Niō tsū* 仁王 2 (*Nioh 2*, 2020) made by a Japanese video game developer, Team Ninja, features Yoshitsune as a human *yōkai* 妖怪 (ghost, monster, demon) boss.²⁸ As Christopher Smith notes, in medieval examples of Japanese literature Yoshitsune is sometimes presented as a passive character unable to deal with danger; he is a delicate nobleman.²⁹ In reference to the medieval story *Gikeiki*, Sachi Schmidt-Hori argues that according to a Japanese historian, Takahashi Tomio 高橋富雄 (1921–2013), Yoshitsune is presented as “elegant and emotionally vulnerable; basically ‘the new Genji,’” also noting that the hero of *Genji monogatari* is not as malleable as Yoshitsune.³⁰ Although Smith and Schmidt-Hori do not deal with the representations of Yoshitsune and Benkei in video games, they do focus on how a variety of premodern sources are reimagined in contemporary popular media. Both scholars' work demonstrates that it is possible for premodern heroes to change in various media from different historical periods, sometimes creating a combination of contradicting characteristics that do not fit into any archetype.

In addition, transhistorical cultural mixtures are not uncommon in contemporary popular media, such as comics and manga, animation, films, and video games. For example, Mia Consalvo states that “very little is ‘pure’ in terms of cultural origin relative to game creation of design.”³¹ In fact, one of cyborg ninja Genji's quotes in *Overwatch*—“Even if I sacrifice my life, I will not sacrifice my honor” (身を捨てても名利は捨てず *Mi o sutetemo myōri wa sutezu*)—is borrowed from the renowned classic about swordsmanship *Gorin no sho* 五輪書 (*A Book of Five Rings*, ca. 1643) by martial arts icon and warrior Miyamoto Musashi's 宮本武蔵 (1584–1645) whose work has been translated into English many times and who is well-

known in the West.³² The cyborg ninja Genji’s training in swordsmanship might have been inspired by Miyamoto Musashi’s popularity outside Japan.³³

Furthermore, game developers and writers often take inspiration from their own gaming experiences. Apart from Genji and Yoshitsune, the development of the cyborg ninja Genji in *Overwatch* might have been thus impacted by other video games. For example, two Japanese PlayStation games released by Sony Computer Entertainment—*Genji (Genji: Dawn of the Samurai, 2005)* and its sequel *Genji: kamui sōran (GENJI 神威奏乱 Genji: Days of the Blade, 2006)*—use the term “Genji” as the name of the warrior clan that won in the Genpei War, the end of which triggered the establishment of the first warrior government in Japanese history.³⁴ Both games and are loosely based on *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (*The Tale of the Heike*, before 1371) and Yoshitsune.³⁵ In addition, the word *bushin* 武神 (god of martial arts, god of war) written on the chest of one of the cyborg ninja Genji’s skins (see Figure 3) is likely a homage to the ninja character named Gai ガイ (Guy) who appears in the arcade “beat-em-up” video game *Fainaru faito* ファイナルファイト (*Final Fight, 1989*) released by a Japanese video game developer Capcom.³⁶



Figure 3. Genji in *Overwatch* with *bushin* on his chest. Author’s screenshot August 5, 2024.

Guy is trained in a fictional style of *ninjutsu* 忍術 (Japanese martial art that uses strategy and camouflage techniques) called *bushinryū ninjutsu* 武神流忍術 (god-of-war-style *ninjutsu*) and wears a shirt with the word *bushin*.³⁷ Moreover, the cyborg ninja Genji in *Overwatch* resembles

Raiden 雷電 who is one of the characters in the *Metaru gia* メタルギア (*Metal Gear*) series of action-adventure stealth video games produced by another Japanese video game developer Konami.³⁸ Raiden, first introduced in *Metaru gia soriddo 2: sanzu obu ribati* メタルギアソリッド 2 サンズ・オブ・リバティ (*Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*, 2001) as the main player character, is also a cyborg ninja who was injured once and as a result, was enhanced with cybernetic prosthetics.³⁹ Also, Genji's chrome skin is similar to the appearance of another hero from the *Metaru gia* series—Gurei Fokkusu グレイ・フォックス (Gray Fox), who is also a cyborg ninja.⁴⁰ There are many other examples of warrior characters in a variety of video games that could have been sources of inspiration for Genji in *Overwatch*.

This character is not just another iteration of premodern Japanese heroes, such as Genji from *Genji monogatari* or Yoshitsune from medieval Japanese tales; the cyborg ninja Genji is a product of destabilization, reorganization, and thus remodernization. In fact, his warrior identity may be a result of a long-recognized trend named Neomedievalism. In 1986, Umberto Eco wrote: “[W]e are at present witnessing, both in Europe and America, a period of renewed interest in the Middle Ages, with a curious oscillation between fantastic neomedievalism and responsible philological examination.”⁴¹ Neomedievalism occurred because, as Jennifer deWinter emphasizes, the medieval does not exist and instead exists only in the neomedieval.⁴² Used both in political and literary theories, Neomedievalism considers the use of medieval cultures and texts in the postmodern world.⁴³ Indeed, examples of the impact of the Middle Ages in popular culture include *Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), *Star Wars Trilogy* (1977–1983), *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019), and *Vikings* (2013–2020).⁴⁴ Neomedievalism also recognizes the power of globalization, its impact on the states' sovereignty, and changes that continue to occur in the international system.⁴⁵ As Stephen J. Kobrin states, “cyberspace is not physical, geometric or geographic,” and the gamification of the broadly understood Middle Ages has already been conducted.⁴⁶ Video games as a pedagogical tool in teaching about the Middle Ages and game-making have been objects of scholarship.⁴⁷

It was thus only a matter of time before this global phenomenon affected various elements of Japanese culture, especially considering that in contemporary Japanese popular media medieval themes are often situated outside of Japan, for example in Europe or China. In the West, the image of medieval Japan is frequently associated with samurai culture,

which Adam Clulow confirms in his analysis of the American video game *Ghost of Tsushima* (2020).⁴⁸ Therefore, the warrior is likely the most convenient archetype to introduce a Japanese hero into a video game produced in the West because it represents “the other” culturally and ethnically.⁴⁹ Although relocated and used in a new context which, according to Ben Whaley, is a practice allowed in the otaku culture, *Overwatch*’s Genji is also a result of remedievalization and remilitarization of a medieval Japanese archetype.⁵⁰

Due to the video game industry’s constraints and the level of secrecy it maintains about the creation process, it is difficult to establish the exact sources of inspiration for various heroes. However, since neomedieval is not a historical period, in the case of cyborg ninja Genji *Overwatch* makers hacked Japanese culture and creatively retranslated whatever they found fitting for their new Genji’s identity without much care for any archetypes or historical eras. Whether or not the cyborg ninja Genji can be described with Walter Benjamin’s famous term “afterlife,” the hero is a transhistorical representation of how the West imagines and reinvents medieval Japanese warriors.⁵¹ Koichi Iwabuchi emphasizes that Asian products are sometimes deprived of “cultural odor” when transported to the West.⁵² Andrew B. R. Elliott argues that popular media do not necessarily present the untrue image of the past but instead, they follow a “different interpretation of the period to the one which we currently hold.”⁵³ In addition, Jennifer deWinter points out that characters borrowed from another culture are not meant to function in the same way when recreated by new media that transform them “through global markets that export and import culturally specific texts into new markets and contexts.”⁵⁴ Indeed, *Overwatch* makers created their own rules when they were designing the game’s universe, and they positioned the cyborg ninja Genji within the futuristic reality in which global concerns are specific to the twenty-first century. Their Genji may have originated in Japan’s imagined past, but thanks to *Overwatch* the hero traveled into the future and represents more than one historical period. Most importantly, it demonstrates that the past continues to haunt the present-day discourses and that it is “not dead yet,” as Andrew B. R. Elliott points out about the Middle Ages.⁵⁵

The usage of the newest technologies to create immersive environments in video games for learning medieval languages and cultures has been emphasized.⁵⁶ However, *Overwatch* was not made for educational purposes but for entertainment and to make a profit, proving

that Linda Hutcheon’s theory and definition of appropriation—“a process of taking possession of another story and filtering it through one’s own sensibility, interest and talents”—applies well in the non-Japanese context.⁵⁷ In the spirit of Neomedievalism, the cyborg ninja Genji is reorganized to fit into a more transnational framework of *Overwatch* and, though exciting in many ways, it is a risky representation of Japan’s intellectual history to generate entertainment. The hero presents an image of premodern Japan as a mainly masculine society dominated by violence and cruelty.⁵⁸ It also reveals the West’s fixation on Japanese military history despite Japan’s post-war policy of pacifism inscribed in Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, drafted by Americans and promulgated on November 3, 1946.⁵⁹ Ironically, the game writers and developers of *Overwatch*, untrained in Japanese studies, have conditioned a global image of the term “Genji” for current and future generations, creating a precedent for a loose usage of various elements of premodern Japanese cultures.

Overwatch is evidence of not only Neomedievalism. By selling Japaneseness and the image of Japan “that the rest of the world wants to see,” as pointed out by Tara Fickle et al., it is also a sign of techno-Orientalism.⁶⁰ As David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu explain, techno-Orientalism is a global phenomenon of “imagining Asia and Asians in hypo- or hypertechnological terms in cultural productions and political discourse.”⁶¹ A result of the anxiety about a fading dominance of America, techno-Orientalism operates with the stereotype of Asia as technologically advanced and threatening but intellectually primitive. Based on cyberpunk and speculative science fiction, techno-Orientalism envisions a future of the fallen West when Asians are dehumanized robots or cyborgs who dominate the world. Created by an American game developer, the cyborg ninja Genji falls into a techno-Orientalistic imagination of Japan. In fact, Christopher B. Patterson argues that online video games like *Overwatch* take globalization to a negative level through not only the appropriation of “the other” but also through the proliferation of global culture of mistranslation, linguistic ignorance, nationalism, and racism.⁶² One could argue that *Overwatch* is selling an exoticized, remixed, and thus commodified image of Genji and Japaneseness to American and global consumers, which could be interpreted as cultural appropriation and neocolonialism. *Overwatch* is considered to pay considerable attention to diversity, but players and fans in the West have requested even more representation of the sometimes-complex identities in the newly

introduced heroes.⁶³ In late March 2024, *Overwatch 2* introduced the game's first non-binary hero named Venture, who is a Canadian archeologist.⁶⁴

Despite some criticism, the reception of *Overwatch* and the cyborg-Genji in Japan was largely positive soon after the release of the game.⁶⁵ *Overwatch* has also been a popular Esport in Japan. Since the launch of the *Overwatch* Champion Series in early 2024, the new iteration of *Overwatch*'s Esports replaced the *Overwatch* League, and since the start of Season 9 also in early 2024, the game has been gaining players and viewers.⁶⁶ Modern Japanese do not confuse the classical Genji, Yoshitsune, and the cyborg ninja Genji, while cultural appropriation and racism come up infrequently when *Overwatch* is discussed by Japanese players. It is not the Japanese community in Japan, where the Japanese classics and Classical Japanese language continue to be taught at school, but rather the global community that may be confused about the various Genji characters, and their origins and identities. With the creation of the cyborg ninja Genji, and due to *Overwatch*'s popularity, the game caused discursive chaos and redefined the term "Genji" for the world.

Prior to the popularity of *Overwatch*, the term "Genji" was never well-known in global popular culture. Genji was never cool in the sense of the "Cool Japan" strategy, which according to Christine Yano "provides a global currency in a market trade of youth culture that spans continents and oceans."⁶⁷ Following Stevie Suan's argument about anime, the cyborg ninja Genji, though from Japan, is dislocated because his story was produced and released outside Japan.⁶⁸ Thanks to the game, the newest Genji is not only cool but also transnational and positively recognized as a symbol of Japaneseness. Thanks to the media mix described by Suan as "designed so that popularity of one medium can incite interest in the other," constructing a hero of the future based on some elements of Japan's past, and presenting him in a format that young audiences appreciate, *Overwatch* encourages the study of Japanese culture and language, which assists in promoting Japanese studies during the current humanities crisis at all stages of education.⁶⁹

Furthermore, cyborg-Genji in *Overwatch*, intentionally or not, corresponds with a broader discourse about the creation of Japan's postwar identity. As Seth Jacobowitz argues, *jinzō ningen* 人造人間 (artificial human being) is the symbol of modernization, Westernization, and dehumanization through mechanization.⁷⁰ *Jinzō ningen* could be seen as a postmodern form of Japonisme, but as Tatsumi Takayuki suggests, it is

also indicative of Japanese identity constructed along the emperor's role in postwar Japan. Tatsumi claims that when the emperor lost his divine status, he became "a cyborgian chimera" and "so too have the Japanese people all become cyborgs—what I refer to as 'Japanoids'—transforming a once divine nation into a monstrosly hybrid one."⁷¹ In this sense, the classical Genji and Yoshitsune—who were both of noble birth but were either made commoners (Genji) or were also warriors (Yoshitsune) and were thus removed from the aristocratic world—were cyborgs, too. In *Overwatch*, Genji is a cyborg in the postmodern and posthuman sense. He is a hybrid of machine and organism thanks to Western science and modern medicine and is thus a symbol of the partially dehumanized postwar Japan, and of all postmodern humanity in general.⁷² The cyborg ninja Genji from Japan represents posthumanity and posthumanism, so feared in techno-Orientalism.⁷³ In fact, along the continuous development of various AI technologies, *Overwatch* may become increasingly relevant because it makes a prediction about AI's impact on the future of humanity.

The cyborg ninja Genji in *Overwatch* is also a symbol of who and where (the East or the West) "owns" and controls Japanese culture and its content. As Stevie Suan states about anime and Japan's contemporary popular culture, "[T]here is no single operator of control here, and references or citations can be vague and dispersed across time and space, interlinking with one another in ways that radically undermine the notion of inside and outside, containment and (cultural and national) ownership."⁷⁴ The "Cool Japan" strategy, despite some criticism, has undeniably served its purpose; both traditional Japanese and popular cultures are transnationally recognized and frequently referenced.⁷⁵ Following Seth Jacobowitz's argument, the cyborg ninja Genji could be interpreted as at least half-Western because he is mechanized and invented outside Japan. He became dehumanized but also de-Japanized and is thus more ready to be global and universal. On the other hand, Luca Paolo Bruno argues that "Japanese video games cannot be reduced to geographical provenance."⁷⁶ The way *Overwatch* handled Genji as one of its heroes proves that Japaneseness and "Japan" are a brand and that Japan's popular media altered global culture in a lasting manner. In addition, as Matt Alt emphasizes, Japan's culture is the source of unlimited localized content for the video game industry.⁷⁷ Going one step further, one could conclude that due to the global impact of new media during the 2020–2023 world pandemic on the global economy (which impacted people's lifestyles, working cultures, and mental health), humanity has

been remodernized. In the same way, premodern Genji characters have been reorganized and remodernized by *Overwatch*, while archetypes have lost their significance with the rise of gamification and transnationalism.

Overwatch—a video game developed in the West by experts untrained in Asian and Japanese studies—changed the game for the term “Genji” in a global context. It opened new possibilities for Genji as a character, demonstrating that responsibility to literature, culture, and history is not a crucial factor for the reception and new iterations of premodern heroes.⁷⁸ *Overwatch* adjusted premodern Japanese Genji characters through destabilization, recreation, and exposure to the global community. It is unlikely that such a character would have been invented in Japan; the postmodern cyborg ninja Genji needed a non-Japanese game developer to exist. Michael Emmerich argues that *Genji monogatari* is part of the world and that it belongs to the category of world literature.⁷⁹ With the popularity of samurai culture in the West, perhaps the same could be concluded about *Heike monogatari* and one of its main characters—Yoshitsune. However, it is thanks to *Overwatch* that Genji as a hero became an integral part of global popular culture. It demonstrates that the classical Genji and Yoshitsune can exist simultaneously with the cyborg ninja Genji in a collective consciousness in certain parts of the world, like Japan, or in academic communities. However, these premodern Japanese characters have been somewhat replaced in, though perhaps not completely erased from, the global community due to the immense popularity and impact of video games.

Potential consequences of appropriating Japanese culture and intellectual history in video games range from unfaithful and risky reorganizations of the premodern content to increased exposure of such content to the global community, making Japan a continuous source of inspiration for global popular culture. It is specifically because the cyborg ninja Genji in *Overwatch* is so different from the classical Genji and Yoshitsune, that the gamer generation would benefit from education in premodern Japanese literature and culture. The field of Japanese studies would also gain from embracing and engaging with one of the most prevalent cultural phenomena of the century. Even though video games do not always mix historical facts with fiction to create new heroes, Christopher Smith argues that “bad takes on Japan” are sometimes produced as a result of cultural essentialization.⁸⁰ By taking video games more seriously, Japanese studies would prove their relevance, interdisciplinarity, and the acceptance of and participation in the inevitable process of borrowing from the classics.

Instead of a Conclusion: It Is Time to Get in the Game

The video game industry and Esports are an empire offering lucrative professions and fame for gamers around the world, unifying younger and older generations, and creating a transnational community with a distinct sub-culture. In 1958, physicist William A. Higinbotham (a member of the team that created the first nuclear bomb) developed the first video game; his *Tennis for Two* displayed motion on the screen and allowed the players to interact through handheld controllers. As Kristen J. Nyitray states, the game was accessible to the public and was a new form of entertainment.⁸¹ The earliest known video game competition took place in 1972 at Stanford University for the game *Spacewar!* (1962).⁸² Esports became popular recently in the early 2000s in East Asia, particularly in South Korea and China, and subsequently gained international spectatorship thanks to streaming media platforms, such as YouTube (est. 2005) and Twitch.⁸³ Video games may seem to be trivial entertainment, but various skills that young people develop through gaming—manual dexterity, strategic thinking, fast decision-making, and communication—are nowadays sought after by the U. S. military which has been recruiting gamers in recent years.⁸⁴ Video game players also develop many other skills, such as risk-taking, patience and perseverance, concentration, pattern recognition, and multi-tasking, which are nowadays desired by almost every profession and can help shape one’s career.⁸⁵ In addition, the increasingly popular AI technology has been an integral part of video game development since the 1950s because it generates an increasingly more immersive and interactive experience for players, and will continue to play a key role in video game design thanks to recent technological developments.⁸⁶

Video game developers are powerful actors in this newly emerged industry. They create entertainment and often present premodern and modern cultures in new and sometimes unexpected ways, adjusting the content to meet the expectations of their anticipated audiences. Game designers and writers in the West, rarely trained in cultural studies, history, and languages, often refer to a collective imagination of the past, which is why video games sometimes operate with stereotypes and/or clichés, and manipulate facts, purposefully or not, shifting the image of many cultures and intellectual histories for current and future generations of students. As Jerome de Groot argues, “the ‘historical’ in popular culture and contemporary society is multiple, multiplying and unstable.”⁸⁷ In addition, video games are a medium that Generation Z seems to understand well and through which it processes knowledge quickly and efficiently.⁸⁸ Many

members of Generation Z, who are the current student cohort, play games more often than they read manga and watch anime and are possibly the most tech-savvy generation in world history. As a recent study by Jingyang Ai, Beth Cross, and Carole Bignell suggests, video gaming is strongly tied to constructing experiences and enabling the performance of identity.⁸⁹ And because Generation Z seems to view video games as the most impactful carriers of knowledge, video games will also play an increasingly significant role in teaching, research, and keeping the classics relevant in the future. Moreover, as some scholars persuasively argue, “due to their popularity video games can influence public perception and general awareness about the long-standing interconnections among different races and faiths.”⁹⁰

Various experts in Japanese and game studies, such as Rachael Hutchinson, Ben Whaley, Mia Consalvo, Paul Martin, and Baro Hyun, have emphasized the value of studying and researching video games, as well as their potential as pedagogical tools in Japanese studies classrooms.⁹¹ Thomas Lamarre and Stevie Suan recognize the close connection between manga, anime, and games.⁹² Azuma Hiroki and Itō Gō have persuasively argued for the games’ impact on various non-game media.⁹³ Adam Clulow, who is one of the founders of JapanLab at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), calls for more attention to video games among historians of Japan.⁹⁴ And yet, even though Japan is considered to be one of the most influential countries in video gaming, video games are not as frequent objects of research in Japanese studies as one might expect. Whaley states: “If academic criticism and classroom instruction do not openly discuss and debate the possibilities and pitfalls of this medium, then video games will remain relegated to the sphere of child’s play.”⁹⁵

It is not the first time that Japanese studies is behind the game. In 2003, Haruo Shirane wrote about a crisis in premodern Japanese studies, suggesting that some scholars are “out of touch with current trends,” and that “it is no longer sufficient to exist within a sub-field of Japanese studies. Instead, one must be both in Japanese and out of it, both in premodern/early modern studies and contemporary studies.”⁹⁶ Shirane encourages a transhistorical and interdisciplinary approach in both research and teaching, which are now quite common. In the same spirit of Shirane pushing the boundaries of Japanese studies, with this article showcasing how premodern Japanese heroes are reconfigured in non-Japanese video games, I call for more attention not only to manga, film,

and anime, which have received considerable scholarly attention in Japanese studies, but also to video games, especially among the experts of premodern Japan.⁹⁷

Premodernists have a stake in studying video games and participating in the making of the video game industry because games were culturally significant in premodern Japan; contests and competitions such as various *awase* 合—*utaawase* 歌合 (poetry contests), *eawase* 絵合 (painting contests), *kaiawase* 貝合 (shell contests)—*kemari* 蹴鞠 (a type of kickball game), and *karuta* かるた (a card game) are featured in many examples of Japanese literature and art as an integral part of premodern Japan’s cultural landscape. Sei Shōnagon 清少納言 (fl. late tenth century) writes in the section “Ureshiki mono” うれしきもの (Pleasing things) of her *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子 (*The Pillow Book*, early eleventh century): “Why wouldn’t one feel pleased having won in one of those competitive contests?”⁹⁸ Often reflecting social structure, hierarchy, and politics, games were opportunities for social interaction and public performance. For example, in late medieval Japan, Ashikaga shoguns composed *waka* 和歌 (Japanese court poetry) and played *kemari* because they recognized the cultural capital carried by the mastery of traditional Japanese arts as useful tools in the legitimization of their political authority.⁹⁹ I doubt that the *Overwatch* makers are aware of such features of medieval Japanese warrior culture.

In addition, since much of competitive gaming is focused on individual characters and/heroes and their gameplay, video games often feature premodern Japanese characters and sometimes modify their stories and identities, just like in the case of the cyborg ninja Genji. Paradoxically, risky manipulations to create entertainment, such as cultural hacking and retranslation of premodern Japan by non-Japanese popular media and experts untrained in Japanese and/or Asian studies, present an opportunity for increased cooperation between academicians and popular media industries.¹⁰⁰ The video game industry would undeniably gain from expertise in Asian cultural studies, and scholars would benefit from embracing and participating in the inevitable process of borrowing from premodern Japanese and other Asian cultures in popular media while creating content for generations of gamers and students. Besides, it is only a matter of time before the students who attend courses in Japanese studies ask about the relationship between the *Overwatch* cyborg ninja Genji and classical Genji or Yoshitsune. If their questions are dismissed, ignored, or unanswered, those students may be discouraged and never come back to

learn about Japan again. As recent opinions indicate, universities not only need to constantly alter their curricula to meet the standards of various industries but also to partner with the business sector to train the students in the most sustainable manner.¹⁰¹

The cyborg ninja Genji in *Overwatch* demonstrates that non-Japanese video games have a tremendous impact on the global image of various elements of Japanese culture and access to information about them online and transnationally. By taking a serious interest in video games, which is one of Generation Z's most prominent mediums, studying it, and using it in research and teaching, the field of Japanese studies has a chance to attract and train its future experts, who will teach Japanese culture differently from prior generations of scholars and based also on popular media, including video games. They will also invent their own new ways of knowledge transmission. If Japanese studies does not literally get in the game of embracing the video game industry, it is likely to lose many potential gifted students and risk obscurity during a time when humanities continue to lose relevance and respect in academia and beyond. Immersive and interactive commercial products, video games are the newest popular way to transmit knowledge and thus could be made with more care for cultural awareness. In modern America and Japan—cultures with established histories of gaming—video games could be taken more seriously in their respective Japanese studies fields instead of assuming that, in the words of Richard Utz, “the subject is not difficult nor demanding enough to warrant recognition by the academy.”¹⁰²

As Roland Li argues, video games are a cultural force and economic powerhouse; they are a global enterprise with an international revenue of over \$142 billion as of 2022.¹⁰³ Video game industry should not be ignored during an era when the world economy and job markets are changing dynamically. In addition, many video games can be used as teaching materials. For example, Kaguyahime 輝夜姫 appears as a violent goddess in *Naruto shippūden: narutimetto sutōmu 4* ナルト 疾風伝 ナルティメット ストーム 4 (*Naruto Shippūden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 4*, 2016) released by the Japanese game publisher Bandai Namco Entertainment Inc., and parts of the *Taketori monogatari* 竹取物語 (*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*; ca. eighth century) narrative are used in *Ōkami* 大神 (2006) published by Capcom, serving as examples of contemporary reception of a Japanese literary classic.¹⁰⁴ Video game *Total War: Shogun 2* (2011), created by a British game developer Creative Assembly, could be used as a resource to teach Japan's geography and parts of premodern history, providing a

chance to discuss various inaccuracies and omissions in Japan's intellectual history as presented in non-Japanese video games.¹⁰⁵ In addition, some characters in various video and mobile games developed in Japan occasionally use Classical Japanese or recite premodern Japanese poetry. For example, in *Sengoku musō 3 戦国無双 3* (*Samurai Warriors 3*, 2009) produced by a Japanese video game developer Koei Tecmo, Izumo no Okuni 出雲阿国 delivers a *kayō* 歌謡 song from *Kanginshū* 閑吟集 (Collection for quiet recitation, 1518) during her cinematic game scene.¹⁰⁶ In addition, in a mobile game *Feito/gurando ōdā* フェイト・グランドオーダー (*Fate/Grand Order*, 2015) published by Sony Music Entertainment Japan, Sei Shōnagon's character trailer contains a reference to *Makura no sōshi*'s famous opening paragraph about the four seasons.¹⁰⁷ Such materials incorporated in the curriculum demonstrate the relevance of studying Classical Japanese for student graduates entering the video game industry as a labor force in translation, creative writing, and video game development.

The variety and amount of Japanese and non-Japanese video games that use elements of premodern Japanese culture is immense. It suggests that premodern Japan is “cool” in its unreality and is desirable content for contemporary video games. There is thus no need to advertise the Japanese classics because they have already been advertised and literally sold by the video game industry to the current student cohort. The game developers are playing with the classics and the students are playing the classics as they interact with various elements of premodern Japanese culture and learn about them. What the Japanese studies field needs to do is consider video games as instruction materials and teaching tools. Adam Clulow argues that historians of Japan need to start making their own video games; I argue that all experts of Japan, especially premodernists, should consider becoming game developers, either by cooperating with the video game industry or by creating their own games in cooperation with the students.¹⁰⁸ It will invite the students to Japanese studies classrooms and create valuable professional development opportunities for them.

Apart from various video and mobile games mentioned above, there are also many resources available in English to get into the game with game studies, including the translation of Koyama Yūsuke's book about the history of the Japanese video game industry, Christian Rollinger's edited volume on how Classical Antiquity is represented in video games, Robert Houghton's edited volume on teaching about the Middle Ages

through various games, and resources produced by UT Austin’s JapanLab, including the game *Palace of Poetry* based on *Genji monogatari*.¹⁰⁹ JapanLab is an example of faculty members in Japanese studies, together with their students, committing to the production of video games as open-access instructional materials. Along with Esports usually organized by the students, initiatives like JapanLab will contribute to the professionalization of gaming and game development in academic communities and beyond. Video games are one way to not only revitalize the Japanese studies field but also to ensure the relevance of humanities in an increasingly competitive academic reality.

NOTES

This article was inspired by teaching a course in Contemporary Japanese Culture (with the sub-title of “Classical Literary Heroes in Contemporary Japanese Media”) at Florida State University (FSU) in 2019, and a similar, yet modified, course in Japanese Literature in English Translation (with the sub-title of “Classical Japanese Heroes in Pop-Media”) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) in 2022. I thank Laura Lee, who was my mentor at FSU and who encouraged me to develop the course while I was a post-doctoral fellow in Japanese studies in 2018–2020. I am also grateful to the Department of World Languages and Cultures, Faculty Research Assistants Funding, and Honors & Scholars Program at UTK for their support while I was conducting research for and writing this article. An earlier version was presented virtually at the Sixteenth Annual Days of Japan held by the University of Warsaw in 2022. I extend my gratitude to Christopher Smith and Stevie Suan for their feedback and advice, as well as the editors and the two anonymous readers for their constructive critique and encouragement.

¹ Interestingly, in Japan *Genji monogatari* is still the first result in Google for “Genji.” *Genji monogatari* has been translated into English many times, most recently by Dennis Washburn. See Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji: Unabridged*, trans. Dennis Washburn (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015).

² Google, “How Results are Automatically Generated:” <https://www.google.com/search/howsearchworks/how-search-works/ranking-results/>. Accessed March 28, 2024; DCC Scotland Ltd, “How Important Google Ranking Is For Your Business,” *LinkedIn*, February 17, 2024: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-important-google-ranking-your-business-dundee-computer-care-ltd/>. Accessed March 28, 2024.

- ³ Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyper Reality*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1986), 61–62.
- ⁴ “Gamification is the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” to improve the user experience and engagement. See Sebastian Deterding, Dan Dixon, Rilla Khaled, and Lennard Nacke, “From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness: Defining ‘Gamification’,” *MindTrek '11: Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference: Envisioning Future Media Environments* (New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2011): 10.
- ⁵ Blizzard: <https://www.blizzard.com/en-us/>. Accessed March 28, 2024. *Warcraft* is a game set around the high fantasy world of Azeroth, in which humans of the Eastern Kingdoms and the orcs which arrived in Azeroth through a dark portal, are at war. For more, see “*Warcraft*,” Blizzard <https://worldofwarcraft.blizzard.com/en-us/>. Accessed August 3, 2024. *Diablo* is a game featuring three realms—the High Heavens where the angels live, the Burning Hell where the demons reside, and the human world of Sanctuary. The angels and demons have always been at war with one another, but they created the humans whom they attempt to influence. For more, see “*Diablo*,” Blizzard <https://diablo4.blizzard.com/en-us/>. Accessed August 3, 2024. *StarCraft*, a game set at the beginning of the twenty-sixth century, focuses on a galactic war for dominance among four species—the Terrans that are adaptable and highly mobile, the Zerg that strive for genetic perfection, the Protoss that are powerful and enigmatic, and the Xel’Naga race of godlike creators. For more, see “*StarCraft*,” Blizzard <https://starcraft2.blizzard.com/en-us/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- ⁶ Iarfhlaith Dempsey, “BlizzCon 2023 Gets More Viewers Than TwitchCon Las Vegas—Total Viewership, Top Channels, and Daily Dynamics,” *Stream Charts*, November 7, 2023: <https://streamscharts.com/news/blizzcon-2023-viewership-stats>. Accessed March 28, 2024. Twitch is an American interactive livestreaming service for content spanning gaming, entertainment, sports, music, and more. See Twitch: <https://www.twitch.tv/>. Accessed April 9, 2024.
- ⁷ Jessica Clement, “Activision Blizzard – Statistics & Facts,” *Statista*, Feb. 29, 2024: <https://www.statista.com/topics/8033/activision-blizzard/#topicOverview>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- ⁸ Ivan Šimić, “Microsoft’s Activision Blizzard Acquisition: How Did It Happen?,” *Esports Insider*, Oct. 13, 2023: <https://esportsinsider.com/2023/10/microsoft-activision-blizzard-acquisition>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- ⁹ Jeff Grubb, “With \$1 Billion in Revenue, Overwatch is Blizzard’s Fastest-Growing Franchise,” *VentureBeat*, May 4, 2017: <https://venturebeat.com/pc-gaming/with-1-billion-in-revenue-overwatch-is-blizzards-fastest-growing-franchise/>. Accessed April 1, 2024.

- ¹⁰ The Game Awards <https://thegameawards.com/rewind/year-2016>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- ¹¹ Kris Holt, “Overwatch 2 Has Officially Reached More Than 100 Million Players,” *Forbes*, June 13, 2024: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/krisholt/2024/06/13/overwatch-has-officially-reached-more-than-100-million-players/>. Accessed August 2, 2024.
- ¹² Dustin Hansen, *Game On!: Video Game History from Pong and Pac-Man to Mario, Minecraft, and More* (New York: Feiwel & Friends, 2016), 337–345. In October 2023, the Overwatch League was disbanded; Blizzard claimed that it was working on improving and relaunching it. See Ash Parrish, “Blizzard Says It’s Building ‘Revitalized’ Overwatch Esports After OWL Season Ends,” *The Verge*, October 2, 2023: <https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/2/23899985/overwatch-league-disbands-esports>. Accessed March 28, 2024. In early 2024, Blizzard announced the launch of the Overwatch Champion Series which are allowing for local competitive gaming in various countries to evolve more organically. See Blizzard Entertainment, “The Future of Overwatch Esports,” *Overwatch*, January 23, 2024: <https://overwatch.blizzard.com/en-us/news/24033788/the-future-of-overwatch-esports/>. Accessed April 6, 2024.
- ¹³ “Overwatch,” *Fandom* <https://overwatch-archive.fandom.com/wiki/Overwatch>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- ¹⁴ The exact details of what *Titan* would have looked like are unknown, but the players would have been able to select a character from several classes on the sci-fi version of the Earth. As they progressed in the game, they would have gained points to use to spend on a skill tree for that character.
- ¹⁵ Hansen, *Game On!*, 338; “Overwatch,” *Fandom* <https://overwatch-archive.fandom.com/wiki/Overwatch>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- ¹⁶ Kris Holt, “Former Overwatch Lead Writer Michael Chu Talks Narrative Design, Archetypes and Not Creating More Story Than Needed,” *Forbes*, April 25, 2022: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/krisholt/2022/04/25/former-overwatch-lead-writer-michael-chu-talks-narrative-design-archetypes-and-not-creating-more-story-than-needed/>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* *Final Fantasy VI* is a game set in a world resembling the Second Industrial Revolution (1870–1914), in which there are fourteen permanent playable characters. Dominant themes include a rebellion against an immoral military dictatorship, pursuit of a magical arms race, and the renewal of hope and life itself. For more, see “*Final Fantasy VI*,” *Fandom* https://finalfantasy.fandom.com/wiki/Final_Fantasy_VI. Accessed May 30, 2024.

- ¹⁸ Shane Schweitzer, Rachel L. Ruttan, and Adam Waytz, “The Relationship Between Power and Secrecy,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 100.6 (2022): 1–15.
- ¹⁹ Blizzard, “Genji,” <https://overwatch.blizzard.com/en-us/heroes/genji/>. Accessed April 2, 2024; “Omnic,” *Fandom* <https://overwatch-archive.fandom.com/wiki/Omnics>. Accessed May 27, 2023.
- ²⁰ Blizzard, *The Art of Overwatch* (Milwaukee: Dark Horse Books, 2017), 30–35; “Genji,” *Fandom* <https://overwatch.fandom.com/wiki/Genji>. Accessed May 27, 2023.
- ²¹ “Every Overwatch Hero Explained by Blizzard’s Michael Chu,” *Wired*, December 22, 2017: <https://www.wired.com/video/watch/every-overwatch-hero-explained-by-blizzard-s-michael-chu>. Accessed April 9, 2024.
- ²² In gaming, mobility refers to the ability to move around the game and is related to the speed of the character, too. Dealing damage is a function of the attacker; damage dealers’ task is to cause most damage (harm) to their opponents in the shortest amount of time possible. Genji is an effective damage dealer during the mid-range rather than up close combat because one of his weapons is *shuriken* 手裏剣 (knifelike weapon for throwing, made of steel), and because he is of low health which means that Genji cannot take a lot of damage during combat before he “dies” (leaves the match). Finally, because Genji is fast, he does not have to come close to his opponents during combat to deal damage. He also does not require extensive teamwork and is good at finishing off fights from a distance.
- ²³ Offense heroes are particularly dangerous to their opponents because they can sneak up to them and deal damage from a distance. In *Overwatch*, Support heroes have healing abilities and can restore other heroes’ health during matches. Any character in *Overwatch* can request heals from a Support hero, but Genji players do it often even after losing a small amount of health. Therefore, the phrase “I need healing” became associated with the Genji character.
- ²⁴ Non-canonical in the popular culture media fandom slang means that something is not part of the canon and outside of the main continuity of a fictional universe. For more, see “*Loverwatch: Love Never Dies*,” *Fandom* [https://overwatch.fandom.com/wiki/Loverwatch: Love Never Dies](https://overwatch.fandom.com/wiki/Loverwatch:_Love_Never_Dies). Accessed May 27, 2023.
- ²⁵ “Genji,” *Fandom* <https://overwatch.fandom.com/wiki/Genji>. Accessed April 2, 2024. Fandom is a wiki hosting service that hosts wikis on entertainment topics. Wiki is a website that allows collaborative editing of its content and structure by its users.

- ²⁶ In this case, I use the term “classical” to refer to the noble culture of the imperial court dominant in Japan between the eighth and twelfth centuries. I use the term “medieval” to refer to the warrior culture which started to gain significance in Japan at the beginning of the thirteenth century.
- ²⁷ *Gikeiki* is an anonymous account of Yoshitsune which draws from a large body of popular legends about Yoshitsune that developed during the centuries following his death. For the translation, see Helen Craig McCullough, *Yoshitsune: A Fifteenth-Century Japanese Chronicle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966). *Hashi Benkei* is a *nō* play based on *Gikeiki*, featuring Benkei’s encounter with Yoshitsune on the Gojō bridge. For the translation, see Arthur Waley, *The Noh Plays of Japan* (Tokyo, Rutland, Vermont, and Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2009), 52–57.
- ²⁸ *Phoenix* is about reincarnation. Each story involves a search for immortality, embodied by the blood of the phoenix which is believed to grant eternal life. However, in *Phoenix* immortality is either unobtainable or a terrible curse, whereas Buddhist-style reincarnation is presented as the natural path of life. Set in Japan of the late 1500s, *Nioh 2* is an action role-playing game, in which gamers can create their own playable character (*yōkai*). As they progress in the game, players earn new skills and special abilities. At locations named “Benevolent Graves,” they can summon other players to assist them in combat.
- ²⁹ Christopher Smith, “A Benkei for Every Age: Musashibō Benkei as Palimpsest,” *Japanese Language and Literature* 55.1 (April 2021): 71, 76.
- ³⁰ Sachi Schmidt-Hori, “Yoshitsune and the Gendered Transformations of Japan’s Self-Image,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 48.1 (Winter 2022): 102, 106, 120. Takahashi Tomio 高橋富雄, *Yoshitsune densetsu: rekishi no kyōjitsu* 義経伝説：歴史の虚実 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1966), 149.
- ³¹ Mia Consalvo, *Atari to Zelda. Japan’s Videogames in Global Contexts* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2016), 208.
- ³² However, not all *Gorin no sho* manuscripts contain the line. See Miyamoto Musashi 宮本武蔵, *Gorin no sho* 五輪書 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991), 166. *Gorin no sho* has been translated many times, earliest by Victor Harries (d. 2017). See Miyamoto Musashi, *A Book of Five Rings: The Classic Guide to Strategy*, trans. Victor Harries (Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1974).
- ³³ A Japanese epic novel by Eiji Yoshikawa 吉川英治 (1892–1962) titled *Miyamoto Musashi* (1935–1939) was published in English in 1981 as *Musashi: An Epic Novel of the Samurai Era*, which contributed to Miyamoto Musashi’s popularization in the West. There are also many books published in English about Miyamoto Musashi, for example Kenji Tokitsu, *Miyamoto Musashi: His Life and Writings* (Boston and London: Weatherhill, 2005); William Scott

- Wilson, *The Lone Samurai: The Life of Miyamoto Musashi* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 2013); William De Lange, *Miyamoto Musashi. A Life in Arms: A Biography of Japan's Greatest Swordsman* (Warren, Conn.: Floating World Editions, 2014).
- ³⁴ The game: *Dawn of the Samurai* follows Yoshitsune's adventures as he descends from a mountain retreat to his quest to defeat the Taira clan. The game *Genji: Days of the Blade* takes place three years after the end of its prequel. For more, see "Genji: Dawn of the Samurai," *Fandom* [https://genji.fandom.com/wiki/Genji: Dawn of the Samurai](https://genji.fandom.com/wiki/Genji:_Dawn_of_the_Samurai). Accessed April 4, 2024; "Genji: Days of the Blade," [https://genji.fandom.com/wiki/Genji: Days of the Blade](https://genji.fandom.com/wiki/Genji:_Days_of_the_Blade). Accessed April 4, 2024.
- ³⁵ *Heike monogatari* was chanted and existed in about a hundred different variants. The most respected version was dictated by a master Heike performer, Akashi Kakuichi 明石覚一 (1300?–1371), just before his death.
- ³⁶ A beat-em-up (also known as brawler and beat'em all) is a video game genre featuring hand-to-hand combat against many opponents. *Final Fight* is a game set in the fictional Metro City within the Street Fighter universe. It focuses on a group of heroic punishers who fight against the control and threats of criminal gangs. For more, see "Final Fight," *Fandom* [https://capcom.fandom.com/wiki/Final Fight](https://capcom.fandom.com/wiki/Final_Fight). Accessed May 30, 2024.
- ³⁷ For more about Guy in *Final Fight*, see "Guy," *Fandom* <https://streetfighter.fandom.com/wiki/Guy>. Accessed April 4, 2024.
- ³⁸ *Metal Gear* is a series of games featuring a special forces operative codenamed Solid Snake who carries out a one-man sneaking mission into the hostile nation of Outer Heaven to destroy Metal Gear, a bipedal walking tank capable of launching nuclear missiles from anywhere in the world. For more, see "Metal Gear," *Fandom* [https://metalgear.fandom.com/wiki/Metal Gear](https://metalgear.fandom.com/wiki/Metal_Gear). Accessed May 30, 2024.
- ³⁹ For more about Raiden in the *Metal Gear* series, see "Raiden," *Fandom* [https://vgcdatabase.fandom.com/wiki/Raiden \(Metal Gear\)](https://vgcdatabase.fandom.com/wiki/Raiden_(Metal_Gear)). Accessed April 4, 2024.
- ⁴⁰ For more about Gray Fox in the *Metal Gear* series, see "Gray Fox," *Fandom* [https://metalgear.fandom.com/wiki/Gray Fox](https://metalgear.fandom.com/wiki/Gray_Fox). Accessed April 4, 2024.
- ⁴¹ Eco, *Travels in Hyper Reality*, 63.
- ⁴² Jennifer deWinter, "Neo-Bushido: Neomedieval Animé and Japanese Essence," in *Neomedievalism in the Media: Essays on Film, Television, and Electronic Games*, ed. by Carol L. Robinson and Pamela Clements (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter, U. K.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), 86.
- ⁴³ For example, see Louise D'Arcens and Andrew Lynch, eds., *International Medievalism and Popular Culture* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2022).

- ⁴⁴ *Lord of the Rings* is an epic high fantasy novel by an English writer J. R. R. Tolkien (1892–1973). Set in Middle-earth, it features the journey of Frodo Baggins, a humble hobbit who is entrusted with the task of destroying the One Ring to vanquish the Dark Lord Sauron. Alongside Frodo, key characters like Gandalf, Aragorn, and Legolas contribute to the complex and rich universe, each with their unique tales and heroic deeds. *Lord of the Rings* features many languages constructed by Tolkien. *Star Wars Trilogy* are three films made by an American director George Lucas—*Star Wars* (1977), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), and *Return of the Jedi* (1983). The films center on the Galactic Civil War between the Rebel Alliance and the tyrannical Galactic Empire, and Luke Skywalker’s journey in his quest to become a Jedi under the tutelage of exiled Jedi Masters Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda. *Game of Thrones* is an American fantasy drama TV series created by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss for HBO based on the series of novels by George R. R. Martin. Set on the fictional continents of Westeros and Essos, *Game of Thrones* follows several story arcs: political conflicts among the noble families either vying to claim the Iron Throne of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros or fighting for independence from whoever sits on it; the last descendant of the realm’s deposed ruling dynasty, who has been exiled to Essos and is plotting to return and reclaim the throne; the Night’s Watch, a military order defending the realm against threats from beyond Westeros’s northern border. *Vikings* is a historical drama TV series written by Michael Hirst for History (Canadian TV channel). It is inspired by the sagas of Ragnar Lodbrok (d. 865?), a Viking who is one of the best-known legendary Norse heroes and notorious as the scourge of Anglo-Saxon England (410–1066) and West Francia (843–987).
- ⁴⁵ Stephen J. Kobrin discusses the ambiguity of authority, multiple loyalties, transnational elites, unifying belief systems, supranational centralization, and emergence of a postmodern, digital world economy. See Stephen J. Kobrin, “Back to the Future: Neomedievalism and the Postmodern Digital World Economy,” *Journal of International Affairs* 51.2 (1998): 361–386.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 369. Also, see Carol L. Robinson and Pamela Clements, eds. *Neomedievalism in the Media*, 1–13, 219–250, and Daniel T. Kline, ed., *Digital Gaming Re-imagines the Middle Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).
- ⁴⁷ Robert Houghton, ed., *Teaching the Middle Ages through Modern Games: Using, Modding and Creating Games for Education and Impact* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022).
- ⁴⁸ Adam Clulow, “From *Shōgun* to *Ghost of Tsushima*: Using and Challenging Historical Video Games,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 49.2 (2023): 399. *Ghost of Tsushima* is a third-person open-world video game developed by Sucker Punch Productions for the PlayStation 4. It takes place in 1274 on the island of

- Tsushima in Japan. The player controls the hero, Jin Sakai, as he fights back against a Mongol invasion. For more, see “*Ghost of Tsushima*,” Sucker Punch Productions <https://www.suckerpunch.com/category/games/ghostoftsushima/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- ⁴⁹ Consalvo, *Atari to Zelda*, 13.
- ⁵⁰ Ben Whaley, *Toward a Gameic World. New Rules of Engagement from Japanese Video Games* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023), 22. Otaku may be defined as consumers who indulge in manga, anime, games, and their subcultures.
- ⁵¹ Walter Benjamin defines “afterlife” as something through which “the original undergoes a change.” See Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn and ed. by Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1968), 70–72.
- ⁵² Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham and London: Durham University Press, 2002), 27.
- ⁵³ Andrew B. R. Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), 37.
- ⁵⁴ deWinter, “Neo-Bushido,” 84, 89. New media are the means of mass communication that use digital technologies such as the internet.
- ⁵⁵ Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media*, 37.
- ⁵⁶ Lynn Ramey, David Neville, Sahar Amer, Jonathan deHaan, Maxime Durand, Brandon Essary, Rob Howland, Mubbasir Kapadia, Felix Kronenberg, Brett E. Shelton, Barbara Vance, “Revisioning the Global Middle Ages: Immersive Environments for Teaching Medieval Languages and Culture,” *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 8.1 (2019): 86–104.
- ⁵⁷ Linda Hutcheon with Siobhan O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 18.
- ⁵⁸ With the release of *Overwatch 2* in 2022, a new Support woman hero named Kamori Kiriko 家守霧子 was introduced. She is a family friend of the Shimada family who used to train with Genji and Hanzō. In the game, she is a healer aided by her *kitsune* 狐 (fox) spirit. Kiriko was the first woman *Overwatch* hero of Japanese origin. In February 2023, *Overwatch 2* released the Mythic Amaterasu skin for Kiriko to be unlocked, expanding the narrative about Japan and its premodern culture. For more, see “Kiriko,” *Fandom* <https://overwatch.fandom.com/wiki/Kiriko>. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- ⁵⁹ “Article 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

- In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.” See The Constitution of Japan, Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet: https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html. Accessed April 6, 2024.
- ⁶⁰ Tara Fickle, Chris Patterson, Melos Han-Tani, Se Young Kim, Marina Kittaka, Emperatriz Ung, “Asian/American Gaming,” *Verge: Studies in Global Asia* 7.2 (2021): 39; Consalvo, *Atari to Zelda*, 11–13, 183, 215.
- ⁶¹ David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu, eds., *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 2.
- ⁶² Christopher B. Patterson, *Open World Empire: Race, Erotics, and the Global Rise of Video Games* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 71–75.
- ⁶³ Imogen Donovan, “Overwatch Fans Point Out a Problem with the Newest Japanese Hero,” *GAMINGbible*, Sept. 16, 2022: <https://www.gamingbible.com/news/overwatch-fans-problem-with-newest-japanese-hero-20220916>. Accessed July 17, 2023.
- ⁶⁴ Blizzard <https://overwatch.blizzard.com/en-us/heroes/venture/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- ⁶⁵ For example, see “Some Japanese Responses to the Dragon Short,” *Reddit* https://www.reddit.com/r/Overwatch/comments/4jvhir/some_japanese_responses_to_the_dragon_short/. Accessed July 17, 2023.
- ⁶⁶ Khanzai, “Why Is Overwatch Suddenly Getting Popular In Japan?,” YouTube, March 26, 2024: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNdShaKGAPg&ab_channel=Khanzai. Accessed April 6, 2024. In *Overwatch 2*, seasonal content is usually released every nine weeks.
- ⁶⁷ Christine Yano, “Wink on Pink: Interpreting Japanese Cute as It Grabs the Global Headlines,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 68.3 (2009): 684.
- ⁶⁸ Stevie Suan, *Anime’s Identity. Performativity and Form beyond Japan* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 269–305.
- ⁶⁹ Stevie Suan, “Colorful Execution: Conventionality and Transnationality in *Kimetsu no Yaiba*,” *Transcommunication* 8.2 (Fall 2021): 180.
- ⁷⁰ Seth Jacobowitz, “Between Men, Androids, and Robots: Assaying Mechanical Man in Meiji Literature and Visual Culture,” *Mechademia* 9 (2014): 44–60.
- ⁷¹ Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full Metal Apache: Transactions Between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 25.

- ⁷² Donna Haraway writes about us all modern humans as cyborgs, too. See Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s,” *Socialist Review* 15.2 (1985): 65–108.
- ⁷³ Posthumanism is a philosophical concept used to consider what the world would look like if humans were not the central characters. For more, see for example Giovanni Aloï and Susan McHugh, eds., *Posthumanism in Art and Science: a Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).
- ⁷⁴ Suan, “Colorful Execution,” 188.
- ⁷⁵ For example, see Laura Miller, “Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan,” *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 20.1 (2011): 18–29; Mark McLelland, *The End of Cool Japan: Ethical, Legal, and Cultural Challenges to Japanese Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Benjamin Boas, “‘Cool Japan’ Needs to Listen to Its Target Market,” *The Japan Times*, April 24, 2016: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/04/24/general/cool-japan-needs-listen-target-market/>. Accessed May 29, 2024.
- ⁷⁶ Luca Paolo Bruno, “Game Studies Meets Japanese Studies,” *The Italian Journal of Game Studies* 10 (2021–2023): 92.
- ⁷⁷ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan Made the Modern World* (New York: Crown, 2020).
- ⁷⁸ One example is *The Legend of Genji*—a free, fan-produced webcomic that imagines the next chapter of the Avatar universe. For more on *The Legend of Genji*, see <https://legendofgenji.com/the-comic/>. Accessed June 24, 2023. Adam Clulow also describes a similar approach in the making of the *Ghost of Tsushima*. See Clulow, “From *Shōgun* to *Ghost of Tsushima*,” 403–414.
- ⁷⁹ Michael Emmerich, *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 229–230.
- ⁸⁰ For example, a strategy video game *Medieval II: Total War* was developed in collaboration with historians from different countries. See Anton Sukhov, “Gamification of the Middle Ages: Educational Dimension of User Modifications of *Total War: Medieval II*,” *Proceedings of the 15th European Conference on Game Based Learning* (2021): 701. Christopher Smith, “How to Avoid ‘Bad Takes’ on Japan.” SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, June 18, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3869879>.
- ⁸¹ Kristen J. Nyitray, “Game On to Game After: Sources for Video Game History,” in *Reference and User Services Quarterly* 59 (2019): 7–11.
- ⁸² *Spacewar!* is a space combat video game developed by an American computer scientist, Steve Russel. The gameplay involves two monochrome spaceships called “the needle” and “the wedge,” each controlled by a player, attempting to

shoot one another while maneuvering on a two-dimensional plane in the gravity well of a star, set against the backdrop of a starfield.

- ⁸³ Roland Li, *Good Luck Have Fun: The Rise of Esports* (New York: Skyhorse, 2016), 80–105. For more about the beginnings of Esports in South Korea and the role of *Overwatch*'s developer, Blizzard, see Baro Hyun, *Demystifying Esports* (Austin: Lioncrest Publishing), 2020.
- ⁸⁴ Rosa Schwartzburg, "The US Military is Embedded in the Gaming World. Its Target: Teen Recruits," *The Guardian*, Feb. 14, 2024: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/feb/14/us-military-recruiting-video-games-targeting-teenagers>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- ⁸⁵ Igor Tulchinsky, "Your Gaming Skills Can Help You Shape Your Career," *Harvard Business Review*, March 30, 2023: <https://hbr.org/2023/03/your-gaming-skills-can-help-you-shape-your-career>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- ⁸⁶ Songye Yoon, "The Gaming Industry's Edge in the Artificial Intelligence Revolution," *Forbes*, March 27, 2024: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbooksauthors/2024/03/27/the-gaming-industrys-edge-in-the-artificial-intelligence-revolution/?sh=261d43bb5c03>. Accessed March 28, 2024; Nial Firth, "How Generative AI Could Reinvent What It Means to Play," *MIT Technology Review*, June 20, 2024: <https://www.technologyreview.com/2024/06/20/1093428/generative-ai-reinventing-video-games-immersive-npcs/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- ⁸⁷ Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2009), 4.
- ⁸⁸ Nagarjoon B, "Games, Tech and the Quest for Truth: How Gen Z Learns," *Medium*, Jan. 27, 2023: <https://medium.com/@nagarjoon.b/games-tech-and-the-quest-for-truth-how-gen-z-learns-f1ed4331a8aa>. Accessed March 28, 2024; Marcela Hernandez-de-Menendez, Carlos A. Escobar Díaz, Ruben Morales-Menendez, "Educational Experiences with Generation Z," *International Journal on Interactive Design and Manufacturing* 14 (2020): 847–859.
- ⁸⁹ Jingyang Ai, Beth Cross, and Carole Bignell, "The Construction of Gamer Identity in Narratives about Video Game Playing and Formal Education Learning Experiences," *Research in Learning Technology* 31 (2023): 1–13.
- ⁹⁰ Ramey, et al., "Revisioning the Global Middle Ages," 92.
- ⁹¹ Rachael Hutchinson, *Japanese Culture Through Videogames* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019); Ben Whaley, "Teaching Japanese Video Games: Practical Strategies for Analysis and Assessment," in *Teaching Games and Game Studies in the Literature Classroom*, ed. by Tison Pugh and Lynn Ramey (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 91–99; Mia Consalvo, *Atari to Zelda*; Paul Martin, "The Intellectual Structure of Game Research," *Game Studies*

- 18.1 (April 2018): https://gamestudies.org/1801/articles/paul_martin. Accessed May 27, 2023; Hyun, *Demystifying Esports*, 13.
- ⁹² Thomas LaMarre, *The Anime Machine. A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Thomas LaMarre, *The Anime Ecology. A Genealogy of Television, Animation, and Game Media* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018); Suan, *Anime's Identity*.
- ⁹³ Azuma Hiroki, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 39; Itō Gō, "Tezuka Is Dead: Manga in Transformation and Its Dysfunctional Discourse," *Mechademia* 6 (2011): 69–82.
- ⁹⁴ Clulow, "From *Shōgun* to *Ghost of Tsushima*," 399, 414–416.
- ⁹⁵ Whaley, *Toward a Gameic World*, 131.
- ⁹⁶ Haruo Shirane, "Redefining Classical Japanese Literature and Language: Crisis and Opportunity," *Japanese Language and Literature* 37.2 (October 2003): 157–158.
- ⁹⁷ For example, Gergana E. Ivanova writes about "selling" the Japanese classics and new definitions of *koten* 古典 (premodernity) in the context of the manga market, while Otilia Milutin analyzes various manga versions of *Genji monogatari* demonstrating how contemporary media engage with premodern literary texts. See Gergana E. Ivanova, "Reading the Literary Canon through Manga in the Twenty-First Century," *Japanese Language and Literature* 55.1 (April 2021): 163–179; Otilia Milutin, "*Shōjo* Murasaki, *Seinen* Genji: Sexual Violence and Textual Violence in Yamato Waki's *Fleeting Dreams* and Egawa Tatsuya's *Tale of Genji* Manga," *Japanese Language and Literature* 55.1 (2021): 275–306.
- ⁹⁸ Sei Shōnagon 清少納言, *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子, in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集, vol. 18, ed. by Matsuo Satoshi 松尾聡 and Nagai Kazuko 永井和子 (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1997), 389. For the translation of *Makura no sōshi*, see Ivan Morris, *The Pillow Book by Sei Shōnagon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
- ⁹⁹ Małgorzata Karolina Citko-DuPlantis, "The Poet Who Challenged the Shogun: Asukai Masayo and *Shinshoku Kokin Wakashū*," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 50.1 (2024): 136.
- ¹⁰⁰ Cultural hacking has been defined as the penetration of foreign cultural systems, orienting oneself within them, and inventing and introducing new and surprising interpretations of them. See Franz Liebl and Thomas Düllo, eds., *Cultural Hacking: Kunst des Strategischen Handelns* (Vienna: Springer, 2004).

- ¹⁰¹ Jim Milton, “How A Business-University Partnership Can Shape Tomorrow’s Workforce,” *Forbes*, June 7, 2023: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2023/06/07/how-a-business-university-partnership-can-shape-tomorrows-workforce/>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- ¹⁰² Richard Utz, “Preface. A Moveable Feast: Repositionings of ‘The Medieval’ in Medieval Studies, Medievalism, and Neomedievalism,” in *Neomedievalism in the Media*, IV (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter, U. K.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012).
- ¹⁰³ Li, *Good Luck Have Fun*, 4.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Naruto Shippūden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 4* is a fighting game that follows a narrative of young ninjas Naruto Uzumaki and Sasuke Uchiha in a world war against the terrorist organization Akatsuki and unite to defeat it. For more, see “*Naruto Shippūden*,” *Fandom*. https://naruto.fandom.com/wiki/Naruto_Shipp%C5%ABden:_Ultimate_Ninja_Storm_4. Accessed May 30, 2024. *Taketori monogatari* is a tale about a supernatural being found by a bamboo cutter and brought up as his daughter under the name Kaguyahime (Shining Princess). For the translation, see Donald Keene, “The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 11.4 (January 1956): 329–355. *Ōkami* is an action-adventure game set in a fictional version of old Japan called Nippon. It combines Japanese mythology and folklore and informs how Nippon was saved from darkness by the Shinto goddess of sun Amaterasu 天照 who took the form of a white wolf. For more, see “*Ōkami*,” *Fandom* https://okami.fandom.com/wiki/%C5%8Ckami_Wiki:Main_Page. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Total War: Shogun 2* is a strategy game set in sixteenth-century Japan when ruling Ashikaga shogunate loses its authority over the regional warlords (*daimyo* 大名) and their clans, who fight amongst themselves for power. The player takes on the management of one of these clans, with the goal of defeating rival clans and ultimately establishing their rule over Japan as the new Shogun. For more, see “*Total War: Shogun 2*,” *Fandom* https://totalwar.fandom.com/wiki/Total_War:_Shogun_2. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- ¹⁰⁶ Wonderpirot, “Samurai Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends (JPN) - Okuni All Story CG Cutscenes with English Subtitles [HD],” YouTube, Feb. 21, 2011: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Th5X9gieH8o&ab_channel=Wonderpirot. Accessed August 3, 2024. For more about Izumo Okuni in the *Samurai Warriors* series, see “Izumo Okuni,” *Fandom* <https://koei.fandom.com/wiki/Okuni>. Accessed April 9, 2024. *Samurai Warriors 3* is the third installment in the *Samurai Warriors* series of hack and

slash video games set in the Sengoku 戦国 (Warring States) period (1467–1568). For more, see “*Samurai Warriors 3*,” *Fandom* https://koei.fandom.com/wiki/Samurai_Warriors_3. Accessed May 30, 2024. *Kanginshū* is a collection of *kouta* 小唄 (short song) from the late Kamakura 鎌倉 (1185–1333) to the Muromachi 室町 (1333–1568) periods. The songs are grouped into categories of seasons and love.

- ¹⁰⁷ LoboNox1313, “Fate/Grand Order Arcade: Sei Shonagon Character Trailer,” YouTube, September 29, 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGYgGOXrLu4>. Accessed April 9, 2024. For more about Sei Shōnagon in *Fate/Grand Order*, see “Sei Shōnagon,” *Fandom* https://fategrandorder.fandom.com/wiki/Sei_Sh%C5%8Dnagon. Accessed April 9, 2024. *Fate/Grand Order* is a free-to-play mobile game centered around turn-based combat where the player, who takes on the role of a “Master,” summons and commands powerful familiars known as “Servants” to battle enemies. The story narrative is presented in a visual novel format, and each Servant has their own scenario which the player can explore. For more, see <https://fate-go.us/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- ¹⁰⁸ Clulow, “From *Shōgun* to *Ghost of Tsushima*,” 400, 415–416.
- ¹⁰⁹ Yuhsuke Koyama, *History of the Japanese Video Game Industry* (Singapore: Springer, 2023); Christian Rollinger, ed., *Classical Antiquity in Video Games: Playing with the Ancient World* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021); Houghton, *Teaching the Middle Ages through Modern Games*; JapanLab: <https://www.utjapanlab.com/>. Accessed April 5, 2024.

REFERENCES

- Ai, Jingyang, Beth Cross, and Carole Bignell. “The Construction of Gamer Identity in Narratives about Video Game Playing and Formal Education Learning Experiences.” *Research in Learning Technology* 31 (2023): 1–13.
- Aloi, Giovanni and Susan McHugh, eds. *Posthumanism in Art and Science: a Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021.
- Azuma Hiroki. *Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Alt, Matt. *Pure Invention: How Japan Made the Modern World*. New York: Crown, 2020.
- Benjamin, Walter. “The Task of the Translator.” *Illuminations*, 69–82. Translated by Harry Zohn and edited by Hannah Arendt. New York:

- Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968.
- Blizzard: <https://www.blizzard.com/en-us/>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- Blizzard. “Genji.” <https://overwatch.blizzard.com/en-us/heroes/genji/>. Accessed April 2, 2024.
- . *The Art of Overwatch*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Books, 2017.
- Blizzard Entertainment. “The Future of Overwatch Esports.” *Overwatch*, January 23, 2024: <https://overwatch.blizzard.com/en-us/news/24033788/the-future-of-overwatch-esports/>. Accessed April 6, 2024.
- Boas, Benjamin. “‘Cool Japan’ Needs to Listen to Its Target Market.” *The Japan Times*, April 24, 2016: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/04/24/general/cool-japan-needs-listen-target-market/>. Accessed May 29, 2024.
- Bruno, Luca Paolo. “Game Studies Meets Japanese Studies.” *The Italian Journal of Game Studies* 10 (2021–2023): 87–108.
- Clement, Jessica. “Activision Blizzard—Statistics & Facts.” *Statista*, February 29, 2024: <https://www.statista.com/topics/8033/activision-blizzard/#topicOverview>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- Clulow, Adam. “From *Shōgun* to *Ghost of Tsushima*: Using and Challenging Historical Video Games.” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 49.2 (2023): 395–416.
- Consalvo, Mia. *Atari to Zelda. Japan’s Videogames in Global Contexts*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2016.
- DCC Scotland Ltd, “How Important Google Ranking Is for Your Business,” *LinkedIn*, February 17, 2024: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-important-google-ranking-your-business-dundee-computer-care-ltd/>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- D’Arcens, Louise and Andrew Lynch, eds. *International Medievalism and Popular Culture*. Amherst, Mass.: Cambria Press, 2022.
- de Groot, Jerome. *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 2009.
- De Lange, William. *Miyamoto Musashi. A Life in Arms: A Biography of Japan’s Greatest Swordsman*. Warren, Conn.: Floating World Editions, 2014.

- Dempsey, Iarfhlaith. “BlizzCon 2023 Gets More Viewers Than TwitchCon Las Vegas—Total Viewership, Top Channels, and Daily Dynamics.” *Stream Charts*, November 7, 2023: <https://streamcharts.com/news/blizzcon-2023-viewership-stats>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- Deterding, Sebastian, Dan Dixon, Rilla Khaled, and Lennard Nacke. “From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness: Defining ‘Gamification’.” *MindTrek '11: Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference: Envisioning Future Media Environments* (2011): 9–15.
- deWinter, Jennifer. “Neo-Bushido: Neomedieval Animé and Japanese Essence.” *Neomedievalism in the Media: Essays on Film, Television, and Electronic Games*, 69–88. Edited by Carol L. Robinson and Pamela Clements. Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter, U. K.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012.
- “Diablo.” Blizzard <https://diablo4.blizzard.com/en-us/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- Donovan, Imogen. “Overwatch Fans Point Out a Problem with the Newest Japanese Hero.” *GAMINGbible*, Sept. 16, 2022: <https://www.gamingbible.com/news/overwatch-fans-problem-with-newest-japanese-hero-20220916>. Accessed July 17, 2023.
- Eco, Umberto. *Travels in Hyper Reality*. Translated by William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1986.
- Elliott, Andrew B. R. *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017.
- Emmerich, Michael. *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- “Every Overwatch Hero Explained by Blizzard’s Michael Chu.” *Wired*, December 22, 2017: <https://www.wired.com/video/watch/every-overwatch-hero-explained-by-blizzard-s-michael-chu>. Accessed April 9, 2024.
- Fickle, Tara, Chris Patterson, Melos Han-Tani, Se Young Kim, Marina Kittaka, Emperatriz Ung. “Asian/American Gaming.” *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 7.2 (2021): 19–55.

- Firth, Nial. "How Generative AI Could Reinvent What It Means to Play." *MIT Technology Review*, June 20, 2024: <https://www.technologyreview.com/2024/06/20/1093428/generative-ai-reinventing-video-games-immersive-npcs/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- "*Fate/Grand Order*." <https://fate-go.us/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- "*Final Fantasy VI*." *Fandom* https://finalfantasy.fandom.com/wiki/Final_Fantasy_VI. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- "*Final Fight*." *Fandom* https://capcom.fandom.com/wiki/Final_Fight. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- "*Genji*." *Fandom* <https://overwatch.fandom.com/wiki/Genji>. Accessed May 27, 2023 and April 2, 2024.
- "*Genji: Days of the Blade*." *Fandom* https://genji.fandom.com/wiki/Genji:_Days_of_the_Blade. Accessed April 4, 2024.
- "*Genji: Dawn of the Samurai*." *Fandom* https://genji.fandom.com/wiki/Genji:_Dawn_of_the_Samurai. Accessed April 4, 2024.
- "*Ghost of Tsushima*." Sucker Punch Productions <https://www.suckerpunch.com/category/games/ghostoftsushima/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- Google. "How Results Are Automatically Generated" <https://www.google.com/search/howsearchworks/how-search-works/ranking-results/>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- "*Gray Fox*." *Fandom* https://metalgear.fandom.com/wiki/Gray_Fox. Accessed April 4, 2024.
- Grubb, Jeff. "With \$1 Billion in Revenue, Overwatch Is Blizzard's Fastest-Growing Franchise." *VentureBeat*, May 4, 2017: <https://venturebeat.com/pc-gaming/with-1-billion-in-revenue-overwatch-is-blizzards-fastest-growing-franchise/>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- "*Guy*." *Fandom* <https://streetfighter.fandom.com/wiki/Guy>. Accessed April 4, 2024.
- Hansen, Dustin. *Game On!: Video Game History from Pong and Pac-Man*

- to Mario, Minecraft, and More*. New York: Feiwel & Friends, 2016.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." *Socialist Review* 15.2 (1985): 65–108.
- Hernandez-de-Menendez, Marcela, Carlos A. Escobar Díaz, Ruben Morales-Menendez. "Educational Experiences with Generation Z." *International Journal on Interactive Design and Manufacturing* 14 (2020): 847–859.
- Holt, Kris. "Former Overwatch Lead Writer Michael Chu Talks Narrative Design, Archetypes and Not Creating More Story Than Needed." *Forbes*, April 25, 2022: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/krisholt/2022/04/25/former-overwatch-lead-writer-michael-chu-talks-narrative-design-archetypes-and-not-creating-more-story-than-needed/>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- . "Overwatch 2 Has Officially Reached More Than 100 Million Players." *Forbes*, June 13, 2024: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/krisholt/2024/06/13/overwatch-has-officially-reached-more-than-100-million-players/>. Accessed August 2, 2024.
- Houghton, Robert, ed. *Teaching the Middle Ages through Modern Games: Using, Modding and Creating Games for Education and Impact*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022.
- Hutcheon, Linda with Siobhan O’Flynn. *A Theory of Adaptation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Hutchinson, Rachael. *Japanese Culture through Videogames*. London and New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Hyun, Baro. *Demystifying Esports*. Austin: Lioncrest Publishing, 2020.
- Itō Gō. "Tezuka Is Dead: Manga in Transformation and Its Dysfunctional Discourse." *Mechademia* 6 (2011): 69–82.
- "Izumo Okuni." *Fandom* <https://koei.fandom.com/wiki/Okuni>. Accessed April 9, 2024.
- Jacobowitz, Seth. "Between Men, Androids, and Robots: Assaying Mechanical Man in Meiji Literature and Visual Culture." *Mechademia* 9 (2014): 44–60.
- JapanLab <https://www.utjapanlab.com/>. Accessed April 5, 2024.

- Keene, Donald. "The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter." *Monumenta Nipponica* 11.4 (January 1956): 329–355.
- Kenji Tokitsu. *Miyamoto Musashi: His Life and Writings*. Boston, London: Weatherhill, 2005.
- Khanzai. "Why Is Overwatch Suddenly Getting Popular in Japan?" YouTube, March 26, 2024: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNdShaKGAPg&ab_channel=Khanzai. Accessed April 6, 2024.
- "Kiriko." *Fandom* <https://overwatch.fandom.com/wiki/Kiriko>. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- Kline, Daniel T. ed. *Digital Gaming Re-Imagines the Middle Ages*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Kobrin, Stephen J. "Back to the Future: Neomedievalism and the Postmodern Digital World Economy." *Journal of International Affairs* 51.2 (1998): 361–386.
- Koichi Iwabuchi. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*. Durham and London: Durham University Press, 2002.
- Koyama, Yuhsuke. *History of the Japanese Video Game Industry*. Singapore: Springer, 2023.
- Ivanova, Gergana E. "Reading the Literary Canon through Manga in the Twenty-First Century." *Japanese Language and Literature* 55.1 (April 2021): 163–179.
- LaMarre, Thomas. *The Anime Ecology. A Genealogy of Television, Animation, and Game Media*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.
- LaMarre, Thomas. *The Anime Machine. A Media Theory of Animation*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Li, Roland. *Good Luck Have Fun: The Rise of Esports*. New York: Skyhorse, 2016.
- Liebl, Franz and Thomas Düllo, eds. *Cultural Hacking: Kunst des Strategischen Handelns*. Vienna: Springer, 2004.
- LoboNox1313. "Fate/Grand Order Arcade: Sei Shonagon Character Trailer." YouTube, September 29, 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGYgGOXrLu4>. Accessed April

- 9, 2024.
- “*Loverwatch: Love Never Dies.*” *Fandom* https://overwatch.fandom.com/wiki/Loverwatch:_Love_Never_Dies. Accessed May 27, 2023.
- Martin, Paul. “The Intellectual Structure of Game Research.” *Game Studies* 18.1 (April 2018): https://gamestudies.org/1801/articles/paul_martin. Accessed May 27, 2023.
- McCullough, Helen Craig. *Yoshitsune: A Fifteenth-Century Japanese Chronicle*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966.
- McLelland, Mark. *The End of Cool Japan: Ethical, Legal, and Cultural Challenges to Japanese Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- “*Metal Gear.*” *Fandom* https://metalgear.fandom.com/wiki/Metal_Gear. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- Miller, Laura. “Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan.” *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 20.1 (2011): 18–29.
- Milton, Jim. “How A Business-University Partnership Can Shape Tomorrow’s Workforce.” *Forbes*, June 7, 2023: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2023/06/07/how-a-business-university-partnership-can-shape-tomorrows-workforce/>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- Milutin, Otilia. “*Shōjo* Murasaki, *Seinen* Genji: Sexual Violence and Textual Violence in Yamato Waki’s *Fleeting Dreams* and Egawa Tatsuya’s *Tale of Genji* Manga.” *Japanese Language and Literature* 55.1 (2021): 275–306.
- Miyamoto Musashi. *A Book of Five Rings: The Classic Guide to Strategy*. Translated by Victor Harries. Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1974.
- Miyamoto Musashi 宮本武蔵. *Gorin no sho* 五輪書. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991.
- Morris, Ivan. *The Pillow Book by Sei Shōnagon*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji: Unabridged*. Translated by Dennis Washburn. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015.
- Nagarjoon B. “Games, Tech and the Quest for Truth: How Gen Z Learns.” *Medium*, Jan. 27, 2023: <https://medium.com/@nagarjoon.b/games->

- [tech-and-the-quest-for-truth-how-gen-z-learns-fled4331a8aa](#). Accessed March 28, 2024.
- “Naruto Shippuden.” *Fandom* https://naruto.fandom.com/wiki/Naruto_Shipp%C5%ABden:_Ultimate_Ninja_Storm_4. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- Nyitray, Kristen J. “Game On to Game After: Sources for Video Game History.” *Reference and User Services Quarterly* 59 (2019): 7–11.
- “Ōkami.” *Fandom* https://okami.fandom.com/wiki/%C5%8Ckami_Wiki:Main_Page. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- “Omnic.” *Fandom* <https://overwatch-archive.fandom.com/wiki/Omnic>. Accessed May 27, 2023.
- “Overwatch.” *Fandom* <https://overwatch-archive.fandom.com/wiki/Overwatch>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- Patterson, Christopher B. *Open World Empire: Race, Erotics, and the Global Rise of Video Games*. New York: New York University Press, 2020.
- Parrish, Ash. “Blizzard Says It’s Building ‘Revitalized’ Overwatch Esports after OWL Season Ends.” *The Verge*, October 2, 2023: <https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/2/23899985/overwatch-league-disbands-esports>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- “Raiden.” *Fandom* [https://vgcdatabase.fandom.com/wiki/Raiden_\(Metal_Gear\)](https://vgcdatabase.fandom.com/wiki/Raiden_(Metal_Gear)). Accessed April 4, 2024.
- Ramey, Lynn, David Neville, Sahar Amer, Jonathan deHaan, Maxime Durand, Brandon Essary, Rob Howland, Mubbasir Kapadia, Felix Kronenberg, Brett E. Shelton, and Barbara Vance. “Revisioning the Global Middle Ages: Immersive Environments for Teaching Medieval Languages and Culture.” *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 8.1 (2019): 86–104.
- Roh, David S., Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu, eds. *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media*. New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2015.
- Rollinger, Christian, ed. *Classical Antiquity in Video Games: Playing with the Ancient World*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.
- “Samurai Warriors 3.” *Fandom* https://koei.fandom.com/wiki/Samurai_Warriors_3. Accessed May 30, 2024.

- “Sei Shōnagon.” *Fandom* https://fategrandorder.fandom.com/wiki/Sei_Sh%C5%8Dnagon. Accessed April 9, 2024.
- Sei Shōnagon 清少納言. *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集, vol. 18. Edited by Matsuo Satoshi 松尾聡 and Nagai Kazuko 永井和子. Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1997.
- Schmidt-Hori, Sachi. “Yoshitsune and the Gendered Transformations of Japan’s Self-Image.” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 48.1 (Winter 2022): 93–121.
- Schwartzburg, Rosa. “The US Military is Embedded in the Gaming World. Its Target: Teen Recruits.” *The Guardian*, Feb. 14, 2024: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/feb/14/us-military-r-recruiting-video-games-targeting-teenagers>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- Schweitzer, Shane, Rachel L. Ruttan, and Adam Waytz. “The Relationship Between Power and Secrecy.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 100.6 (2022): 1–15.
- Shirane, Haruo. “Redefining Classical Japanese Literature and Language: Crisis and Opportunity.” *Japanese Language and Literature* 37.2 (October 2003): 155–165.
- Šimić, Ivan. “Microsoft’s Activision Blizzard Acquisition: How Did It Happen?” *Esports Insider*, October 13, 2023: <https://esportsinsider.com/2023/10/microsoft-activision-blizzard-acquisition>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- Smith, Christopher. “A Benkei for Every Age: Musashibō Benkei as Palimpsest.” *Japanese Language and Literature* 55.1 (April 2021): 65–103.
- Smith, Christopher. “How to Avoid ‘Bad Takes’ on Japan.” SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, June 18, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3869879>.
- “Some Japanese Responses to the Dragon Short.” *Reddit* https://www.reddit.com/r/Overwatch/comments/4jvhir/some_japanese_responses_to_the_dragon_short/. Accessed July 17, 2023.
- “*StarCraft*.” Blizzard <https://starcraft2.blizzard.com/en-us/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- Suan, Stevie. *Anime’s Identity. Performativity and Form beyond Japan*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2021.

- Suan, Stevie. “Colorful Execution: Conventionality and Transnationality in *Kimetsu no Yaiba*.” *Transcommunication* 8.2 (Fall 2021): 179–191.
- Sukhov, Anton. “Gamification of the Middle Ages: Educational Dimension of User Modifications of *Total War: Medieval II*.” *Proceedings of the 15th European Conference on Game Based Learning* (2021): 698–706.
- Takahashi Tomio 高橋富雄. *Yoshitsune densetsu: rekishi no kyojitsu* 義経伝説：歴史の虚実. Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1966.
- Takayuki Tatsumi. *Full Metal Apache: Transactions Between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006.
- “The Constitution of Japan.” Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet: https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html. Accessed April 6, 2024.
- The Game Awards <https://thegameawards.com/rewind/year-2016>. Accessed April 1, 2024.
- The Legend of Genji* <https://legendofgenji.com/the-comic/>. Accessed June 24, 2023.
- “*Total War: Shogun 2*.” Fandom https://totalwar.fandom.com/wiki/Total_War:_Shogun_2. Accessed May 30, 2024.
- Tulchinsky, Igor. “Your Gaming Skills Can Help You Shape Your Career.” *Harvard Business Review*, March 30, 2023: <https://hbr.org/2023/03/your-gaming-skills-can-help-you-shape-your-career>. Accessed March 28, 2024.
- Twitch: <https://www.twitch.tv/>. Accessed April 9, 2024.
- Utz, Richard. “Preface. A Moveable Feast: Repositionings of ‘The Medieval’ in Medieval Studies, Medievalism, and Neomedievalism.” *Neomedievalism in the Media: Essays on Film, Television, and Electronic Games*, I–V. Edited by Carol L. Robinson and Pamela Clements. Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter, U. K.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012.
- “Venture.” Blizzard <https://overwatch.blizzard.com/en-us/heroes/venture/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- Waley, Arthur. *The Noh Plays of Japan*. Tokyo, Rutland, Vermont, and Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2009.

- “*Warcraft*.” Blizzard <https://worldofwarcraft.blizzard.com/en-us/>. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- Whaley, Ben. “Teaching Japanese Video Games: Practical Strategies for Analysis and Assessment.” *Teaching Games and Game Studies in the Literature Classroom*, 91–99. Edited by Tison Pugh and Lynn Ramey. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022.
- . *Toward a Gameic World. New Rules of Engagement from Japanese Video Games*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023.
- Wilson, William Scott. *The Lone Samurai: The Life of Miyamoto Musashi*. Boston, London: Shambhala, 2013.
- Wonderpierrot. “Samurai Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends (JPN) - Okuni All Story CG Cutscenes with English Subtitles [HD].” YouTube, February 21, 2011: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Th5X9gieH8o&ab_channel=Wonderpierrot. Accessed August 3, 2024.
- Yano, Christine. “Wink on Pink: Interpreting Japanese Cute as It Grabs the Global Headlines.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 68.3 (2009): 681–688.
- Yoon, Songyee. “The Gaming Industry’s Edge in the Artificial Intelligence Revolution.” *Forbes*, March 27, 2024: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbooksauthors/2024/03/27/the-gaming-industrys-edge-in-the-artificial-intelligence-revolution/?sh=261d43bb5c03>. Accessed March 28, 2024.