

## Dawn of a Silver Millennium

### Millenarianism, Futurity, and Utopia in *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*

It has now been over thirty years since the debut of Naoko Takeuchi's groundbreaking manga, *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*. That manga has since been adapted into countless media, most famously into a 1992 anime series which transformed *Sailor Moon* into a global phenomenon and a 2014 series which restored the franchise to pop-culture prominence after more than a decade of hibernation. However, while these series and the various other adaptations have turned *Sailor Moon* into one of Japan's most ubiquitous cultural products, none of them fully capture the complexity and thoughtfulness inherent in the original manga. One intriguing aspect that never fully seems to survive adaptation is the manga's fascination with millennial themes. *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* began its run in 1991, at the very start of Japan's "Lost Decade," when the sudden onset of crippling economic stagnation went hand in hand with a more general anxiety regarding the *fin de siècle* and the imminent arrival of the new millennium. As a result, the manga sets the struggles of its protagonists against a general backdrop of angst uncertainty, dread, and expectation over what the new millennium will bring.

This millennial dread was largely omitted from the story's two most prominent and influential adaptations, the 1992 and 2014 anime series. The initial *Sailor Moon* anime, which remains the main vehicle of the story's transmission even today, offered a more lighthearted spin on the tale, and thus millennial angst would have been tonally unwelcome. The latter series, *Sailor Moon Crystal*, was far more faithful. But as the show's setting was updated to be contemporaneous with its 2014 airdate, the adventures of Sailor Moon now take place nearly a decade and a half into the new millennium. Millennial anxiety, in that milieu, would be outdated.

But removing the story's millennial angst loses something essential to *Sailor Moon's* thematic unity. *Sailor Moon*, underneath its magical girl exterior, is a grand narrative of time's unfolding in a vast, cosmic sense. Tokyo of the 1990s is the focal point between the ancient, long-vanished glory of the Silver Millennium and its future restoration as the world-spanning utopia of Crystal Tokyo. It is the persistent sense of millennial anxiety in the 1990s present that holds the narrative of three times together. Without it, Usagi's future kingdom seems to come out of nowhere, and the shifting of focus from the tragic past to the hopeful future feels like an extreme tonal shift. Only in the manga does Crystal Tokyo feel like the proper outgrowth of the Silver Millennium's tragic arc, because a climate of millennial expectation has been seeded in the story from the beginning.

The manga *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* is not, then, just a text which examines millennial angst. It is an actively millenarian text, looking toward the coming of the new millennium not only in a modern but also a far more ancient sense. In its portrayal of Sailor Moon's struggle with ultimate evil and Neo Queen Serenity's subsequent thousand-year rule over Earth, Takeuchi's manga draws upon the well-established chiliastic traditions of both the Eastern and Western cultural spheres to offer Sailor Moon as a vector of hope for a world in the throes of millennial despair. It is only in this context that the designation of the Moon dynasty's past and future rule as the *Silver Millennium* makes sense and it is only with this overarching design in mind that *Sailor Moon's* achievement of interweaving past, present, and future into a tableau of cosmic time can be properly appreciated.

The concept of the Millennium is an ancient one and can be found in any number of cultures across the world. It is, by its very nature, eschatological. In its basic form, it represents a period of supernatural peace, harmony, and fulfillment which comes after history reaches its

apocalyptic conclusion, evil has been dispelled, and the forces of good are triumphant in the world. This last element is crucial. The Millennium does not equate to Heaven or a kind of afterlife. It is still very much *our world*, simply a perfected version of it. Otherwise, this blessed state derives much of its form and character from how it comes into being. Ernest L. Tuveson divides narratives of the Millennium into two main categories, which he dubs the “millenarian” and the “millennialist” strands of belief. In his book, *Redeemer Nation*, Tuveson states,

To the earlier opinion—which expects the physical return of Christ—I have given the name “millenarian.” To the belief that history, under divine guidance, will bring about the triumph of Christian principles, and that a holy utopia will come into being, I have assigned the name “millennialist.”

(Tuveson 34)

As Tuveson frames it, “millenarians” believe that conditions in the world are progressively getting worse. Evil is so firmly entrenched that it is only after a harrowing ordeal that catastrophically devastates the world and the sudden appearance of a messianic figure—say, the returned Christ—that good can finally triumph. For the “millennialist,” however, things are not getting worse, but better. The thousand-year period is already manifesting itself in history, evil is already in retreat, and the world is being filled with ever-greater goodness. The result is not catastrophe, but the gradual progression from the current state of the world to that of a perfect society where peace and harmony are universal. Rather than the manifestation of a single savior-figure, emphasis is placed on the spiritual and moral development of humanity as a whole.

Tuveson’s analysis itself has severe limitations, not least of all its over-privileging of the early-modern Protestant perspective, but the basic distinction between “millenarian” and “millennialist” thought is still a useful one, with particular relevance for *Pretty Guardian Sailor*

*Moon*.<sup>1</sup> For the millennial system found in the manga is fundamentally a synthesis of the various eschatological traditions to which it is heir. Thus, not only are the divides which separate the Eastern and Western traditions of chiliasm bridged by the manga, but *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* also reconciles the competing impulses of the millenarian and millennialist styles of apocalyptic narrative into a coherent whole. The result is a surprisingly syncretic and even ecumenical vision of the Millennium whose uniqueness lies in its ability to subsume these vastly disparate strands of millennial thinking into a single vision of optimism, hope, and renewal.

But to fully appreciate this aspect of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*, it is necessary to understand the context out of which the manga's own brand of millennial utopianism emerged. There are always attempts to imagine what a more ideal society would look like. Both the Eastern and Western traditions are filled with these kinds of imaginary places. Plato may have set the tone for what is today called "utopian literature" in the West when he attempted to construct an "ideal city in speech" in his *Republic*. But thinking about ideal societies took many other forms. Sometimes they were far-off lands, like Hyperborea and Arcadia, Cockaigne, or the Earthly Paradise, Tao Yuanming's "Peach Blossom Spring" or the Tibetan myth of Shambhala. Sometimes they existed in a pristine and inaccessible past. In this category falls the Garden of Eden, the Golden Age of Hesiod, and the Satya Yuga of India's various faiths. Sometimes, they were simply thought experiments in the mind. This is true of Plato and his successors, as well as the great scholars of the Confucian and Mohist schools during China's philosophical golden age whose main topic of debate was the ideal construction of society.

Utopia could even, in special cases, be perceived to exist on the margins of historical time; in this case, these utopias were usually doomed from the start. Into this category falls the

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<sup>1</sup> As shall become clear, this paper breaks completely with Tuveson over his fundamental thesis that millennial thought was only "the motivating force to local uprisings during the Middle Ages" and that it was only "with the Reformation [that] there began a largely new apocalyptic tradition" (Tuveson 16-17) of millennialism.

glorious, albeit flawed, chivalric utopia associated with the figure of King Arthur and, quite similarly, the long literary tradition surrounding China's Three Kingdoms period that transformed Liu Bei's small state of Shu-Han into something of a social utopia characterized, according to the *Sanguozhi pinghua*, by "the Harmony of Men" (*Records* 8). But what united all these utopian dreams was that they existed somewhere beyond the reach of mundane and ordinary life.

But these utopias were far-away lands, dream visions, or rose-tinted depictions of the past. But there was one other possible location for utopia, and that was the future. It is this expectation which turns utopianism into millennialism. Millennial thinking is itself quite old. Zoroastrianism, the most ancient of the world's extant monotheistic faiths, told of a salvific figure or figures called the *Saoshyant* would appear at the end of history to inaugurate a renovation of the physical world to bring it in line with God's design. Further to the west, the Romans speculated about the return of Saturn and the rebirth of the long-lost Golden Age. But the most important millennial development of antiquity began in Judaism, which during its Second Temple period developed the concept of the Messiah, a great savior-king who would elevate Israel above the nations and usher in an era of peace and contentment for God's people.

It was Jesus of Nazareth's laying claim to the Messianic title and the subsequent disappointment that his earthly career did not ring in a new age of glory that led to the development of the concept of the Millennium proper, or at least of the Christian version which has become the defining example and lent the general concept its name. And while millennial expectation for Christ's return runs throughout most of the New Testament in some form or another, it was that most storied and infamous of biblical texts, the *Apocalypse of St. John the*

*Divine*, better known as the Book of Revelation, which transformed that hope into the vision of a Millennial Age.

Under Tuveson's rubric, Revelation is not only Christianity's first millennial text, but also its very first millenarian one; the end of days is a bloody, brutal affair, displaying a level of carnage and violence that is shocking to behold even some twenty centuries later. But this brutality is not without a purpose. It is orchestrated by God in order to answer the call of the martyrs, "How long, oh Lord, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on earth?" (Rev. 6.10). The violence the world undergoes serves as a kind of purification. At its end, Jesus returns, defeats the forces of evil in battle, and has Satan bound to keep him from mischief. Finally, "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus ... lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4). The Millennium is outline out in very little detail, but Christian tradition has long held the resulting world order to be harmonious, just, and without suffering. In short, it is the perfect fulfillment of God's original plan for the world he created.

That being said, the Millennium is not the final consummation of God's plan for humanity, nor is it the beginning of eternity. That role is played by the New Jerusalem and the "new heavens and new earth" which exists after "the old heaven and earth had passed away" (Rev. 21.1). In direct contrast to the true eternity of the New Jerusalem, the shadowy quasi-eternity of the Millennium is defined almost entirely by its temporal limits. Its most concrete characteristic is that it will last for a thousand years, hence its name. It may represent the perfection of the earth, but the earth is not meant to last forever. Still, the very this-worldliness of the Millennium, in contrast to its distant and otherworldly successor, has given it a much greater appeal. Over Christianity's two-thousand-year lifespan, the Millennium has always seemed to enjoy far more interest and speculation than the New Jerusalem.

Despite Revelation's own warning that, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Rev. 22.18), later believers were quick to make their own additions to the millennial program. Two seventh-century works, the *Apocalypse of St. Methodius (Pseudo-Methodius)* and the *Sibylline Oracles*, led the way by creating the figure of the Last World Emperor, a great universal monarch whose reign would mark *yet another* utopian golden age within the end-times scheme. Then there was medieval vogue for legends of long-passed national heroes returning to establish a kind of nationalized millennial state. That genre's most famous, and perhaps original, exemplar is, of course, the myth of King Arthur's return as the "rex quondam rexque futurus" to restore the golden age of Camelot, which transforms the tragedy of a failed utopia located in the distant past into the triumph of a secular Millennium established in the near or distant future.

And yet, without a doubt, the figure who did the most to transform the concept of the Millennium and give it a definite shape and character distinct from the brief sketch in Revelation was the Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore. Over a span of nearly twenty years from 1184 until his death in 1202, Joachim introduced a new and revolutionary eschatological scheme that divided the history of the world into three separate ages, which he called *status*, and assigned each of them to one of the persons of the Christian trinity. The first two *status* were allocated to the Father and the Son and represented the Jewish and Christian dispensations, respectively. The third *status*, corresponding to the Holy Spirit, was explicitly identified with the Millennium. And yet, it was a very different kind of Millennium that that foreseen by John of Patmos.

In the *Status* of the Holy Spirit, the world would undergo a complete renovation. The Church would become "the future church in which gold, silver, bronze, and iron have worn away"

(*De Ult. Trib.* 179), with all its corruption, greed, and worldly ambitions cast aside.<sup>2</sup> Old hierarchies would be redefined or even overturned entirely, and a more egalitarian socio-religious order would arise from their ashes. Where the previous two *status* humanity had lived “according to the flesh” and then “between the flesh and the spirit,” the Third *Status* would see “living according to the spirit” (*Lib. Con.* 2.1.4), allowing for the full development of humanity’s spiritual faculties.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps most importantly, this transformation of the world would come about through the efforts of a new generation of *vires spirituales*, or “spiritual men.” This spiritual generation would unite humanity and overcome evil not by warfare but through “the sword of Christ which is his Word” (*De Ult. Trib.* 188), which designates a peaceful and patient process of proselytization.<sup>4</sup> The heroic efforts of the spiritual men would transform the world into a utopia, one inspired by God’s will but ultimately achieved through human effort and agency.

If the end-times vision offered by Book of Revelation should be considered millenarian, then that of Joachim should be considered millennialist. Indeed, just as Revelation originated the millenarian strain in Christian eschatology, Joachim can be credited with founding Christianity’s millennialist tradition. As Geoffrey Ashe puts it in *Merlin: The Prophet and His History*, “Joachim and his school of thought made room in the Christian scheme of things for optimism about the earthly future” (Ashe 34). Joachim grasped the importance of the Millennium’s situatedness in historic time to a much fuller extent than any previous theologian had managed. As Marjorie Reeves explains in her still-definitive *Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, “The third

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<sup>2</sup> “[P]acem illiam sine dubio respicit futuram ecclesie in quo contrite auro, argento, ere et ferro, lapis qui abscisus est de monte sine minibus impleturus est faciem orbis terre” Ed. E. Randolph Daniel, *Prophecy and Millenarianism: Essays in Honor of Marjorie Reeves* (Essex: Longman, 1980). Translation mine.

<sup>3</sup> “Aliud namque tempus fuit in quo vivibant homines secundum carnem ... aliud in quo vivitur inter utremque, hoc est inter carnem et spiritum, usque, scilicet ad presens tempus ... aliud in quo vivitur secundum spiritum, usque videlicet ad finem mundi[.]” Ed. E. Randolph Daniel (*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series 73.8, 1983), p. 66. Translation mine.

<sup>4</sup> “[P]rt quod intelligitur quod, tranverberati gladio Christi quod est verbum eius, deficient carnaliter vivere ut ‘vivant iam non ipsi, vivat autem in eis Christus’.” Translation mine.

*status* is within history, yet not a new set of institutions: rather, a new quality of living which transforms former institutions” (Reeves 303). The millennial era may redefine society but it does so as an outgrowth of the social structures and institutions already in place in Joachim’s time. This intertwined the future Millennium with the contemporary present in a way largely unprecedented, giving a new sense of dynamism and energy to both. It is not without reason that Joachim is sometimes considered the father of the modern notion of “progress.”

Joachim’s ideas inspired individuals as diverse as Christopher Columbus, Savonarola, and St. Francis of Assisi, and left their mark on literary works as diverse as Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. His influence is still very much felt in popular culture, albeit through a rather circuitous route. Marjorie Reeves has chronicled the effort made by St. Vincent Ferrer to make Joachim’s three *Status* more palatable to Church orthodoxy by removing their connections to the Trinity and reassigning them instead to the Zodiac. The *Status* of the Father was renamed for Aries, and the *Status* of the Son was rechristened for Pisces. The *Status* of the Holy Spirit, of course, became the epoch of “Aquarius ... the twelfth *status* of the world of this future after the death of the Antichrist, because the sun of justice will then be in Aquarius: for thence shall all generations of the infidels be baptized” (qtd. in Reeves 171).<sup>5</sup> Ferrer’s innovation failed to win Church approval but did succeed in giving Joachim’s ideas a strange new afterlife. The notion of the Age of Aquarius as a time of global rebirth, utopian living, and spiritual transformation, would be transferred down the centuries until it became the basis and namesake of the modern-day “New Age” movement. And it through from this channel that the idea would ultimately migrate into the pages of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*.

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<sup>5</sup> “*Aquarius ... et figurat undecimum statum mundi huius futurum post mortem Antichristi, quia tunc sol iustitiae erit in aquario: nam tunc omnes generationes infidelium baptizabuntur.*” Translation mine.

Indeed, both the Johannite and the Joachimite understanding of the Millennium are important ingredients in *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*'s depiction of the Millennial Age. As the fountainheads of their respective traditions, they embody the conflict between millenarianism and millennialism. The manga undertakes the work of reconciling them into a coherent and organic whole through its portrayal of the defeat of the Dark Kingdom and the birth of Crystal Tokyo. But while *Sailor Moon*'s response to these two traditions forms the bulk of its millennial engagement, it also draws something unique and fundamental from the Eastern branch of eschatological thought. By incorporating the unique conception of the Millennium found in its East Asian milieu, *Sailor Moon* is able to reconcile the millenarian and millennialist traditions of the West while offering a vision of the future that differs in a significant fashion from both.

China's millenarian tradition may not be as old as its utopian one but can still boast a long historical lineage. Already in the Han Dynasty, Taoists were thinking of time in a cyclical fashion and expecting great disasters to accompany the end of each cycle. But it was only in the third century, amid the turmoil of the Three Kingdoms period and its aftermath, that this thinking took on a millenarian and messianic hue. It was then that the first Taoist millennialist movements, such as the Yellow Turbans and the Five Pecks of Rice sect, emerged. Taoists of a soteriological bent would soon come to believe that a savior named Li Hong would appear to beat back the forces of chaos. This vision was a potent one and would lay the groundwork for China's extensive eschatological tradition. However, it was another faith, imported from India, which would come to define the shape of East Asian apocalyptic.

For, in India, Hinduism had already begun to work out a complex, salvific vision of the end-times. Hindu doctrine spoke of the world going through a succession of four ages of declining quality in a manner not unlike that recorded by Hesiod in his *Works and Days*. The

first age was the Satya Yuga, a golden period of prosperity and enlightenment. The fourth and current age, the Kali Yuga, is the worst in the sequence, wherein suffering is rampant. However, unlike the finality found in Hesiod, Hindu texts such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* suggest that this sequence of ages is repeating and cyclical. Thus, according to the Vaishnavist tradition as represented by the *Kalki Purana*, when the Kali Yuga reaches its lowest point, Vishnu will incarnate as the hero Kalki to reset time and ring in a new Satya Yuga.

But time remains cyclical, and that cyclicity does not stop even for an avatar of Vishnu. The succession of ages continues indefinitely. The future Satya Yuga will itself degenerate, eventually becoming another Kali Yuga, from which another Satya Yuga will be born. Perhaps it was this impermanence, this inability to fully stamp out suffering, which made this aspect of the old Hindu eschatology so appealing to Buddhists. For while the new reforming religion jettisoned many of the bedrock tenets of Hinduism, it retained this idea of ages declining and passing away. The succession of epochs was now tied to the teachings of the various Buddhas who had appeared in the world throughout history. The current age is that of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. But just as there were Buddhas before Gautama whose teachings were forgotten, his own version of the teachings is destined to fade away. At this moment, when the truths of Buddhism are completely unknown in this world, a new heroic savior-figure will appear to reveal them anew and begin a new epoch. And unlike Gautama, this figure's emergence will transform the world into a utopia of peace and enlightenment. But eventually, this blissful time will itself decline, and the cycle of history shall begin all over again.

The identity of the hero who would bring this about would take different forms. Sometimes, it was a new form of the Vaishnavist warrior-king Kalki, such as Rudra Chakrin, the final Kalki king of Shambhala, in Tibet. But there were other messiahs. One such intriguing

figure was Yueguang tongzi, or “Prince Moonlight,” who emerged as the central character of the apocalyptic narrative promulgated by Chinese Buddhists around the fifth century. Prince Moonlight, something of a cross between a bodhisattva and a sage-emperor, would come into the world at the end of the age to battle an evil force known as the “Old Moon.” This figure provided an important new contribution to East Asian eschatology: namely, thinking of the apocalypse and the ensuing Millennium in lunar terms. This association would be long-lasting. The *Maqian ke*, written in the Qing Dynasty, but attributed to the Three Kingdoms era sage Zhuge Liang, would root its prophetic model in the lunar cycle. One of its last prophecies compares the coming of the messiah to light returning after a new moon, “Salvation from calamity can only be done by a sage / Yang restores order and light is born from the depths of darkness,” (Zhuge 28).<sup>6</sup> Given the name of the series, it should not be surprising that *Sailor Moon* fully embraces this long tradition of Moon-centric millennial symbolism.

But neither Prince Moonlight nor a modified version of Kalki achieved the popularity of another figure: Maitreya, the Buddha of the future age. He was initially a figure more closely modeled on Gautama than on the warlike Kalki, a pacific figure who would attain enlightenment and then spread his teachings. His uniqueness would lie, instead, in the worldwide transformation he achieves. As Joseph M. Kitagawa puts it in “The Career of Maitreya, with Special Reference to Japan,” Maitreya’s “coming would signify the fulfillment of Buddha’s Law as well as the establishment of universal concord without conflict” (Kitigawa 107). This evocative portrait of a future age of bliss would prove to be one of the most appealing parts of Buddhism, and would ensure that Maitreya accompanied the religion as it spread throughout Eastern Asia. In China, however, his portrayal fundamentally changed. As Ernst Zürcher suggests

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<sup>6</sup> “拯患救難 是唯圣人 / 陽復而治 晦極生明 [Zhěng huán jiù nàn Shì wéi shèng rén / Yáng fù ér zhì Huì jí shēng míng]” Ed. Steve Moore. Translation mine.

in “Prince Moonlight,” “the benign Teacher is changed into a powerful Messiah who rescues the good people from the final holocaust, and condemns the sinners” (Zücher 13). Thus, Maitreya went from being the pacific teacher of Indian tradition to being a heroic savior in the image of Li Hong or Prince Moonlight.

This was the form of Maitreya which entered Japan on the coattails of Buddhism in the late sixth and early seventh centuries. This Buddhist messiah and the golden age he promised would have a profound impact on Japanese society, such that, in Kitigawa’s words, “The penetration of the simplistic belief that Maitreya’s descent will bring about peace and prosperity has brought about a wide variety of religious expressions among the common folk in Japan” (Kitigawa 124). It was this Maitreyan tradition which first brought organized millennial thought to Japan and it is this tradition which has probably done more than any other to encourage millenarianism in the country. While perhaps not a strongly held belief any longer in the secular and skeptical Japan of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, its influence on the Japanese cultural landscape, including on *Sailor Moon*, is profound.

These Eastern strains of apocalyptic thought would, for the most part, be considered millenarian under Tuveson’s definition. In each, the world is expected to get worse until a chosen messianic figure, whether Kalki, Prince Moonlight, or Maitreya, appears and routes the forces of evil. Millennialism is not completely absent, however. Hints of it appear in the original Indian understanding of Maitreya’s mission as peaceful transformation of the world in a millennialist manner, and it finds fuller expression in later Maitreyan offshoots such as the White Lotus and Luoist movements of late Imperial China, who adopted a tripartite soteriological scheme eerily reminiscent of Joachim’s.<sup>7</sup> But *Sailor Moon*’s millenarian and millennialist

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<sup>7</sup> As Richard Shek, in “Millenarianism without Rebellion,” notes, “This scheme pictures the lamp-lighting Buddha to be in charge of the first age, Sakyamuni [Siddhartha Gautama], the second, and Maitreya, the third” (Shek 323).

impulses are already accounted for by the various strands of Western apocalyptic. Eastern Asia's unique contributions are the imbuing of the Moon and its facets with eschatological meaning and the idea of the Millennium's inevitable corruption and decline. These Eastern concepts are conjoined with manga's Western chiliastic inheritance in order to create a unique vision which is both Eastern and Western, but also quite distinct from both.

The most striking thing about *Sailor Moon*'s millennial moment is that it actually manages to dawn twice. Within its first two arcs—comprising twenty-six of the manga's sixty installments—the series offer up two distinct visions of the Millennium. In the case of the second or “Crystal Tokyo” arc, the appropriateness of a millennialist reading is obvious; the future utopia of Crystal Tokyo wears its millennial credentials on its sleeve. However, the first or “Silver Millennium” arc also offers its own millennial vision which is interconnected with, but also stands apart from, the second arc's depiction of Crystal Tokyo.<sup>8</sup> And yet, the two millennial visions are interconnected, and it is only when both are taken together that it becomes possible to fully appreciate the skill with which *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* wrestles with, interrogates, and ultimately synthesizes competing conceptions of the Millennial Age.

The millennial theme is a part of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* from the very beginning. Indeed, it is only a few pages into Act 1 that a sense of millennial angst and expectation attaches to the main characters' heroic destiny. Tellingly, this accompanies the first introduction, however indirect, of super-powered heroics. When Usagi Tsukino and her friends are together at lunch, conversation turns to the robbery of a jewelry store, which Usagi's friend Umino reveals was foiled by Sailor V, “A champion of justice in a sailor suit who's the talk of the town!” (Takeuchi 1:12). Usagi's immediate reaction is, “Hmm... so someone like that showed up? It's the end of

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<sup>8</sup> *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*'s last three arcs all bear official titles, but the first two are unnamed. I have chosen to refer to them as the “Silver Millennium” and “Crystal Tokyo” arcs for the sake of convenience.

the century all right” (1:12). This moment exists to introduce the concept of a sailor-suited hero to Usagi and the audience, moving her forward on her path to becoming Sailor Moon.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting, then, that Usagi responds with a remark about “the end of the century,” explicitly linking the appearance of a sailor-suited superhero with the coming of the new millennium. That the two lines occur in the same panel further underscores the connection between them. And since Usagi, herself destined to become Sailor Moon, is the one tying them together, it is evident that the concept of “the end of the century” will be important to her own heroic journey.

If nothing else, Usagi’s phrasing suggests that the appearance of someone like Sailor V is exactly what should be expected at the turn of the millennium. This indicates that the “end of the century” is expected to be a time marked by strange portents and unusual happenings. Umino confirms this in the very next panel when he responds, “That’s right! These days, not counting the robbery, there are all sorts of weird crimes happening one after the other” (1:13). Umino interprets Usagi’s “end of the century” remark as referring not to Sailor V but to the outbreak of “all sorts of weird crimes.” Umino’s choice of adjective is no accident. The crimes are later revealed to be the work of the Dark Kingdom and involve the draining of their victims’ life-energy. This creates a further link between the end of the century and extraordinary events. What is more, that association is already double-edged. The coming millennium can bring both heroic figures like Sailor V and more malevolent forces like the Dark Kingdom. Millennial expectation has, even this early into the series, begun to shift into millennial dread. And from the first, there seems to be no clear dividing line between them.

The next mentions of the century’s impending end also carry the same connotations of open expectation and concealed dread. Act 4 revolves around a diplomatic visit to Japan from the

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<sup>9</sup> By the time *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* debuted, Sailor V was already anchoring her own eponymous manga series, *Codename: Sailor V*, so many readers would already have been familiar with her. But the first issue of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* clearly also has new readers in mind who have no prior experience with the character.

Kingdom of D, during which Princess D is expected to reveal one of the kingdom's rare treasures for the first time. A newspaper announcing the event bears the headline, "The final mystery of the century will be unveiled tonight!" (1:129). This quick moment reminds the reader that the century's end is quickly approaching, and that remarkable events like the revelation of mysteries are expected to happen in these times. This is millennial expectation. Millennial dread is created, subtly, by stressing the word *final* here and in a later emphasis on the heirloom as "the world's final secret treasure" (1:157). This use of the word *final* suggests that the world is approaching a more definite end than the rolling over of one century to another. Later on, the Legendary Silver Crystal, the centerpiece of *Sailor Moon's* elaborate mythology, is itself referred to as "the century's biggest treasure" (1:207). This reenforces the connection between the new millennium and the unveiling of treasures.

But it also justifies it. For the eventual unveiling of the Legendary Silver Crystal is *Sailor Moon's* first truly millennial moment. And when that moment comes, it carries the proper sense of millennial significance because the passages cited above have already made the connection. They have prepared the reader to think millennially, so that the reader is prepared for when the story hits its millenarian stride. But the shift into a fully eschatological register begins in Act 8 when Sailor V (soon to be rechristened Sailor Venus) joins the team. This kicks off a sequence of events which culminates in Usagi finally remembering that she is the reincarnation of Princess Serenity and heir to the Moon Kingdom, a glorious nation destroyed by the Dark Kingdom aeons ago. The formal name of the original Moon Kingdom is also revealed to be "Silver Millennium" (2:54). The unveiling of this name is incredibly important. Whereas the millenarian theme had mostly appeared in passing before, and always signified by a phrase like "the end of the century,"

here the word “Millennium” appears for the first time, drawing a direct connection between the protagonists and the concept of the Millennial Age.

The preserved consciousness of Queen Serenity, the Moon Kingdom’s last ruler, later offers a concise description of the Silver Millennium and its purpose, “Our mission is to remove the disturbing factors from the Earth and instead to encourage, provide rescue and guide the Earth to evolve in the best manner possible” (2:161). In her depiction of the Silver Millennium, there is the influence of all the major eschatological traditions explored above. With its chief directive being to guide the Earth’s development, it sounds quite a bit like the progressive millennial state first envisioned by Joachim of Fiore. The centrality of the Moon and its importance to humanity’s evolution clearly recall Chinese apocalyptic. And the tragic downfall of the Silver Millennium evokes the Buddhist understanding of cyclical time and the impermanence of the Satya Yuga. It may seem strange that *Sailor Moon*’s particular Millennial Age has already faded away. But again, this recalls Hindu and Buddhist cosmology, where several Satya Yugas have already existed in the deep past. And just as those past Satya Yugas gestured toward a future one, the Silver Millennium is as much of the future as it is of the past. For whenever the kingdom’s fall is discussed, talk of restoration is never far behind.

That the Silver Millennium should primarily be associated with futurity is evidenced by the fact that the possibility of restoration is brought up almost as soon as its name is revealed. A few pages after that first mention, Queen Metalia, the evil force controlling the Dark Kingdom, is already fretting about the Moon princess, “Hoping to obliterate me and revive her kingdom” (2:77). It is not long before the heroes come adopt this ambitious goal for themselves. Act 9 finds Sailor Mercury proclaiming, “We were reborn to protect the princess and to help restore the Kingdom of the Moon” (2:103). This occurs when Sailor Moon’s awakening as Princess Serenity

restores the Sailor Guardians' memories. Thus, it is spoken not as an ambition, but as a thing remembered to have always been true. Its causal relation to Usagi's supernatural transformation gives it further metaphysical weight, imprinting the coming restoration with the stamp of destiny.

Mercury here steps, for a brief moment, into that oldest of millennial modes: prophecy. So too does Sailor Venus when she draws a sword from a stone on the Moon and later finds a prophecy engraved upon it which states, "When this sword shines with brilliant light, within the breast of a future queen hides the 'Legendary Silver Crystal'" (3:22). The "future queen," is Sailor Moon; this prophecy indicates that the Silver Millennium will exist again in the future. No less a figure than Queen Serenity lends credence to this when she tasks the Sailor Guardians to "bring back this kingdom and this Moon Castle" (2:167). As it was she who arranged the heroes' reincarnation on Earth, her words are an authoritative confirmation that the future restoration of the Silver Millennium is the destined conclusion of Sailor Moon's heroic journey.

It is clear, then, that the future second coming of the Silver Millennium is not just a worthy aspiration, but a real, transformative event whose fulfillment is already foretold. This is enough to provide *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* with the outlines of a genuinely eschatological program. And the contours of that program are nowhere made more apparent than when Sailor Moon finally manifests the Legendary Silver Crystal. When she first harnesses its power, there is a moment of what can only be described as millennial possibility. There is a blinding light and earth tremors. The sick are healed and, in the excited words of one newscaster, "The Earth's undergoing a revitalization!" (2:115). There is even a resurrection of the dead, albeit limited entirely to the Four Heavenly Kings previously slain by the Sailor Guardians. Ultimately, these effects fade away. However, this moment, so pregnant with parallels to the major moments of the Christian apocalyptic scheme, offers the first real sense of what Usagi's reign as queen in the

future will look like. There can be no question, then, that the future Silver Millennium is, indeed, *Sailor Moon*'s version of the Millennial Age.

It is no surprise, then, that the last installments of the “Silver Millennium” arc cross over into that ubiquitous mirror-twin of millenarianism, apocalypse. From the beginning, the war between the Sailor Guardians and the Dark Kingdom is framed in apocalyptic terms. In Act 8, right as the arc enters its millenarian phase, Sailor Venus says this of Queen Metalia, “The one manipulating the Dark Kingdom is something born of the void. A being of pure malice. It resembles no living thing. It is concentrated evil” (2:64). And Queen Serenity later refers to her as “the enemy of all that exists. Evil in its purest form” (2:163) Descriptions like these transform the coming battle into a struggle not just against an evil being, but against the essence of evil itself. And vanquishing evil in itself—the very concept and substance of evil—is only possible in the eschaton. As Queen Metalia is also the corrupting influence behind downfall of the Silver Millennium, her defeat will also excise that influence and allow the world to return to its original blessed state. In banishing her, then, Usagi emerges as a messiah-figure responsible for repairing the world and restoring the primordial wholeness it enjoyed under the Silver Millennium.

Again, the parallel to the Christian apocalyptic scheme, wherein evil and sin need to be completely uprooted (and their originator, Satan, banished to the lake of fire) so that humanity can return to the bliss of Eden, is obvious. Indeed, the depiction of Metalia draws much inspiration from the great adversary of Christianity. She is imprisoned within “the Earth’s core” (3:29), wherein her palace is located, and she is often referred to as the “devil” (3:14, 3:15, 3:80, 3:89). Given this context, it is not surprising that Sailor Venus’s remark, “Someone must have broken the seals for something that evil to be born into this world again...!” (2:65), calls to mind the breaking of the seven seals in Revelation. For it is in *Sailor Moon*'s insistence that original

evil must be extirpated before original innocence can be reclaimed that it bears the fullest resemblance to John of Patmos's singular apocalyptic vision.

And much like that most famous of apocalyptic texts, *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* rushes headlong toward that moment of extirpation, the great final battle between the forces of good and evil. The results are suitably apocalyptic in both the ancient and modern senses of the word. Sailor Moon seemingly slays Tuxedo Mask and then turns the sword on herself, reenacting the tragic conclusion of their previous lives. Queen Metalia breaks free of her bounds and reaches the Earth's surface. The world is thrown into chaos. Every corner of the globe is bombarded by "erratic weather conditions" (3:65), a "black shadow" covers the Earth's surface until it becomes "a planet of darkness" (3:69), buildings crumble, and humanity descends into mindless violence. The other four Sailor Guardians sacrifice their powers in an ultimately futile attempt to hold Queen Metalia back.<sup>10</sup> But through the power of the Legendary Silver Crystal, Sailor Moon emerges triumphant. Though her messianic intervention, the final struggle with evil is won and Metalia is banished forever. And in true millenarian fashion, the time has come for the dawning of *Sailor Moon's* first vision of the Millennial Age.

After Metalia's defeat, the cats Luna and Artemis look around them to find that the entire Moon Castle has risen again and looks exactly as it did in the time of Queen Serenity's rule. Luna remarks that, "Usagi-chan's 'Legendary Silver Crystal' was its guide. And it was revived by the great power of the moon" (3:114). The restoration is entirely Sailor Moon's doing, brought about through her victory in the apocalyptic final battle with Metalia. She has fulfilled her messianic role and, with the embodiment of evil gone, the Moon Kingdom can rise again. As Luna announces to Sailor Moon upon her arrival, "Silver Millennium has been restored" (3:126).

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<sup>10</sup> Naoko Takeuchi originally planned to have the Sailor Guardians meet their deaths instead. The 1992 anime's decision to keep this ending, and to subsequently have all the Sailor Guardians resurrected after Usagi's victory, represents a rare instance in which the anime *improves* upon the manga's millenarian symbolism.

This series of apocalyptic events has reached their culmination in the dawning of what is literally a new Millennium. The Silver Millennium lives again as the present state of a fulfilled eschaton.

Throughout the story, the millennialist potential of a new Silver Millennium has been bound up with the prophecy of Usagi's future queenship. Indeed, the manga even demonstrated that Usagi's connection to the Legendary Silver Crystal would bring universal healing and could potentially turn the earth into a paradise. And now it is time for that queenship to become real. As Luna tells Sailor Moon, "You, Usagi-chan, are the new Serenity. The new Queen. And you are the master of the Moon Castle" (3:126). That the prophecy comes true at this moment indicates that Usagi's millennial potential is now in the process of being fulfilled. Her accension seems assured, and the world's paradisaical transformation seems close at hand.

*Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon's* first story arc is thus revealed to be a powerful vision of millennial hope sketched throughout *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon's* first story arc. It draws on many sources, Christianity, East Asian Buddhism, and even—as the sword in the stone motif makes clear—the myth of King Arthur's future return to present a paradigmatically millenarian narrative in which the world falls from an original state of purity and blessedness through the introduction of evil, only for a savior to bring back that primordial perfection by defeating evil itself and ringing in the Millennium. This is where most millenarian stories end. However, there will be no such finality here, because *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* is about to shatter the millenarian paradigm and take its millennial story in a much different direction.

For the manga pulls back from its millennial moment just as it is on the verge of fulfillment. Usagi balks at taking the throne, reminding Luna that she still has a life to live as a normal teenage girl, "I'm Usagi Tsukino! I know that I'm Serenity too, but... the place where Mamo-chan [Tuxedo Mask] is, Earth... is the place where I must be too" (3:127). This prompts

Queen Serenity to appear one final time and give Usagi permission to return to her earthly life instead of becoming the new queen. Thus, while the Silver Millennium is indeed restored to its ancient glory, the postponement of Usagi's ascension to the throne means that the full flowering of the Millennial Age cannot immediately begin. Usagi does heal the world of Metalia's influence before returning to her normal life, but the rest of the program remains unrealized. The millennial promise must still await its full consummation.

However, the program and the promise will not have to wait very long, as the manga's second arc will offer a vision of a realized millennial state. While the "Silver Millennium" arc had, despite its apocalyptic focus, been a tale of the past and the present, the "Crystal Tokyo" arc is *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon's* foray into the future. This new arc begins when the arrival of Chibi-Usa from the distant future draws the Sailor Guardians into a protracted struggle against the mysterious Black Moon Clan. Reckoning with these antagonists forces Sailor Moon to confront her own eschatological destiny as the Queen of the restored Silver Millennium, allowing the manga to examine what the future looks like for a world which has already seen the apocalyptic final battle but not yet fully entered into millennial bliss.

While the revival of the Silver Millennium remains in effect, as this is what allows the Sailor Guardians to grow in power, it is clear that the people of present-day Tokyo are living in a deferred eschaton. Due to this, the millennial angst of the previous arc has not been dissipated by Sailor Moon's triumph over the embodiment of evil. Instead, it has only grown stronger, as it is now tied into widespread anxiety over "200 confirmed sightings of UFOs in the 23 wards of Tokyo" (3:209) and fears of untimely death. The "Silver Millennium" arc had seen a similar combination of future uncertainty and a spate of supernatural occurrences fuel a sense of dread over "the end of the century." But now this current of angst has been supercharged. No longer

limited to a few significant references in the background of the Sailor Guardians' lives, the millennial dread and anxiety of the people of Tokyo has become a potent force in its own right. It is one which the struggle with the Black Moon Clan will force the Sailor Guardians to directly confront for themselves.

The confrontation comes in Act 18. The Black Moon Clan has been manipulating the anxieties of the populace in order to infiltrate society and entrap the Sailor Guardians. When it comes time to target Sailor Venus, Calaveras of the Black Moon Clan decides to prey on the people's millennial angst. Calaveras poses as a medium and publicly broadcasts a message from Black Moon stating, "we are here to lead you Earthlings to the true path" (4:73). Calaveras presents Black Moon's chief interest as guiding humanity to a higher plane of spiritual development. She speaks directly to the widespread anxiety of the times, telling the people that Black Moon has come because, "Presently, the Earth and the human race are not well, and are seeking salvation" (4:75). Calaveras recognizes the undercurrent of millennial angst and dread that pervades Tokyo, and explicitly addresses it. In seeking to coopt it for her own purposes, she not only acknowledges that this millennial anxiety exists, but that it is a powerful force in the popular psyche with which society as a whole is failing to cope.

This moment, then, turns the *fin de siècle* foreboding of the previous arc on its head; it makes that millennial angst a threat, both to society and the Sailor Guardians themselves. Calaveras's advice for "improvement" is actually quite harmful, "I'm afraid medicine and hospitals are bad too. And infinite power and eternal life do not exist" (4:75). But even more troublingly, Calaveras makes a direct attempt to turn the populace against the Sailor Guardians by repeatedly warning that, "You mustn't trust any of the 'White Moon.' Those who bear the mark of the 'White Moon' only bring calamity to the Earth" (4:83). The "White Moon" clearly

represents Sailor Moon and her allies. By telling the people of Tokyo that Sailor Moon will “bring calamity to the Earth,” Calaveras attempts to discredit Sailor Moon’s future millennial reign before it has even begun. Calaveras’s claim that “infinite power and eternal life do not exist” is a blunt denial of the life-giving power demonstrated by the Legendary Silver Crystal in the previous arc and the future potential embodied therein. Calaveras is thus setting herself and the whole Black Moon Clan in direct opposition to the millennial hope signified by Sailor Moon.

And yet, in a twist of irony, Calaveras does so while claiming the millennialist mantle for Black Moon, announcing to her listeners, “the Earth is soon to enter the Age of Aquarius, the Water Bearer constellation. And the Aquarian Age indicates the beginning of a cosmic millenium [sic]. It will be an age of ‘reformation.’” (4:82). The Age of Aquarius is, as noted above, Joachim of Fiore’s own unique vision of the Millennial Age, renamed by Vincent Ferrier and translated through countless iterations of the New Age movement into the twentieth century. Its presence here is not surprising, given that, with references to channeling, dowsing, UFOs, and spontaneous combustion, *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* displays a newfound fascination with New Age ideas in this arc. Even so, it is much more than simply another esoteric set-piece. Calaveras’s emphasis on “reformation” preserves the progressivist notion of Joachim and his New Age imitators. She even goes so far as to evoke the concept of the Millennium or, here, the “cosmic millennium” itself. In doing so, Calaveras aligns Black Moon with the millennialist vision of the future and disputing the Sailor Guardians’s right to be the caretakers of that vision.

It is strange, perhaps, that Calaveras should get to so thoroughly challenge the manga’s own painstaking association of the millennial moment with Sailor Moon. But it is even stranger that when Sailor Venus arrives on the scene, she accepts Calaveras’s inverted millennialist framing without question. Instead of calling out Calaveras’s appropriation for what it is, Venus

instead sets herself up as an opponent of the Millennium by proclaiming, “We’re still in the age of Pisces and Love! This is not an age where the Goddess of Love, Venus will be defeated!” (4:86). Sailor Venus here displays a basic awareness of the Aquarian scheme. But she openly decries the sense of progression inherent within it. Progress is key to this conception of the Millennium. The *Status* of the Son is superseded by that of the Holy Spirit. The Age of Pisces gives way to the Age of Aquarius. The new age represents an evolution into a higher state of being. Thus, its coming is to be sought for and its arrival to be welcomed.

But Sailor Venus rejects this on all counts. She halts the movement toward the Millennium by stressing that “we are still in the Age of Pisces.” This uses the inherent *nowness* of the present to suggest its superiority to the as-of-yet unrealized future. And by defining the Age of Pisces as the era of “Love,” Venus rehabilitates and valorized the present age. Indeed, Venus’s association of the Piscean Age with “Love” has an effusive positivity which Calaveras’s dry reduction of the Aquarian Age to the bureaucratic-sounding concept of “reformation” can never hope to match. As a result, Sailor Venus makes the current Age of Pisces sound far more appealing than the future Age of Aquarius. Far from affirming the millennial meaning of Sailor Moon’s mission, Venus appears to discredit the very notion of a Millennial Age altogether.

Contrary to appearances, however, the manga has not suddenly abandoned its commitment to the Millennium. The same installment, Act 18, again reiterates the prophecy of Sailor Moon’s destiny as millennial ruler, with Kunzite telling Mamoru [Tuxedo Mask], “The fact that you were reborn means that the Princess has started down the path to become Queen, and you to become King” (4:80). And this Act is also when Chibi-Usa first demands that Sailor Moon travel forward in time in order to, “Save the future Earth of the thirtieth century!” (4:94). In short, Act 18 is the moment in the manga where the weight of future time is felt most keenly.

The words of Calaveras and Sailor Venus, then, could be read as a dialogue between two different visions of the Millennium. Calaveras promises a reformation, but her future is one of death and decay. Venus, on the other hand, stands for the hope and healing offered by Sailor Moon. Calaveras, then represents a false Millennium while Sailor Venus stands for the true. The reader is again being induced to think millennially, to match both characters' words against the visions of the future which they represent. This is once more in preparation of a millennial moment on the horizon. If this preparation requires more complex thinking, however, that is because the coming millennial vision is itself a complex one. The Sailor Guardians will bear witness to that complexity first-hand when they finally visit Crystal Tokyo.

In the aptly named "Act 20: Crystal Tokyo," Sailor Moon, Sailor Venus, Tuxedo Mask, and the cats follow Chibi-Usa into the thirtieth century. There, they discover that Crystal Tokyo is the capital of the restored Silver Millennium, ruled by Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Mask as Neo Queen Serenity and King Endymion, respectively, with Chibi-Usa as their daughter and heir. The protagonists arrive at this place roughly a thousand years after their present, and soon discover how central the concept of a thousand years is to Crystal Tokyo's idyllic existence. As King Endymion explains to them,

The lifespan of a Silver Millennium native is roughly a thousand years ...

Serenity assumed the throne at age twenty-two, gave birth to the Crown Princess [Chibi-Usa], and has maintained the same appearance since. It was all due to the power of the "Legendary Silver Crystal." I also received its power and obtained the same lifespan as a Silver Millennium native. It wasn't just the two of us either. Ever since the twenty-first century, the citizens of Crystal Tokyo also received the lifespan of Silver Millennium natives. In fact, nearly all denizens of the Earth

have received power and long lives from the “Legendary Silver Crystal.” It was all the lifespan that any human could desire. We lived on an Earth of peace.

(4:158-59)

There is much to unpack here. But the first thing to notice is that longevity is central to Crystal Tokyo’s state of felicity. All inhabitants of the planet Earth live for a thousand years, and it seems to be these long lives which have laid the groundwork for the peace and harmony which the citizens enjoy. The Legendary Silver Crystal’s first appearance in the previous arc had led to a brief moment of universal “revitalization” that saw the sick healed, nature restored, and even the dead resurrected. That was the promise of Sailor Moon’s future potential. Crystal Tokyo is the fulfillment of that promise. Noteworthy too is that “nearly all denizens of the Earth” are the inheritors of the promise. The lifegiving power of the Legendary Silver Crystal, and consequentially Neo Queen Serenity’s rule, extends over the entirety of the Earth. Her dominion is functionally universal and exists in a state of perpetual peace and tranquility.

Ironically, it is one of Crystal Tokyo’s enemies who further expounds upon this millennial vision. After capturing her, Black Moon’s Prince Demande bluntly tells Sailor Moon that, “Long life and peace are all just a fraud ... And we must return history to the correct path. A repetition of war after war!” (4:203). This indicates two things. One is that “peace” refers specifically to the end of war. The other is that by defining history’s “correct path” as “A repetition of war after war,” Demande indicate that a world free of war represents a fundamental break from history as it has always played out. Crystal Tokyo has, if not ended history, at the very least suspended it. Of course, Crystal Tokyo is still very much within history, as it is itself the transformed Tokyo of the twentieth century. But the reign of Neo Queen Serenity does represent a new age in history and a new way of being in history.

The new Silver Millennium of Crystal Tokyo is indeed the Millennium in the fullest eschatological sense. The influence of the traditional Christian conception of the Millennial Age is evident.<sup>11</sup> The Book of Revelation offers a rough sketch of that vision over a handful of gnomic but evocative lines, “I saw thrones, and on them sat those to whom judgment was committed . . . They came to life again, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4). During Christ’s thousand-year rule, peace prevails and war is no more, for Satan is bound and “might not seduce the nations again till the thousand years were ended” (Rev. 20:3). And because the saints ruling for ten centuries is its defining feature, it is not too much to say that thousand-year lifespans are central to the Millennium as Revelation conceives it. Neo Queen Serenity’s earthly rule is also defined by thousand-year lifespans, the cessation of war, and a universal dominion. And Crystal Tokyo, like the Christian Millennium, is depicted as lasting for at roughly a thousand years. This is *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*’s second millennial vision.

But aside from its heavy debt to Revelation, what makes this vision interesting in contrast to the first is that it is explicitly millennialist. Tuveson had defined millennialist thought as centering around a future utopia born of earthly progress rather than Revelation’s portrait of a distinctly otherworldly millennial state. This was true of Joachim’s vision and those of his New Age successors, and it is also true of Crystal Tokyo. What is more, the very establishment of Crystal Tokyo is itself millennialist. As King Endymion succinctly recounts, “Serenity assumed the throne at age twenty-two, gave birth to the Crown Princess, and has maintained the same appearance since.” Despite its brevity, this statement reveals several things. Usagi’s age at her ascension is twenty-two. Her present age, as is stated from the first installment on, is “14 years old” (1:7). Thus, there are eight years separating current Usagi from the beginning of her rule.

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<sup>11</sup> *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* is very much fascinated with Christian ideas and symbolism in general, as its emphasis on the eucharistic significance of the Holy Grail in the “Infinity” arc demonstrates.

Assuming that the date of “1992” (1:203) found on a newspaper in Act 6 is accurate, this indicates that Usagi will ascend the throne in the year 2000.<sup>12</sup>

This is striking because it means that the dawning of the new Silver Millennium coincides exactly with the beginning of the new millennium of the calendar. This fully reconciles the future coming of Crystal Tokyo with the general angst and excitement about “the end of the century” which has long pervaded the pages of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*. As it turns out, the momentous event which the people of Tokyo have been expecting to occur at the dawn of the millennium is actually Sailor Moon’s ascension to the throne. The new millennium and the new Silver Millennium are one and the same. It is this millennial conjunction which unifies *Sailor Moon*’s 1990s present with the far-future age it envisions. It is also a powerful statement of optimism in the face of the economic turmoil and general dread gripping Japanese society at the time. It looks at the new millennium not through the lens of anxiety, but through an older sense of the Millennium as a time of hope and possibility. Even today, with the new millennium well into its third decade and with no utopian transformation in sight, *Sailor Moon*’s choice to face the year 2000 with an air of optimism remains.

It is clear then, that much of the manga’s unity emerges from this millennial intertwining of real present and hoped-for future. But King Endymion’s account reveals even more about the nature of *Sailor Moon*’s millennial vision. The reader has just witnessed the restoration of the Silver Millennium at the end of the previous arc, and Luna’s mention of the “revived Moon Castle” (3:182) at the start of Act 15 demonstrates that that restoration is still very much in effect. And yet, King Endymion reckons the beginning of the new Silver Millennium from Sailor Moon’s ascension at twenty-two, when the Silver Millennium’s restoration starts to have a

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<sup>12</sup> There is some uncertainty about the exact dating of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*’s chronology. While “1992” is printed here, a digital profile for Sailor V which Mercury reads in Act 7 states that she has been active “mainly in Tokyo area since 199X” (2:32), in what seems like an effort to make the actual date of the story ambiguous.

visible effect on the world and the process of utopian transformation begins. Thus, the Millennial Age actually has two distinct beginnings, with a span of eight years separating them. What is more, the second beginning is a decidedly millennialist one. This time, there is no final battle. Serenity simply ascends to the throne. In doing so, she begins a process in which longevity and its benefits are extended first to Endymion, then to the inhabitants of Crystal Tokyo, and finally to the whole world. This process is gradual, peaceful, and continuous, without the conflict and calamity which marked the Silver Millennium's first restoration.

That *Sailor Moon* is able to envision two separate beginnings to the Millennium is likely due to its indebtedness to the Age of Aquarius, and the Joachimite tripartite scheme that ultimately underlies that concept. Joachim of Fiore first introduced the idea that his Age of the Holy Spirit, and indeed each of his Three *Status*, had two separate beginnings. Thus, for instance, Joachim states, "The fructification of the Third *Status* [beginning] from the twenty-second generation after Saint Benedict and [lasting] up to the consummation of the world, was initiated by Saint Benedict" (*Lib. Con.* 2.1.4).<sup>13</sup> By "fructification," Joachim means when the qualities of that particular age begin to manifest themselves in the world. Thus, the *Status* of the Holy Spirit began to exert its pull in the time of Saint Benedict (fl. c. 500) but its full manifestation as a physical reality which transforms human society should not be expected until much later. New Age thinkers adopted this idea wholesale, allowing for a span of time between the first manifestation of the Age of Aquarius's influence and the full commencement of the age itself. It was no doubt this later formulation which suggested to Naoko Takeuchi the possibility of the Silver Millennium dawning twice in her own eschatological scheme.

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<sup>13</sup> "*Fructificatio tertii status ab ea generatione que fuit vicesima secunda a sancto Benedicto usque ad consumationem seculi, initiatio a sancto Benedicto.*" Daniel's edition, p. 67. Translation mine.

But though the mechanism may have originated outside the manga's pages, what *Sailor Moon* does with it is truly unique. For it uses this trope of a double-beginning to essentially give its narrative both a millenarian and a millennialist eschatology. *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* is thus able to enjoy the climactic good vs. evil conflict of the millenarian strain while ultimately privileging the hope and optimism of the millennialist narrative, essentially overturning Tuveson's original dichotomy in favor of a more holistic apocalyptic vision. The double-beginning of the Silver Millennium is what makes this possible.

The first beginning in the "Silver Millennium" arc is clearly millenarian. A climactic and cataclysmic final battle must take place against the embodiment of all evil. The heroes are on the back foot throughout the arc, and it is only in the final moments of battle that a catastrophic defeat for the forces of good is averted. Only when Sailor Moon finally extirpates evil itself in the form of Queen Metalia can the Silver Millennium rise again. The second beginning in the second arc, that of Crystal Tokyo, is quite different. It is created when Serenity peacefully ascends the throne at twenty-two. The establishment of the new age is gradual as well as peaceful. And yet, the future utopia still bears continuity with the society it grew out of, as the very name of Crystal Tokyo demonstrates. These are all hallmarks of millennialist eschatology.

It is the particular achievement of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* that it is able to not only ride these millennial crosscurrents but bring them together into a greater whole. For there can be no doubt that there is a fundamental unity and symmetry between the old Silver Millennium and Crystal Tokyo that is only possible because of *Sailor Moon's* conjoining of millenarianism and millennialism. But the vision of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* is even more holistic than this, and the symmetry between the ancient Silver Millennium and Crystal Tokyo goes even farther. For the manga also draws heavily on those two characteristic elements of East

Asian apocalyptic, lunar symbolism and millennial impermanence, to send Crystal Tokyo down the same ruinous path as its predecessor. Despite its seemingly pessimistic overtones, this maneuver actually allows *Sailor Moon* to further reify its optimistic outlook in the face of inevitable decline and cyclical change.

There is a certain irony in the fact that, however much Crystal Tokyo may be described as a paradisaal state, very little of this is seen in the manga itself. For, when the present-day heroes arrive in the future, they are greeted with a ghastly sight. As Sailor Venus describes it, “It’s too quiet... The buildings... all the structures are broken... It’s almost like they’ve melted” (4:128). Crystal Tokyo is empty and charred corpses litter the streets. This eerie, deserted, dead city seems like a far cry from the kind of perfection signified by the millennial state.

As it turns out, Crystal Tokyo’s Millennial Age seems to be at an end. The city is under siege by the Black Moon Clan. Only the Crystal Palace at the heart of the city has yet to fall, but even that presents a dire scenario. Neo Queen Serenity was grievously wounded in Black Moon’s initial attack on the city and, “At that very moment, the crystal suddenly encased the queen’s body as if it was protecting her” (4:155). She is currently, in another clear echo of the millennial myth surrounding King Arthur, in an enchanted “endless sleep” (4:159) as she slowly heals from what otherwise would have been a mortal wound. Everyone inside the palace—save for Chibi-Usa and Diana, the daughter of Luna and Artemis—has also fallen to Black Moon’s corrupting influence, such that they all exist in a kind of death-like state. King Endymion is only able to communicate with the present-day heroes through a form what he himself says is “something akin to my ghost that has left my body” (4:149). In short, then, what seems to be occurring is yet another apocalyptic moment within the wider *Sailor Moon* narrative, one which seems to mark the end of Serenity’s millennial reign itself.

Of course, anyone familiar with Christian apocalyptic will not be surprised by this. After all, both John of Patmos and Joachim of Fiore agreed that the end of the Millennium would be marked by one last attack from the forces of evil, who “laid siege to the camp of God’s people and the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them” (Rev. 20:7). The same tropes—evil forces rising up to overthrow the Millennium just as it reaches its thousand-year mark and the city of the righteous being besieged by these same foes—also form the basis of the “Crystal Tokyo” arc, and so this looks to be another case of *Sailor Moon* drawing extensive inspiration from its Western apocalyptic predecessors.

But there is much more going on here. The revolt of Gog and Magog against the Millennium enjoys only a small paragraph in Revelation; they are clearly the least consequential of the book’s villains. The Black Moon Clan is quite a different story. They manage to exceed the Dark Kingdom as a threat to Sailor Moon’s millennial potential. Not only do they annihilate Crystal Tokyo, but they possess the ability to change the flow of history itself, something Queen Metalia could never hope for. They actively present themselves as the diametric opposites to the Silver Millennium’s heroes in every conceivable way.

Their name is the most obvious indication of this. The direct contrast which Calaveras draws between the Black Moon Clan and “Those who bear the mark of the ‘White Moon’” (4:83), indicates that the name “Black Moon” is meant as a dark parody of the “White Moon,” the ruling dynasty of the Silver Millennium. Similarly, the black moons they wear on their foreheads mock the crescent moon which manifests itself upon Neo Queen Serenity’s. The Black Moon Clan draws their power from something called the “Malefic Black Crystal,” which is presented as a kind of dark antimatter double of the Legendary Silver Crystal. They dwell on the planet Nemesis, another one of *Sailor Moon*’s holdovers from New Age apocalyptic, which is

defined as a “planet of darkness” (4:62) in direct contradistinction to the planet of light which Earth has become under the new Silver Millennium. Messianic literature generally requires evil counterparts to the savior, and few fit the bill quite as thoroughly as Black Moon does for the Sailor Guardians and Crystal Tokyo.

And while the East Asian tradition of lunar apocalyptic symbolism is necessarily ever-present in a series fascinated by both the apocalypse and the Moon, it is never more appropriate or relevant than it is here. For the conflict between the “White Moon” led by Sailor Moon and the “Black Moon” led by the opponents of her millennial rule looks strikingly like the narrative envisioned fifteen hundred years earlier in medieval China, which pitted Prince Moonlight against the forces of “the Old Moon.” As Ernst Zürcher explains in “Prince Moonlight,” “the apocryphal Dunhuang text [among others] ... contains some very obscure references to a (obviously evil) power or fluid called The Old Moon ... which prevails in the final period, and which is to be supplanted by the virtuous rule of Yueguang” (Zürcher 33).<sup>14</sup> Like the Prince Moonlight story, the “Crystal Tokyo” arc also has competing good and the evil forces bearing names related to the Moon. In both, the evil lunar forces hold the upper hand for a time, only for a hero, also bearing a lunar name to arrive with comrades and drive them back. This hero is Yueguang tongzi in the former, and Sailor Moon in the later, both of whom hold princely rank. And while not strictly in the Prince Moonlight tradition, the *Maqian Ke*’s imagery of lunar “light born from the depths of darkness” (Zhuge 43) of a new moon, gets even closer to the dichotomy of White and Black Moons which pervades the “Crystal Tokyo” arc.

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<sup>14</sup> The *Maqian ke* also offers this woeful prophecy, “The Water Moon is master, the Old Moon becomes sovereign.” (“水月有主 古月為君 [Shǔi yuè yǒu zhu Gǔ yuè wéi jūn]” Moore’s edition, p. 43) By this time, the term “Old Moon” had come to refer to the non-Han peoples of the northern steppe; this prophecy is a veiled description of the Qing Dynasty. But Zürcher cautions that “in the messianic lore of Yueguang tongzi it appears to have a more general meaning. The savior is by no means represented as a symbol of China vs. the barbarians” (Zürcher 33).

Even the fact that, as Zürcher puts it, “in the Taoist apocalyptic scripture TT 322 ... the Old Moon is said to “invade China” ... as an evil influence” (33) finds a counterpart in Black Moon’s method of achieving its end. Black Moon attacks Crystal Tokyo by placing a “black monument-like megalith that ... began to suck in any and all energy, and space itself began to warp” (Takeuchi 4:159). It is this baleful influence which proves to be Black Moon’s greatest weapon, even reaching into the Crystal Palace itself. As King Endymion recounts, “We sealed the palace off right away, but our people still fell one by one, as if poison gas had filtered in” (4:156). Black Moon thus works much as the Old Moon does, by spreading an “evil influence” across the land rather than through direct combat and conquest.

Playing into this Moon-based eschatology thus sharpens the contrast between the Sailor Guardians and Black Moon, suggesting that this conflict takes place in an even more apocalyptic register than its predecessor. Like Calaveras’s earlier millennial posturing, it challenges the Sailor Guardians’ sole claim to their special role, making the meaning of their future world order dependent on who wins the final victory. However, the fact that Crystal Tokyo’s fall is a possibility, and the world undergo another apocalypse, reveals that *Sailor Moon*’s millennial vision is built upon an idea that lurks in the background of the Prince Moonlight story and the *Maqian ke*, but which only finds its full explication in the Satya Yuga and the myth of Maitreya. It is the idea of cosmic impermanence, and it is at the heart of Crystal Tokyo’s chiliastic destiny.

The Millennium of Maitreya is, as has been noted, always destined to pass away. Glorious as it may be, it must come to an end, for “the Good Law will be not forever be present in this world” (qtd. in Zürcher 8). This theme of impermanence and the inevitability of collapse is one which *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* treats with increasing seriousness over the course of its run, culminating in the thematic moodiness of the manga’s fifth and final (or “Stars”) arc. But

an acute awareness of impermanence is already manifesting itself here. Despite all its millennial connotations, the Silver Millennium ends up following far short of the Christian ideal or of the Age of Aquarius. The new Silver Millennium may have dawned with the defeat of evil, but it never seems quite able to bind the devil for a thousand years. Even at its most tranquil and content, Crystal Tokyo lives under the shadow of darker forces. The failure to properly defeat those forces holds within it the seeds of Crystal Tokyo's own ruin.

This becomes clear when King Endymion discusses the career of Death Phantom. As he tells it, “just one time, several centuries ago, in Crystal Tokyo, the most beautiful and peaceful place on Earth[,] a criminal and murderer that people had forgotten came back to life” (Takeuchi 4:214). What is meant by Phantom coming “back to life” is never explained, but it is evident that he arose during the peaceful period of Serenity's millennial rule, not before it. He is an ill produced at a time when society is supposed to have no ills, denting the narrative of Crystal Tokyo's tranquil perfection. What is more, Sailor Venus soon discovers that, during his reign of terror, “he single-handedly destroyed Crystal Tokyo, and transformed it into a city of crime” (5:9). Crystal Tokyo did not, as it turns out, enjoy one thousand years of uninterrupted peace and harmony. At some point, the city was given over to crime and apparently even destroyed, an occurrence would should be impossible in such a supposedly idyllic time. As Venus succinctly remarks, “It looks like it was an awful ruinous age of history” (5:9). That such an “awful, ruinous age” could even exist suggests how imperfect Crystal Tokyo's Millennium is. It never truly succeeds at eliminating evil or human suffering completely. It comes close, time and again. But sooner or later, something slips through the cracks, and corruption becomes inevitable.

Finally, Neo Queen Serenity confronts Death Phantom. King Endymion explains what happens next, “Until that point, Neo Queen Serenity had quietly watched over Crystal Tokyo

but... Then, that one time, she stood up to fight. He was captured and sent to Nemesis. And after that, the planet was sealed and banned” (4:214). This at first seems like a happy result. Crystal Tokyo is restored, and the Queen has fulfilled her messianic role once again. But by exiling Death Phantom instead of executing him, Neo Queen Serenity lays the groundwork for him to form the Black Moon Clan and destroy her kingdom. After her reawakening, Neo Queen Serenity herself acknowledges this darker truth, “I did not have the strength of heart and courage to defeat the insane criminal Death Phantom. I am responsible!” (5:204). It was Neo Queen Serenity’s own loss of “strength of heart” which caused Crystal Tokyo’s downfall.

Ever since the original Queen Serenity told Sailor Moon, “The ‘Legendary Silver Crystal’ depends on your heart. A strong determination, iron will and deep feelings of love... Without all these you cannot hope to eliminate the evil” (2:167), resolute willpower and depth of love have been central to both Sailor Moon’s power and her character as a hero. Thus, by saying that she did not have the “strength of heart and courage” when she needed it, Neo Queen Serenity is admitted to not only a decline of ability, but to a moral decline as well. She is no longer the Sailor Moon who had a heart strong enough to control the Legendary Silver Crystal. She is no longer the Sailor Moon who offered millennial hope. She now lacks that same strength of character, and her kingdom suffers for it. Her decline and that of the Silver Millennium are inextricably linked.

What is particularly poignant about this is that the old Silver Millennium’s downfall was occasioned by a similar failure on the part of the first Queen Serenity. In the distant past, after Princess Serenity’s suicide, Queen Serenity confronted Queen Metalia. As she explains to her reincarnated daughter, “Back then, the shock of losing you... despair... confusion... in my weakness, I could not entirely use the power of the ‘Legendary Silver Crystal.’ And because I

could not use the crystal's full power... the seal on the creature was imperfect" (2:164). Because she had fallen into despair, Queen Serenity was unable to completely defeat Queen Metalia and prevent the demise of the original Silver Millennium. Several thousand years later, Neo Queen Serenity is unable to maintain her own "strength of heart" and thus fails to completely defeat Death Phantom, leading to the destruction of her Silver Millennium. This indicates that the temporal nature of the Silver Millennium is fundamentally cyclical. The original Silver Millennium fell, in part due to Queen Serenity's failure. Sailor Moon redeemed her mother's failure by defeating Queen Metalia, but then the cycle repeated during her own reign over the new Silver Millennium, leading it to share for a time in its predecessor's fate. It seems, then, that every queen eventually loses that essential strength of character, after which the Silver Millennium comes crashing down, and the cycle begins again.

At first, this sense of decline on Neo Queen Serenity's part is offset by the narrative, passed around by the other denizens of the Crystal Palace, that when Neo Queen Serenity awakens, she will defeat Black Moon and restore Crystal Tokyo. This is a very deliberate manga evocation of King Arthur's deathless existence as the long-awaited "Once and Future King." At one crucial moment, Diana even prophesizes of an Arthur-like return on Serenity's part, in tones very reminiscent of Arthurian lore, "Is it simply that the time has not yet arrived, Your Majesty? If true danger threatens, the Queen will surely save us ... the queen is healing her wounded body inside the 'Legendary Silver Crystal.' She is building the strength that she is going to need" (5.79). This follows the broad outlines of Arthur's return myth and suggests a further eschatological role for Neo Queen Serenity as the promised "Once and Future Queen" who will awaken from her slumber and save her people from annihilation.

But then, shockingly, she never fulfills that promise. Neo Queen Serenity does not awaken to save her people; she awakens because Sailor Moon has already managed to repel Black Moon and Chibi-Usa has finally come into her own as a Sailor Guardian. And even when given the chance to join the final battle against Death Phantom, Neo Queen Serenity demurs, instead telling Chibi-Usa “Small Lady, you are presently the only one who can take my place” (5:205). When Neo Queen Serenity hands her royal rod down to Chibi-Usa, it signifies that a change has taken place. The Queen completely abdicates the messianic role she had once occupied and Chibi-Usa steps in to fill it.

Indeed, Chibi-Usa had already been marked out in the story as a figure of millennial import in her own right. King Endymion had previously said of her, “She is a new Earthling born with the blood of The Silver Millennium, so there are many things about her we don’t understand” (4:213). As the firstborn daughter of the Silver Millennium, Chibi-Usa is a new kind of human being. Like Joachim’s *vires spirituales*, she embodies the mystery and possibility inherent in the trope of a new humanity. Chibi-Usa is quite literally born to take over her mother’s messianic role. And by helping to defeat Death Phantom and restore Crystal Tokyo to its previous paradisaical state, Chibi-Usa has become the new vector of millennial hope.

Chibi-Usa has redeemed the failure of her mother just as Neo Queen Serenity had once made up for her own mother’s mistakes. The rebirth of the Silver Millennium is once again achieved not by the reigning queen, but by a future queen enveloped in millennial potential. Neo Queen Serenity herself acknowledges this. When Sailor Venus tries to credit her with Crystal Tokyo’s revival, “Crystal Tokyo’s... come back to life. It’s a miracle from the Queen,” Serenity refuses the accolade, saying, “No, Sailor Moon, with borrowed strength from both Tuxedo Mask and Small Lady [Chibi-Usa], destroyed Nemesis” (5.220-21). Neo Queen Serenity admits that

she herself had no part in achieving this new birth of the Silver Millennium. The cycle of time has passed her by. But this is not the cause for despair as it had been in the prior arc, because a solution to this ruinous cycle has presented itself through Chibi-Usa. And that solution is to check impermanence and decline through a continual process of renewal.

In this sense, *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* is more optimistic than the Maitreyan myth it draws inspiration from. The decline of the Millennium may be inevitable, but this does not mean that it must lead to the aeons of darkness which succeeded the first Silver Millennium. There is another possibility, not ruin and collapse but renewal and rebirth. Crystal Tokyo's downfall is foreshortened and reversed because Chibi-Usa is able to mature into the messianic, millennial figure which Neo Queen Serenity can no longer be. It is through her, and the potential for renewal which she represents, that *Sailor Moon's* vision of a cyclical and imperfect Millennium is imbued with a sense of possibility and hope.

This abiding millennial allows *Sailor Moon's* millennial vision to transcend cyclical time itself, just as it had previously transcended the dichotomy between millenarian and millennialist. This hope is possible because *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* has crafted an extraordinarily unique millennial narrative out of diverse and disparate eschatological traditions, but never allows itself to be fully beholden toward any one of them. Instead, the manga responds to the fears and anxieties of the coming millennium on its own terms, planting seeds of possibility which bloom into a powerfully optimistic millennial vision founded in hope toward the future and a sense of continual renewal. This bold and creative reimagining of the Millennium should be regarded as a crucial part of *Sailor Moon's* legacy, as it both testifies to the groundbreaking nature of this classic manga series and demonstrates that one of humanity's oldest modes of visualizing the future still maintains a powerful allure.

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