

# **Intercultural Crossovers, Transcultural Flows: Manga/Comics**

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# Introduction

Kyoto Seika University's International Manga Research Center is supposed to organize one international conference per year. The first was held at the Kyoto International Manga Museum in December 2009,<sup>1</sup> and the second at the Cultural Institute of Japan in Cologne, Germany, September 30 - October 2, 2010. This volume assembles about half of the then-given papers, mostly in revised version.

The Cologne conference's point of departure was a Call for Papers launched by Japanologist Franziska Ehmcke<sup>2</sup> (University of Cologne) and picture-book expert Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer<sup>3</sup> (University of Tübingen). Their focus on comics from the perspective of Intercultural and Transcultural Studies met our Center's intentions. Thus, we joined forces, last but not least supported by Steffi Richter<sup>4</sup> (University of Leipzig) who kindly contributed the epilogue to this printed edition. In cooperation with The Japan Foundation (Japanisches Kulturinstitut Köln) and the Center for Intercultural and Transcultural Studies of the University of Cologne, we were able to welcome experienced comics/manga critics, such as Frederik L. Schodt, Pascal Lefèvre, Fujimoto Yukari<sup>5</sup> and Itō Gō, but also a considerable number of up-and-coming academics. The conference was divided into two parts, with the first mainly resulting from the Call for Papers, and the second consisting of invited contributions to a workshop named "Transculture, Transmedia, Transgender; *NARUTO* Challenging Manga/Comics

1 *Comics Worlds and the World of Comics* (English & Japanese, 2 printed vols, Kyoto 2010; <http://imrc.jp/lecture/2009/12/comics-in-the-world.html>)

2 *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk Japans im interkulturellen Dialog (1850-1915)* [Japan's Art and Craft in Intercultural Dialogue], Munich: Ludicium 2008.

3 co-editor of the Routledge volumes *New Directions in Picturebook Research* (2010) and *Beyond Pippi Longstocking: Intermedial and International Aspects of Astrid Lindgren's Works* (2011).

4 co-editor of *J-culture: Japan-Lesebuch IV* (Tübingen: konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke 2008) and *Reading Manga from Multiple Perspectives: Japanese Comics and Globalisation* (Leipzig University Press 2006).

5 In this volume, Japanese names are usually given in the Japanese order with surname preceding first name without comma separation, except in the bibliographies, and individual articles such as the one by Giesa/Meinrenken.

Studies.” Three of the workshop papers appear in this volume, while the others form the core of the forthcoming Routledge volume *Manga’s Cultural Crossroads*, co-edited by Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and myself.

Titled “Intercultural Crossovers, Transcultural Flows: Manga/Comics,” the Cologne conference had two main topics: comics and culture. The very attempt to interrelate Japanese comics—ranging from manga made in Japan, including *gekiga*,<sup>6</sup> to the deployment of manga style outside Japan—with non-mangaesque graphic narratives, that is, alternative comics, picture books or even Chinese *lianhuanhua*,<sup>7</sup> deserves attention for its exceptionality. Recent conferences, special magazine issues and essay collections show an inclination to concentrate on either comics (in the sense of “non-manga”) or manga, conceding the respective Other a contrastive role at most. As distinct from that, the Cologne conference saw a whole range of comparative efforts, although not all of them were as convincing as Frederik L. Schodt’s keynote talk on the localization of manga in North America.

It goes without saying that the discourses which shape manga/comics texts in their domestic locales are difficult to access without any command of the respective language. Yet, linguistic shortcomings do not excuse to refrain from double-checking available sources, or from any consideration of discourses at all. Such methodological flaws, however, are rather the rule than the exception in recent manga/comics research, as not only some of the papers in this volume but also many of the recent essay collections suggest. Apparently, young academics often feel obliged to claim knowledge about, for example, Japanese comics instead of raising questions which would not cross the mind of Japanese critics or Japanologists. Japanologists, on the other hand, may exhibit a lack of familiarity with contemporary concepts of culture, identity and media. And both tend to take their own disciplinary and cultural angles for granted. Only a few authors in this volume clarify their (necessarily limited) position,

6 Contemporary Japanese discourse defines *gekiga* (lit. pictorial, or graphic drama) mostly in a historical way, as a genre addressed to non-infant readers which emerged in the late 1950s and formed an alternative to magazine-based mainstream manga, due to its site, that is, pay libraries, or rental book outlets (*kashinon’ya*) and its mainly proletarian readership. The fact that these conditions do not exist anymore may have led Roman Rosenbaum in this volume to see *gekiga* as a “style.” Its characterization as a “new” and “counter-cultural drawing style” calls for contextualization though, since by now precisely the drawing style signals anachronism to younger manga readers. See for example the low publicity of the highly informative yakuza series “Hakuryū LEGEND: Genpatsu mafia [White Dragon: Nuclear-power mafia]” (installments 155-161) by Ten’ōji Dai & Watanabe Michio in *Weekly Manga Goraku* (Febr. - April 2011) which was discontinued after 3/11.

7 Palm-size books containing “linked pictures” (usually one per page), which flourished between the 1920s and 1980s, and are being rediscovered in the name of “comics” recently, for example, here: <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/heidelberg-research-architecture/hra-projects/hra14-chinese-comics.html> (last access: December 10, 2011).

and even fewer employ manga/comics in an attempt to shake established notions and methodologies instead of merely applying authoritative tools to the new topic. The recently published special issue on “Comics Studies: Fifty Years After Film Studies” confirms that this trend is not peculiar to German academe. Bart Beaty notes that “Comics Studies has so far failed to develop analytical and theoretical innovations that could be exported to cognate fields.”<sup>8</sup>

Exceptional within this volume is, for example, Thomas Becker’s innovative reading of the current manga boom in relation to theories of remedialization and premedialization. Demonstrating that the recent proliferation of manga has revived the penchant for virtuosity and “cold equipment” which was once characteristic for the anticipation of cinematic effects by American superhero comics, Becker’s paper draws attention to what superhero comics and manga have in common as modern media, beyond any nationally defined culture. This attention is not strictly directed towards the “materiality of comics,” or “comics-ness as a matter of form,” which Thomas LaMarre calls for, but it definitely helps to counteract the naturalization of national boundaries in Comics Studies. According to LaMarre, “whenever geopolitical difference comes into question, studies of comics tend to reduce comics to national culture.” And he adds, “this comes of the current emphasis on content or representation—the ‘what,’ not the ‘how.’”<sup>9</sup>

While in Becker’s essay the focus on intermedia relations undermines the assumption of manga’s “transmission” from one national entity to another, Zoltan Kacsuk’s paper pursues “localization” with respect to the workings of subcultural capital, mainly in manga (and anime) translation. Vacillating between legitimization efforts and reluctance to compromise, in other words, between rapprochement and detachment in regard to the general public, dedicated Hungarian fans demonstrate virtuosity, or mastery, as he calls it, in a twofold way: they emphasize their direct access to Japanese-language sources and, thus, their independence from the anglophone market; and at the same time, they stress their command of the English language and, by that, their global range of communication. Precisely this critical triangle of English (American), Japanese and local (Hungarian) references has to be reckoned with by those subcultural entrepreneurs, or “fantrepreneur,” who try to market manga translations and corresponding anime synchronizations to both the fandom

8 Bart Beaty: “Introduction”, in: *Cinema Journal*, vol. 50, no. 3, spring 2011, p. 108 (pp. 106-110).

9 Greg M. Smith (moderator): “Surveying the World of Contemporary Comics Scholarship: A Conversation” (with Thomas Andrae, Scott Bukatman, and Thomas LaMarre), in: *Cinema Journal*, vol. 50, no. 3, spring 2011, p. 143 (pp. 135-147)

and a more general public. Kacsuk thus highlights the concurrent diversity of manga readers, whereas Radosław Bolałek foregrounds the historical dimension of fandom, distinguishing between three different generations. Furthermore, he thinks out of the box and considers not only manga but Polish comics culture at large. Holding a master in Japanese Studies and running his own business of publishing Japanese comics in Polish and Czech translations, Bolałek intertwines the multitude of “cultures” related to manga: culture as language, community and even capital, tied to both identity via comics and identity as comics. This is still rare in Manga/Comics Studies.

The Cologne conference addressed comics. However, due to its combination with culture, comics itself were not necessarily regarded as a culture in its own right, i.e., a distinct way of signification and making sense of the world, a realm of specific practices and sometimes even life-styles. Not comics’ identity, but comics as a mediator of identity—in terms of gender, subculture and/or national culture—attracted the most attention, as also several contributions to this volume indicate. Yet, Greg M. Smith is right to “worry that the ‘Comics and ...’ approach encourages us to neglect the actual comics themselves and to favor the elements (characters, iconography, storylines) that readily transfer across media”<sup>10</sup> or, in our case, cultures.

The conference aimed at discussing comics as a means and a site of intercultural exchange, with a special focus on their capacity to cross borders and to occupy a “third space” in between geopolitically defined cultures. Yet, to be precise, it was *Japanese* comics which took center stage, once again. To those of the organizers who are familiar with Comics/Manga Studies, it should not have come as a surprise that young academics turn to manga for investigations of culture. Although any kind of comics relies fundamentally on cultural exchange—ranging from the “melting pot” which gave rise to American comics, to manga piracy in 1970s South Korea—the conference’s theme did not trigger papers on “intercultural crossovers” within *bande dessinée*, or the recent “transcultural flow” of the graphic novel. But the preponderance of papers on manga also helped to bundle up diverse disciplinary perspectives. Frequently raised during the Q&A sections was the issue of definitions: How does the popular understanding of manga, which refers mainly to a certain character design and a non-media specific mode of reception, relate to the subject of Manga/Comics Studies? Shall formal characteristics, such as panel layout and pictorial sequences, be favoured over perception, or the above-mentioned discourses? What may be gained by naming

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10 Greg M. Smith: “It Ain’t Easy Studying Comics”, in: *Cinema Journal*, vol. 50, no. 3, spring 2011, p. 111 (pp. 110-112)



picture-book like *lianhuanhua* “Chinese comics?” How many different phenomena has the Japanese word “manga” been denoting, and do they have anything in common? What fan-cultural connotations does the word “manga” carry in European languages today which may limit manga’s readership? Can American reprints of gekiga as graphic novels count as manga? What is obscured when *NARUTO* is categorized a “graphic novel” in English?

Towards the end of the conference, manga critic Itō Gō likened the discussion to the literal meaning of the protagonist’s name Naruto (maelstrom) Uzumaki (vortex)—the intercultural exchange among manga/comics researchers seemed to Itō both conflictual and confluent while sharing a common undercurrent. Featuring first in this volume, his paper offers a close reading of *NARUTO* which indicates an understanding of manga as graphic narratives based in magazines (here *Shōnen Jump*)<sup>11</sup> and thereby genres, intertextually complexed with previous as well as concurrent series of the same publication site: to Itō, like many other Japanese manga readers, *NARUTO* is a post-*DRAGON BALL Jump* manga. And in response to a question about “Japanese tradition,” Itō touched upon a second kind of post, that is to say, the loss of tradition (for example, in the form of reliable communities) as the driving force of the *NARUTO* narrative. Itō’s paper printed here appears less interested in Media Studies than in manga-specific representation. In line with his (at least in Japanese) renowned argument of manga characters’ ambiguity<sup>12</sup>, Itō proceeds from the general characteristic of comics that the visible is merely drawn and therefore apparently less reliable than, for example, photographs, and interrelates it with one of *NARUTO*’s central narrative motifs, namely, that the visible cannot be trusted due to the ninjas’ levelling of clone and original. Following this, one might almost want to insinuate that his paper points to a sort of self-reflexivity at the core of the *NARUTO* story. But even if so, has this actually affected the world-wide *NARUTO* fandom? Most of the fans apply the story seriously to value discussions concerning friendship, trust and intimacy. The kind of self-reflexivity which might be cherished in university seminars, reveals itself only to those who are used to reflect upon manga as comics in a formalist way; it does not go along with

11 Where Kishimoto Masashi’s *NARUTO* has been serialized since 1999. By the end of 2011, 58 vols were published as well.

12 As weaving between being just a bunch of strokes drawn on paper [*kyara*] and giving the realistic impression of a human personality [*kyarakutā*], in: Itō Gō: *Tezuka izu deddo. Hirakareta manga hyōgenron e* (Tezuka is Dead. Postmodernist und Modernist Approaches to Japanese Manga). Tōkyō: NTT shuppan 2005. See also Ito, Go: “Manga History Viewed through Proto-Characteristics,” in: Philip Brophy, ed., *Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga* (exh.cat.), Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, pp. 107-113.

obvious formal experimentation and, by means of that, a heightened awareness of “comics-ness.”

Itō's is followed by the two *NARUTO* papers already mentioned above, Kacsuk's and Bolalek's. Both shift the focus from the manga text itself to its mediators and users, illuminating not how the manga's storytelling works, but how it becomes subject to reception within Eastern European contexts. Their focus does not simply replace an author-centered perspective though, since the position or intention of manga creators are intriguingly absent from Itō's analysis. Trained in German modern literature, Paul Malone takes a different approach when he introduces “German manga,” or more precisely, young artists who have been publishing their manga-style creations in German.<sup>13</sup> According to him, German manga amplify the “translocal mélange culture” characteristic for German-speaking countries. The fact that German publishers have put more efforts into raising local artists than, for example, their French colleagues leads him to the assessment of German manga being “more than a mere intercultural appropriation.” But one criterion when briefly evaluating the output is whether the artists brought their ethnic background into a central position, and another whether their visual style is “identifiably Western.” In addition, their orientation towards an imagined “Japan” is juxtaposed to “European standards.” Last but not least it is the final combination of being “German” and “manga” which reveals, unwittingly, the prevailing power of the “intercultural,” as both a trait of German manga and an intellectual tool, even if acknowledging the fundamental hybridity of German culture and manga.

Such a notion of the “intercultural” as the exchange between discrete entities, which maintain their solid identities, forms also the undercurrent of Verena Maser's paper. Her endeavor to grasp the Japanese particularities of *yuri*, or girls' love manga, results in two conclusions: first, texts of this new Japanese genre do not address or even claim lesbian identity and, therefore, cannot serve as “mirrors” of lesbianism in contemporary Japanese society; and second, the comparison to American manga-style creations with clearly lesbian subject matter suggests that manga may cross borders as form, but that contents remains country-specific. With respect to the absent identity politics, participants in the audience pointed out that the very concealment of lesbianism within in *yuri* manga may actually tell a lot about its position in contemporary Japanese society, and suggested to trace allusions back to genre conventions rather than to “Japanese culture” at large.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that introductions to current trends like Malone's run the risk of becoming outdated. As for 2011, artists like Ying Zhou Cheng are not active anymore, and others like Christina Plaka have changed their style in a way which makes it difficult to classify them as “manga” anymore.

Verena Maser's contribution is shaped by the field of Japanese Studies as is Roman Rosenbaum's whose profound knowledge of postwar Japanese literature and culture provides the backdrop to his introduction of 1960s gekiga as a "transcultural phenomenon that combined native Japanese aesthetic traditions with audio and visual styles from television, radio and, especially, American movies." His paper stimulates further research with respect to its two central ideas: first, relating gekiga to American underground comix of the same decade beyond any measurable "influences," and second, comparing gekiga to other popular media, especially movies. How these are carried through is a different matter. Some readers may miss historical evidence as well as substantiation by means of textual analysis, while others may take the wording at face value which mostly suggests *intercultural* (American-Japanese) relations rather than transcultural flows. Setting out from the American edition of Tatsumi Yoshihiro's *A Drifting Life* (2008) in 2009, Rosenbaum's paper finds causes for its present appreciation as a veritable graphic novel in North America in the "transcultural" modernity of postwar Japan. Likewise interested in the transcultural appeal of a specific manga is the analysis of Urasawa Naoki's "20th Century Boys" (2000-2006) by narratologist Felix Giesa and art historian Jens Meinrenken. Instead of "Japaneseness," or intercultural exchange in the traditional sense, they focus on intermedia relations, especially by reference to rock music, cinema and iconic images which have been shared on an increasingly global scale since the 1960s, and they try to intertwine their reading of the narrative with basic characteristics of comics itself, especially the "constant fragmentation and repetition of visual motifs and plots moments." This culminates in their appreciation of "20th Century Boys" as an intriguingly multi-layered comics text. Last but not least, Maaheen Ahmed takes Frédéric Boilet and Takahama Kan's *Mariko Parade* (2006) as her example to not only discuss "cross-cultural interchange" within one work but also try out to what extent tools of art history and recent *Bildwissenschaft* (lit. the study of pictures) can be employed for the textual analysis of comics. Ahmed distinguishes two different comics styles—bande dessinée and manga—in *Mariko Parade*, which tells the story of an intercultural encounter while leaning heavily also on intermedia relations involving photography and the nouveau roman. Precisely the resulting hybridity ensures a scope of possible interpretations, or openness as a marker of quality, as Ahmed maintains. Interestingly enough, her example contains in a nutshell what applies to contemporary comics/manga culture on a global scale. Mainstream manga series such as *NARUTO* seem to balk at intercultural exchange; their readers are usually not interested in any

## Jaqueline BERNDT

other kind of comics culture. But on closer inspection, they do not need to look for such exchange outside, since their manga contain it within themselves, although in a dissolving, that is, transcultural way. In contrast, alternative comics, that is, independent, non-generic (and usually less extended) productions seem to be most open towards globalization in the sense of an exchange between different locales, an impression which can easily be confirmed at one of the numerous international comics festivals and conventions. Yet, most of these works are too self-contained, too autonomous to allow for such transcultural obscurations of identity as mainstream manga.

At any rate, it is hoped that this volume contributes to the newly emerging field of Manga/Comics Studies precisely by admitting imperfection, facing blind spots and clearing the view for the tasks at hand. I would like to thank all the authors who, for the sake of furthering Manga/Comics Studies, expose their ideas on the pages of this volume. I am also grateful to all collaborators, including those conference speakers who were not able to submit a revised version of their papers and, of course, all those participants in the audience who tirelessly engaged in discussing the talks and much more. The next conferences are being planned already, and we will report in them within this series named *Global Manga Studies*.

Kyoto, December 10, 2011

Jaqueline Berndt

# 1

## Particularities of boys' manga in the early 21st century: How *NARUTO* differs from *DRAGON BALL*

ITŌ Gō

*NARUTO* is a ninja manga, and the apparent popularity of “ninja” in the west surprises us Japanese a lot. I would like to hear from you why ninja are so attractive to westerners. But let's turn to our subject. *NARUTO* is flourishing within the expressive space which was opened up by its precursor *DRAGON BALL*. Author Kishimoto Masashi has talked several times about *DRAGON BALL*'s influence on him and his respect for its creator Toriyama Akira. Similarities of the two works are, for example, the visual pleasure derived from depictions of untamed, three-dimensional body movements, as well as the fights which impress with martial-arts physicality. Yet, this is not limited to *NARUTO*. The expressive space of Japan's *shōnen* [boys'] manga, especially those serializations in the magazine *Shōnen JUMP*, extraordinarily drawn out due to endless chains and repetitions of bodies colliding with each other in fights—all of these can be traced

back to *DRAGON BALL*. The characters' fights are a matter of life and death. Every single one of them goes to the limit of their abilities, and readers empathize with them. *NARUTO*'s battles fascinate because of their surprising developments, which unfold when the combatants trick each other with the help of ninja techniques (*ninjutsu*, or *jutsu*) and cunning. A character might, for example, be about to fail, but then we learn, that apparently inferior movements were actually clever tactics, serving to generate an advantage over the enemy. In such moments, we as readers, are as much deceived as the characters.

*NARUTO*'s ninja techniques are both magical and supernatural, but besides physical attacks which damage the rival's body, other jutsu are frequently employed as well, such as disguise, doppelganger, mental possession, hallucination and hypnosis. Especially the *bunshin no jutsu* (doppelganger technique), that is, splitting oneself up into many illusions of oneself, forms the basis of the ninja techniques in *NARUTO*. Protagonist Uzumaki Naruto goes to great trouble to acquire what translates as "Multiple Shadow Clone Technique", which later becomes his specialty.

Let's have a look at one of the battle scenes. At the so-called *chūnin exam* (which the characters take to achieve a higher ninja rank), Naruto meets Hyūga Neji.

Neji tries to find out who the real Naruto is among the dozen of his shadow



Fig. 1: *NARUTO*, vol. 12. pp. 20-21.



Fig. 2: *NARUTO*, vol. 12. pp. 21-23.

clones. Yet, his attacks make only clones disappear. Rationally thinking, he decides that the real must be the one who is fighting most defensively, the one with the lowest frequency of attacks.

But when turning the page, we see that Neji has been outwitted by Naruto and has attacked yet another shadow clone.

This is a very simple example, but it may demonstrate how the doppelganger jutsu itself is used as a tactic to lead the opponent astray initially, and then serves to confuse him more by second-guessing his next step. Further it is remarkable, that



Fig. 3: *NARUTO*, vol. 12, pp. 24-25.



Fig. 4: *NARUTO*, vol. 10, pp. 36-37, including the last panel of the previous page.

everything “visible” in this scene turns out to be an illusion generated by the rival ninja’s skill.

Anyhow, both characters and readers are fooled. Or more accurately, things are shown in a way that misleads the reader by means of page layout and panel arrangement. In the *NARUTO* world, fights almost always have this aspect of deception. Precisely therefore, the ninja-technique world of *NARUTO* may be determined as a space where the “visible” is not to be trusted. The visible is ever suspect, because it might be an illusion. Even when taking into account that the story contains elements such as the doppelganger, disguise and spirit possession, it is fair to say that among all visible things, the doppelganger is the most unreliable.

This lack of trust in the visible couldn’t be found in *DRAGON BALL*. For example, if we look at Naruto’s Shadow Clone Technique, it is not possible to tell on sight whether the Naruto we see is a clone or the original. And this applies to the readers, who do not live in his world, too. We should add though that the Shadow Clone Technique does not only create clones; among these clones the real thing is hidden. So, what can be trusted in Naruto’s world?

One of the things we can trust is something that makes intentional lies impossible. This device is the characters’ “voice of the heart”. In manga-studies terminology, it is called their “inner voice” (*naigo*). This inner voice can’t be perceived by the other characters. It is “invisible” to them. Only the readers, not contained in the work’s world, enjoy the privilege of seeing this inner voice exposed. One of the stylistic characteristics



## ITŌ Gō

of the manga *NARUTO* is its frequent use of the inner voice; it is formally distinguished from spoken “dialogue”, mainly through differently shaped speech balloons.

In fig. 5, Gaara and Rock Lee fight against each other during the chūnin exam. The double spread shows the inner voices of four characters, in three different shapes (the subject determines the shape). Out of the following four shapes, which are generally used to express an “inner voice”, three are employed:

1. Words placed outside of a speech balloon.
2. Words inside a speech balloon that has a radial, or jagged outline.
3. Words inside a speech balloon with a foam-like tail (consisting of small bubbles)



Fig. 5: *NARUTO*, Shapes for Expressing the “Inner Voice”.

diegetic world is not limited to Japanese manga. Yet, since the latter half of the 1960s, manga has seen a persistent evolution with respect to the use of the inner voice. Text placed on a manga page is read as an “inner voice” and gets linked to the characters. Usually, the reader easily understands instinctively whose heart is speaking through the link between script and character image.

The most simple way is to keep the text balloon near the character, within the same panel. It is also common to link text spread over several panels, to a character that appears in a different panel. For example, in fig. 5, we see that the text, placed over a total of five panels, is the “inner voice” of one and the same boy, namely Kankurō. The panels are stitched together through his gaze. The use of the “inner voices” makes it possible to efficiently explain certain things to the reader. This device is often employed in Japanese boys’ manga, especially sports manga. The frequent use of the “inner voice” in *NARUTO* is apparently motivated by the necessity to explain in a clever way what is going on in those complicated battles.

In *DRAGON BALL*, there is almost no use of the “inner voice”. In *NARUTO*, on

4. Words inside a speech balloon

that consists of one or several rectangles

With the help of these shapes, the “inner voice”, which is never voiced and which can’t be perceived by the other characters, is distinguished from spoken dialogue.

The use of a formal distinction between speech balloons that contain spoken and unspoken words within the



the other hand, it is obviously linked to the protagonists' self-reflection and to identity issues, in stark contrast to *DRAGON BALL*, where contemplations are almost absent.

In general, the "inner voice" is closely related to "confessions" about one's inner life. This kind of "inner voice" is also present in *NARUTO*, as the example in fig. 5 shows. The boy-ninja Rock Lee is soliloquizing about why everything is so frustrating. Here, the "inner voice" isn't a straight verbalization of his feelings, but rather an indicator of unexpected power. That is to say, the "inner voice" suggests the existence of an opaque part inside Rock Lee which he himself does not understand, and it indicates an emotion which lies so deep that it can't be penetrated by a verbalized "inner voice". Thus, Rock Lee's inner world is presented as something opaque and multi-layered. Interpreting this page as a depiction of a multi-layered inner world makes it also easy to interpret the gray-shaded panel which is separated from the inner voice and offers a visual of Lee's mental landscape. It depicts Lee himself, left behind by Naruto and Sasuke and unable to move forward. This landscape is visible to the reader and conveys a singular meaning, but it doesn't depict what Lee himself sees. Inner voices and mental landscapes can be seen by the reader, while remaining invisible to the characters. However, when measuring the "distance" to the consciousness of the diegetic actors, we may assume, that the "inner voice" layer is on top, and then, deeper, we find the layer of the mental landscape, with the latter being less visible to the characters than the former.

One of my students described *NARUTO*'s attraction like this: "its characters are pitiful". The Japanese word for pitiful, *ijirashii*, does not mean exactly the same as the negatively loaded "pathetic". It carries the nuance of feeling empathy, or a certain amount of pity and sympathy, for someone weak. *NARUTO* is about a group of characters, whose stories are told in separate episodes, and how these characters gain self-esteem is a recurring theme. It is a story about "recovering" from alienation. Estranged from their community and family, the characters achieve a consolidation of their identity through experiencing "bonds" with others. Naruto, for example, has been disliked and alienated by the people from his village because of the Nine-Tail Demon Fox spirit locked inside him. The story starts with the relationship between Naruto and his teacher Iruka, and offers variations of the same story for all main characters.

The recovery or consolidation of identity, mentioned above, should be read not as experiencing affiliation to community and family, but rather as overcoming negative feelings about oneself. And this includes to accept the good will and intimacy offered by one's peers. Or more accurately, to dissolve one's dismissal of such offerings. Just

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recall that Iruka liked Naruto, long before Naruto himself realized that. Or that the siblings Kankurō and Temari both love their brother Gāra.

*NARUTO*'s whole narrative is eminently driven by the story of Sasuke running away, and Naruto chasing after him. Naruto's strong feelings for Sasuke are those of friendship and brotherhood. Let's call them "love" in the wider sense, that is, something higher than romantic love, like intense feelings for friends or family members. Sasuke's motivation for leaving the village was revenge on his elder brother Uchiha Itachi, and gaining the strength to achieve this goal. But he makes it clear, that for him this means to actively break off his bonds with his peers and the village Konohagakure. We can read Sasuke's behavior as an escape from the intimate community of his peers. It is caused by his refusal to accept the affection they offer him, and he more than anything resents creating an intimate relationship with Naruto. His mental state is especially well depicted in the long sequence in which Sasuke tries to kill Naruto. He does this at Itachi's urging, who said that by fulfilling the requirement to take the life of his best friend, he would be able to open the *Mangekyō sharingan* (a ninja technique unique to the Uchiha family). But Sasuke doesn't have the heart to kill Naruto. He ended up staring at the knocked-out Naruto for a very long time, and then leaves the site. Yet precisely the very attempt to kill Naruto, proves that Naruto is a very important friend to Sasuke.

The act of killing for a purpose is a negation of friendship and love. How can you call someone who is able to kill for a purpose your "best friend"? The message "Kill

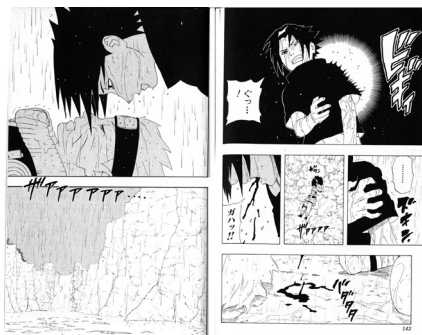


Fig. 7: *Naruto*, vol. 26, pp. 142-143.

your best friend!" is a double bind. It can best be regarded as a setting which depicts the mental state of denial. As such, it works very well. When faced with a choice, the killer can only follow his heart. Sasuke could not help but choose Naruto. By denying the existence of their friendship, he paradoxically admitted it, a literal denial. Sasuke couldn't kill Naruto because he couldn't reconcile himself with the method to obtain the Mangekyō Sharingan the

way his brother told him. But how does he really feel?

The readers know that the reason isn't what Sasuke thought it was. During their fight, a "mental landscape" emerges. Both are children, holding hands. Sasuke's denial is made without any awareness of what he is denying. Please recall what I said about



Fig. 8: *Naruto*, vol. 25, pp. 164-165.

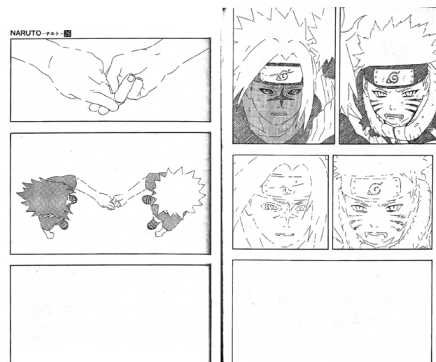


Fig. 9: *Naruto*, vol. 26, pp. 134-135.

inner worlds being opaque and multi-layered. Sasuke's "real intention" is not visible to himself. Even with an "inner voice", it is still possible to lie to oneself about one's real intention. But this level of denial is not possible in the mental landscape. What you can see the least is what you can trust the most. This principle is probably the pervasive spirit in *NARUTO*. And we can also assume, that Itachi's behavior after the assassination of the Uchiha family, which made Sasuke burn for revenge, was a result of his love for Sasuke, his younger brother. Itachi, too, deceived. But out of love.

The ninja village (*sato*) in *NARUTO* is different from a "country"; apparently without means of production, and partly belonging to something like a "country". In the time period of the narrative, a fragile power balance is upheld after a war between several villages. After the assassination of the Uchiha family, conflicts occur inside the "village". There are also the destructive schemes of a group of outlaw ninja, which don't belong to the "village", such as Orochimaru and the Akatsuki organization. We can regard these outlaws as the "evil" which has to be crushed, although they too were villagers once. So, their activities are also the subject of internal quarrels. Sasuke and Itachi are not evil either. The series will probably find its closure in Sasuke overcoming his denial.

Ninja are marginal people which can't be integrated into a nation state. They are a minority. As such they fight and obliterate each other in marginal places. We can regard this world view as a reflection of the world after 09/11.

To summarize, *NARUTO* is a manga, that in addition to endless fighting sequences, contains a series of "small narratives" about individuals who overcome their denial of the awareness that they are loved. As such, it is also a highly introspective work. This introspective theme was, from my point of view, made possible through

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the institutionalization of the “inner voice” in manga expression. It synchronized the parameters of post-*DRAGON BALL JUMP* manga, with the shape of the world after 09/11. Because of this, *NARUTO* has been able to enchant children all over the world.

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# 2

## **Subcultural entrepreneurs, path dependencies and fan reactions: The case of *NARUTO* in Hungary**

**Zoltan KACSUK**

Through examining the Hungarian introduction of the franchise *NARUTO* (En. & Hu.: *Naruto*) I wish to draw attention to the way subcultural producers can play an important part in the way subcultural and fan markets develop, and to highlight the often overlooked role these actors play in both the creation and reproduction of subcultures, and fandom and the mediation of cultural products.

### **1. Subcultural producers: career paths and entrepreneurship in subcultures and fan cultures**

Fan studies research tends to concentrate mostly on the interactions within the level of non-professional (in the sense of non-profit oriented) fandom and/or its relationship

with the major companies producing and distributing the texts serving as the focus of fandom. The fact that there are actors emerging from within fan cultures, who might create careers or businesses building on their fannish interests and experiences, receives only passing mentions within the literature. The importance of these actors and their career paths for fandom has yet to be explored.

In *Textual Poachers*, for instance, Jenkins mentions both the case of fans becoming professional writers (1992: 48–49) and the appearance of semi-professionals within *filking* (fan folk music) (1992: 274–276), and in *Convergence Culture*, he alludes, for example, to the role fandom can play in entering careers in film making or promotion (2006: 132, 134, 143), but without discussing the characteristics and significance of these careers in detail. Similarly, Hills mentions the possibilities for converting *fan cultural capital* (the term taken from Fiske's 1992 discussion of the topic; (Fiske 1992 cited in Hills, 2002) into potential employment opportunities within the cultural industries (2002: 52), and in a self-reflexive move also points out how fans can make a transition towards academia (2002: 18), which has become a common phenomenon both within fan studies and subculture research (cf. insider ethnography in the case of Hodkinson, 2002, Kahn-Harris, 2007, and Vályi, 2010).

It is to subculture studies that I would like to turn for a slightly more developed framework of addressing the role these actors coming from within fandom play in the creation and development of fan cultures. The term *subcultural entrepreneur* was coined by McRobbie drawing attention to the way small-scale entrepreneurship often coming from within the counter-culture and youth subcultures had always been important in the life of these cultures,<sup>1</sup> with both participants and researchers shying away from the idea that commercialism might not be wholly antithetical to the existence of these formations (1994 [1989]: 143–145). This line of thought was further elaborated by Hodkinson, who introduced the term *subcultural producers* to refer to not only entrepreneurs, but also volunteers, employees and freelance professionals coming from within the subculture, and also underlined the importance of their role in the creation of the relatively autonomous infrastructure necessary for subcultures to exist independently of the ebb and flow of mainstream interest (2002: 31–33, 114–127). While still a marginal topic the significance of DIY<sup>2</sup> and small-scale entrepreneurship as well as subcultural or scenic careers in the cultural and creative industries is addressed more and more within subcultural and popular music studies

<sup>1</sup> McRobbie explicitly uses both the term counter-culture and subculture when describing the hippie culture and its young entrepreneurs (1994 [1989]: 143–145).

<sup>2</sup> Do It Yourself. The DIY approach is often seen as characteristic for youth subcultures and fan cultures, especially since the arrival of the punk subculture (cf. McRobbie 1994 [1989]: 145).

(e.g. Peterson and Bennett 2004: 5–6) as well as cultural industries research (e.g. Hesmondhalgh 1997) with works focusing on, for example, the worlds of extreme metal music (Kahn-Harris 2007) and crate diggers (specialist record collectors; Vályi 2010) or the careers of young British fashion designers (McRobbie 1998).

The notion of working within fandom or building a career in bigger companies in the cultural industries sector based on the skills, knowledge and social capital accumulated within fan culture is referred to within discussions focusing on anime and manga as well. For example, Hatcher refers to the way fansub communities participate in the training and exposure of people with translating and subtitling talent, who might then move on to working for businesses, similar to the way *dōjinshi* [self-published fan works] act partly as a training ground and stage of publicity for would-be manga creators (2005: 536).<sup>3</sup> Regarding the history of anime fandom in the U.S., Cubbison mentions in passing that “[s]ome of the early fan clubs and groups developed into anime distributors such as Central Park Media, Media Blasters, AnimEigo, and ADV Films” (2005: 48). In a similar fashion both Condry (2010: 200) and Jenkins (2006: 159)—drawing on Leonard’s works (2005a, 2005b)—point out that specialist localizing distributors sprang from within the fan community.

Leonard’s often cited main argument is that fans and fan distribution networks paved the way for the mainstream success of anime in the U.S. (2005b: 298). He focused mainly on legal questions surrounding the development of U.S. fansubbing and its status of being a *proselytization commons*—a term inspired by Lawrence Lessig’s innovation commons—(2005b: 290). But Leonard also mentions that “fans started anime companies, becoming the industry leaders of today” (2005b: 282). Referring to A.D. Vision (later ADV Films), AnimEigo, Central Park Media, Pioneer LDC, Streamline Pictures and Viz Communications, he claims that:

Their stories are similar: they were started by fans and industrialists closely connected with the fandom; they adopted the fan-induced mantra to maintain true to the original anime while expanding their markets. (2005a: 221)<sup>4</sup>

This is not to imply that previous fandom, manga or anime studies works’ relative lack of a more focused examination of the role and significance of these subcultural producers in anyway subtracts from the veracity or the value of those analyses.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the propensity for building careers within the cultural industries in relation to fannish involvement see also Lee (2009: 1013) and Schodt (1996: 332).

<sup>4</sup> Patten stresses that only AnimEigo and A.D. Vision (and from the later wave of companies Media Blasters) can be seen as having been really fan-founded and fan-oriented companies within the U.S. (2004b: 130).

However, I would like to draw attention to the potential gain offered by a detailed examination of the role of employees, freelance professionals and entrepreneurs coming from within fan cultures, or *fantrepreneurs*, as I shall call them. Such an examination is important because in the life-cycle of successful subcultures and fan cultures there comes a point where these cultures emerge from the underground or the fringes and enter the mainstream, and it is at this point that *fantrepreneurs* can shape the way the given cultural products cross over into the mainstream. Using the word “successful” in this case is meant to draw attention to the way that subcultural and fan participants often want to see their tastes legitimated by mainstream approval, while at the same time fearing mainstream exposure as somehow compromising their objects of fandom/affection<sup>5</sup>. Apparently, U.S. anime fans were also slightly torn on this question (Leonard 2005a: 221, 2005b: 288, 291, 293), with *fantrepreneurs* and individuals who forged careers out of fannish interests, quite understandably more readily arguing in favor of opening towards increasingly larger audiences (Leonard 2005b: 288, 291).

The current anime-manga fandom<sup>6</sup> boom<sup>7</sup> in Hungary is in a similar fashion fueled by the work of a number of older participants of the “Dragon Ball—Sailor Moon generation” (explained below), who after finding each other on an online mailing list started the first Anime Meet<sup>8</sup> in the country in 1999. Later, as a response to misrepresentations of anime in the mainstream media, especially with the overtones of moral panic in relation to age-inappropriate sexual and violent content, they decided to establish the Hungarian Anime Association (Magyar Anime Társaság) in 2003

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5 For a discussion see Thornton (1996 [1995]: 128).

6 Throughout this paper I will refer to *anime-manga fandom* even though some participants of the fandom will tend to consume more of the products of one or the other medium, in certain cases to the point of only reading manga or watching anime. The reason I feel that addressing these fans and their practices under this hyphenated term was appropriate, is that Hungarian fan conventions, organizations and magazines address audiences of both manga and anime, which seems to signal a strong interrelation between manga and anime fandoms. The fact that anime precedes manga in the hyphenated term is only a result of following alphabetical order and in no way suggests that anime is more significant either as an entry point for the fandom—as it once used to be—or that it is consumed more widely or in greater quantities.

7 Preceding 2006 there were only a couple of short lived attempts at manga publishing in Hungary (see later) and fan convention attendance could also be measured in the hundreds. 2006 saw both the entry of a number of publishers on the Hungarian manga market and an explosion in fan convention attendance with the 2006 autumn convention reaching attendance numbers above two thousand. This sudden expansion of interest and available publications has continued since, even despite the late-2000s global recession.

8 The name of the informal weekly get-togethers initiated by members of the mailing list of the MAU (Magyar Anime Útmutató [Hungarian Anime Guide]) website. These were the first semi-formal, but also open anime-centered fan meetings in the country, with the focus later expanding to incorporate manga and even J-pop, they were usually held at fast-food restaurants.



with the aim of countering negative images and commentary and promoting anime-manga culture in Hungary. The work of the Hungarian Anime Association was central in bringing together different generations of fans and people coming from outside the initial core of Budapest Anime Meet participants, who would go on to participate in different roles in the production and development of a commercial anime-manga presence in the Hungarian entertainment market.

Drawing on my qualitative research on these subcultural producers of Hungarian anime-manga fandom—including extensive interviews with a significant number of defining actors—I would like to highlight in relation to the Hungarian reception of *NARUTO*, how fanpreneurs and professionals fluent in fan culture can have a positive impact—in relation to fan expectations (cf. Cubbison 2006: 47)—on the import and localization of anime and manga, while at the same time opening up the terrain of company vs. fans debates to the same type of authenticity and status claim laced positions found within the fandom itself.

The two key figures for the Hungarian translation of *NARUTO*, the head of MangaFan Publishing and the head of anime programming decisions at A+ and later Animax,<sup>9</sup> were both to a certain degree outsiders in relation to anime-manga fandom, although familiar with fan knowledge and fan expectations, not to mention their fan-like commitment to quality, that is product localization, which adheres to the original as much as possible.<sup>10</sup> Indeed it is in part their stance as non-fans and professionals, which has informed some of their decisions regarding the Hungarian translation of *NARUTO*, gaining them both support and criticism from fan circles in equal share. In order to understand the dynamics of this criticism—revolving to a large extent around the question of translation and transcription decisions—I shall now turn to the history of anime and manga in general and then *NARUTO* in particular in Hungary.

## 2. A brief overview of anime broadcasting and manga publishing in Hungarian

Although a number of anime on Hungarian television such as *Nirusu no fushigi na tabi* (En.: *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, Hu.: *Nils Holgersson csodálatos utazása a vadludakkal* [The fantastic travels of Nils Holgersson with the wild geese]) airing in 1988—and re-aired in 1989 due to its success<sup>11</sup>—and even some obscure anime video releases had appeared in Hungary, the main reference point for most older fans of anime and manga when recounting how they became interested in this form

<sup>9</sup> Animax will be used to refer to Animax Eastern Europe throughout the text.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Leonard (2005a: 221) cited earlier.

<sup>11</sup> [http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nils\\_Holgersson\\_%28rajzfilm%29](http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nils_Holgersson_%28rajzfilm%29) (last access January 2, 2011).

of entertainment is the airing of *Bishōjo senshi sērā mūn* (En.: *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, Hu.: *Varázslatos álmok* [Magical dreams]—but nevertheless referred to as *Sailor Moon* by Hungarian viewers) and *Doragon bōru* (En. & Hu.: *Dragon Ball*) starting in 1997 and broadcast by RTL Klub television channel.<sup>12</sup>

*Sailor Moon*, adapted from the French version, was broadcast between October 1997 and August 1999. The fifth season was not picked up by the French broadcast company and as a result it was not shown in Hungary either.<sup>13</sup> *Dragon Ball*, also adapted from the French version, started airing in December 1997, with the complete 153 episodes of the series reaching Hungarian television screens. Concerns were already raised about the first series, but during the airing of the *Doragon bōru zetto* (En. & Hu.: *Dragon Ball Z*) series, RTL Klub came under investigation by the National Radio and Television Commission for excessively violent content compared to the rating category *children's show* assigned to the series. The show was suspended in April 1999 (with the last episode aired being No. 122).<sup>14</sup> These two series, the moral panic surrounding the themes and violence in *Dragon Ball* and the ensuing legal dispute brought anime, as a specific form of entertainment imported from Japan, to the attention of a whole generation, some of whom would go on to explore this form beyond the scope of series available on Hungarian—or German and Italian satellite—television channels.

With more and more series like *Poketto monsutā* (En. & Hu.: *Pokémon*) and *Yūgiō* (En. & Hu.: *Yu-Gi-Oh!*) appearing on broadcast television channels and the central European anime cable channel Anime+ (A+) starting its daily evening and late-night programming (from 8 p.m. till 2 a.m.)<sup>15</sup> in December 2004, anime was becoming increasingly accessible for a wider audience in Hungary during the first half of the 2000s. In 2007 Sony Pictures Television International acquired A+ and integrated it into its international network of anime channels launching Animax Eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup>

With only a couple of previous short-lived attempts at manga publishing in Hungarian,<sup>17</sup> 2006 saw the start of the current manga publishing boom, with five major

12 RTL Klub is owned by the German Bertelsmann AG's RTL Group. It is worth noting that German (and Italian) satellite television broadcasts available in Hungary also played a role in providing anime series for the first fan generation.

13 [http://hu.wikipedia.org/Sailor\\_Moon](http://hu.wikipedia.org/Sailor_Moon) (last access January 2, 2011).

14 <http://www.origo.hu/teve/20040707pert.html?> and <http://futuretrunks.gportal.hu/gindex.php?pg=1351948> (both last accessed January 2, 2011).

15 Both A+ and later Animax share the channel with Minimax (occupying the daytime slots), a Central-European cartoon channel owned by Chellomedia (the European content division of Liberty Global international media company).

16 <http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/A%2B> (last access January 2, 2011)

17 SEMIC Interprint (later renamed ADOC SEMIC) the up till then most important Hungarian comics

publishers<sup>18</sup> now offering a total of fifty-three series titles with altogether 186 volumes<sup>19</sup> marketed under the umbrella category manga, which also includes *manhwa* (Korean manga) [ten series, thirty-eight volumes], original *English language manga* (OEL) [nine series, twenty-three volumes] and even *manhua* (Chinese manga) [two series, seven volumes] as well as *comics/manga* [two series, nine volumes], OEL/manga [five series, fourteen volumes], *manga/manhwa* [one series, sixteen volumes] crossovers,<sup>20</sup> with Japanese manga [twenty-four series, seventy-nine volumes] accounting for 42,5% of the market with respect to available volumes and 45,3% regarding the number of series titles (all numbers for September 2010 and compiled by the author based on the available data on the publishers' websites).<sup>21</sup>

Out of the five major Hungarian manga publishers the currently biggest and most successful company, MangaFan published the first volume of *Shin angyō onshi* (En.: *Blade of the Phantom Master*, Hu.: *Árnybíró* [Shadow Judge]) a lesser known

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publisher ventured into the field of manga publishing between 1999 and 2001. In January 1999 they launched their first *Sailor Moon* series under the title *Sailor Moon—Varázslatos álmok*, which was an anime comic (not the original manga series, but rather a comic created with stills from the anime), which appeared in a similar size and format as U.S. comics had been presented to the Hungarian public previously, with reading order from left to right and containing two episodes each. This first series ran until the end of 2000 with twenty-four issues, and was joined by a second *Sailor Moon* series from the end of 1999 under the title *Sailor Moon füzetek* [Sailor Moon booklets]. This second series only continued for seven issues serializing the anime comic version of the second season of the anime. While its length and reading order were similar to the first series its format was closer to pocket book size resulting in a new format resembling a cross between a double issue U.S. comic book and a *tankōbon* [paperback format edition of volumes of a manga series]. Two more series were launched January 2000, both adhering to this new *pocket-booklet* format, *Den'ei shōjo* (En.: *Video Girl Ai*, Hu.: *Ai, a videó lány*), running for four issues, and *Dragon Ball*, which terminated in 2001 after sixteen issues. While the former had a mirrored page layout, the latter was published according to the original page layout with Japanese reading order from right to left. See <http://db.kepregeny.net> (last access January 2, 2011)

18 In alphabetical order (company name in brackets if other than the comics and/or manga imprint): Delta Vision, FUMAX (Goodinvest), MangaFan, Mangattack (Athenaeum 2000), Vad Virágok Könyvműhely.

19 *Series title* refers to works such as *NARUTO*, and *volume* refers to the individual *tankōbon* being published.

20 Crossover here refers to a sense of foreclosing a clear-cut identification of the work with any of the established categories, such as manga, manhwa or comics, by for example having an artist and a writer from different traditions collaborating on a publication. These crossover works initially generated heated debates within the fandom regarding their position and value in relation to the original categories, with Japanese manga thought of as being more authentic and thus/or more valuable than manhwa, manhua and OEL works by a number of fans.

21 These are only the numbers for series titles and volumes, and they do not represent sales figures or market shares. Although the number of volumes sold is not made public by the publishers, based on the top selling children's books list of the biggest book retail chain, which is the most significant distribution channel in Hungary for all of these titles sold under the heading *manga*, leading Japanese manga titles such as *NARUTO* usually produce more outstanding sales results than other titles do.

*seinen*<sup>22</sup> manga/manhwa series in October 2006 (Korean creators working for a Japanese publisher, which not only means the series was first published in Japan, but also that it was produced with the help of Japanese editors). This very first volume produced by MangaFan already presented every trademark element—not necessarily essential to commercial concerns—which most likely contributed to enabling the securing of the rights to publish *NARUTO* in Hungarian, and which also won the company applause from fan circles. First of all, the format of the Hungarian edition matched the Japanese *tankōbon*, with a non-mirrored page layout and thus reading order from right to left, color page inserts and wrap around outer jacket. Furthermore the translation was done by bilingual semi-native and native speakers working from the Japanese original, with lettering, typesetting and editing by editors, who had significant amounts of fan experience and thus a familiarity with expected genre conventions.<sup>23</sup>

Whereas previously anime and manga had reached Hungarian audiences through a double translation and mediation process often subject to changes by and the broadcast or publication decisions of the respective French and U.S. companies, MangaFan and Animax were now mediating content directly from its Japanese sources, which is an important point I will return to again later.

### 3. *NARUTO* in Hungary: claims of authenticity and status within fan discourse

*NARUTO* first reached the Hungarian fan community through English language manga scanlations and fansubbed anime. In February 2007, a much larger audience was reached when the widely available children's cable channel Jetix<sup>24</sup> started airing the first two seasons (fifty-two episodes) of the *NARUTO* anime series dubbed in Hungarian. The first volume of the official<sup>25</sup> Hungarian translation of the manga series followed in May 2007, published by MangaFan working from the original Japanese material.

From a fan perspective, the Jetix version of the anime could be seen to be riddled with shortcomings. It was an adaptation of the U.S. cut version of the anime, retaining its often debated translational choices,<sup>26</sup> and to aggravate things further, the

22 *Seinen manga* refers to manga aimed at a young adult male audience.

23 Cf. O'Hagan (2008: 177–179).

24 Owned by The Walt Disney Company, previously called Fox Kids and later renamed Disney Channel.

25 Hungarian scanlations did exist prior to this.

26 The (from a fan perspective often problematic) reworking of the original materials in certain U.S. versions have been mentioned and discussed in for instance Allison (2006: 21), Cubbison (2006: 52–54), Katsuno and Maret (2004: 80–106) and Leonard (2005: 285, 289). It is worth noting that the

voice actors in the Hungarian dub were not necessarily consistent between the two aired seasons.

Animax remedied the situation by starting to air the uncut and re-dubbed version of the series in December 2008. They also took on board some of the well received voice actors from the Jetix version, but replaced, for instance, the voice of *NARUTO*. Animax pays more attention to the dubbing of the anime, employing translators, who are fans of anime and manga,<sup>27</sup> working from both the English and the Japanese scripts, and also synchronizing its translations with those of the Hungarian manga version published by MangaFan. Jetix (now called Disney Channel) has since discontinued showing *NARUTO* in Hungary.

While some viewers only realized the potential shortcomings of the Jetix version by exposure to the Animax version, there were also a number of complaints regarding the new version of the anime. For instance the pronunciation of certain words did not match the previous (mis)pronunciations, and the—arguably more appropriate—translations would now be opposed on grounds of being different from the previous Jetix version or that found in fansubs. Similarly, MangaFan drew criticism for its translation working from the Japanese source and using Hungarian phonetic transcription rules, which resulted in a number of translated terms (like the names of the hidden villages),<sup>28</sup> which are commonly left untranslated in English-language scanlations and fansubs, and as a result are also incorporated in that form in Hungarian fan translations. This again met partial disapproval among Hungarian fans.

The Hungarian phonetic transcription and name order (surname preceding given name in Japanese), such as *Ucsiha Szasuke* (*Uchiha Sasuke* in the original, but *Sasuke Uchiha* in English) was also ill received. Fans were used to the English

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U.S. practice isn't the only example of this phenomenon. Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006: 43) note that Spain too was importing most of its anime from a mediating country, Italy, where translation was also subject to censorship. For further examples of how the Japanese original might get distorted through localization see Lee and Shaw on the self-censorship of manga translations in Chinese (2006: 45).

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the positive impact of genre familiarity in the work of fan translators see O'Hagan (2008: 177–179).

<sup>28</sup> For example *Konohagakure no sato* ["Village Hidden In The Leaves" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/World\\_of\\_Naruto](http://en.wikipedia.org/World_of_Naruto), last access January 2, 2011)], which is often simply left as *Konohagakure* in English version fansubs, became *Avarrejtekfalva* in the official Hungarian version, an almost literal translation (*village of hideaway in fallen leaves* – the word *fallen leaves* was chosen most likely in order to avoid confusion with *letters*, a homonym of the word *leaves* in Hungarian), which was later abbreviated to *Avarrejte* as a result of complaints about the way the ending *falva* (meaning *village of*) made the name too closely resemble the Hungarian name of the *Smurfs*' village, *Aprajafalva* (literally *village of the small ones*).

written form, used even in Hungarian scanlations, which—as already stressed—are usually based on English fan translations, and thus retain numerous Anglicisms.<sup>29</sup> Fans would be thrown off by either the actual pronunciation, which might even differ from the Hungarian misreading of the English form (for example *Sasuke* would be occasionally mispronounced *Shashuke* in Hungarian), or just the unusual Hungarian written form of the same name. Furthermore, due to the exposure to English language materials on the web and to scanlations, fans often accept Hepburn romanization as a more *authentic* form of transcribing Japanese words and names, than the Hungarian official transcription system. As a result the non-English form of even those words, which exist as well established loan words in Hungarian with appropriate spelling (for example *nindzsa* as opposed to the English form *ninja*), were seen as compromising the *quality*, that is, in this case the atmosphere of the translation.

Another interesting critique within the debate around Hungarian vs. Hepburn romanization deals with the question of the implied lack of distance between the orthographic representation of the Hungarian transcribed version of names and expressions and their original Japanese pronunciation. On the one hand, some fans argue that the Hungarian form creates a comical effect by collapsing the distance between the spoken form of the original Japanese word and its often very characteristically Hungarian written representation.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, fans also pointed out that the official Hungarian transcription rules for Japanese do not in fact provide an accurate phonetic representation of the original Japanese pronunciation, and therefore the Hungarian form encourages mispronunciations (for instance by retaining the silent *u* in the written form *Szaszuke*)—a recurring argument on all sides of the debate as we have seen—as it allegedly renders the distinction between script and pronunciation transparent.

Although this is far from an exhaustive list of the different reasons provided by fans for their dissatisfaction with the Hungarian transcription, these examples provide enough evidence to underline the points made by Condry (2010: 201–203) and Cubbison (2006: 46–47, 49) with regard to *authenticity* being a central issue within

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29 In a similar fashion for example Spanish (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006: 38–39) or Turkish (Hatcher 2005: 535) fansubs are also often created working from the English language fan translations. The way the reception of texts might be influenced by a mediating culture is also apparent in the Hong Kong versions of Japanese manga, which carry the imprint of having been localized first for a Chinese market in Taiwan (Lee and Shaw 2006: 49, 51).

30 The digraph *cs* (e.g. *nunchaku* is written *nuncsaku* in Hungarian) and the trigraph *dzs* (as already mentioned *ninja* for example is written *nindzsa* in Hungarian) for instance are both only used in the Hungarian language and as such immediately identify the words—or at least the orthographic representation—as being Hungarian.

anime-manga fandom, highlighting a strong investment —both in the form of invested labour and the heatedness of debates—on the part of fans, who all take part in creating the “globalized fantasy” (Allison 2006: 16) of “Japaneseness” (Condry 2010: 196, 202).

One of the explicit reasons why MangaFan initially chose to use the Hungarian mode of transcription is that the company ultimately aimed not only at serving the fans, but also at reaching an even larger market, with readers beyond the circle of scanlation savvy fans. In a similar fashion, Animax—aiming at a wider audience—airs dubbed episodes of the anime, as a result of the national expectation to consume films and television programs dubbed in Hungarian,<sup>31</sup> even though hardcore fans would prefer viewing the original Japanese episodes with subtitles (cf. Leonard 2005a: 223). Decision makers at MangaFan and Animax explained their respective choices, by referring to the necessity of balancing out both business considerations and fan preferences, without giving up quality standards (maintaining fidelity to the original) or succumbing to serving only hardcore<sup>32</sup> audiences. In both cases the chosen path regarding localization was attributed by the decision makers to a *professional* stance on their part versus a purely fan position. It is interesting to note, however, that the notion of what counts as *quality* (or *fidelity*) and what counts as being *too hardcore* is in a constant state of shifting, as indicated by, for example, the *tankōbon* format and Japanese reading order being taken for granted in Hungary today, whereas ten years ago these were not necessarily the norm as mentioned previously.

The conflict between reaching increasingly larger audiences and staying true to fan ideals had played out in a similar fashion in the U.S. during the 1990s, where Streamline Pictures focused on expanding towards more mainstream markets by taking into account the general U.S. audience's need for dubbing; their strategy paid

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31 Different countries in the region have different expectations regarding the consumption of foreign programs: dub is also the accepted format in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but subtitles are *de rigueur* for programs aimed at ages six and upwards in Romania (as a result the fact that anime is subtitled and not dubbed there sets it clearly apart from children's shows), while in Poland voice-over is the dominant format with subtitles also present. Animax adheres to the national expectations regarding localization in each country.

32 As one of my interviewees explained, hardcore fans would like to be able to experience the anime or manga as it would be experienced by a Japanese audience without actually learning the language – to only mention the most obvious hurdle (which does not mean that some hardcore fans do not engage in learning Japanese for this very reason). Or more precisely in accordance with their idea of how it would be experienced, but not taking into account that Japanese audiences, for instance, actually understand Japanese expressions. Hence the paradoxical nature of their stance, which through the rejection of certain forms of localization, like the translation of certain expressions, exposes the relationship of these fans to a fantasy of *fidelity* and *Japaneseness* as has already been referred to (see Allison 2006: 16 and Condry 2010: 196, 202).



off even though dubbing was more expensive and initially met strong fan opposition (Leonard 2005a: 223, Patten 2004a: 63). The latter was countered by the application of the same *quality* standards that would be found in fansubs,<sup>33</sup> with for instance Fred Patten being hired to help ensure the accuracy of translations and the proper use of original names in anime (Leonard 2005a: 223). As cited earlier and mirroring the case of Streamline Pictures, Animax's careful strategy—in part due to the person in charge coming from a fan cultural background—has lead to the dubbed productions closely approximating the quality expectations of fans (cf. Cubbison's list of fan expectations in relation to DVD releases, 2006: 47).<sup>34</sup>

Secondly, the inclination towards using Hungarian transcription and translations—although this has not been explicitly noted by the decision makers at either MangaFan or Animax—involves, I would like to argue, once again the issue of *authenticity*. The decision to use the Hungarian translation for certain terms and the Hungarian transcription of names and expressions signals, in my view, working from the original Japanese materials<sup>35</sup> and hence independence from both official English language editions and fan translations, which are sometimes regarded as being of lower fidelity as a result of the previously cited localization practices of the official versions and potential mistranslations in the case of scanlations and fansubbing. The direct mediation from the Japanese source materials signaled in this way allows the two companies to position their respective localized versions of the *NARUTO* franchise as being more *authentic* than, for instance, Hungarian scanlations or fansubs usually working from English fan translations.

However, it is the very same notion of authenticity (and the implied claims to subcultural or fan cultural capital involved)<sup>36</sup>, which provides a key to understanding some of the possible motives behind fans' reactions towards the official Hungarian versions of *NARUTO*. Certain fans opposed the official Hungarian version and demonstrated an attachment to the English transcriptions and expressions. This can be seen as a demonstration of a *mastery*—predating the official Hungarian

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33 Note how the reference points of *quality localization* can also differ from country to country and between different time periods.

34 There will, of course, always be fans who are dissatisfied with a dubbed version, preferring to watch the original with subtitles (for a discussion of the “dub vs. sub” debate within fandom see Cubbison (2006: 46).

35 The reason I highlight this again is that as we have seen in the case of Jetix and the *NARUTO* anime and as can be found in the case of other manga series being translated and published by other publishers in Hungary, working from the English version of a given product is not necessarily an uncommon practice.

36 For an excellent discussion of how claims to authenticity are the terrain of negotiating the distribution/attribution of subcultural capital and status see Hodkinson (2002: 65–83).



introduction of the franchise—of both the subject material (based on foreign versions and fan translations) in particular and *NARUTO* fandom in general, which, of course, for the overwhelming majority of Hungarian fans means a Hungarian and English language fandom, and not a Japanese one. Thus this can be interpreted as a possible way for certain fans to signal that their attachment to the *NARUTO* franchise predates its official Hungarian introduction and that therefore they can claim a higher level of authenticity—corresponding to a longer and therefore more durable fan relationship—with regard to their fan involvement.

In connection to the way Hungarian anime-manga fan culture has been dependent upon an English-language fandom, there is a pragmatic argument on the part of certain fans within the localization debate stating that abandoning Hepburn romanization in the official translation and using the Hungarian translations of certain expressions, makes it harder for fans to join in the international fan discourse surrounding *NARUTO*, which is more extensive and more up to date with the Japanese version of the franchise than the Hungarian fandom. But this dependence upon an English-language fandom for Hungarian fans also serves as the background for certain types of status claims within the fandom<sup>37</sup>. As Jenkins writes about the consumption of Asian popular culture “[t]hese works allow pop cosmopolitans to demonstrate their mastery” (2004: 132), and in a similar manner so too does the use of English-language fan resources as well as interactions with foreign fans.

In an interesting twist, although more rarely, it is possible to run into a reverse position arguing for the use of Hungarian transcriptions and the translation of expressions, mirroring both the logic of the arguments put forward by MangaFan and the structure of their claims to legitimacy. Fans taking this position will lay claim to *authenticity* and status based on a mastery of the Japanese language or culture or both—not mediated through English language fandom but rather Hungarian channels of reception (e.g. university courses, books etc.)—*preceding* their involvement with anime or manga and the surrounding fandom. In this fashion Hungarian transcription and translations become the markers of a more direct, unmediated relationship with the Japanese source material, just like in the case of MangaFan and Animax.

## Concluding remark

37 For a discussion of how fan practices and rhetoric are implicated in status claims see for example Hills (2002: 46–64). Condry also points out, how the striving for status is a driving force behind the large amounts of work with which fansubbers go to extra lengths to provide the—in their view—most authentic experience possible (2010: 202–203). Although not explicitly discussed, this theme is also evident in Lee’s discussion of fansubbers (2009: 1016, 1018).

As the above discussion of the structure of competing claims to authenticity and status indicates, fanpreneurs and fandom-versed professionals do not only play an important role in influencing the way fan markets and fandoms develop in a given country, but are also both more aware of and involved in the fan discourse on quality and authenticity.

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# 3

## The *NARUTO* fan generation in Poland: An attempt at contextualization

Radosław BOLAŁEK

### Introduction

The object of this paper is to characterize the *NARUTO* fan generation by positioning it within the history of the Polish fan movement and relating it to the domestic comics market. There is almost no scholarly research on the subject of manga and anime<sup>1</sup> in Poland, especially with respect to fandom and its relation to the comics/manga market. Most of the available articles are by journalists or fans with little background knowledge on comics, and in many cases they are based on debatable sources, such as discussion boards and Wikipedia. Comics print-runs, on the other hand, are mainly kept confidential by publishers. That is why most of the information for this paper had to be acquired through field work, i.e. official and unofficial conversation with publishers, booksellers and fans. My research was mainly conducted during the three years prior to writing this article, that is actually based on field data which I have collected since 1998, when I became active in the fandom (it goes without saying that my intention was not academic at first, but rather related to the market and

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<sup>1</sup> The words *manga* and *anime* are used here meaning comics and animation of Japanese origin.

the possibility of turning my hobby into a business). As a researcher, publisher and comics fandom activist I also had access to confidential data that cannot be quoted directly here.

My point of departure is a short introduction to the current situation of comics and manga in Poland. This is important as the situation is quite different from other countries on the same continent, not to mention Japan or the United States. And since the roots of the current situation are historical, history also needs to be briefly presented in order to understand how *NARUTO* fans, who form the third manga fan generation in Poland, differ from those fans who became familiar with Japanese sequential art in earlier years. In the last part then, I will touch upon the future of Poland's manga market.

### 1. Comics in Poland: present situation

The comics market in Poland looks currently rather unusual compared to the United States, Japan, and Western European countries. This can be traced back to the mainly negative policy and attitude towards comics, taken by the post-WW II communist government (Kurc 2003: 34; Bolałek 2009: 60-61). In the early 1990s many Western mainstream comics were published in Poland (Szyłak 1998: 147), among them a huge number of superhero comics (in the years 1992-1994, more than 100 titles yearly) released mostly by Tm-Semic (KZ 2003, internet). However nowadays, mainstream series in the fantasy and horror genres, even superhero comics from the United States, and popular gag comics from France are rarely published anymore. The largest share of the market is taken by titles that are often classified as “artistic” (works by Moebius and Bilal) or “alternative” (works by Crumb and Thompson). The only mainstream series<sup>2</sup> available in Poland are those which exceed the classification as mere “pulp comics” (for ex., *Hellboy*, *Sin City*), and they are brought out by the big international publisher EGMONT.

However, EGMONT is highly exceptional. In contrast, the majority of publishing houses consist of people who work with comics only in their free time (with the exception of the manga publishers, who attend to manga during their regular working hours). They prefer high-quality titles to commercial hits. While this is one of the reasons for the specific range of available titles in Poland, the second reason lies in the readers themselves. Comics readership is small<sup>3</sup>. Not many people actually buy

<sup>2</sup> EGMONT publishes one-shot superhero comics, and the publisher Mucha publishes superhero series, but less than ten titles appear each year.

<sup>3</sup> It is hard to evaluate the actual number of readers. Sales numbers may give the impression that

comics, and most of those who do, favor artistic titles over entertainment, as is evident from the fact that almost all companies that made an attempt at publishing Western mainstream comics were rather short-lived. Manzoku<sup>4</sup> is a good example in that regard. They focused mainly on titles originally realized by DC<sup>5</sup> in the United States, but did not publish regularly, and their activity was rather short-lived because they did not make enough profit to continue their business. Another attempt at publishing superhero titles called “Dobry Komiks” (En. *Good Comic*) was short-lived as well. Owned by Axel Springer Polska, a big international publishing company, they published well-known titles like *New X-men* or *Superman & Batman*.

As for the print runs, usually their numbers rank between 800 and 1500. But they may be even as low as 200 for lesser known Polish authors that publish in anthologies like *Kolektyw*. Only a few titles exceed 1500 copies (old classics, and *Thorgal* by Grzegorz Rosiński<sup>6</sup>, a Polish author working for the Franco-Belgian market).

## 2. Japanese comics in Poland

Manga, on the other hand, have higher print runs (from 1500 to 5000<sup>7</sup>), but until recently, manga themes and art were not really appreciated by general comics readers, and there were no reviews of manga in mainstream media. This is due to the fact that the majority were comedies or action-packed titles for teenagers, and that publishers marketed them exclusively to manga/anime fans. Until 2007, there were three major publishers of manga in Poland, the oldest one being JPF founded in 1996. They published all the big hits for the teenagers such as *Sailor Moon*<sup>8</sup>, *Dragon Ball*<sup>9</sup>

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there are less than 2000 fans of Western comics, but over 20.000 who read comics occasionally. These numbers are misleading; taking into account pirated versions available on the Internet (mainly in English), there is a much larger readership.

4 The Japanese name is misleading, as the company did not publish any Asian comics.

5 These were not typical superhero comics, but mainly Wildstorm and Vertigo imprints.

6 Grzegorz Rosiński was born in Poland in 1941. *Thorgal*, a fantasy tale about a man who came from the stars and was raised by Vikings, is his best-known work. The first volume was published in 1977. By 2010, a total of 32 volumes had been released. Until volume 30, the scenario was written by Jean Van Hamme. From volume 30 onwards, Yves Sente took over.

7 The number 5000 was mentioned in an interview with Yasuda Shin, owner of Poland's first manga publishing house JPF (szczecinbiznes.pl 2010, Internet). Their bestselling title (and THE bestselling manga in Poland) is *NARUTO*, which gives the impression that the above-mentioned number is due to this series. 1500 copies is the official number given by some publishers, but there are a few digitally published titles (for example, *Crying Freeman*) that would suggest even lower print runs (with print-runs over 500 copies, it is cheaper to stick to the traditional way, that is, offset printing).

8 The title *Sailor Moon* is commonly used in many countries, also in Poland. The official Polish title is *Czarodziejka z Księżycy* (Jp. *Bishōjo senshi Sērā Mūn*).

9 Many manga titles of Polish translations are left in English (*Dragon Ball*, *Vampire Knight*) or even in Japanese (*Yami no matsuei*).

and *NARUTO*, but among their titles one can also find *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*. The second manga publisher was Waneko founded in 1999. They started from rather old titles (for example, *Lock Superczłowiek* [En. *Lock the Superhuman*, Jp. *Chōjin Rokku*]) but they quickly put more stress on titles for a younger audience, and now their catalogue includes *Vampire Knight*; the release of *Kuroshitsuji* (En. *Black Butler*) has also been announced. One of their most important contributions to the Polish market was publishing the regular manga magazine *Mangamix* (2001-2004). The third and last company is the international corporation called Egmont. They published the titles that appealed to older fans, like *Gunsmith Cats* or *Ranma 1/2*<sup>10</sup>. Unfortunately lately they announced their intent to withdraw from publishing manga.

There were four more companies before 2007 that published manga—TM Semiec (as previously mentioned, their main field was superhero comics; accordingly, they published manga in American comic-book format), Arashi (they published only one title, *Metropolis* by Tezuka), Mandragora<sup>11</sup> (they published the two series *Vagabond* and *Samotny wilk i szczenię* [En. *Lone Wolf and Cub*, Jp. *Kozure Ōkami*]), and Saisha (a BL/yaoi publisher<sup>12</sup>). The latter's failure is surprising when compared to the popularity of the BL/yaoi genre in neighboring Germany.

Before 2007, only a few manga titles addressed grown-ups, which gave Polish readers of Japanese comics mainly the following three options. First, simply to stop reading manga, which was the most common choice; second, to switch to Western comics, which some male readers did, and third, to continue reading Japanese comics, which (as mentioned before) meant reading mainly titles addressed to youngsters. In 2007, Hanami started to publish Japanese titles for grown-ups, that is to say, titles which can be appreciated not only by "hardcore manga fans", but also by comics lovers in general or even by people that have little or nothing to do with sequential art. Titles like *Suppli* and *Solanin*, or Taniguchi Jirō's manga relate universal topics. This helped manga in Poland reach out for a new audience. Manga by Hanami are reviewed in general media (such as newspapers, magazines, TV and radio programs).

Before that, many people were misled by stereotypes when forming an opinion on Japanese comics. The most common argument against manga was that they were

<sup>10</sup> Titles like *Ranma ½* are not strictly aimed at an older audience, but fans from the first generation, the so-called *Sailor Moon* generation, would appreciate them as adult reading material.

<sup>11</sup> They published mainly Polish comics and superhero comics from the United States. Beside those comics and two manga series, they published some manhwa but dropped the line due to low sales.

<sup>12</sup> In the BL/yaoi genre, there was a publishing house called Kasen. They published manhwa and original Polish "manga" as well.



infantile. Critics compared, for example, manga series like *NARUTO* to graphic novels such as the American comics *Maus*, exposing their mixing up of genres and related target groups. Admittedly, among the “manga fans”<sup>13</sup>, there were many grown-ups and older teens who read titles initially aimed at teenagers. Also, Polish publishers often chose a higher age rating for the translations than the original Japanese version. Let’s take two titles that run in *Shōnen Jump magazine* (which in Japan is targeted to kids but actually also read by older males and even women): While *NARUTO* in Poland has the “15+” mark on its cover (recommended to ages 15 and up), *Hiroszima 1945. Bosonogi Gen* [En.: *Barefoot Gen*, Jp.: *Hadashi no Gen*] was rated 18+. Although this title can more reasonably be compared to *Maus*, it differs from the latter that is for “all ages”. Considered a title for adults ironically only strengthened the impression that manga are infantile.

There is no law in Poland that makes the above-mentioned ratings an obligation for publishing houses. Probably, they were introduced voluntarily because of the scandals that involved titles like *Sailor Moon*, and *Dragonball*, or the suicide of a young *Hellsing* fan. Those three titles were accused of promoting violence and pornography, and thus being harmful for kids. There were TV programs<sup>14</sup> exclusively dedicated to *Sailor Moon* (describing the series as showing young girls with very aggressive attitudes and in too erotic poses) and *Dragon Ball* (focusing on the scene where Bulma pulls up her skirt, but unfortunately forgot to put on pants, and disparaging the series as a “porn comic that should not find its way into children’s hands”<sup>15</sup>). Despite a few scenes that might be inappropriate for younger readers, most of the scandals were an obvious exaggeration (like when *Sailor Moon* was blamed for introducing children to witchcraft), but nevertheless, manga in Poland received some bad PR. One example is an article about the above-mentioned suicide: “It is likely that the cause of this suicide was Japanese comics, completely foreign to us from a cultural point of view”<sup>16</sup>.

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13 During a discussion panel (that is, a meeting at Hanami in 2010), someone opined that Polish fandom itself was infantile. One participant pointed out that she did not understand how it was possible that Polish fans in their twenties or even thirties preferred titles aimed at teenagers to graphic novels for grown-ups.

14 It is hard to quote exact programs or opinions. Accusations of manga/anime for having a bad influence on children appeared mainly in television and radio programs (in the late 1990s and early 2000s). Many of them were broadcasted live, and it is almost impossible to access the original recordings. A few recorded shows can be found on the internet, but without the acknowledgment of their creators. Because of copyright considerations, I refrain from linking them here.

15 The quotation is from the program “Uwaga!” (12<sup>th</sup> July, 2003). Half of the program was dedicated to *Dragon Ball*.

16 The article was originally published in the Polish tabloid *Super Express*, and is still available on the internet (anime.com.pl, internet).

### 3. Anime in Poland

Among the first anime that appeared on Polish television in the 1980s<sup>17</sup> were *Załoga G*<sup>18</sup> [Jp.: *Kagaku Ninja-tai Gatchaman*, En.: *Battle of the Planets*] and *Pszczółka Maja* [Jp.: *Mitsubachi Māya no bōken*, En.: *Maya the Bee*]. None of the anime titles aired today (or even *Harry Potter*) is as popular as the early programs were at the time, because back then, there were no cable television or satellite dishes in Poland yet, and there were only two television channels. Given the small living quarters and the fact that there was only one TV set per household, almost every child and his whole family were watching all television programs aimed at kids, regardless of the subject or the country of origin. Awareness that a title was made in Japan (or calling it “anime”) was close to zero. Every anime aired in Poland was inspired by stories of European origin after all. The first four cinematic features<sup>19</sup> that appeared in Poland, were: *Kot w butach* ([Jp.: *Nagagutsu o haita neko*, En.: *The Wonderful World of Puss n’Boots*] in 1972), *Mała syrena* ([Jp.: *Anderusen dōwa ningyo hime*, En. *Hans Christian Andersen’s The Little Mermaid*] in 1976), *Podróż Kota w butach* [Jp.: *Nagagutsu o haita neko hachijū-nichikan sekai issū* “[En.: *Puss n’Boots Travels Around the World*] (in Poland in 1977), *Dzieci wśród piratów* [Jp.: *Dōbutsu Takarajima*, En.: *Animal Treasure Island*] (in Poland in 1979). The first and third one were inspired by a fable by Charles Perrault, and the second was based on Jules Verne’s *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours* [En.: *Around the World in Eighty Days*]. *Dōbutsu Takarajima* is of course the animated adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson’s famous novel *Treasure Island*, and the Japanese and English titles of *Anderusen dōwa ningyō hime* reveal the origin of the story.

Initially European stories were not the only reason that people in many cases did not consider them productions from Japan. The second reason can be traced back to why those anime were chosen for screening in Poland. *Nagagutsu o haita neko*, for example, had received an award at the Moscow Film Festival in 1970.

The same applies to television series. Among the first screened series were titles like *Cudowna podróż* ([Jp. *Nils no fushigina tabi*, En.: *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*], based on Selma Lagerlöf’s *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige*), *D’Artagnan i trzej muszkieterowie* [Jp.: *Wan Wan Sanjūshi*, En.: *Dogtanian and the*

<sup>17</sup> No source known to author quotes exact dates of screening. It might be possible to find out the exact screening dates by examining, for example, the TV program section of the major newspapers.

<sup>18</sup> The series was probably already screened in Poland in the late 1970s (Kostuła 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Those movies were recognizable as animation from Japan because of Polish posters that explicitly stated “Japanese animated movie”.

*Three Musketeers*] (Alexander Dumas' *Les trois mousquetaires* [En.: *The Three Musketeers*]) and *Dookoła świata z Willy'm Fogiem* ([Jp.: *Anime hachijū-nichikan sekai isshū*, En.: *Around the World with Willy Fog*] again based on Jules Verne's *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours*) or even the previously mentioned *Mitsubachi Māya no bōken* (an adaptation of Waldemar Bonsel's *Die Biene Maja und ihre Abenteuer* [En.: *The Adventures of Maya the Bee*]). All of them had been screened previously in other European countries and did not come to Poland directly from Japan. Even more so, most of them were co-productions. For example *Wan Wan Sanjūshi* and *Anime hachijū-nichikan sekai isshū* were produced by a Japanese-Spanish team, and *Mitsubachi Māya no bōken* was a Japanese-German-Austrian co-production.

#### 4. The “*Sailor Moon* generation”: Awareness of anime’s Japanese origin

The beginning of an awareness of anime’s Japanese origin came probably in the early 1990s with titles like *Kapitan Jastrząb* [En.: *Capitan Tsubasa*] or *Generał Daimos* [Jp.: *Tōshō Daimosu*, En.: *Brave Leader Daimos*] where all main characters were Japanese. But those were aired by Polonia 1, a network owned by an Italian company which broadcasted the anime in Italian with Polish voiceovers<sup>20</sup>; this was rather confusing for young viewers. However, the above-mentioned titles were well known, and probably almost every child living in Poland in the 1990s watched them at least a few times on television, as there were only a few channels that aired animated series.

But the emergence of people who called themselves anime/manga fans is connected to three subsequent anime series<sup>21</sup>—namely, *Sailor Moon*, *Dragon Ball* and *NARUTO*. The fans from the respective periods, or “generations”, differ significantly from each other, mainly due to the times that they were living in and how they treated their hobby.

The first big anime/manga boom in Poland occurred when *Sailor Moon* appeared on TV (first in 1994). All “generations” included “casual watchers”. However, for the first time, there were also people (especially teenage girls) that wanted more than the TV series. Since communism had just fallen in 1989, almost everything “Western” was welcomed, but at the same time there was a group of people that had enough of “Western” (mainly American) products, and “anime” offered them an alternative.

Those girls who liked *Sailor Moon* began to look for fellow fans. Actually, there

<sup>20</sup> A kind of incomplete dubbing, in which the Italian voices could still be heard. Even the opening songs were in some cases in Italian.

<sup>21</sup> Only a few fans became familiar with Japanese comics directly through manga; in most cases it was anime.

were some—in almost exclusively male SF, Fantasy and RPG clubs, or in the computer demo scene. Those young males were in contact with Western friends mainly from Germany who introduced them to anime. Suddenly, two worlds met—boys and girls. Both groups mixed and formed something that could be called the cradle of the manga/anime fandom. They watched anime together, exchanged video tapes, and even went out on dates. It is noteworthy that one had to be a member of this community in order to get new titles, and that those people were not only into anime, but also into Japanese culture. Manga did not play an important role, because it was harder to get them than anime—they couldn't be copied and distributed as easily (the coping of video tapes was not that easy, but there were “gurus” in the community who provided the necessary technical expertise). Manga had to be borrowed, and only a few publications were available. But when something appeared, regardless whether it was published in Poland or brought in from abroad, fans spent their last penny to get it.

In the first few years, everyone was able to take part in discussions, because there was some sort of canon that everybody shared. Manga started to play a more important role when more titles became available in Polish, and especially when fans of *Dragon Ball* appeared.

### 5. The *Dragon Ball* generation: an entrance to the digital era

*Pokemon* and *Dragon Ball* are two hit series that appeared in Poland almost at the same time, around 2000. The first one became famous among a younger audience, but not as a manga. *Pokemon* figures were available with children's meals, official merchandising was sold everywhere, and kids were exchanging cards in school on such a large scale, that it was discussed in the Polish media as a social problem<sup>22</sup>. The *Pokemon* manga appeared as well, but it was put on hold after only four short volumes (taken from one Japanese tankōbon volume). The reason of this failure was simple—the monochrome manga edition could not compete with *Pokemon* titles in colour, that is, anime books of a mainly poor quality. Not surprisingly, the *Pokemon* cult among kids did not have a big impact on the manga/anime scene. For children, it was a temporary hobby, centered on exchanging cards and goodies, and thus something similar to collecting strips from Donald bubblegums in the 1980s<sup>23</sup> which was not directly connected to the popularity of the comics either. *Pokemon*'s success was later repeated by *Yugi-oh*, mainly because of the cards sold for both.

<sup>22</sup> For example in the previously mentioned TV program “Uwaga!”.

<sup>23</sup> There was a bubblegum with short comic strips about Disney characters. Many kids collected and exchanged them, without being dedicated Disney fans.

*Dragon Ball* on the other hand triggered the search for more, like *Sailor Moon* five years earlier. But the market and other conditions were completely different by now. Manga fans had an easier start. First of all, there was a fair selection of titles (*Sailor Moon*, *Fushigi Yūgi*, *Oh My Goddess!*, *X* and since 2001 *Dragon Ball*). And there was no need for “gurus” anymore, who had the skill (and the equipment) to copy video tapes, because exchange was easier through digital means like CD-ROMs. Also, the Internet could be used not only for contact between fans, but increasingly also as a source of anime and later manga contents. Another difference was that fans had a much smaller interest in Japanese culture. In addition, the most popular titles were different from the previous generation, when SF, Fantasy and Cyberpunk had ranked top (with titles such as *Akira*, *Record of Lodoss War* or Studio Ghibli films). Now, fans were more into comedies, cute girls and “big breasts”. Slowly also the yaoi fandom—that could even be called a sub-fandom (as they had their own exclusive conventions and their own web pages)—was forming.

## 6. The *NARUTO* generation: an “aggressive” digital generation

Currently, the biggest group within Polish fandom is that of the *NARUTO* generation. And it is much different from the previous ones. First of all, fans usually start to read manga much earlier; these days 12 year-old fans are not surprising anymore<sup>24</sup>. The fans of the *Sailor Moon* generation were at least 15 years old, which was the minimum age to get access to SF/Fantasy/RPG clubs at that time, and also the minimum age that most parents would allow kids to go to events outside town (because of the limited number of manga and anime events, fans had to travel across Poland to participate in them). Furthermore, most fans of the second generation were already university students (and therefore had Internet access).

The *NARUTO* generation is the most “digitalized” among all three fan generations, using the Internet and mobile phones every day. And they are the generation in which manga is playing the most important role. But in many cases they do not buy manga, rather, they read illegal scanlations online. In 2008, a survey conducted by the Polish *NARUTO* publisher JPF on one of the most popular of many *NARUTO* fan sites, asked the question “Do you own any *NARUTO* manga that appeared in Poland?”. Only 13% answered that they owned all of them, 15% had a few volumes, 4% had one volume, but 68% did not own even a single volume<sup>25</sup>! If they buy anything at all, it is *NARUTO*

<sup>24</sup> Please recall that *NARUTO* is recommended as [15+].

<sup>25</sup> The site where the original survey was conducted went down, but the results are still available on an unofficial discussion forum of JPF (mangaforum, internet). On the same forum there are many

merchandise, mostly imitations “Made in China”.

Also, their attitude toward other fans is in many cases very intolerant and even offensive. Admittedly, this “aggressiveness” is limited to verbal assaults on the Internet, but they do not tolerate any criticism of their favourite series. For example, when JPF, the publisher of *NARUTO*, in March 2008 demanded on the Internet that scanlations should be removed from web pages, it received many offensive mails and letters. This indicates some sort of paradox. While previous generations were using the Internet to get to know each other, certain *NARUTO* fans are using it to stay anonymous. On the other hand, they often participate in conventions<sup>26</sup>. But when it comes to reading manga, most fans of this generation limit their activity to *NARUTO*. Although there is also a group that goes beyond that, usually they only read the most popular *shōnen* titles such as *Bleach* or *One Piece*.

Because of their attitude, *NARUTO* fans who are fixated on that specific franchise only are called “Narutards” by other manga fans, derived from “Naruto” and “retard”—an offensive word meaning “a person with a mental retardation” or “a stupid person, one who is slow to learn”. But this is not specifically Polish.

Another characteristic of this generation is the amount of money they spent on gadgets. During their events there are more stands with products connected to anime/manga than anime/manga works as such.

Of course there are fans from the *NARUTO* generation who look beyond their favorite manga/anime. And generally speaking, all the fans, including so-called “Narutards”, make Japanese comics more popular. They introduce their hobby to other people, who from time to time also become fans (or at least casual readers/watchers). But the *NARUTO* generation is using pirated sources of manga/anime more than any other generation before, simply because they have an easier access to the Internet and to a wide range of scanlated titles. The problem of piracy has existed for some time, and it is not limited to this generation, but now it cannot be justified so easily anymore. Fifteen years ago there were no manga or anime in Polish and it was extremely difficult to buy something from abroad. Ten years ago there were more titles in Polish, but titles in other languages were still extremely expensive. In the last five years the selection of titles has become much bigger, as almost all titles ever published are still available,

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strong (even aggressive) comments by people who were reading or even administrating web pages with illegal translations.

26 The number of amateur-organized manga/anime events in Poland is larger than ever—with a few events every month—whereas about ten years ago it was a few events per year, mainly held in summer.

and each month new volumes appear. Also, everyone who is older than thirteen years can have a debit card (with their parents' permission) which makes it possible to order anything from across the world. Of course, the difference between wages in Poland and in Western Europe or the United States is still big<sup>27</sup>, but it is not impossible to buy comics in English (or in other languages) even with a moderate income, and many "true fans" do so. The language skills are not the problem here because pirated versions are read/watched in English as well.

On the other hand, there is also a group that started appreciating (and buying) manga because of *NARUTO*. Some *NARUTO* fans will eventually grow up, and maybe because of a wider availability of titles (including titles for grown-ups that Hanami specializes in), they will not stop reading comics. They might have a choice beside shōnen and shōjo titles, a choice that older generations did not have. But that will depend on the condition of the market itself.

Unfortunately, the comics market across the globe is facing a crisis. In countries like Japan, France, and the U.S., where comics culture has its own, deep-rooted tradition, crisis means lower sales and limitation of the range of titles. Lower revenue for publishers may lead to bankruptcy in a few cases. This applies first of all to independent publishing houses that publish only a few titles yearly. For them limitation means going below the point of profitability. The bankruptcy of Tokyopop U.S. shows that this could happen also to the biggest "players" in the market. Still, in the above-mentioned countries a wide range of titles will remain available. The biggest problem is that the manga medium might reach the point where only big commercial hits will be made available outside of Japan and the market will again focus only on teenager-oriented titles. In the case of emerging markets like Poland, all publishers can be considered "independent". Therefore, a crisis could lead to the complete disappearance of the manga market itself.

Since 2010 the popularity of *NARUTO* in Poland has been shrinking. It tends to be less popular, at least among fans attending the conventions. Apparently, there is not as much *NARUTO* merchandise available during such events anymore and even if it is, it is no longer visitors' first choice. Compared to previous years less people cosplay *Naruto* characters, and there are fewer panel discussions, contests, and speeches connected to the series.

Furthermore, according to comics store owners, the series' sales are decreasing.

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27 For example, around 2007 the median yearly income per household was as follows: United States: 31,111 \$ (2008), United Kingdom: 25,168 \$ (2007), France: 19,615 \$ (2007), Japan: 19,463 \$ (2006), Poland: 9,113 \$ (2007). (OECD, internet)



Its publishing frequency changed from bimonthly (4-5 issues per year) to monthly (around 10 issues yearly). Most *NARUTO* readers are children. It is said that them it is sometimes hard to afford a new volume every month, even at a price of 18,85 PLN<sup>28</sup>. However, this price is lower than a ticket to the cinema or a happy meal at McDonald's in Poland. Manga (that can be enjoyed many times or simply resold to get some portion of the buying price back) is actually one of the lesser expensive hobbies. And when one compares the price of a *NARUTO* volume to the median monthly income, it turns out that it is the lowest among manga volumes consumed by the three above-mentioned generations. In 1997 (the year when *Sailor Moon* was first published), the average Polish reader could have bought almost 135 volumes of the most popular series at that time, *Sailor Moon*. In 2001 (when the *Dragon Ball* series started) it would have been about 159 volumes of *Dragon Ball* (and in 2003 *Dragon Ball* was even published biweekly). The number of *NARUTO* volumes that can be bought in 2010 is 171!

The other reason for the drop of sales is the rather poor percentage of people who actually read books in Poland. According to a survey conducted by the Polish National Library, more than 56% of Poles did not read any books at all in 2010 (Biblioteka Narodowa, Internet). Parents do not read for kids, and they do not encourage them to read either, nor do they give them money for books, including comics.

Of course the fall of *NARUTO*'s popularity at conventions is not only a result but also increasingly a cause for the drop of this series' popularity. As appearances of *NARUTO* become limited, only a few new people get interested in it during such events.

### 7. Is the *NARUTO* generation the last of its kind?

The drop of *NARUTO*'s popularity in Poland can be regarded as one of the causes of the current crisis in the manga sector, since each of the generations provided "fresh blood" to the fandom as well as new buyers to the market. Those of the *NARUTO* generation who grew up with manga and still are interested in it, do not buy comics but rather read scanlations. This, however, cannot be explained anymore by financial difficulties or limited access; previous generations had far less access and paid relatively more too. For contemporary fans it is more convenient to download contents or simply read it online. In addition, the diversity of reading preferences is now such that publishers cannot please one big group of fans. In fact, beside "Narutards" there are people from the *NARUTO* generation who are fans of only one or a few series, and they won't read anything else.

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28 Less than 5 EUR. This is the official retail price; some bookstores offer discounts up to 25%.



The same applies to new readers, people who get attracted to one particular series or genre. Their number is too small to create an active fandom of one series which would eventually evolve into a new “generation” or a genre fandom like BL/yaoi groups. In the future more new readers will probably be attracted to certain titles only for a short time.

The variety of television channels makes it impossible for any series to gain wide popularity as it happened with previous generations that watched anime in Polish on major TV channels, and read manga officially translated into Polish. Firstly, anime is now mainly shown on smaller commercial TV stations that are frequented by less than 1% of population. Secondly, television does not play such a great role anymore, because console/computer gaming<sup>29</sup> and the Internet are now dominant forms of entertainment. So, it is unlikely that TV will trigger another new generation.

Paper books (or even e-books), as mentioned above, are not popular; reading, especially reading comics, is not a common option for spending free time anymore. Therefore manga is also unlikely to become the source of a new fan generation. However, the examples of *Harry Potter* or the *Twilight* series show that the emergence of big fan communities based on printed matter is still possible. On the other hand, those series were published a few years ago, and recently it is hard to find similar examples that have the same global impact. Right now we might be witnessing the sunset of the printed medium. The variety of Internet contents will probably not only hinder the development of a new “generation” but also lead to the fall of the manga market as we know it.

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# 4

## Transcultural Hybridization in Home-Grown German Manga

Paul M. MALONE

Despite a history of visual storytelling and lively traditions of both children's literature and caricature for adults, the German-speaking countries did not develop a kind of comics industry until after World War II; even then, only West Germany was really in a position to do so on a capitalist basis, leaving Austria on the sidelines (for different reasons, and in its own fashion, East Germany also developed a small comics scene). In the years intervening, however, the few successful indigenous German-language comic characters have been greatly outnumbered, and very often outsold, by licensed imported material from other countries—particularly American and Franco-Belgian comics (Becker 1986: 48; Dolle-Weinkauff 2006: 2). As a result, comics were originally seen by many German-speaking critics as an inherently foreign, invading form (Springman 1995: 414; Jovanovic and Koch 1999: 107; Vasold 2004: 86, 90; Blaschitz 2008: 179–80).

These conditions created perforce a high degree of hybridity, as imported characters were localized with varying degrees of success for the German market, while local creations had little choice but to react to foreign product, whether by parodic critique, slavish imitation, or anything in between (Platthaus 2010: 4). Several generations of a small but dedicated German-speaking comics fandom grew up under these circumstances, which created something approaching what Jan Nederveen

Pieterse has called a “translocal mélange culture” (1994: 161).

By the early 1990s, however, Germany’s small and import-dependent German comics industry had overextended itself, while at about the same time American and French comics were also suffering economic and creative crises; when, on top of that, recession hit the newly reunified German economy, there was a serious contraction of the comics scene. For several smaller publishers, the bottom simply fell out (Knigge 2004: 69–70; Malone 2010b: 324–5).

The surviving major comics publishing firms—in particular Carlsen Verlag and Egmont Ehapa Verlag, but also the Italian-owned Panini Verlag—then seized upon the rising interest in Japanese manga. When this interest took off in the late 1990s, they began aggressively licensing Japanese properties. These publishers soon made the happy discovery that manga, with its broad range of genres and styles, appealed as much to female readers as to males, thus virtually doubling their potential audience by drawing in girls and young women who had seldom read comics before, and leading to a correspondingly strong interest among the publishers in *shōjo* manga, aimed specifically at a female readership, in addition to the *shōnen* manga aimed at male readers (Böckem 2006: 9).

Up to this point, the importation of Japanese manga could be taken for simply another in the ongoing series of appropriations and localizations by which Germany has continually defined itself as a net importer, rather than as a producer and exporter, of comics culture. However, this new import quickly became more than a mere intercultural appropriation: the high level of active fan participation that is so crucial to manga culture made manga an excellent tool for recruiting consumers as potential producers. Thus Carlsen, Ehapa and newcomer Tokyopop Germany have not only been aggressive in licensing Japanese manga, but have also cultivated home-grown German artists via competitions and contests, and trained them, often at considerable expense. This is similar to the activities of a few U.S. publishers, but a distinct contrast to Germany’s comics-centric neighbour France, where the manga boom was just as much in evidence, there are probably more manga publishers—mainstream and niche combined—and the same do-it-yourself books were published; but by comparison there has been very little attempt to promote local French beginners as prospective mangaka<sup>1</sup>. By turning to manga, in fact, the German publishers have opened participation in German comics production and consumption not only across the gender gap to young women, but also

<sup>1</sup> This is a reference not to *la nouvelle manga*, the movement spearheaded by Frédéric Boilet, but rather to a much less well-publicized phenomenon sometimes called *franga* or *manfra*. An example of *franga* is Reno Lemaire’s original series *Dreamland*, which has published nine volumes in Pika Edition’s *shōnen* line (Lemaire 2006).

to young artists from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds who might otherwise find little entry into public German-language culture (Malone 2010a: 233).

So far over 100 German manga have been published, and every publication apparently represents almost 100 submissions that were rejected. This wave of mangaka, overwhelmingly consisting of young women, and generally working within the conventions of shōjo manga—to the point that I have compared them elsewhere to Japan's famous "Forty-Niners," the *nijūyonen-gumi* (Malone 2009, internet)—are now combining imported manga aesthetics and the German language with their own ethnic backgrounds and their own individual influences and interests to create transcultural hybrid forms that reflect the increasing diversity and hybridity of culture in contemporary Germany and Austria.

Perhaps because of the lack of a strong indigenous comics tradition, a problematic "authenticity" to Japanese rather than European standards has become an important constraint within which these artists work, even in terms of the editorial process (though it is also true that the European editorial model in comics already has as much or more in common with the Japanese model as it does with the American model). Thus all of these German manga are not only published right-to-left in Japanese fashion, but they are also quite likely to be set in Japan or Asia, to have some or all main characters of Japanese or Asian origin, or at least to conform visually and generically to established stereotypes of manga styles; for example, the use of typical manga *emanata* or visual conventions for depicting emotions, such as the giant sweat drop that signals anxiety; or direct communication from artist to reader in separate side panels, which is particularly common in shōjo manga (Jüngst 2006: 253, 257; Malone 2010a: 231). In Nederveen Pieterse's terms, this very much resembles "an assimilationist hybridity that leans over towards the centre, adopts the canon and mimics the hegemony" (1994: 172); the catch here, however, is that the canon and the hegemony are already located outside German-language culture. This otherwise dodgy but in a sense wonderfully unreachable ideal of authenticity has thus also allowed publishers and creators wiggle room to display a remarkable cultural diversity, as the following concrete examples demonstrate.

Judith Park, for instance, born in Duisburg of South Korean background, got her break by winning the 2002 *Manga Magie* contest in Cologne, going on in 2005 to win the Sondermann Prize at the Frankfurt Book Fair for her early work *Dystopia* (Park 2003). Park is one of the more prolific German mangaka, as well as one of the first to be published, and her manga are now available through licensing deals in France, Spain,

Greece, Italy, Russia, South Korea, and the U.S. In Park's best-known work, *Y Square* and its sequel, *Y Square Plus*, there are two Japanese protagonists, one straight and one gay, but the story is set in South Korea and most of the other characters are Korean. Interestingly, there is no attempt whatsoever to make these historically quite significant ethnic differences a theme of the story; fortunately, all the characters speak perfect German, and there is conflict only over who is going to pair off with whom (Park 2004; Park 2007). This rather idyllic situation demonstrates that Park is constrained to produce imitation manga, rather than Korean-style *manhwa*, for instance, which would also read left to right in Western fashion—even though *manhwa* are also well-known and available in Germany. However, Park has produced more *manhwa*-like work for the local Korean immigrant community, and her forthcoming, though long delayed, manga volume is titled *Kimchi*, so it may be that her prominence will now enable her to bring her ethnic background into a more central position in her work.

A different relationship to Japanese culture, but within the same constraints, is exemplified in Ying Zhou Cheng's *Shanghai Passion*, the first genuine boys' love or homoerotic tale in German manga—certainly not the last, given the tremendous popularity of this subgenre. *Shanghai Passion* is set in 1930s China, where a young German attempting to make business connections with a local triad leader feels a strong fascination for his host's son. Cheng tries to reverse orientalist stereotypes by making the Westerner the passive, pursued party, the *uke*, and the Asian character the *seme*, the active one. At the same time, Cheng also includes as a side character a half-Japanese drag queen, who is forced to pass as fully Chinese to avoid anti-Japanese feelings stemming from Japan's then-recent occupation of Manchuria. This figure also symbolizes Cheng's own personal conflict as a Chinese who has grown up in Germany, "utterly without the influence of anti-Japanese education" (*vollkommen ohne Einfluss der anti-japanischen Erziehung*) who thus loves and draws manga, even manga in German, and not Chinese *manhua* (Cheng 2005; n.p.).

By contrast, Zhe Zhang, also from Shanghai and one of the minority of male mangaka in Germany, seems to experience no conflict working to the Japanese model. His fantasy series *Go Kids*, set in a magical world inside our earth where bands of seafaring adventurers hunt giant monster crabs. Like a number of his fellow German mangaka, whatever their background, Zhang sidesteps questions of cultural depiction by setting his story in a fantastic place, neither Eastern nor Western (quite literally, since it is inside the planet); aesthetically, however, the dynamically drawn *Go Kids*, with its *One Piece*-like exaggerations of perspective and its mix of magic and action,



fits comfortably within a shōnen manga style. This is really the exact opposite of Ying Zhou Cheng's narrative strategy, which deliberately sets *Shanghai Passion* in a geographically and historically specific moment in both Chinese and Japanese history in order to raise exactly such questions, and to equate questions of national identity with those of a sexual identity which proves fluid within her story. In Zhang's fantasy world, by comparison, perhaps not surprisingly, men are men and women are women—and giant monster crabs are giant monster crabs (Zhang 2007).

Perhaps the ultimate contrast in this context is provided by sisters Prin and Umi Konbu (*nées* Omura Chiharu and Omura Sachi respectively), who are among the few Japanese artists living in Germany. Trained in fashion design and illustration, they travel throughout Europe, offering popular courses in drawing manga. They are among the few German mangaka not published with one of the major companies, preferring to work with the smaller Eidalon Verlag, which, ironically, otherwise specializes in manga by Westerners. The Konbus' own series, *Tomoe*, is based on the story of Tomoe Gozen, a legendary 12th-century female samurai. Clearly, in the German context, the Konbus have a great deal of credibility as mangaka due to their background, particularly in terms of taking up Japanese historical themes, or *jidaimono*, which most German artists have avoided, deliberately or otherwise; and visually their work can be quite elegant, though it is uneven in quality (Konbu and Konbu 2004). Perhaps also because of their background, the cultural intermingling in their work seems to remain pretty much purely at the linguistic level. It is difficult to determine whether they're pitching their work at a European audience, or whether they would produce very similar work if they were publishing in Japan; however, I think it is likely that in Japan they would face a lot more competition in this particular genre, and much of would frankly be from stronger writers and artists.

Only a few German mangaka are of Asian background, however; more commonly, they are likely to be first- or second-generation immigrants from Eastern Europe, who do not bring the same cultural conflicts and baggage with them. Dorota Grabarczyk, originally from Poland, and Ukrainian Olga Andryienko met while taking dance lessons in Bonn. Discovering a common interest in manga, they began working together as DuO (a clever abbreviation of "Dorota und Olga"), developing an easily recognizable visual style—which mixes Western chic and *kawaii* cuteness—and a gift for tongue-in-cheek dialogue. Their series *Mon-Star Attack* and *Indépendent* are set not in Asia—although the protagonists of the earlier series bear the same Japanese pseudonyms as their creators, Reami (Grabarczyk's individual pen name) and Asu

(that of Andryienko)—but rather in fantastic and savagely satirical versions of a generic, hyper-capitalist West (DuO 2004). *Indépendant*, for example, is about a fashion-obsessed Mafia boss's daughter who steals money from her dad and goes on the run with her best friend: the result is something like a remake of Ridley Scott's 1991 film *Thelma and Louise* with Paris Hilton and Nicole Ritchie in the lead roles (DuO 2006). Popular media themselves, including the news media, are often the target of DuO's satire, and in their early work *Mon-Star Attack* they make fun of their own pop-culture influences and draw attention to them at the same time: they stage the final climactic battle in a Museum of Defeated Super-Villains, where among the exhibits are the two-headed angel Sachiel from the Japanese anime *Shinseiki Ebuangerion* (Neon Genesis Evangelion), the black Venom costume from the American Marvel Comics series *Spider-Man*, and the sorcerer Gargamel from the Belgian bande dessinée *Les Schtroumpfs* (The Smurfs), created by Peyo (Pierre Culliford) (DuO 2004: n.p.).

Again in contrast, Christina Plaka, of Greek background, sets her long-running series about a struggling rock band in Tokyo itself, reflecting her own active interest in Japan, which has also led her formally to study Japanology. *Yonen Buzz* is currently published in France and in the U.S., besides in Germany (Plaka 2005). In fact, Plaka was the first European manga artist to be published in America. Notably, despite a good deal of effort in perfecting the Japanese look of her art, her fictitious band Plastic Chew (originally named Prussian Blue) are constrained to sing their grunge-influenced lyrics in English, since when the series began Plaka was not in a position to compose Japanese lyrics (Plaka 2003). Within the plot, this move is justified by band leader Jun's mixed Japanese-western parentage. At the same time, however, this also serves to reproduce a strategy common in both other German manga and in original Japanese works, where English is used as a marker of exotic and simultaneously cosmopolitan coolness.

A similar active interest in things Japanese ultimately led Czech-born Lenka Buschová to formally take up Japanese studies, but she had wanted to be a mangaka from the time she was 12; she won the Connichi convention's amateur manga contest in 2003, and went on to publish one volume of her comedy *Freaky Angel* (Buschová 2005). The titular angel, Hikari, is a kind of matchmaker who shows up to connect people who ought to be in love, making no distinction between heterosexual and homosexual pairings, in a manner that prefigures the eventual appropriation of outright boys' love themes, which was not long in coming in the form of Cheng's *Shanghai Passion*. Buschová's studies and work in advertising and web graphics have prevented

an official second volume of *Freaky Angel* from appearing (although it is at least partially available online in *dōjinshi* form; Buschová 2009, internet); this is a shame, because she combines a sly sense of humour—Hikari’s targets generally do not want her help that much—with a sharp depiction of Japanese *milieu* and a clarity of line that recalls Alfons Mucha as much as manga. One real strength of many German mangaka, including Buschová, is the fact that they so often supply very witty scripts, with a real love of playing with language—specifically, the German language, though many of them are bi- or multilingual. In fact, in most cases the very same wit can be found on the artists’ individual web pages, as proof that this is not merely a question of their editors polishing their work.

To conclude with a small selection of home-grown mangaka who are not the product of recent immigration: Alexandra Völker combines an interest in fashion and design comparable to that of DuO with a more filigreed, almost Gothic Lolita style in her two interrelated longer works *Catwalk* and *Paris*. Like many Japanese mangaka, Völker creates a parallel universe with strong connections to our own, though her characters’ hometown, Xela City, is also not unlike Superman’s Metropolis or Batman’s Gotham City: imaginary though it may be, there are convenient air connections to both Paris and Tokyo (“Xela,” of course, is simply the artist’s name, “Alex”, spelled backwards). *Catwalk* depicts the world of *haute couture* as a true *mélange* of ethnicities and gender-bending, with characters of mixed background and an equally androgynous heroine and love interest; in fact, a first-time reader might initially assume that the manga’s romance is *yuri*, or lesbian, because the male lead is as pretty and as heavily made up as the heroine, and spends so much time in kilts. Völker’s intricate visual style, with its trademark huge, doe-like eyes—they are probably among the biggest eyes in German manga—is assured and unmistakeable (Völker 2006).

A rather more unusual style, at least initially, is that of Detta Zimmermann, whose three-volume *Isce!* has overtones of both Takahashi Rumiko’s *Inu Yasha* and Arakawa Hiromu’s *Hagane no renkinjutsushi* (Fullmetal Alchemist), with a spunky young heroine and an erratic hero with mysterious magical powers. Like Zhe Zhang, Zimmermann creates a complete fantasy world, though hers is more like a Miyazaki Hayao-style medieval Europe. However, in this early work she renders her scenes in a refreshingly sketchy, sometimes almost angular style that bears little resemblance to the stereotypes most Westerners have of manga. Since then, however, in her webcomics (none of which seem to be available online at present) and her later manga *Tarito Fairytale*, she’s worked towards a rounder, smoother style that is very professional

looking and quite cute, but not as individual (Zimmermann 2008). One of the delights of *Isce!* is the band of street urchins who become the heroine's protectors and helpers, and who signal their outsider status by speaking in broad Viennese Austrian dialect while everyone around them speaks standard German (for example, Zimmermann 2006: 14–16).

One of Germany's largest and oldest post-war immigrant groups is its Turkish-descended population, and one of its youngest published mangaka is Reyhan Yildirim, who actually had to finish school before she could start her career. Her story *Tylsim* intertwines European and Turkish visual and narrative motifs into a lively fantasy world where the teenage Auru (from Latin *aurum*) and his dragon spirit Kita (a reversal of Turkish *atik*, "nimble") rescue the young witch Djady (from Turkish *cadi*, "witch") to battle the villain Karabasan, whose name is Turkish for "nightmare" despite his deceptive *bishōnen* good looks. The title *Tylsim* itself also comes from an ancient Turkish word for a magical stone (Yildirim 2008: n.p.). This combination of elements gives the story a visual and narrative flavour less like Western European fairy-tale fantasy than an Eastern folk adventure in the style of Ilya Muromets, and interestingly, the rights were sold to bring *Tylsim* out in Russia as well, under the Fabrika komiksov (Comics Factory) imprint (Yildirim 2009).

Finally, Anike Hage, who won the Leipzig Manga Talent contest in 2004, is one of the few German mangaka now working full-time as an artist and writer. Hage, unusually among this group, foregoes any Japanese, pseudo-Japanese or fantastic elements; her work remains identifiably western, though a hybrid of European and American elements, while still following the basic formal conventions of manga. *Gothic Sports* is set at a high school where the Goth kids and other "outsiders" form a soccer team to rival the school's official team. *Gothic Sports*, also published in France and the U.S., is marked by its strong premise, well-crafted characters, and Hage's clean, spare drawing style, which redefines the term *ligne claire* (Hage 2006). The fifth and final volume of *Gothic Sports* has finally been published; and Hage has recently gone on to produce a graphic novel adaptation of Gudrun Pausewang's novel for young readers, *Die Wolke* (The cloud) (Hage 2010).

Jan Nederveen Pieterse writes, "if we accept that cultures have been hybrid all along, hybridisation is in effect a tautology: contemporary accelerated globalisation means the hybridisation of hybrid cultures." This statement is certainly applicable to the German manga scene; Germany and Austria are already multicultural, globalized, hybrid. German manga merely put this hybridity on display in a uniquely forthright

manner. As Nederveen Pieterse further writes, however: “Hybridity unsettles the introverted concept of culture which underlies romantic nationalism, racism, ethnicism, religious revivalism, civilisational chauvinism, and cultural essentialism” (1994: 180). Many might think that this statement, too, has a particular resonance for German-language culture, and it does, but not only in stereotypical, predictable ways.

In 2000, when Christina Plaka first submitted work to Carlsen Verlag, she was told there were no opportunities. Not because she was a woman, not even because she was 17, but rather because neither publishers nor readers were interested in comics by German artists (Böckem 2006: 10). A decade later, Plaka is published and publishing, and Germans are reading her and her compatriots. Comics journalist and publisher Martin Jurgeit once even claimed that the future of German comics is manga: “These artists, with their sales and the chord they’ve struck among readers, have the best economic conditions that the coming generation of comics in Germany have ever had” (Pannor 2008, internet). The manga boom now appears to be ebbing—in the last few years, the percentage of the German comics market dedicated to manga has dropped from 75% to 60% (Pasamonik 2010, internet)—but a crucial change has nonetheless taken place. German manga may have helped break down barriers between people of different backgrounds, genders and identities, but they have also broken down an important barrier to recognizing that German speakers, no matter what their ethnic background, are as capable of producing good comics, at a global level of quality, as they are of consuming them. It is for this reason that these works well deserve to be called both “German” and “manga”.

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## Biography

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# 5

## On the depiction of love between girls across cultures: Comparing the U.S. American webcomic *YU+ME: dream* and the *yuri* manga “Maria-sama ga miteru”

Verena MASER

In recent years, the portrayal of sexuality in manga<sup>1</sup> has attracted much academic research (e.g. Hori 2009, Levi, McHarry and Pagliassotti 2008). Attention was especially given to the depiction of love between boys in manga, a genre mostly referred to as *boys' love*.

On the contrary, love between girls, the so called *yuri* [lily] genre, did not arouse much scholarly interest. This genre has hitherto been almost exclusively explained in terms of lesbian sexuality (e.g. Welker 2006) despite the fact that most works of

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the term “manga” is used to denote comics created by Japanese artists in Japanese, published in Japan for a Japanese audience.

this genre do not feature homosexual<sup>2</sup> characters. The underlying expectation or maybe even intercultural misunderstanding is that fictional works about love between female characters always include a discussion about sexuality. This might be true in a U.S.American or European context, but as my analysis will show it is not always true in a Japanese context.

The aim of my paper is to examine if and how issues of female sexual identity are depicted in the products of U.S. American and Japanese popular culture, namely webcomics<sup>3</sup> and manga. Due to restrictions of space, I will limit my intercultural comparison to one manga and one U.S. American webcomic with a textual analysis especially focusing on characters and their representation.<sup>4</sup> I will show that while the manga art style crosses cultural borders, the content does not.

I chose two comics that at first glance might seem hardly comparable at all. On the one hand, this is the U.S. American webcomic *YU+ME: dream* whose author Megan Rose Gedris might best be called an amateur comic artist working in the field of webcomics since 2004. Her depiction of love between girls reflects U.S.-American ideas on this topic but was at the same time inspired by Japanese yuri manga and can therefore be said to be a hybrid product. On the other hand I use a manga published in a mainstream manga magazine in Japan, “Maria-sama ga miteru” (En.: Maria Watches Over Us), which can be termed the most popular yuri series of the last ten years in Japan. While this manga was originally created in Japan for a Japanese audience, it has nevertheless crossed cultural boundaries by being exported to Asia, North America and Europe. My comparison of these two works offers a “clash of cultures” useful to highlight cultural differences not visible in other ways.

## 1. *YU+ME: dream*

The two-part U.S. American webcomic *YU+ME: dream* by Megan Rose Gedris<sup>5</sup> ran from June 2004 to October 2010 on her website. Later, she also self-published in bookform. Four volumes have been released so far, with volumes one to three covering the first part of *YU+ME: dream*. I will limit my remarks to this first part, as it

2 “Homosexuality” in this paper is broadly understood as sexual attraction towards a person of the same sex. It is also my understanding that it is connected to the notion of a sexual identity. Therefore, in order to “be” homosexual, you will have to define yourself as such.

3 “Webcomic” in this paper is used to denote a comic first published on a website.

4 A deeper analysis of the yuri genre is the topic of my PhD thesis called *Love between girls in manga. Yuri – formation of a genre*. It will specifically focus on contents, production and reception of yuri manga and will contain an analysis of yuri manga as well as interviews with yuri manga editors and fans. For a discussion of sexuality between female characters in manga, see my paper Maser 2011.

5 Gedris is a freelance webcomic artist and *YU+ME: dream* was her first long-running webcomic.

is the one most influenced by manga. Furthermore the second part has a different setting and set of topics than the first one.

Part one of *YU+ME: dream* consists of nine issues<sup>6</sup> and tells the story of Fiona Thompson, who, in the beginning, is an underdog at her school. She has no friends and is frequently sentenced to clean the girls' bathroom. Then one day, a girl named Lia Riolo moves into the house next door. They become friends and, in the course of the story, lovers.

In an email interview, Gedris told me that her story was inspired by yuri manga, a subgenre of *shōjo manga* [manga for girls]. Generally speaking, this genre deals with love and/or romance between girls. The word yuri literally means “lily” and was created by Itō Bungaku, editor of Japan's first gay magazine *Bara-zoku* [Rose Clan], to denote love between women as antonym to *bara* [rose] with which he meant love between men (Yamada 2005: 29). Yuri manga have been evident from at least 1971 when female artist Yamagishi Ryōko's “Shiroi heya no futari” [The two girls in the white room] was first published in Shūeisha's *shōjo manga* magazine *Ribon* [ribbon] (Fujimoto 2008: 247–249).<sup>7</sup>

Gedris enjoyed reading yuri manga but at one point received the impression that the stories became predictable and so she decided to create her own comic.<sup>8</sup> The earlier issues of *YU+ME: dream* especially are influenced by manga art style<sup>9</sup>: the drawings are kept in black and white with the usage of (digital) screentones to indicate grey. Additionally, the division of pages into panels does not follow a rigid pattern with, for example, three rows with three panels each. Gedris occasionally also draws super-deformed versions of her characters, ones which are caricatures with oversized heads and chubby limbs (see for example Gedris 2004–2010: 19). Finally, the character Lia

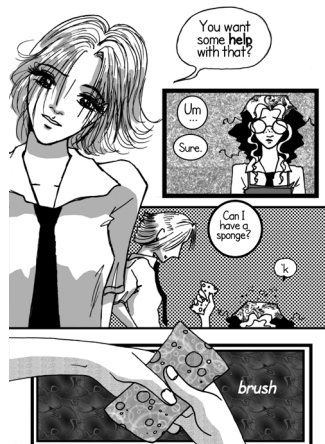


Fig. 1: Manga-inspired drawing style in *YU+ME: dream*. Source: Gedris, Megan Rose: *YU+ME: dream*©, Part one, Issue 2, p. 33, <http://rosalarian.com/yume/?p=98>

6 Even though the comic was published online, Gedris divided it into “issues” of various lengths mirroring the common practice of the U.S. American comic book industry.

7 The usage of the term yuri to denote these manga only became widely used around the year 2000 (Yamada 2005: 29), yet it remains unclear where and when exactly this started.

8 From an email interview in August 2009

9 The art style changes over time – later issues and especially part two very much differ from the art style used in the beginning. Gedris herself states that she was also inspired by non-manga artists such as Naomi Nowak (from afore-mentioned interview).

is depicted with big eyes, as commonly found in shōjo manga (see fig. 1).

Additionally, issues one to five explicitly reference manga, since every frontispiece says the copyright is with “anonymous manga and rosalarian”<sup>10</sup> (see for example Gedris 2004–2010: 40). One should also note the wordplay in the title *YU+ME: dream*. “YU+ME” can be read as “You and Me”, but it is also a reference to the Japanese word *yume*, which means “dream”. Gedris says this is no coincidence, as she “started the comic on the tail end of [...her, V.M.] total obsession with manga” (from afore-mentioned interview).

## 2. “Maria-sama ga miteru”

Originally a light novel<sup>11</sup> series by female author Konno Oyuki,<sup>12</sup> “Maria-sama ga miteru” has been in publication since 1997 in Japan by Shūeisha and counts thirty-eight volumes, as of April 2011.<sup>13</sup> A manga version by female artist Nagasawa Satoru<sup>14</sup> ran from 2003 to 2007 in Shūeisha’s shōjo manga magazines *Margaret* and *Za Māgaretto* [the Margaret]. It was published in eight paperback volumes and later re-published in five bunkobon<sup>15</sup> paperback volumes. Due to the upcoming release of the live action movie, a new instalment of the manga ran in *Za Māgaretto* in 2010 and volume nine was published later that year (citations here refer to the nine-volume edition). The movie itself was released in Japan in November 2010. The anime<sup>16</sup> version of the series counts four seasons so far and at this point is the only version of the series that has been officially translated into English. Both manga and novel however, are being published in Taiwan, South Korea and Germany.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Rosalarian is Gedris’s pen name.

<sup>11</sup> In Japan, the term light novel denotes novels for a teenage audience, usually published in the small A6 format, with depictions of manga characters on the frontispiece. Inside, illustrations can be found too. The original illustrator of “Maria-sama ga miteru”, for example, is a woman called Hibiki Reine. Yet contrary to what might be expected, light novels do not have any characteristic contents or narrative modes (for details see Enomoto 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Oyuki is a light novel author who debuted in 1993. “Maria-sama ga miteru” is her third long-running light novel series.

<sup>13</sup> Occasionally, additional stories are published in Shūeisha’s bimonthly light novel magazine *Cobalt*. Those are later added to the regular novels. The novel itself is published under Shūeisha’s light novel label *Kobaruto bunko* [Cobalt library].

<sup>14</sup> Nagasawa is a shōjo manga artist publishing in the shōjo manga magazines *Margaret* and *Za Māgaretto*. “Maria-sama ga miteru” was her first long-running manga series.

<sup>15</sup> *Bunkobon* are smaller (usually A6 format) than normal manga paperbacks and tend to have twice as many pages. In general, two normal manga paperback volumes are republished into one bunkobon paperback volume.

<sup>16</sup> “Anime” in this paper means animation made in Japan in Japanese language for a Japanese audience.

<sup>17</sup> However, publication of the German version of the novel was discontinued after volume five, probably due to lacking success and volume nine of the manga has not been translated to date either.

“Maria-sama ga miteru” might be seen as just another shōjo manga yet especially in Japan a consensus has developed that this series belongs to the yuri genre. This is visible in a survey among readers of the Japanese yuri manga magazine *Komikku yuri hime* [Comic Lily Princess] who elected the series second best yuri work of 2006 (Sugino 2008: 141) as well as the fact that it was the boom of “Maria-sama ga miteru” that originally inspired the foundation of the first (and now defunct) Japanese yuri manga magazine *Yuri shimai* [Lily Sisters] (Yamada 2005: 29). Not least, the series is also considered a yuri work by Japanese scholars researching the genre (e.g. Kumata 2005: 88–95).

The main character of “Maria-sama ga miteru” is sixteen year old Fukuzawa Yumi, who is in the first year of high school at the Lilian Girls’ Academy. Her long-term idol is second year student Ogasawara Sachiko. When Sachiko tries to evade starring in the stage play *Cinderella*, she asks Yumi, who is only accidentally present, to become her *petite sœur* [little sister]<sup>18</sup> and take the role. Yumi in the end accepts the proposal and thereby joins the students’ council *Yamayurikai* [Assembly of the Lilium auratum]. The manga follows the first year of Yumi at the school and the relationships between the eight members of the students’ council.

In this coming of age manga, love between girls plays an important role. The main protagonist Yumi is in love with Sachiko but the series for example also depicts the sometimes complicated relationship between Yoshino and Rei (vols 2 and 6), the tragic love story of Sei and Shiori (vol. 3), as well as the blossoming relationship between Shimako and Noriko (vol. 9). However, one should keep in mind that “Maria-sama ga miteru” is thought of belonging to the category *yūjō ijō koibito miman* [more than friends but less than lovers] (Yamada 2005: 29). While these girls certainly have intense feelings for each other, one should not expect an open depiction of this affection by, for example, kisses. This ambiguity can, in part, be attributed to the manga’s usage of the Japanese verb *suki* which can be translated as either “to like” or “to love”. A case in point is the following scene from volume one (fig. 2): Yumi and Sei are searching for Sachiko, who is nowhere to be found.

Yumi is anxious to be the first to find her so Sei asks her for the reason: “Do you *suki* Sachiko...?” (vol. 1, p. 130), to which Yumi nods in reply. Yet the question remains whether Sei is referring to “like” or to “love” and it is also unclear which of the meanings Yumi’s nodding is referring to. This is even more complicated by the fact that Sei goes on to state that she and the Yamayurikai are feeling the same way and

<sup>18</sup> The school is organized along the lines of the *sœur seido* [sister system], where younger students become the “little sisters” of older students and are guided through life at school by them.



Fig. 2: Ambiguity of the word *suki* in "Maria-sama ga miteru". Konno Yuki, "Maria-sama ga miteru", 2004, p. 130.

that all of them do *daisuki* Sachiko (vol. 1, p. 130). *Daisuki* means "very much *suki*", but it is still left to the reader's interpretation which kind of *suki* is being referred to.

This subtle depiction of love between girls shows that the yuri genre is not defined by the intensity of romantic feelings and might explain why there is no clear-cut definition of what precisely yuri is. For the most part, it is up to the reader to decide what he/she perceives as yuri. Fans in the U.S. and Europe tend to draw a distinction between yuri with which they mean "manga about love between girls with sexual contents", and *shōjo ai* [girl love], which to them means "manga about love between girls without sexual contents".<sup>19</sup> Yet in Japan, such a distinction does not exist<sup>20</sup> not least because the term *shōjo ai* seems to be connected to adults' paedophilic attraction to young girls.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Comparing *YU+ME: dream* to "Maria-sama ga miteru"

Even though there are differences regarding art and storyline between *YU+ME: dream* and "Maria-sama ga miteru", there are some similarities regarding the setting. First of all, the main characters are girls in their teens. "Maria-sama ga miteru" goes even one step further. Since its setting is an all-girls school, one hardly finds any male characters at all. There are some exceptions, like Yumi's younger brother who appears in some chapters, but the focus clearly is on the female characters. A second parallel between the two comics is the fact that the setting is identical. In both cases, it is a catholic high school with nuns as teachers.<sup>22</sup> All students have to wear a school

19 See for example the sub-division of the large English-language forum of the Shoujo-Ai Archive (Shoujo-Ai Archive 2011, internet).

20 In Japan, alongside yuri there is also the term *gāruzu rabu* [girls' love] or *GL* which is mostly used as an antonym of *boizu rabu* [boys' love] or *BL*. Yet it seems that there is no qualitative difference between the terms yuri and GL, so that both tend to be used interchangeably.

21 Unfortunately, there seems to be no scholarly research available on this term but since it is not mentioned in Japanese dictionaries it can be deemed as not being standard Japanese vocabulary. However, sites on the Japanese internet unanimously link it with pedophilia or the phenomenon of *lolicon* [Lolita complex, adult men attracted to young girls]. This is also true for a book called *Shōjo ai* (Miyajima 2005), to which Japan's National Diet Library assigned the keyword *ijō seiyoku* [abnormal sexuality] (NACSIS Webcat 2011, internet). In any case, in Japan *shōjo ai* is not connected to manga or anime about love between girls.

22 My research suggests that the setting of a school or even an all-girls school is a common feature in many of today's yuri manga.

uniform, which is rather unusual for a U.S.-American high school, though not so much for a Japanese high school.<sup>23</sup> The similarities end here, though. Much more striking are the differences between the two works.

One of the main contrasts is the way in which the characters define themselves and their sexual orientation. *YU+ME: dream* depicts self-definitions that are strongly influenced by the sexual orientation of the respective characters. The fact that they see themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual is one of the driving factors behind the story. For example, defining herself as lesbian makes it easier for Fiona to connect with Jake, a gay classmate of hers. And when she comes out to the head nun Sister Mary (Gedris 2004–2010: 359), it is the first time in the story that Fiona stands up for herself. Her self-definition as lesbian can therefore be seen as a means of empowerment.

As opposed to this, in “Maria-sama ga miteru” none of the characters defines herself as lesbian or bisexual, even though some relationships go beyond the point of being “just friends”. Remarkably however, you also won’t find any self-definition as “heterosexual”. I would therefore argue that in this manga, the sex of the person the characters fall in love with is less important than the fact that they love that person and also that a sexual identity of whatever kind is not a necessary precondition for this love. Therefore this is not a manga about sexual identity but about growing up and coming to terms with one’s feelings and emotions.

Predictably, the way in which the characters define themselves also influences the way in which they react to themselves falling in love with another girl. *YU+ME: dream* depicts a sort of “classical” pattern of coming out narratives, that is, confusion. When Fiona accidentally sees Lia coming out of the shower, for days she is unable to sleep (Gedris 2004–2010: 70–73). At the end of issue three, she stares in the mirror, startled and confused: “As much as it scares me... I think... ...I might... ...be gay.” (Gedris 2004–2010: 86–87).

In “Maria-sama ga miteru”, on the other hand, the characters do not see themselves as having a distinct kind of sexual orientation. Therefore, all feelings connected to the discovery of being “different” from the other girls around them are missing. The characters show no feelings of shame for their love and no confusion about their identity. Instead you see other emotions, for example Yumi blushing because she is close to her idol Sachiko (vol. 1, p. 53).

Differences in the depiction of love between girls in these two comics are

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<sup>23</sup> Yet one might argue that it is less “sexy” in the case of “Maria-sama ga miteru” because the skirts and blouses are much longer than the ones seen in *YU+ME: dream*.



also visible in the reactions of the characters' social environment. As for fellow pupils and classmates, one can see that in *YU+ME: dream*, reactions are mixed. On the one hand, there are a lot of negative reactions ranging from harassing graffiti, like "Fiona Thompson is a LESBO!" (Gedris 2004–2010: 139, emphasis in the original) to insulting comments like "Ew! I have gym with her! She was probably *watching* me in the showers! Gross! Oh, I'm gonna puke!" (Gedris 2004–2010: 373, emphasis in the original) or "She's a lezzie? That's *hott* [sic]! Woo!" (Gedris 2004–2010: 373, emphasis in the original). These reactions are examples of stereotypical attitudes towards lesbian women: they are either sexual predators looking for sex with every woman in their vicinity, or they are sexual objects, whose sexual encounters are to be enjoyed by male viewers. Yet there are also supportive characters. It is notable that those are mostly ones who define themselves as gay, like Fiona's friends Jake and Don, or Fiona's uncle. In general, once they find out, Fiona loving Lia and both of them being girls is a big topic for their classmates.

In "Maria-sama ga miteru" however, the vast majority of pupils and classmates show no reaction at all. If they do, they are either supportive or jealous. When Yumi declines Sachiko's offer to become her *sœur*, she is told by another girl that she would be happy if Yumi accepted (vol. 1, p. 82). Yumi is also offered help for preparing her Valentine's Day gift for Sachiko and their first date (see vols 5 and 6). On the other hand, Yumi's future petite *sœur* Tōko becomes jealous and runs out of the room crying when she hears of the blossoming relationship between her idol Shimako and her friend Noriko (vol. 9, pp. 51–54). While the fact that one girl likes or loves another girl is a topic for fellow pupils and classmates, the fact that both are of the same sex (and in most cases also the same gender) is not.

As for the reactions of parents and teachers, *YU+ME: dream* presents them mainly opposed to the relationship. The head nun Sister Mary bears a grudge against Fiona from the beginning of the story, because she sees her as nothing more than a troublemaker. When Fiona comes out to her, she is unhappy because due to state regulations she cannot punish her (Gedris 2004–2010: 360). However, she hands the news to Fiona's parents, who deal with the situation in their own way. Her stepmother is mainly enraged because she considers Fiona "engaging in immoral activities" (Gedris 2004–2010: 367). Her father, on the other hand, thinks it would be worse if she were into drugs (Gedris 2004–2010: 367).

In "Maria-sama ga miteru", reactions of parents and teachers are again rare which is partly explained by the fact that neither of them gets to play a big part in the



story. In general, they too show no particular reaction. Only once a teacher gives a small hint about what she is thinking. When the character Sei is in her second year, she falls in love with her classmate Shiori. When Shiori ends the relationship, Sei's grades are getting worse and she is called in for a guidance talk. At the end, a nun says to her: "Isn't it sad to fall for just one thing and lose sight of your surroundings?" (vol. 3, p. 189). To the nun, Sei's love seems to be an obstacle for good grades, even though she admits that "only studying is not everything in school life" (vol. 3, p. 189). However, she is not generally opposed to the idea that Sei has a close relationship with another girl.

## Conclusion

As I have shown, the flow of the manga art style in this case crossed cultural borders, but the contents of the stories remained country-specific. *YU+ME: dream* follows a coming out narrative (discovery of sexual identity—confusion and doubt—first homosexual relationship and at the same time overcoming difficulties like the rejection by parents and friends) and thereby specifically discusses the process of accepting that one is gay and coming out in public. The obstacles shown are occurring in the U.S. which is why conclusions about homosexuals in today's U.S.-American society may be drawn from this webcomic. "Maria-sama ga miteru" however could be said to be merely a variation of the "boy-meets-girl"<sup>24</sup> pattern, in this case: girl meets girl—during the course of the story, they fall in love—happy ending. To draw conclusions about homosexuals in Japan from the depiction of love between girls in this manga would be misleading. Through this comparison of *YU+ME: dream* and "Maria-sama ga miteru" it should therefore have become clear that today's yuri genre does not necessarily thematise homosexuality.

Nonetheless, it is possible to infer that in the U.S. and Japan, different kinds of contents are seen as acceptable entertainment. As I mentioned earlier, "Maria-sama ga miteru" has been a tremendous success in Japan, with females as with males (Sugino 2008: 107 and 137). Yet in the U.S. and Germany, it has not been able to attract an equally large audience and the same is true for other yuri manga. I suppose that one of the reasons is that readers of yuri manga in western countries expect a coming out narrative when they read a story about love between girls. An explanation might be that many of them define themselves as non-heterosexual and read these comics in order to find out how others cope with their sexual identity. Japanese readers of the

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<sup>24</sup> Definition according to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary: "relating to a story, book or film whose main subject is romance" (CALD 2011, internet).

yuri genre, on the other hand, are mostly heterosexual women and men. They seem to want just a love story without having to think about political implications. They are probably looking for distraction from everyday life. One should also be aware of the fact that in Japan, the sexual orientation does not seem to be considered a major part of one's identity<sup>25</sup> (McLelland 2000: 2).

So even though two things look similar and might even have similar contents, it is still necessary to be aware of differences stemming from the cultural context in which they were made. As Stuart Hall (1992) reminds us, media products are encoded in a specific way by their producers but this might not be the same way they are decoded by their consumers. A further analysis of how fans around the world appropriate the manga art style to express themselves (encode) and how these comics are read (decoded) in other countries, Japan or elsewhere would therefore be important.

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<sup>25</sup> It also seems to be questionable whether the notion of "identity" is actually useful in a Japanese context. The Japanese expression for "identity", *aidentiti*, was evidently taken from English, and as research reveals, today it is understood by less than one in four Japanese (Clarke 2009: 60 and 74).

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## Biography

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# 6

## Gekiga as a site of intercultural exchange: Tatsumi Yoshihiro's *A Drifting Life*

Roman ROSENBAUM

Your protagonists are often wide-eyed antiheroes who silently endure grave indignity until one day they explode into acts of extreme violence. This dramatic transformation of the blue-collar everyman seems diametrically opposed to that of, for example, Superman . . . ( Nunez 2006, internet)

*A Drifting Life* . . . It's as if someone had taken a Haruki Murakami novel and drawn, beautifully and comprehensively, in its margins. (Garner 2009, internet)

### 1. Why talk about gekiga now?

*Gekiga*<sup>1</sup> was a key word for a new style of manga that emerged in 1959 and became popular throughout the Japanese graphic art industry in the 1960s. Although some have felt that the term is now largely obsolete, several excellent English translations of the works of avant-garde gekiga artist Tatsumi Yoshihiro have triggered a renewed interest in this 1960s counter-cultural drawing style and led to a reappraisal of his role in contemporary graphic art. In particular, the Japanese publication of Tatsumi's

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<sup>1</sup> *Gekiga* is translated in various ways but recently "dramatic pictures" that connote a "hard-edged realism characteristic of men's comics" has taken hold. For details see, Timothy Lehmann (2005: 206, 246).

long autobiographical serialization *Gekiga hyōryū* (hereafter: *A Drifting Life*) initiated renewed interest in the role of the gekiga style in popular cultural discourse. Following this English translation Tatsumi was awarded the grand prize for the manga at the thirteenth annual *Tezuka Osamu bunkashō* (Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize) in 2009. Then *A Drifting Life* received two Eisner Awards in 2010: for the English translation, published by Drawn & Quarterly, in the Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia category, and for the Best Reality-Based Work of the year.

Tatsumi Yoshihiro's long story manga<sup>2</sup> *A Drifting Life* was originally published over some eleven years, from 1995 to 2006, in the manga magazine *Mandarake ZENBU*. Its English-language publication in 2009 was a very timely celebration of the appearance in 1959 of the gekiga style. Anniversaries are significant triggers for commemorative cultural production in Japan, and the year 2009, perhaps coincidentally, also marked two important milestones for Japanese manga: the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the *Gekiga kōbō* (hereafter: Gekiga Atelier) and the twentieth anniversary of the passing in 1989 of the father of modern comics, Tezuka Osamu. However, *A Drifting Life*—Tatsumi's autobiographical magnum opus on the formation of gekiga—is not the only work commemorating that fiftieth anniversary. Matsumoto Masahiko, another member of the Gekiga Atelier, had been working on the long-term project *Gekiga bakatachi* (The Gekiga Fools), also released in 2009, anthologizing the formation of gekiga. Although this work has not yet been translated into English it was first serialized in *Biggu komikku* (Big Comic) from 1979 to 1984 and predates Tatsumi's work by more than a decade. The resurfacing in contemporary manga culture of the dramatic gekiga style triggered by the international success of the English translations of Tatsumi's stories, along with several *fukkokuban* (reprints)<sup>3</sup> suggests a re-evaluation of its significance in the postwar history of Japanese visual aesthetics.

<sup>2</sup> I use the nomenclature “manga” holistically as an umbrella term throughout the text. The term “long story manga” is used specifically to highlight the contribution of Tezuka's early postwar manga, which significantly extended the content to several hundred pages. Tezuka reminisced about the development of this manga style in *Boku wa mang ka* (1999:90-92) and outlined how he was approached by Sakai Shichima for a collaboration that would result in the epoch-making *Shin-Takarajima* (New Treasure Island, 1947).

<sup>3</sup> For example, hardcover editions of the complete reprints of *Machi* and *Kage* were published by Shōgakukan Creative in 2009. As far as gekiga manga from the sixties are concerned *fukkokuban* (reprints) may refer to re-editing and reformatting into, for example, *renkaban* (bargain price editions) of a popular series without altering the story line. The term is also used to refer to a previously completed series whose story arc is started afresh by the same author due to lobbying from fans after a hiatus of more than ten years. For example, the cult following of Hoshi Hyūma, the protagonist of the 1960s series *Kyojin no hoshi* (Star of the Giants), has brought about its continuation in 2006.

## 2. The avatar of Hiroshi: Towards a synopsis of *A Drifting Life*

Following the publication in English of several of his short-story collections, Tatsumi published *A Drifting Life* as his graphic novel-memoir.<sup>4</sup> This long graphic work is influential in several ways. First of all it defies definition, eluding categorization as either graphic novel or manga. In fact, it is a pastiche of both, in addition to autobiography, memoir and, most importantly represents the style of gekiga. This unabashed eclecticism has managed to captivate a large international readership and invigorate the recent transcultural discourse on manga in global popular culture. The work is best described as a long story manga that is drawn in Tatsumi's trademark gekiga style. *A Drifting Life* was published in English in 2009 by Drawn & Quarterly as an 855-page single volume in soft cover. The renowned Japanese-American alternative comic artist Adrian Tomine has described the work as follows:

In terms of tone and style, this work shares an obvious kinship with the “alternative” or “literary” comics that began proliferating in North America in the mid-1980s (and continue to thrive today), yet it predates much of that work by as much as three decades. (Tatsumi 2005: 5)

In fact, Tatsumi's work was discovered in the eighties by Tomine, because the nature of the American alternative comics movement was to distance itself from the mainstream superhero comics genre.<sup>5</sup> In similar fashion, though much earlier, Tatsumi tried to distance himself from the anthropomorphic Disneyesque drawing style of Tezuka Osamu, and therefore his countercultural graphic discourse is historically closer to America's underground comix movement popularized by Robert Crumb or Gilbert Shelton in the late sixties, which were in turn inspired by the hippie counterculture movement. Be that as it may, Tatsumi's primary influence in the early sixties was American and Japanese film noir and he denies any knowledge of American comic artists of the time. *A Drifting Life* is a hymn to the birth of Japan's hybrid manga culture and through its encyclopedic referencing style of American and Japanese movies as well as graphic art of the period, the work also commemorates a cultural history of

<sup>4</sup> John Ingulsrud and Kate Allen (2009, 23, 44) for example, equate the term gekiga with the English “graphic novel”, a term popularized by Will Eisner in his short-story collection *A Contract with God, and Other Tenement Stories* (1978).

<sup>5</sup> A detailed explanation of American comics culture is beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice to say that the underground comix movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s developed in reaction to stereotypical mainstream comics and various counterculture factors like hippie and punk cultural archetypes, which were disseminated through self-publication and developed into alternative comics in the 1980s.

manga leading up to Japan's postwar period of high economic growth.

Yet the contemporary significance of *A Drifting Life* lies elsewhere. It marks the reappearance of Katsumi Hiroshi, the countercultural underdog of Tatsumi's stories and his gekiga doppelgänger. In essence, *A Drifting Life* is the prequel to Tatsumi's antisocial heroes of the seventies. It is through Hiroshi, the blue-collar disenfranchised nascent personification of 1960s Japan, that Tatsumi paints his countercultural discourse of the anti-security treaty demonstrations in the 1960s. His gekiga are not like Shirato Sanpei's metaphorical ninja warriors that symbolize class inequality and disenfranchisement. Tatsumi's characters are mundane and often grotesque individuals that make up the lowest level of industrial pre-bubble Japanese metropolitan society. From steel to sewage workers they are the anti-heroes with no hope of happy endings or any prospect of redemption.

Japan in the 1960s was undergoing rapid social transformations, which led to a period of high economic growth, where the rights of the individual were neglected for the greater good of the nation's economy. In the introductory quote at the start of this paper, Tatsumi talks to Irma Nunez from the *Japan Times* about the relevance of his archetypal anti-hero Hiroshi as depicted in his vintage 2009 gekiga style where Hiroshi prowls the streets of Tokyo. Hiroshi, in fact, is Tatsumi's literary alter ego, popularized during the economic growth of the seventies.

Through his alter ego, the simple Hiroshi, *A Drifting Life* narrates the early life of Tatsumi, beginning with the emperor's renunciation of divinity in 1945 when Tatsumi was ten years old and finishing with the nationwide demonstrations against the renewal of the security treaty between Japan and the United States in 1960. The work also juxtaposes autobiography with a cultural history of the Shōwa period, in particular the postwar history of comics culture. Tatsumi achieves this by directly referencing and depicting the major cultural achievements of the postwar period in anthological form.

For instance, Tatsumi (2009: 426–427) directly references the first edition of the detective short manga anthology *Kage*, published in April 1956. He also provides several examples from the work including his own short story entitled *Watashi wa mita* (I saw it) and that of his rival Matsumoto Masahiko entitled *Rinjitsu no otoko* (The man in the next room) and describes in detail the impact it had on his personal drawing style. In this sense, Tatsumi's references are a graphic cultural anthropology of the 1960s in their depiction of the decline of the rental manga industry and Japan's emerging mass-consumer market.

By the end of the fifties it was becoming clear that Japan was moving into an



unprecedented period of economic growth. The *baburu keiki* (Japanese asset price bubble) of the eighties was already well and truly under way in 1959, a year of some consequence in Japan as it also marked the first large demonstrations that would engulf the archipelago in the sixties. The bilateral talks on revising the 1952 security pact also began in 1959 and led to Japan signing the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan on 19 January 1960. Not only did Japan strengthen its ties with the U.S. during the Cold War era, it also triggered a series of opposition movements that shook the country. Peter Kelman (2008: 79) for example points out that between May 1959 and June 1960, roughly 16 million people engaged in protests against the renewal of a revised version of the U.S.–Japan security treaty. It is no coincidence that the Gekiga Atelier was formed at a time of increasing citizen activism. Simon Avenell (2010: 6) discusses the emergence of charismatic philosophies and relates them to what he calls “movement intellectuals” like Oda Makoto, Tsurumi Yoshiyuki and Tsurumi Shunsuke. Oda Makoto for instance lived as a Fulbright scholar in the United States and was influenced by the Beat Generation before returning via Asia to Japan. His adventures were published in 1961 as the seminal *Nan demo mite yarō* (I Will Look at Anything), which became an instant bestseller that changed the perception of Japan’s postwar generation of youth about what was possible in the world. The gekiga style of graphic artists like Tatsumi and Shirato contextualized the philosophies of those “movement intellectuals” and triggered a period in which public sensibility towards the need for art to become more socially engaging was inaugurated.

From a contemporary perspective, Roland Kelts explains that the world’s current infatuation with manga is similar to Japan’s assimilation of Walt Disney and Max Fleischer in the early postwar period. The present influx of manga to the Western graphic arts tradition is an example of reverse acculturation made possible because:

Via anime and manga, American teenagers today are experiencing a similar sense of transcultural longing. It may be the result of sheer irrational exoticism, an infatuation with a somewhere else that is consecrated by the quality of the art itself. It may also reflect dissatisfaction with the homegrown product. (Kelts 2006: 211)

Adrian Tomine (2005: 4) also confirmed this disillusionment with the local comics industry when he wrote “Unlike the garish, full-color, action-packed comic art I’d grown up with, Tatsumi’s visuals were restrained, minimal, and stylized in a manner that seemed appealingly foreign.”

Following the demise of his Gekiga Atelier, and in the context of the declining rental-book industry, Tatsumi established his own publishing company, Dai-ichi Puro,<sup>6</sup> while also publishing his gekiga stories in *Garo*, a monthly manga magazine founded in 1964 by Nagai Katsuichi. The boom in gekiga mainly occurred in *Garo*, which led Tatsumi to publish a detailed account of the movement, entitled *Gekiga daigaku*, in 1968. *Garo*, founded with the help of Shirato Sanpei, specialized in alternative and avant-garde manga. Its name pertains to one of Shirato's gekiga ninja characters and the first serialization published in it was Shirato's ninja drama *Kamui*. With its themes of class struggle and anti-authoritarianism, it became a bestseller with college students who engaged in the social movements of the 1960s. *Garo* took over where the Gekiga Atelier left off and attracted several influential gekiga artists, including Tatsumi Yoshihiro and Tsuge Yoshiharu.

Whereas Tatsumi continued to consolidate his style through his own publishing house throughout the sixties, after his company folded in 1971 he began to focus on short stories that established his anti-hero Hiroshi, who lived on the fringes of industrial metropolitan society. It was in the 1970s that Tatsumi began to focus primarily on the lowest stratum of Japanese society, and he produced gloomy psychological short-story manga, several of which have recently been translated into English as anthologies<sup>7</sup> as well as into French and have established his reputation outside Japan. In recent years Tatsumi has become known abroad as one of the few manga artists who focused on the plight of Japan's disenfranchised metropolitan underclass during Japan's bubble economy.

### 3. Towards a contemporary definition of gekiga

The birth of the gekiga style in 1959 is usually seen as a reaction against Tezuka's style of drawing, which was focused primarily at a readership of children in early postwar manga. Yet, in the late fifties the revolutionary medium of television, with its continuing serial stories which lured readers into watching every week, was also a serious threat to the manga industry. Weekly manga magazines emerged in the late fifties, beginning with *Shūkan manga sandē* (Weekly Manga Sunday) and *Shūkan shōnen magajin* (Weekly Shōnen Magazine), both in 1959. Furthermore, as Craig Norris' analysis of visual art culture has suggested, historically it was the gekiga which fuelled the development of the gekiga style:

<sup>6</sup> Before long the company changed its name to *Hiro Shobō* and continued business until 1971.

<sup>7</sup> These include for example, *Abandon the Old in Tokyo* and *The Push Man and Other Stories*. In 1986 he opened his own manga specialty store in Kanda called *Don Komikku*.

The gekiga (dramatic pictures) style was developed primarily in rental manga. As opposed to the cuter, anthropomorphic characters that filled many children's manga, the gekiga style contained more mature, serious drama, depicted in a more realistic and graphic style that reflected the tastes of its older readers during the 1950s. However, gekiga's major impact lay not in its graphic style, but in its popularity amongst poorly educated young urban workers and, during the 1960s, university student activists, where it became part of the anti-establishment politics of the time. Shirato Sanpei's *Ninja bugeichō* (Secret Martial Arts of the Ninja, 1959–62) was influential in this regard. Many critics saw this story of peasant uprisings as reflective of student and worker anger over current issues such as the Japan-America Security Treaty. (Norris 2009: 242)

Norris' definition accurately captures the social circumstances of the time; however, my own definition of gekiga, in terms of signifying a transcultural phenomenon, proposes that gekiga also combined native Japanese aesthetic traditions with audio and visual styles from television, radio and, especially, American movies.

Importantly, it marked a shift from anthropomorphic analogies to realism, reflecting the current trend of *nikutai bungaku* (literature of the flesh).<sup>8</sup> In literature particularly writers like Sakaguchi Ango (1906–1955) and Tamura Tajirō (1911–1983) described a return from the wartime “national body” (*kokutai*) to the physicality of everyday existence. In this context gekiga absorbed the subjectivity and focus on the self depicted, in particular, through the individualism of characters in American movies.

In other words, it was in the melting pot of Japan's metropolitan centers, where Japan's renewed industrialization, following the devastation of the Asia-Pacific War, attracted an urban labor force and its accompanying need for entertainment. In this atmosphere, Tatsumi's gekiga style is an example of a popular cultural site where, following Japan's postwar occupation, a process of reverse transculturation took place. Through the assimilation of American film, animation, and television during the postwar occupation period, manga emerged as a hybrid combining aspects of both American and Japanese culture. Gekiga quickly captured the adult market and was absorbed into the holistic blend of the contemporary manga, which first reached America and Europe in the late eighties after being translated for overseas consumption. By the early nineties, the graphic manga style was successfully exported into the Western cultural hemisphere, due to the gradual increase in the overseas popularity of Japanese animation and computer games.

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8 For a detailed discussion of this literary trend see, for example, Douglas Slaymaker, 2004.

#### 4. Towards a historical origin of the gekiga style

Yet it took some time before the gekiga style of manga could establish itself. In the impoverished early postwar years it was common for people to borrow money from places called *gageki-sha* to produce rental books and *kamishibai*<sup>9</sup> art. In his ethnographic study of postwar manga, Fujishima Usaka (1990: 17) suggests that the proliferation of companies with the name *gageki*, like Kansai Gageki and Ōsaka Gageki, may have been the impetus for the creation of the gekiga school of manga. According to Fujishima (1990: 106–8) the turning point for the rental-manga system came in April 1960 when, in competition with television, publishers of children's magazines seized on the publication of written material and changed almost their entire content to pictorial-based manga. Suddenly, within a single magazine, there were five or six installments of different manga series, each of which demanded a large amount of drawn material at a time when manga artists were in short supply. As a result publishers from Tokyo went to Osaka and took many of the leading manga artists with them.

With the gradual decline of the *kamishibai* storytelling tradition, Japanese manga in the 1950s also experienced a shift from the *akahon*<sup>10</sup> media to the different *kashihon* “rental” manga that polarized the industry. Yamaguchi Masao (1998: 34–5) for example has suggested that *kashihon* became popular following Japan's defeat in the Asia–Pacific conflict, the lack of paper and the general poverty providing fertile ground for a cheap rental system. It was in this context that the gekiga movement was born. The term was first used by Tatsumi Yoshihiro in the twelfth installment of the monthly short-story magazine *Machi* (City) in the story “Yūrei taxi” (Ghost Taxi) published in 1957. It developed into a grass-roots comic artist movement two years later, in 1959, when Tatsumi Yoshihiro and several like-minded graphic artists who worked for the publisher Hinomaru bunko in Osaka founded the Gekiga Atelier. The initial success of this studio brought the *kashihon* rental manga into vogue and led to more mature adult-oriented content, which increased the consumer base of manga and diversified the media.

This innovative gekiga style emerged from three parallel trends in postwar Japanese manga. The first was represented by Tatsumi and his group of artists who specialized in short-story manga designed for the rental industry, whereas the second was developed by artists like Shirato Sanpei and Mizuki Shigeru, who arose from the *Kamishibai*, or literally “paper drama” is a form of storytelling that can be tied to the global depression of the late 1920s and the depression at the end of the Asia-Pacific War, when it offered a means for unemployed men to earn a small income. See Kata Kōji (2004) for a detailed history of the *kamishibai* tradition in the Shōwa period.

<sup>10</sup> For details see Mark MacWilliams (2008: 12, 28), where *akahon* or “red books”, after their distinctive red cover, are described as having evolved from newspaper comic strips of the 1930s, but also reflect a much older tradition of contextualizing oral folk and fairy tales for popular consumption.

kamishibai oral story-telling tradition. The third, and the main current at the time, was represented by Tezuka Osamu and his long story manga inspired by Walt Disney's animated films. The blending of the first two autochthonous artistic streams of the short story manga and a variety of existing pictorial kamishibai styles were to combine with the stylistics of American expressionist movies to yield the gekiga style of the 1960s.

Trying to set himself apart from Tezuka's early drawing style aimed at children, Tatsumi conceptualized his new style as an amalgam of American film noir expressionism and local film tradition. The heyday of American film noir, from the 1940s to the late 1950s, owed much to the black-and-white visual style developed from German expressionist cinematography. Many of the classic Japanese films of the time were heavily influenced by this and even films like Kurosawa Akira's classic police detective story *Nora inu* (Stray Dog, 1949) contained many cinematographic and narrative elements of classic American film noir. Tatsumi's early experiments with suspense stories simply reproduced cinematographic techniques in a frame-by-frame film-noir type manga and culminated in works like *Kuroi fubuki* (Black Blizzard, 1956), one of the first examples of a gekiga type long story manga.

In his analysis of the gekiga style, published in 1968 as *Gekiga daigaku* (Gekiga University), Tatsumi (1968: 14) explains that before the gekiga style came into being Japanese movies were mainly a mixture of horror and thriller inspired by Henri-Georges Clouzot's 1955 black-and-white French suspense film *Les Diaboliques*. In these psychological thrillers young and beautiful detective heroes with unusual reasoning powers would solve complex whodunits. Adopting Tezuka's innovative drawing style that depicted psychological landscapes through close-ups as well as the depiction of backgrounds and the use of onomatopoeia, the gekiga artists added elements from the film noir hardboiled school of crime fiction to their repertoire of visually representing the existential crisis of postwar urban culture.

In time this realization of cinematographic effects led to increasingly realistic drawing techniques in manga. Tatsumi's epic *A Drifting Life* gives several examples of films whose psychological impact inspired his introspective drawing style. He mentions, for example, Orson Welles' creepy savagery in Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949), where harsh lighting and distorted camera angles combined with seedy locations to evoke the postwar exhaustion in Vienna at the start of the Cold War (Tatsumi 2009: 169). Tatsumi's works adopt the psychological landscape of this film noir expressionism to convey a distinct sense of exhaustion through the urbane sensibility of his gekiga style. Other examples he mentions are First Sergeant Milton Warden's (Burt Lancaster)

cold-bloodedness in Fred Zinnemann's *From Here to Eternity* (1953) and the cruelty of Jack Palance in George Stevens' *Shane* (1953).

## 5. The formation of Gekiga Atelier and the significance of the *Gekiga*

### *Manifesto*

Just as Tezuka Osamu had done previously, as of 1959 most artists who worked for Hinomaru bunko in Osaka moved to Tokyo, where they formed their own independent manga studio called Gekiga Atelier and adopted the term gekiga as their aesthetic principal. Amidst increasing consumer affluence yet rising social unrest, it was Tatsumi who proposed the formation of this revolutionary countercultural graphic arts studio. Even though it was a short-lived venture—it was disbanded a year after its inauguration in 1959—Gekiga Atelier united the most talented graphic artists of the time, including Tatsumi Yoshihiro, Saitō Takao, Satō Masaaki, Ishikawa Fumiyasu, Matsumoto Masahiko, Sakurai Shōichi, Yamamori Susumu, and K. Motomitsu. The artists lived together in the Kokubunji area in Tokyo and in 1959 produced a short-story magazine called *Matenrō* (Skyscraper), which became the creative platform for the gekiga style. In addition, Tatsumi drafted his seminal *Gekiga Manifesto*,<sup>11</sup> which asserts the importance of gekiga as part of the genealogy of manga by making a connection between manga and Toba Sōjō, *Onyōriga* (Small-scale Frolicking Animals) are attributed.

Tatsumi aimed primarily at redefining the audience of manga through depicting the psychological world of the adult. He wrote in his *Gekiga Manifesto* that “the difference between manga and gekiga most certainly lies in artistic technique, but it can also be defined by its target audience”. He defines this target audience as originally “ranging from middle school to first grade high school students” but admits that the mature art of Shirato Sanpei and Hirata Hiroshi pushed the age group even higher (Tatsumi 1968: 28-9).

The clinical psychiatrist Fukushima Akira, who specializes in crime, has argued in *Manga to Nihonjin* ([Manga and the Japanese] 1992: 60) that it was primarily through gekiga that the manga media was able to spread to the untapped adult market. It was not until its rapid spread by the early seventies that criticism of gekiga divided into *kōteiha*

<sup>11</sup> Tatsumi produced his *Gekiga Manifesto* as a one-page *gekiga kōbō go-annai* (Guide to the *Gekiga Atelier*) in 1959 and sent it as a postcard to 150 editors, newspapers, publishers, and manga artists, including Tezuka Osamu. The source of my translation is Ban Toshio's reprint in *Tezuka Osamu monogatari* (1992: 284).

<sup>12</sup> In her analysis of manga discourse Jacqueline Berndt (2008: 309) has noted that references to Toba Sōjō go back to 1924, when the cartoonist and critic Hosokibara Seiki wrote the first history of manga.

(affirmative faction) and *hiteiha* (negative faction) primarily because the increasing number of adults reading manga was perceived as a regression to childhood drawings rather than adult-oriented literature. In this respect comics have been perceived as hindering the healthy transition into adulthood in Japan. Fukushima also points out that it was only because of the adult-oriented manga provided by the gekiga pioneers that a multitude of adult genres were able to emerge, for instance in erotic magazines such as *Ero gekiga* (Erotic Dramatic Manga), *Kannō gekiga* (Sensual Dramatic Manga), and *Erotopia*, that shifted the manga industry up the generational ladder well into the adult market. In this way gekiga became an icon for mature graphic content in the sixties and seventies through its combination of adult concerns, like the individual's search for meaning in disenfranchising metropolitan consumer society. The commonality of these motifs found in Western movies as well as Japanese literature provided a stepping stone towards today's international manga culture.

## 6. Transcultural influence of the gekiga

Once Tatsumi's concept of gekiga became recognized, mainly through opening up the adult readership market in Japan, writers who specialized in other genres also began to draw in the new style. For example, Mizuki Shigeru produced *Gekiga Hitler* in 1971<sup>13</sup> and, because of the intense rivalry between them, Tezuka Osamu also began drawing in the style, producing such unusual titles as *Dororo* (1967–68)<sup>14</sup> to compete with Mizuki's successful portrayal of Japan's folkloric *yōkai* (ghost) tradition and his adoption of gekiga.

From the height of its popularity in the sixties, gekiga quickly fell into disrepute in the seventies due to its often grotesque portrayal of the social underclass that existed in Japan's urban centre. Its discourse was criticized as violent and as an influence that corrupted Japan's younger generations. In his afterword to *A Drifting Life*, Tatsumi (2009: 408) wrote that "all of a sudden gekiga was associated with corruption and headlines like 'The crimes of the gekiga generation', appeared in newspapers". Tatsumi's frustration is reflected in the social movement known as *yūgai komikku sōdō* (harmful comics riots), which sought to ban obscene and indecent comics. In his psychological investigation Fukushima Akira (1992:50) states that the gekiga boom in Japan was a reflection of postwar Japan's infantile education system. This infantilism is corroborated by John Dower (1986: 123), who observes that American propaganda

13 It was published in *Manga Sunday* as part 2 of the "*Kakumeika*" series (Revolutionary Series).

14 In 2008, Vertical Inc. released an English translation of *Dororo* in three volumes, which received the Eisner Award in the Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Japan division in 2009.



utilized the Western perception of Japan's "collective psychic blockage at an infantile stage of development". Yet beside these negative portrayals of gekiga in the media, the new dramatic style propelled the comics tradition of Japan into one of the most accessible cultural consumer products the world had ever seen.

It is now generally assumed that the original gekiga drawing style has been completely subsumed by the umbrella term of modern manga. However, this is a mistaken assumption and I shall argue below that the gritty realistic gekiga style verbalized by Tatsumi and developed through social analogy by Shirato Sanpei remains influential in contemporary manga—as is evident by the success of Saitō Takao's *Golgo 13*<sup>15</sup>—as a strong alternative manga discourse against other graphic tropes like *otaku* fetishization, *lolicon* and the cultural archetype of *kawaii* (aesthetic of cuteness).<sup>16</sup>

It is equally unhelpful to attribute the influence of gekiga to Tatsumi and Shirato and dismiss the movement's wholesale absorption into the mainstream manga boom. Quite on the contrary, gekiga continued to exist as an independent dark, almost gothic undercurrent within the mainstream manga culture throughout the 1970s, when Koike Kazuo<sup>17</sup> first drew *Kozure ōkami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*, 1970–76) in parallel with Tezuka's *Black Jack* (1973–83). Both works, but especially the former, quickly became cult classics due to the epic scope, detailed historical accuracy, masterful artwork and nostalgic recollection of the *bushidō* ethos. In addition, the realism of *Kozure ōkami* is reflected in the picturesque and detailed depictions of nature and the adoption of famous historical locations in Japan. As *Lone Wolf and Cub* it was initially released in North America by First Comics in 1987, with covers designed by the likes of Frank Miller, and as a result became one of the most successful Japanese manga released in the United States.

Even one of its few predecessors—Nakazawa Keiji's *Hadashi no Gen* (*Barefoot Gen*), one of the first English-language translations, produced in 1976 by Project Gen, a volunteer organization—could not rival its success. Arguably Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* also exhibited strong gekiga influences with its pathos, dark topic, and often grotesque visual style, but it lacked the realistic drawing style of the human figure which made *Lone Wolf and Cub* a success in America.

Due in no small part to Frank Miller, the gekiga style spread to the United States,

<sup>15</sup> Saitō Takao (b. 1936) produced the story of the professional assassin *Golgo 13* from 1969 up until the present day, which arguably makes it the longest running gekiga manga in postwar graphic culture.

<sup>16</sup> For detailed explanations of these terms see, for example, Patrick W. Galbraith (2009).

<sup>17</sup> Similar to Tatsumi's *Gekiga Atelier* in 1959, Kazuo Koike established *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a cram school for aspiring *gekiga* artists, in 1977. Koike's school was instrumental in moving the *gekiga* style into the twenty-first century.



where *Lone Wolf and Cub* received the prestigious Eisner Award in the category of Best U.S. Edition of International Material for 2001. Miller's work in particular is heavily influenced by the gekiga tradition, as reflected, for example, in *Sin City*, released for the first time in black and white in 1991 to emphasize a sense of neo-film noir expressionism, which as discussed above was also one of the main sources of inspiration for Tatsumi. The transcultural connections appear to bring us full circle here to the history of moving images from screen to paper and vice versa. Finally and most recently, in an interview on the BBC the novelist Max Allan Collins acknowledged this influence when he declared that his *Road to Perdition* is "an unabashed homage" to *Lone Wolf And Cub*.

## 7. Socio-cultural influence of the gekiga style

The appeal of Tatsumi's autobiographical account is that he intersperses his personal story with an accurate and detailed depiction of Japan's postwar period. One example will illustrate the encyclopedic quality of *A Drifting Life*. In the single-page panel below, Tatsumi depicts the impact of the Korean War on his alter ego. In this way, Tatsumi's private life becomes a vital part of the grand history of Shōwa Japanese history, wherein the private seamlessly unfolds alongside the economic and cultural happenstance of Japan.

Intertextualizing the personal with the historical in an attempt to re-imagine Shōwa history through the artist's personal life is a common trend in Japanese graphic art, another fine example being Mizuki Shigeru's retelling of Shōwa history in *Komikku Shōwa-shi* (A Comics History of the Shōwa Era, 1994), in which he places himself at the center of the story as the countercultural anti-hero soldier. In both cases history is no longer retold through anthropomorphic characters or populated by names and figures, but is told through realistic trickster narrators who place themselves at the locus of history.

Another important factor in Tatsumi's gekiga oeuvre, particularly in the seventies, lies in his introduction of the social dimension to storytelling. No longer was manga discourse defined through an emphasis on action and adventure as a form of pure escapist entertainment, but it now exhibited a social consciousness that reflected the needs of the individual in Japan. Tatsumi's main character, Hiroshi, is located in relation to factual history and his concerns reflect those of society. This marks a thematic move from escapism, fantasy, and fiction to the realm of social concerns and social realism.

I have already mentioned briefly that many graphic artists who drew in the gekiga style belonged to the generation of youths who had experienced the Asia–



Fig. 1: *A Drifting Life*, p. 68.

Pacific War during their childhood. Arguably it is no coincidence that the trauma experienced by many of those artists found expression in a new style of manga that eschewed the depiction of the trivial comic in favor of the social tragicomic. Several of the most renowned gekiga artists were robbed of their youth during the war, including Shirato Sanpei, Tatsumi Yoshihiro, Saitō Takao, Kojima Gōseki, and Tsuge Yoshiharu, who are united in their depiction of nihilism via the gekiga style of realistic manga. Most of these artists were just too young to make it into the group of Japanese child soldiers, who actively participated in the war but were old enough to comprehend the devastation around them in the final years of the war. With their own eyes they saw what Oda

Makoto referred to as *akachaketa menseki* (the burnt-out vistas) and they knew the war passively on the home front, through large-scale fire bombings, shelters, and school evacuations. Themselves innocent, they were yet traumatized by the psychological effect of war during a time when their psychology was not fully formed. This sets them apart from adult manga artists like Mizuki Shigeru who experienced the war more actively and had significantly different perceptions of it. As a result, gekiga artists have expressed their childhood experiences through a vague sense of nihilism that is common in their representation of Japan's social condition. In essence, gekiga is an extension of the dramatic rendition of childhood trauma and expresses in its most fundamental sense a longing for social equality and democracy.

## 8. *A Drifting Life* and Tezuka Osamu

It is no coincidence that Tatsumi's *A Drifting Life* begins and ends with Tezuka Osamu. The symbiotic relationship between Tezuka, the "God of Comics", and Tatsumi, the "godfather of comics" (Aoki 2009), is vital to the development of modern Japanese graphic art. *A Drifting Life* begins with Tatsumi reading Tezuka's *Lost World* and he leaves no doubt in readers' minds that it was Tezuka who inspired him to draw. After sending in four panel comic strips for publication, Tatsumi is invited by the *Mainichi Shinbun* newspaper, which sets up a round-table talk with Tezuka Osamu and several

young artists. As Tatsumi's relationship with Tezuka develops, so does his desire to follow in his footsteps.

Tatsumi (2009: 831-834) dedicated the epilogue of *A Drifting Life* to the fifth anniversary of Tezuka Osamu's death, which was celebrated on 9 February, 1995. For the final chapter, or epilogue, Tatsumi jumps from the 1960s during the student demonstrations to 1995 in a sudden emotional commemoration of Tezuka. It is unclear why Tatsumi chose to devote the last chapter of his history to the memory of Tezuka, but the graphics and text are somber, dark (Tatsumi shades his own face in a gesture that hides his expression), and emotional. Perhaps it is a personal dedication to his role model, yet the language suggests otherwise. In fact, Tatsumi's expressions suggest a deep sense of awe and *carpe diem* where "time swallows everyone without distinguishing between the genius and the ordinary" (Tatsumi, 2009: 833). *A Drifting Life* is Tatsumi's attempt to write himself into the graphic history of postwar manga culture, yet it is also a reflection on how Tezuka had defined the Shōwa history of manga in his own right. Through rewriting his own history, Tatsumi sets out to redefine "the small boat of gekiga amidst the great ocean of Tezuka's works". (Tatsumi, 2009: 832) Therein also lies his greatest achievement. *A Drifting Life* redefines the postwar history of graphic art in Japan by displacing the centrifugal force of Tezuka's manga oeuvre and foregrounding the eddies and undercurrents tugging and pulling in various directions to yield the diverse discourses that make up today's hybrid manga media. Initially, Tezuka severely criticized the Gekiga Atelier, but in the end even he had to embrace its tenets and adjust his style. Below is a double page from Ban Toshio's manga biography of Tezuka Osamu depicting the impact of Tatsumi's *Gekiga Manifesto* and how Tezuka tried to come to terms with the new movement.

(Below, p. 285, reading from top, right to left):

**Narrator:** Tezuka Osamu was particularly sensitive about the changes of the period and was irritated and worried.

**Tezuka:** Is this gekiga? Is it interesting?

**Assistant:** Yes.

**Tezuka:** What is interesting about it?

**Assistant:** It creates an atmosphere.

**Tezuka:** Mmm. I don't get it. I don't understand letters drawn by magic.

**Assistant:** Sensei, are you alright?

**Tezuka:** Mmm. The more I think about it, the less I am drawing.

**Tezuka:** Even if I explain it, you won't understand.

**Narrator:** Tezuka Osamu said that this period was the most difficult.

**Narrator:** Perhaps it was the pain of giving birth to a new kind of creative work.



Fig. 2: Ban Toshio, *Tezuka Osamu monogatari*, p. 283-284.

Yet, by the mid-1960s Tezuka could no longer ignore the overwhelming influence of the gekiga style and its redefinition of adult-oriented manga. The rise of the Gekiga Atelier was a difficult period in Tezuka's life. Ban Toshio (1992: 283–5) has remarked that the emergence of rental manga stores specializing in short-story magazines (*tanpenshi*) for adult readers defined by the *Gekiga Manifesto*, which appeared in *Matenrō*, was a serious threat to Tezuka's style of drawing. Not only did rival artists like Tsuge Yoshiharu and Mizuki Shigeru work for the booming rental manga industry but Shirato Sanpei's epic manga also contributed to the mercurial twists of manga stylistics and its new adult readership in the early sixties.

In the end, Tezuka responded with several gekiga works of his own style that would consolidate the adult style in relation to children's manga. Tezuka's *Black Jack*, *MW* (1976–78), and *Adolf ni tsugu* (*Tell Adolf*, 1983–85) are all notable as Tezuka's attempt to beat the gekiga artists, who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, at their own game.

## Conclusion

Quite recently many of the gekiga discussed above, which have been translated into English as well as other languages, have won some of the top prizes in the American (Eisner Awards), European (Angoulême) and Japanese (Tezuka Osamu bunkashō) comics industry. For Tatsumi, the founding father of the gekiga style, 2010 was a particularly successful year as he won two Eisner Awards for the English translation of *A Drifting Life*. Where, then, within the thematic of manga as a means of intercultural

crossover and a transcultural phenomenon, can we locate the significance of *A Drifting Life*?

Several recent manga collaborations suggest that in conceptualizing manga as global graphic discourse we should locate Tatsumi's work as a transcultural production that seeks to combine Japan's native comics tradition with stylized film noir expressionism and a sense of verisimilitude that sought the engagement of artists in the social struggle of postwar Japan. For instance, *Japan: As Viewed by 17 Creators* (2006) is a product of the nouvelle manga movement, wherein a group of Franco-Belgian and Japanese cartoonists attempt to combine their respective comics cultures into one hybrid Franco-Japanese coproduction. The work constitutes an anthology evenly divided between European and Japanese creators, wherein each cartoonist presents a short comic set in a different part of Japan. The Europeans have the outsider perspective, while the Japanese pose as insiders. On the other side of the spectrum of transcultural collaboration is *Bat-Manga!: The Secret History of Batman in Japan* (2008). This work anthologizes a Japanese shōnen manga adaptation by Kuwata Jirō of the American *Batman* comic book series serialized from April 1966 to May 1967, created during the Batman craze in Japan. Tatsumi Yoshihiro's *A Drifting Life* lies in between these two divergent attempts towards, firstly, the exploration of diverse cultural influences and the creation of a hybrid form of manga and, secondly, the intercultural collaboration resulting from these crossovers. *A Drifting Life* is both a hybrid and a collaboration, because it is a cooperation of design and translation into English and also because of the American influence in the text and graphism.

Gekiga changed the emphasis of early postwar manga from making readers laugh to portraying the anger and annoyances of Japan's disenfranchised young generations. Omnibus magazines like *Kage* and *Machi* were able to reach an adult readership through the realistic portrayal of working-class hardship in contemporary society. As a result of this shift in theme and subject matter the readership of manga extended rapidly from children to adults.

Rather than an end to Tatsumi's illustrious career, *A Drifting Life* is on the contrary another beginning, with several of his short stories earmarked for movie productions. Thereby Tatsumi's oeuvre is shortly to enter the pop-culture market along the lines of Tezuka Osamu and Mizuki Shigeru.

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# The Eye of the Image: Transcultural characteristics and intermediality in Urasawa Naoki's narrative *20th Century Boys*

Felix GIESA  
and  
Jens MEINRENKEN

“20th century toy, I wanna be your boy”  
(T.Rex “20th Century Boys”, 1973)

## 1. Introduction

Urasawa Naoki's manga *20th Century Boys* is a graphic narrative of global validity, thanks to its multilayering of musical references, iconic images and several timelines. This manga compresses a variety of images in a special manner, thus achieving a pictorialism, that contributes to the conception of *20th Century Boys* as a *pictorial encyclopedia*<sup>1</sup> for the second half of the past century. The symbols of eye and hand,

1 Not to be forgotten in this context, is the immense importance of collecting and archiving images

which the protagonist Kenji and his friends chose as a logo in their childhood, suggest Urasawa's work should be read as a visual form of *Sehtheorie* [theory of viewing], in which the various images and motifs are compressed into a common allegorical significance that goes beyond the plot depicted in *20th Century Boys*. Urasawa tells his story of a few boys from the 20th century by constantly recursing to images from the late period of this time, in particular, from mass communication media such as radio and television to contemporary computer media, both fundamental to the dissemination of knowledge and essential for the structure in Urasawa's manga. This paper is a first attempt at an interdisciplinary reading of Urasawa's manga that combines the visual knowledge of art history with the narratological competence of literary theory and extends the media studies perspective on accessing manga. We have chosen this manga, since it is a prominent example for analyzing intermedia and transcultural phenomena which in particular disclose the need of historical visual knowledge as a basis for comics studies.

In *20th Century Boys* Urasawa Naoki draws on a multitude of visual metaphors taken from the pool of media-based images of the last 50 years. This paper aims at retracing how Urasawa establishes a transcultural narrative for the new millennium that is rooted on the verge of the 21st century but recounts the past half century and aims for the future. One prominent example is Okamoto Taro's *Tower of the Sun* (1970), which appears repeatedly in the manga series and reveals the summoning of traditional concepts by Urasawa what is also a typical strategy of contemporary Japanese art (Vartanian and Wada 2011). The *Tower of the Sun* by Okamoto Taro<sup>2</sup>, for example, is based on late Jomon period earthenware (ibid.: 157). By giving this monument of the *EXPO '70* a crucial role in the plot of his narrative Urasawa pays credit to Okamoto's anthropological concept, whenever he reflects on a certain culture in his manga. Also by doing so he provides a reading support for his multi-timed plot since the "head, abdomen, and back [of the tower; FG & JM] all have a face formation, representing the future, the present, and the past in turn." (ibid.) In Urasawa past, present, and future are heavily interwoven and connected with memorabilia from each period making time and memory the key topoi of *20th Century Boys*.

By expanding his grasp on not only Japanese traditions but also western popular media products (in the broadest sense) Urasawa corresponds with the to generate a common cultural memory (eg. Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne-project). In addition to older visual media such as photography and film, now especially the internet and computers serve as digital data storage of a global culture of memory.

<sup>2</sup> This paper refrains from using macrons to indicate long Japanese vowels in order to avoid mistakes.

tradition of Japanese modernization; he fuses the local with the global, among other things, the idea of collecting, saving, and archiving of objects as an art form<sup>3</sup>. The latter can be found widely throughout popular culture, referring back to the classical idea of an encyclopaedia:

Collecting and generating are, in this sense, related cultural techniques: Generating is a collective activity in an already available area of culture, pre- and extra-literary perhaps, but actually in the form of a parent stock of knowledge or [...] in the form of an encyclopaedia<sup>4 5</sup> (Baßler 2002: 96).

By collecting ideas from the pictorial inventory of the late 20th century and generating new images from a personal point of view, Urasawa gives way to a transcultural flow of memory images and creates a graphic narrative that has global validity.

## 2. On the artist and his manga *20th Century Boys*

Urasawa Naoki, born 1960 in Tokyo, is one of the most recognized *mangaka* of his generation. Outside of Japan, Urasawa is mainly renowned for his series “Monster” (originally serialized in *Big Comic Original*, 1994–2000), “20th Century Boys” (originally serialized in *Big Comic Spirits*, 1999–2006), and most recently “Pluto” (originally serialized in *Big Comic Original*, 2003–2009), all of which have been published in the United States, France, Spain, and Germany. In 2004, Urasawa received an award at the French *Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d’Angoulême* for *20th Century Boys*, and in 2006, the series was nominated for the *Max and Moritz Award* at the *International Comic Salon* in Erlangen, Germany. While all 22 volumes of the series and also the two issues of the follow-up *21st Century Boys* have been published in Germany, the American publisher *VIZ Media* has only published seventeen issues so far<sup>6</sup>.

Starting in 1969 and ending in 2017, the fate of a group of childhood friends

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3 For more details see Schaffner (1997).

4 For the idea of comics as an encyclopaedia of knowledge see Meinrenken (2007, internet; 2011/ forthcoming).

5 Translated from German: „Sammeln und Generieren sind, so gesehen, verwandte Kulturtechniken: Generieren ist eine Sammeltätigkeit in einem Bereich der Kultur, über den man bereits verfügt—vor- und außerliterarisch zwar, aber durchaus schon in Form eines geordneten Wissensvorrates oder [...] in Form einer Enzyklopädie“.

6 Vol. 18 is scheduled for Dec. 2011.

around the protagonist Kenji is related<sup>7</sup>. However, the story is not told chronologically, but starts in 1999, on the verge of New Year's Eve 2000, and continues after a long break in 2014. In particular, childhood memories of the late 1960s and the 1970s are reported, without exception through extensive flashbacks. In 1969, the young Kenji and some of his friends form a "gang" and set up a secret headquarter<sup>8</sup>. Inspired by manga and Science Fiction films of their time, they develop their own doomsday scenario in which they position themselves as heroes and saviors of the fate of all mankind. With the beginning of the action around the year 2000, the once childish fantasies of omnipotence really start to happen and plunge parts of the world into chaos. These events are concerted by the so-called *friend*, an unknown but seemingly all-powerful cult leader who apparently had access to the ideas of the once-children. Kenji now gathers his former friends in order to prevent the impending apocalypse.

### 3. The layer of reference to musical and visual media

As indicated by the number of awards, this series counts as Urasawa's most renowned work nationally and internationally. This global recognition—so we claim—can be traced back to both this manga's narrative and visual particularities. *20th Century Boys* creates a retrospective of the 20th century via patent references to modern media and devises a dark vision of the future. Besides movies, computer games, and comics, it is American and British rock music of the 1960s and 1970s that plays a crucial role. The series' title is borrowed from the song *20th Century Boy* by the British glam rock band T.Rex. The chorus "20th century toy, I wanna be your boy" and the line "Friends say it's fine, friends say it's good" has a multi-layered echo both at the story level and at the visual level. Playfully, and musically inspired, Urasawa composes a relation between childhood, adulthood, and friendship and confronts these with the destructive identity of the 20th century. Urasawa's fictitious cultural and historical construction sets in with the wild musical energy of Rock'n'Roll, which

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7 The idea of a group of adolescents whose personalities and especially whose personal memories as such are viewed as time capsules in a fictional narrative can be found in the collection *Time Capsule: short stories about teenagers throughout the twentieth century* (1999) by Donald R. Gallo. Here also—just as in *20th Century Boys*—is the personal fate of each character interwoven with political and technical advances of each period of time.

8 This secret headquarter is located in a deserted field surrounded by forest. One could argue that this location resembles the *utaki* [a sacred place] that Okamoto Taro describes in his works about his field studies in the 1960s and 1970s in Japan. Okamoto was convinced "that here in the 'utaki' was something that had been passed down since time immemorial, a supernatural presence that descended upon an empty plot of land" (Ito 2005: 21). For Kenji and his 'gang' their old secret headquarter evolves into an *utaki* whose 'supernatural presence' interconnects all timelines of the plot and functions as an anchor for the whole plot scheme.

even serves as the series' overture: When the song *20th Century Boy* reverberates through the hallways of a junior high school in 1973, it provides a hint to Kenji's future. He is the 20th century boy and together with his friends he has to save mankind for the new millennium (*20th Century Boys*, Vol. 1: 10f.). But the use of a simple record marks also the turning point in the daily school routine, without the reader knowing anything about the story or its characters so far. The direct and electric sound of Rock'n'Roll creates an immediacy of representation that has its narrative counterpart within the repetition and changes of the different timelines. Musicians and bands such as Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, Bob Dylan or The Rolling Stones represented the rebellion of a whole generation against society's standardization, and are presented accordingly in *20th Century Boys*<sup>9</sup>. The subversive power of Rock'n'Roll, and the broad public effect of related cultural events, such as that of Woodstock most famously, surpass nostalgic reference and evoke a demonic threat. For example in vol. 10 of *20th Century Boys*, the legendary American Blues musician Robert Johnson is mentioned; supposedly, Johnson was taught the secrets of guitar play by the devil himself. This anecdote—in the manga, it also functions as the birth myth of Rock'n'Roll—reveals the deliberate ambiguity of Urasawa's media references (*20th Century Boys*, Vol. 10: 27). That is to say, on the one hand, Rock'n'Roll signifies emancipation, and helps, for instance, the main character Kenji to gain the strength necessary for his personal identity, fighting for the fate of the world (see fig. 1)<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, the music also symbolizes, in part, the global threat emanating from the secret organization of the *friend* that underlies the whole plot. For instance, student Ma-Kun in vol. 1 listens to the "healing CD" from the organization of the *friend* (*20th Century Boys*, Vol. 1: 118–119). Later on, it is he who is stabbing the leader of another sect with a kitchen knife.

Representations of catastrophic and horrific scenarios can also be found within Urasawa's cinematic references that range from classic Japanese anime such as *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu*) or *Gigantor* (*Tetsujin 28-go*) to American Science Fiction movies. The visual crossover between Western and Japanese pop culture is plainly seen in fig. 2, which depicts the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. Movies like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*

9 See Urasawa Naoki (2009): *20th Century Boys*, Vol. 4, San Francisco: Viz Media, p. 70. Originally published by Shogakukan. Here an ironic allusion towards Jimi Hendrix playing the guitar with his teeth appears in the lower right panel. While this image contains, at this point, quite caricatured features, the constant recourse to especially this early form of Rock'n'Roll discloses an emphasis on the rebellion of the juvenile population against prevailing systems.

10 See Giesa (2009) for a discussion of adolescence and pop culture/ music in comics.



Fig. 1: Urasawa Naoki (2009): *20th Century Boys*, Vol. 2, San Francisco: Viz Media, p. 147 (edited sample). Originally published by Shogakukan. The broken condition of Kenji's character is reflected in this image representing a mere mirage of him intersected by the crossbars of the window.

verge of the 21st century<sup>12</sup>.

The prophetic power of these images coincides with the concept of a virtual reality. The different layers of reality are envisioned in vol. 8 of the series. There, we see Kyoko playing computer games, dressed with a head-mounted display—a crucial tool for the brainwashing methods of the organization of the *friend*. In the organisation's own amusement park *Tomodachi Land*, the sect submits its victims to the ups and downs of a rollercoaster trip, while forcing them to look at pictures which display, besides others, a burning Tokyo on New Year's Eve 2000. Dream and trauma are the recurring motifs of this play with actual and fictive realities in *Tomodachi Land*<sup>13</sup>. In vol. 10, it is the computer screen that functions as an instrument of control and communication marking the new familial benchmark for the members of the sect (see fig. 5). The screen serves as a technoid version of the all-seeing eye. It is part of the *friend's* *Big Brother* mentality, tracing his desire to control all of his members by

(USA 1951), *War of the Worlds* (USA 1953) or *Target Earth* (USA 1954) are proof of the vast expansion of *Alien Invasion* movies in the 1950s. The scenario of a possible World War III reverberates in the Japanese *Godzilla* movies, becoming its own genre of horror. The power of destruction by an atomic bomb is present in the images of the comics of the *Atomic Age* that unfold their very own modern version of the biblical apocalypse (see fig. 3). The Bible illustrations by the American comics artist Basil Wolverton shown in fig. 4 relate the end of the world directly to the destruction of real cities<sup>11</sup>. In *20th Century Boys*, these intermedia references to popular culture are condensed into the concrete shape of a mysterious robot heralding the destruction of mankind on the

11 See Meinrenken (2010) for a discussion of apocalyptic visions in comics and in the TV series *Heroes*. There (86) he exemplifies McCloud's comparison of the potential of comics with that of an atomic nucleus: only waiting to be split. (McCloud 2000: p. 243f.)

12 Illustrative examples can be found in vol. 2, p. 114 and vol. 8, pp. 40-41. Especially the latter in which a mobilized version of the *Tower of the Sun* is confronted with a fiendish, garbage-like robot impressively reveals how Urasawa toys with icons, and places them within a plot that resembles that of Science Fiction narratives or computer games.

13 See for example pages 85, 89 and 137 in Urasawa Naoki (2010): *20th Century Boys*, Vol. 8, San Francisco: Viz Media. Originally published by Shogakukan.





Fig. 2: Urasawa Naoki (2009): *20th Century Boys*, Vol. 1, San Francisco: Viz Media, pp. 62–63. Originally published by Shogakukan. In comparison of this double spread from Urasawa's manga with fig. 2 and 4 the global awareness and paranoia of an apocalypse during the peak of the cold war are densely palpable.



Fig. 3: *Atomic War*, Vol. 1 (1952), Springfield, Mass.: Ace Comics. Cover illustration.

any means necessary.

The exposed visual representation of media objects in *20th Century Boys* can also be found on the level of covers, posters, magazines, and different manga that are quoted throughout the series. For example a part of the famous record cover of *Big Brothers & The Holding Company's* 1968 record, composed by legendary underground comix artist Robert Crumb is shown in a moody situation depicting Kenji and his guitar idol from the neighbourhood (*20th Century Boys*, Vol. 4: 75). Besides sports manga or the Japanese male magazine *Heibon Punch*, there are several issues of *Shonen Sunday* and *Shonen Magazine*, which function as further references in the narrative of *20th Century Boys* (ibid., vol. 2, p. 79). Their historic publication dates correspond with the childhood of the protagonists in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the seed for the later dramatic events was planted.

#### 4. The layers of graphic style and narration

Let's turn to the layers of graphic style and narration, and examine whether the beforesaid applies to these as well. The variation of timelines already mentioned is interconnected with the use of different drawing techniques. The rendition of actual objects or buildings based on photographs is thwarted by sketches which present a condensed version of the story<sup>14</sup>. This takes the form of scrawly children

<sup>14</sup> As can be seen for example if one compares the children's drawings of the National Diet

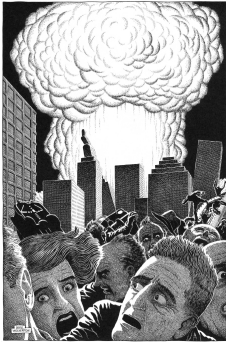


Fig. 4: Basil Wolverton (2009): *The Wolverton Bible*. The Old Testament & Book of Revelation through the Pen of Basil Wolverton. Seattle: Fantagraphics, p. 265. Originally, production started in the late 1950s, serialized publication started later in *The Plain Truth* (Eugene, Oregon) under the title of "The Bible Story".



Fig. 5: Urasawa Naoki (2010): *20th Century Boys*, Vol. 10, San Francisco: Viz Media, p. 133 (edited sample). Originally published by Shogakukan. The "friend" is watching you: by means of the screen the "friend" and his organization control everyone and everything.

drawings foreclosing crucial elements of the upcoming events in *The Book of Prophecy* (see fig. 6). *The Book of Prophecy* is a small booklet in which Kenji and his schoolfriends drew their future anticipating adventures in battle against the devilish *League of Evil* when they were children. The fight with a 50m tall robot, futuristic laser weapons and the destruction of government buildings mark an essential narrative moment of the series, as they reveal an affinity to technical developments not only during that time. *The Book of Prophecy* has, however, also served the *friend* as a draft for the attacks of his organisation.

The storyboard reveals how Urasawa designs his manga pages (Hijiki 2009: 67, 82). Starting with a rough layout of the page in pencil, he details the characters and their surroundings explicitly with a nib. This technique also applies to the narrative technique of *20th Century Boys*. The constant fragmentation and repetition of visual motifs and plot moments creates a truly labyrinthine and spiral narrative structure. The recursive interlocking of childhood memories from the years 1969 through 1973 with the later, main narrative level have their counterpart in *The Book of Prophecy*, in regard to the graphic style as well as the contents. What begins as a mere childish fantasy, grows into the threatening presence of adults. The narrative modes of analepsis and metalepsis<sup>15</sup> are the most prominent stylistic devices throughout the whole series. Two narrative levels can be identified: On the one level, the years 1997 through 1999 see Kenji and his mates uncover that the *friend* must be one of their childhood group. On the other level, the year 2014 has Kenji's niece Kanna uniting rivaling groups in battle against the *friend*. All other timelines are personal narrations

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Building in *The Book of Prophecy* in vol. 5, p. 65 with the photorealistic depiction of the very same building in vol. 5, p. 79.

<sup>15</sup> Understood in the tradition of French theorist Gérard Genette (1998). Genette uses the term of analepsis to categorize flashbacks in a narration which in *20th Century Boys* can be found in the numerous memory processes. Genette uses the term metalepsis to categorize paradoxical transgressions of logical narrative levels, e. g. a book that contains itself just as in *20th Century Boys* where *The Book of Prophecies* quasi contains the lives of Kenji and his friends.





Fig. 6: Urasawa Naoki (2009): *20th Century Boys*, Vol. 5, San Francisco: Viz Media, p. 61. Originally published by Shogakukan. In *The Book of Prophecy* the idea that 'man forges its own fate' becomes tragic reality—at least within the narrative. The small size of the booklet also resembles the underlying artistic concept of eye and hand: what the hand perceives, the eye perceives as well. The *friend* perceived what was drawn and puts it into practice. Kenji and his friends, on the other hand, also have to perceive what was drawn, but their view is bound backwards in time to reconstruct what they were planning, in order to prevent the fate of the world orchestrated by the friend.

or characters' memories.

The multilayered narrative interreferentiality between text and image manifests itself in the historic broadcasting of the landing on the moon on July 20<sup>th</sup> 1969, which is watched by Kenji's friend Donkey who stays up all night in front of the TV screen (*20th Century Boys*, Vol. 1: 126-130). The images from the satellite create a white noise on the TV screen, allowing only an intermittent view of the actual event. Urasawa's play with the visibility and invisibility of the presentation reappears in the secret identity of the *friend*. His true character might be exposed but his face remains covered, due to a mask and the fact that only isolated parts of his face become visible. As is the case with the first landing on the moon, the riddle of his secret identity is a play with the possibility of representation. This is reminiscent of installations by the Korean media artist Nam June Paik, who transferred the white noise of a TV set into the artistic domain at the beginning of the 1960s (see Hanhardt 2000). Those artistic references allude to the deeper symbolic relevance of the plot of *20th Century Boys*.

This becomes most recognizable in the references to the World Expo '70 in Osaka<sup>16</sup>. From this world exposition, Urasawa borrows not only the idea of a time capsule in which children place their trophies<sup>17</sup>, but also the *Tower of the Sun*. As a symbolic motif it has already appeared in *The Book of Prophecy* (*20th Century Boys*, vol. 5: 61), promising peace and humanity in accordance with the Expo's motto "Progress and harmony for mankind". The time capsule, on the other hand, serves as an objective embodiment

of the different timelines of the plot. It encloses important clues for the uncovering of the *friend's* identity, but it also has a long tradition in the art of the 20th century

16 See *Structure, space, mankind* (1970) for details on EXPO '70.

17 See *Time Capsule EXPO '70* [<http://panasonic.net/history/timecapsule/index.html>], a homepage that documents the time capsule project for EXPO '70. See also *The official record of time capsule EXPO '70* (1980), which understands the time capsule as a gift to the people of the future from the people of the present day, as the subtitle infers.

and in art in general. There, it points to the complicated liaison of culture, memory and remembrance. A most prominent example are Andy Warhol's time capsules—a collection of 610 cardboard boxes stuffed with everyday objects, photographs, works of art, and numerous other materials (see Görner 2003).

The children's time capsule contains probably the most important symbol in *20th Century Boys*: the *friend* logo, an image that penetrates the whole manga and seizes different carriers (see fig. 7). The divine image of the all-seeing eye finds its symbolic culmination in connection with the hand. The sign of the cross combining eye and hand has seen a multitude of interpretations as a prophetic motif throughout cultural history. It is part of the one-dollar note as well as a symbol of the divine trinity. In theological exegesis, it is ascribed the ability to look into the most mysterious future and to grasp the most remote of events. In such an analogy the recursive repetitions and time loops throughout the plot of *20th Century Boys* gain their symbolic counterpart: in the course of the narrative, past, present and future merge into one plotline.

At the same time, the symbolic fusion of eye and hand lends itself to the fundamental concept of any artist's work: The hand draws what the eye sees. On closer inspection, *20th Century Boys* often emphasizes hands as well as parts of the face and the eyes<sup>18</sup>. Close-ups of eyes and hands establish an interaction between the characters and the reader and address them directly, as for example in the very dynamic scene in which Kanna and an assassin face off (vol. 9, p. 184). Addressing the reader directly by pointing a finger at him has a large tradition in Western movie and poster art. It reaches from James Montgomery Flagg's *Uncle Sam Wants You* and Edwin S. Porter's movie *The Great Train Robbery*, to the horror cinema of the Canadian director David Cronenberg, and even Scott McCloud's comics theory, in which the character directly addresses the reader (McCloud 1994: 24–59).

Eye and hand are signs of self-referentiality, by which Urasawa presents himself as the creator of *20th Century Boys*. Last but not least, his similarity with Kenji is highly visible, which directly becomes obvious if one places a photograph of Urasawa next to a panel with Kenji in it. The artistic and personal identity of Urasawa as both a musician and a manga artist has its echo in the multiple temporal and spatial leaps. Thus *20th Century Boys* can be interpreted as a parable for manga (and comics) as a medium of pictorial narration for a whole generation but on a personal level.

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<sup>18</sup> Their importance for Urasawa as well as his respective efforts can be seen in his breakdowns and scribbles. See for graphic samples Hijiki (2009, pp. 75-81).

Urasawa uses a variety of artistic strategies which in his manga function as a kind of reminiscence. With the basic theme of a conspiratorial, dictatorial sect, a further topic unwinds, specifically related to Japanese history—especially the sarin gas attacks of the Aum Sect. Accordingly, *20th Century Boys* is a product of the last century. The personalities and identities of its characters have their roots there but overcome the uncertainty of the year 2000 (2YK)<sup>19</sup>.

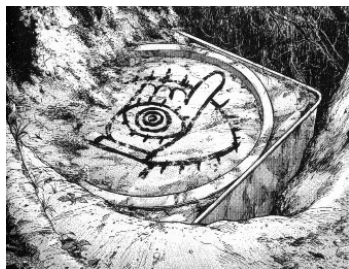


Fig. 7: Urasawa Naoki (2003): *20th Century Boys*, Vol. 5, Stuttgart: Planet Manga (Panini), p. 61. Originally published by Shogakukan. The symbols of eye and hand on the container from the children's past induce that Kenji and his group have to come to terms with their past.

The above sketch might have demonstrated the necessity of comparative studies of comics and manga in order to provide a broader, cross-cultural understanding of individual graphic narratives. Urasawa depicts not just Kenji or the *friend*, but the fundamental characteristics of a whole century—that is the point of our reading. His manga offers a global perspective, mainly based on references to popular icons and music, which have been increasingly shared worldwide since the 1960s. It is precisely these obvious similarities that raise the question of which cultural differences remain.

<sup>19</sup> See on this specifically Dorsey (2011). It is possible to view the 20th century as a period of constant war and traumata that were overcome together on a global scale. Most recently, this applies to the disaster in Fukushima.

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# 8

## **Cool premedialisation as symbolic capital of innovation: On intercultural intermediality between comics, literature, film, manga, and anime**

**Thomas BECKER**

Almost all media theories regard intermediality as a technical or semiotic phenomenon, considering its social impact only with respect to economic but not aesthetic strategies, that is, potential innovations on the market of cultural goods. Explanations for the intercultural manga boom are good examples in that regard. In general, they refer to four typical arguments: Firstly, the fact that manga series entered the market as complete editions so that they could satisfy youth's frenzy to read comics; secondly, the fact that manga volumes are cheaper than the common comics making them more easily

available to young people on the mass market; thirdly, the fact that a new generation of youth culture looks for distinction from their comics-reading parents; and finally, the world wide accessibility of Japanese anime and its aesthetics due to the proliferation of respective TV broadcasts since the late 1980s (Groensteen 2006: 91–93). All these explanations are functional ones because they only focus on media reception while leaving users' aesthetic activities untouched. But today manga is more than simply comics "Made in Japan". If one considers that not only a new readership was created by manga during the 1990s but also a group of non-Japanese manga artists, one must acknowledge the existence of a specific taste practice which has triggered the manga boom in European and U.S. markets.

When Tezuka Osamu visited the largest European comics festival in Angoulême in 1983, the western media did not recognize him at all (Groensteen 2006: 17). Already called the "god of manga" in Japan, Tezuka was still an unknown person abroad. This raises the question why western youth culture was not interested in manga aesthetics before the early 1990s? Below, I will try to answer this question by considering intermedia and intercultural effects within the world wide distribution of symbolic forms. I do not assume that my argumentation will explain the phenomenon completely. Rather, it may provide a first perspective that is to be endorsed by further research. I shall argue that a certain manga sensitivity existed long before the actual manga boom, as part of a specific habitus of popular taste which was structured by the conjuncture of new and old media. But this popular habitus did not only result from the interplay between old and new media. The following description of intermedia relations between literature, comics, animation, cinema, and the internet may serve as a first example to illuminate how the taste of popular culture is able to turn the mass market's tendency towards normalization into the power of distinction. A habitus not only supports tacit knowledge in legitimate fields of culture but it also mobilizes the tacit taste of distinction against one's own legitimate culture. This can become explicit through intercultural communication.

Before showing how the aesthetic stimulus of the manga boom in the western world came into being, I will give a short review of recent theories of intermediality in regard to social effects: Firstly, the book by Grusin and Bolter with their hypothesis that all mediation is remediation, and secondly, Henry Jenkin's theory of the world wide transmediality of culture.

Grusin and Bolter try to show that not only can new media remediate old ones but vice versa as well. For the latter, they refer to the web structure in television news.



Yet, thereby they analyze only the TV news' citation of the semiotic surface of the World Wide Web. They do not take into account that the web is a medium of social dialogue, not a one-way stream of information like TV news. The citation of the web design by television is nothing but semiotic design. Therefore, Bolter and Grusin do not really go beyond the older media theory of Marshall McLuhan, reproducing his logic of teleological progress and technological determinism although arguing against the teleological view of older media theory (Bolter and Grusin 2000: 55). But a real criticism would have to show that old media are able to be more innovative than new media, which Bolter and Grusin do not. Rather, they take the computer as the standard to understand intermediality, tacitly confirming the technological determinism of classical media theory:

The supposed virtue of virtual reality, of videoconferencing and interactive television, and of the World Wide Web is that each of these technologies repairs the inadequacy of media that it now supersedes. In each case that inadequacy is represented as a lack of immediacy, and this seems to be generally true in the history of remediation. Photography was supposed more immediate than painting, film than photography, television than film, and now virtual reality fulfills the promise of immediacy and supposedly ends the progression. (Bolter and Grusin 2000: 60)

This quote demonstrates a clearly teleological view. However, if one puts the relation between older and new media into intermedia and social perspectives, American comics of the 1940s can serve as an example for the innovation of a new media by an old one, that is, movies by comics. On the one hand, comics aesthetics exhibited a parasitic imitation of movies; but then again, comics could make Superman fly over the city, something the camera was not able to imitate at this time. It took almost forty years until the equipment of cinema was finally able to produce the same reality effects of such flights through skyscrapers in *Terminator II*, with permanently changing perspectives of a moving camera. Recently, film adaptations of superhero comics are booming in Hollywood.

In the first editions of the *Superman* comics, the hero could not fly. He only could make far jumps. Superman learned to fly first in the animated cartoon, an art form located between cinema and the graphic arts. Since then flying has been the hallmark of superheroes during their remediation by TV and radio. In other words, the virtuosity of graphic art anticipated a modern kind of cinema that the contemporary movie was

not able to redeem until the 1990s. The cartoonists demonstrated their virtuosity by using extreme camera perspectives inclined to exaggerate the effects of the technical equipment itself. French avant-garde film maker Alain Resnais was one of the few to recognize in the early 1960s that comics aesthetics had developed many elements of modern cinema long before their adoption into cinema. This relationship between cinema and comic has probably fallen into oblivion because cinema caught up with comics increasingly. By now, our cinema-familiarized gaze regards cinema as the very cause of such elements.

In social classes with lesser cultural capital, the virtuosity to draw realistically is always appreciated as the sign of a genius artist. From the standpoint of institutionalized contemporary art, this is a misunderstanding of legitimate culture. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the avant-garde of legitimate art tended to dissolve the representation of reality. The social classes with lesser cultural capital lack the code to recognize or even understand legitimate art (Bourdieu 1979: 367–371). But exactly this misconception of virtuosity as high culture in classes with lesser cultural capital has been the motor for the innovative cinematic aesthetics in comics. More exactly, one may say that these aesthetics conveyed a feeling for the cold equipment of modern technologies at a time when cinema's mass market itself tried to suppress any recognition of the apparatus behind the picture in order to favour both an untroubled readership of the story and empathy with the hero. Walter Benjamin was the first to describe this so-called equipment-free aspect of cinema:

In the theatre one is well aware of the place from which the play cannot immediately be detected as illusionary. There is no such place for the movie scene that is being shot. Its illusionary nature is that of the second degree, the result of cutting. That is to say, in the studio the mechanical equipment has penetrated so deeply into reality that its pure aspect freed from the foreign substance of equipment is the result of a special procedure, namely, the shooting by the specially adjusted camera and the mounting of the shot together with other similar ones. The equipment-free aspect of reality here has become the height of artifice; the sight of immediate reality has become an orchid in the land of technology [blaue Blume der Technik]. (Benjamin 1968: 233)

By contrast, comics artists induced an awareness of the camera gaze because they tried to satisfy the aesthetics of virtuosity by employing extreme optical perspectives. Their virtuosity gave them the ability to be more cinematic than cinema itself. It was this parasitic exaggeration of cinema provoked by the very competition with cinema on the

mass market that brought about the above-mentioned innovation of graphic authorship.

At the same time when Benjamin discussed the equipment-free aspect of film, Bertolt Brecht repudiated the mass market cinema because of its inclination to invite empathy with heroes, something which, of course, applies to the comics industry as well. Whereas Brecht rejected the aesthetics of mass production, he looked nevertheless for possibilities to appropriate the cold-equipment aesthetics from cinema. Brecht claimed to be a technophile author referring to the take-over of cinematic effects to his poetry in order to distinguish himself from the storytelling in the mass market cinema (Brecht 1971: 118). Under the conditions of 20<sup>th</sup> century mass communication, his claim confirmed a strategy which had been characteristic of modern authorship, especially since Goethe and Flaubert. Both Goethe and Flaubert aimed at a cold description without any empathy in order to distinguish themselves from the orchids of romantic narration, i.e. empathy with the hero.

Brecht tried to renew this aim of modern authorship for avant-garde literature in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by appropriating the modern media's sense for cold apparatuses. Brecht realized that the storytelling of mass market cinema fostered empathy with the hero, but he failed to recognize that the technically outdated graphic authorship was able to evoke a love for cold equipment despite its traditional storytelling. As an author of theatre plays and novels, he had a sense for the historic situation of literary narration, but not for cartoonists' authorship.<sup>1</sup> Yet, when adventure comics like *Superman* and *Batman* came about, the American industry of pulp novels imploded (Fuchs and Reitberger 1973: 201). This part of publishing had to convert into comics production. Obviously, the first transmedia encounter of comics, animation, TV and radio which occurred long before the film adaptations of superhero comics, cannot have been triggered by storytelling only. So, where shall we look for the aesthetic stimulus of such transmediality?

Henry Jenkins offers useful arguments against the technological teleology of media theory by observing new media effects at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Against the attempt to see the computer as the medium of all media because of its ability to imitate all media effects, Jenkins states that the future of media is not to be found in one single black box. On the contrary, the mass market exhibits a new tendency towards

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1 The film served Brecht as a means of distinction in the field of literature against Thomas Mann. Mann, like Brecht, tried to apply a double perspective in his writing ('doppelte Optik' according to Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*). Both aimed to write for an intellectual avant-garde and lower classes of cultural capital, but Brecht could distinguish himself against Mann as more modern because of his proclaimed model of the film.

extension, suffice to mention a film like *The Matrix* whose subject crossed over into video games, comics and anime.

Whereas old Hollywood focused on cinema, the new media conglomerates have controlling interests across the entire entertainment industry. Warner Bros produces film, television, popular music, computer games, web sites, toys, amusement park rides, books, newspapers, magazines, and comics. (Jenkins 2006: 16)

Jenkins calls this phenomenon “convergence culture” because the distribution of the same subject across different media is rooted in a common aesthetic experience, not in a black box such as a computer. Concentrating not on media themselves but their users as a constitutive factor of the transmedia phenomenon, he fails to explain the aesthetic stimulus by stating, “transmedia storytelling is the art of world making” (Jenkins 2006: 21). Of course, storytelling is a strong aesthetic stimulus of the mass market but in the age of intermediality, it certainly is not the exclusive property of transmedia effects. In order to refute generalized assertions, comics’ transmedia effect, which stimulated the shift from pulps to adventure comics in the 1940, is a good example. It is also noteworthy, that the syndicates of the comics industry (Marvel, especially) did not publish cartoonists’ names prior to the 1960s because they feared that artists would claim more money if they were known by name. Only the author of the original pulp story appeared on the cover of comic books. Obviously, in this case storytelling was not the social motor of comics’ first transmediality. Transmediality was rather fostered by both the new grammar of images whose premediation, or anticipation of new media, showed an affinity for the cold equipment of cinematic effects, and the aesthetics of virtuosity. We do not live in a discourse society but in a society of intermedia practices.

The combination of the affinity for cold equipment with the aesthetics of virtuosity reveals an aesthetic openness between traditional culture and new technologies of mass communication in popular culture. Therefore, this combination is indeed not just re-mediation but an innovating pre-mediation of future media by already existing media. Furthermore, a new technology of the mass market can never yield such premediation because of its tendency to avoid any awareness of the equipment. Whenever storytelling tends to avoid such awareness of equipment, putting new technologies into service of empathy, it leads to cultural normalization.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The concept of normalization was introduced into the history of science by Georges Canguilhem. Michel Foucault also used it for his description of power in the history of science. Both describe a cold practice of amplifying modern individualizations: observing and objectivating every little difference

In the 1990s, the impact of the equipment-armed aesthetics of comics was caught up by computer-animated films, *Terminator II* (1992) being the first. Superman's flight through the row of skyscrapers could be shown in a very realistic manner now. The difference between comics and cinema has been a permanent incitation for cinematic normalization. Indeed, the recent boom of 3D film adaptation of superhero-comics is just the last step of this normalization in which comics completely lost their premediating properties. Instead of comics, youth culture has turned to the aesthetics of manga since the 1990s, where it found a strategy to renew its habitualized love for cold equipment. What kind of pictorial grammar conveys the popular taste for distinction against normalization now?

In 1947, Tezuka created his manga *New Treasure Island* (*Shin-Takarajima*) in a modern style with cinematic effects by showing us, among other things, how a car is approaching as if in single drawings for an anime.<sup>3</sup> The original version was reedited in the early 1980s because meanwhile Tezuka had been recognized as the pioneer of manga's typical grammar. It is well known that Tezuka was influenced by early Walt Disney productions. In Disney's first animated cartoon *Steamboat Willie*, the movements appear stumbling because of the stop motion practice.<sup>4</sup> In order to make these movements reasonable and to sustain the normalizing equipment-free aspect, Disney employed rhythmic music. By contrast, Tezuka's new style of manga drew attention to the apparatus which makes images move in drawn cel animation. In the 1990s, western youth culture became aware of this kind of affection for cold equipment, as an alternative to American adventure comics which could no longer convey this feeling due to the perfectionism of film adaptations.

Not only in that regard does the relation between manga and anime play a constitutive part to fuel anew the affinity for cold equipment in the western world. In Japan, a mangaka is not rarely also the author of an anime by the same title. *Akira*, for example, the animated film of one of the earliest manga series read in western languages, contains sequences which are typically anime with respect to giving images between individuals with scientific methods (e.g. statistics). But cultural normalization takes the other direction. A film for the mass market weakens individuality by setting off the individuality of heroes, the good and the bad are clearly discerned in order to provide empathy. Besides such obvious differences constructed by storytelling in all mass media, one of the best evidence for the normalization of cinema is its equipment-free aspect. In a nutshell, normalization is the harmony of storytelling with an equipment-free aspect. André Bazin for example, who was a critical forerunner of the aesthetics of the *Nouvelle Vague* in the 1950s, regarded the narration dominating the cut as clear evidence of aesthetic normalization. This was to him one of the reasons why he favoured the films of Orson Wells with their long, cut-free sequences as the model for the new avant-garde (Bazin 2007:76).

3 For images look here: [http://www.thefullwiki.org/History\\_of\\_manga](http://www.thefullwiki.org/History_of_manga) (last access: 20 Sept., 2011)

4 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TPbpvP-okM> (last access: 20 Sept., 2011)

a double code of narration: firstly, the respective sequence can be seen simply as an element of meaning within a linear story, and secondly, as an extradiegetic narration about the collision of magic belief and media culture—e.g. the scene in which toys of a bear, a rabbit and a car approach the protagonist Tetsuo in stumbling movements, and transform into monster ghosts while continuing their stumbling walk.<sup>5</sup> Whereas this sequence is accompanied by rhythmic music, it lacks any dialogue. But in contrast to the early Disney films, the employment of music as a permanent justification for stumbling movements was quite outdated in the late 1980s when *Akira* was made. Anime's mass market had already been normalized by storytelling through dialogues, due to the longer formats of feature films and TV series. Older practices of harmonizing storytelling and apparatus had been depreciated on the mass market. Precisely therefore, such apparently retrograde practices could serve as a tool of aesthetic premediation, directed against technological perfection and “hot” normalization: Now, such practices help to distinguish sequences from each other, leaning on an awareness of the apparatus on one hand and pure storytelling on the other. This difference can also be found in Oshii Mamoru's anime *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*. The sequence of the puppets' parade, for example, juxtaposes the stumbling movement of the puppets and especially real persons with the perfect movement of the travelling camera accompanied by music.<sup>6</sup> Equipment-free and equipment-armed aspects of anime narration are presented at the same time. On the one hand, this points to the cold, mechanical effect of cinema: The repetition of the single timeless picture is constitutive for the illusion of movement. On the other hand, it reinforces the magic of film: The viewer assumes to see movements, although it becomes visible at the same time that cinema never shows images of movement but the movement of images.

It is important to keep in mind that this cannot be understood in the sense of the Deleuzian “time-image.” According to Deleuze, the time-image decentralizes a story or interrupts the linearity of normalized storytelling and meaning (Deleuze 1997: 53-62). But in the case of drawn manga, the cinematic effect of image-repetition triggers the feeling of a speed up because the repetition of panels with very small transformations fosters a faster reading, but this is not intended to stop dramatic action. Likewise in anime, the visible difference between moving image and stop motion does neither serve the decentralization of linear storytelling as such. Rather, it supports the story

5 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFEePk-UYFk&feature=related>: 00:08:19–00:09:55 (last access: 20 Sept., 2011)

6 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Qdc\\_Cfi1-k&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Qdc_Cfi1-k&feature=related): 00:01:38–00:02:25 (last access: 20 Sept., 2011)

while offering the decentralizing code of cold aesthetics at the same time. It is not the Otherness of the time-image that becomes visible but the difference between timeless images and movement, and by no means at the expense of the main focus on the linear story. In regard to narration, the timeless image in such sequences has both extradiegetic and intradiegetic functions. This, however, marks a difference within popular culture and its normalization, not a distinction of legitimate art production against normalizing popular culture. Since this social difference remains untouched by Deleuze's philosophical theory which does not acknowledge different degrees of legitimacy in art production.

In addition to the affinity for traditional virtuosity, found in handcrafted art production, the differently habitualized cultural traditions of this affinity may also provide a resource for innovative premediation. Whereas during the 20<sup>th</sup> century cartoonists and their virtuosity constantly incited the mass market of high-tech media to normalize media differences, that is, between the equipment-free aspect of cinema and comics' potential of cool premediation, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century saw normalization completed, which provoked the taste of popular culture to employ intercultural communication for a renewal of that difference. Europe has a long tradition of hybrids between nature and machine. Beginning at the time of the Renaissance, it showed a first peak with the iatromechanism. Even Immanuel Kant who chose natural beauty over the beauty of artworks justified the iatromechanism, i.e. the medical description of the human body as a machine. But at same time, there is a strong tradition in Europe which condemns the communicative machine as a diabolic apparatus. In E.T.A Hoffmann's novel *Sandman*, men distrust women as robots if they are able to dance in a perfect rhythm. In Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, the diabolic robot seducing men to set off a revolution is disguised as a woman. And the leader of the aggressive Borgs in *Star Trek* is a woman as well. The disruption of the male observer's control by brainy communication with machines has to be demonized as the corruption of women, the "natural" representatives of communication. But in Japan, the Sony dog has become a hit among elderly women, and Oshii Mamuro, the author of the anime *Innocence (Ghost in the Shell II)* regards the communication with the machine as a possibility for a better understanding of the human condition, as can be deduced from his quoting Donna Haraway. Haraway criticizes the NASA concept of cyborgs as a male monopolization of the transgression between nature and technology whereas women have to represent the innocent and purely natural. By contrast, cyborgs in Japanese manga and anime are mainly female. This affinity for communicating with cold machines was accepted in western

youth culture just at the moment as cinema had caught up with the premediality of comics, and it paved the way for a new symbolic distinction against normalized graphic authorship by film.

Although manga and comics are, as far as their aesthetics is concerned, closely interrelated with American movies, their way of premediating cinema has culturally differed. This cultural difference does not get suppressed at any rate by mass communication though. Within one's own culture, new media may easily transform the popular love for cold equipment into a habitualized desire for normalisation, but intercultural communication holds the potential to rearticulate this love and turn it against normalization. Intercultural communication is therefore able to unfold distinction from below. After all, distinction is not only a power of so called high-brow culture.

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# 9

## **Reading (and looking at) *Mariko Parade*: A methodological suggestion for understanding contemporary graphic narratives**

**Maaheen AHMED**

### **1. Differentiating graphic narratives: A methodological lacuna**

It is a safe generalization to make: never before have comics, manga and graphic novels been more popular, among readers as well as academics. Nonetheless, although manga and comics remain distinguishable on a cultural basis, the difference between comics and graphic novels, especially across western cultures, is far from clear, as is evident, for example, from Jan Baetens and Charles Hatfield's articles in *English Language Notes* (46,2 2008). While both Baetens and Hatfield find the term problematic, the latter does suggest that an interdisciplinary methodology can

aid in comprehending the diversity of graphic literature. The terminological uncertainty regarding graphic novels, which can be anything from alternative or artistically inclined graphic narratives to comics published in book format (implying, at least for this paper, the mainstream, frequently serial, graphic narratives and their counterparts across the West like *bande dessinée*, *fumetti* and *tebeo*), is indicative of the absence of appropriate methodological means of grasping the differences in word-image narration. Yet although some graphic novels are extremely similar to comic books since the graphic novel label is often regarded as referring only to the format (e.g. Versaci 30), many graphic novels stand out through their attempts to resemble other literary and visual media like novels and paintings through their manipulation of textual and pictorial narrational tools in frequently complex ways.

In contrast, as can be seen in their drawing styles or panel transitions, manga contain some basic differences from western comics (parallel to those between anime and cartoons). However, given today's speedy transmission of information and the prevalent multimodality, word-image media continue to diversify, absorbing influences from one another and other related media. Since translations of Ōtomo Katsuhiro's *Akira*, published by Marvel Comics in 1988 (and followed by an animated film two years later), manga have inspired many western artists, promoting not only the phenomenon of indigenous manga but also influencing artists like Frank Miller, Bryan Lee O'Malley and Edmond Baudoin. It was also in the 1980s that the graphic novel label became more recurrent with DC initiating the Vertigo imprint and Marvel creating Marvel Graphic Novels. Hence the expansion of the potential of sequential word-image narration, as embodied by many graphic novels, has coincided with—and been enriched by—cross-cultural interchange.

As an outcome of the *nouvelle manga* initiative and a collaboration between a French and a Japanese artist, *Mariko Parade* is probably one of the most conscious concretizations of cross-cultural interchange between Western comics (specifically BD) and manga. As will be shown in the course of the following analysis, through incorporating the influence of diverse media and their traditions such as BD, manga, anime and the *nouvelle vague* in films along with the *nouveau roman* or new novel, *Mariko Parade* exemplifies intermediality as well as cultural interaction within and across media. Given the “Nouvelle Manga Manifesto”, charted out by Boilet, the constructedness of such interaction forms an underlying but prominent layer in *Mariko Parade*.

Through analyzing *Mariko Parade*, this paper aims at demonstrating the

application of a combinative methodology for looking at unusual, in several senses hybrid, word-image media. A work-based instead of reception-based approach is adopted in order to show how openness is engendered in graphic narratives, whereby the focus on one book allows for an in depth analysis, the results of which can serve as comparative poles. Instead of providing definitions of the different kinds of word-image narratives, this paper is concerned with the innovational tools employed by word-image narratives and the means that can be used for discerning them.

## **2. Openness as a methodological tool**

In *Die Sprache des Comics* (The Language of Comics), Ole Frahm rejects the distinction made between comics and graphic novels and proposes “weird signs” as a means of understanding the working and significance of comics (i.e. all graphic narratives), which implies, an essentially parodic element in all kinds of graphic narratives. Frahm’s emphasis on the performativity of graphic narratives is worth bearing in mind, since it underscores the processual nature of sequential art forms. However since it is not just a question of parody, one could propose “strange signs” for graphic novels instead of Frahm’s “weird signs”. “Strange” is proposed because the mocking element remains but is accompanied by the uncanny juxtaposition of serious content with drawings that due to their reductive essence can be caricatural. Hence strangeness can denote the unsettled factor that the drawing style’s serious intonations, despite its removal from realism, produces. This in turn has the potential for alternative readings and consequently openness on visual and the accompanying literary levels.

Currently most of the scholarship on comics comes from the literature or cultural studies departments, as is evident from the departmental affiliations of most comic studies scholars (like Jan Baetens, Jean-Paul Gabilliet and Hillary Chute) as well as the publications containing most of the research in comics studies including the *ImageText* and *Studies in Comics* journals or the *Studies in Popular Culture* series of the Mississippi University Press. The absence of research on graphic narratives in departments based on visual material like visual studies and art history is striking. Reasons for this include the strong narrative characteristics of such works along with the underestimation of comics, their relegation to the fringes of popular culture and consequent disqualification from traditional literary and artistic academic disciplines. Indeed despite their proclaimed dissolution, the categories of high and low art continue to haunt contemporary media, and the emergence of graphic novels to designate more complex, literary or artistic works in comparison to the typical comics is to a certain

extent symptomatic of the persisting division between high and low art. The division itself is not groundless, but it is perhaps more fruitful to specify the factors on which these distinctions are based (for example on the degree of depth or the possibility of multiple readings) rather than taking the high and low art (or fine art and popular art) labels as conclusive.

Highlighting the distinguishing features and workings of the graphic novel by remaining attuned to its literary and visual aspects is the point of departure for the methodology presented here. After touching on the purposes propelling the creation of the nouvelle manga as a concept, *Mariko Parade* will be analyzed on the literary and visual levels. While the analytical framework is broadly based on semiotics, it incorporates art historical methodologies of formal analysis and iconography as used, among others, by the proponents of the Warburg School, like Erwin Panofsky [cf. *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, *Iconology* etc.]. Simultaneously however the analysis is similar to the literary notion of a close reading concentrating upon key literary devices as well as the intermedia and intercultural connections to bring out the innovations and unusualness of the book that in turn indicate the emergence of new kinds of contemporarily pertinent word-image combinations.

Before describing the method the notion of hybridity employed here deserves clarification. Hybridity is used in lieu of bimodality because it emphasizes the interaction between the two modes, as well as others implied by them, like audio or video. That *Mariko Parade* itself is a conscious hybrid of bande dessinée and manga underscores the potential underlying interaction between media or genres of media. The suggested method unfolds along the traditional categories of form and content (as far as they can be separated), relying upon the literary scholarly tradition for the textual signs and the tradition of iconography and formal analysis for the visual element. Ultimately the concentration is on the contribution of these visual and verbal tools towards creating openness in graphic novels, like *Mariko Parade*. Furthermore openness comes across as a useful attribute for distinguishing between the concepts of comics and graphic novels.

As applied here, openness refers to Umberto Eco's concept of the open text, which can be condensed as follows:

The aesthetic dialectics between openness and closedness of texts depends on the basic structure of the process of text interpretation... This structure is made possible by the nature of the system of codes and subcodes constituting the world... The reader finds his freedom (i) in deciding how to activate one or

another of the textual levels and (ii) in choosing which codes to apply (Eco 1984: 39).

The openness of a text is, therefore, gauged by the interpretative scope allowed for the reader.<sup>1</sup> As such the concept has acquired a greater degree of specification than Eco's earlier explication of the open work of art in the late 60s (in his *Opera Aperta*) and is a pertinent means of distinguishing cultural products and their effects due to its flexibility and applicability for all kinds of media. The potential for openness is incremented in word-image combinations due to their reliance on two basic modes of expression, namely the pictorial and the literal, because that increases the referential scope. It is, after all, for media combining several channels, like film, that the multiple possibilities of webbing narrative threads, open for each reader and reading have been brought up. Thus Philippe Marion, while using Thierry Groensteen's notion of the structuring effects of the *mise en réseau* (or the spatio-temporal organization of the panels and pages in a book) also transposes Gilles Deleuze's notion of *image-temps* or time-image to emphasize the momentary, variable aspect of the final story entailing the simultaneous interpretation of visual and verbal material and transforming the typical reader into a reader-viewer or "lecteur-spectateur" (Marion 1993: 84). Given the degree of input required, the spectator can also be regarded as a "spectacteur" (Dumouchel 1989) a spectator-actor, which is comparable to the reader's participation in open graphic narratives.

Besides the formal level of containing multiple channels of communication, the openness of a text is connected with the more content-based features of inserting levels of meaning, such as the use of figurative devices like metaphors or intertextuality. In this respect, the symbol, understood by Eco as "a textual modality, a way of producing and of interpreting the aspects of a text" (Eco 1986: 162), is frequently "suggested by the co-text and by the intertextual tradition" (Eco 1986: 163). Consequently intertextual references are a means of expanding the scope of the diegesis by locating it within a network of other texts. Interestingly the original Greek version of the word symbol—*symbolon*—acquires additional significance in the context of iconotexts since it was a sign of recognition formed by an object broken into two; hence something which, though incomplete, was a carrier of meaning. This aspect of disjointedness requiring readers to fill in the gaps lies at the core of the iconotextual sequential narration. In superimposing intercultural and intermedia layers upon the hybrid nature of iconotexts,

1 Sensitivity to possible reader constructions of texts has also been propagated by Todorov, among others (e.g. Todorov, Tzvetan, *Genres in discourse*, Cambridge/ New York: Cambridge University Press 1990).

graphic novels offer several kinds of readings and hence, considerable openness, whereby readers will naturally interpret the works in accordance with their individual frames of reference.

### 3. Interaction between media and cultures

Published in 2003, Frédéric Boilet and Takahama Kan's *Mariko Parade* covers 188 pages (roughly four times the length of an *Astérix* volume) and is issued as a part of Casterman's *écritures* series.<sup>2</sup> Tellingly *écritures* employs dimensions close to B5. This size of approximately 176 x 250 mm is significant because it is usually used for paperbacks. Originally favored by the underground comix, the format is also common for graphic novels.

Born in 1960, Boilet is a French artist active since the 1980s. His works have been characterized by their periodic, jumping transitions recalling film stills or photographs. During his sojourn in Japan between 2001 and 2008, he became more active as a mangaka, albeit with a very distinct style, primarily due to rotoscopic images. Takahama, born in 1977, has been publishing since 2001 in the alternative manga magazine *Garō*, that appeared in the 1960s and targeted adults.

Hinting at the cinematic affiliation, Takahama describes the nouvelle manga as a "manga d'auteur" (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 3), which the two artists consider synonymous with BD d'auteur (Boilet 2007, internet). For Boilet, the nouvelle manga, like the non-commercial nouvelle BD, sets itself apart from the commercially established genres by being accessible for everyone, regardless of culture and age group essentially through their everyday themes (Boilet 2007, internet), as in the case of *Mariko Parade* love (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 5 ). The term, "nouvelle manga" (originally 'nouvelle manga vague') was coined by Kusumi Kiyoshi, editor of the monthly art magazine *Bijutsu Techō*, to describe the multifaceted nature of Boilet's works: graphically affiliated with the BD, they employ the narrative style of manga, specifically "sa fluidité, sa technique pour suggérer les sensations, les sentiments" (its fluidity, its technique for suggesting feelings and emotions", Boilet 2001, internet), whereby the themes and tone recall alternative, art-et-essai French films (Bastide 2001, internet). The employment of 'manga' as a feminine noun, in deliberate disregard of French grammatical conventions, also serves to distinguish it from western mainstream

2 Titles in the series include: Ari Folman and David Polonksy's *Valse avec Bachir* (2009), José-Louise Bouquet and Catel Muller's *Kiki de Montparnasse* (2007), Ben Katchor's *Histoires Urbaines de Julius Knipl, Photographe* (2005), Taniguchi Jiro's *Le journal de mon Père* (2004), Craig Thompson's *Blankets. Manteau de Neige* (2004) etc. See Jesse Bi's review in the online magazine *du9* for the effects of imposing the same format on all the albums of the series (Bi 2005, internet).



comics that have largely attracted a male audience and subsequently subverts the dominant trend. Notably in contrast to comics, manga attract a greater proportion of female readers than male ones; a trend mirroring the readership of graphic novels. A comparison with Boilet's earlier, pre-Tokyo works, like *Rayon Vert* with its more sensationalist, rapidly-paced arrangement of perspectives easily reveals the change in narrative pace and mode. In order to extend the phenomenon to a global scale, Boilet applies the *nouvelle manga* term essentially to its content, whereby it aims at being a universal comic attempting to bridge the distance between readers, creators and editors by presenting the everyday from autobiographical, documentary or fictional perspectives (Boilet 2007, internet).

One of Boilet's means of nearing reality is to incorporate the physical attributes as well as the personality of his models. The first book created through such a collaboration with a model was *L'Épinard de Yukiko* (Yukiko's Spinach), which was published in 2001 by Ego Comme X in France and Ohta Shuppan in Japan. Although *Mariko Parade* is *L'Épinard*'s sequel, Takahama's involvement as Mariko introduces a reciprocal artist-model-character nexus because this time both protagonists are based upon the two artists narrating the story. Once again both books have been published in Japanese (Ohta Shuppan 2003) as well as French (with the French version containing translations of the Japanese signs and sound effects in the panels or brief descriptions of Japanese figures or customs mentioned in the story as footnotes). *Mariko Parade* incorporates the brief strips and illustrations that Boilet based on his model and muse between 1998 and 2002.<sup>3</sup> These six brief sketches are ensconced in the main story, "La Ballade d'Enoshima", drawn by Takahama and co-written with Boilet. The transitions to Boilet's briefer, older episodes are sometimes triggered by the protagonists recalling those works, or by parallel aspects between the present and the past. Sometimes the episodes are also visually present in the panels from the main story to enable a smoother transition and to include the reader in the protagonists' experiences. While incrementing visual diversity, these brief insertions also provide richer insight into the characters' past and natures as in "Les petits vestes de Boilet" that narrates Boilet's first encounter with Yukiko (who becomes Mariko in the second story).

The story begins with Mariko and Frédéric in a train to Enoshima, with Mariko reading *L'Épinard* for the umpteenth time and remarking that she has changed. The first of many self-reflexive references to the emergence of their book based on their lives appears when Frédéric shows her the drawings he wants to include in *Mariko*

3 "Les Douze Chimères du zodiaque", *Hohoemido, le cérémonie du sourire*, "Histoire presque sans paroles", "Les petites vestes de Boilet", "Juin 2049, Eirin a 100 ans!" and "Les Ampoules de Mariko".

*Parade*, leading to the “Les douze Chimères du zodiaque” episode with the series of twelve drawings forming full-paged splashes (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 13). After their arrival at Enoshima, Frédéric takes over the previously neutral narrational perspective and his thoughts written across the panels transform them into stills and alternate with his actual conversation with Mariko (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 56-59).

Most of Boilet’s brief episodes were originally published in Japanese in art magazines (like *Bijutsu Techô*), as manga or comics, highlighting the episodes’ intermediate status. *Hohoemidô, la cérémonie du sourire*, for instance, first appeared in L’Association’s *Comix2000* anthology in 1999. By being a crossover between manga and BD and avoiding complete conformity with the conventions of both BD and manga, *Mariko Parade* stands apart mainstream manga. According to Takahama’s introduction, *Mariko Parade*’s difference from regular manga lies in the absence of violent action and major events (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 5). Other non-manga features include the presence of the protagonist as an active narrator and the narrative style itself and possibly even Takahama’s claim that the book was not made to entertain or divert (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 4).

Moreover Takahama exacerbates the aspect of extended temporality in manga, particularly through large panels with limited action that create something relatively unfamiliar to readers of both comics and manga, which can be seen as an attempt at life-likeness. Moreover this unsensational realism succeeds in generating reader empathy, much like television series and films with “soft” themes. Additional details like Frédéric’s enthusiasm for the French soccer player Zidane or his reference to John Lennon and Yoko Ono as the “dieux du love and peace” emphasize the proximity of the characters’ worlds to those of readers familiar with western popular culture (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 107).

As shown by the persistent inclusion of the environment, aspect-to-aspect transitions typical for manga abound in the main story by Takahama. In contrast, Boilet’s panels essentially comprise clear transitions, which preserve most of the elements of the previous panels. Thus two distinct drawing styles are discernible in the book, namely those of Boilet’s episodes and Takahama’s “La Ballade”. The contrast between the two artists is discernible in the panel that appears soon after Frédéric begins his overhead narration and then asks Mariko whether she remembers the first time they met, whereby the question is placed in a single panel by Boilet showing Mariko admiring his sketches of her (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 58). Boilet employs a rotoscopic style that hovers between photographs and realistic drawing since it exudes the spontaneity

and realism of a snapshot while emphasizing its drawn nature. In contrast to clear lines Takahama relies a lot more on grey shading that suggest features instead of outlining them. This is suitable for the book's intimate theme and subtle, emotionally intense atmosphere. Moreover the grey tones make the panels appear as if they have been drawn on faded photographs. Opposing the line-based, realistic rotoscopicism, it extends the tendency of manga to become roughly sketchy and cartoon-like (usually for instance for an alternate perspective or mood, such as a behind-the-scenes view from the drawing board) to its backgrounds, which are frequently formed by hasty, vague lines emphasizing their rough, hand-drawn essence and alluding instead of imitating (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 34, 35, 62). This is a complete reversal of what McCloud calls the masking effect that is considered indigenous to manga but has also become prominent in western comics (McCloud 1994: 81). Instead of easy identification with the character and immersion into the elaborately rendered surroundings enabled by the masking effect, a certain distance for the reader is generated. On the other hand, reader empathy is produced by the memoir-like narration. Unfolding from Frédéric's point of view, with Mariko as the conscious object of his gaze, the intermedia and intercultural aspects have a clear western slant. Yet it is not merely the presence of intermedia and intercultural interaction but their incorporation in the story that generates its openness.

#### **4. The layering of meaning and reading possibilities**

Weaving the past—which is indicated by Boilet and Takahama's visual style—and following the emotional ups and downs of the protagonists' relationship, the practical aim of the trip is fulfilled by Frédéric alone at the end of the story, namely getting the desired cover picture for the completed book that should simultaneously be an authentic token of their relationship. Precisely this desire for “de vraies photos... pas seulement des documents. Des photos qu'on pourra garder...” (“true photos... not only documents. Photos that one can keep”) made Boilet use his analogue camera during the trip (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 109). The cover photograph, which is also the *Mariko Parade*'s cover, shows Boilet lying next to a stick drawing of Mariko in the sand, wearing a *yukata* with hydrangeas (*ajisai*). This drawing-photograph crossover asserts not only the degree of linkage with real-life people but also the possibility of transience—in itself proximal to the Japanese notion of *hanami*—in Frédéric and Mariko's relationship. Nevertheless it simultaneously affirms the power of images and their ability to preserve and resurrect memories, much like the slides at the beginning of “Les Ampoules” that reenact Mariko's performance for Boilet despite his absence

at the actual event (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 158). Hence while exemplifying the book's reference to other media, the photographic element also refers to the theme of transience. (However the book's cover, by being in color, undoes the pertinent contrast between Boilet's solid figure and Mariko's outline, since both appear equally three-dimensional.)

One of the book's most noteworthy aspects is its central trope of hydrangeas, which embody transience and also connote the two artist-protagonists' disparate backgrounds due to the different cultural connotations attached to the flowers. The insertion of figurative language like tropes takes advantage of the fact that readers have the freedom to read the book at their own pace and to muse over its contents. Originating from the realm of literature, such multi-layered tropes are rare in comics and other popular fiction due to their temporal and mental demands. Yet the very first panel of *Mariko Parade* is a close-up of hydrangeas. In the course of the story, these flowers reveal themselves as the quintessential motif of the book, signifying the changing emotions of the two protagonists as well as their different cultures (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 7). The Japanese symbolism of the flowers is only clarified towards the end by the landlady of the guesthouse who, in response to Frédéric's remark that the flowers have altered since their arrival, points out that hydrangeas change color when in season because of which for the Japanese—in complete contrast to the Europeans—the flower stands for inconstancy and indecision. Ultimately, the flowers end up signifying Frédéric and Mariko's love. Furthermore it is because of this notion of change and uncertainty incorporated by the flowers that the book does not have an unequivocally happy ending, but a more tentative, realistic one.

Importantly these themes of transience on the one hand and critical self-referentiality on the other are highly dependent on the manipulation of formal factors in a manner that is rich in allusions. The album is mostly in black and white. In "La Ballade" color is used exclusively for the hydrangeas in the last few pages to highlight their change (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 172–177).<sup>4</sup> Moreover the gutters are kept black throughout the book, even though the interstices in Boilet's sketches were originally white. Although artists like Pierre-Yves Gabrion (e.g. in *L'Homme de Java* from the 1990s) have already used black gutters, the shading in "La Ballade", along with the varying thickness of the interstices accentuates the photographic connotations. The significance of colored backgrounds has been underscored by Groensteen. White is no longer perceived as a natural support for the page and consequently acquires a status

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<sup>4</sup> However some of the inserted episodes, like "Les Ampoules", were originally published in color, albeit limited to pale washes of skin and blue.

equal to that of other colors in the panels. In contrast the black gutters emphasize the framing of each panel (Groensteen 1999: 42). While Takahama, like many mangaka, frequently employs such gutters in her other books, *Kinderbook* and *L'Eau amère* (*Bitter Waters*), they are slightly thicker and consequently more dominant in *Mariko Parade*. Aptly, in “La Ballade”, each panel has the appearance of a snapshot, making the book resemble a photo album of memories, consequently preserving the reference to actual lives; every action occurring in the diegetic present and thus recorded in the book immediately becomes a part of the past, accentuating the sentimental tone as well as the processual nature of the book. That the predominant visual mode is photographic complements the action because Frédéric spends most of his time taking photographs of Mariko not only for creating his art but also in a desperate attempt to preserve cherished moments. Owing to its artistic lightning, “Histoire presque sans paroles” gives a comparable impression. While the thin panels with moment-to-moment transitions in Boilet’s other sketches recall photographs like in “Les Petites Vestes”, the difference is that these “panel-photographs” freeze action, whereas Takahama’s appear as recollections due to the intimate rendition of the monochrome panels (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 112).

As already mentioned, one of the reasons behind transforming the author into the protagonist is to generate a more authentic effect. Stories like *Mariko Parade* consequently stand apart due to the interesting possibility of being true and the corresponding proximity to contemporary life as opposed to the most popular genres of superheroes, thrillers and science fiction. Since the book narrates its own making, with its creators as the story’s protagonists, metafiction and self-reflexivity are closely intertwined in *Mariko Parade*, leading to an additional level of complexity. Metafiction, as Linda Hutcheon points out, is related to the openness of the text because it generates greater awareness of the media and consequently their influence and effects in molding the story:

... while being made aware of the linguistic and fictive nature of what is being read, and thereby distanced from any unselfconscious identification on the level of character or plot, readers of metafiction are at the same time made mindful of their active role in reading, in participating in making the text mean (Hutcheon 1984: xii).

The book’s several visual references to photography and film, like the artistic intermediary of rotoscoping along with the techniques familiar to fine art such as mixed

media and painting are, therefore, significant.

Though allusions to film and photography have been discernible in Boilet's works since long, albeit of the more common kind, such as the drastic perspectives and panel layouts in *Le Rayon vert* from 1987, rotoscopic drawing became more dominant after his move to Japan. In addition, cinematic conventions common to most comics and manga (the pioneering mangaka Tezuka Osamu was, after all, greatly inspired by Disney animations), particularly the significance of perspective and transition, are used throughout the book by both artists. These include the alternation of full front, single shots of the two protagonists during their conversations (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 130–133), as well as the aforementioned close-ups that intensify intimate moments and also increase the involvement of viewers or readers as during their second night on the island or the moment of their parting (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 143, 171).

However as indicated by the original description, “nouvelle manga vague”, various similarities with the French New Wave are discernible that are uncharacteristic for comics or manga. The focus on Mariko during some of their talks gives the impression that Frédéric is holding the camera throughout the narration, even a film camera in the case of continuous panels. Thus beginning with the structure itself, the story is marked by the auteur, more precisely the two auteurs. Along with the arrangement of the panels, the monochrome but atmospheric tones in the main story also recall film. Particularly the dimmed ambience of Takahama's night scenes is evocative of film since regular comics aim at clarity and even Boilet includes limited night scenes. Especially during their second night on the beach, the darkness-defying vividness of the panels and the close-up views are evocative of anime, with the grey shading generating three-dimensional effects in some of the panels (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 147–148).

Additionally, the main narrative's measured pace is comparable to the nouvelle vague's partiality for real time, and that the story itself is in-the-making, laying the process of its creation bare, is another similarity. Likewise the shifts to Boilet's episodes, as well as the flow of the episodes themselves (particularly “Les Chimères”, “Les petits vestes de Boilet” and “Les Ampoules”) recall discontinuous jump cuts favored by the nouvelle vague. On a related but literal note the nouvelle manga also illustrates the commonalities that exist between graphic novels and the nouveau roman, which is particularly intense in Boilet's works. Notably Alain Robbe-Grillet, who clarified the general traits of the New Novel, also collaborated with New Wave directors like Alain Resnais in key movies such as *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) and *L'Immortelle* (1963). Far from being a theory unified by a set of principles, the New Novel is “an

exploration” through which the authors try to bring out hitherto ignored possibilities of the medium as well as the metafictional focus upon the process of becoming (Robbe-Grillet 1989: 134). This holds for graphic novels due to the degree of verbal and visual experimentation often applied, such as the melange of visual styles in *Mariko Parade*, the predominance of (in multiple senses) photographic visuals, the motif embodying the story’s themes and even the very ordinariness of the storyline and its romantic theme—a combination that is largely absent in both comics and manga. Yet while borrowing techniques or referring to other media, *Mariko Parade* also underscores the uniqueness of its sequential static pictures, highlighting their relative freedom and constraints, as in the case of the color seeping in the images toned in black and white that occurs with the hydrangeas towards the end of the book (Boilet and Takahama 2003: 174–175).

Thus *Mariko Parade* shows how the potential of word-image narratives is constantly being explored and extended. These works consequently become places marked by both transculturality and transmediality that bring in additional levels of hybridity and call for methodologies sensitive to these several interacting facets. Correspondingly, the most rewarding means of analyzing them involve taking into account a variety of media traditions, extending from the purely visual and literary to the mixed, as well as considering their possible cultural nuances. For this the notion of the open work of art, with its wide, mutational gambit provides a useful and malleable analytical basis. Lastly, the interculturality and intermediality brought out here can be seen as a reflection of the contemporary globalized multimedia world, deploying the graphic novel as a particularly contemporary medium; its intermedial nature can be seen as reflecting the prevalence of Internet and multimedia where communication and expression are also dependent upon the interaction of two or more media.<sup>5</sup>

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5 According to Lev Manovich, in the 1990s “moving-image culture went through a fundamental transformation”, the incorporation of several kinds of media to the extent that “hybrid media became the norm”. (Manovich 2007, internet)

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## Biography

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# Epilogue

## Steffi RICHTER

Held under the title “Intercultural Crossovers, Transcultural Flows: Manga/Comics” in fall 2010, the Cologne conference was quite unique, in regard to both the thematic range of its altogether 26 contributions and the multitude of countries the speakers came from. It can be called unique for at least two reasons. Firstly, it brought together experts of the still young (and in Europe hardly institutionalized) field of Comics Studies, and engaged them in problematizing the global phenomenon of manga from a variety of angles. As evident from this volume, the contributions applied interdisciplinary as well as transdisciplinary approaches and, sometimes, exhibit an interest in intermedia and transmedia issues. Furthermore, the mostly young speakers made clear that they conduct Manga/Comics Studies not from a position of “objective distance” owing their findings mainly to booklore, but that they are in command of what should be called connoisseurship, leaning on a sort of knowledge which is closely tied to personal experiences as an “insider” to popular culture, in this case, comics. Theirs is a popular competence without being populist. They analyze and interpret the very field they are acting in as readers/users, as participants in “a complex organizational principle of various goods and activities” (Zahlten 2008: 82), as Media Studies scholar Alexander Zahlten has characterized it, last but not least referring to manga and anime.

Secondly, the Cologne conference was unique because manga activists, too, participated as speakers and discussants. Contributions to this volume such as the papers by Zoltan Kacsuk and Radosław Bolałek give evidence to the fact that analysts of fan cultures, for example related to manga, do not need to hide their own involve-

ment in the analyzed group anymore. Thus, it is not surprising either that Christina Plaka, who attended the conference and took part in a panel discussion of female manga artists, is at the moment enrolled in the new Graduate School for Manga Studies of Kyoto Seika University. Christina created a conference poster which visualized the key notions of “inter,” “trans” and “cross,” “comics” and “manga” in a unique way. Her image, however, cannot be shown in public, and consequently not be reproduced here. Therefore, I have no other choice than to take the path of “intermedia” transfer, that is, to translate the “banned” image into words, to describe it. After that, I will relate briefly what happened and offer some thoughts on the implications of that incident with respect to more general issues of our time, concerning changes in media culture and society.

Christina’s poster provides a bricolage of three characters which are not only easily recognizable but also easily regarded as representatives of specific comics cultures: Superman as standing in for American comics, *Sailor Moon* protagonist Tsukino Usagi for Japanese manga, and Tintin for Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*. Superman, placed on the left and staring sceptically into the distance, wears a sailor suit similar to Usagi’s, who appears at his right side dressed in brown trousers, blue sweater and white shirt, in other words, clothes reminiscent of Tintin. Turning her body away from the big guy and raising her left leg as if she is about to jump off, she addresses the viewer with her gaze, unhampered by her glasses. In the lower right corner, we find Tintin sitting on the ground, stretching his legs (in Usagi’s boots) to the left. Swathed in Superman’s suit whose cape rises from its collar to form the characters’ background, Tintin seems to be completely absorbed by a book adorned with the *NARUTO* symbol on its cover.

Presumably, Christina opted for such a “disguise” of the famous characters in order to sententiously express the “*intercultural*” as one of the conference’s central notions. Each character is a hybrid, but represents a discrete entity whose identity is constructed by means of a binary distinction between Self and Other. Styles and stories are culturally (nationally) fixed: their borders can be crossed, but not dissolved. This fixation of the Self via distinction against the alleged Other, that is to say, the perspective of the “inter” leans heavily on “comparison” and “influence.”

Yet, the same poster can also be viewed from a *transcultural* perspective acknowledging that cultures have always been hybrid formations permanently re-constructing different codes and modes of meaning into a kind of fragile, dynamic “unit” (which is neither melting/dissolving nor unifying/harmonizing the existing differences).

Consequently, the “transcultural” does not signify an ontological novelty which replaces the “intercultural.” Rather, it is to be understood as a practice incessantly recombining signs and images, which is due to the interrelation of new digital technologies and community-specific ways of dealing with existent signs and images. Media Studies scholar Felix Stalder regards this digital “remixing” of existent contents as a central cultural technique of the 21st century and its “network society,” by which the dichotomy between creator and recipient loses its hegemonial definitude as does the hierarchy between original and copy (or fake), and also the notion which ties authenticity to artists as creators of auratic works.

To read Christina’s poster from this transcultural perspective seems appropriate, for example, in the light of her own lived transculturality as a Greek woman who grew up in Germany. Furthermore, the sort of manga she creates (and her Superman-Usagi-Tintin remix is mangaesque!) belong to a kind of comics which cannot be characterized anymore solely by the catchphrase “Made in Japan.” These comics are global insofar as they are being created and read within subcultural taste communities worldwide, because they provide the expressive means for telling one’s own story. Calling them “Japanese” may refer just to certain stylistic dispositions and themes, or to certain production strategies and business models.

Although placed in the above-sketched context, Christina’s poster did eventually not see the light of day. The conference organizers had welcomed it as authentic in the new sense of an authenticity which admits its source explicitly, while using it freely and creating something new and of equal value (Stalder 2009: 10). And it was about to be mailed to a number of European university departments when the International Manga Research Center of Kyoto Seika University notified the German organizers that *Sailor Moon* creator Takeuchi Naoko withheld her approval to employ her Usagi character. This came as a complete surprise since the poster was to serve scholarly, not commercial purposes. After all, the remixing had resulted in a new work. However, the International Manga Research Center feared that this work’s partial source material might be claimed by the copyright holder. So this, then, was the kernel of the brute.

Anything but an expert in copyright, I have become interested in topics such as “knowledge, autonomy, original, power in the age of new digital media,” stimulated by my research on postmodern identities, and precisely therefore, the “poster incident” made me pursue the issue a little further. Soon I learned that such incidents are not exceptional anymore, and how important it is to face them in an unemotional yet politically committed way. Another case which I came across shall serve as a contrastive

example here in order to raise some fundamental questions related to our “poster incident.”

In 2004, internet artist Cornelia Sollfrank conceived a project for an exhibition in which a search engine software developed by herself assembled Andy Warhol's “Flowers” from the internet and recomposed them. But, as the website “iRIGHTS.Info – Urheberrecht und kreatives Schaffen in der digitalen Welt” reports, “The board of the exhibition venue feared a legal battle with the powerful Warhol Foundation. Consequently, Sollfrank withdrew her work and decided to instead conduct video interviews with four copyright lawyers about her work and to show these in the exhibition. What emerged is a document in which one can listen to lawyers in conflicting deliberation about authorship and art.”

Structurally the two cases seems to be similar. Two art works were supposed to be shown, although with different intentions: Sollfrank's project aimed at an exhibition and, possibly, subsequent sale; Plaka's poster aimed at spreading information and arousing curiosity. Similar agents were involved: in addition to the artists, persons of the public realm such as researchers and curators who faced conflict. Like the exhibition board, the International Manga Research Center feared legal consequences for a public use of the poster without the creator's permission. But there was also an important difference. The “Warhol-Sollfrank” case was about avoiding a legal battle with the powerful Warhol Foundation, while the International Manga Research Center was mainly concerned with not increasing the negative impression Ms. Takeuchi had received by the fact that the poster had been given to the print-shop before her answer to the initial request arrived. It goes without saying that this was a gross mistake. However, the question arises whether the request for approval, that is, for a grant of the copyright holder's permission was necessary in the first place?

Since the early 19th century, the concept of copyright has been assigned the task to balance out artists (and other creators), commercial agents and the public. Critics such as legal theorist and activist Lawrence Lessig assess that the copyright does not fulfil this function anymore in the digital age. According to them, it favors the cultural industries. Sollfrank, a copyright activist herself, developed her “Warhol incident” into a meta-art work. Instead of leaving the matter to lawyers, in her “Work about a (finally

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1 <http://www.ights.info/index.php?q=node/643>. See also <http://artwarez.org/projects/legalperspective/>. Sollfrank's “Anonymous Warhol Flowers” can be found on the homepage of The Agency for Civic Education of the State of Nordrhein-Westfalen, section “Multimedia,” under the title “Arbeit 2.0: Die Ausstellung” <http://www.politische-bildung.nrw.de/multimedia/podcasts/00109/00114/index.html> (last access for all: 11 Dec., 2011)

not) impeded work” she features four legal experts who voice fundamentally different opinions about the case, illuminating that in digital media authorship, originality, and intellectual property are not unequivocal anymore and precisely therefor have to become the subject of general discussion, including artists and scholars. One of the legal experts, Peter Eller, remarks: “I find it remarkable that Andy Warhol, who himself played with the copyright, comes into play. Therefore, this art cannot really be sacrosanct for all eternity.”

In contrast, the “poster incident” was apparently mainly about personal sensitivities. Any discussion of whether Christina’s was a work in its own right and, if so, why, was avoided, and the particular occasion of her creation—a scholarly conference which was expected to give fresh impetus to Manga/Comics Studies in Europe—did not play any role at all. All those who were involved are to reflect upon the reasons of this failure, in order to deal with such incidents in the future. Insiders know very well about the hardships of manga artists who depend on their work. Manga Studies are, among other things, called upon analyzing and criticizing the precarious nature of such labour. In this regard, Takeuchi Naoko’s concern about what happens to her work’s results are not only understandable but also legitimate. If the aim of the conference—as so aptly expressed by the poster—would have been communicated more sufficiently, Ms. Takeuchi might have reacted in another way, not only as the entrepreneur of *Kabushiki gaisha* [joint-stock company] *Princess Naoko Planning*. She might have acknowledged her mangaka colleague’s right to deal freely with a fragment of her own work, and she might have even smiled at the result.

Finally, the following question arises: Do not we researchers and scholars have the right as well as the obligation to decide upon whether the aim of a conference—in this case, the promotion of Manga Studies beyond Japan—outweighs an alleged copyright? It should not be our stance to freeze immediately like the proverbial rabbit in front of the snake, that is to say, to leave our very own matter to legal experts and, eventually, economic necessities or financial constraints.

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2 <http://artwarez.org/projects/legalperspective/download/PeterEller-engl.pdf> (last access: 11 Dec., 2011), p. 4.

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