2020

The Emerging Metamodern Sensibility in Narrative: A Case Study of Things Left Forgotten and the Dai Gyakuten Saiban Games

Gina Barbieri
University of Denver

The Emerging Metamodern Sensibility in Narrative:

A Case Study of *Things Left Forgotten* and the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* Games

_____

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

University of Denver

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

_____

by

Gina Barbieri

June 2020

Advisor: Rafael Fajardo

ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes a metamodern shift in recent narrative trends, which incorporate modernist and postmodernist techniques for narrative. This includes narrative shifts which utilize postmodern devices such as irony and satire for seemingly modern ends such as hope and progress. This thesis posits that this shift can be understood through an analysis of emergent media, and considers the intertextual nature of fanfiction narratives emerging from games through a case study of *Things Left Forgotten*, a fanfiction written by Archive of Our Own user LookerDeWitt and based upon the two *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, spinoffs of the Ace Attorney series which are currently Japan-exclusive. This analysis seeks to identify metamodern narrative techniques, focusing on metamodern *oscillation* between modernism and postmodernism, the metamodern "*as if*" mindset, the *return to earnestness* through a repurposing of postmodern and modern narrative conventions, a specifically metamodern understanding of *paradox*, the *dissolution of clearly defined boundaries* stemming from an increasingly globalized world, and the uniquely *reconstructive* nature of metamodern narratives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis proposes a shift in recent narrative trends which incorporate modernist and postmodernist techniques for narrative, without being truly either modern or postmodern. This includes narrative shifts which utilize postmodern devices such as irony and satire for seemingly modern ends such as hope and progress. The return to, and oscillation between, the modern and the postmodern appears to gesture toward a *metamodern* shift in narrative. This thesis posits that this shift can be seen in, and understood through an analysis of, emergent media. This thesis considers the intertextual nature of fanfiction narratives emerging from games through a case study of *Things Left Forgotten*, a fanfiction written by Archive of Our Own user LookerDeWitt and based upon the two *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, spinoffs of the Ace Attorney series which are currently Japan-exclusive. *Things Left Forgotten* expands the story of the character Kazuma Asōgi beyond the initial boundaries of the games, and takes the inherent metamodern sensibilities of the games' narrative further to create what I believe is a deeply metamodern narrative.

Many scholars have already discussed various ways of identifying metamodern sensibilities in various creative works, which will be covered during the literature review. My analysis seeks to identify metamodern narrative techniques, focusing on metamodern *oscillation* between modernism and postmodernism, the metamodern "*as if*" mindset, the *return to earnestness* through a repurposing of postmodern and modern narrative

1

conventions, a specifically metamodern understanding of *paradox*, the *dissolution of clearly defined boundaries* stemming from an increasingly globalized world, and the uniquely *reconstructive* nature of metamodern narratives.

This thesis will have five major parts. The first part contains the literature review, establishing the research base from which I'm building my analysis techniques from. The second part documents my process for forming this thesis, discussing my scoping, background, development process, and intended outcomes. The third part will offer a brief synopsis of both *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, followed by a synopsis of *Things Left Forgotten*. The fourth part will establish my understanding of modernism, postmodernism, and metamodernism, and identify and define the six metamodern techniques I am using to understand and analyze my case study with. The fifth part of the thesis will be devoted to the case study, using the six metamodern techniques to analyze the narrative elements and devices of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games and *Things Left Forgotten*. Given that *Things Left Forgotten* was based upon the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, I will look at the games and fanfiction separately to avoid confusion between the two while also noting how the games and fanfiction relate to each other. In addition to these major parts of the thesis, I will also briefly discuss the digital component associated with this thesis before concluding this thesis.

LIT. REVIEW AND PRIOR WORKS

The following contains a literature review of the research I conducted to develop the six techniques for metamodern narrative in preparation for conducting the case study of *Things Left Forgotten* and the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games. As I was primarily interested in the metamodernism proposed by Vermeulen and van den Akker, I built my research around their initial article, "Notes on metamodernism." Thus, this literature review covers "Notes on metamodernism" and briefly looks at the post-postmodern theories which Vermeulen and van den Akker address in their article to establish a research history of "Notes on metamodernism." Afterwards I look at a variety of scholarship from across different fields of study which utilize and evolve Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism in order to build an understanding of how metamodernism has evolved, and study techniques for using metamodernism as a lens to analyze creative works as established by past scholars. I briefly touch on fandom studies and scholarship, as my case study is a work from fandom which I would not have been able to use if not for the prior work of these scholars. The purpose of this literature review is to establish the research base which I studied before developing my own metamodern techniques and conducing the cast study of this thesis.

Notes on metamodernism

Metamodernism was first proposed by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in "Notes on metamodernism." They open by discussing how new generations of artists have left behind postmodern techniques and methods, and appear to be moving towards something different, something which seems to oscillate between modern and postmodern methods. Vermeulen and van den Akker specifically note: "We do not seek to impose a predetermined system of thought on a rather particular range of cultural practices. …It should be read as an invitation for debate rather than an extending of a dogma."[1] In this sense, their argument is foregrounded in the idea that *what* metamodernism is should be open to interpretation and discussion.

Vermeulen and van den Akker begin their discussion of metamodernism by establishing its history. While the idea that postmodernism is over has been reiterated by many scholars,[2] few have attempted to identify what will emerge next. Of the existing proposed ideas which precede metamodernism, Vermeulen and van den Akker discuss

---

[1] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism," *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, Vol. 2 (2010).

[2] The idea that postmodernism is "over" was first proposed by Linda Hutcheon, and she is the most cited scholar in papers and essays which address the shift away from postmodernism, see: Linda Hucheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (New York/London: Routledge, 2002). Many of the scholars who I look at later in the literature review section discuss either an end to, shift away from, or evolution of postmodernism, including Vermeulen and van den Akker in "Notes on metamodernism," Alison Gibbons in ""Take that you intellectuals!"…," Seth Abramson in "Ten Basic Principles…," Greg Dember in "After Postmodernism…," Michel Clasquin-Johnson in "Towards a metamodern academic study…," Nick Bentley in "Trailing Postmodernism…," Dennis Kersten and Usha Wilbers in "Introduction: Metamodernism," Tom Drayton in "The Listening Theatre…," Jan Alber and Alice Bell in "The importance of being earnest again…," and Stephen Knudsen in "Beyond Postmodernism…," all of which have proper expanded citation when I discuss them in depth, and which can be found in the bibliography section. Also, while this paper did not contribute to my research into applications of metamodernist sensibilities, Ofelia Al-Gareeb also touches on the shift away from postmodernism into a post-postmodern era of literature in her paper "New Realities of the Contemporary Novel," *Cultural Intertexts*, Vol, 4 (2015): 10-20.

Gilles Lipovetsky's *hypermodernism*, Alan Kirby's *digimodernism*, Robert Samuels'

automodernism, and Nicholas Bourriaud's *altermodernism*. Vermeulen and van den

Akker feel that Bourriaud's observations, which led to the proposal of altermodernism,

are accurate for understanding the current moment—but argue that Bourriaud only

identifies the "result" rather than the source of changes within the arts.[3]

 The authors then move on to discuss the shift from postmodernism to

metamodernism, noting that aspects of postmodernism have not fully died out. They

suggest that instead of "dying," postmodernism is evolving. They tie this shift in attitude

to the "threefold "threat" of the credit crunch, a collapsed center, and climate change"

rather than post-9/11 fear.[4] They suggest the rise of metamodernism comes with the

"death" of a Hegelian history, linking Hegel's positive idealism with modernism and

postmodernism, and Kant's negative idealism with metamodernism—emphasizing the

"as if" thinking presented by Kant's philosophy. Vermeulen and van den Akker then try

to define what metamodernism is, outlining how it oscillates between modernism and

postmodernism, noting that oscillation is not balance, but constant motion.

Metamodernism is born from the tension between modern and postmodern techniques.[5]

 Vermeulen and van den Akker go on to identify metamodern strategies in the arts,

discussing Raoul Eshelman's performatism, Jörg Heiser's Romantic Conceptualism, and

James MacDowell's quirky cinema, suggesting that these emerging artistic strategies all

arise from metamodern oscillation. They then discuss an emergent sensibility they call

---

[3] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

neoromanticism, noting that it is where "metamodernism appears to find its clearest expression."[6] This is because Romantic attitudes inherently oscillate between opposite poles while also being expressed across a wide variety of art forms and media. Artists who create art in a neoromantic style are inherently metamodern because their work exists within the tension created by oscillation. Vermeulen and van den Akker note that aspects of this oscillation will be reminiscent of postmodern techniques—to be expected as metamodernism oscillates between modernism and postmodernism—but that when these similarities arise, they should not be confused for postmodernism, as any postmodernist aspect will be paired with and countered by a modernist aspect; modernism aspects will be redirected in much the same way. They note this is most apparent in emerging metamodern architecture, if only by the nature of architecture's purpose as a structure.[7] The authors tie this back to neoromanticism, noting that a return to Romanticism does not arise from a sense of parody or nostalgia, but rather "to perceive anew a future that was lost from sight."[8]

The article closes by noting how metamodernism is "atopic metataxis"—that is, metamodernism exists, simultaneously and paradoxically, as both a place and not a place. It exists as a sense of place and time, creating a space-time that oscillates between the modern temporal order and the postmodern spatial disorder. This paradox of metamodernism, and the tension it creates, is essential for setting metamodernism apart

---

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

and casting it into the future, suggesting that the metamodernist will "pursue a horizon that is forever receding."[9]

This was the article first to identify metamodernism as an emerging movement and define techniques which set it apart from modernism and postmodernism.

Preceding Metamodernism

It is important to look to the works which Vermeulen and van den Akker cite as alternate "post-postmodernist" movements, as they establish ideas which set the groundwork for "Notes on metamodernism." The following section will summarize Gilles Lipovetsky's hypermodernism, Alan Kirby's digimodernism, Robert Samuels' automodernism, and Nicholas Bourriaud's altermodernism, as these are the major alternatives to postmodernism which were addressed by Vermeulen and van den Akker. It is not the purpose of this thesis to compare and contrast these post-postmodern ideas with metamodernism, or further investigate the post-postmodern era, but rather to briefly investigate the alternate movements Vermeulen and van den Akker built their definition of metamodernism upon in order to establish a short history of the origins of Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism. Future scholarship may seek to more deeply investigate the post-postmodern era with regards to these movements, but such research is beyond the scope of this thesis, and so I will only offer a summary as a means of establishing the research base presented by this literature review.

---

[9] Ibid.

Hypermodernism

Gilles Lipovetsky first proposes the concept of hypermodernism in *Hypermodern Times*. In this book, Lipovetsky touches on the rise of postmodernism, and states that the idea of "post-postmodernism" still redirects people's attention to the past without discussing or offering an explanation for what has become of the present. He introduces the idea that the world has shifted into a "hyper" state, where culture, emerging science, and emerging technology are rushing forward. Lipovetsky touches on the relation between modernism and hypermodernism, with hypermodernism acting as a "second modernism" which has formed from the marked, technocratic efficiency, and a new focus on the individual. Specifically, Lipovetsky states that there has been a dramatic expansion of economic operations and capital, leading to a "more and more" mentality escalating and affecting every aspect of life. Likewise, there has been a rise of extreme hyperindividualism. Hypermodernism is defined by this constant development and forward movement propelled by anxieties of the future, shortening of time, and an increase focus on the present moment and the individual. This sense of divergent time is directly tied to neocapitalism.[10]

Lipovetsky goes deeply into how time functions in hypermodernism, noting the increased pressure on, and preoccupation with, time. He suggests that conflicts between class are decreasing as "time vs. time" conflicts arise. The sense of time is tied as well to hypermodernism's obsession with the individual, as it raises the focus on the individual

---

[10] Gilles Lipovetsky, *Hypermodern Times*, translated by Andrew Brown (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005).

and increases self-reflection through the ephemerality of media. Ubiquitous to hypermodernism is a sense of urgency, as the individual gains an increased sense that there is a shortage of time. This is tied to individualism, as the individual is now capable of organizing their own time, which is further tied to consumerism.[11]

Lipovetsky also discusses how hypermodernism is structured on a present moment that continuously draws upon the past, in the sense that the past is not removed from the bigger picture despite the hypermodern obsession with an accelerating present. The hypermodern interest in the past is tied to a quest for identity. The hypermodern focus on the individual helps to rekindle the appeals of tradition as the individual attempts to form their identity. As such, identity has become reflexive and open, requiring self-reflection rather than just being immediately assumed. Lipovetsky suggests that this leads to an individualistic demand for recognition based on identities and instant satisfaction. The increased sense of individualism and self-identity likewise leads to an increase demand for public recognition and claims to victimization. Lipovetsky ultimately ties his ideas of hypermodernism to Ulrich Beck's analysis of modernity, while discussing how hypermodernism diverges from Beck's analysis.[12]

Digimodernism

Alan Kirby proposes digimodernism in his book *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure out Culture*. He suggests that

---

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

digimodernism arose with the advent of computer technologies, specifically the computerization of text. He notes that digimodernist text permit the viewer/reader to intervene and shape the text. Kirby states that digimodernism works as a dominant or hegemonic cultural logic, not a blanket description of all contemporary cultural production. He discusses digimodernism's relationship to postmodernism, stating that he is not trying to argue that we have entered a new phase of history or a digimodern era per se, but rather suggests that digimodernism is another shift within modernity.[13]

Kirby defines digimodernism as an impact on culture and forms of computerization, as shifting aesthetic characteristics in a new context, as a cultural shift and reorganization of communication, and as a new form of textuality. He goes over the history of text, with emphasis on the ideas of what text could "hold" before the advent of digimodernism, and notes that the shift to digimodern text extends text beyond reading/viewing to making, which is driven forward by technological motivation. The digimodern text explores how a textual machine operates, how its boundaries are determined and by whom, and its extension into time and space.[14]

Kirby identifies the following as traits of a digimodern text: o*nwardness* (the text exists now, the text is still ongoing, it has a beginning but no end); *haphazardness* (the future development of the text is perpetually undecided); *evanescence* (the text does not endure, it is difficult to capture or archive, and not meant to be reproduced); *reformulation and intermediation of textual roles* (the text will redefine traditional

---

[13] Alan Kirby, *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture* (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2009).

[14] Ibid.

functions such as author or reader); *anonymous, multiple, and social authorship* (text will

cause a radical shift in ideas of authorship based on a sense of multiplicity and anon- or

pseudonomity); *fluid-bound text* (the limits of the text length are not defined, they are

mutable); and *electronic digitality* (text is interdependent on the electronic).[15]

Kirby identifies Espen J. Aarseth's "ergodic literature" as the ancestor of

digimodernism, and discusses the participatory nature of digimodernist textuality. He also

notes that digimodernism will go beyond both the ergodic literature and the participatory

textuality, and will likewise have political consequences. While early digimodernism will

be unable to use previous terminology for discussing text, it will eventually develop its

own terms. As such, authorship will become more complex with digimodernism restoring

the author (as opposed to Barthe's "death of the author"), but will also move beyond the

singularity of authorship. There will likewise be other evolutions caused within

digimodernism. These include evolutions of interactivity and expansions in listening as

an activity. Digimodernism will shift the nonlinear (or more accurately, the

nonchronological) to a state of antisequentiality and ultraconsequativeness. Kirby also

discusses how digimodernism will drastically redefine and shift the idea and act of

publishing, leading to a potential death of the aura of publishing, and that this redefinition

of publishing will likewise redefine reading (there is an increase in reading, but it is a

different kind of reading from a pre-digimodernist reading). The linguistics of text (as in

letters and words, rather than a work) also shift within digimodernism, and

digimodernism will transform typing and lead to the death of writing. "User" will become

---

[15] Ibid.

a useful alternate helping digimodernism move past ideas of author or reader, and also changes how viewership is defined.[16]

In response to the postmodern sense that the "real" world did not exist, such as Baudrillard's idea of simulated reality,[17] Kirby proposes the digimodern "apparently real." Specifically, unlike the dilemma caused by the postmodern idea that there is no "real" world, the apparently real only offers what seems to be real (while not pretending to be actually real), and presents this apparently real world without self-consciousness, irony, self-interrogation, or self-signaling. Kirby discusses the moral panic surrounding the addictive nature of the digimodern apparently real text at length. He further discusses how the digimodern sense of cultural time differs significantly from the postmodern sense of time, in that postmodernism looks backwards while the digimodern is engulfed in the present. Kirby also suggests that digimodernism, for all its focus on a new form of textuality, may lead to the death of text itself.[18]

Automodernism

Robert Samuels proposes the concept of automodernism in his paper "Auto-Modernity after Postmodernism: Autonomy and Automation in Culture, Technology, and Education." He discusses automodernity as a combination of technological automation and human autonomy. Samuels builds his argument from observations of how the digital

---

[16] Ibid.

[17] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[18] Kirby, *Digimodernism*.

youth are experiencing the world differently, noting that new media technologies offer an increased sense of freedom and control rather than the mechanical alienation and impersonal predetermination that many feared new media would bring. He also discusses the transformation in how knowledge and information is being perceived by digital youth, with research taking more collaborative forms, and linguistic flexibility emerging to fit specific situations. Digital youths, Samuels argues, are creating a new way for education to occur, but schools are resistant to digital innovations because these innovations do not fit a traditional, book-centered learning model. This in turn creates a tension between traditional, individual-centered education models, and a newer collaborative/distributive model. Samuels goes on to suggest some postmodern theories can be used to undermine the traditional, or modernist, educational practices—but he also notes that postmodernism fails to account for digital youths' combination of automation and autonomy, and thus proposes a shift to automodernity.[19]

Before expanding on automodernism, Samuels critically examines postmodernism, focusing on what he defines as four forms of postmodernity. The first is multiculturalism, the second is social constructivism, the third is a cultural model of remix, and the fourth is deconstructionism or poststructuralism. Once he establishes this postmodern history, he discusses strategies for helping digital youths see the social influences that effect the world, warning against the dangers of theories that do not promote stability. He delves into how cultural diversity is tied to postmodern methods of

[19] Robert Samuels, "Auto-Modernity after Postmodernism: Autonomy and Automation in Culture, Technology, and Education," in *Digital Youth, Innovation, and the Unexpected*, ed. Tara McPherson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 219-240.

education, noting that educators tend to make the assumption that networked

collaboration will equate with acceptance of cultural diversity and social responsibility,

even though the opposite is likely true. Further shortcomings of postmodern theories stem

from the fact that the modern to postmodern shift is based on a linear understanding of

historic development. Students are also likely to resist postmodern theories because the

theories do not align with their lived experiences, and Samuels argues that we should use

student resistance to these theories to better understand the theories' problems rather than

simply casting the theories aside. Samuels suggest that education should strive to

integrate postmodern theories with students' experiences.[20]

Samuels then begins to discuss automation and autonomy. He draws links

between psychological investigations of autonomy and his idea of automodernism He

retouches on postmodern theories and how they fail to account for automation and

autonomy, noting that the phenomena of globalized media is often not taken into account.

Samuels discusses automodernity in depth, defining it as the combination of automation

and autonomy. He outlines a "history" of automodernism, citing the automobile as the

precursor to automodern modes of being. Samuels defines the personal computer as

automodern since, like cars, the PC creates ways of controlling one's space and social

interactions, though this creates a bit of a paradox of avoiding public spaces while

accessing public information. He further explains how new technologies are replacing

social public realms with private realms, which he believes is fueled by the

automation/autonomy combo of automodernism.[21] The internet further expands the

---

[20] Ibid.

[21] While there may be a critique of Samuels' usage of "private/public spaces" in regards to automation, he
does not elaborate or address this. As critique and investigation of automodernism beyond establishing the

automodern because it figures time and space differently, moving towards a more globalized work, which Samuels argues increases a move for equal rights and rejections of prejudices at the cost of a decrease in sensitivity to cultural and ethnic differences. Samuels then goes deeply into the conflicting areas of automodernism, noting the inherent complexity of the automodern is not as simple as a pros/cons binary. Automodernity may increase a tolerance for cultural differences, but, on a different level, may also lead to a denial of those same cultural differences. Samuels also discusses the automated autonomy of search engines, blog sites, and other online tools which offer personal freedom of expression from a limited set of presets. Beyond the PC, Samuels notes that other automodern devices include the iPod (which automates and autotomizes music), and the cell phone (which acts as a convergence of other automodern devices).[22]

Samuels proposes potential future uses for automodernism in education, suggesting that educators have to recognize the emerging combo of automation and autonomy and create new teaching methods for a more reflective and collaborative style of education. Educators likewise have to understand how social media functions and will function, and attempt to combine students' personal interests with publically-minded activities. If educators understand new technologies, then they can use them to critically engage their students. Likewise, educators need to develop new modes of learning and interaction based upon a model of critical new media literacy, as this will help to move the automodern back into public spaces, though Samuels does not address the

---

origin of Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism is far beyond the scope of this thesis, I will not offer or expand upon such critiques, though future scholarship is certainly free to do so.

[22] Samuels, "Auto-Modernity…"

complications regarding the definition of "public" and "private" spaces, nor does he address the fact that social media website are privately owned and are treated as private property at least by the American legal system.[23]

Altermodernism

Nicholas Bourriaud introduced his ideas for altermodernism in the 2009 Tate Triennial. Bourriaud presents a discussion around the end of the postmodern era, which is giving way to an emerging global altermodernism which stems from a synthesis of modernism and post-colonialism, though he does not directly address the social and political implications of "post-colonialism." Bourriaud suggests that we have entered an age of globalization, and this likewise affects how we communicate and travel. According to Bourriaud, his sense of globalization likely stems from the dissolution of borders between countries and the expansion of technology, though Bourriaud did not address these factors specifically in the source I was using when attempting to locate information about altermodernism. Bourriaud also believes there is no center globally speaking, and the world exists in varying states and degrees of modernity.

Bourriaud suggests that artists are now beginning their art from a globalized state of culture, with a new sense of universalism born from translation, subtitling, and dubbing. Cultural exchanges and examinations of history are leading to an evolution of how we view and inhabit the world, with our individual lives playing out against the backdrop of the world at large. In this way, emerging artist have to reconfigure modernity

---

[23] Ibid.

to fit the globalized present. Altermodernism rises out of this global context and ushers in an era of universal subtitling. Bourriaud does not specifically state that we currently occupy this era, so much as we may be moving towards it, however the assumption that subtitling will become universal us extremely optimistic and doesn't address how current power structures and hegemonic social constructs may inhibit this.[24]

Bourriaud also discusses how there is a new sense of travel, especially a sense of travelling through signs, where the creation of the work is a journey in itself. He does not address factors such as who is privileged to travel, and the benefits or detriments of travel as tourism, tied in part to the implications of travel as a privileged. Bourriaud instead focuses on the effects of increased and open travel on art, believing that altermodern art will read like a hypertext, offering a journey which artists and audience can travel through. Bourriaud believes that the altermodern artist is free to travel, and shouldn't be tied to their origins, though he again doesn't touch on the questions of who is free to travel and who can truly be unaffected by their origins when creating art or traveling through the world.[25]

A Brief Aside

The purpose of this thesis is not to compare and contrast or even offer an in-depth critique and investigation of these alternate post-postmodern ideas. Rather, they help to understand the extant post-postmodern ideas Vermeulen and van den Akker attempted to

---

[24] Nicholas Bourriaud, "Altermodern explained: manifesto," *Tate,* https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/altermodern/altermodern-explain-altermodern/altermodern-explained (11/3/19).

[25] Ibid.

work from when discussing metamodernism. Future research projects and scholarship may delve into the critiques of each of these, and offer a deeper look into the overlap, strengths, and weaknesses of the various post-postmodern movements and ideas which have been proposed.

Following Metamodernism

The following section summarizes various authors from different disciplines who have built upon Vermeulen and van den Akker's model of metamodernism, whether to use metamodernism as a tool for analysis or to critique the shortcomings. The works are from a variety of different fields of research and study, offering an interdisciplinary way of investigating how metamodernism has been used. It was primarily from studying these works that I was able to build an understanding of the breadth of metamodernism and develop my own metamodern techniques for narrative analysis. The following have been grouped by year of publication, working from the oldest works to the most recent works.

I will also note that the purpose of this section is *not* to synthesize and apply the works of previous scholars to my own interpretation and application of metamodern techniques for narrative analyses, but rather to offer a *summary* of the research I conducted which allowed me to synthesize the later sections of this thesis and actually conduct this thesis's case study. While I might offer asides about how a scholar expanded the usage of a recurring technique, such as oscillation, or explain why I haven't chosen to follow the thought processes of a particular scholar or scholars, the primary purpose of this literature review is to offer a foundation of research for the thesis. As a side note, I

researched how previous scholars have applied metamodernism to various forms of media as a means of identifying recurring metamodern sensibilities that appear in disparate media. Doing so allowed me to construct the six metamodern narrative techniques I later define by selecting recurring sensibilities that were not inherently tied to one format of creative expression, suggesting that they were more applicable as metamodern sensibilities.

After the publication of "Notes on metamodernism," Luke Turner published a webpage titled "The Metamodernist Manifesto." Turner attempts to make a manifesto for metamodernism by outlining eight points which define metamodern living and may be used to break away from modernism and postmodernism. While the abstracted language of the manifesto does not make specific methods for investigating or practicing metamodern immediately clear, it is one of the earlier attempts at establishing techniques for seeking a metamodern praxis.[26] I did not draw heavily from this site when developing my own techniques, as the "manifesto" format did not lend itself well to deriving techniques for narrative analysis.

A website called *Notes on Metamodernism* was set up for a series short articles written by Vermeulen and van den Akker, and other, often anonymous, authors. The articles, such as "Strategies of the metamodern," work to expand the initial "Notes on

---

[26] Luke Turner, "Metamodernist // Manifesto," *The Metamodernist Manifesto*, http://www.metamodernism.org/ (11/3/19).

metamodernism" article by discussing various metamodern techniques used in the arts.[27]
Of the articles I read, many of the techniques, such as oscillation and a return to
earnestness, overlapped with—and were discussed in greater detail with stronger
application to creative analysis—in other scholarship which I will summarize shortly.

In 2014 David James and Urmila Seshagiri also proposed a theory of
metamodernism in their paper "Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and
Revolution." While they used the term metamodernism, they were not referring to
Vermeulen and van den Akker's proposal of metamodernism. James and Seshagiri do not
reference or acknowledge Vermeulen and van den Akker in this paper, and instead focus
on defining their usage of metamodernism as a literary return to modernist techniques.
Therefore, while the same term was used, a different methodology was proposed. This
has caused some confusion and debate about *what* metamodernism is, and as such I
would like to take a moment to discuss James and Seshagiri's metamodernism to
understand how it diverges from Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism. James
and Seshagiri look deeply into the legacy of modernism, noting that contemporary fiction
offers a look into the reconstruction of modernist practices. They propose their own
definition of metamodernism, and explore how metamodern fiction informs current
debates about transitory literature. The expansion and contraction of spatial and temporal
studies extends into this "new modernism" in a literary sense. However, they note that it
is difficult to track metamodern strains in literature, as contemporary fictions are built on
modernism but also complicate it.[28] Because their theory of metamodernism is situated in

---

[27] "Strategies of the metamodern," Notes on Metamodernism,
http://www.metamodernism.com/2010/08/01/strategies-of-the-metamodern/ (12/8/19).

[28] David James and Urmila Seshagiri, "Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and Revolution," *PMLA*
Vol. 129, No. 1 (2014), 87-100.

a creative "return to modernism" I will not be using this definition of metamodernism in my thesis. It is possible that there may be similarities between Vermeulen and van den Akker's use of metamodernism, and the return to modernist techniques proposed by James and Seshagiri, but this potential reconciliation is not the focus of this thesis and will not be explored, though it may prove to be an avenue of future research for scholars interested in "metamodernism(s)" as a post-postmodern movement. Most scholars who acknowledged both Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism, and James and Seshagiri's metamodernism in their papers differentiate the two by including either "Vermeulen and van den Akker" or "James and Seshagiri" in the phrase discussing either duo's metamodernism, and did not create shortened labels such as "metamodernism (2012)" and "metamodernism (2014)" or else, "metamodernism (V.vdA)" and "metamodernism (J.U.)"—as I am not be using James and Seshagiri's metamodernism beyond this subsection, I will not be creating new labels as a means of shorthand to differentiate between the two. I am merely acknowledging James and Seshagiri as a means of reflecting the breadth of my research for this thesis.

Alison Gibbons wrote ""Take that you intellectuals!" and "kaPOW!": Adam Thirlwell and the Metamodernist Future of Style," in which Gibbons discusses how the postmodern era has passed, and gives an overview of various scholarship discussing the end of postmodernism. Gibbons then relates Vermeulen and van den Akker's article on metamodernism to other theorists, tying metamodernism's concern with global ethics and metamodern writers to a new sense of justice. Gibbons offers metamodern techniques for analyzing the works of Adam Thirlwell, specifically *Kapow!* Gibbons discusses the ideas of heterochrony, mixing of language, and the metamodern dissolution of boundaries, which I will discuss in greater depth later during my techniques section. Gibbons also

covers metamodern techniques for code-switching, ways of utilizing the reader's point of

view, and "ethical kitsch," using the analysis of *Kapow!* to offer an example of the

proposed techniques.[29] Gibbons offers a plethora of techniques for analyzing metamodern

narrative, many of which I will discuss in greater detail during my techniques section

later in this thesis.

A short article in *Frieze* magazine titled "The Art of Distraction," by Tom

Morton, briefly discusses the idea of metamodernism in performative art, tying it to

practices of endurance art. Unlike earlier forms of endurance art, metamodern endurance

art seeks to test the endurance of not only the artist, but also the audience.[30] The brevity

of this article, and the lack of scholarship linking metamodernist sensibilities with

contemporary endurance art made it difficult to utilize this technique for further

application to narrative analysis, though a deeper investigation into the topic may provide

for the subject of future metamodern research.

In 2015 Vermeulen and van den Akker revisited metamodernism in "Utopia, Sort

of: A Case Study in Metamodernism." In this essay they investigate the unexpected

reemergence of utopia as a narrative tool alongside a new sense of empathy, a

reinvigorated constructive engagement, a re-appreciation of narrative, and a return to

craftship.[31] They focus this essay on examining the practices of David Thorpe (who's

appropriation of postmodernism conventions work to create a sense of community),

---

[29] Alison Gibbons, ""That that you intellectuals!" and "kaPOW!": Adam Thirlwell and the Metamodernist Future of Style," *Studia Neophilogica* Vol. 87 (2015), 29-43.

[30] Tom Morton, "The Art of Distraction," *Frieze: Contemporary Art and Culture*, No. 167 (2014): 13.

[31] "Craftship" is the term used by Vermeulen and van den Akker; I have echoed the usage of this term to accurately summarize this paper.

Ragnar Kjartansson (who uses postmodern irony to generate sincerity), and Paula Doepfner (who's use of postmodern melancholy invokes hope). Vermeulen and van den Akker argue that the new focus on utopia is a shift from the postmodern to the metamodern. They also discuss the importance of utopia for the metamodern generation.[32] This article in particular offers some useful ways of thinking about the ways in which metamodern sensibilities often "return to hope" but the discussion of utopia offers some challenges which I critique in greater depth during the techniques section of this thesis.

Seth Abramson posted "Ten Basic Principles of Metamodernism" which proposed ten techniques for understanding and identifying metamodern trends in media. These techniques stem from Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism, but also diverge away from Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism, working to expand the idea of what metamodernism can be. The techniques Abramson identifies include metamodernism as negotiation between modernism and postmodernism, the shift to dialogue instead of dialect, the use of paradox, juxtaposition, the collapse of distances, the existence and overlap of multiple subjectivities, collaboration, simultaneity and generative ambiguity, an optimistic response to tragedy via a cautious return to metanarratives, and a shift to interdisciplinarity.[33] Abramson followed this article up with a second article titled, "Five more Basic Principles of Metamodernism" in which he

[32] Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, "Utopia, Sort of: A Case Study in Metamodernism," *Studia Neophilogica* Vol. 87 (2015), 55-67.

[33] Seth Abramson, "Tem Basic Principles of Metamodernism," *HuffPost*, posted 4/27/15, updated December 6, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ten-key-principles-in-met_b_7143202 (12/8/19).

further expanded the techniques to include reconstruction instead of deconstruction, engagement instead of exhibitionism, effect as well as affect, walllessness and borderlessness, and flexible intertextuality.[34] I discuss several of these ideas in more depths during my techniques section.

Vermeulen and van den Akker posted "Misunderstandings and clarification" to *Notes on Metamodernism* as a response to some of the different interpretations of their article "Notes on metamodernism." In this article, they acknowledge that different interpretations are inevitable and welcome, but wish to clarify what they specifically meant when they attempted to define metamodernism. Vermeulen and van den Akker define what metamodernism is *not*—stating that metamodernism is not a philosophy, movement, program, aesthetic register, visual strategy, or literary technique—although other scholars have used metamodernism for these purposes. They reiterate that metamodernism, as they initially intended, is a structure of feeling, and that the term is to be used for historic purposes. However, they also acknowledge that, since the term "metamodernism" was not their neologism,[35] scholars should be allowed to use and adapt it as they need, but that these uses and adaptations will be divergent from, and therefore be inherently different than, the metamodernism specifically proposed by Vermeulen and van den Akker.[36] This once more raises the question of whether we need a label to

---

[34] Seth Abramson, "Five More Basic Principles of Metamodernism (VIDEOS)," *HuffPost*, posted 5/14/15, updated May 12, 2016, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/five-more-basic-principle_b_7269446 (12/8/19).

[35] The term "metamodernism" was first used by Mas'ud Zavarzadeh in his paper "The Apocalyptic Fact and the Eclipse of Fiction in Recent American Prose Narratives," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1975): 69-83.

[36] Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, "Misunderstandings and clarification," *Notes on Metamodernism*, posted June 3, 2015, http://www.metamodernism.com/2015/06/03/misunderstandings-and-clarifications/ (12/8/19).

differentiate Vermeulen and van den Akker's usage of "metamodernism" from all other uses, but as every scholarly paper which I have read assumes that the use of metamodernism as a term will naturally differ from Vermeulen and van den Akker and every other scholar who uses the term (with or without acknowledging this natural divergence), without creating a special label to denote one "metamodernism" from "a different metamodernism" I will continue to attach Vermeulen and van den Akker's name to the term when I am specifically referring to their usage of the term, and the names of any other scholars when I am referring to that scholars usage of the term, as this appears to be the standard procedure established by other scholars who have discussed and investigated metamodernism before me. For the purposes of my thesis, I acknowledge that I will diverge away from the metamodernism defined by Vermeulen and van den Akker, as much of the scholarship I studied and used to help me develop metamodern narrative techniques likewise diverged in order to use metamodernism as a means for creative expression and analysis.

Ciprian Baciu, Muşata Bocoş, and Corina Baciu-Urzică wrote "Metamodernism – A Conceptual Foundation" which seeks to establish a foundation for metamodernism. They attempt this by exploring the existing relationships between modernism, postmodernism, and metamodernism as both successive and overlapping movements. In order to establish a history of metamodernism, the authors discuss postmodernism and explore how postmodernism has been defined. This allows them to deeply investigate metamodernism as they seek to define a metamodernism vision through questioning, and

short examples of analysis.[37] This provided a useful example of how to compare and contrast metamodern sensibilities and techniques against and alongside postmodern and modern sensibilities and techniques, and helped me to visualize a way to construct the table which appears at the end of the techniques section.

Daniel Southward wrote "Dealing with the creative/critical divide: these men as readers simply cannot know what it is to write." Southward suggests that the opposition between creative writers and critical theories is a needless, forced binary that is not helpful to creative researchers who are both creative writers *and* theorists who study creative writing. The oppositional binary forces writers to choose between creative or critical outputs, which is not useful for academia. He proposes a third option which offers a metamodern oscillation between these two seemingly opposite poles, suggesting a methodology to explore both creative and critical writing. Southward provides an example of this by discussing the process of his own creative work. He argues metamodernism provides techniques for how to occupy both roles, even when doing so seems impossible.[38] Southward's discussion of being both creator and research for the same field helps develop an understanding of the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries as well as metamodern paradox, which I discuss further in the techniques section.

---

[37] Ciprian Baciu, Muşata Bocoş, and Corina Baciu-Urzică, "Metamodernism – A Conceptual Foundation," *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 209 (2015), 33-38.

[38] Daniel Southward, "Dealing with the creative/critical divide: these men as readers simply cannot know what it is to write," *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* Vol 13, No. 2 (2016), 273-280.

Matthew E. Lemberger and Tamiko L. Lemberger-Truelove wrote "Bases for a

More Socially Just Humanistic Praxis" which proposes five techniques for forming a

basis of a socially just humanistic praxis inspired from metamodern interpretations of

human psychology. They explore how social justice praxis requires a variety of tactics to

meet the needs of oppressed individuals and groups. The five techniques they offer are

thus: first, while all forms of injustice should be challenged, the manner of challenge

should change based on conditions needed to diminish the injustice; second, a humanistic

social justice practitioner should not blindly adopt any ideology or practice; third, social

justice pertains to regulation more often than it pertains to redistribution; fourth,

oppression is real, but the experience of oppression should not be the defining trait of any

human; and finally, empathy and compassion are required of any humanist practitioner.[39]

Their discussion of techniques for applications of metamodernism to social justice was

surprisingly helpful for developing an understanding of one of the key components of

metamodern reconstruction. Specifically, how Lemberger and Lemberger-Truelove

discuss their fifth technique, the cultivation of empathy and compassion, is echoed in

metamodern reconstruction through narrative resolution stemming from communication

and collaboration rather than annihilation. Lemberger and Lemberger-Truelove also offer

alternate applications for metamodern oscillation.

Greg Dember's article, "After Postmodernism: Eleven Metamodern Methods in

the Arts" offers several techniques for understanding and identifying metamodernism.

---

[39] Matthew E. Lemberger and Tamiko L. Lemberger-Truelove, "Bases for a More Socially Just Humanistic Praxis," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 56, No. 6 (2016), 571-580.

Dember addresses Vermeulen and van den Akker's theory for metamodernism, and establishes a summary of modernism and postmodernism before proposing eleven non-exhaustive "methods" which artists may employ or which may be used to investigate a metamodern aesthetic. These eleven methods are: meta-reflexivity, narrative double-frame, oscillation between opposites, the quirky, the tiny (metamodern minimalism), the epic (metamodern maximilism), constructive pastiche, ironesty, normcore, overprojection, and meta-cute. Dember also notes that he may be leaping to conclusions in listing these as methods for metamodern work, and suggests that the metamodern sensibility will exist regardless of which names are applied to it.[40] While my own techniques diverge a great deal from Dember's, this was one of the first articles I discovered in my research process which attempted to identify techniques for cultivating and identifying metamodern sensibilities in create works.

Michel Clasquin-Johnson's article "Towards a metamodern academic study of religion and more religiously informed metamodernism" builds upon Abramson's metamodern techniques to propose future metamodern avenues for religious research and study. Clasquin-Johnson discusses how religious studies have been influenced by various philosophies and methodologies over the years, and proposes that metamodernism likewise offers a new way to study religion, as well as theological studies. Specifically, Clasquin-Johnson is interested in how metamodernism can be used to understand emerging religious developments, and how it can assist in the convergence of fields

---

[40] Greg Dember, "After Postmodernism: Eleven Metamodern Methods in the Arts," *WiM on Med*, posted April 17, 2018, https://medium.com/what-is-metamodern/after-postmodernism-eleven-metamodern-methods-in-the-arts-767f7b646cae (11/3/19).

within religious academia. As metamodernism is a negotiation between modernism and postmodernism, it may be used to investigate the similarities and differences of the modern-postmodern clashes within religious studies. Likewise, the metamodern juxtaposition of irony and earnestness is practical for a praxis of religious study, and metamodern methods may be used to foster more instances of collaboration in future religious studies. Ultimately, Clasquin-Johnson believes that the simultaneity, metanarratives, and interdisciplinary nature of metamodernism is not only tied to religious study practice, but can be used to expand religious studies beyond their current boundaries.[41] How Clasquin-Johnson explores and expands beyond Abramson's metamodern principles was useful for understanding how I could differentiate my own interpretation of metamodernism, and Clasquin-Johnson offers discussions of several techniques which I used to develop my own metamodern narrative techniques, which I expand upon further in the techniques section.

Nick Lavery's "Consciousness and the Extended Mind in the "Metamodernist" Novel" looks at Will Self's *Umbrella* and Ali Smith's *How to be Both* from a contemporary philosophical, as well as a metamodern, perspective. Oscillation is tied to Lavery's understanding of these works, as he argues that the works draw a relation between cognition and affect. From this Lavery suggests a model of the mind which oscillates at different levels of consciousness. He offers an analysis of both works to explore this oscillation of states of mind, looking at how the text of the works is used to indicate metamodern oscillation. Lavery argues that oscillation is fundamental to how the

---

[41] Michel Clasquin-Johnson, "Towards a metamodern academic study of religion and a more religious informed metamodernism," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Vol. 73, No. 3 (2017).

mind works, connecting metamodernism with a contemporary framework of the mind. In this way, Lavery works to expand the idea of metamodernism to include various conscious and subconscious states of mind.[42] Lavery offers yet another look at how oscillation can be used to evoke the metamodern, and the study he offers gives a strong example of how metamodern sensibilities can be used to analyze literature.

Nick Bentley's "Trailing Postmodernism: David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, Zadie Smith's *NW*, and Metamodernism" offers a thorough debate about how metamodernism has impacted the contemporary novel and other new developments in fiction writing. Through an analysis of *Cloud Atlas* and *NW*, Bentley argues that while new fiction shifts slightly from postmodern aesthetics, especially in the shift to reconstruction, new fiction does not necessarily break from postmodernism entirely. He challenges the assertion that *Cloud Atlas* and *NW* are metamodern works. Bentley ultimately suggests that it may be too early to label a post-postmodern era, and that metamodernism may in fact just be a new subset of postmodernism.[43] Bentley's article is useful for understanding some of the limits of metamodernism, as well as for identifying techniques which are emerging in new works regardless if said work has been labelled as metamodern or not.

Robin Vogelzang's "The Likeness of Modernism in Marilynne Robinson's Fiction" examines how modernism and postmodernism functions in new fictions by deeply examining Robinson's fiction and use of metaphor. Specifically Vogelzang is interested in how Robinson's works are related to early 20th century modernism, but does

---

[42] Nick Lavery, "Consciousness and the Extended Mind in the "Metamodernist" Novel," *English Studies* Vol. 99, No. 7 (2018), 755-765.

[43] Nick Bentley, "Trailing Postmodernism: David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, Zadie Smith's *NW*, and the Metamodern," *English Studies* Vol. 99, No. 7 (2018), 723-743.

not assume the works are a response to postmodernism. This is supported by a deeper analysis of Robinson's works, which especially looks at how metaphor is utilized within the works. Vogelzang does note that Robinson's works may be viewed as metamodern, especially noting how Robinson's metaphor usage is tied to the metamodern idea of oscillation.[44] This offers ways of tying techniques of literary analysis, such as investigating the narrative significance of metaphor and how it manifests within narrative, to metamodern sensibilities.

Michial Farmer's paper "Stay Young, Stay Lonely: Nostalgia and Spirituality in Okkervil River's *The Silver Gymnasium*" uses Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism to discuss metamodern oscillation, and relates this sense of oscillation to Will Sheff's album, *The Silver Gymnasium*. Farmer offers a deeper look into nostalgia as a creative technique, and offers ways in which nostalgia is used in metamodernism. Farmer is specifically interested in how Sheff oscillates between distrusting and indulging in nostalgia, and analyzes Sheff's album to investigate how it invites the listener to self-examine the subject of nostalgia, as well as how Sheff interrogates nostalgia. Farmer argues that the album is a record of self-creation, which metamodern sensibilities can be used to understand.[45] This further expands the usage and versatility of oscillation as a metamodern technique for evoking metamodern sensibilities in creative works.

---

[44] Robin Vogelzang, "The Likeness of Modernism in Marilynne Robinson's Fiction," *English Studies* Vol. 99, No. 7 (2018), 744-754.

[45] Michial Farmer, "Stay Young, Stay Lonely: Nostalgia and Spirituality in Okkervil River's *The Silver Gymnasium*," *Popular Music and Society* Vol. 41, No. 2 (2018), 119-131.

Tom Drayton's "The Listening Theatre: A Metamodern Politics of Performance" discusses trends in contemporary performance that are socially and politically engaging. Drayton argues that these emerging trends are tied to emerging trends of metamodernism. He examines how oscillation is used by Lung and Feat.Theatre,[46] two UK-based theater companies. Drayton examines the work of these two theaters, and looks at how they respond to political and economic effects on the artists, suggesting that the rise of these conflicts across Britain directly affect the artists and theater companies. In this way Drayton also seeks to lay the foundation for future discussions of performance by the millennial generation, connecting concepts of the metamodern with the millennial, which he explored by examining some of the performances held by the theaters. He emphasizes that there is an evolution of contemporary theater which can be explained through the lens of metamodernism, offering several techniques for understanding contemporary theater.[47] Drayton offers a variety of techniques for understanding and identifying metamodern sensibilities, which I will expand upon in the techniques section, while also exploring and emphasizing the importance of oscillation to metamodern works.

James Brunton wrote "Whose (Meta)modernism?: Metamodernism, Race, and the Politics of Failure" which critically looks at the shortcomings of the metamodern notion of "failure" as proposed by Vermeulen and van den Akker. Specifically, Brunton discusses how the poetry of contemporary black American women challenges both

---

[46] The theater companies are literally named "LUNG" (though Drayton uses "Lung" in his paper) and "Feat.Theatre". For more information, see both: "About Us," LUNG, https://www.lungtheatre.co.uk/about-us (5/11/20); and, "Feat.Theatre," arts depot, https://www.artsdepot.co.uk/feattheatre (5/11/20).

[47] Tom Drayton, "The Listening Theatre: A Metamodern Politics of Performance," *Performance Philosophy* Vol. 4, No. 1 (2018), 170-187.

metamodernism and the idea that accepting failure should be a central attitude of metamodern art and literature. As an emerging term, "metamodernism" should be interrogated, and Brunton critically scrutinizes Vermeulen and van den Akker's focus on failure, questioning the privilege associated with being allowed to fail as an aesthetic. Brunton looks deeply at Harryette Mullen's *Trimmings* and *Sleeping with the Dictionary*, focusing on the role of race within the narratives, as well as the critical challenge to metamodernism—in Mullen's works, failure is not romanticized in any way, it is simply a negative aspect that should not be exalted for the sake of aesthetics. Brunton also looks at Evie Shockley's poetry anthology, *the new black*, which explicitly discusses race and gender, criticizing the Obama administration's shortcomings. Shockley's use of poetry further makes the text critically engaging by utilizing methods seen in modernism, but not necessarily functioning as metamodern texts. Brunton expands on how metamodernism can operate as politicized nostalgia, and argues that we should strive for a livable now rather than a deferred, impossible future utopia.[48] Brunton's critique is especially useful for developing an understanding of the underlying privileges in Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism that are often co-opted by scholars using and expanding the idea of metamodernism. As I will expand upon later, I kept Brunton's critique in mind when crafting the definitions of the techniques, specifically the "as if" mindset, in an attempt to supplant Vermeulen and van den Akker's romanticization of failure and the inherent privilege romanticized failure stems from.

---

[48] James Brunton, "Whose (Meta)modernism?: Metamodernism, Race, and the Politics of Failure," *Journal of Modern Literature* Vol. 41, No. 3 (2018), 60-76.

Jan Alber and Alice Bell wrote "The importance of being earnest again: fact and diction in contemporary narratives across media." They discuss the passage of postmodernism and the debates about what comes after. The authors then introduce Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism, stating that it is a media-comprehensive theory, but do not focus specifically on metamodernism, instead opting to look at the unnamed "post-postmodern" moment. They note that postmodern works still exist, but that generally works have shifted and become more self-reflexive. Brian McHale's methods for navigating modernism and postmodernism are discussed to augment how contemporary works of fiction can be investigated. The authors then discuss narratives across media that play with the divide between fact and fiction, investigating how ontological ambiguity functions in creative work. They offer an analysis of works which utilize the mixing of fact and fiction to these seemingly "post-postmodern" ends. While Alber and Bell do not immediately subscribe to metamodernism, their discussion of "post-postmodern" creative techniques is useful for developing an understanding of metamodern creative techniques, as the two overlap.[49] Their discussion of how postmodern conventions are being used for not-postmodern ends is especially useful for understanding how the return to earnestness functions as a technique to evoke hope in metamodern works. I discuss this usage of postmodern conventions, as well as several other techniques discussed by Alber and Bell, in greater depth throughout the techniques section.

---

[49] Jan Alber and Alice Bell, "The importance of being earnest again: fact and fiction in contemporary narratives across media," *European Journal of English Studies* Vol. 23, No. 2 (2019), 121-135.

Finally, Stephen Knudsen discusses the metamodern shift in the realm of fine art painting in "Beyond Postmodernism. Putting a Face on Metamodernism Without the Easy Clichés." He offers a look at metamodernism through the lens of painting, using Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* to understand modernist sensibilities in painting (noting the idealism, heroism, and hope present despite the wreckage of the scene, evoked in part through the active and dynamic posture of the subjects), and Eric Fischl's *The Old Man's Boat and the Old Man's Dog* to understand postmodernist sensibilities in painting (noting the complete apathy of the subjects despite the danger of the coming storm, evoked in part through passive posture). Knudsen then discusses *School of the Americas* painted by Bo Bartlett, which cannot be understood through a purely postmodern or modern lens. The painting at first appears postmodern in the use of very passive subjects (people who are laying on the ground and don't appear to be actively engaged with anything), but the context of the painting, specifically the protest which is references, evokes a sense of the modern (the subjects are in fact, actively and even heroically protesting). Thus, postmodern visual conventions are used to almost-modern ends, which Knudsen believes creates a strongly metamodern painting. Knudsen uses metamodern techniques, focusing how Bartlett invokes a sense of hope and resistance through postmodern devices, to analyses *School of the Americas* and discuss the shift to metamodernism in the fine arts.[50] Several of the techniques Knudsen utilizes, such as oscillation and the usage of both postmodern and modern conventions, were used to help discuss and define the techniques I used for my case study.

---

[50] Stephen Knudsen, "Beyond Postmodernism. Putting a Face on Metamodernism Without the Easy Clichés," *ARTPULSE Magazine*, http://artpulsemagazine.com/beyond-postmodernism-putting-a-face-on-metamodernism-without-the-easy-cliches (12/8/19).

A Brief Overview of Fandom Studies

Often credited with the creation of the term "acafan,"[51] media studies scholar

Henry Jenkins has been majorly influential to the development and expansion of new

media studies. While Jenkins' contributions to media studies are many and varied, for the

purposes of my thesis I would like to draw attention to his work in fandom studies. In

1992 he published *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* which

looked into the culture of the *Star Trek* fandom from both a fan's and academic's

perspective.[52] It was one of the first major studies of fandom culture, and laid the

groundwork for his later works into fandom and emerging media studies, such as

Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide, which touched on fandom as

well as impact of merging new media technologies.[53]

There are several significant fan studies scholars who have made numerous

contributions to fandom studies, but I would like to draw attention to Karen Hellekson

and Kristina Busse, who are the founding coeditors of *Transformative Works and*

Cultures,[54] an international, peer-reviewed journal focusing on media and fandom

studies.[55] Hellekson and Busse have collaborated on books such as *Fan Fiction and Fan*

---

[51] A portmanteau of "academic" and "fan," see following: Henry Jenkins, Erica Rand, and Karen Hellekson, "Acafandom and Beyond: Week Two, Part One," Henry Jenkins Blog, posted June 20, 2011, http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2011/06/acafandom_and_beyond_week_two.html (11/3/2019).

[52] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[53] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

[54] Karen Hellekson, Russel Blackford, and Graham J. Murphy, "New Journal: Transformative Works and Cultures," *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 35, No. 2 (2008), 360-362.

[55] "About the Journal," Transformative Works and Cultures, https://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/about (11/3/19).

Communities in the Age of the Internet[56] and *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*,[57] as well as contributing to academic studies of fandom and media individually.

      Transformative Works and Cultures is published by the Organization for Transformative Works, a non-profit organization which works to preserve the history of fanworks and fan cultures.[58] The Organization for Transformative Works also created *Archive of Our Own*, which was awarded the Hugo Award for Best Related Work in 2019.[59] These are both important to this thesis, as I used the professional standards of *Transformative Works and Cultures* to define the ethical scoping of my case study, and *Archive of Our Own* as the primary source for my case study, which I will discuss in depth during the next section.

---

[56] Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006).

[57] Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014).

[58] "About the OTW," Organization for Transformative Works, https://www.transformativeworks.org/about_otw/ (11/3/19).

[59] Cheryl, "2019 Hugo Awards Announced," The Hugo Awards, posted August 19, 2019, http://www.thehugoawards.org/2019/08/2019-hugo-awards-announced/ (11/3/19).

The following contains a written explanation of my process for scoping, a brief overview of my past work, the development process of the six techniques I propose, and my intended outcomes for the research conducted in this thesis.

Scoping

The follow subsections explain my process for scoping the selection of metamodernism as my narrative lens, and the selection of the fanfiction for my case study.

Scoping my Topic – Metamodernism

My thesis seeks to use a metamodern lens for narrative analyses, building from the idea of metamodernism first proposed by Vermeulen and van den Akker. As metamodernism is a broad and unwieldy topic, I am focusing on identifying metamodern narrative techniques and applying them in a case study. I chose to focus on this application of metamodernism because I believe identifying metamodern narrative techniques will better cultivate an understanding of the possible manifestations of metamodern works and offer potential threads for future metamodernist applications. Therefore, I have chosen not to compare and contrast metamodernism against other

proposed post-postmodern movements, nor will I attempt to write an emerging history of metamodernism. I have also chosen not to argue that metamodernism is definitely what comes after postmodernism, as I understand that the future is an unwoven tapestry and that any of the proposed post-postmodern movements—perhaps even one yet to be proposed—may instead define the future once it has come to pass into history. I am working with the tools and theories present to work out techniques for understanding emerging narratives, and have chosen metamodernism because it provides me with a potentially useful set of narrative techniques which I wish to explore further with my case study.

While I have chosen to use Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism and the scholarship which has developed this idea of metamodernism, I recognize that the term "metamodernism" has also been used by James and Seshagiri, which has caused confusion in some scholarship for what "metamodernism" is.[60] As James and Seshagiri's use of metamodernism is very different from how Vermeulen and van den Akker—and the scholars I used for my research—use metamodernism, I will not be using James and Seshagiri's definition. For the purposes of my thesis, I will not be using James and Seshagiri's metamodernism. Furthermore, my use of Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism will diverge from the initial idea proposed in "Notes on metamodernism," as my understanding of metamodernism has been informed by studying the interpretations and applications from scholars of various fields who built off of Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism before me.

---

[60] Dennis Kersten and Usha Wilbers, "Introduction: Metamodernism," *English Studies* Vol. 99, No. 7 (2018), 719-722.

The primary focus of my thesis is to conduct a case study using techniques for understanding metamodern narrative, which I will develop and identify through the study of Vermeulen and van den Akker's metamodernism, and the usage of this metamodernism by scholars following after them.

Scoping my Case Study

I am conducting a case study to investigate techniques used in metamodern narrative. I am specifically interested fanworks such as fanfiction, which appear to inherently possess many metamodern qualities. I have thus chosen to use a fanfiction, and the source media upon which it was based, to further investigate the metamodern sensibilities it may or may not possess. The following discusses my process for selecting the fanfiction used in my case study.

Scoping my Case Study – Ethics

There are several ethical grey areas surrounding the study of fandom, especially fandom within online spaces[61]. Therefore, I must define the ethical scoping and process I used to decide which fanfiction and which resources related to the work I used for my case study. The "Submissions Guidelines" of Transformative Works and Cultures outlines the following in the Permissions section: "TWC, like its parent organization, the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW), is committed to the free expression of ideas, particularly in the context of scholarly activity about derivative fan artworks.

---

[61] Kristina Busse, "The Ethics of Studying Online Fandom," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (New York: Routledge, 2017), 9-17.

Therefore, we do not require the consent, explicit or implicit, of the original author of a transformative work under discussion, such as a piece of fan fiction or a vid. All citation URLs to such texts need only be open to the public."[62] Using this guideline, I limited the selection of my case study focus to works that are publically available.

However, this was still not a stringent enough guideline to ensure the ethics of my research. As many fanworks are disseminated online, I also had to take into consideration the fact that certain online spaces, even when publically viewable, are considered private, making the public/private divide of an online space ambiguous and difficult for a researcher to navigate.[63] To avoid publically-private spaces, such as social media sites, I limited the platforms from which I can access a fanwork to sites that are specifically designed for the dissemination of creative works and/or fanworks. I specifically chose to use Archive of Our Own (henceforth referred to as AO3) as it fits the parameters of a site developed for, and devoted to, the dissemination of fanworks. Furthermore, AO3's "Terms of Service" states in Part III, Section E:

> Any information you include in your work, comment, profile, bookmark, summary, or other Content, including information about your religious views, political views or your sexual identity, or any personally identifying information such as your email address, location, or account User Name for other sites will be accessible by the general public if the Content is marked public, and by Archive users and personnel if the Content is marked accessible to Archive users only. If you save the Content in Draft form, it will be accessible by certain Archive personnel.[64]

---

[62] See "Permissions" section, "Submissions," Transformative Works and Cultures, https://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/about/submissions (11/3/19).

[63] Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, "Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research: Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee (Version 2.0)," AoIR: Association of Internet Researchers, 2012, https://aoir.org/ethics/ (11/3/19).

[64] "Terms of Service," Archive of Our Own, https://archiveofourown.org/tos (11/3/19).

This specifically states that a user of AO3 may choose make their work inaccessible to the general public. For the purposes of my research, I selected a work marked as public, thus ensuring that the work I selected was both available on a site specifically designed for the dissemination of fanworks (AO3) and public by the author's choice.

For the purpose of my case study, I am focusing on the work's narrative directly, and as such will not use any personally identifying information outside of the author's username. I will likewise not conduct any fandom-related research outside of the fanwork itself, as I am not seeking to investigate and research fandom social behaviors. I will only use the contents of the fanwork, as a publically-accessible creative work, in a case study utilizing metamodern techniques for narrative analysis.

AO3 allows for the author to write comments before and after their works, as well as for readers to post comments on the work, which the author can then respond to. This creates a paratext which extends the narrative experience of the work beyond the story itself. This paratext is different from the immediate framing paratext of print books, and likewise offers a different way of reading and experiencing the narrative. As this additional paratext is available publically with the body of the work itself, and because this paratext can affect the narrative experience, I will also be using it for my case study.

I am also using the source media that the fanwork stems from (the original video game that the fanwork was based upon) to discuss a comparison of the usage of metamodern narrative techniques between the fanwork and original narrative. Since the fanwork stems from the source media, the analysis of the source media will precede the analysis or the fanwork in the case study section. I will not draw comparisons that

criticize the narrative of either the fanwork or the source media, as this will not contribute to a discussion of metamodernist methods.

While I am not using the fandom social behaviors surrounding the source media, certain aspects which have allowed for the dissemination of the source media and the fanwork, and function as a sort of general knowledge[65] will be used if they further expand on the metamodern sensibilities of the works. It is otherwise difficult to discuss the fanwork's existence without addressing the general context of the source media it was based upon.

To summarize the ethical scoping of my case study selection: I only used a work that was publically available from AO3. I did not use any work that was only accessible to AO3 users, as the work would not be available to the general public. I did not use social media sites where the fanwork may have been discussed. While the work is an artifact of fandom, I focused on the contents of the work rather than the fandom's social behaviors. The only exception to this were widely known facts (such as availability of the source media or fan translations) which may relate to the fandom, but ultimately worked to expand upon an understanding of the metamodern sensibilities present in the fanwork and its source material. This ensured that the focus of my case study remained on exploring metamodern narrative techniques in fanfiction. As my case study is only interested in applying metamodern techniques in narrative analyses, I offered no critique of the work or its source media.

---

[65] For example, the fact that the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games' narratives are accessible to a non-Japanese audience because internet technologies allowed the Ace Attorney fandom to translate the games' narratives and share them with an English-speaking audience, or translated interviews with the games' director Shū Takumi

Scoping my Case Study – Selection

The work I chose had to fit the above guidelines, and also had to carry a certain amount of "weight" as a creative work. AO3 was awarded the Hugo Award for Best Related Work, an impressive feat not only because of the Hugo Award's prestige but also because AO3 is a collection of fiction works—usually only nonfiction collections are eligible for the Best Related Work category.[66] I therefor knew that any work I chose from AO3, especially a work published before the 2019 Hugo Award announcements, would have ties to the Hugo Awards.

As AO3 is a site mainly dedicated to fanfiction, I used techniques for classifying literary works to aid the selection of my case study. The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America offers a useful definition of categories for the Nebula Awards based on word count, which can be used as a means of understanding the scale of a work based on length. The following categories are defined as such: a short story is classified as less than 7,500 words, a novelette is 7,500-17,500 words, a novella is 17,500-40,000 words, and a novel is classified as 40,000 or more words in length.[67] Using this as a measurement, I was able to understand a work's scale through the perspective of word count. As I desired a substantial amount of text to work with, I selected a work that was "novel-length" or longer.

The work I chose was one that I have prior familiarity with, which I acknowledge lends a certain amount of personal bias to the case study selection. This also allowed me

---

[66] "Hugo Award Categories," The Hugo Awards, http://www.thehugoawards.org/hugo-categories/ (11/8/19).

[67] "Nebula Rules," Nebula Awards: Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America, https://nebulas.sfwa.org/about-the-nebulas/nebula-rules/ (11/8/19).

to select a work with which I had previously associated metamodern sensibilities, and thus allowed me to formally and deeply explore the narrative application of metamodernist sensibilities.

Based on these parameters, I chose *Things Left Forgotten*, a fanfiction based upon the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, written be AO3 user LookerDeWitt. *Things Left Forgotten* meets the ethical criteria I defined, as it was published on AO3 between January 12th and April 13th of 2018, and is accessible to the general public. The date of its publication also places it within the collection of AO3's works which were awarded the 2019 Hugo Award. The work is 86,084 words in length, making it double the minimum length required to be defined as a novel by the Nebula Awards, which provided me with a substantial amount of text to work with. I had familiarity with the work prior to reading "Notes on metamodernism," and know the author personally, allowing me to receive verbal consent to use the work for my thesis and confirming the work was not written by a minor, which further ensures the ethical selection of my case study. Of note as well, the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games are Japan-exclusive spin-offs of the Ace Attorney series, and while the games have not yet been localized they still have a Western audience, which I believe ties to metamodernist narrative techniques stemming from emerging trends in globalization. As such, I believe this fanwork carries weight as a creative work and provides a useful case study for analyzing metamodernist creative fiction.

My Background and Prior Academic Work

The following situates this thesis as an extension and continuation of my prior research projects by establishing a brief synopses of my previous studies. My background stems from a mix of art, illustration, art history, narrative, and digital studies. I currently have a BFA of Illustration and an accompanying Minor in Creative Writing, and my artistic and creative practices are deeply tied to my research practices, which stem from an interest in art history, and a fascination with narrative across various media. The majority of my creative works attempt to explore the various forms of narrative expression, such as my BFA thesis which sought to understand and expand the narrative archetypes associated with tarot through illustration. My primary tools for creative expression tend to be digital, or blend digital and traditional techniques, which fueled my interest in studying the history and philosophies tied to emerging technology. I firmly believe that creative works are interconnected with research practices, as research informs—and is informed by—creative practices, and vice versa. I tend to view research papers, such as this thesis, as a natural extension of my artistic creative practices.

Previous Studies

My own scholarly practices have not yet focused specifically on fanworks, though they have focused on new media such as video games. As I have not yet published, my works stem from research papers and essays written for college classes. In 2014, I wrote a research paper for an undergraduate "Communication and Diversity" class analyzing how race was portrayed in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, which discussed the use of race

in the game's narrative and player interaction with in-game, avatar-creation mechanics. This was my first real academic investigation into video games as subject of study, though as it was written in my early academic career it is lacking compared to the research papers I am now capable of writing. In 2016, I wrote a research paper for an undergraduate "Methods in Art History" class which discussed video games as the contemporary *gesamtkunstwerk*; I did touch on the existence of fandom in this paper, as I believe the extension of fandom beyond the video game expands video games into a more complete *gesamtkunstwerk*, though I argued the existence of fandom is not the only factor which makes video games the contemporary *gesamtkunstwerk*. In 2018, I wrote an essay for a graduate "Emergent Digital Cultures" class discussing cyborg performance in the Metroid series, which focused heavily on the player-interaction with the video game. For the same class I also wrote a paper which looked at the narrative of the anime *Little Witch Academia* and compared it to the Chthulucene as proposed by Donna Haraway. I've also discussed new media and the existence of fanworks in-class in the classes I have listed, as well as my undergraduate "Gender and Contemporary Art" and "Narrative Form and Theory" classes.

From my academic practices, I have established techniques for researching and writing about subjects and objects with relatively little pre-existing scholarship by tying new media with previously established scholarly investigation and methodology, as well as cross-examining it with related research within the topic. For example, there were no scholarly papers about *Skyrim* specifically while I was writing my initial paper in 2014, but there were papers discussing the issue of race in contemporary video games that I used to form an analysis of race within *Skyrim*.

I was introduced to the term "metamodernism" in a graduate-level Gender and Archaeology class when I asked one of my classmates, a doctoral student, about her dissertation and what sort of research she had to conduct for it. It was near the end of the quarter when she told me to look into something called "metamodernism," stating that it was "about reconstruction" and that I would probably be interested in it. The following summer I did some light, cursory research and came across "Notes on metamodernism" as well as a handful of shorter articles attempting to summarize the gist of the metamodern idea. Reading these initial articles, I felt there was something familiar about metamodernism, and began to connect it to a handful of creative narratives (of various media) which I had recently encountered.

My prior familiarity with the narrative aspects of *Things Left Forgotten* allowed me to connect the ideas of metamodernism to emerging metamodern sensibilities in fanworks. This was the initial spark which led me to further delve into metamodern studies, as I desired to know exactly what metamodernism was, how it was emerging in creative works, and how it could be identified and used to understand emerging narratives. As an artist and illustrator who also participates to some extent in the creation of fanworks, my interest in developing metamodern techniques also stems from an interest in expanding my artistic and research practices.

Development of Metamodern Techniques

I developed the six metamodern techniques used in my case study through a close reading of Vermeulen and van den Akker's "Notes on metamodernism" as well as

scholarship which sought to identify and apply metamodernist techniques for analyzing

creative works. I drew from research spanning multiple disciplines to gain an

interdisciplinary understanding of how metamodernism had been applied across different

practices, which I believe helped me develop a deeper understanding of metamodernism

and aided in the identification and application of the techniques I used for my case study.

I also looked at scholarship which criticized aspects of Vermeulen and van den

Akker's metamodernism, as I believe studying critical interpretations of metamodernism

is important for developing an understanding of how metamodernism had been

previously used. This provided me with additional viewpoints to consider while I was

constructing the definitions of the techniques I am using in my case study.

The six techniques I identify in this thesis were derived by comparing and

contrasting the interpretations and applications of metamodernism in various scholarly

research. I do not hold that these are the only techniques viable for narrative analyses,

merely that they best synthesized my research and offer a useful means for analyzing the

metamodern sensibilities in the narratives of my case study. As many scholars before me

have noted, metamodernism offers much flexibility for interpretation. This flexibility is

useful because it does not severely constrain or limit the possibilities of metamodernism,

but difficult when interpretations vary so widely as to be incomparable. That said, there

are underlying similarities in the various interpretations of metamodernism which I have

researched, and this suggests that the oscillatory nature of metamodernism works within

the flexibility as well, where flexibility is allowed and encouraged—but before it can

become too flexible, interpretations swing back to shared interpretations of metamodern

sensibilities. As such, this flexibility allows the use of my six techniques as an interpretation, and also allows for future scholars to use more or fewer techniques in similar studies of metamodern narratives.

Intended Outcomes

      The purpose of this thesis is to develop an understanding of emerging metamodern narrative sensibilities in emerging narratives, especially in nontraditional narrative forms such as fanfiction. To pursue this interest, I have identified and defined six metamodern techniques for narrative and applied them in a case study. Ideally, the techniques I propose in this thesis will also work as a means by which future scholars may further expand upon and investigate metamodernism as an emerging movement. By building upon metamodernism through a deep investigation and proposal of my own techniques, I am also seeking to expand my understanding of narrative, and further develop my own techniques for constructing creative works and conducting future research. The groundwork created by the metamodern techniques developed in this thesis will, hopefully, further become a means for future interpretation of metamodernism to emerge in scholarship and creative works.

The following offers brief synopses of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games and

Things Left Forgotten. Because of the complex nature of the games, which is later

relevant in the case study, I have also included an expanded summary of the *Dai*

Gyakuten Saiban games in the Appendix section.

Synopses of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* Games

The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games are spinoffs of the Ace Attorney series. Unlike

the contemporary setting of the main series, the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games are set

during the end of Japan's Meiji era, at the turn of the 20th century. They feature

Ryūnosuke Naruhodō, an ancestor of the main series' protagonist Phoenix Wright,[68] as

the main playable protagonist. Both games are narrated by Naruhodō, who is speaking of

the events as if reflecting on the past.

Dai Gyakuten Saiban: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Bōken, the first of the two games,

opens with Naruhodō being tried for the murder of Dr. John. H. Watson. Naruhodō must

defend himself despite never studying law because his friend, Kazuma Asōgi, will lose

the opportunity to study abroad as a defense attorney otherwise. With Asōgi's assistance,

---

[68] "Phoenix Wright" is the Western localization of the name Ryūichi Naruhodō, which is the name used in the original Japanese text. The shared family name of Naruhodō is recognizable to Japanese players as the connection between Ryūichi and Ryūnosuke.

Naruhodō is able to defend himself, and the murderer is revealed to be a British exchange student, Jezail Brett.[69] Afterwards, Asōgi convinces Naruhodō to accompany him to Great Britain for the study abroad, and smuggles Naruhodō onto the S. S. Aclaire. However, Asōgi is murdered, and Naruhodō is once more accused. With the help of Susato Mikotoba, the legal assistant sent with Asōgi, and the famous Sherlock Holmes, Naruhodō is once more able to prove his innocence. He agrees to take Asōgi's place and continues to Great Britain, using the remaining voyage to study law under Susato.[70]

When they arrive, the Chief Justice, Hart Vortex, doubts Naruhodō's abilities, and tests him by making Naruhodō defend Megundal, a rich man accused of murder. No one was willing to take Megundal's case because the prosecutor is Barok van Zieks, the feared "Death Bringer." While Naruhodō is able to defend Megundal, the facts of the case are so muddled that no one is quite sure what actually happened. Megundal is acquitted, but falls victim to the Death Bringer's curse when he dies shortly after the trial.[71] The next day, Vortex assigns the two to defend Sōseki Natsume, a Japanese exchange student accused of stabbing (but not killing) a woman named Viridian Green. Naruhodō and Susato reunite with Holmes and are able to prove Natsume's innocence, after which Holmes offers them lodgings with him and his adopted daughter, Iris Watson. Iris's mother died in childbirth, and Iris believes her birth father is John Watson, who she

---

[69] The Adventure of the Great Departure, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Bōken*, Shū Takumi, Capcom, 2015, Nintendo 3DS, video game.

[70] The Adventure of the Unbreakable Speckled Band, Ibid.

[71] The Adventure of the Runaway Room, Ibid.

claims was Holmes's partner in solving cases years earlier. Naruhodō and Susato do not tell Iris that Watson was murdered in Japan.[72]

A few months later, a pawn shop owner is allegedly killed by a pickpocket named Gina Lestrade, who was a key witness in Megundal's trial. Naruhodō takes on Lestrade's defense, but Susato receives news of her father falling ill, and leaves before the trial begins. In her stead, Iris helps Naruhodō, and they are able to uncover a conspiracy to sell government secrets tied to the truth of Megundal's case, successfully defending Lestrade. Naruhodō and Iris are able to meet Susato before her ship leaves, and Iris reveals that the government secret was written in Japanese Morse code, which Susato translates to a list of four names: K. Asōgi, A. Sasha, T. Gregson, and J. Watson. Asōgi and Watson are familiar names, as is Gregson, the star detective of the Scotland Yard, but they can't figure out who Sasha is before Susato has to depart.[73]

Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2: Naruhodō no Kakugo is the sequel to *Dai Gyakuten Saiban: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Bōken*, and picks up shortly after the events of the final case. Susato safely returns to Japan, but her friend Haori Murasame has been accused of murdering Jezail Brett. Disguised as Ryūtarō Naruhodō, a "cousin" of Ryūnosuke Naruhodō, Susato defends Murasame with the aid of her perfectly healthy father, Yūjin Mikotoba. She proves that the murder was actually committed by Heita Mamemomi, a journalist who seems to be aware of a conspiracy involving Brett, Watson, and Asōgi.[74] Susato writes to Naruhodō (who has been banned from entering a court since Lestrade's

---

[72] The Adventure of the Clouded Kokoro, Ibid.

[73] The Adventure of the Unspeakable Story, Ibid.

[74] The Adventure of the Blossoming Attorney, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Kakugo*, Shū Takumi, Capcom, 2017, Nintendo 3DS, video game.

defense), telling him to revisit the "second incident" they helped Natsume out of. Naruhodō recalls that shortly after Green's recovery, Natsume had been accused of poisoning (but not killing) his neighbor. Naruhodō and Susato were able to defend Natsume and, with Holmes's help, discovered the "treasure" of an infamous burglar who had previously occupied Natsume's flat. The treasure is a large, bloodstained dog collar which causes Holmes to go pale. Naruhodō speculates that Susato thinks this dog collar has something to do with Yūjin faking his illness.[75]

Afterwards, Naruhodō goes to Vortex to request his ban be lifted, which Vortex grants. Vortex then directs him to a case which occurred at the World Fair, and Naruhodō finds himself defending Benjamin Dobinbough, whose invention supposedly killed a man. While investigating, Naruhodō meets the Masked Disciple, van Zieks's new apprentice who seems oddly familiar to Naruhodō despite hiding his face and refusing to speak. Susato returns partway through the trial to aid Naruhodō, and the two are able to get the trial extended to the next day. After the trial, Susato informs Naruhodō that Yūjin also went pale at mention of the dog collar, and that he and the minister of foreign affairs, Seishirō Jigoku, had studied in Great Britain sixteen years earlier. At some point, Susato also learned that Brett's real name was Ann Sasha and was not in fact an exchange student. Susato also shares that Mamemomi told her Asōgi's body vanished after he was killed.[76]

The two seek out Holmes for assistance with investigating, but he instead tells them about the Professor, a serial killer who was put to death ten years earlier. A grave

---

[75] The Memoirs of the Clouded Kokoro, Ibid.

[76] The Return of the Great Departed Soul, Ibid.

robber supposedly witnessed the Professor rising from his grave before being shot and killed. Holmes has been investigating the disappearance of the Professor's wax figure from a museum. The two are able to finish investigating Dobinbough's case and prove his innocence when they uncover that the head coroner, Courtney Sithe, had faked the Professor's autopsy ten years earlier—a fact which was later used along with the stolen Professor's wax figure to blackmail her into cooperating with the crime Dobinbough was accused of. After Dobinbough is declared not guilty, van Zieks reveals the identity of the Professor by unveiling the face of the wax figure. The Professor was a Japanese man. The reveal causes the Masked Disciple to scream and tear off his mask, revealing himself to be Asōgi, who had lost his memories after nearly being killed, but still managed to make it to Great Britain. Asōgi identifies the Professor as his father, but doesn't explain much before leaving.[77]

Later, Naruhodō and Susato greet Yūjin and Jigoku after they arrive for the international forensic science symposium. Yūjin expands on the Professor case: he, Jigoku, and Asōgi's father, Genshin Asōgi, had travelled to Great Britain as exchange students, but Genshin had been convicted of the Professor killings and was executed. To avoid international scandal, the trial was held in secret, and Genshin's cause of death was officially labelled as illness, though his son suspected otherwise. Naruhodō and Susato return to Holmes's flat only to get pulled into a new murder case. Gregson has been murdered and the accused is van Zieks. Naruhodō speaks with Vortex and Asōgi, and learns that Asōgi will be prosecuting the case. The trial is held in secrecy, and Naruhodō

---

[77] Ibid.

is able to get it extended another day. While further investigating, Naruhodō and Susato speak with Asōgi and learn about his experiences since waking up with no memories, as well as parts of his childhood. The two later speak with Yūjin and Holmes, and learn that Yūjin was actually Holmes's partner, not Watson. Yūjin is not, however, Iris's missing father, but he doesn't have time to explain before Holmes drags him off to solve a new case.[78]

Before the next trial, Iris gives Naruhodō a rabbit charm to use if he gets backed into a corner. Vortex takes over as the judge of the trial, believing it's too important for him not to be involved. During the trial, it's revealed that Gregson was involved with the Death Bringer organization, as he and Asōgi had been sent to assassinate Jigoku. Vortex puts the trial on break to locate Jigoku, and Naruhodō uses the rabbit as a sort of radio to contact Holmes and Yūjin. They're aboard the ship Jigoku was supposed to be on, and promise Naruhodō that they'll find something in time. The two discover Jigoku hiding in a trunk. With Jigoku discovered alive, Vortex postpones the trial one more day. Back at Holmes's flat, Holmes admits to knowing about the list of names (K. Asōgi, A. Sasha, T. Gregson, J. Watson), but he thought the list was a list of targets, and thus faked Asōgi's death in an attempt to keep him safe (although he was not expecting Asōgi to walk away later). The list was actually two assassins and two targets, though Asōgi claimed he never carried out any assassination.[79]

During the trial the following day, Jigoku confesses to murdering Gregson, but Asōgi calls for the trial to be continued because he believes van Zieks is the head of the

[78] Twisted Karma and His Last Bow, Ibid.

[79] The Resolve of Naruhodō Ryūnosuke, Ibid.

Death Bringer organization. Vortex allows this. Throughout the course of the rest of the trial, it's revealed that Genshin was not the Professor, van Zieks's older brother Klimt was, but that Genshin had eventually confronted and dueled Klimt to the death. Vortex had blackmailed Klimt into committing more murders than Klimt initially set out to commit, and Klimt was so disgusted with himself that he saw the duel with Genshin as an honorable way to meet his end. However, Vortex and Gregson then pinned all the Professor murders on Genshin. Vortex made a deal with Genshin, promising that if Genshin confessed to being the Professor, then Vortex would ensure that Genshin made it back to Japan. However, when going to retrieve Genshin from the graveyard with Jigoku, Vortex saw the grave robber and gave Jigoku a gun to shoot Genshin with, which Jigoku did. Vortex later used this as blackmail to coerce Jigoku into agreeing to the assassin exchange program.[80]

Vortex says all his actions were justified, as they'd all made London a less corrupt city. Feeling as he has no way of opposing Vortex, Naruhodō once more uses the rabbit, though this time it projects a hologram of Holmes. Holmes is having tea with Iris and the queen of England, and they have been watching the trial the entire time. The queen strips Vortex of his authority, and van Zieks is declared not guilty. After the trial, Yūjin explains that Klimt requested that his wife be kept safe—Genshin gave an address to Yūjin, and there Yūjin found the wife in critical condition. She was able to give birth to a healthy daughter, but died shortly afterwards. As Yūjin had to return to Japan, he entrusted the baby, Iris, to Holmes, who raised her. Neither wanted her to bear the weight

---

[80] Ibid.

of having her father be a serial killer, and so agreed not to tell Iris about Klimt until she was old enough. After celebrating their victory, Naruhodō and Susato decide to return to Japan to help build up the legal system, and Asōgi decides to stay in London to study as a prosecutor.[81]

Synopsis of *Things Left Forgotten*

The fanfiction *Things Left Forgotten* is based upon the two *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games. It is set primarily after the events of *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2: Naruhodō no Kakugo*, but also expands on events referenced in both games through a series of flashbacks. The protagonist of this story is Asōgi rather than Naruhodō. *Things Left Forgotten* is canon-compliant, meaning that it does not alter, modify, or change any of the "canonical" events that occur within the games, though the flashbacks often expand beyond these canonical events.

The story opens by catching the reader up with Asōgi's situation after the events of the second game. He has continued to study as a prosecutor, but realizes that his memory still seems patchy, despite regaining most of his memories. Along with blank spots in his memory, Asōgi has a series of scars that he doesn't remember having before, along with unusual defensive reactions when put into situations that should not cause defensive reactions. Asōgi is haunted by the belief that he's failed Naruhodō as a friend and scared Naruhodō off after his angry outbursts during van Zieks's trial. In order to

---

[81] Ibid.

muffle these doubts and fears, Asōgi throws himself into his prosecutor work, despite a strained relationship with van Zieks.[82]

The story comes into focus with Asōgi filling out paperwork for a trial he'd completed earlier that day, but was having trouble remembering. His memory issues are further shown when he walks home with Iris, whose name and address Asōgi cannot remember. When he brings her to his flat so that he can call Holmes to come pick Iris up, Asōgi slips into his own thoughts as he tries to recall details about his father. When Iris calls Asōgi's attention back to the present, he realizes that he's just been standing in the doorway spaced out. After Holmes is contacted, Iris offers for Asōgi to move in to their flat, the way that Naruhodō and Susato stayed at their flat, noting that Asōgi seems lonely. Asōgi doesn't feel that he's earned their trust or kindness, though he doesn't tell this to Iris.[83]

Asōgi eventually tries to keep a diary, and takes Iris's advice to rest a bit. This does help his memory, and he begins to have flashbacks filling in certain blank areas. Some of the flashbacks reveal where some of his scars came from—such as when he was attacked as the Masked Disciple with van Zieks. He also takes in a cat he names Hachimaki and begins sending letters to Naruhodō, hoping for a response though none come.[84] Asōgi's flashbacks span from his childhood to the very recent past, however, not all the flashbacks are of good memories, such as the day Jigoku coerced him into

---

[82] LookerDeWitt, Chapter 1, "Things Left Forgotten," *Archive of Our Own*, posted January 12, 2018, completed April 13, 2018, https://archiveofourown.org/works/13349289/chapters/30563673 (4/15/19).

[83] Ibid.

[84] Chapter 2, Ibid.

agreeing to the assassin exchange plan.[85] He continues to regain memories, some good, and some traumatic. Of the most haunting are the memories of an assassination mission which Vortex sent Asōgi on during the time when he was the Masked Disciple. Asōgi failed the mission and Vortex assaulted him afterwards, leaving the largest of Asōgi's scars both physically and mentally. Realizing that Vortex has such power over him, Asōgi fears that he had been manipulated into *actually* killing someone, and he becomes terrified of regaining any other memories. He begins drinking bottles of wine he takes from van Zieks's office, and develops an alcohol problem while simultaneously overworking himself in an effort to forget.[86]

However, Asōgi is still plagued by nightmares born of his fears of having killed someone, and without any word from Naruhodō, Asōgi begins to believe that he truly drove Naruhodō away for good. He is driven deeper into alcohol issues until a certain trial. The defendant of the trial, Miss Dewitt, seems completely innocent despite the evidence pointing towards her guilt, and despite being hung-over and the prosecutor for the trial, Asōgi wants to find the truth to clear her name. This of course, does not work since Asōgi is the prosecutor, not the defense attorney. After the trial he passes out, and upon waking, is forced to take a leave of absence for his unprofessional behavior. As Asōgi tries to return home he is stopped by Iris who is truly concerned for him, though Asōgi can't fathom why someone as undeserving as he would earn her concern. She gives him a small cat charm, telling him to place it somewhere where it won't be covered

---

[85] Chapter 3, Ibid.

[86] Chapter 5, Ibid.

up, ideally in a larger room, not facing a wall. The set of rules is confusing, but Asōgi agrees to them.[87]

He returns home only to fall asleep to a terrible nightmare. When Asōgi awakes, he goes in search of wine to drown his thoughts out, but is startled when Naruhodō appears in his flat. More specifically, with Iris's hologram technology, Naruhodō was able to appear in Asōgi's flat via the cat charm she'd given him earlier. The conversation does not go well though. Naruhodō tries to uncover what's plaguing Asōgi, but Asōgi evades every question. Naruhodō then makes it a habit to call Asōgi every single night. Asōgi doesn't tell Naruhodō about being banned from court, and generally avoids talking about himself, making the conversations more strained. This goes on until one night Asōgi, while drunk, lashes out at Naruhodō in confusion about why Naruhodō keeps bothering with him. Naruhodō continues to try and reach Asōgi, despite Asōgi's insecurities keeping him from confiding in Naruhodō. After Naruhodō agrees to hang up the hologram call, Asōgi passes out and, after an uncertain amount of time, wakes up to find Naruhodō sobbing over him. Once Naruhodō realizes Asōgi isn't dead, he directly confronts Asōgi about Asōgi's recent behavior. Before Asōgi can explain, Naruhodō realizes how sick Asōgi is from overdrinking, and instead tells Asōgi to get some rest.[88]

When Asōgi wakes up next, he is very confused and worried when he finds himself in an unfamiliar location. He quickly discovers that he is in Iris and Holmes's flat. Iris explains that they retrieved him and his cat from his flat the day before, though

---

[87] Chapter 6, Ibid.

[88] Chapter 7, Ibid.

Asōgi remembers none of this. He eventually gives in when Iris insists on them having lunch, and since he apparently agreed to move in with the two, doesn't protest about staying there.[89] Asōgi grows accustomed to living with Iris and Holmes, though he feels guilty about hiding his court situation from Iris, and is scared by how much Holmes must know about him. Asōgi gives up drinking because of Iris's presence. Instead of alcohol, in order to try avoiding the recurring nightmares Asōgi begins staying up as late as he can, until one night when Holmes finally pulls him aside to talk. Despite his mistrust of Holmes, Asōgi eventually confides his fears about possibly murdering someone to Holmes. Holmes indicates that he still believes in Asōgi's innocence, even if Asōgi doesn't believe in it himself, and then informs Asōgi that Naruhodō will be visiting for Christmas.[90]

Even after Naruhodō arrives, Asōgi continues to force himself to stay up all night and doesn't confide in Naruhodō, despite the fact that Naruhodō can tell something is still amiss. This continues until Naruhodō wakes Asōgi from a nightmare, after which Asōgi finally tells Naruhodō about everything that's occurred. Despite all of Asōgi's fears, Naruhodō still believes in him. With the truth laid bare, they confess their love to each other, and Asōgi is finally able to get a long, restful sleep.[91] Afterwards, Naruhodō suggests that Asōgi could still become a defense attorney if he wanted, though Asōgi isn't as sure.[92]

---

[89] Chapter 8, Ibid.

[90] Chapter 9, Ibid.

[91] Chapter 10, Ibid.

[92] Chapter 11, Ibid.

Asōgi and Naruhodō celebrate Christmas together with Holmes and Iris. For the

first time in a long while, Asōgi begins to feel more secure. Among the gifts Asōgi

receives is a disgusting notebook from Holmes, though Holmes refuses to explain what

the notebook is. It isn't until later that night that Asōgi realizes it's Gregson's notebook,

which he confronts Holmes about. Holmes admits to stealing the notebook from evidence

storage, and teaches Asōgi how to decode the contents. The notebook contains a list of

Death Bringer cases Gregson had been sent on, included cases where Asōgi was

supposed to be the assassin, but Asōgi never once went through with his mission. The

realization that he is completely innocent relieves much of the heavy doubts and fears

that have plagued Asōgi. Holmes gives Genshin's ring to Asōgi, and recollects some

stories from before Genshin was arrested.[93] Free of all his past burdens and guilt, Asōgi is

able to see the arrival of the New Year as a fresh start. Though the healing process of all

he's survived will still take some time it has, at least, begun. Asōgi is allowed to return to

court, but rather than work as a prosecutor, he returns to pursing his path as a defense

attorney, beginning by reopening Miss Dewitt's case. The story ends with Asōgi standing

in court for the first time as a defense attorney, his future looking bright.[94]

---

[93] Chapters 12 and 13, Ibid.

[94] Chapter 14, Ibid.

MODERNISM, POSTMODERNISM, AND METAMODERNISM

The following establishes my understanding of modernism and postmodernism, and defines the six metamodern techniques I will be using in my case study.

Establishing a Prehistory: Defining an Understanding of Modernism and Postmodernism

The following establishes a brief history of modernism and postmodernism to situate the prehistory of metamodernism and to identify modern and postmodern methods which metamodernism oscillates between. As all cultural studies are situated in the subjective bias of the writer, I likewise acknowledge that my understanding of modernism and postmodernism are filtered through the Western-American lens which I have grown up with. I have studied art history, and to some degree narratology, and my understandings of the modernist and postmodernist creative movements are thus colored by those particular fields of study. The following may not be an "objectively accurate" retelling of what modernism and postmodernism "actually are," but instead works to foreground my own knowledge to build the base for my understanding of metamodernism and construction of metamodern narrative techniques.

Establishing clear-cut "beginnings" and "ends" for modernism and postmodernism is problematic, if only because the exact emergence of these sensibilities

64

occurred gradually over years and were tied to myriad changes in technology and political powers. Roughly, modernism emerged in the late 19th century as a reaction to the "traditional" ideals of the past[95] (stemming especially from a very Greco-Roman-centric system of ideals), as early "modernists" believed "that new times required new standards and new forms of expression."[96] While a shift to postmodern sensibilities occurred during the late 1960s to early 1970s,[97] modernist sensibilities and methods persist into the contemporary scene. Postmodernist sensibilities have likewise not vanished.

At its height, modernism was "fuelled by scientific and technological development and dominated by the spread — extensively across the world and intensively into every nook and cranny of the soul — of the capitalist market economy."[98] Burgeoning technological developments of the early 20th century informed many of the modernist sensibilities and techniques, such as an interest and trust in master narrative (metanarratives) of history and culture, cultivation of national values, trust in scientific and technological progress, the idea of a unified identity, hierarchical organization, faith in the "real" (or authenticity of the "original"), a strict divide of high

---

[95] Greg Dember, "After Postmodernism: Eleven Metamodern Methods in the Arts," *WiM on Med*, posted April 17, 2018, https://medium.com/what-is-metamodern/after-postmodernism-eleven-metamodern-methods-in-the-arts-767f7b646cae (12/13/19).

[96] Lloyd Spencer, "Modernity, postmodernism and the tradition of dissent," from *Icon Dictionary of Postmodernism*, ed. Stuart Sim (Cambridge, Icon Books, 1998), posted 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20051029142944/http:/www.tasc.ac.uk/depart/media/staff/ls/Modules/Theory/PoMoDis.htm (12/10/19).

[97] The term "postmodernism" was induced by Jean-François Lyotard in 1979. See: "Postmodernism," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, posted September 30, 2005, revised February 5, 2015, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/ (12/10/19).

[98] Spencer, "Modernity, postmodernism…" (12/10/19).

and low culture, the idea of art as a singular and finished object, mastery of knowledge, centralization, earnestness, and clearly defined boundaries (i.e. a set boundary between music and literature, but also boundaries between human and nonhuman or organic and nonorganic).[99] There was, in a sense, a rushing forward into the future, and enthusiasm without much fear of consequences, which, when coupled with the aftermath of the World Wars, eventually gave way to postmodernism.

There has been much debate about what postmodernism is or even means,[100] but it can briefly be described as a "variant of modernism which has given up hope of freeing itself from the ravages of modernity or of mastering the forces unleashed by modernity."[101] It exists not as a true departure from modernism, but essentially

> …as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning.[102]

As a critical response to modernism, postmodernist sensibilities and methods often contrasted sharply (although not always in a binary polarization) when placed alongside their "modernism analogues." Deconstruction is often the most indicative technique utilized by postmodernism[103] and is used to ironically deconstruct the idea of metanarratives.[104] Likewise there was a rejection of national values (as many

---

[99] Martin Irvine, "Modernism vs Postmodernism," http://www19.homepage.villanova.edu/karyn.hollis/prof_academic/Courses/2043_pop/modernism_vs_postmodernism.htm (12/10/19).

[100] Spencer, "Modernity, postmodernism…" (12/10/19).

[101] Ibid.

[102] "Postmodernism," *Stanford Encyclopedia…*, (12/10/19).

[103] Ibid.

[104] Irvine, "Modernism vs Postmodernism," (12/10/19).

postmodernists blamed the World Wars in part on excessive nationalism) in favor of plurality of culture, skepticism and suspicion of scientific and technological progress, a shift to ideas of fragmented identity and multiplicity of identities, subversion of hierarchical orders, suspicion of "real" in light of theories of hyperreality and simulacra, a dissolution between divides of high and low culture, the idea of art as an unending and intertextual process (with dissolution between the art(ist)/audience divide of modernism), knowledge navigation (rather than mastery of knowledge, as information updates or changes too rapidly to be mastered), decentralization, irony and cynicism, and the dissolution of boundaries (shift of interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary studies/works, shift to cybernetic muddling of human/nonhuman and organic/nonorganic divides).[105] Where modernism encouraged a blind enthusiasm in pursuing the future, postmodernism "demands that we be scrupulously responsible not only about our actions but even about our hopes and dreams."[106]

The literature review provides a look at the recent scholarly uses and analyses of metamodernism, but some understanding of both modernism and postmodern is essential for understanding the metamodern. To be sure, this is not an exhaustive or even complete historic account of modernism and postmodernism, nor does this overview offer a comprehensive list or identification of all modernist and postmodernist sensibilities and techniques. Likewise, this stems from a very *Western*-centric tradition, which should be critically analyzed in future investigations of metamodernism. At best, the usage of the terms modernism and postmodernism functions "to refer to historical epochs and trends

---

[105] Ibid.

[106] Spencer, "Modernity, postmodernism…" (12/10/19).

which we feel constrained to grasp in their complexity."[107] Modernism and postmodernism are useful for shorthand, but arguably do not convey the weight of the history they come from. Several aspects of modernism overlap and bleed into postmodernism, and likewise these aspects further overlap and bleed into metamodernism, with unclear boundaries between the three. The persistent use of the *modernism* suffix for all proposed post-postmodern theories likely stems from the fact that both modernist and postmodernist sensibilities and methods have never truly died.

Metamodernism and Metamodern Narrative Techniques

Metamodernism was first proposed by Vermeulen and van den Akker, but after ten years it has come to represent a set of sensibilities and techniques utilized by various scholars for making sense of the contemporary moment. Vermeulen and van den Akker identified metamodernism as "an attitude tied to a generation"[108] and this sentiment has been echoed by other scholars as well. Michel Clasquin-Johnson discusses the generational shift of metamodernism, stating, "Metamodernism is a 21st-century development, and its proponents tend to be young. If it catches on, it will be the philosophy of the Millennial Generation."[109] Vermeulen and van den Akker likewise expand on the idea that metamodernism is a millennial movement in their paper "Utopia, Sort of: A Case Study in Metamodernism." They believe,

---

[107] Ibid.

[108] Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism," *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, Vol. 2 (2010).

[109] Michel Clasquin-Johnson, "Towards a metamodern academic study of religion and a more religiously informed metamodernism," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Vol. 73, No. 3 (2017): 2.

> …[t]he millennials know too much of today's exploits, inequalities and injustices to take any meaningful decision, let alone position themselves on a convenient subject position, yet they appear – from the political left to the political right – to be to be united around the feeling that today's deal is not the deal they signed up for during the postmodern years.[110]

Whether millennials are unwilling to "take any meaningful decisions" or not is debatable—the generation spans thousands upon thousands of individuals, and making such a blanket statement seems shortsighted. Surely there are many millennials who will make meaningful decisions, for they will eventually inherit the world and must make these decisions.

There are also several issues with the idea of what a "millennial" is—the boundaries of the "millennial generation" are always shifting with the end of the millennial generation shifting between nebulous dates such as "the mid-1990s and early 2000s"[111] to more or less exactly 1996.[112] This unclear transition point between generations is not new, as there have always been individuals born in between generations who don't quite fit one or the other generation. Vermeulen and van den Akker, and the other scholars who tie metamodernism to the millennial generation do not offer any definition of what they mean exactly by "millennial," which raises some questions about the usefulness of attempting to tie metamodernism to this generation.

---

[110] Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, "Utopia, Sort of: A Case Study in Metamodernism," *Studia Neophilogica* Vol. 87 (2015): 58.

[111] Sabrina Barr, "What Generation Do You Belong To? Millennial, Generation X or Z," *Independent*, posted November 10, 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/generation-definitions-what-am-i-millennial-generation-x-y-z-baby-boomers-golden-age-young-old-a8679741.html (5/12/20).

[112] Michael Dimock, "Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins," *Pew Research Center*, posted January 17, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/ (5/12/20).

Even using the term "millennial" to refer to the recent generation, I feel that

metamodernism is not simply a millennial's "modernism"—after all, the sensibilities of

metamodernism *have* been used by individuals in older generations. Without these people

beginning to blaze the trail, millennials could not have begun to create metamodern

works in the first place. If we are simply at the start of a metamodern movement or era,

then metamodernism will, at its height, be typified by the contributions of generations

younger than millennials who will likewise begin to inherit the world issues the older

generations were unable to rectify. So while metamodernism is certainly a young

movement, it needs not be closed to older generations nor barred from younger

generations. Indeed, such limitations would go against many metamodern sensibilities.

The metamodern narrative is important because it normalizes proactive

techniques and sensibilities which can then be carried out into the "real" world via a sort

of *doxa*. Pierre Bourdieu, when discussing *doxa*, noted that things which "go without

saying" are able to do so "*because they come without saying*."[113] For the potential

positive effects of metamodernism to be able to achieve this, metamodern creative works

are essential because they disseminate these sensibilities beyond the scope of scholars

and academics, into the common sphere of everyday life, for all people. Metamodern

works possibly have "the ability to raise the consciousness and conscience of the general

public: fiction thus becomes a vehicle through which to increase awareness of

contemporary insecurities – environmental, social, political."[114] Of course, simply

---

[113] Pierre Bordieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 167.

[114] Alison Gibbons, ""That that you intellectuals!" and "kaPOW!": Adam Thirlwell and the Metamodernist Future of Style," *Studia Neophilogica* Vol. 87 (2015): 31.

creating metamodern works is not enough to create positive change in the world. It will take a large-scale collaborative effort to create proactive change. But this is not necessarily impossible.

While outlining such a brief history of metamodernism is necessary to foreground the narrative techniques I will define, it is not the purpose of this thesis to argue for what metamodernism is or isn't in terms of a historical canon. I am interested in developing tools to analyze the emerging metamodern narratives which I have encountered. Rather than argue too much for or against any particular scholar who has come before me, I wish to synthesize my research of metamodern scholarship to develop techniques for identifying and analyzing metamodern sensibilities in narrative. By studying prior scholarship, I have identified six techniques which I find useful for the following case study. They are the metamodern *oscillation* between modernist and postmodernist sensibilities, the *"as if" mindset*, the *return to earnestness* through the use of modern and postmodern conventions, a specifically metamodern variation of *paradox*, the *dissolution of clearly defined boundaries* stemming from an increasingly globalized world, and the *reconstructive* nature of metamodern narratives.

The construction of these techniques occurred through intensive study of scholarship on metamodernism, and analyses of metamodern works within that scholarship. Almost all my research materials came from Western scholarship, and was thus doubly affected by both the Western bias inherent to the scholarship and to my own Western bias as an American. Utilizing the techniques for my case study, which include looking at the narratives of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, may therefore be

71

problematic. Still, I can only work with what materials I have. The following defines the

six aforementioned techniques I will be using during my case study.

Oscillation

Vermeulen and van den Akker identify oscillation, above all else, as being

indicative of metamodern works. Metamodern oscillation covers a variety of narrative

techniques, and some of the techniques I will identify and define afterwards may well be

argued to be offshoots tied directly to oscillation. I have chosen to separate these

techniques from oscillation, even if they stem from it, because I believe they can be

developed, and should be developed, separately from oscillation, lest oscillation become

some unwieldy catch-all too expansive to effectively use for narrative analysis.

Vermeulen and van den Akker described the metamodern as oscillating between

modernist commitment and enthusiasm, and postmodernist detachment and irony.[115] This

oscillation doubles as a negotiation, creating tensions within the metamodern work. To

Vermeulen and van den Akker, the metamodern work:

> …oscillates between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope
> and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity
> and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity. Indeed, by
> oscillating to and fro or back and forth, the metamodern negotiates between the
> modern and the postmodern. One should be careful not to think of this oscillation
> as a balance however; rather, it is a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10,
> innumerable poles. Each time the metamodern enthusiasm swings toward
> fanaticism, gravity pulls it back toward irony; the moment its irony sways toward
> apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm.[116]

---

[115] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

[116] Ibid.

According to this definition, oscillation is inherently tied to modern and postmodern

sensibilities and techniques, without negating either. The metamodern work will utilize

both modern and postmodern narrative techniques through continual movement between

them. This creates a sense of motion, as the audience is never allowed to settle in the

modern or postmodern sensibility of the work, and must negotiate between them to

experience the work.

This idea, notably, does not suggest that metamodernism has declared dead

postmodernism or modernism. Rather, the idea that metamodern oscillation requires both

the modern and the postmodern suggests that both must be, to some extent, alive. It may

be more accurate to suggest that the devices of modernism and postmodernism

> …have become conventions…they have been turned into a perceptual frame that
> we can now invoke in order to make sense of fictional narrative phenomena. …In
> other words, self-reflexivity has become a common and well-known narrative
> device, and, somewhat paradoxically, its familiarity has allowed authors to utilise
> these conventions to produce a new artistic movement.[117]

If modern and postmodern sensibilities and techniques are now conventions, they can be

used for unique, distinctive metamodern expression. Simply put, metamodernism requires

the continued existence of both modernism and postmodernism, synthesizing the two

through oscillation rather than destroying either.[118]

Metamodern oscillation is not solely tied to the effects of modernism and

postmodernism. Oscillation is a continual movement between various poles, and indeed,

various aspects integral to the work. This includes what Alison Gibbons identified as an

---

[117] Jan Alber and Alice Bell, "The importance of being earnest again: fact and fiction in contemporary
narratives across media," *European Journal of English Studies* Vol. 23, No. 2 (2019): 131.

[118] Clasquin-Johnson, "Towards a metamodern academic study of religion…," 4.

"assimilation of high and low cultural references…" noting that "metamodernist writing often contains everyday references, such as the explicit use of brand names, in a cloaked acknowledgement and criticism of commercialized culture."[119] Thus, the metamodern work is not a work which exists exclusively separated from the mundane and everyday, for it may oscillate between the avant-garde and the kitsch, between fine art and commercial art, between the fiction of the narrative and the fabric of the audience's world. Many postmodern sensibilities employ similar techniques, as many postmodern works utilized a hybridization of high and low cultures, or else referenced low culture to deconstruct high culture. I argue that the metamodern oscillation between high and low cultures is tied to the metamodern sense of movement between the modern and postmodern. Rather than referencing popular culture to the postmodern ends of deconstruction and despair at the artificiality of the constructed commercial world, the metamodern utilizes the reference to bring attention to—perhaps criticize—this constructed artifice and then to swing to a modern sensibility. Modern sensibilities saw a strict divide between high and low culture, if only to exalt that which was deemed high culture. Metamodern sensibilities afford for the inclusion of low culture to be elevated to the same status of high culture, to be exalted in the same way, if only to later return to a more cynical postmodern scrutiny later in the story, via the continual oscillation between the modern and postmodern. The inverse is also true, as metamodern oscillation may bring into the work reference to high culture, only to bring it low, a technique which could be used for various narrative ends.

---

[119] Gibbons, ""That that you intellectuals!"…," 32.

Other scholars have suggested that metamodern oscillation in fiction also materializes as oscillation between forms of thought (where the audience can see both "inside" a character's thoughts and beyond the character's perspectives),[120] as well as negotiating between dystopia and utopia through organic oscillation between the two.[121] Furthermore, the oscillation may extend beyond the work itself, a phenomena Tom Drayton observes while discussing metamodern theater, which he calls the Listening Theatre, noting "[the Listening Theatre] at once negotiates a discourse between the audience and the artist in order to strive towards a form of utopic vision through political interface, whilst also struggling with self-critique through an awareness of this form's failings, frailties and falsehoods."[122] In many ways, the oscillation of a metamodern work is not bound by the boundaries of the work itself, and many works engage the audience in various ways. Oscillation may displace the audience's focus within the work and the audience's sense of presence by engaging them directly—this engagement is, naturally, not fixed, as the constant motion of oscillation will also create lapses where the audience may not be directly engaged. Audience oscillation depends largely in part on the medium of the metamodern work.

An alternative to oscillation, simultaneity, has also been proposed. Simultaneity suggests that one may inhabit differing positions or poles simultaneously, rather than

---

[120] Nick Lavery, "Consciousness and the Extended Mind in the "Metamodernist" Novel," *English Studies* Vol. 99, No. 7 (2018): 756.

[121] Daniel Southward, "Dealing with the creative/critical divide: these men as readers simply cannot know what it is to write," *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* Vol 13, No. 2 (2016): 278.

[122] Tom Drayton, "The Listening Theatre: A Metamodern Politics of Performance," *Performance Philosophy* Vol. 4, No. 1 (2018): 177.

moving between them.[123] This is very similar to what I will later identify as metamodern paradox, and for the purposes of my case study I have decided to view metamodern oscillation and metamodern paradox (which utilizes simultaneity) as separate techniques.

To summarize, metamodern oscillation is continual movement between various aspects of a work. These aspects are usually modern and postmodern techniques, but may also include the usage of high and low culture, elements within the narrative itself, and the relationships between the creator, work, and audience.

The "As If" Mindset

An alternate name for this technique could be "striving for the impossible possibility" but the "impossible possibility" alludes to metamodern paradox (and is not required for the "as if" mindset per se), and the "as if" mindset stems from the *striving* part of that phrase. The specific phrase "as if" was taken from Vermeulen and van den Akker's statement: "The current, metamodern discourse also acknowledges that history's purpose will never be fulfilled because it does not exist. Critically, however, it nevertheless takes toward it *as if* it does exist."[124] The "as if" mindset allows a creator to attempt something seemingly impossible *as if* it is possible. Vermeulen and van den Akker cite several examples in "Notes on metamodernism," such as the neoromantic "attempt to turn the finite into the infinite, while recognizing that is can never be realized."[125] Despite the recognition that the attempt is seemingly impossible the creator

---

[123] Seth Abramson, "Ten Basic Principles of Metamodernism," *HuffPost*, posted 4/27/15, updated December 6, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ten-key-principles-in-met_b_7143202 (12/8/19).

[124] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

[125] Ibid.

still progresses forward *as if* they can fulfill their goal. Similar to oscillation, the "as if"

mindset creates perpetual motion in this quest, and this perpetual motion lends itself to

progress. Vermeulen and van den Akker note,

> …people, are not really going toward a natural but unknown goal, but they
> pretend they do so that they progress morally as well as politically.
> Metamodernism moves for the sake of moving, attempts in spite of its inevitable
> failure; it seeks forever for a truth that it never expects to find.[126]

Perhaps the realization of the quest sought with the "as if" mindset is "impossible," but

there is still progress made from the attempt. While the sought results of attempting the

impossible might not be achieved, there are still results and they still have effects on the

world around them.

It is hard to say exactly from where the "as if" mindset arises, but it is very likely

tied to various global crises. Gibbons recognizes what I am calling the "as if" mindset as

the *aesth-eithical*, stating that

> …[a]esth-ethical commitment…is opposed to the injustices of global capitalism,
> concerned by the increased digitalization and hyper-reality of society, conscious
> of the shifting social relationships in a globalizing world, and it hopes for a shared
> sustainable future, however untenable that may be.[127]

As stated earlier, it is possible that metamodernism is inherently tied to the millennial

generation. For millennials, the realities of the present create anxieties for the future,

which hang over this generation and make something like a "sustainable future" seem

utterly impossible. The modernist mindset wasn't concerned with sustainability so much

as it was concerned with progress, with little regard to the consequences of that

progress—though, if tasked with attaining a sustainable future, a modernist might

---

[126] Ibid.

[127] Gibbons, ""That that you intellectuals!"…," 31.

optimistically believe it achievable through continued progress. A postmodernist mindset

would cast the present as a dystopia, with the irony of humans destroying their natural

environment, and therefore themselves, worthy of despair or sardonic dark humor. For

the metamodernist, neither of these are sufficient for actually living, especially not for

living *as if* one expects to be able to continue living into the future. Therefore, the

metamodern "as if" mindset takes both the postmodern acknowledgement of the present

issues and the modernist optimism, and moves forward *as if* both can be used to achieve a

livable future.

Though I had first encountered the "as if" phrase in "Notes on metamodernism," I

am not the first to identify this "as if" mindset as being tied to global crises and

metamodernism. While discussing various metamodern principles, Seth Abramson

touches on the "as if" mindset:

> Metamodernists are as aware of political, economic, climatological, and other
> forms of chaos as is anyone else, but they choose to remain optimistic and to
> engage their communities proactively even when and where they believe a cause
> has been lost. Theorists describe this way of thinking as an "as if" philosophical
> mode; that is, the metamodernist chooses to live "as if" positive change is
> possible even when we are daily given reminders that human culture is in fact in a
> state of disarray and likely even decline. The metamodernist does not presume
> that optimistic civic engagement will save the world — or resolve an individual
> crisis — merely that a) it couldn't hurt, b) it gives one a reason to hope and the
> ability to stave off despair, and c) in rare instances our sense that a harm is
> incontrovertible and/or inevitable is incorrect.[128]

The metamodern "as if" mindset returns to an almost modernist optimism, albeit a return

aided or accompanied by postmodern caution and cynicism. This creates a means of

forward motion, and therefore some sort of progress, rather than stagnation in the face of

---

[128] Abramson, "Ten Basic Principles…," (12/8/19).

despair. It is not a self-pitying mindset, but rather a proactive mindset seeking to create

the conditions for change. Whether that change is positive or negative, and the

consequences of such a mindset, remain to be seen.

It should be noted that while not indicative of an "as if" mindset, the sense of

utopia—really, the return to seeking a utopia—in metamodern works is tied to this

mindset. Vermeulen and van den Akker discuss this return to utopia, stating:

> …artists today are once more taking to reimagining utopia primarily because they are faced with a radically unstable and uncertain world, where political systems and power relations are diffuse and unpredictable, financial security a rare privilege and ecological problems – sometimes quite literally – clog the horizon. By this we do not mean to say that the return to utopia is an escape mechanism. On the contrary. During the postmodern years of relative peace and plenty, few artists felt the need to imagine alternative societies or cultivate a utopian desire. Even those artists that were critical did not look elsewhere but rather set their sights on problems *within* society. Now that conflicts are pending and poverty is increasingly widespread within the West, looking elsewhere for solutions suddenly seems like a viable option again. As an impossible possibility, utopia should not be perceived as a new ideological blueprint, however. Much rather, it should be understood as a tool, say, a looking glass, for scanning this world and others for alternative possibilities. It is not invoked to get us away from something according to this or that dogma; it is evoked out of a renewed utopian desire.[129]

There are some issues with this idea of utopia, however. James Brunton specifically

criticizes Vermeulen and van den Akker's interpretation of utopia noting that looking

away from the present problems by looking to the future, and indeed romanticizing the

inevitable failure of striving for such utopia, stems from a positon of privilege. Brunton

notes that there are many groups of people who do not have the luxury of failure. These

people don't need a livable future, they need a livable *now* and they needed it

---

[129] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Utopia, Sort of…," 65.

yesterday.[130] I agree with Brunton's assessment that utopia, as outlined by Vermeulen and van den Akker, is dangerously privileged. And while Vermeulen and van den Akker have, to some degree, romanticized the idea of failure via the "as if" mindset, I wish to diverge from their line of thinking. I do not believe the metamodern "as if" mindset should so nihilistically embrace, to the point of romanticizing, an inevitable failure. That is far too close to the postmodern sensibility of nihilism and it overlooks the fact that the attempt for the impossible does produce results and progress, even if those results and progress were not the initial goal of the attempt. We very much need the livable now before we can hope to achieve a sustainable future, but it's not impossible to strive for both at the same time. If nothing else, we could strive for both *as if* achieving both is possible.

I would add, as well, that the "as if" mindset does not excuse a lack of common sense. If someone catches a bad flu, they cannot simply go out to work *as if* they weren't sick. That foolishness will only lead to a worsening of their illness and health risks for their coworkers. Rather, this flu-ridden hypothetical individual could live *as if* they will recover, which is not an impossible result and can be achieved with enough rest and self-care (though, without the proper rest and self-care may not actually be an achievable result). I argue that the "as if" mindset should not allow room for apathetic carelessness, for that would lose the metamodern synthesis of hope and caution—that synthesis of modern and postmodern sensibilities to create forward momentum. As Abramson noted in the quote above, the "as if" mindset is *proactive*.

---

[130] James Brunton, "Whose (Meta)modernism?: Metamodernism, Race, and the Politics of Failure," *Journal of Modern Literature* Vol. 41, No. 3 (2018): 60-76.

While I have stated that the idea of utopia is not indicative of the "as if" mindset, but rather a single instance of it, I would caution away from blindly pursuing utopia, even with the "as if" mindset. Drayton discusses the Listening Theatre's vision of utopia, stating that the Listening Theatre "concurrently implements a motion towards a utopian vision whilst importantly being aware of the frailties and falsehoods implicit in such an attempt."[131] If utopia is pursued, it must be pursued not as a fictitious "alternate world," but with cautious optimism and hopeful pessimism, aware of the issues of the present whilst forging a livable now and tomorrow. If nothing else, then pursuing a future with an "as if" mindset may begin carving a path for future generations to walk and build upon, and perhaps even complete. The "as if" mindset should not attempt its quest with the expectation or exaltation of failure, but attempts it *as if* failure is impossible, if only so that the attempt may improve the present situation and perpetually move towards a better future. For the "as if" mindset "is the attempt that matters despite itself."[132] In the spirit of the metamodern, this optimism should also be tempered with caution and suspicion, going back to the sense of oscillation that requires constant movement between the various poles of hope and suspicion, optimism and caution.

The "as if" mindset does not always appear as an obvious narrative device. Sometimes the medium of the metamodern work is where the "as if" mindset arises— such as when a creator chooses a medium unfit for the "purpose" of the work *as if* it will fit the purpose of the work, in order to draw attention to the attempt made by the work.[133]

---

[131] Drayton, "The Listening Theatre…," 176.

[132] Southward, "Dealing with the creative/critical divide…," 279.

[133] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

81

The "as if" mindset may likewise appear directly within the narrative fabric as a theme of the story, with the character(s) working against impossible odds *as if* they can succeed. Of course, it is also possible for the "as if" mindset to be interwoven throughout a metamodern narrative on various levels, for narratives and creative works are complex things and a creator need not be limited to a single area to express the work's metamodern sensibilities.

Return to Earnestness

I am hesitant to use the phrase "return to earnestness" because it is not just earnestness which has reemerged in metamodern works via postmodern conventions, but an entire array of hope, emotion, empathy, sincerity, and other virtues that could rarely appear in the postmodern work except ironically. Jan Alber and Alice Bell identify "a return to sincerity, realism or ethics via the deployment of postmodernist devices"[134] as a distinctly post-postmodern technique, indicating that it appears not only in metamodern works, but in works associated with other post-postmodern proposals, which lends a bit of flexibility to this technique. One purpose of the return to earnestness is to reconnect, as Alber and Bell state:

> …post-postmodern authors inherit 'the postmodern fascination with representation, the layers of text, discourse, narrative, and image' but, at the same time, aim 'to reconnect with something beyond representation, something extralinguistic, something real'. Thus, while post-postmodern narratives utilise postmodernist devices – and particularly self-reflexivity – they do so in order to 'break through to a reality outside of language, and . . . to connect with others'.[135]

---

[134] Alber and Bell, "The importance of being earnest again…," 122.

[135] Ibid., 122-123.

The return to earnestness is a technique for reconnection. The modern work might see a strict divide between creator, work, and audience, and the work would be presented via the devices of historic metanarratives. The postmodern creator deconstructs these divides and blurs the lines between creator, work, and audience through ironic rejection of metanarrative. But what occurs when, rather than drawing attention to the constructed-ness, the perceived artificiality of the creator-work-audience divide—rather than using deconstruction to make a statement about the untrustworthiness of such creators and works—the creator makes themselves apparent, uses these devices to then reach out and earnestly attempt to inspire hope and reconnection by engaging the audience rather than alienating them? To be sure, the metamodern return to earnestness "does not indicate a return to the trappings of modernist metanarratives."[136] The postmodern suspicion of these metanarratives is still there, but metamodern narrative does not always sustain the postmodern apathy and cynicism when using these narrative conventions.

Vermeulen and van den Akker identify a similar return to earnestness, observing that "the cultural industry has…increasingly [abandoned] tactics such as pastiche and parataxis for strategies like myth and metaxis, melancholy for hope, and exhibitionism for engagement."[137] Of course, the usage of such postmodern techniques is not new *per se*, but what metamodernism seeks to evoke is different than what postmodernism sought. Vermeulen and van den Akker further clarify:

> Indeed, both metamodernism and the postmodern turn to pluralism, irony, and deconstruction in order to counter a modernist fanaticism. However, in metamodernism this pluralism and irony are utilized to counter the modern

---

[136] Drayton, "The Listening Theatre…," 174.

[137] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

aspiration, while in postmodernism they are employed to cancel it out. That is to say, metamodern irony is intrinsically bound to desire, whereas postmodern irony is inherently tied to apathy.[138]

It is as if the metamodern creator grew tired with pretending not to care for the sake of the postmodern, or perhaps the metamodern creator sees no point in continuing to cultivate apathy. In a sense, the return to earnestness is also a return to feeling. Or rather, the metamodern grants permission to feel again, without shame or scrutiny. If postmodernism "shame[s] ebullient, unabashed self expression" then "[m]etamodernism gives us permission for [ebullient, unabashed self-expression]…not toward a randomness or anarchic or destructive impulse"[139] but rather "to protect the solidity of *felt experiences* against the scientific reductionism of the modernist perspective and the ironic detachment of the postmodern sensibility."[140]

But why, after so many years of postmodernism telling us that these things are dangerous because they are constructed, are we now returning to them despite our knowledge? Why does being earnest matter so much to the metamodern work? Alber and Bell propose an answer to those questions, saying,

> Like their postmodernist predecessors, artists of the twenty-first century acknowledge the fundamental constructedness of ethical principles. The postmodernist reaction can be characterised as a form of escapist withdrawal from societal and global responsibilities into ironic self-reflexivity and/or playful metafictionality ...By contrast, more recent artists suggest that belief systems and convictions matter, even though – as discourses – they are inevitably constructed.[141]

---

[138] Ibid.

[139] Dember, "After Postmodernism…," (12/13/19).

[140] Ibid.

[141] Alber and Bell, "The importance of being earnest again…," 130.

They suggest, essentially, that metamodern creators have chosen to return to earnestness because doing so matters. It is important not only for the work, but for the creator and the audience. A return to heartfelt sensibilities allows for expression and validation of the felt experience, but the continued use of postmodern conventions also keeps the creator and audience from falling into the blind spots often created by modern enthusiasm. In short, "metamodernism allows the possiblity (sic) of staying sympathetic to the poststructuralist deconstruction of subjectivity…and yet it still encourages genuine protagonists and creators and the recouping of some of modernism's virtues."[142]

As a narrative device, we can think of the return to earnestness through the metaphor of the "man behind the scenes" a la a person performing a show for an audience. In a modern narrative, the creator "puts on a show" for the audience through the work; the creator has something of a godlike status, with the audience trusting and assuming the creator knows what they are doing, and accepting the work as it is at face value. There is suspension of disbelief because there is no reason to disbelieve. The postmodern narrative destroys this illusion, making the creator the obvious manipulator of the work, a person just as fallible as any member of the audience and sometimes more so; the postmodern creator can only ever put on a self-derisive show drawing attention to the artificial production of it all. The audience cannot suspend their disbelief because they are not allowed to believe in the first place. The metamodern return to earnestness allows the creator to make themselves and their devices known to the audience without

---

[142] Stephen Knudson, "Beyond Postmodernism. Putting a Face on Metamodernism Without the Easy Clichés," *ARTPULSE Magazine*, http://artpulsemagazine.com/beyond-postmodernism-putting-a-face-on-metamodernism-without-the-easy-cliches (12/8/19).

shattering the illusion—a sort of "this is fake, and we all know it's fake, but you're allowed to enjoy it nonetheless" disclaimer. Thus, while the audience knows there is reason to disbelieve, they are still allowed to suspend their disbelief if they want, and can enjoy the show regardless, because they derive enjoyment from doing so. The animosity between creator and audience, created either by the modern illusion or postmodern unveiling, is less likely to exist in the metamodern narrative because the creator and audience are both aware of the constructed nature of the work, but choose to share in the experience for the sake of sharing the experience.

In short, the return to earnestness via postmodern devices is not merely a return to earnestness, but a return to feeling, a way to cultivate hope, rather than apathy. The return to earnestness reconnects where postmodernism sought to disconnect, even if this reconnection is made with the postmodern caution. The metamodern work acknowledges the constructed nature of these sensibilities, but returns to their use because they matter for the human experience.

Paradox

Paradox is a narrative technique—indeed, a cultural technique expanding beyond narrative—which has existed far longer than any of the "modernisms." The term shares linguistic origins with *doxa*, and yet the use of "paradox" is different than the anthropological use of *doxa* I discussed earlier, being used here primarily as a term to shorthand a single entity containing contradictory truths (though such a use of paradox could be applied to anthropology, though I am not exploring that here). The metamodern

86

use of paradox is far different than the postmodern use of paradox, though they share similarities. The "impossible possibility," the idea that something is both possible and impossible, and also neither possible nor impossible, mentioned while discussing the "as if" mindset is one such metamodern paradox. The intrinsic influence of modernism and postmodernism are essential to the metamodern paradox, for metamodernism may "be conceived of as a 'both-neither' dynamic…at once modern and postmodern and neither of them."[143] While not necessarily in direct opposition to each other, modernism and postmodernism sensibilities are often treated as oppositional, each in direct conflict with the other's interests. And yet metamodernism utilizes the techniques of both—and couldn't exist without the existence of both—quite organically. This appears to be reminiscent of Hegelian synthesis,[144] though Vermeulen and van den Akker suggest that metamodernism veers away from many of Hegel's philosophies[145] and no other scholarly work from my research connected metamodern paradox with Hegel's thesis-antithesis-synthesis pattern. However, metamodernism allows for both modernism and postmodernism to exist simultaneously, without cancelling each other out, within a single work.[146] While the metamodern work is both modern and postmodern in its devices and techniques, it also cannot *be* either of them. Metamodernism is an existence unto itself, being neither modern nor postmodern, while simultaneously being both modern and postmodern.

---

[143] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

[144] "Hegel's Dialectics," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, posted June 3, 2016, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-dialectics/ (5/12/20).

[145] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

[146] Abramson, "Ten Basic Principles…," (12/8/19).

Metamodern paradox arises from the tension created through oscillation, though it is not always affixed to oscillation, and this creates the "both-neither" dynamic which Vermeulen and van den Akker warn should not be confused "with some kind of postmodern in-between (a neither-nor)."[147] The key characteristic that sets metamodern paradox apart is that metamodernism allows a paradox to simply exist, accepting that contradictions in truth are also a type of truth in themselves, rather than trying to resolve, destroy, or explain away those contradictions. Michel Clasquin-Johnson succinctly summarizes differences in approach to paradox:

> To the modernist mindset…[paradox] is a contradiction that must be resolved by choosing one side or another. To the postmodernist it is an ironic situation ripe for deconstruction. To the metamodernist, however, the fact that there is a paradox does not mean that one is wrong and the other right, or that one has to be relegated to a mere 'subjective truth'.[148]

The metamodern paradox allows for the "as if" mindset and the return to earnestness to exist in metamodern works by allowing the existence of internal contradictions that are bound to occur when both modernist and postmodernist sensibilities occur within the same work. The metamodern work is paradoxical *as if* the paradox is not an issue because for metamodernism paradox *is not* an issue, it is simply a state of being.

Metamodern paradox also allows for a negotiation between the modern idea of a singular truth and the postmodern multiplicity of truths to coexist in a meaningful way.[149] It acknowledges that an individual truth may not be true at the larger scale of community

---

[147] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

[148] Clasquin-Johnson, "Towards a metamodern academic study of religion…," 4.

[149] Matthew E. Lemberger and Tamiko L. Lemberger-Truelove, "Bases for a More Socially Just Humanistic Praxis," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 56, No. 6 (2016): 574.

or society truth, but is still true for the individual. Abramson explains this paradox of individual truths, stating,

> …metamodernism posits that certain ideas can be "objectively" true for an individual even though the individual also understands that they are not universally true. The paradox of something being "objectively true for me" simply means that each of us does, in fact, respond to guiding "metanarratives" (the stories we tell ourselves about our lives and what they mean) which operate as absolutely true to us even as we recognize they are not shared — or even necessarily understood — by others.[150]

This idea of individual truth is in part tied to the fact that we cannot experience each other's perspectives but are rather locked within our own bodies, tied to our own perceptions of the world around us, and as such we can only make sense of the world around us through our own experiences. Yet, despite our inability to verify what and how others are experiencing the world, ideas of universal truth have arisen and these ideas, no matter how faulty they are, have shaped and constructed the societies we participate in. In this way, humans are inherently paradoxical creatures, so it makes sense that the works we create will likewise be paradoxical. The metamodern paradox simply allows us these paradoxes to exist without having to justify or nullify their existence.

Metamodern paradox may present itself in narrative through a number of ways. The narrative work may be inherently paradoxical, or the techniques used in the work may seem to contradict each other without cancelling out the work itself. Metamodern paradox is often apparent through the use of juxtaposition, which places two seemingly unrelated things beside each other (i.e. irony and sincerity) potentially causing conflicting reactions within a single individual.[151] Furthermore, the attempts of the metamodern

---

[150] Abramson, "Ten Basic Principles…," (12/8/19).

[151] Ibid.

89

work, often tied with the "as if" mindset of the work, may also be paradoxical. Drayton identifies an example of metamodern paradox via the "as if" mindset in Listening Theatre, noting "[the Listening Theatre] is simultaneously hopeful and cynical, utopic in vision and critical in application. It is work that wants to change the world—even though it knows it probably can't."[152] A work that contains paradox without attempting to address the paradox—even willfully embracing the paradoxical nature—can thus be identified as utilizing the metamodern paradox.

Dissolution of Clearly Defined Boundaries

The dissolution of clearly defined boundaries has its roots in the postmodern fragmentation of defined boundaries, but may in fact transcend all labels with the *modernist* suffix. Vermeulen and van den Akker tie this sensibility to a dissolution of "borders," as derived from Bourriaud's altermodernism, believing that increased globalization has led to increasingly blurry lines between the borders of countries.[153] This appears to be a very Eurocentric view of borders, and does not reflect the reality that many countries face in regards to borders (that being that borders are not open, and cannot be easily crossed, if at all). Vermeulen and van den Akker's usage of border dissolution (along with other scholars of metamodernism who used the idea of borderlessness) should be more deeply, and critically examined in future scholarship on metamodernism. For the purposes of this thesis, I am investigating instead a dissolution of *boundaries* between more abstracted areas, often propelled forward by shifts and

---

[152] Drayton, "The Listening Theatre…," 185.

[153] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

90

changes in technology and affected in part by globalization, as a dissolution of boundaries more readily lends itself to a narrative analysis. Metamodern creators utilize this phenomena within their works, and the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries makes it possible for new works to exist which could never have existed otherwise.

It should be noted that this is a sensibility directly tied with technology and globalization, and as technology is not available to all parts of the world or even all people within a single part of the world, the idea that a dissolution of boundaries is integral to metamodernism raises the question once more of privilege, of who has access to this and how and why, and suggests that metamodernism may, like its predecessors, be inherently tied to a location and economic class despite its connections to globalization. I have chosen to discuss this as a technique because many other scholars have indicated that the dissolution of boundaries has impacted recent creative works, as it is difficult to untangle recent works from recent technological and global shifts. A deeper investigation into the idea of "metamodern lack of boundaries" and the privileges of technology is somewhat beyond the scope of this thesis but should be investigated in future research.

Like many metamodern sensibilities, the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries arises from contemporary issues stemming from late globalization. A series of affairs which have garnered global attention are testament to this, and in recent years the access to, and therefore concern with, global affairs has been increasingly easy as internet technologies improve.[154] The world is currently more interconnected than it has ever been within known history, and the transmission of information, ideas, and other

---

[154] Gibbons, ""That that you intellectuals!"…," 31.

communications is easier and faster than ever before. Abramson further explains the

metamodern dissolution of clearly defined boundaries as it contrasts from its postmodern

predecessor:

> Postmodernism, which came of age in the Age of Radio, is…likely to emphasize how meaning degenerates as it moves across the vast expanse of space between selves and groups of selves. Metamodernism, which came of age in the Digital Age, recognizes that we feel at once distant from others — because on the Internet almost everyone is a stranger, so we are daily surrounded by more strangers than at any other point in human history — but also incredibly close to others, as the Internet allows us to create connections more quickly than ever before.[155]

Along with—or perhaps in part because of—the internet's globally connective power,

various businesses and industries have shifted to international practices, with the

transmission of media often spanning across the globe. Linguistic boundaries are also

dissolving as access to language-learning and translation tools becomes widely

disseminated through the internet. For metamodernism this heightened connectedness

requires us to understand and acknowledge our effects within a globalized world.[156] Or

more specifically, because we are aware that we are in an interconnected world, and that

all our actions will have consequences, metamodernism urges that we must take care

when performing actions.

With the dissolution of global boundaries comes dissolution in other boundaries.

Abramson further identifies that metamodernism encourages collaboration, in part

because a globalized world cannot function unless people learn to work with each other,

and in part because the dissolution of boundaries allows people to self-reflect in new

---

[155] Abramson, "Ten Basic Principles…," (12/8/19).

[156] Gibbons, ""That that you intellectuals!"…," 31.

ways which allow them to connect with others who otherwise seem entirely different.[157] This ties with metamodern paradox, which allows for individuals to have conflicting truths coexist within themselves without needing to resolve those conflicts—by allowing ourselves to be paradoxical, we realize that others may be as well, and that may lead to a foundation for communication and collaboration. This is a very optimistic hope that metamodernism offers, and current global affairs suggest that global collaboration is still a ways off. Therefore, I am currently keeping collaboration as an effect or potential effect of the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries, rather than a technique in itself, though many metamodern narratives certainly utilize collaboration as a narrative device, often achieved via the dissolution of boundaries.

Other boundaries which are beginning to dissolve are the boundaries that once partitioned off academic fields of study. In a world where everything is becoming more interconnected, it is difficult to continue justifying a strict divide in all fields. This affects both academic scholars, and the people who find themselves in the murky area between "scholar" and "practitioner." Abramson identifies the former as a sort of inter-disciplinarity, but Clasquin-Johnson proposes a modification to this idea, stating that "['i]nter'-disciplinarity implies the existence of two disciplines as hard, well-defined entities. What we need…is a 'Meta'-disciplinarity in which the boundaries between disciplines are softened and allowed to overlap."[158] This idea for *meta*-disciplinary styles of learning and teaching certainly opens up possibilities for the flexibility needed to adapt

---

[157] Abramson, "Ten Basic Principles," (12/8/19).

[158] Clasquin-Johnson, "Towards a metamodern academic study of religion…," 9.

to and flourish within a globalized world. As for the divide between practitioner and scholar, Daniel Southward discusses the difficulties of being both a creative writer and a scholar who studies creative writing, explaining how metamodernism may offer solutions to this divide through the use of metamodern oscillation.[159]

Clasquin-Johnson succinctly summarizes how metamodern oscillation, aided by the simultaneity of metamodern paradox and the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries, allows for scholar-practitioners to simply exist, stating, "There need not be a separate category of scholar–practitioner. One oscillates between the role of scholar and the role of practitioner. With time and practice, both roles are present simultaneously. The dichotomy is shown not to be false but negotiable."[160] Indeed, this divide seems quite superficial and ridiculous when we realize that the scientist was always a scholar-practitioner because they both studied and practiced in their field, *while* publishing their research simultaneously. The divide currently applies, or applied, mostly to fields of creative work—the artist is not expected to also be an art historian, or the writer a scholar of writing theory, etc.[161] However, metamodernism sees creative endeavors as capable of producing information which may then lead to knowledge.[162] Indeed, any creative endeavor, or perhaps more accurately for a world where boundaries are becoming less defined, *any endeavor* creates information and knowledge for the individual who partook

---

[159] Southward, "Dealing with the creative/critical divide…" 273-280.

[160] Clasquin-Johnson, "Towards a metamodern academic study of religion…," 5.

[161] This in turn is a product of past dominant ideas and philosophies advocating for divides in creative fields, such as G. E. Lessing and Clement Greenberg, see: Mandy Bloomfield, *Archaeopoetics: Word, Image, History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2016), 29-30.

[162] Knudson, "Beyond Postmodernism…," (12/8/19).

in it. We likewise have various means of recording and sharing this information to add to the wealth of information and knowledge which documents our experience and existence.

I would like to reign this exciting prospect in though. The collapse of boundaries separating fields of study may lead to more progress in these various studies, but there is a modernist enthusiasm for the future here that should also be tempered by postmodern caution to make this aspect of the dissolution of boundaries truly metamodern. After all, exciting as new discoveries may be, history has enough examples where the use of such information resulted in damage and regression of these advancements, harming people and the environment, and destroying the potential for collaboration or any further dissolution of boundaries. The future may be now, but the world is not in such a state of balance, equity, or equality that those of us more privileged can simply rush forward blindly.

Bringing this to narrative devices, the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries allows for a certain fluidity in metamodern narrative. Part of this fluidity has already been touched upon with oscillation, which allows for narrative oscillation to include the audience, dissolving the boundaries between work and audience. The return to earnestness as well promotes dissolution, though dissolution is not necessarily the primary purpose of returning to earnestness. Rather, the dissolution of boundaries within narrative begins with postmodern intertextuality, which worked to bring attention to the constructedness of the work by references itself and other past works.[163] The practice of intertextuality is spread across modernism, postmodernism, and now metamodernism,

---

[163] Nick Bentley, "Trailing Postmodernism: David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, Zadie Smith's *NW*, and the Metamodern," *English Studies* Vol. 99, No. 7 (2018): 731.

though each uses intertextuality for different purposes, which Abramson briefly

summarizes by stating that modernist intertextuality was interested in metanarratives,

postmodernist intertextuality critiqued those metanarratives, and metamodernist

intertextuality offers ways of uniquely processing various types of information.[164]

Abramson identifies the metamodern use of intertextuality as

> …much more flexible: often brief; only intermittently substantive; ambivalent about whether they are readily recognized by every member of an audience; sometimes so distorted or jumbled up by the author as to even be unrecognizable as citations; intended as an idiosyncratic expression of the author's network of associations rather than the establishment of a broader canon of associations.[165]

This particular use of intertextuality—especially the merging of various references that

no longer work strictly to situate the work chronologically or temporally—is possible

because the boundaries that would have otherwise prevented the intertextual flow are less

defined than they used to be. Perhaps they never truly existed and it is only now, with the

realization that these boundaries were constructed, that they are being surpassed.

Such dissolutions permit intertextual references that allow the real to bleed into

the fictional. The conscious mixing of the real and the fiction also has postmodern

roots,[166] and appears in fictional narratives through

> …the intertextual borrowing of characters, metaleptic jumps between worlds, narrative contradictions and, …[the] mixing reality and fiction, exemplified by texts in which a 'real-world figure is inserted in a fictional situation, where he interacts with purely fictional characters'.[167]

---

[164] Seth Abramson, "Five More Basic Principles of Metamodernism (VIDEOS)," *HuffPost*, posted 5/14/15, updated May 12, 2016, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/five-more-basic-principle_b_7269446 (12/8/19).

[165] Ibid.

[166] Alber and Bell, "The importance of being earnest again…," 124.

[167] Ibid., 125.

The postmodern use of such reality-fiction crossovers drew attention to the constructed

fiction world, displacing the reader and the work. For metamodernism, there is not such

displacement because the return to earnestness allows for this technique to be used

without irony or deconstruction. Rather, this form of intertextual mixing exists potently in

the metamodern work to create a world that is allowed to overlap and interconnect with

other worlds.

More obviously connected to the effects of the globalized world is the narrative

device of heterochrony and integrated linguistics, both of which are tied to the dissolution

of clearly defined boundaries. Gibbons explains the connection, saying,

> In metamodernist writing, heterochrony is often created through frequent
> temporal deictic shifts (e.g. changes in tense), while specificity is made manifest
> through the use of proper nouns providing specific geographical locations.
> Moreover, the breakdown of national borders and geographical boundaries in the
> globalizing world is often enacted in metamodernist writing through integrating
> lexis from different languages.[168]

Heterochrony creates shifts in *time*, and these various "places of time" can sit alongside

each other, or nest within each other, in various ways to affect or assist the narrative. It is

quite possible for the past, present, and future to easily shift and coexist—this is

particularly easy in fiction because fiction is not tied to the same rules as the physics of

our "real" world. However, the effects of globalization make the boundaries of time seem

less distinct, as different areas of the world exist in different states of time.

Communication across these boundaries means communicating across the boundaries of

time, lending to their dissolution. The linguist mixing is a more obvious result of

---

[168] Note the usage of the word "borders" here mirrors Vermeulen and van den Akker's usage of borders
which should be critiqued. Gibbons, ""That that you intellectuals!"…," 33.

globalization, since communication is inherently dependent upon language and shared language. When media crosses into different countries, even when localized, it still carries with it the effects of the linguistic environment it was created in, and these linguistic effects are then picked up by the global consumers, whether knowingly or unknowingly.

The dissolution of clearly defined boundaries is a complex metamodern technique. It stems from postmodernism, but is inherently tied to the increasingly globalized state of the world. It is the dissolution of various "boundaries" whether globally defined or personally defined, and expands to how we think of scholars and practitioners. In narrative, the dissolution of boundaries allows for the intertextual mixing of reality and fiction and various fictional worlds, as well as a mixing of language, and of time. This is an expansive technique which goes beyond the limits of metamodernism, but is utilized by metamodern works for fundamentally metamodern goals, such as collaboration and proactive negotiation of differences.

Reconstruction

While many scholars have agreed that oscillation is one of the key identifying sensibilities of metamodernism, and while I agree that oscillation is something of a hallmark of metamodernism, I feel that the primary purpose of the metamodern is *reconstruction*. If the modern constructs, and the postmodern deconstructs, then the metamodern should, via oscillation, swing between constructing and deconstructing. But repeated deconstruction is more postmodern than metamodern. Rather than simply

oscillating between the two ideas, it is possible that metamodernism is concerned with reconstruction after deconstruction. Nick Bentley identifies reconstruction as a potential "post-postmodern" tool appearing in recent contemporary works:

> Whereas much postmodernist literature was invested in promoting a process of fragmentation in order to interrogate, challenge or deconstruct a variety of grand or metanarratives, post-postmodernism…starts at a point of fragmentation and explores possible ways of (re-)forming connections. If postmodernism was a movement of deconstruction, post-postmodernism is about the possibility of reconstruction.[169]

Bentley does not immediately subscribe to metamodernism, but does note that much post-postmodern literature seems more concerned with reconstruction than deconstruction. Vermeulen and van den Akker do not tie metamodern directly to reconstruction, but note that emerging metamodern practices, such as Romantic Conceptualism and neoromanticism, *are* tied to reconstructive ideas.[170] Abramson takes this a step further and identifies reconstruction as metamodern, believing that postmodern deconstruction encourages "dialects" which force people to take sides and battle until one remains the victor, while the metamodern encourages dialogue—collaboration—as a means of finding common ground so that, rather than destroy, people can come together to rebuild.[171] This, I believe, is the purpose of the metamodern pursuit—not to continually destroy and conquer, but to reconnect, to reinvigorate, and reconstruct what postmodernism deconstructed and left in ruins.

---

[169] Bentley, "Trailing Postmodernism…," 740.

[170] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism."

[171] See both: Abramson, "Ten Basic Principles…," (12/8/19); and Abramson, "Five More Basic…," (12/8/19).

Reconstruction is not about putting the modernist constructions back together. Rather, if postmodernism deconstructed the modernist constructs to bring attention to their shortcomings, then reconstruction is about moving on and healing from the harm of those constructs. It's about putting things back together, not to restore the harmful original, but to rebuild with the pieces that worked and try something new in hope of a better outcome. This is partially the goal of the "as if" mindset and the return to earnestness, and it stems from the various global crises which younger generations are inheriting. Postmodernism especially does not offer the solutions or courses of actions needed to deal with these crises, because deconstruction often leads to stagnation via postmodern nihilism.

Younger generations desire to continue living and to be able to pass on the world to their heirs. They need a way of reconstruction to restore the world without falling back to the trappings of the blind modernist enthusiasm which so eagerly fueled the capitalist over-consumption of global resources or the postmodern nihilism which refuses the potential for hope. More than anything, reconstruction is about healing and it is about hope, but it will not be easy. Vermeulen and van den Akker state that "hope is both natural to the human species and a skill that needs to be learned, a rare good that needs to be fought for."[172] The dismal state of the world, and the futureless prospects it portends, will not be an easy obstacle to overcome. The "as if" mindset offers a single technique to inspire forward movement, but it is through synthesis of all the metamodern techniques

---

[172] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Utopia, Sort of…," 65.

which I have identified, and others beyond the scope of this thesis, that will allow for global reconstruction to occur.

Until that time, metamodern creators have begun to model what reconstruction can look like. While some scholars identified the potential of reconstruction as a metamodern sensibility, no scholar I read while researching this paper used reconstruction specifically as a means of analyzing metamodern narrative. Using the various narratives which I believe have metamodern undercurrents, I identify reconstruction as a technique evident when the gist of the narrative and the character's actions work towards cultivating hope and/or rebuilding their lives or world through collaborative, reconstructive means rather than through deconstruction and conflict resulting in the total destruction of one or more entities. It is possible for a narrative to still have metamodern and/or reconstructive themes despite the resolution of the narrative's conflict resulting in destruction—after all, narratives are multi-layered and complex—but a truly metamodern narrative will use reconstruction and healing to resolve the plot's conflict without annihilation.

Table of Metamodern Techniques

This is a table for easy reference of the six metamodern techniques I have defined. Modern and postmodern techniques were included to show how metamodernism overlaps and differs from them.

Metamodern Technique	Postmodern	Modern
Oscillation: Metamodern oscillation moves between the various poles of modernism and postmodernism, as well as between various aspects of the work itself.	Postmodern works have their own set of conventions and techniques which they use to postmodern ends; inclusion of modern sensibilities and techniques is often ironic, and works towards deconstruction.	Modernism also adheres to its own set of conventions and techniques, and responds directly to traditions preceding it.
"As if" Mindset: Metamodern works present an "as if" mindset which proactively works towards an optimistic, albeit extremely difficult to achieve, goal *as if* this goal can be achieved, while carrying the cautions derived from postmodern techniques.	Sense of dystopia focused on the shortcomings within contemporary society, occasionally though not always ending in a nihilistic deconstruction of the social constructs which made the dystopia possible.	Sense of utopic futures achieved through the trusted progress of science and technology, with little regard to the consequences of this progress.
Return to Earnestness: Postmodern conventions are used in works not to apathetic ends, but to reconnect and re-inspire sincerity, hope, and earnestness.	Postmodern conventions are used to draw attention to the constructed artificiality of the work and create distrust.	While the work is presented earnestly to inspire hope and trust, there is a strict divide between audience and work that creates the illusion of creator as "omniscient" and therefore trustworthy.
Paradox: Metamodern paradox allows the inherent paradox within a work to simply exist as it is.	Postmodernism seeks to deconstruct paradox to draw attention to the conflicting constructs of the paradox	Modernism seeks to resolve a paradox by picking a side which is "true" and denouncing

	and question the truth or falsity within.	the other conflicts of the paradox as "false."
Dissolution of Clearly Defined Boundaries: Stemming from globalization, clearly defined boundaries are becoming less apparent and important; metamodern works are able to easily mix a variety of aspects, such as reality and fiction, time, and language, without the use of such intertextual conventions drawing attention to the artificiality of the work.	Dissolution of boundaries resulting in intertextual mixing of reality and fiction, etc. in order to draw attention to the constructed artificiality of the work.	Clearly defined boundaries and boundaries between various areas and subjects.
Reconstruction: Sense of rebuilding after deconstructing in order to inspire hope, and promote healing and empathy, through the use of postmodern caution.	Deconstruction as a means to draw attention to the social constructs which shape society, or to the conventions which shape a work.	Construction as a means to build upon progress and expand scientific and technological knowledge.

The following section contains the primary focus of this thesis: the case study of *Things Left Forgotten* and the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games using the metamodern techniques I outlined in the previous section. Given that *Things Left Forgotten* is a fanfiction based on the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, and expands on some of the metamodern sensibilities first presented in the games, I will begin by analyzing the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, and then analyze *Things Left Forgotten*. I will also compare the metamodern narrative techniques I analyze in the games and the fanfiction against similar modern and postmodern narrative devices to explore if (and if so, how) metamodernism offers a wider understanding of the narratives than modernism or postmodernism could provide.

Case Study of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* Games

The complete narrative of Naruhodō and Asōgi is told across two separate games, and the narrative of either game is incomplete without the other. Thus, to understand the complete story I will be looking at both games as a single narrative. While I will be focusing on the narrative, the nature of the narrative medium (video game) means that occasionally game mechanics[173] will overlap with or enhance narrative aspects, and as

---

[173] The term "game mechanics" refers to a variety of elements which make a game playable. For example, the game mechanics of chess would include the ruleset restricting how pieces could move, the pieces, and the design of the board, all of which work in some way with the gameplay of chess.

such I will occasionally discuss game mechanics as they relate to narrative and the techniques discussed. However, the focus of this case study is not a complete analysis of game-as-narrative, but rather of metamodern sensibilities within the narrative, and therefore this should not be taken as a comprehensive study of the entirety of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games.

The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative has some metamodern sensibilities, as the following will discuss, but may not present a metamodern narrative according to the techniques I've identified. Future analyses of the games' narrative under a different understanding of metamodernism may reveal otherwise, as the techniques I've outlined are subjective to my own understanding of metamodernism. Because *Things Left Forgotten* builds upon the metamodern techniques of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, I believe it is important to analyze the games' narrative nonetheless.

I will divide the following analyses into subsections based upon which metamodern technique I am using.

Oscillation in Dai Gyakuten Saiban

The best argument for oscillation in the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative occurs with use of satire and absurdism as narrative devices. Like the mainline Ace Attorney games, the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games satirize the court system. However, unlike the main Ace Attorney series, the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games do not satirize the Japanese court system so much as they take the concept of Meiji Era Japan and Victoria Era England and satirize those time periods. An example of this can be seen with Jezail Brett's character design. She wears a dress typical of the fashion for English women at

the time, but the aspects of her outfit are exaggerated to comical degree—for example, the swan on her hat is actually alive and flies off, taking Brett with it, during her breakdown in court after her crime is exposed.[174] Various character's designs throughout both games likewise lampoon their character's roles in the narrative or the aesthetics of the time, ranging from fairly mild (Sherlock Holmes's design draws on the visual tropes of a stereotypical "great detective"[175]) to downright absurd (the Japanese detective Satoru Hosonaga, despite being a capable detective, continually shows up in court wearing whichever "undercover" outfit he was wearing before the crimes he investigated occurred, which include a waiter outfit for a Western restaurant[176] and a 90s swimming suit[177]).

In addition to absurd character design, almost every character's name is a pun of some sort. While the Ace Attorney series has always featured characters with name puns, the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games take this a step further by utilizing the setting of London (rather than Japan).[178] Names of British characters occasionally feature English words not typically used as names, as well as names which act as puns for Japanese phrases (i.e. a character named Everyday Mittlemont is quite literally named Everyday[179] despite that not being a word typically used as a name).

---

[174] The Adventure of the Great Departure, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

[175] Holmes first appears: The Adventure of the Unbreakable Speckled Band, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

[176] The Adventure of the Great Departure, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

[177] The Adventure of the Blossoming Attorney, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

[178] While the localization of the Ace Attorney series has set Phoenix Wright and co. in "America," the original Japanese text sets the series in Japan, with names doubling as puns for Japanese words and phrases.

[179] The name is written as エブリデイ ミテルモン which is transcribed as Eburidai Miterumon, where ブ ("bu") is used in place of "v"—thus, Everyday. The surname is a pun referencing the Japanese 見ている者 (*miteiru mono*) "one who watches," a references to Everyday's former job as a jailer. "Mittlemont" was the

Alongside character design and pun names, the game has the player uncover the facts of each case to prove Naruhodō's client's innocence—but these facts often reveal ridiculous chains of events that seem to make sense for the story, but are otherwise incredibly improbable and ridiculous as soon as they're taken out of narrative context. These chains of events even span between games, such as the two cases involving Sōseki Natsume. Each occur in a different game but foreshadow or resolve the subplots involving Natsume and other minor characters in his two cases *and also* tie in with other cases *and* the overarching narrative of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games.[180]

Using a purely modern lens, the narrative's portrayal of various modern aspects is not entirely in line with the modern idea of progress through science and technology. There *is* a burgeoning of new technologies for crime investigation, but the court treats these with suspicion, which often hinders the progress of the court proceeding rather than work to show the benefits of technological advancement as progressing other aspects of life. Some of the new technologies were not new for the early 1900s, and in fact would still be considered science fiction in the contemporary moment, such as Iris's hologram-telephone which provides a sort of absurd *deus ex machina* resolution of the final case of the second game.[181] Yet, while the court refuses a chemical to identify a person's unique blood as evidence[182] (which, while this technology doesn't exist *per se*, bears similarities

agreed upon fan localization of "Miterumon" that appears in various fan translations. This character first appears: Twisted Karuma and His Last Bow, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

[180] See both: The Adventure of the Clouded Kokoro, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015; and The Memoirs of the Clouded Kokoro, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

[181] The Resolve of Naruhodō Ryūnosuke, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

[182] The Adventure of the Unspeakable Story, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

to actual blood type identifying technologies), the court does not once question the validity of the claims made by the hologram projections. Thus, the portrayal of technology and new science is hardly uniform, and a modernist sensibility is difficult to pin to the amorphous narrative techniques used throughout the games, which rather lend themselves more to postmodern irony and satire than to modern sensibilities of technology.

A postmodern lens can be used to understand the use of satire and absurdity within the narrative, but fails to fully explain the earnestness inherent to the narrative alongside, and occasionally through, the use of satire. The purpose of satire and absurdity in the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games is not always entirely to draw attention to the construction of the "courtroom drama." Often, the narrative usage of these devices lends itself to the fun of playing the games, acting as puzzle mechanics to challenge the player. In a way, the repeated use of these devices and conventions works to create a new master narrative of what the "courtroom drama" can be—after all, the absurdity of character design, name puns, and case facts appear in every single Ace Attorney game, making them both a tool for satire and the identifying narrative conventions of the series. Thus, the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games do not use satire for the sole purpose of deconstruction, but rather oscillate between satire as deconstructive, absurdism for the sake of fun, and conventions used throughout the series as specific "Ace Attorney narrative tropes."

The "As if" Mindset of Dai Gyakuten Saiban

The use of the "as if" mindset appears in every game of the Ace Attorney series and is especially important as a narrative device in the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games. The protagonist is always placed against seemingly impossible odds, with all the evidence pointing to the defendant's guilt. The defense attorneys of the main series often challenge these odds with an "as if" mindset—continuing the trial and drawing out as much new evidence and witnesses as possible *as if* they can prove their client's innocence by believing in the client and seeking the truth. This narrative device also doubles as the main challenge for the player to overcome while playing the game.

The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games continue this in-series trope, but also complicate it. Rather than a defense attorney, Naruhodō begins the narrative as an English language student forced to defend himself under bizarre circumstances. He knows he is innocent, but does not actually believe he can win the case—rather, it is his best friend Asōgi (who *is* studying to be a defense attorney) who believes in Naruhodō and inspires Naruhodō to believe in himself and go through the trial *as if* he can prove his innocence. Asōgi tells Naruhodō that believing in their client and themselves is the defense attorney's greatest power.[183] Naruhodō takes this to heart, but constantly questions this advice throughout the rest of the first game, and only comes to truly embody this mindset within the second game. Rather than Naruhodō inherently defending with the "as if" mindset, the narrative shows him learning to trust himself and his clients, growing into an attorney who pursues the truth with the "as if" mindset.

---

[183] The Adventure of the Great Departure, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

The games' narrative offers neither the modern sense of utopia (for London is in a sorry state of corruption at the beginning of the narrative) nor the postmodern sense of dystopia (though the corruption exists, various groups are actively fighting against it, in their own ways, *as if* they can rid London of its corruption). The metamodern "as if" mindset therefore offers a useful lens to understand the convictions which Naruhodō acts upon and grows to believe in.

The Dai Gyakuten Saiban *Narrative's Return to Earnestness*

The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games offer some sense of a return to earnestness, if only because satire is not used entirely to the postmodern ends of deconstruction. As discussed earlier, the games exaggerate, to comical and absurd degree, both characters and plot events. But rather than using these exaggerations to deconstruct the issues of Victoria Era London and Meiji Era Japan, they are used alongside those very issues to invoke a sense of hope. This is most apparent in the final case of the narrative, where the various disconnected plot threads are tied together and all comes to light. Despite being the heart of the modern world, London is revealed to be rife with corruption—a "darkness," as the narrative refers to it, which has twisted the nobility and made harder the lives of poor folk. The narrative satirizes this through the convoluted events which make up the various story threads of the Professor killings and the Death Bringer organization. These truths behind these events are brought to light via absurd means, such as a perfectionistic wax-sculptor revealing that the "Professor" had been buried alive

110

rather than executed, because she had trouble when casting the mold of his face.[184] When all the facts are brought together to unveil the truth in the final case—that the Chief Justice, Hart Vortex had blackmailed the actual Professor and also controlled the Death Bringer organization to rid London of further corruption (and was thus indirectly responsible for the majority of the deaths that both within the narrative and outside the narrative's scope)—Vortex breaks down laughing, applauding Naruhodō's ability to uncover the truth but lamenting that it was for naught, since no one will oppose Vortex's power. In a final absurd twist, the queen (watching the trial via hologram) strips him of his power, allowing for Vortex to be arrested for his crimes.[185]

This seems to be a very postmodern use of satire to deconstruct the corruption running rampant through government entities. Vortex's crimes are brought to light only after the plot that made them effective is deconstructed and laid out for all to see—the entire legal system of Great Britain is implied to be so deeply tied with this corruption that it may no longer function correctly, if it ever did. But rather than letting the story end with this deconstruction, the queen declares that Vortex's trial will be held publically in order to "come clean" with the public, and the British characters who remain agree to work towards correcting the mistakes of the British legal system—a final sequence of cutscenes before the credits role show that these efforts are in fact being made, and that positive progress may be possible.[186] Thus, the metamodern return to earnestness is

---

[184] The Return of the Great Departed Soul, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

[185] The Resolve of Naruhodō Ryūnosuke, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

[186] Ibid.

achieved within the narrative by creating a sense of hope through the use of postmodern devices.

The medium of the narrative itself also lends to a sense of return to earnestness, as rather than presenting a story where the player suspends their disbelief because they have no reason to disbelieve, the narrative integrates enough satirical elements to draw attention to the constructed fiction of the story, as well as integrating characters based upon historic figures, that the player knows the story is fiction, but is allowed to continue to suspend their disbelief for the fun and enjoyment of the game. Indeed, even immersion-breaking elements such as the sudden appearance of hologram technology, doesn't seem so out of place when taken with the narrative elements and game mechanics as a whole experience.

Likewise, Shū Takumi, the lead writer, has spoken of the game and story's development in interviews, revealing his own hand and thoughts within the creations of the work.[187] In essence, the player knows that what they are playing is not an accurate or historical reflection of courts circa 1900, knows that they are playing a game designed to have elements that appeal more to gameplay sensibilities rather than narrative sensibilities, but can still enjoy the narrative because it is presented sincerely to them through the medium of interactive game.

---

[187] There have been several interviews with various Japan-based magazines. Many have been translated by fans and posted online, thus reaching audiences outside Japan.

Paradox in Dai Gyakuten Saiban

Paradox is not the focus of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, nor are the

paradoxical situations that do appear easy to analyze. A useful example of narrative

paradox within the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games is the cross-examination game mechanic

which also works to progress the plot onwards. This game mechanic revolves around

Naruhodō's ability to find contradictions within a witness's testimony and follow those

contradictions to a truthful resolution of the case. Even when two truths seem to be in

paradoxical conflict with each other, there is usually some explanation which adheres to

the logic of the narrative—such as hidden facts which render one of the "truths" false. A

modern understanding of paradox, in which the conflicting points are resolved when one

fact is revealed to be true and another false, offers the strongest understanding of

paradoxical conflict-resolution in the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games. There is some sense

of postmodern paradox, as witness testimony and other evidence must be carefully

examined and picked apart, similar to deconstruction, but the ends are ultimately a

modern unveiling of a singular truth. Thus, metamodern paradox does not exist within the

Dai Gyakuten Saiban games, as they favor a modern resolution of paradox via the game

mechanics necessary for progressing the narrative.

The Dissolution of Clearly Defined Boundaries in Dai Gyakuten Saiban

The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games utilize the metamodern dissolution of clearly

defined boundaries in a variety of ways. The narrative is set in the early modern era, with

the opening of Japan during the Meiji Era as a means of developing plot conflicts and

characters. There are several characters who spend a great deal of time outside their

"home" country, as many are foreign exchange students travelling between Great Britain

and Japan. Naruhodō, Asōgi, and Susato also meet characters from various parts of the

world outside Japan or Great Britain, such as a Russian ballet dancer seeking sanctuary in

America.[188] The diversity of character origins illustrates the scale of the world, which

seems very large to Naruhodō and his friends who have spent their lives in Japan. Of

course, this is not a utopic mixing of cultures, for Naruhodō and Susato also encounter

much racism from several British characters during their stay in London. This brings the

setting of the world into context as well; though the boundaries between countries are

beginning to dissolve, the boundaries between people are not always so fast to disappear.

For all the absurdity of the games' satire, there is still a somber note of reality interwoven

into the world-building of the narrative setting.

In addition to the dissolving boundaries between countries, there is some mixing

of language. The games are primarily written in Japanese, as they were intended for a

Japanese audience, with all of the "Objection!" cut-ins[189] written and spoken in Japanese

as well. The major exception to this rule is Jezail Brett, who instead says "Shut up!"

written and spoken in English.[190] In-game imagery, such as signs and newspaper articles

also appear in languages corresponding to their origins. While this makes some text

---

[188] The Adventure of the Unbreakable Speckled Band, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

[189] Iconic to the Ace Attorney series as a whole, a speech bubble with the word "Objection!" and accompanying voice acting appears during dramatic shifts in the court proceeding. The use of this visual trope does not mimic raising an objection in real-life court proceedings, but is rather used for narrative drama and flare. In localized games, the phrase and voice acting is translated to the target language. The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, having never been officially localized, use the original Japanese 異議あり (*igiari*) which translates as "Objection!"

[190] The Adventure of the Great Departure, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

unavailable to the target audience, it also works to build a believable world in which

travel and cultural exchange between many countries is quickly becoming a reality.

While not shown directly, it is often implied when Naruhodō and other Japanese

characters switch between speaking Japanese and speaking English, indicating the

multilingual necessities of their situation.

A dissolution of boundaries also occurs with time shifts, the most notable of

which occurs when a letter from Susato prompts Naruhodō to recall his second time

helping Sōseki, with almost the entire chapter occurring in a flashback. This "flashback

case" occurs with the second game, but the case itself occurred a day after the fourth

chapter of the first game.[191] No other cases occur within a flashback, the past events of

the Professor killings, which occurred ten years prior to the narrative, are so frequently

referenced and expanded upon that the player knows all the details of these past events as

if they had occurred in the present time of the narrative. There is also a sense of temporal

displacement with the chapters' openings and closings, which Naruhodō narrates as if he

is reminiscing on the events, though there is no further expansion of this "future" moment

which Naruhodō seems to occupy. Thus, the past, present, and future are mixed

organically, and while the player knows when the events on the screen belong to one of

these temporal areas, the events are all so interconnected that the distinctions mostly

matter as a means of keeping track of the narrative's master timeline.

The most prominent use of the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries in the

Dai Gyakuten Saiban narrative occurs with the intense use of intertextual references.

---

[191] The Memoirs of the Clouded Kokoro, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

Intertextual references are primarily used in three ways, with the first being references to the main Ace Attorney series. Ryūnosuke Naruhodō is the ancestor of the main protagonist for the majority of the Ace Attorney games, Phoenix Wright (Ryūichi Naruhodō in the original Japanese), and as such the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative is situated as "historic events" in terms of the Ace Attorney canon. However, the name "Phoenix Wright" also appears on an omnibus, written in English as "Phoenix Wright Omnibus."[192] Unlike the direct familial connection between the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* Naruhodō and the main Ace Attorney protagonist, this reference only serves as an Easter egg[193] for attentive players to find.

The second use of intertextuality occurs with the mixing of disparate fictional worlds, specifically the crossover of the *Sherlock Holmes* universe with the Ace Attorney universe that the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative is set in. The player is made aware of this crossover in the very first chapter when the victim is identified as John Watson.[194] Sherlock Holmes is likewise a prominent character, working alongside and helping Naruhodō throughout the entire narrative. However, the use of these characters is distinctive from any other iteration of the *Sherlock Holmes* mythos. The John Watson who dies at the start of the first game is not Holmes's partner, and might have never even met Holmes While this Watson is connected to the Professor killings, he has little plot relevance overall.

---

[192] The Adventure of the Runaway Room, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

[193] The term "Easter egg" is used in video games and other forms of computer programming to refer to a hidden feature, often included for entertainment or as an inside joke. To read more about these types of Easter eggs, see: "Frequently Asked Questions," The Easter Egg Archive, https://eeggs.com/faq.html (4/7/20).

[194] The Adventure of the Great Departure, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

There is some playful misleading as to *who* occupies the "John Watson" position. The player is introduced to Iris Watson, a girl in Holmes's care who is portrayed as more or less his adopted daughter. She at first appears to fill the role of "John Watson," since she writes stories about Holmes's adventures and helps him on a few of his cases. Iris believes she is the daughter of John Watson because of an honest mistake with interpreting some documents while trying to find out more about her birth parents, but she actually has no relation to Watson, and is also not the story's "John Watson" as Holmes *did* go on adventures with someone prior to her birth. It is only partway through the second game that the player finally learns who the "John Watson" to Holmes's "Sherlock Holmes" is: Yūjin Mikotoba, father of Susato and close friend of Holmes fills the roll of "John Watson." Yūjin reveals that during his own study abroad sixteen years earlier he had become close with Holmes and helped solve many of Holmes's cases.[195] The fact that Yūjin is Japanese lends itself to a double dissolution of boundaries—there is the intertextual mixing of fictional worlds, and the iconic duo of Holmes and Watson is recast as a British and Japanese man working together despite their differences.

There are likewise several references to various *Sherlock Holmes* stories, with several minor characters from the *Sherlock Holmes* stories appearing as witnesses or important side characters, though often with some sort of "Ace Attorney twist". For example, the "Inspector Lestrade" is a young girl who begins her life as a pickpocket before she's ever a detective.[196] Shū Takumi discussed his inclusion of the *Sherlock*

[195] Twisted Karuma and His Last Bow, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2015.

[196] Lestrade first appears as a character: The Adventure of the Runaway Room, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015. She begins working as a detective in the second game.

Holmes characters, noting that the Holmes who appears in the game was a more lighthearted Holmes that he had always imagined rather than the serious Holmes that other iterations tend to portray.[197] The existence of these interviews with Takumi work both for the return to earnestness and for the dissolution of boundaries, because the boundary between creator, work, and audience is collapsed when the creator directly talks about the creation process of their work.

The third sense of intertextual mixing occurs with the existence of the character Sōseki Natsume, who was an actual historical person which Takumi requested permission from the living family to use as a character.[198] The historic Natsume was a significant novelist in Meiji Era Japan and did in fact travel to England to study British literature,[199] as the fictional Natsume also does. The inclusion of Natsume as a fictional character works to mix the real with the fictional, but the fictional Natsume does not feel out of place for he's subject to the same absurdity of the narrative as any other character, finding himself the defendant of two separate cases, both of which were unique to the Ace Attorney series for not having a victim who was actually dead.[200] The names of the

---

[197] The interview appeared in *Dengeki Nintendo*'s September 2015 issue, and can be found here: "Dengeki Nintendo: scans of the September 2015 issue," Perfectly Nintendo, posted July 21, 2015, https://www.perfectly-nintendo.com/dengeki-nintendo-scans-of-the-september-2015-issue/?utm_campaign=dengeki-nintendo-scans-of-the-september-2015-issue (4/7/20). See summarized fan translations: "*Dai Gyakuten Saiban* in September 2015 Dengeki Nintendo," Court-Records Forums, posted July 21, 2015, https://forums.court-records.net/viewtopic.php?p=1314781&sid=d1e8472e06d176567ed2814cb9d5b698#p1314781 (4/2/20).

[198] Fan translation of the *Famitsu* article "Takumi Shū Explains How the Scenarios and Tricks of *Gyakuten Saiban* and *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* Are Created (GCC'18)"; see full fan translation here: Ash, "Takumi Shū Explains How the Scenarios and Tricks of *Gyakuten Saiban* and *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* Are Created (GCC'18) (2018)," *Gyakuten Saiban Library*, posted April 3, 2018, https://gyakutensaibanlibrary.blogspot.com/2018/04/takumi-shu-explains-how-scenarios-and.html (4/7/20).

[199] Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Natsume Sōseki," *Britannica*, posted July 20, 1998, updated February 5, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Natsume-Soseki (4/7/20).

[200] The historic Sōseki was never arrested for any crime.

chapters involving Natsume also reference the historic Natsume's famous work *Kokoro*,
[201] and the fictional Natsume has a cat named Wagahai, a reference to the historic
Natsume's novel *Wagahai-wa neko de aru* (*I Am a Cat*).

Of all the metamodern techniques, the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games utilize the
dissolution of clearly defined boundaries the most prominently. The mixing of place,
language, and time—and intertextual references to the main series alongside blending of
fictional worlds, and of reality and fiction—are deeply interwoven with the narrative of
the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, regardless of whether the player understands the
references or not, to create a complex and multi-faceted world that is as much a product
of the creator's imagination as the influence of the globalized world on the creator and
work. While these two games have not been localized, the expanding of globalization has
allowed them to be translated by dedicated fans and shared online, globally. The lack of
boundaries within the narrative does not work to the postmodern ends of drawing
attention to the constructed fiction, but rather to the metamodern ends of creating a work
where mixing occurs simply because it can and because it works to enrich the world and
fabric of the narrative in unexpected ways, creating a fun story for the player to discover.
It is a narrative that could not be analyzed through the modern understanding of fixed
boundaries, if only because the inherent boundlessness is so important to the work itself.

---

[201] The chapters are named "The Adventure of the Clouded Kokoro" and "The Memoirs of the Clouded
Kokoro."

Reconstruction and Dai Gyakuten Saiban

   The game mechanic most well-known to the Ace Attorney series is that of the

courtroom battle, where the client's innocence can only be proven when the truth is

brought to light. The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games use this archetypal mechanic and also

expand it by including a jury system and multiple witnesses taking the stand at once. The

result of such a setup does not offer itself much to a metamodern analysis, as one side

must emerge victorious, though it should be noted that the court trials often end in

collaboration between the defense and prosecution to bring forth the truth.

   There is some room for reconstructive narrative techniques, despite the conflict

resolution requiring that a "villain" emerges who is guilty of the case's crimes. As

previously mentioned, the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative is resolved when the heart of

the Death Bringer organization is brought to light, and the queen herself declares that the

corruption of Great Britain cannot be fought with more corruption. Through the efforts of

Naruhodō and his friends, the British legal system is rid of Vortex's corruption and given

the chance to recover and rebuild itself. Despite the fact that Asōgi remains in London,

alone, the ending of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative is fairly hopeful, indicating that

all the characters will be able to move on with their lives and improve their worlds.[202]

The game more implies this or tells through short snippets during the pre-credits

cutscenes, rather than actually showing that any reconstructive healing has or is

occurring. Still, the positive, hopeful note that the narrative leaves off on leans towards

metamodern reconstruction more so than postmodern deconstruction. The modern lens of

---

[202] The Resolve of Naruhodō Ryūnosuke, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

construction for the sake of progress is not as useful because the narrative works to

deconstruct the British legal system to bring forth the corruption plaguing it.

Dai Gyakuten Saiban *Study Conclusion*

      Overall, the narrative of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games may not be entirely

metamodern but does exhibit strong metamodern leanings, especially through the use of

the metamodern dissolution of clearly defined boundaries. The narrative layers this

dissolution of boundaries with the "as if" mindset and the return to earnestness to

oscillate between postmodern satire and modern earnestness, and cultivates a story

resolution suggestive of reconstruction. An official localization of the games would

further strengthen the metamodern sensibilities present in the games by placing them in a

global market beyond their current accessibility, though it's difficult to know if such a

localization is currently possible due to some bizarre copyright issues surrounding the

character of Sherlock Holmes.[203] The inherent metamodern sensibilities present within

the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games set the stage for *Things Left Forgotten* to build upon and

expand the narrative techniques into a deeply metamodern narrative. The next section

will analyze that narrative.

---

[203] For summary of the copyright legal issues surrounding the character of Sherlock Holmes, see: Mike Masnick, "Sherlock Holmes And The Case Of The Never Ending Copyright Dispute," *techdirt*, posted May 26, 2015, https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20150524/17521431095/sherlock-holmes-case-never-ending-copyright-dispute.shtml (4/7/20).

Case Study of *Things Left Forgotten*

As a text-based fanfiction, *Things Left Forgotten* lends itself to an easier application of metamodern techniques for narrative analyses, as much of the prior scholarship I have read focuses on literary analyses of similar text-based media. Therefore it is possible that through my use of these techniques, I have found *Things Left Forgotten* to more strongly possess the metamodern techniques I've outlined. Future scholarship will ideally expand beyond the limits of this thesis. However, I still maintain that *Things Left Forgotten* is deeply metamodern, and not simply because it is a fanfiction based upon games not currently globally available. The following analysis will likewise be divided into subsections based upon the metamodern technique used, with postmodern and modern analogues discussed alongside the metamodern.

Oscillation in Things Left Forgotten

Oscillation is used almost immediately within *Things Left Forgotten*. The most obvious uses of oscillation occurs within the narrative fabric, particularity in the first few chapters of the story, where the narrative swings between Asōgi's reflections, dreams or nightmares, the present moment, and Asōgi's flashbacks.[204] This oscillation within time and Asōgi's various states of mind is organic, with the text shifting seamlessly between the different states, and also affects the narrative world beyond simply showing Asōgi's inner experience. Every time that Asōgi slips into thought or flashback, time still

---

[204] LookerDeWitt, "Things Left Forgotten," *Archive of Our Own*, posted January 12, 2018, completed April 13, 2018, https://archiveofourown.org/works/13349289/chapters/30563673 (4/8/20).

continues during the story's "present moment." This is shown when other characters are present and question Asōgi who, to their perspective, has simply been spaced out for a few minutes.[205] The text of the narrative also oscillates with Asōgi's state of mind—when he blanks out from being drunk, the narrative skips to the next moment he is conscious of his surroundings and never shows the reader what occurred during that blank state. Rather, the reader, like Asōgi, is left to fill in those blanks with information provided by other characters.[206] While the narrative is predominantly tied to Asōgi's perspective, with peeks into his thoughts or memories through the lens of a limited third-person narrator, the reader is also given some insight to the minds of other characters through the inclusion of notes and letters, as well as speech and body language. Rather than interpreting other character actions purely through Asōgi's subjective perspective, the narration style instead presents both what actually occurs and Asōgi's interpretation of the action.

The narrative of *Things Left Forgotten* also utilizes creator-work-audience oscillation. The formatting of AO3 allows for authors to write comments before and/or after each of their chapters, which LookerDeWitt does for every chapter. Thus, the reader's experience of the story oscillates between immersion within the story and a sort of dialogue with the author, which is further expanded by AO3's option to leave comments for readers to directly voice their responses to the work. The presentation of the work on AO3 therefore allows a reader to oscillate between work, author, and other

---

[205] See Iris's reaction to Asōgi in Chapter 1 for an example: Ibid.

[206] Chapter 8, Ibid.

readers. The various poles of this oscillation are further multiplied when LookerDeWitt uses the author comment function to direct readers to fanart made of *Things Left Forgotten*,[207] thus expanding the oscillation of the narrative experience outside the narrative itself to other fan creations. Focalization is therefore not fixed, but oscillates in a manner which does not disrupt the narrative fabric so much as organically weaves together the multi-layered experience of the narrative.

As a fanfiction, *Things Left Forgotten* must inherently oscillate between the canonical events of the games' narrative and the fanfiction's unique narrative. This is especially apparent in *Things Left Forgotten* because it is a canon-complaint work that builds off of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, and must therefore make reference to events within the games while also setting its own events into motion to create the fanfiction narrative. The major conflicts driving the plot forward are Asōgi's memory, and his fears and self-doubts stemming from his memories (or lack thereof). Therefore, oscillation between the canonical events, which the reader assumes to be "true," suspending their disbelief for the fun of the story, and the fabric of the fanfiction create the narrative tension compelling the reader forward.

Finally, *Things Left Forgotten* also contains the specifically metamodern oscillation between modern and postmodern sensibilities. On one hand, the existence of the fanfiction and specifically the fact that is occurs after the events of the final game, along with the author's comments, indicate that LookerDeWitt found the ending of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative to be lacking in resolution, specifically in resolving

---

[207] See specifically author's opening comment: Chapter 8, Ibid.

Asōgi's character arc.[208] *Things Left Forgotten* itself focuses on the *healing* aspect of Asōgi's character arc, which lends to a postmodern criticism of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative. The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, like many mystery dramas, focuses more on the excitement of uncovering the truth, with conflict resolution portrayed as the grand unmasking of the actual culprit. While the personal narrative of characters comes into play for such story types, they are not the central focus. As such, while the issue of "who framed who and set up which crimes and how?" is solved, the effects of those events on characters is not explored.

By focusing on Asōgi's character arc, and specifically focusing on the aftereffects of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative events on Asōgi's mental well-being, the narrative of *Things Left Forgotten* brings attention to the shortcomings of the original *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative and subtly critiques the lack of personal focus. However, a truly postmodern narrative would seek to completely dismantle these shortcomings, but rather than express full cynical critique, *Things Left Forgotten* swings to the modern sense of enthusiasm and hope. The narrative is not solely a critique, it is also a resolution to that critique. *Things Left Forgotten* acknowledges the shortcomings of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, but chooses to offer a potential resolution by expanding upon Asōgi's story and providing the resolution, rather than simply bemoaning the absence of resolution. Thus, the narrative oscillates between postmodern criticism and modern enthusiasm, between the acknowledgement of narrative shortcomings and expansion of those shortcomings through creative energy.

---

[208] See author's note at the end of Chapter 14, Ibid.

The "As if" Mindset of Things Left Forgotten

The "as if" mindset is interwoven with the narrative and is also present as an existential element of *Things Left Forgotten*. The intra-narrative "as if" mindset gives forward motion to the narrative's central theme, which is set around Asōgi's recovery. Asōgi's personal arc is presented *as if* he can recover, despite the strength of his self-doubts and fears—and this "as if" narrative mindset is resolved with Asōgi actually achieving this goal, despite the many difficulties he faces.[209] Empathy, proactive support, and healing are presented *as if* they are the inherent backbone of the narrative resolution because they *are* used as the backbone to this resolution. This is in direct contrast to the narrative resolution of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, where resolution was not focused on empathy or healing but on the uncovering of truth to prevent further crimes. In a way, *Things Left Forgotten* romanticizes the possibility of healing and recovery, and by doing so presents the narrative of recovery as something ideal and desirable, *as if* presenting such recovery narratives in this manner will normalize the narrative of recovery and make the reality of recovery seem more achievable to the audience.

Things Left Forgotten also exists in a sort of "as if" state. This work is a fanfiction, is presented as a fanfiction, and the author makes no illusion that this is anything but fanfiction. Yet despite being fanfiction—and therefore, very much *not* canon—the events of the narrative are presented *as if* they are a natural continuation and expansion of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative. This existential "as if" mindset of

---

[209] Chapter 14, Ibid.

Things Left Forgotten is not expressed directly in words, but exists nonetheless as tied to the presentation and sharing of the narrative.

The lenses of modernism and postmodernism do not provide adequate explanations for this "as if" presentation. A modernist interpretation might try to exist as the natural progression of the original narrative without acknowledging that it was in any way separate from the original narrative, whilst a postmodern interpretation would continually draw attention to this separateness, to the point where the fanfiction would exist mostly to draw attention to the constructed nature of "canon" and "fan" narratives. *Things Left Forgotten* is not concerned with either of these pursuits—the narrative is presented as natural progression but is also presented in such a way (through author comments, and being posted on a website *dedicated to fanfiction*) that the reader would never mistake it as a "canon" progression of the story. *Things Left Forgotten* is instead allowed to exist between the modern and postmodern, in a metamodern *as if* state of being.

The Return to Earnestness in Things Left Forgotten

Some elements of the metamodern return to earnestness present in *Things Left Forgotten* have been touched upon in the previous sections. The return to earnestness is typified as a way to cultivate hope and empathy through the use of postmodern conventions. This can most readily be seen in *Things Left Forgotten* through the continual use of author comments, which bring attention to the artificial construction of the work by allowing the author to interrupt the narrative immersion and offer

127

commentary on the work. However, this is not used to create distrust towards the narrative or to disillusion the readers, but rather draws the reader even further into the narrative and encourages the reader to care more deeply about the characters. In this way, author commentary works to cultivate feeling, both to convey the author's feelings and draw upon the reader's feelings, harmonizing the two through the experience of the narrative work itself.[210]

If we were to test the narrative presentation of *Things Left Forgotten* against the modern and postmodern "counterparts" to the return to earnestness, we find that both are lacking—*Things Left Forgotten* cannot be modern, for the constant presence of the author shatters the illusion of the author-work-audience divide. However, the shattering of this illusion does not invoke distrust in the readers by drawing attention to the constructed nature of the work, disallowing them from suspending their disbelief. Instead, *Things Left Forgotten* utilizes the postmodern revealing of the author's hand to cultivate a connection between author, work, and audience, and works to reconnect on the level of feeling. This is partly aided by the fact that *Things Left Forgotten* is a fanfiction—its fanmade origins assume likeminded fans will be the audience, and thus the narrative works as a way of connecting fans through the shared enjoyment of the original narrative and through the sharing of a newly created narrative expanding upon the original.

---

[210] For an example of this harmonizing, see the ending author's comment, and the readers' comments section of Chapter 3, Ibid.

Paradox in Things Left Forgotten

The "as if" nature of *Things Left Forgotten*, specifically that it is a non-canonical story presented *as if* it is an actual continuation of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, ties in with the paradox of the narrative. *Things Left Forgotten* is simultaneously presented as a continuation of the original narrative *and* as a fanfiction narrative entirely separate and self-aware of this separateness through the use of author commentary. The narrative is derived from the events of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, but is presented as a written work rather than interactive media. Historic details within the narrative are accurate but the setting of *Things Left Forgotten* also adheres to the ahistorical aspects of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative. The very fabric of the work is paradoxical through these contradictions, yet it still exists.

The use of paradox within the narrative is more subtle, and alludes to the idea that people are inherently paradoxical. How Asōgi is written and portrayed offers a strong example of narrative paradox, with Asōgi being shown as both deeply aware of how others might perceive his behavior but also completely unaware to how others perceive his behavior. He is deeply empathetic to Iris's situation but is also entirely baffled by the fact that she would likewise treat him with empathy and struggles with being empathetic to himself. There are several other subtle examples of paradoxes within Asōgi, but none of them are necessarily "resolved." Surely, as part of the healing process Asōgi learns to be more empathetic with himself, and he realizes that what he thinks other people think of him is not what they may actually think of him, but these changes are not treated as resolving the paradox so much as character growth which evolves the paradox.

129

The only paradox that does get resolved is the paradox of Asōgi inherently embodying the Ace Attorney convention of a "defense attorney"[211] but working as a prosecutor for part of the narrative, which is resolved when he takes his place as a defense attorney at the end of the story. With this latter exception, all paradoxes, both intra-narrative and via narrative presentation, are never resolved so much as they are presented as existing just as they are. There is no postmodern deconstruction, and no modern explaining away the conflict, because these inherent "conflicts" are simply aspects of *Things Left Forgotten* that do not need to be resolved. Thus, the metamodern technique for paradox is apparent in both the presentation and narrative fabric of *Things Left Forgotten*.

The Dissolution of Clearly Defined Boundaries in Things Left Forgotten

Like the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, *Things Left Forgotten* utilizes the metamodern dissolution of clearly defined boundaries, and also expands this usage beyond that of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games. *Things Left Forgotten* mixes the worlds of the canon *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative with the unique fanfiction narrative through a series of flashbacks which build upon events only referenced within the original narrative. No scenes from the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games are recreated in *Things Left*

---

[211] This is a bit difficult to explain without a summary of the entire Ace Attorney series, but in short the series presents defense attorneys as having certain qualities and personality traits, and prosecutors as have different qualities and personality traits, with the idea that some attorney-prosecutor duos can work together synchronistically to resolve the conflicts of the cases they work, even though they are on different "sides" and use different approaches to uncover the truth. This has become something of trope used in the Ace Attorney series. *Things Left Forgotten* presents Asōgi as possessing many of the characteristics of the Ace Attorney defense attorney, rather than the Ace Attorney prosecutor. The usage of the terms "attorney" and "prosecutor" don't necessarily accurately reflect how these terms are used in "real life" law practice.

Forgotten, but the presence of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative's plot is ever present. *Things Left Forgotten* also extends the dissolution of locational boundaries which the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative first presented—Asōgi spends the entire narrative in London, but a series of flashbacks situate him in Japan and other locations. Likewise, Naruhodō returns to London to directly speak with Asōgi, even though he left for Japan at the end of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative.[212] The boundaries of place are further dissolved with Iris's hologram technology allowing for communication not only over the distance of a city, but of a world when Naruhodō first contacts Asōgi using a hologram.[213] Likewise, the mixing of this technology's ahistorical existence with other historically accurate details creates a mixture of the futuristic with the historic.

As mentioned earlier, the narrative of *Things Left Forgotten* oscillates between the past and present, and this in turn creates a dissolution of temporal boundaries. This dissolution is emphasized by the symbolic usage of scars, which act as a means of connecting the past and present simultaneously. *Things Left Forgotten* also utilizes the mixing of language to further expand the dissolution of boundaries—unlike the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, *Things Left Forgotten* is written in English, but uses Japanese words and honorifics throughout the narrative and dialogue to show the overlap of cultures occurring in the world, and emphasizes the fact that Asōgi is a Japanese foreign exchange student far, far from home.

Things Left Forgotten utilizes intertextuality in a variety of ways. Building upon the initial intertextuality of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, Sherlock Holmes once

---

[212] Chapter 10, Ibid.

[213] Chapter 7, Ibid.

more appears as an important character—the Holmes of *Things Left Forgotten* is very similar to the Holmes of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games, and therefore references the games rather than the original *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Yūjin continues to occupy the role of "Watson," and while he doesn't appear as a character, he is referenced frequently and his past work with Holmes is brought up several times. Though Natsume doesn't appear as a character in *Things Left Forgotten*, LookerDeWitt includes a side character entirely original to *Things Left Forgotten* named Miss Dewitt—a playful intertextual mixing of reality and fiction which both plays off of the Ace Attorney convention of pun names and adds reference to the author directly within the work, which is further played with by LookerDeWitt's comment at the beginning of the chapter where Miss Dewitt first appears.[214]

Notably, *Things Left Forgotten* exists as a product of the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries through globalization. The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games have not been localized, and therefore are not immediately accessible to a Wester audience. However, via the technologies of the internet and the fan community surrounding the Ace Attorney series, the text of the games has been translated and made available through online means. Thus, the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative is surprisingly accessible to English speakers who have internet access. *Things Left Forgotten* could not have come into existence if the story had not been made available to LookerDeWitt through the dissolution of global boundaries and the internet's interconnectivity.

---

[214] Chapter 6, Ibid.

Furthermore, that the fic was posted on AO3 allows for a dissolution of

boundaries between author and reader, as AO3 allows for readers to post comments and

for the author to respond to those comments.[215] This extends even beyond the scope of

boundary dissolution which the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games are capable of. The scale of

Capcom as a game-making corporation, and the massive spread of the games they

publish, makes it difficult for creators like Takumi to respond to and interact with players

on an individual level. While interviews allow for some of the boundaries between

creator and audience to dissolve, smaller scale of sites like AO3 allow for a more active

dissolution of boundaries to occur between the creator and audience. Like the *Dai

Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, the dissolution of boundaries in *Things Left Forgotten* is not

used to the postmodern ends of deconstruction, but works instead to build the work up

and imbue it with a sense of complexity and connection. Likewise, the inherent

dissolution of boundaries makes a modern lens inadequate for understanding the

intermixing present in *Things Left Forgotten*.

Reconstruction in Things Left Forgotten

The primary narrative purpose of *Things Left Forgotten* is reconstruction. The

narrative focuses on Asōgi's struggle to recover from the trauma of the events he went

through during the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, and presents this narrative focus by

expanding on past events alluded to during the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative, showing

the aftereffects of these events during the narrative present, and resolving the narrative

---

[215] For an example, see the final author's comment and the comments section of Chapter 14, Ibid.

conflict by allowing Asōgi the chance to heal and begin rebuilding his life. The story notably does not end with Asōgi post-healing—rather, it ends as he steps onto the path of healing, indicating that healing is a process that takes time but can be achieved.

This reconstructive ending is possible only because the narrative first deconstructs everything that occurred to Asōgi during the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games (as well as some events not specifically alluded to during the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative that work to flesh out a believable background for the setting of *Things Left Forgotten*). This deconstruction occurs not to bring focus to the miserable state of the world Asōgi inhabits or create the sense that harm suffered in such a world is insurmountable, but rather the deconstruction allows Asōgi the opportunity to see the broken pieces of his situation and use them to rebuild and reconstruct—to begin healing from all he's survived. The ending is fundamentally hopeful.

The reconstructive nature of the ending is not achieved through the destruction of another entity. In terms of narrative conflict, *Things Left Forgotten* can be classified as a "man vs. self" narrative since Asōgi's own fears and self-doubts, though born of the traumatic events he survived, are essentially what he must overcome. However, the resolution of the plot does not "destroy" these fears and self-doubts—Asōgi is able to face them and feels less burdened by them, but it is implied they are still present to some extent. The healing process in not about suddenly being rid of all one's negative qualities, but rather learning to live with these qualities in a healthy manner so that they do not rule one's life. *Things Left Forgotten* conveys this message of healing by making it clear that while Asōgi still feels these fears and self-doubts, he knows he doesn't have to be ruled

134

by them. Asōgi begins the story alone, but ends surrounded by people he trusts. He is not overwhelmed by how much he must do in the future, nor is Asōgi tied down by the past—he is able to live fully in the present.[216]

The narrative of *Things Left Forgotten* also does not condemn others any further than the canon of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative—that is to say that, while Vortex was arrested, there are other people who treated Asōgi terribly and suffered no consequences. The *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative frequently shows how racist van Zieks is through his dialogue, and while *Things Left Forgotten* does not expand on this aspect specifically, van Zieks is not shown to be especially kind. Despite this, his character does not have to suffer some sort of punishment for the story to resolve. He is presented as an unsympathetic character, but this creates a sense of believability by balancing the portrayal of kind, unkind, and indifferent characters.

Furthermore, van Zieks is shown to acknowledge that Asōgi is fit to be a defense attorney in the final chapter,[217] which adds to the reconstructive nature of *Things Left Forgotten* and extends the implied hopeful ending of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* narrative—not only is Asōgi allowed to heal and rebuild his life, but the people of London around him are also continuing to work towards a more hopeful, reconstructed future. Thus, *Things Left Forgotten* utilizes reconstruction in a fundamentally metamodern way. The narrative cannot be understood through postmodern deconstruction because the narrative elements do not remain deconstructed, nor is the

---

[216] Chapter 14, Ibid.

[217] Chapter 14, Ibid.

modern lens of construction useful when then narrative begins in deconstruction. *Things Left Forgotten* inspires hope and empathy through the use of metamodern reconstruction by presenting a narrative capable of such feats without the need for conflict resolution through destruction.

Things Left Forgotten *Study Conclusion*

Through this analyses, I believe *Things Left Forgotten* embodies a deeply metamodern sensibility. *Things Left Forgotten* utilizes and layers every metamodern technique I outlined both through the narrative fabric, and through the presentation of the narrative. The hopeful, reconstructive finale of the narrative is built upon the forward motion of the "as if" mindset and kept in motion through continual oscillation between various poles within and without the narrative. The return to earnestness and the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries work in tandem with the other techniques to utilize postmodern means to metamodern ends, creating paradoxes which are allowed to exist in all their conflicting complexity. *Things Left Forgotten* does not exist as a true, canon "ending" or "extension" of the *Dai Gyakuten* narrative, nor does it pretend to be, but rather offers one interpretation meant to be shared, further expanding the connective, globalized network from which the work sprang and potentially inspiring future works which may likewise embody and extend the metamodern sensibilities of *Things Left Forgotten*.

Through this study I have tested the viability of the techniques which I identified, and find them to be useful for the works I've selected. Of course, future scholars and my

136

own future studies may expand the understanding and critical application of metamodern

narrative devices beyond the boundaries of this thesis.

DIGITAL COMPONENT

Per the requirements for MA candidates of the EDP department, I produced a digital component alongside this written thesis. This digital component is a smaller project derivative from the work completed in this thesis. I designed a webpage which acts as a sort of extended archive of works with metamodern undercurrents. These works provide examples of narrative metamodern sensibilities beyond the scope of this thesis, which is currently limited to two games and one fanfiction. I also provided a brief synopses of my metamodern narrative techniques as well as a brief discussion of metamodernism to help situate the logic behind the collection of works. While my web-making skills are not on par with professional website designers, I intend to keep updating this webpage with better design and new examples throughout the future, possibly including an interactive element allowing for other people to contribute both their thoughts and other media examples in the future. My hope was to design the language of this webpage in a way that makes an understanding of metamodernism accessible to at least undergraduate students, while also providing a list of examples to help cultivate an understanding of the applications and manifestations of metamodernism in media.

Currently this webpage is an extension of my portfolio website, which allows me to save money until a future time when I might expand the webpage into its own site. This is done partly because my thesis work is currently a project situated within my

138

portfolio work, and partly because this thesis was created during the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine, which significantly impacted my financial situation.

The webpage can be found here: https://www.plaguelily.com/metamodernism-and-narrative.html

CONCLUSION

As I come to the end of this thesis, I find myself in a strange place. Metamodernist sensibilities stem from the ever-increasingly globalized world and as I write this, that world is in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am witnessing, in real-time, the global reaction to crises which quickly spread across the world. If there is one thing that I feel certain of, it is that the globalized state of the world will continue to affect the evolution of society, culture, and the creative works which respond to these structures. I cannot know that metamodernism is what comes after postmodernism, but I do know that we are moving, rapidly, into an era that cannot be so easily understood through the tenets of postmodernism. My interest in metamodernism stemmed from the fact that it *is* hopeful, that it offers a *reconstructive* alternative to the often nihilistic ends I often find in postmodern works. Now, perhaps more than ever, I believe we need hope, we need to believe that we can make a change for the better and that, no matter how impossible the goal seems, we need to strive for that better present and future *as if* it can be achieved.

The pandemic did not affect the process of my thesis as much as I'm sure it affected others. The financial difficulties many individuals in America are facing have affected me, and this in turn affected how I went about constructing my digital component. However, almost all of my research for the thesis paper itself was accessible through the internet, and that which wasn't I had already archived in some form that I

could easily access before I ever knew I'd be quarantined (which, I will note, is standard for my research practice, since I tend to assume I may lose access to materials that I don't archive for my future self). Perhaps the highly digitalized aspect of my process is in itself, metamodern—it was, after all, the interconnected nature of the internet, as well as the shift to publishing scholarly work online that made it so I faced little to no change in my process. In that same metamodern vein, I've worked on this thesis *as if* things will eventually return to normal, because pandemic or no, certain aspects of life still continue on, like a stream of water which finds a different course when it hits a block in its initial path.

It's possible the process of my thesis was more metamodern than I had initially realized it would be. And yet, I still find myself concerned by the limits of my studies. Surely, metamodernism is a fluid thing, capable of being shaped to the scholar's needs. I've read several scholars who came up with their own techniques for identifying metamodern works, some of which overlap with my own six, and some which I disregarded. I can't say that the six techniques I used are *the* techniques one should use for understanding or identifying metamodernism, but they were useful for my case study in more ways than I had expected.

When I began the research process, I wanted to avoid searching out or creating techniques tailored to proving my case study as metamodern. I *suspected* that *Things Left Forgotten* had metamodern sensibilities, and as I began to read through my research materials, I began to suspect that maybe the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games also had some metamodern undercurrents—but I didn't want to construct techniques which would prove

these suspicions "right." Instead I chose to focus on researching and synthesizing this research into what eventually became the six techniques I used for the case study, separate from the materials for my case study. Until I actually conducted the case study by using the six techniques, I did not know for certain that my selected works would indeed fit the metamodernist sensibilities I had identified. Yet surely there was some subconscious mental bias while I was synthesizing my research—and this I must acknowledge, because all the information, both about metamodernism and about the narratives I used for my case study, was in my head as I wrote this thesis, and therefore it's impossible to say there was no subjective bias when forming the arguments presented in this paper.

I was surprised to find as many metamodern sensibilities in the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games as I did. Because I was familiar with the presence and history behind Holmes and Natsume, I suspected the dissolution of clearly defined boundaries would be a significant metamodern narrative technique used by the games' narrative, but I was not expecting to find that several of the metamodern techniques I identified would be applicable in any manner to the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games. Likewise, several of the techniques I thought would have a stronger presence in *Things Left Forgotten*, specifically the "as if" mindset and the return to earnestness, actually didn't appear as integral as I'd initially thought.

The process of writing the case study, and putting everything together, made me further question the usefulness of the techniques which I had identified. I feel that metamodernism does treat paradox differently than either postmodernism or modernism

did, and discussions of paradox often arose several times in the scholarly research I was

studying. The more I wrote about paradox, however, the more I realized how difficult

paradox is to discuss and I began to wonder if it really was useful as a technique for

analyzing and understanding metamodern narrative. It is also perhaps possible that due to

the lack of scholarship which actively applied paradox to analyses (rather than simply

discussing it as a metamodern sensibility), I had little to model a useful application of

paradox to narrative analysis to go by. Further, while many scholar cited the "as if"

mindset as indicative of a metamodern sensibility, I wonder about the usefulness of the

"as if" mindset for narrative analysis specifically. It is surely useful when looking at the

narrative's medium, but the actual story of fiction narratives often operate on a sort of "as

if the things happening in this story are possible" logic. Dragons can exist in a story *as if*

they actually exist in the setting of the story, but it's doubtful that the "as if" existence of

fictional dragons automatically make dragons metamodern. Even now, at the conclusion

of this thesis, I cannot confidently say that I am satisfied with the techniques I have

identified. Surely the techniques identified in this thesis stem from my understanding of

metamodernism, but how useful are they for understanding metamodern narrative?

Perhaps as metamodernism continues to evolve, and as my own creative and

research practices change, I will develop a different, more useful set of metamodern

techniques for making sense of metamodern creative expression—or perhaps I will just as

quickly become dissatisfied with those techniques. Metamodernism offers, after all, a

highly dynamic way of understanding the contemporary moment. If nothing else, the

shortcomings of this thesis have provided a reflecting point to allow me to return to so that I may strengthen and deepen my future research and work.

To say that I am completely dissatisfied is also incorrect. I feel I have a much stronger grasp of metamodern narrative expression than I did previously, and I am noticing that I respond to new works differently than I did before. I'm not necessarily "looking" for metamodern undercurrents in the media I consume, but I am more sensitive when metamodern sensibilities do arise. Trying to understand why I perceive a narrative device as metamodern, and how it can heighten my understanding of various works (and likewise deepen my understanding of postmodern and modern sensibilities as well) has enriched how I engage with media and offers a myriad of new pathways for future study and research. I am also more sensitive when making my own creative works, and which sorts of ideas are influencing them. I am painfully aware of the limits of this thesis, but I am simultaneously excited for going forward with the possibilities which this thesis has opened.

All in all, this thesis has been as much of a journey as it has been tedious study. While I studied scholars from a variety of fields, I can only hope that metamodernism is picked up by even more scholars from a wider array of backgrounds to provide a more complex and multifaceted understanding of the potential applications of metamodernism. Should metamodernism not catch traction, the studies I've conducted still lend themselves to an understanding of the moment I occupy in history, and build the groundwork for whatever may come to pass. I will continue to move forward as best I can, but if possible I'd like to do so in the spirit of the metamodern. That is, moving

forward with enthusiasm and caution, with deep reflection and the belief that positive changes can and are being made. Maybe that sense of hope is naïve, but choosing to despair inevitably leads to an end in self-destruction, and that is simply not an end I am willing to settle for.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abramson, Seth. "Five More Basic Principles of Metamodernism (VIDEOS)." *HuffPost*.
Posted May 14, 2015. Last updated May 12, 2016.
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/five-more-basic-principle_b_7269446.

Abramson, Seth. "Ten Basic Principles of Metamodernism." *HuffPost*. Posted April 27,
2015. Last updated December 6, 2017. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ten-key-
principles-in-met_b_7143202.

Alber, Jan, and Alice Bell. "The importance of being earnest again: fact and fiction in
contemporary narratives across media." *European Journal of English Studies* Vol.
23, No. 2 (2019): 121-135.

Al-Gareeb, Ofelia. "New Realities of the Contemporary Novel," *Cultural Intertexts* Vol.
4 (2015): 10-20.

Ash. "Takumi Shū Explains How the Scenarios and Tricks of Gyakuten Saiban and Dai
Gyakuten Saiban Are Created (GCC'18) (2018)." *Gyakuten Saiban Library*.
Posted April 3, 2018.
https://gyakutensaibanlibrary.blogspot.com/2018/04/takumi-shu-explains-how-
scenarios-and.html.

arts depot. "Feat.Theatre." Accessed May 11, 2020.
https://www.artsdepot.co.uk/feattheatre.

146

Baciu, Ciprian, Muşata Bocoş and Corina Baciu-Urzică. "Metamodernism – A

Conceptual Foundation." *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 209

(2015): 33-38.

Barr, Sabrina. "What Generation Do You Belong To? Millennial, Generation X or Z."

Independent. Posted November 10, 2019. https://www.independent.co.uk/life-

style/generation-definitions-what-am-i-millennial-generation-x-y-z-baby-

boomers-golden-age-young-old-a8679741.html.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann

Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1944.

Bentley, Nick. "Trailing Postmodernism: David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas, Zadie Smith's

NW, and the Metamodern." *English Studies* Vol. 99, No. 7 (2018): 723-743.

Bloomberg, Mandy. *Archaeopoetics: Word, Image, History*. Tuscaloosa: University of

Alabama Press, 2016.

Bordieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge,

England: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Bourriaud, Nicholas. "Altermodern explained: manifesto." *Tate*. Accessed November 3,

2019. https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-

britain/exhibition/altermodern/altermodern-explain-altermodern/altermodern-

explained.

Brunton, James. "Whose (Meta)modernism?: Metamodernism, Race, and the Politics of

Failure." *Journal of Modern Literature* Vol. 41, No. 3 (2018): 60-76.

Cheryl. "2019 Hugo Awards Announced." *The Hugo Awards*. Posted August 19, 2019.

> http://www.thehugoawards.org/2019/08/2019-hugo-awards-announced/.

Clasquin-Johnson, Michel. "Towards a metamodern academic study of religion and a

> more religious informed metamodernism." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological*

> *Studies* Vol. 73, No. 3 (2017): https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4491.

Court-Records Forums. "Dai Gyakuten Saiban in September 2015 Dengeki Nintendo."

> Posted July 21, 2015.https://forums.court-

> records.net/viewtopic.php?p=1314781&sid=d1e8472e06d176567ed2814cb9d5b6

> 98#p1314781.

Dai Gyakuten Saiban: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Bōken. Directed by Shū Takumi.

> Capcom. 2015. Nintendo 3DS. Video game.

Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Kakugo. Directed by Shū Takumi.

> Capcom. 2017. Nintendo 3DS. Video game.

Dember, Greg. "After Postmodernism: Eleven Metamodern Methods in the Arts." *WiM*

> *on Med*. Posted April 17, 2018. https://medium.com/what-is-metamodern/after-

> postmodernism-eleven-metamodern-methods-in-the-arts-767f7b646cae.

Dimock, Michael. "Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z

> begins." *Pew Research Center*. Posted January 17, 2019.

> https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-

> generation-z-begins/.

Drayton, Tom. "The Listening Theatre: A Metamodern Politics of Performance."

> *Performance Philosophy* Vol. 4, No. 1 (2018): 170-187.

The Easter Egg Archive. "Frequently Asked Questions." Accessed April 7, 2020.

>https://eeggs.com/faq.html.

Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Natsume Sōseki." *Britannica*. Posted July 20,

>1998. Last updated February 5, 2020.

>https://www.britannica.com/biography/Natsume-Soseki.

Farmer, Michial. "Stay Young, Stay Lonely: Nostalgia and Spirituality in Okkervil

>River's The Silver Gymnasium." *Popular Music and Society* Vol. 41, No. 2

>(2018): 119-131.

Gibbons, Alison. ""That that you intellectuals!" and "kaPOW!": Adam Thirlwell and the

>Metamodernist Future of Style." *Studia Neophilogica* Vol. 87 (2015): 29-43.

Hellekson, Karen, Russel Blackford, and Graham J. Murphy. "New Journal:

>Transformative Works and Cultures." *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 35, No. 2

>(2008): 360-362.

Hellekson, Karen, and Kristina Busse, ed. *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age

>of the Internet: New Essays*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company,

>Inc., 2006.

Hellekson, Karen, and Kristina Busse. *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*. Iowa City:

>University of Iowa Press, 2014.

Hutcheon, Linda. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. New York/London: Routledge, 2002.

Irvine, Martin. "Modernism vs Postmodernism." Accessed December 10, 2019.

>http://www19.homepage.villanova.edu/karyn.hollis/prof_academic/Courses/2043
>_pop/modernism_vs_postmodernism.htm.

James, David, and Urmila Seshagiri. "Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and

  Revolution." *PMLA* Vol. 129, No. 1 (2014): 87-100.

Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York:

  New York University Press, 2006.

Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. New York:

  Routledge, 1992.

Jenkins, Henry, Erica Rand and Karen Hellekson. "Acafandom and Beyond: Week Two,

  Part One." *Henry Jenkins Blog*. Posted June 20, 2011.

  http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2011/06/acafandom_and_beyond_week_two.html.

Kersten, Dennis, and Usha Wilbers. "Introduction: Metamodernism." *English Studies*

  Vol. 99, No. 7 (2018): 719-722.

Kirby, Alan. *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and*

  Reconfigure our Culture. New York, NY: The Continuum International

  Publishing Group Inc., 2009.

Knudson, Stephen. "Beyond Postmodernism. Putting a Face on Metamodernism Without

  the Easy Clichés." *ARTPULSE Magazine*. Accessed December 8, 2019.

  http://artpulsemagazine.com/beyond-postmodernism-putting-a-face-on-

  metamodernism-without-the-easy-cliches.

Lavery, Nick. "Consciousness and the Extended Mind in the "Metamodernist" Novel."

  English Studies Vol. 99, No.7 (2018): 755-765.

Lemberger, Matthew E., and Tamiko L. Lemberger-Truelove. "Bases for a More Socially

    Just Humanistic Praxis." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 56, No. 6

    (2016): 571-580.

Lipovetsky, Gilles. *Hypermodern Times*. Translated by Andrew Brown. Cambridge, UK:

    Polity Press, 2005.

LookerDeWitt. "Things Left Forgotten." *Archive of Our Own*. Posted January 12, 2018.

    Completed April 13, 2018.

    https://archiveofourown.org/works/13349289/chapters/30563673.

LUNG. "About Us." Accessed May 11, 2020. https://www.lungtheatre.co.uk/about-us.

Masnick, Mike. "Sherlock Holmes And The Case Of The Never Ending Copyright

    Dispute." *techdirt*. Posted May 26, 2015.

    https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20150524/17521431095/sherlock-holmes-case-

    never-ending-copyright-dispute.shtml.

Morton, Tom. "The Art of Distraction." *Frieze: Contemporary Art and Culture*, No. 167

    (2014): 13.

Notes on Metamodernism. "Hard and soft." Posted March 16, 2011.

    http://www.metamodernism.com/2011/03/16/hard-and-soft/.

Notes on Metamodernism. "Strategies of the metamodern." Posted August 1, 2010.

    http://www.metamodernism.com/2010/08/01/strategies-of-the-metamodern/.

Organization for Transformative Works. "About the OTW." Accessed November 3,

    2019. https://www.transformativeworks.org/about_otw/.

Perfectly Nintendo. "Dengeki Nintendo: scans of the September 2015 issue." Posted July

 21, 2015. https://www.perfectly-nintendo.com/dengeki-nintendo-scans-of-the-

 september-2015-issue/?utm_campaign=dengeki-nintendo-scans-of-the-september-

 2015-issue.

Samuels, Robert. "Auto-Modernity after Postmodernism: Autonomy and Automation in

 Culture, Technology, and Education." In *Digital Youth, Innovation, and the*

 Unexpected, edited by Tara McPherson. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008.

 219-240.

Southward, Daniel. "Dealing with the creative/critical divide: these men as readers

 simply cannot know what it is to write." *New Writing: The International Journal*

 for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing Vol 13, No. 2 (2016):273-280.

Spencer, Lloyd. "Modernity, postmodernism and the tradition of dissent." From *Icon*

 Dictionary of Postmodernism, edited by Stuart Sim. Cambridge: Icon Books,

 1998. Posted 2005.

 https://web.archive.org/web/20051029142944/http:/www.tasc.ac.uk/depart/media/

 staff/ls/Modules/Theory/PoMoDis.htm.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Hegel's Dialectics." Posted June 3, 2016.

 https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-dialectics/.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Postmodernism." Posted September 30, 2005.

 Last revised February 5, 2015. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/.

Transformative Works and Cultures. "About the Journal." Accessed November 3, 2019.

 https://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/about.

Turner, Luke. "Metamodernist // Manifesto." *The Metamodernist Manifesto*. Accessed

    November 3, 2019. http://www.metamodernism.org/.

Vermeulen, Timotheus, and Robin van den Akker. "Misunderstandings and

    clarifications." *Notes on Metamodernism*. Posted June 3, 2015.

    http://www.metamodernism.com/2015/06/03/misunderstandings-and-

    clarifications/.

Vermeulen, Timotheus, and Robin van den Akker. "Notes on metamodernism." *Journal*

    of Aesthetics and Culture Vol. 2 (2010).

Vermeulen, Timotheus, and Robin van den Akker. "Utopia, Sort of: A Case Study in

    Metamodernism." *Studia Neophilogica* Vol. 87 (2015): 55-67.

Vogelzang, Robin. "The Likeness of Modernism in Marilynne Robinson's Fiction."

    English Studies Vol. 99, No. 7 (2018), 744-754.

Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud. "The Apocalypse Fact and the Eclipse of Fiction in Recent

    American Prose Narratives." *Journal of American Studies* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1975):

    69-83.

Expanded Summary of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* Games

The following is an expanded summary of the *Dai Gyakuten Saiban* games,

which offers a more complete look at the various plot elements used to develop a highly

complex narrative, and a deeper understanding of the events and characters presented in

the games' narrative.

Dai Gyakuten Saiban: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Bōken, the first of the two games,

opens with the murder of Dr. John H. Watson, a doctor from Great Britain working in the

medical department of Teito Yūmei University. The crime is blamed on Naruhodō, an

English student attending Teito Yūmei University who happened to be at the restaurant

where Watson died. The Japanese-Anglo Alliance treaty had recently been signed and the

Japanese government wants to wrap the case up quickly and quietly, less they face

international scandal. Before the trial, Naruhodō is approached by his best friend,

Kazuma Asōgi, another student at Teito Yūmei University who is studying law to

become a defense attorney. Asōgi wants to defend Naruhodō, however Asōgi recently

secured a study abroad position in the British Empire, and if he acts as Naruhodō's

defense and loses, then he will also lose the study abroad opportunity. When Asōgi is

called away to meet with the trial's judge, Naruhodō is approached by Yūjin Mikotoba,

another medical professor at Teito Yūmei University, who advises Naruhodō to defend

himself in court in order to avoid possibly having Asōgi's study abroad permission suspended indefinitely. Naruhodō goes ahead with this plan and states that he is defending himself when the trial begins; Asōgi acts as his co-counsel since Naruhodō has no knowledge of the law. The trial's progression eventually reveals that Naruhodō is indeed innocent. The true culprit is a British exchange student named Jezail Brett, who refuses to state her motive for killing Watson. After the trial, Yūjin and his daughter, Susato Mikotoba, congratulate Naruhodō and Asōgi on their victory, but Yūjin also informs the two that Brett cannot be tried in Japan, as she is a citizen of Great Britain. Asōgi notes that Naruhodō performed surprisingly well in court, and suggests that Naruhodō might even be fit to work as a defense attorney. Asōgi also mentions that he has a mission he must complete in Great Britain, no matter the cost.[218]

The next episode begins several months after Naruhodō's trial, aboard the S. S. Aclaire which is travelling towards Great Britain. Asōgi convinced Naruhodō to accompany him on his study abroad trip, but because Naruhodō was not approved for studying abroad, Asōgi smuggled him onto the ship, intending to hide Naruhodō in his cabin until they reach Great Britain. Asōgi keeps this a secret from Susato, who is travelling with him as a legal assistant, and Satoru Hosonaga, a detective assigned to accompany Asōgi on his trip. However, Asōgi is murdered and Naruhodō is discovered in the cabin's closet by Sherlock Holmes, a famous British "detective" who has been popularized around the world by the in-game series of novels, *The Adventures of*

---

[218] The Adventure of the Great Departure, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Bōken*, Shū Takumi, Capcom, 2015, Nintendo 3DS, video game.

Sherlock Holmes. Naruhodō is once more accused of murder because the cabin was locked and he was the only other person in the cabin with Asōgi. Naruhodō is able to convince Susato to help him investigate the case, as she realizes that a seal placed on the closet where Naruhodō was sleeping hadn't been broken, and it would be impossible for Naruhodō to place the seal on the closet after entering it. Unlike most episodes in the Ace Attorney series, this episode is has no trial, with Naruhodō and Susato instead working alongside Holmes to uncover the truth of Asōgi's "murder." They discover that Asōgi's death was an accident caused by a young Russian ballet dancer who was fleeing to America. Afterward, Hosonaga informs Naruhodō that he will have to return to Japan, as Naruhodō was not awarded the study abroad. Holmes intercedes and notes that the study abroad program approved one defense attorney and one legal assistant, and that it would therefore be possible for Naruhodō to take Asōgi's place. Because of the length of the boat ride, Susato agrees that there's plenty of time to train Naruhodō in the law, and Naruhodō agrees to the proposition. He reflects on all the things Asōgi was unable to achieve, and swears to carry on Asōgi's will.[219]

In the third episode, Naruhodō and Susato arrive in London and meet the Chief Justice, Hart Vortex, who already heard the news of Asōgi's death. Vortex is reluctant to accept Naruhodō as Asōgi's replacement. To test the duo, Vortex tells them to head to Old Bailey and defend Cosney Megundal, a very rich man who has been accused of the murder of Mortar Milverton. No one else would take the case because the prosecutor is the feared "Death Bringer of Old Bailey," Barok van Zieks. According to rumors, every

[219] The Adventure of the Unbreakable Speckled Band, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

defendant prosecuted by van Zieks declared innocent dies shortly after the trial. Still, Naruhodō and Susato have no choice but to defend Megundal. This trial introduces the jury gameplay mechanic where Naruhodō is tasked with swaying the jury's opinion in his favor, which doubles as a plot device when Susato invokes a fifty-year old law allowing the defense to present a closing argument to sway a jury that would otherwise rule in the prosecution's favor. This allows Naruhodō to continue the trial long enough for a new witness to be brought in, a pickpocket named Gina Lestrade who was present at the scene of the crime, an omnibus. The trial continues with Lestrade's new testimony, but the facts of the case become extremely muddled. Reinvestigating the omnibus submitted as evidence reveals new bloodstains, leading to speculation that Megundal forged evidence, but ultimately there is no solid proof of this. In light of the bloodstains, the judge rules that there is not enough evidence to charge Megundal and declares Megundal not guilty, though no one is sure who the murderer actually is. Despite proving themselves to Vortex, the victory does not sit well with Naruhodō or Susato. Megundal does award them money for securing a victory, but later dies when the omnibus suddenly catches fire after the trial.[220]

The fourth episode follows after Megundal's case when Naruhodō and Susato are assigned a new case from Vortex, who was extremely pleased with their performance the day before. The victim of the case, a woman named Viridian Green, is not actually dead, but is in critical condition after being stabbed. The accused is Sōseki Natsume, a Japanese exchange student studying English literature in London. Naruhodō and Susato are given

---

[220] The Adventure of the Runaway Room, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

time to investigate before the trial begins, which allows them to speak with Natsume and investigate the crime scene. While investigating, Naruhodō and Susato speak with Tobias Gregson, a leading detective of the Scotland Yard who thinks Holmes is a fraud, despite helping Gregson make the arrest. When the two try to find Holmes at his house they meet Iris Watson, a young girl in Holmes's care and the author of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Iris reveals that she based her stories off notes she found which she believes were written by a John H. Watson, a name she then took as a penname when she published her stories. Iris then directs the two to where they can find Holmes to continue their investigation. The trial commences the next day, and Naruhodō and Susato are able to prove Natsume's innocence, despite once more facing off against van Zieks. While he fears the Death Bringer's curse, Natsume is very grateful to Naruhodō and Susato for proving his innocence. After the trial, Holmes invites Naruhodō and Susato to stay with him and Iris during their study abroad, as the two were not provided lodgings of their own. Holmes warns Naruhodō of a darkness lurking in London, though Naruhodō doesn't know what Holmes means at this time.[221]

The final episode of this first game occurs two months after Natsume's trial. The episode begins before the crime is committed, with Holmes taking Naruhodō and Susato to a pawn shop to retrieve his violin, introducing them to the shop's owner Hutch Windibank. As they're speaking with Windibank, Lestrade enters the shop and withdraws a coat before trying to sell off a strange disc from the coat's pocket. A man calling himself Egg Benedict then arrives and claims that the coat belongs to him even if

---

[221] The Adventure of the Clouded Kokoro, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

Lestrade had the correct paper to retrieve it. Because Benedict knows the password associated with the coat's retrieval ("Professor"), Windibank sides with Benedict, forcing Lestrade to hand over the coat. She refuses to part with the disc, but before any fights or arguments can ensue Holmes steps in to try and uncover the truth of the situation. His reasoning (assisted by Naruhodō), reveals that Egg Benedict is a pseudonym (though the man refuses to state his actual name), and that "Benedict" was attempting to steal Megundal's possessions, as it was Megundal who had deposited the coat and disc at some point before his trial. When "Benedict" pulls a gun on the group, Gregson (who was passing by) intervenes with the Scotland Yard. The coat is returned to Lestrade, however Gregson takes the disc while muttering about some incident. Holmes and Iris invite Lestrade over for dinner later that night.[222]

Back at Holmes's flat but before Lestrade arrives, Iris explains her unusual living situation: her mother died in childbirth and her father (whom she believes is Watson) used to work with Holmes on cases but went far away, leaving only notes about the cases behind. Because of the absence of her parents, Holmes took Iris in and cared for her as if she were his own daughter. Naruhodō realizes that the Watson Iris believes is her father is probably the same Watson who was murdered in Japan, but doesn't mention anything. Holmes arrives, revealing that he was able to copy the disc before it was confiscated, but notes that despite trying every model of music box in London, he can't identify the music on the disc. Iris then mentions a "Baskerville" story she was unable to publish, which Susato recognizes as "The Hound of the Baskervilles" despite the fact that Holmes forbid

---

[222] The Adventure of the Unspeakable Story, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban*, 2015.

the publication of that one particular story. They are unable to discuss the matter until later, after Lestrade arrives. Lestrade believes Holmes probably sold off the manuscript of the story for money, rather than storing it in the pawn shop as he had told Iris. Later that night, Holmes wakes Naruhodō and Susato when he realizes Lestrade has left for the pawn shop, possibly to try and retrieve the manuscript for Iris. When the go to investigate Holmes is shot, forcing Naruhodō to go out and find an officer. When Naruhodō returns, Holmes tells him to check the storage room, where Naruhodō discovers that Windibank has been murdered. Lestrade is unconscious in the room with a gun as well.[223]

This leads to Lestrade being accused of Windibank's murder. Naruhodō resolves to defend her. During the pre-trial investigation, Naruhodō learns that Susato will not be his co-counsel, as she must return to Japan immediately. Yūjin's health has taken a turn for the worse and Susato cannot stay for the trial, though she does assist with the investigation. Lestrade eventually admits to lying in court during Megundal's case. Megundal had coerced Lestrade into working for him, allowing him to set up evidence in such a way as to evade conviction for murdering Milverton. With the truth of Megundal's trial now clear to Naruhodō, he questions Asōgi's advice to always believe in the client. Regardless of the past, Naruhodō must press forward with defending Lestrade, even as Susato bids him farewell.[224]

In place of Susato's absence, Iris insists on being Naruhodō's co-counsel, as she believes very strongly in Lestrade's innocence. Van Zieks is once more prosecuting the

---

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid.

trial. Naruhodō is able to extend the trial until Robert Crogley, formerly using the name

Egg Benedict, is called to testify, which eventually leads to the truth of the Megundal

trial being brought to light. Megundal's involvement with Milverton's murder is directly

tied to the mysterious disc he deposited at the pawn shop. When the disc is played to the

court, Gregson tries to have it stopped. However, the judge allows the disc to be played

when both Naruhodō and van Zieks agree that it is evidence and therefore must be

presented to the court. It is revealed that the disc is actually part of a pair with Morse

code recordings of government secrets, which ties them to a scandal the Scotland Yard

was trying to resolve quietly, explaining why Gregson didn't want them played in court.

Crogley sold the first disc to Megundal, but when Crogley's father, Milverton, discovered

the plot, he asked to take Crogley's place for the second exchange and ended up being

murdered by Megundal. Crogley arranged for Megundal's murder in the omnibus when

he learned of the incident, and then tried to retrieve the discs before his plot to sell

government secrets was revealed. The trial ends with Lestrade being declared not guilty.

In the aftermath of the trial, Naruhodō, Iris, Holmes, and Lestrade are able to meet up

with Susato who was unable to leave due to heavy rain. Iris reveals that, because she had

studied Morse code, she could understand the recordings once they were played in court.

The recordings were actually in Japanese Morse code, which Susato is able to translate

into a list of names: K. Asōgi, A. Sasha, T. Gregson, and J. Watson. Before they can

speculate on what this list implies, Susato must leave since her ship is about to depart.

The game ends with this final farewell.[225]

---

[225] Ibid.

Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2: Naruhodō no Kakugo is the sequel to *Dai Gyakuten Saiban: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Bōken*, and picks up shortly after the events of the final case. Rather than resuming with Naruhodō's story, the first episode begins in Japan, with Susato as the playable protagonist. Susato has safely returned to Japan, but her friend Haori Murasame, a medical student at Teito Yūmei University and former student of Watson, has been accused of murdering Jezail Brett, the killer from the first trial of the first game. Since women are not allowed to be attorneys in Japan, Susato disguises herself as Ryūtarō Naruhodō, a "cousin" of Ryūnosuke Naruhodō, so that she can defend Murasame in court. Yūjin (who is in perfectly fine health) acts as Susato's co-counsel. During the trial, Natsume makes an appearance as a witness, having made it back to Japan without the Death Bringer's curse following him. Murasame is cleared of her guilt when Heita Mamemomi, a journalist who claims to know the truth about Watson's murder, confesses to killing Brett after she insulted his journalism. Whatever this connection is, it is not revealed. After the trial, Yūjin admits faking his illness, but before he can elaborate as to why, Mamemomi appears and accuses Yūjin of conspiring with Asōgi, because of something Asōgi had to do in Great Britain. Before this lead can be explored, the judge from the trial orders the bailiffs to remove Mamemomi, and introduces himself as Seishirō Jigoku, a friend of Yūjin's. Jigoku leaves to discuss something with Yūjin, and Natsume notes that he ran into Yūjin on a steamship while returning to Japan. After this, Susato visits Asōgi's grave and wonders if the "second

incident" involving Natsume that she and Naruhodō dealt with might be connected to the mysteries arising now.[226]

The second episode focuses on the "second incident" Susato refers to. The episode opens before the incident is expanded upon, with Naruhodō in the chronological present. He receives a letter from Susato sharing her first victory as an attorney in Japan, and noting Natsume's presence as a witness. She writes that Naruhodō should go over the details of the "second incident" they helped Natsume out if in London. Naruhodō has been banned from entering a courtroom since the Crogley case, and decides he has plenty of time to review the "second incident" involving Natsume. The episode then shifts back chronologically to the day after the Green case. Naruhodō, Susato, and Holmes went to visit Green after she recovered, but received notice from Natsume that someone was killed in his flat. The victim is William Petenshy, Natsume's neighbor. Holmes attempts to solve what occurred, which leads to Natsume once more being arrested. As Naruhodō and Susato continue to investigate the scene, Petenshy revives, revealing that he is not dead, but then promptly passes out before anyone can ask him anything. Further investigations reveal that there is something amiss about the flats, which Natsume blames on his life being cursed. Gregson informs Naruhodō and Natsume that, while Petenshy will make a full recovery, he is suing Natsume for poisoning him, and thus Naruhodō will still have to defend Natsume in court.[227]

[226] The Adventure of the Blossoming Attorney, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2: Naruhodō Ryūnosuke no Kakugo*, Shū Takumi, Capcom, 2017, Nintendo 3DS, video game.

[227] The Memoirs of the Clouded Kokoro, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

The next day, Naruhodō is surprised when Susato informs him that van Zieks will once more be prosecuting. Unlike most trials, which are wrapped up within a day, Naruhodō is able to argue Natsume's defense long enough, while uncovering a potential lead to Petenshy's gas stealing activities, that the judge puts the trial on hold till the next day, allowing Naruhodō and Susato some extra time to investigate. While reinvestigating the crime scene with Holmes, Gregson tells the three about items he found hidden within the flat: a newspaper clipping about a serial murderer and thief named Seldan, a photo of the landlord with the same man who appears in a picture belonging to Green (the man is later identified as Duncan Ross, Green's fiancé and a tenant who died in Natsume's flat before Natsume moved in), and an empty box. When Naruhodō and Susato ask Natsume about Seldan they learn that Seldan used Natsume's flat as a hideout before being arrested, and that every occupant afterwards has died. Natsume himself notes that he's woken up with his room filled with gas fumes, and believes Seldan's spirit is trying to kill him, though Naruhodō thinks something else is going on. When the trial resumes the next day Naruhodō is able to uncover the truth of the incident: Petenshy killed Ross while trying to drive him out of the flat because Petenshy wanted the flat, but after Ross died Petenshy was barred from moving in and Natsume ended up occupying the flat; Green suspected that he might have killed Ross when she overheard Natsume ranting about his flat being cursed, and so she poisoned the pipes in Petenshy's flat so that if Petenshy tried to drive Natsume out by blowing gas through the pipes into the flat, he would poison himself. Natsume is acquitted of all charges. After the trial, Holmes is able to find Seldan's hidden "treasure" which had been stowed away in a ceiling compartment of

164

Natsume's flat. The "treasure" was a large, stained dog collar, which causes Holmes to go pale. When Iris talks about turning the two incidents with Natsume into stories, Holmes asks her not to publish the second half. Naruhodō, speaking now in narration, reflects on the fact that Yūjin visited Natsume after hearing about the incidents and likely sent Susato the telegram saying he was sick after learning that Holmes had discovered Seldan's treasure.[228]

The third case resumes with Naruhodō in the present, still barred from entering a courtroom. Iris wants to go to the World Fair, but Holmes is busy with a case. He gives Naruhodō a paper with a story about an attack on van Zieks before leaving, and Naruhodō agrees to bring Iris to the Fair after he visits Vortex to ask about having his ban lifted. Vortex agrees to lift Naruhodō's ban, but only after noting that Naruhodō never knew what Asōgi's true mission was. Vortex also mentions an incident which occurred at the World Fair, noting that van Zieks has a connection to the case. Naruhodō and Iris visit van Zieks next and meet his apprentice, a strange cloaked man called the Masked Disciple who wears a mask refuses to speak, though Naruhodō feels there's something oddly familiar about him. Van Zieks reveals that the victim of the case, Elyder Meningen, was the head of the crime syndicate that had attacked him, and that the defendant of the case is a friend of his from college, an English man named Benjamin Dobinbough who moved to Germany to continue his research. Naruhodō wonders if this means that van Zieks's friend is doomed to die no matter how the trial plays out. Van Zieks notes that, before Naruhodō came along, he didn't care whether his defendants died or not because

---

[228] Ibid.

they had all been bad people, though he had nothing to do with their deaths. However, van Zieks also inquirers about Natsume, and learns from Naruhodō that Natsume is alive and well.[229]

Naruhodō and Iris then visit Dobinbough, he claims Meningen's death was an accident. He owed too much to Meningen to murder him, and Naruhodō and Iris agree to take on Dobinbough's defense. While investigating the crime scene at the Fair grounds, the two run into Gregson and Lestrade, who is now training to become a detective in the Scotland Yard. Like Natsume, Lestrade seems to be free of the Death Bringer's curse. Gregson directs them to Madam Rozaic's Wax Museum, where they run into Holmes. It seems a wax figure of "the Professor" was stolen. The Professor was a serial killer from ten years prior, whose last victim was Klimt van Zieks, the older brother of Barok van Zieks. Holmes is busy investigating the missing sculpture and leaves the defense of Dobinbough to Naruhodō. Partway through the trial, Susato returns and acts as Naruhodō's co-counsel, helping him buy enough time to uncover the involvement of a person named Enoch Drebber, and put the trial on hold for the day.[230]

After the trial, Susato updates Naruhodō on a few things: Yūjin also went pale when he heard about the dog collar uncovered during Natsume's second arrest, and Yūjin studied in England many years earlier along with Jigoku. She speculates that perhaps something happened during that time connected to the dog collar. Susato also informs Naruhodō that she, Yūjin, and Jigoku were invited to England to attend an international

---

[229] The Return of the Great Departed Soul, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.
[230] Ibid.

forensic science symposium, though Yūjin and Jigoku won't be arriving for a while. It seems Vortex is planning to become Attorney General of Great Britain via the symposium. Susato also discusses Brett, noting that Jezail Brett was a fake name. Her real name was A. Sasha, and she was not an exchange student either. Beyond that, none of the mysteries surrounding her have been resolved. According to Mamemomi, Asōgi's body was never actually recovered. Furthermore, Yūjin is aware of this and is searching for the body. Naruhodō wants to speculate on Asōgi's missing body further, but realizes the subject is upsetting Susato. Instead, Iris turns the conversation to a promise Susato made before she initially left England, and Susato explains how she was familiar with Iris's unpublished "House of the Baskervilles" story. Susato had discovered the manuscript in Yūjin's study, and Yūjin told her never to speak of it. The manuscript vanished from his office shortly afterwards. Iris thanks Susato for sharing this information, but notes that they should return to investigating Dobinbough's case.[231]

Their investigation allows them to meet Courtney Sithe, the chief coroner of the Scientific Investigation Unit who conducted the autopsy of Meningen's body, and her daughter Maria Goulloyne. They also run into van Zieks and the Masked Disciple, and Susato also feels that the Masked Disciple is unusually familiar. Van Zieks informs the two that Vortex ordered him to take on the mysterious man as an apprentice, though the Masked Disciple apparently has no memories. Naruhodō and Susato agree that the Masked Disciple may be Asōgi and go to the wax museum to confront Holmes about it, though he dodges their questions and instead directs their attention to the wax exhibit for

---

[231] Ibid.

the case he has "mostly" solved. The Professor's wax model was returned, but is missing

its head. Part of the exhibit shows a grave robber, who appears to be Drebber. Holmes

then tells them about the Professor case that occurred ten years earlier. The Professor

used a large dog to attack and kill his victims, and his trial was held in absolute secrecy.

Despite execution, the Professor was somehow able to rise from his grave, which

Drebber witnessed as he was going to rob the grave. Rozaic based the wax display on

Drebber's story. After Holmes finishes, Lestrade appears to inform the group that the

Scotland Yard had discovered Drebber's whereabouts so that they could bring him in to

trial. They discover the missing head of the Professor's wax figure while tracking

Drebber down.[232]

The following day, Gregson delivers the autopsy report of the Professor to

Naruhodō, saying that it was a request from Holmes. During the trial, the Masked

Disciple is van Zieks's co-counsel. Naruhodō eventually uncovers the truth: Sithe

murdered Meningen after being blackmailed into assisting Drebber's crime. Drebber

stole the Professor's wax figure to blackmail Sithe, as it proved she had altered the

Professor's autopsy report stating that the Professor died during his execution. Rather, the

Professor died after rising from his grave, when he was shot by an unknown party. After

the trial, van Zieks sends Dobinbough back to Germany to avoid the Death Bringer's

curse, and then asks Naruhodō and Susato to come with him to the courtroom. There he

reveals the identity of the Professor by unlocking the face mask on the Professor's wax

figure. The wax face underneath reveals that the Professor was Japanese, but before

---

[232] Ibid.

Susato and Naruhodō can speculate on this further the Masked Disciple screams. He tears

off his cloak and mask, revealing himself to be Asōgi. Asōgi's memories have returned,

and he identifies the Professor as his father. Asōgi isn't able to explain much past that

and leaves. Van Zieks notes that he doesn't know why Vortex assigned Asōgi to him, but

he believes that the Professor case isn't over. When Naruhodō and Susato are left alone,

Susato notes how when she went with her grandmother to pick her father up when he

returned from England, he had with him the son of a friend who had died in England.

That boy was Asōgi, who swore to become a defense attorney to discover the truth of his

father's crime and death. Susato had resolved to become a legal assistant so she could

help him achieve these goals. The episode ends with Naruhodō contemplating these

twists of fate as the beginning of something larger.[233]

The final case of the game is split across the last two episodes. The fourth episode

begins with Naruhodō and Susato greeting Yūjin and Jigoku. Both Yūjin and Jigoku were

foreign exchange students along with Asōgi's father sixteen years prior, and are able to

fill Naruhodō and Susato in on some more details of the Professor case. Asōgi's father's

name was Genshin Asōgi, and he was studying with the Scotland Yard to become a

detective, while Yūjin studied forensic medicine, and Jigoku studied law alongside the

Attorney General. Genshin's official cause of death was listed as illness, but the two

suspect that Asōgi knew something was amiss when he decided to study law with the

aims of going to Great Britain. Naruhodō then tells the two that Asōgi is alive and

working as van Zieks's apprentice, though Yūjin wonders why Vortex never bothered to

---

[233] Ibid.

contact them about this. Yūjin goes on to expand on his study abroad experience sixteen years earlier, stating that he left for the trip shortly after Susato was born but was in despair because his wife had died during childbirth. After Genshin was arrested and tried, both Yūjin and Jigoku had to return to Japan, leaving Genshin's body behind.[234]

Naruhodō and Susato return to Holmes's flat to find a scene of chaos as Lestrade arrests two red-haired men who were apparently trying to con Holmes. When asked about Asōgi's "death," Holmes reveals that Asōgi had actually fallen unconscious and that the amnesia was likely a side effect. He conspired with the crew to make it seem like a murder, but didn't expected Asōgi to vanish from the ship. Holmes admits that there was no excuse for what he did. Naruhodō and Susato then go to Vortex's office and learn that Asōgi left London recently. When asked why Vortex assigned Asōgi to van Zieks, Vortex said that an amnesiac man with no passport or memory appeared three months prior, and Vortex ordered him wear the mask to avoid drawing questions as to why van Zieks was working with a foreigner. Vortex does not expand beyond this, but does note that some people of London were a fan of the Professor, as most of his victims were corrupt nobles. He notes that Genshin's identity was kept secret from the public to avoid ruining relations between Great Britain and Japan.[235]

Naruhodō and Susato return to Holmes's flat where they meet Anna Mittlemont. Anna has come seeking Holmes's help locating her missing husband Everyday Mittlemont, who works as a jailer at the same prison where Genshin was held. Naruhodō

---

[234] Twisted Karma and His Last Bow, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

[235] Ibid.

and Susato begin helping Holmes investigate, and learn from the prison warden, Harry

Barricade, that Everyday had been fired from his job shortly after the Professor case. The

two return to Holmes's flat to report this, but are interrupted when Lestrade comes in to

inform them that Gregson has been murdered and van Zieks has been arrested as the

suspect. Naruhodō and Susato decide they want to take the case, but van Zieks refuses to

have them as his lawyers. When the two speak with Vortex, they learn Asōgi will be

prosecuting the case. Naruhodō and Susato speak with Asōgi, who notes that while he's

regained all his memories, he's lost other things, and can't be too close to Naruhodō as

they're now on opposite sides of the court. Asōgi does want Naruhodō to take the

defense, and gives him a photo to help convince van Zieks to let Naruhodō defend him.

The photo works, and van Zieks allows Naruhodō to defend him in court.[236]

The trial is unusual, as there is no jury and it is held in secrecy by order of the

queen. During the course of the trial, there is speculation that Gregson was investigating

the "Death Bringer" curse that seems to follow van Zieks, and that if van Zieks was

responsible for killing all his defendants then it would be motive to kill Gregson.

Naruhodō suggests that Gregson was actually investigating the Red-head League, which

was suspected of fraudulent practices, since he was discovered wearing a red wig, and the

two men who were arrested at Holmes's flat are brought in as witnesses. These two

witnesses reveal a "fake detective" who turns out to be Everyday. Under the fake name of

Hugh Boone, Everyday rented the room where Gregson was killed, and worked with

Gregson on some of Gregson's undercover cases, though Everyday wasn't privy to the

---

[236] Ibid.

details of Gregson's cases. Asōgi questions Everyday about the Professor's execution, stating that he believes there is a connection between the cases. Before Everyday can complete his story, he screams and faints and the trial is put on hold.[237]

Naruhodō, Susato, and Iris have some time to investigate, and speak with Vortex about the case. Vortex speculates that the truth of the Death Bringer may be brought to light, but since no one knows how the public will react to the news the trial is being kept secret. Vortex also notes that he was supposed to prosecute Genshin, but van Zieks took the prosecution to avenge his brother's death. Vortex then rushes off before explaining anything else. When they go and speak with van Zieks, he reveals that he's been investigating the "Death Bringer" on his own, believing it was a group of people with a contact in the Scotland Yard. He believes Gregson was that contact, and that their main assassin was a woman named Ann Sasha, which Naruhodō and Susato recognize as the woman who murdered Watson and was later killed by Mamemomi. However, they don't discuss Sasha further due to Iris's presence. Van Zieks then expands on his history with Genshin, stating that Genshin saved his life shortly before Genshin was arrested for Klimt's murder. Van Zieks felt betrayed by Genshin and has hated Japanese people ever since.[238]

Naruhodō, Susato, and Iris then go to talk with Yūjin, and when Iris is away getting snacks for them, he says that Watson was neither Holmes's partner nor had a daughter, making it impossible for Watson to be Iris's father. Still they agree to keep

---

[237] Ibid.

[238] Ibid.

172

quiet about the matter around Iris. Yūjin then asks Naruhodō to consider returning to

Japan, as their legal system is still undergoing changes and they need a defense attorney.

Continuing their investigation, the three speak with Everyday, who has recovered. He

tells them about his memories of the Professor case, noting that only two people were

needed to confirm the death, but that the coffin was nailed shut before he could make the

confirmation. He also notes that Genshin had a final will that vanished before his

execution. When they return to the prison, Barricade tells them the will never vanished

and gives them a copy. The will simply details that Genshin wanted all his belongings

sent to his son. He also notes that Sithe and Everyday were the two responsible for

signing off on Genshin's death confirmation. Sithe isn't allowed visitors, though

Barricade says her daughter, Goulloyne, may know something.[239]

Before speaking with Goulloyne, Naruhodō and Susato go to speak with Asōgi.

Asōgi tells them about his experience, starting when he woke up on the ship with no

memories. Despite the lack of memories he knew he had to go to Great Britain, and

slipped off the ship at Hong Kong. He was able to get a job on a cargo ship, and

eventually made his way to England where he was apprehended by immigration officials

and brought to Scotland Yard. There he met Vortex who assigned him to work under van

Zieks because Asōgi's knowledge of the law was still intact. Asōgi then recalls that he

was young when his father left, and was told that Genshin died of illness. After returning,

Yūjin took him in and paid for his education. Asōgi thought the illness claim sounded

suspicious, especially after receiving a letter that labelled Genshin a serial killer. When

---

[239] Ibid.

he brought the letter to Jigoku's attention, the judge nervously laughed it off. Asōgi also notes that his mother died of illness a year after the events. Asōgi finally discusses the case at hand with Naruhodō, saying that his father wasn't a serial killer and that he'll prove van Zieks is the Death Bringer in court. Naruhodō says he can't allow that and departs for Goulloyne's office.[240]

When questioned about the missing time of death on Gregson's autopsy report, Goulloyne says Vortex told her to skip that section since the time of death was obvious. She then notes that the time of death is impossible to estimate because the body had been tampered with. When asked about Sithe, Goulloyne says she was startled to learn her mother had falsified the Professor's autopsy information, and reveals that Sithe was also present during Klimt's autopsy as an assistant. The one in charge of the autopsy was Watson, and the other assistant was Yūjin. When Goulloyne goes to recover Klimt's autopsy file, she finds that it is missing, and then remembers that Holmes and Iris had visited two years earlier wanting to see the records. Iris excuses herself, saying that she had some business to attend to. After reinvestigating the crime scene, Naruhodō and Susato return to Holmes's flat and discover Yūjin passed out on the couch, while Iris stands by silently. Iris eventually admits that she stole Klimt's autopsy report, claiming that it was how she found her father. The handwriting in the report is the same as the notes and stories written by Holmes's partner, and the report was signed by Watson. Holmes blames himself, saying that he'd tell Iris about her father when the time was right, and that his secrecy drove her to steal the report. When Naruhodō and Susato look

---

[240] Ibid.

over the report, Susato is shocked to find that the writing matches her father's handwriting. It seems that Yūjin, acting as the assistant, recorded all of notes for the autopsy and then Watson signed off. Holmes's partner was actually Yūjin. Yūjin revives and explains how he came to meet Holmes sixteen years earlier, and that they pursued many cases together until the Professor case forced Yūjin to return to Japan. Because Holmes told Iris that her father wrote the stories of their adventures, Susato assumes she and Iris are half-sisters, and is upset with Yūjin for having an affair with Iris's mother. Yūjin claims that's not the case, but before he can explain, Holmes says they have a case to solve like in the old days, and the two head off. The episode ends with Naruhodō steeling his resolve for the following day's trial.[241]

The final episode begins on the trial's second day. Before the trial, Iris gives Naruhodō a rabbit charm, telling him to pull the rabbit's ear when he gets backed into a corner. According to Iris, neither Holmes nor Yūjin returned home the night before. Susato says they never returned to the hotel where Yūjin was staying at either. When the trial starts, the usual judge has been replaced by Vortex, who claims that the trial has shaken the foundations of the British legal system, forcing him to step in and uncover the truth. The gallery is likewise made up of important government officials. The court learns that shortly before being murdered, Gregson was on a mission with Asōgi to assassinate Jigoku. The mission was never carried out, and since Gregson was killed by a gun, not the sword that Asōgi carried, Asōgi wasn't a suspect. Asōgi argues that van Zieks is the head of the Death Bringer group, and killed Gregson for failing to kill Jigoku. However,

---

[241] Ibid.

Vortex realizes that Jigoku hasn't been heard from in a while, and puts the trial on hold to locate him.[242]

During this break, Naruhodō and Susato realize if Jigoku is not found in the next thirty minutes, then he will be declared dead and their case will become much more difficult. Naruhodō decides to pull the rabbit's ear and discovers it is connected to Holmes's rabbit, similar to a radio. Holmes and Yūjin aboard the S. S. Balabrook, the same ship Jigoku was supposed to be on. They promise Naruhodō and Susato that they will find evidence within the next thirty minutes. The game then shifts, with Yūjin being playable as he and Holmes investigate the ship. A sailor says that Jigoku disembarked at a different port, so Holmes and Yūjin decide to break into Jigoku's cabin. They find Jigoku hiding in a trunk, who claims he left trying to flee the Death Bringer, though Holmes has his doubts about this. Back in the court, Naruhodō is able to report Jigoku's safety, and the trial is extended another day. This additionally buys Naruhodō time to catch up with Holmes and Yūjin. Back at Holmes's apartment, Naruhodō admits that he is shocked that Asōgi was an assassin, even if he never carried out his mission. Iris reveals that she overhead that neither Yūjin nor Watson was her father, and says she understands that Holmes still can't tell her about it. Holmes then discusses the strange telegram from the Crogley case, which listed four names. It seems the same telegram was in Jigoku's office, and that Holmes knows this because he was in contact with Hosonaga, who broke into the office to find it. Holmes faked Asōgi's death because he thought the telegram was a list of targets, and that Asōgi would be murdered. However, the list was

---

[242] The Resolve of Naruhodō Ryūnosuke, *Dai Gyakuten Saiban 2*, 2017.

actually two assassins and two victims, as Sasha killed Watson, and Asōgi had been sent to kill Gregson.[243]

The trial commences the following day. Jigoku is the first witness called to testify and admits he sent Asōgi to Great Britain as an assassin. Asōgi says he met with Gregson, but hasn't killed anyone. Eventually, Jigoku confesses to killing Gregson and smuggling the body back to London. Jigoku states that when Asōgi went missing en route to England, it messed up the plans for the assassin exchange. Jigoku believed the only way to remain on good terms and keep up his end of the deal was to go and kill Gregson himself. He conspired with the "English person" who headed the Death Bringer operation to lure Gregson away, and then planned to frame Everyday for the murder. Vortex believes that the trial is over, since Gregson's murder is now solved, but Asōgi requests that the trial be extended as van Zieks may still be the Death Bringer. Vortex allows the trial to continue. Klimt's autopsy is brought under scrutiny, with Asōgi revealing that Gregson told him something had been fabricated during the autopsy when they met on the ship. The autopsy could not have been faked without the help of the prosecutor leading the case, and the original prosecutor for the Professor case was Vortex.[244]

Vortex brushes this off. Naruhodō argues that with Watson dead and Sithe in jail, the only witness they can call is Yūjin, who was also an assistant during the autopsy. Vortex refuses, but then Holmes appears and reminds Vortex that he proclaimed he'd uncover the truth. Vortex allows Yūjin to take the stand. Goulloyne also takes the stand

---

[243] Ibid.

[244] Ibid.

in her mother's place. Genshin's ring was found in Klimt's stomach, supposedly because Klimt swallowed it. However, the ring's design is such that it would have left internal wounds if swallowed, and the only wound on Klimt's body was the fatal stab wound. Furthermore, all the Professor's previous victims had their throat torn out by a large dog. It was also possible that the ring was stolen when Genshin defended van Zieks days before being arrested, and Genshin may have willingly confessed to the murders if he had been promised an escape plan, which would explain why his execution had been falsified and why he appeared to have "risen from the grave" when Drebber attempted to rob it. Asōgi summons Barricade and Everyday to the stand, since they worked at the prison during the Professor case. They argue over whether Genshin's will was written in black or red ink, and Naruhodō comes to realize that Genshin may have possessed Klimt's final will as well as his own. Naruhodō also believes it was possible Klimt's will was a confession about connections to the Professor killings, since Klimt also owned a large hunting dog who wore a collar—the same one Seldan stole—that bore the crest of his wife's family, the Baskervilles.[245]

Vortex finally admits he knows more about the Professor killings than he let on, revealing that Genshin had been pursuing the Professor and suspected Klimt, who had begun killing corrupt nobles. When Genshin approached Vortex about this, Vortex brushed him off, causing Genshin to go and confront Klimt himself. Genshin did kill Klimt, as there were many witnesses among Klimt's servants who saw Genshin leave the manor, but Genshin was not the Professor. Vortex and Gregson then decided to pin all the

---

[245] Ibid.

killings on Genshin because they couldn't have one of the most prestigious noble families

looking bad. Gregson attacked Genshin to steal the ring, and gave it to Watson to

fabricate as evidence during the autopsy. Vortex made a deal with Genshin, telling

Genshin that if he confessed to the Professor killings, then Vortex would make it possible

for Genshin to return to Japan. Asōgi asks how van Zieks never came to suspect his

brother, and van Zieks says that he did, but that the Professor's third victim was the Chief

Justice in office before Vortex, whom Klimt was very close to and who van Zieks could

not imagine him killing.[246]

Vortex wants to wrap the trial up since Klimt and Genshin are both dead, but

accidentally lets slip that there was a third page to Genshin's will. So far only two pages

have been presented. Barricade agrees to hand over the final page—it's a letter directly

addressed to Asōgi. Naruhodō and Susato realize this final part of the will is referencing

Asōgi's katana, Karuma, which he inherited from Genshin. Hidden inside the hilt is

Klimt's final will, which Vortex tells them to ignore, but the rest of the gallery agrees to

hear. Klimt's will reveals that he was indeed the Professor, but that Vortex learned of his

crimes and began to blackmail him. It was under Vortex's orders that Klimt killed his

friend, the Chief Justice, after which he felt he couldn't face his wife or younger brother.

Klimt was thankful that Genshin would allow him an honorable death through a duel, but

cursed Vortex for his heinous deeds. The court is shocked, but Vortex says that while this

may be true, he never killed Genshin. Rather, he promised to help Jigoku get into the

office of minister of foreign affairs if Jigoku helped him smuggle Genshin out of the

---

[246] Ibid.

graveyard. However, Drebber had already dug up the grave, so Vortex gave Jigoku a gun and told him to kill Genshin, which Jigoku did. Vortex later used this as blackmail to coerce Jigoku into agreeing to the assassin exchange plan. Naruhodō and Asōgi point out that Vortex was using and framing otherwise innocent people: van Zieks bore the title of Death Bringer, Gregson was the one actually doing all the dirty work, and Asōgi almost became an assassin in the process. Vortex applauds them for their work, but appeals to the gallery saying that he had to fight the corruption of London with corruption, and that if any of this came to light the public would lose all faith in the legal system, and Great Britain would fall into chaos.[247]

     Naruhodō expected this sort of manipulative behavior from Vortex, but also realizes that he's been backed up into a corner one more. He pulls the rabbit charm and this time instead of merely acting as a radio, Holmes appears in the courtroom as a hologram (apparently an invention of Iris's, though the game does not expand too much on the hologram technology). Holmes may appear to be in the court, but he is physically at Buckingham Palace, having tea with the queen and Iris. The three of them have actually been watching the entire trial via the rabbit charm so the queen is entirely aware of Vortex's crimes. The queen then strips Vortex of his position and all his power, and states that he will have a public trial so that the people know the truth. Vortex then decides to breakdown, as he has utterly lost. Susato reveals the last part of Klimt's letter, which apologizes to van Zieks and reveals that Klimt has already discussed the truth of his sins with his wife, who will surely understand if he dies during the duel with Asōgi.

---

[247] Ibid.

When Naruhodō questions why Vortex waited ten years before he started killing the people connected to his crimes, Vortex confesses that he wanted the position of Attorney General, but could never get it if there were people who could reveal the truth about him. The original judge is called back, and declares van Zieks not guilty.[248]

After the trial, Yūjin explains one of Klimt's final requests of Genshin: his wife was pregnant, and he wanted her to be safe from all the corruption of London. Genshin gave an address to Yūjin, and he found Klimt's wife. While she gave birth to a healthy daughter, she died shortly afterwards. Yūjin saw a trunk with the Baskerville crest on it and realized she was Klimt's wife. Yūjin would be unable to adopt the child because he had to return to Japan, so he entrusted the girl to his closest and most trusted friend, Holmes. Not wanting the newborn child to grow up with the weight of knowing her father was a serial killer, Yūjin and Holmes agreed not to tell her until she was old enough. Yūjin named her after his deceased wife, Ayame, although he translated the name into English: Iris. With all the mysteries solved, the entire group agree to celebrate at Holmes's flat later. In the aftermath, Lestrade decides to continue being a detective because Gregson worked so hard for her to become one; Iris doesn't feel like she needs to find her birth father, since Holmes is already the best father she could ask for; and Holmes is grateful to Yūjin for entrusting him with Iris's care, as she's the best thing that's ever happened to him. Later, Naruhodō talks with Yūjin and learns that Yūjin faked his illness and called Susato back because he was afraid of the Baskerville secret coming to light, because he didn't think Iris was ready for the truth of her birth father. Yūjin

---

[248] Ibid.

admits that, now that he's met Iris again, he believes she has the strength to handle the truth when she does eventually figure it out. Naruhodō agrees to return to Japan, since now that Asōgi is here there isn't much reason for him to stay. When they depart, Asōgi announces that he will continue to study as a prosecutor, and says he looks forward to the day when he and Naruhodō face off again in court. He also requests that Naruhodō hold on to Karuma, because he nearly killed Gregson and doesn't want to risk hurting other people until he resolves his issues. Susato then says that she's retuning to Japan with Naruhodō, and Asōgi agrees that he'd feel better if Susato was keeping an eye on Naruhodō. Holmes says he and Iris will come to Japan to visit them soon, and they all bid farewell.[249]

---

[249] Ibid.