

Introduction

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Reading *manga* (comic books and graphic novels) and watching *anime* (animation) is a significant part of daily life for millions of Japanese. Japan's literacy, newspaper circulation, and TV viewing rates are among the world's highest, and its mass media (*masu komi*) creates an environment that is replete with stories. Modern Japan is what Michel de Certeau describes as a "recited society" where people walk "all day long through a forest of narratives from journalism, advertising, and television, narrativities that still find time as [people are] getting ready for bed to slip a few final messages under the portals of sleep" (1984, 186). Japan is also what Susan Sontag refers to as an "image world," since much of Japanese mass media is involved in producing and consuming images, at a time when they have "extraordinary powers to determine [people's] demands on reality and are themselves coveted substitutes for firsthand experience . . ." (Sontag 2003, 80). The animated images that flicker across the screen and fill the pages of comic magazines and books are a major source of the stories that not only Japanese, but also an increasingly global audience, consume today.

An example of the ubiquity of manga and anime can be seen in Machiko Hasegawa's (1920–1992) famous *Sazae-san*. *Sazae-san* became a fixture in postwar Japanese life after it first debuted as a four-panel comic strip in the *Asahi shimbun* in 1946. The newspaper serialization ended in 1974, but Fuji TV's animated version has appeared every Sunday since 1969, making it the longest-running TV series in Japan. The show is a nostalgic throwback to an earlier and simpler age; it features a young suburban housewife who lives with her in-laws in a traditional three-generation Japanese household, occasionally enjoys wearing a kimono, and never uses a cell phone, a personal computer, or an MP3 player. And yet, Sazae Isono is also a modern middle-class woman whose house is filled with the latest electronic domestic appliances, courtesy of Toshiba, the show's longtime corporate sponsor. The weekly episodes are sprinkled with lighthearted humor about the everyday trials and tribulations of an ordinary Japanese family (Lee 2000, 189–190). As one fan puts it, "we see their life go through each season's transition with a smile" (Mari 2004).

Sazae-san generates consistently solid ratings, making it a family-oriented TV staple. In the last week of November 2006, for instance, it was Fuji TV's top-rated weekly show with a 20.9 percent market share, and it has achieved an almost ritualistic

status among Japanese viewers. Those who habitually watch it can suffer from that grievous Sunday-evening malady known as *Sazae-san* syndrome, the depression that sets in when the show's final credits roll, signifying the end of the weekend (Mari 2004). *Sazae-san* is a good example of how manga and anime occupy an important place in everyday Japanese life as forms of entertainment.

However, classics like *Sazae-san* are only a small part of an immense narrative universe. There are thousands of manga, anime, and computer games that avid fans, known as *otaku*, said to number about 2.4 million in Japan and spend over 2.5 billion dollars a year on these products, enjoy (Makino 2007). One realizes this by going to Mandarake, the large manga emporium in Shibuya in downtown Tokyo. It is overwhelming to first view the tens of thousands of brightly colored manga volumes packed in the rows and rows of bookshelves that stretch out before you. This same experience is also available virtually. Just typing in "manga" and "anime" on the Google search engine, for example, yields 180,700,000 hits, close to what you would get for *eiga* (movies) at 201,000,000. One of the interesting Web sites that will turn up on such an Internet search is the *Anime News Network* (www.animenewsnetwork.com). This key electronic source for information on new anime releases lists over 4,354 anime titles, ranging from TV specials and series to OVAs (original video animation) with provocative titles like *Death Note*, *Samurai X: Trust and Betrayal*, and *Fullmetal Alchemist* to full-length movies, such as Hayao Miyazaki's Academy award-winning *Spirited Away* (2001). Where does one begin to explore what for some might seem a dauntingly vast and exotic world of Japanese comic, graphic, and animated art? Who are the artists? What kinds of stories do they create, and why do so many people find them so entertaining?

In recent years, a growing number of works in English have appeared to address these questions. These range from introductory works geared for a popular audience to more sophisticated scholarly studies. Important books on manga include Frederik Schodt's *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (1983) and *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (1996), Sharon Kinsella's *Adult Manga* (2000), Paul Gravett's *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics* (2004), Jaqueline Berndt and Steffi Richter's *Reading Manga: Local and Global Perceptions of Japanese Comics* (2006), and, most recently, Frederik Schodt's *Astro Boy Essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, and the Manga/Anime Revolution* (2007). In the case of anime, several books are also worth mentioning: Antonia Levi's *Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation* (1996), Gilles Poitras's *The Anime Companion: What's Japanese about Japanese Animation* (1999), Helen McCarthy's *Hayao Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation* (1999), Patrick Drazen's *Anime Explosion: The What? Why? and Wow! of Japanese Animation* (2002), and Susan Napier's *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (2005). In addition, several anthologies on Japanese popular culture include important studies of manga and anime, such as John Whittier Treat's *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture* (1996), Timothy Craig's *Japan Pop! Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture* (2000), John Lent's *Illustrating Asia* (2001), Timothy Craig and Richard

King's *Global Goes Local: Popular Culture in Asia* (2002), and, most recently, Steven Brown's *Cinema Anime* (2006).

This recent surge in publishing is partly a response to manga and anime's increasing popularity among Western fans. As Toshiya Ueno has noted, "If people once asked, 'What is ZEN?' now they ask, 'What is otaku?'" In the past, it was Japan's high culture, such as Zen Buddhism and the fine arts, that was the object of the Western obsession for things Japanese. This derives from early connoisseurs such as Ernst Fenollosa, who popularized the idea that Japanese art displayed a "carefully nurtured refinement" that gave "deep insight into the secrets of the East" (Chisolm 1963, 96). These refined spiritual sensibilities seemed exotic to those, like Fenollosa, who envisaged the West as a culture mired in a crass materialism. But today, the elegant geisha strolling in a tranquil tea garden has been replaced by a saucer-eyed, super-sexy heroine in a post-apocalyptic dystopian landscape. Fenollosa would have been appalled, dismissing this aesthetic as supremely low culture, but it now reigns supreme. Manga and anime are not fine arts on display in a museum; they are popular art forms created by an industrialized, corporate, capitalistic culture found on TV, in the movie theater, at the local bookstore, or in manga cafes (*manga kissa*). That being said, however, both media have gained artistic recognition as exemplified by the new museums dedicated to their exhibition, such as the Osamu Tezuka Manga Museum in Takarazuka, northwest of Osaka, the Studio Ghibli Museum in Mitaka near Tokyo, and the new Kyoto International Manga Museum.

Manga and anime attract fans, both Japanese and Western, not because of any Eastern mystical sense of harmony with nature, but because of what Jean Marie Bouissou has called their "aesthetic of excess, conflict, imbalance, and overt sensuality." They are especially appealing because they are "pure pleasure commodities," inexpensive forms of entertainment that are to be enjoyed (2006, 149–155; Berndt 2001, 351). However, this does not mean that they are nothing more than cheap thrills, created to escape from the pressures of the real world. Most would agree with manga expert Frederik Schodt that they also have the power to express people's hopes and fears. They are mediascapes of dreamscapes, "where stressed-out modern urbanites daily work out their neuroses and frustrations. Viewed in their totality, the phenomenal number of stories produced is like the constant chatter of the collective unconscious, an articulation of a dream world" (1996, 31; see also Napier 2005, 73–74). We must explore these dream worlds found within manga and anime.

The present volume, *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, attempts to do just this. This essay collection was originally inspired by panel presentations at the Seventh Annual Asian Studies Conference at Sophia University in Tokyo, 2003. Over the next few years, I became acquainted with an international coterie of researchers studying in this area, some of whom have contributed to this volume. All of the essays in this book presume that manga and anime are important to study for two reasons: first, they are a key part of contemporary Japanese mass visual culture, and second, they play an increasingly important role in the global mediascape of electronic and print media that is shaping the collective imaginations, experiences, and feelings of people throughout the world.

Manga and Anime as Contemporary Japanese Visual Culture

Manga and anime share a mixed or hybrid nature. First, they both blend the visual and the verbal into a unified whole, manga via a synthesis of text and images and anime through dialogue in cinematic live action (Carrier 2000, 69). Second, both are cultural hybrids originating from Japan's contact with the modern West. Both are inspired by Western styles of visual culture while drawing upon Japan's venerable tradition of caricature and sequential art (Craig 2000, 7; Nakamura 2003, 10). Third, as forms of contemporary art, they ultimately dissolve what some envisage as an impermeable line between high and low art; these days it is impossible to dismiss the finest examples of manga and anime as somehow inferior to what is lauded as the "fine arts" (Berndt 2001, 352). Fourth, they are also integrally part of a "mixed media" of entertainment that constitutes an important marketing niche in Japan's increasingly globalized culture industry. By "mixed media," I refer to a phenomenon of contemporary markets in which a single corporate conglomerate dominates by producing and distributing a wide variety of media products to its consumers (Iwabuchi 2002, 456; Ito 2003–2004, 31–32).

A good example of this is Yoshi's popular manga version of his novel, *Deep Love* (*Ayu no monogatari*), the tragic story of a Tokyo teenage prostitute named Ayu, who finds love despite her nightmare life of rape, STDs, and anorexia of which she ultimately dies. The novel, which reads like a Harlequin romance geared for a female young adult audience, first premiered on Bandai's wireless network as a cell-phone novel in 2001. Although originally a piece of "mobile literature," it spawned a multimedia industry as a feature-length movie, a TV series, a successful two-volume manga version in 2003–2004, and, most recently, a new comic about Ayu's pet, Pao, who might be euthanized at the dog pound if no one saves him (Wired News 2007). More typically, manga inspire the media mix, with spinoffs into anime, novels, video games and other consumer goods, as in the case of Tsugumi Oda's recent mega-hit manga, *Death Note*. What is important to note here is the multimedia synergy that exists between manga and anime: manga are the source for over 90 percent of anime (Trautlein 2006).

Manga and Anime as Mass Art

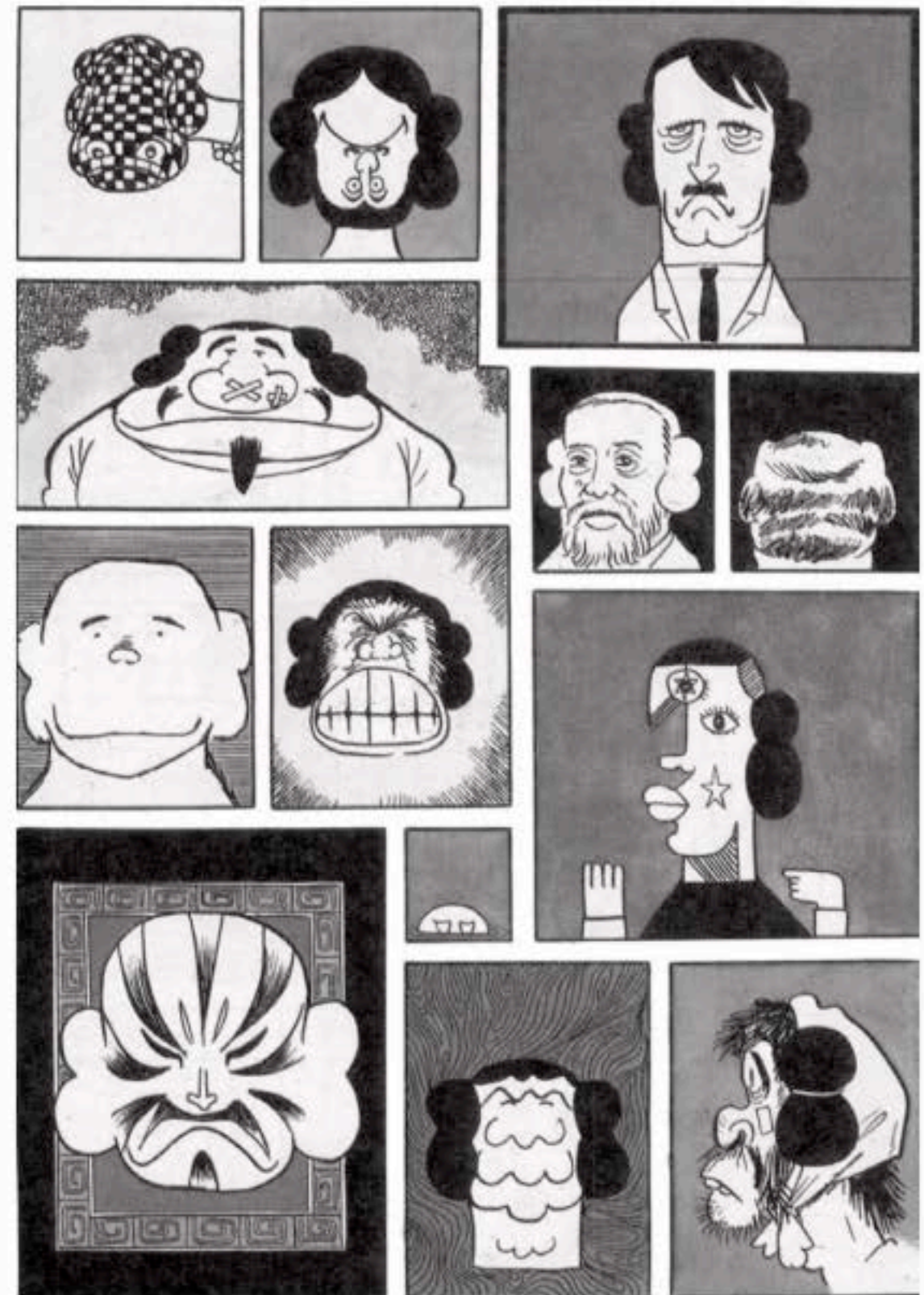
Manga and anime are important examples of what philosopher Noël Carroll has called mass art. By "mass art," Carroll means the TV shows and movies that are consumed by millions. Calling these "popular culture" is misleading, Carroll argues, because it is ahistorical; mass art refers to forms of art that have emerged recently in urban, industrial, capitalistic society. This art, which is reproduced and distributed by mechanical and digital reproduction technologies, is intentionally designed to attract a mass audience. As such, it is different from avant-garde art since the key to its success is accessibility which is exoteric rather than esoteric, for the average consumer rather than the connoisseur, and often reflects rather than transgresses conventional tastes (1998, 184–186). Carroll takes as his example comic books and popular movies that

tell their stories through pictures. Any child is able to recognize what a picture represents if she already knows the real-world object that is being referenced. Recognizing that Bugs Bunny is a rabbit, though a strange one, requires no further abstruse study in “code, language, or any special procedure of inference other than simple object recognition” (1998, 192). To enjoy them, all the consumer needs is a conventional everyday knowledge about the modern world.

This is particularly true for manga and anime. Even if you cannot read the speech balloons in manga or understand the dialogue in anime, you can still get the gist through the sequence of images that advance the story. Comic book theorist Scott McCloud defines comic art as the consecutive arrangement of images in order to communicate information as well as elicit aesthetic, emotional, and cognitive responses in their audiences (1993, 9). In manga, as in anime, it is the flow of images that is key. According to Aarnoud Rommens, the storytelling relies upon an “analytical montage,” by which he means that a sequence of images scatters the narrative action over several frames through a flexible page layout rather than having one picture/text to represent one story event. Moreover, by adopting a style of having different “camera angles,” fading in and out, and so on—manga can mimic a cinematic style by creating a seamless visual continuum that turns the act of reading into a scanning of images (2000, 1–3). Since manga contain less text than Western comics, they are extremely easy to read, with reader-viewers consuming a 320-page comic book in twenty minutes, or scanning a page every 3.75 seconds (Schodt 1996, 26). Anime, of course, does this too, replicating cinematic techniques in the flow of its cels to create an animated narrative for its audience.

Osamu Tezuka’s great manga masterpiece *Hi no tori* (*The Phoenix*) provides an interesting illustration of the use of sequenced images without relying on much text to advance the plot. On one page, Tezuka draws a set of portraits of the famous Japanese emperor Keiko. He does this to create multiple perspectives, transforming him from an august monarch into an object of ridicule through a sequence of distortions—from a likeness of Adolf Hitler to a Picasso-esque work of abstract expressionism into a series of unflattering caricatures. The montage is in fact a sequence of portraits that a group of fawning artists have drawn to try to capture the pompous emperor. It sets the scene because they have been showing him their work in an attempt to impress the moody monarch. This page of paintings is cleverly crafted to make a key point—that the true likeness of Keiko, as a buffoon and a tyrant, was never transmitted through the official sanitized histories. Here, the sequence of images does not advance the plot temporally, but it does, through its biting satire, set the stage for the story that follows. While “reading” this montage requires a certain level of cultural sophistication, even the Picasso, although avant garde, is a readily recognizable piece of pop culture for Tezuka’s older fans.

But while manga and anime are easily intelligible, how do they function as mass entertainment? Critics often dismiss mass art as kitsch. Theodor Adorno, for example, argues that it is best understood as a commodity produced by a monolithic “culture industry.” Since it is explicitly designed for the sole purpose of maximizing profits,



Emperor Keiko's portrait broken down into a pastiche of caricatures.
(Copyright Tezuka Productions)

mass art maximizes its appeal to the lowest common denominator. While reinforcing the values of the capitalist system that produces it, it dulls the mind with monotonous, formulaic “mechanical standardization” that frees people “from thought and negation.” Mass art fills people’s leisure time with fanciful and escapist fantasies based upon the feel-good but “decayed romanticism” of bourgeois ideology. It also encourages a spirit of passivity by encouraging consumers to conform to the status quo, unlike genuine art, which intellectually engages them to reflect critically on their lives in a way that may lead to revolutionary social change (Carroll 1998, 72–76; Adorno 1991, 11, 67; Witkin 2003, 138).

Carroll rejects this kind of critique as a caricature of what mass art really is and how the public experiences it. Yes, manga and anime are a big business, with major publishers like Kōdansha and Shōgakukan and major production studios like Gainax and Studio Ghibli deeply involved in the industry. However, manga and anime are anything but homogeneous in style, content, characterization, themes, or meanings, as they are aimed at different subcultures, age levels, and genders, and produced within ever-changing social-historical contexts. Moreover, the fantasies they evoke are not homogeneous either; they do not uniformly convey any master narrative or transcendent system of capitalistic values to their audiences. As anthropologist Mizuko Ito aptly describes, manga and anime, along with their “media mix” of TV series, video games, and character goods, create “a highly distributed and pervasive imaginary that spans multiple material forms, an imaginary that is massive, but not mass” in Adorno’s pejorative sense of the term (2003–2004, 34).

That is not to say that consumer capitalism and commodity fetishism are wholly absent as a subtext or a deliberately crafted marketing strategy in manga and anime franchises. A good example is *Sailor Moon*, the hugely popular manga and anime series that debuted in 1992. *Sailor Moon*’s schoolgirl hero, Usagi Tsukino, is also the quintessential teenage consumer whose magical power comes from the accessories she acquires—her jewelry, her makeup, and her magic prism. The show was an instant cash cow for the Japanese toy company Bandai, which sold over 400 million dollars worth of merchandise over a two-year period (Grigsby 1998). *Sailor Moon* characters are also trademarked, enabling their use as brand names from apparel to frozen foods. This type of commodification through product licensing has been part of cartooning from the very beginning; anyone who ever owned a pair of Buster Brown shoes, “one of the world’s best-known children’s shoe brands” according to their advertisements, might or might not know that the name comes from Richard Outcault’s famous *Buster Brown* American comic strip of 1902. In Japan, manga characters like *Sailor Moon* or Tezuka’s *Astro Boy* are invariably stars in the image-based advertising that is pervasive today (Gordon 1998, 37–38).

In other cases, it is the story rather than character licensing that has marketing power. The currently popular manga series *Kami no shizuku* (*Drops of God*), for example, is a mystery story that also introduces European wines to its readers. The writers, Yuko and Shin Kobayashi, who happen to love wine, select the bottles that appear in their episodes based upon their own careful research into moderately priced but delicious

wines. The result is that, although the series does not have any vintners as sponsors, sales of featured wines appearing in the manga have jumped thirty percent in Japan since the series first came out (Hardach 2007).

Recently, the Subaru car company has taken the commodification of the media to new heights with their new ten-million-dollar ad campaign for the 2008 Impreza WRX. Their Web site (Subaru.com/legend) features three commercials that make up a “three-part epic series,” entitled “The Legend is Reborn.” The three thirty-second anime are about a man who lives “in a land of forbidden secrets” (Japan) who discovers “the key to his destiny” (the car) and “attracts an admirer along the way” (a new sexy girl friend). The episodes blend real-life film footage of the speeding car with fantasy landscapes that are reminiscent of manga and anime stories. Episode two, “The Meeting,” for example, takes place with the car speeding through a futuristic urban cityscape evocative of scenes from movies such as *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*, *Blade Runner*, and anime hits such as *Ghost in the Shell* (Elliot, 2007). Here it is the story format as well as the slick hyperreal anime graphics that sell Subaru’s cars to their young adult market. In other words, manga, anime and marketing usually mix.

Yes, manga and anime are formulaic, but that does not mean they lack expressive power or depth. They rely on easily comprehensible schema of representation, clear plots, and the reader/viewers’ easy identification with the stories’ characters. Stock plots and stylistic conventions are powerful modes of communication because audiences can quickly learn their codes through repeated exposure. Here familiarity does not breed contempt, but rather facilitates intelligibility. The stories can also arouse powerful emotions such as horror, sexual desire, or suspense in the audience.

A case in point is Hideaki Anno’s renowned *Shinseiki ebangerion* (*Neon Genesis Evangelion*, 1995), a postapocalyptic tale set in 2015 about special children who captain gigantic bio-machines called Evas to fight against Angels, mysterious beings from outer space bent on destroying not only Tokyo-3 but all humankind. Over the twenty-six episodes of the original TV series, Shinji Ikari, the main character, and the other children pilots face off every week against a new numbered angel, which they eventually defeat through teamwork. Anyone familiar with Japanese children’s TV programming from the 1980s and 1990s knows this is a formulaic plot of heroes piloting mecha versus monster. And yet, Anno uses the old formula to explore all sorts of disturbingly new questions, particularly Shinji’s dysfunctional relationship with his cold and distant father, who, as head of a UN special agency called Nerv, is preoccupied defending the earth against the destructive angels. The episodes present an unstintingly dark portrait of childhood loneliness in a broken society where dad is always working—a depiction that would strike a nerve for any child growing up in 1990s Japan before the collapse of the bubble economy.

Yes, manga and anime are deliberately designed for easy enjoyment, but that does not mean they are palliatives for people seeking relief from the tedium of daily life. Rather than just serving up fantasy escapes from the real world, they are potentially a source for political, ethical, or existential critical reflection. This is possible because they offer “new resources and disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and

imagined worlds," and also provide a "staging ground for action and not only escape" (Appadurai 1996, 3, 7; Treat 1993, 365–366; Ito 2003–2004). One example that comes to mind is the work of manga artist Jōji Akiyama, whose classic *Zeni geba* (Money Crazy, 1970), is a story about an evil capitalist named Futaro who, after a miserable childhood, decides he will do anything for money. Futaro is so obsessed by power through profit that it ultimately drives him insane. Akiyama's manga is anything but a paean for the spirit of capitalism, and, as an unsparingly harsh critique of "mad money," Akiyama's work provokes readers to question the dominant corporate system with its obsessive materialism and casual disregard of human values.

Manga, Anime, and Mass-Media Technologies

Carroll's second characteristic of mass art is that it is intimately connected to the spread of modern industrial mass-media technologies. He is referring here to the "mass delivery systems" capable of spreading content to multiple sites simultaneously (1998, 202). Comic strips are a case in point. In the West, comics first appeared when rising literacy rates made them attractive for newspapers appealing to a newly literate audience (Carrier 2000, 108). When the first American comic strip, Richard Outcault's "Yellow Kid," made its debut in the *New York World* in 1895–1896, its serialization dramatically increased the Joseph Pulitzer newspaper's circulation (Gordon 1998, 14). From 1895 to 1901, Outcault, along with other popular artists of the time, adapted existing visual technologies of word balloons, image sequences, and panel design to develop the basic comic strip conventions familiar today (Carrier 2000, 108). Comic strips quickly became a fixture of American print media, appearing in over eighty-three city papers in fifty locations by 1908. By the 1920s, comics such as Outcault's famous *Buster Brown* in the *New York Herald* were read by millions, becoming part of everyday American life (Gordon 1998, 37). Through newspapers and magazines, comics became the new icons of national culture, visual symbols that America's "imagined community" shared.

What about the case of Japanese comic strips? They developed as the new Western media culture rapidly flowed into Japan at the end of the nineteenth century. For example, one of the founding fathers of Japanese manga, Rakuten Kitazawa (1876–1955), initially studied Western-style caricature, particularly Outcault's work and Rudolph Dirk's (1977–1968) *The Katzenjammer Kids*, which first appeared in 1897 in the "American Humorist," the Sunday supplement of the *New York Journal*. As early as 1902, Kitazawa began publishing his own in the Sunday *Jiji manga* (comic strips), a section in Yukichi Fukuzawa's widely circulated newspaper, *Jiji shimpō*. Another early manga artist, Ippei Okamoto (1886–1948), whose political cartoons first appeared in *Asahi shimbun* in 1912, became deeply influenced by American Sunday funnies such as George McManus's *Bringing Up Father*, a serial that also was published in Japanese newspapers (Okamoto 2001, 207). By 1917, Okamoto published his own cartoon serial, "Cinematic Novel: The Woman with One Hundred Faces" (*Eiga shōsetsu: onna hyakumensō*) in the magazine *Fujokai* (Woman's World) (Isao 2001, 137).

My point is that the rapid proliferation of new print technologies coincided with the spread of new visual genres in Japan. Political cartoons, comic strips, and cartoon series, Western genres associated with newspapers and magazines, proliferated in Japan as it developed into a modern industrialized nation-state. As such, they served as important new sources of Japanese collective identity. A similar process also occurred in the case of Japanese anime (see McDonald 2006, 76–77).

Both the manga and anime industries, therefore, are local Japanese manifestations of a globalized "mediascape" for the mass circulation of images, originally through newspapers, magazines, and comic books, but now also through the electronic media of video games, the Internet, and cell phones (Appadurai 1996, 35). In the latter case, with over two-thirds of Japanese (over eighty million people) owning cell phones, "mobile manga and anime" represents the latest means of distributing content online through companies such as Softbank Creative Corporation, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Bandai Networks, the publisher Shinchōsha, and NTT Solmare Corporation. NTT Solmare, for example, is a leading distributor, with over three million manga downloaded in March 2006 alone, often by commuters who find that viewing the liquid crystal displays of their cell phone is more convenient than carrying a bulky book or magazine (Sato 2006; J-CAST 2006; Taylor, 2006).

The Mass Audience for Manga and Anime

Carroll's third characteristic of mass art is that it reaches a huge audience. One milestone certainly had to be Osamu Tezuka's debut work, *New Treasure Island* (*Shintakarajima*), written in 1947. Tezuka published it as a "red book" (*akahon*), a cheaply made comic for children that had evolved from newspaper comic strips of the 1930s. It was a perfect format for Tezuka's innovative style and was an astonishing hit, selling between 400,000 and 800,000 copies and marking the advent of the story manga boom in Japan so indicative of the postwar period (Schodt 1983, 62).

This period also witnessed a phenomenal growth of weekly and monthly manga magazines, such as *Nakayoshi* (Best Friend, a monthly magazine for girls founded in 1954, circulation in 2006, 418,500) and weekly magazines like *Shūkan shōnen magajin* (Weekly Boys' Magazine, founded in 1959, circulation in 2006, 2,839,792). The manga magazine market came of age in the 1970s and 1980s, by developing into adult niche markets as the readership grew older but still enjoyed the medium. Some examples include Shōgakukan's weekly *Biggu komikku supiritsu* (Big Comic Spirits, circulation in 2006, 394,042), first published in 1980 and targeted toward young salarymen in their twenties, and romance-oriented women's comics like Shūeisha's *Young You*, first published in 1986, discontinued in 2005, and now replaced by its sister publications *YOU* (circulation in 2006, 202,750), *Office YOU* (circulation in 2006, 120,000), and *Kōrasu* (*Chorus*, circulation in 2006, 164,583), all geared toward young adult women. Some notable milestones in the expanding market of magazines include the 1988 New Year's special edition of *Shūkan shōnen jampū* (Weekly Boys' Jump), which was purchased by 70 percent of all boys between the ages of ten and

fifteen. Although it reached its peak of circulation at 6.53 million copies in 1995, this manga magazine, with 2.78 million in circulation today, is still the largest weekly in Japan (Kumagai 1996, 74). By the 1990s the manga industry had twelve magazines with a circulation of one million or more and over fifty at the 150 thousand level (Kinsella 1999, 567).

The numbers for manga published in book form (*tankōbon*) are equally impressive. To give but one example, Tsugumi Oba's recent hit manga, *Death Note*, which originally ran over 108 episodes in *Shūkan shōnen jampu* from December 2003 until May 2006, had sold over eighteen million copies as an eleven-volume series by June 2006 (Mainichi Newspapers 2006). Overall, the manga industry occupies a commanding position in the print media market, making up 22.5 percent of total sales of books and magazines sold in Japan in 2004 with 37.2 percent of the total volumes sold. Despite eleven years of declining sales, domestic Japanese manga sales totaled 481 billion yen in 2006.¹

The same can be said for Japanese anime. Along with the exponential growth of household TV sets in the 1950s, animated features became part of regular TV programming. It was Tezuka, again, who helped lead the way with his manga series *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astro Boy*), which became the first TV anime in 1963 and was soon dubbed and exported abroad (Morton 2003, 243). Despite a recent slip in DVD sales, the Japanese domestic anime market remains strong, worth over twenty-seven billion dollars (Krikke 2006, 15). On Japanese TV currently, over eighty anime shows reach tens of millions of consumers each week. It is clear that the manga and anime culture industries are a powerful presence in Japanese mass media today. All this shows that almost every Japanese person is a consumer (at least at some point in life) irrespective of age, gender, education, and social class. Manga and anime are part of mainstream Japanese pop culture.

The Globalization of Manga and Anime

Manga and anime are an increasingly important part of the global culture industry. These pop cultural exports, along with Japanese fashion, pop music, and TV dramas, are now avidly consumed not only throughout much of Asia, but also in Europe and North America. Toshiya Ueno argues that the Western interest in otaku culture springs from new currents in globalization and information capitalism. When Disney held the international monopoly on entertainment, "globalization" was synonymous with "Americanization"; however, what Ueno calls "Japanimation" is now a dominant transnational economic and cultural force, a part of the larger global flow of Japanese popular culture. This is apparent in such divergent areas as sushi restaurants, karaoke bars, Hello Kitty merchandise, and the latest episode of *Inuyasha* on the U.S. cable Cartoon Network (Ueno 2002, Moeran 2004, 1). According to Koichi Iwabuchi, this new global "J-cult" flow comes from a relatively small number of transnational media conglomerates (2002, 457). A good example is Bandai Visual, a pioneer on the Japanese animation scene that was founded in 1983. In 2005, Bandai established its own subsidiary, Bandai Visual USA,

to integrate its domestic and international operations. It now distributes its extensive catalog of anime through independent American companies like Image Entertainment and Geneon Entertainment. The result is evident at any entertainment store, where walls are stocked full of anime for purchase.

Anime were first introduced on American television with Osamu Tezuka's *Atom Boy* in 1963 and *Speed Racer* in 1967. With the introduction of the videocassette in the 1980s, American fans had direct access to anime imports. Today, the market has evolved from its original niche of college males into a rapidly growing market, with teenage and young adult girls and boys making up a major segment of the consumer demographics (Trautlein 2006). In 2003, anime was a five-billion-dollar business, over three times the value of Japanese steel exports to the United States. This market is now growing rapidly; the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) reports that Japanese anime DVD exports to the United States have increased dramatically from 2.1 million units in 2000 to 12 million units in 2005, possibly because of the sexually explicit content of pornographic anime, which have become big sellers (Hongo 2006). According to the Japan Information Network, Japan's export market is approaching over 60 billion dollars, with 60 percent of all cartoon shows on TV throughout the world made in Japan (Krikke 2006, 15).

The overseas market for manga reveals a similar trend. In the case of the U.S., since 1999, manga sales have taken off, mainly because the popularity of anime paved the way for manga that served as their source of inspiration (Trautlein 2006). Publishers such as Viz Media, TokyoPop, and Darkhorse have shown exponential growth. Viz Media, a pioneer distributor with over twenty years experience, began by selling a small number of pamphlet comics. By 2007, Viz was the American distributor of two of the largest manga publishing houses in Japan, Shūeisha and Shōgakukan. Viz publishes the English language edition of Shūeisha's flagship manga magazine, *Shonen Jump* (2007 U.S. circulation, 180,000) as well as over 350 graphic novels, including best-sellers like *Naruto* and *Death Note* (Cha 2007). Another sign that manga has become part of mainstream American culture is the fact that trade book publishers like Del Ray (via Random House) and Penguin, as well as American comic book companies like DC Comics, have entered the business, brokering licensing agreements with Japanese companies for content in order to produce their own titles (Reid 2007a, 2007b). Total sales of manga books in the United States have grown from 7.8 million in 2005 to 9.5 million in 2006, a 22 percent increase (Phillips 2007). Overall, 44 percent of all graphic novels sold at bookstores or comic shops are manga (*Publishers Weekly* 2007). Sales revenue at the retail level has grown dramatically from 60 million in 2002 to an estimated 170 to 200 million dollars in 2006 (*Publisher's Weekly* 2007; see also Webb 2006). Recently, I was surprised to find a manga section that matched the science fiction collection in size at a local Barnes and Noble store in a Fayetteville, North Carolina mall—not a place where I thought I would find Japanese manga. And if you want to buy Viz Media's top selling English version of *Naruto*, all you have to do is go to your local Walmart, which is good evidence that manga is becoming a mass-market phenomenon in America.

Another sign of how anime and manga have become mainstream in the United States are the many conventions and local clubs that have proliferated in recent years. Anime- and manga-related conventions regularly occur throughout the United States; the Yaoi-Con in Millbrae, California, the New York Comic Con, Baltimore's Otakon, and Anaheim's Anime Expo, which was held across from Disneyland and attracted a record 41,000 visitors (Schou 2006), were all held in 2006. On a local level, even my little local library in Canton, New York, has two manga/anime clubs, one for children and another for the over-thirteen young adult set. The image of Japan for American youth today is not Pearl Harbor, kamikaze pilots or Japan's traditional "classical" culture, but *Naruto*, *Cowboy Bebop*, and *Ranma 1/2*.

Are Manga and Anime "Japanese" or Culturally Odorless?

Some see manga and anime's global popularity as evidence of the distinctive "expressive strength" of Japanese artists (Allison 2006, 224–225). Finding national identity through culture has a long history in Japan. It first arose in the early twentieth century as a response to the challenges of modernization and Westernization. "Japaneseness" became identified with high cultural symbols like Zen, the tea ceremony, and *ukiyo-e* prints. In the 1980s, Honda Civics and Sony Walkmans were added to the mix as potent new symbols of Japan's superior high-tech industrial power. But with the collapse of the bubble economy in the early 1990s, and as Japanese companies began aggressively to market J-Cult worldwide, software began to replace the fine arts and high-tech hardware as the newest icons of Japanese identity—what Iwabuchi and others refer to as "soft nationalism." (Iwabuchi 2002, 451, 459; Nakamura 2003, 1–2).

How do manga, anime, and video games express a Japanese "soft nationalism"? Partly, it has to do with Japan's quest for a "cultural uniqueness" in contrast to foreign nations, a national soul-searching about what it means to be Japanese (*Nihonjin-ron*) that began in the 1980s. In 1994, the connection between manga, anime, and nationalism came to the forefront over the *Lion King* controversy. At that time, several Japanese comic artists and fans accused Disney of stealing the story from Osamu Tezuka's famous comic, *Janguru taitei* (literally, the Jungle Emperor, known in the United States as *Kimba the White Lion*), which became a rallying point of national pride (Kuwahara 1997, 44). Since then, the Japanese government has pushed for Janimation's official status as one of Japan's key cultural exports (Kinsella 2000, 91–93). Officials, like the self-acknowledged manga fan Foreign Minister Taro Aso, tout Japan's global media culture as an effective tool of diplomacy. "Soft power" is just as valuable as "hard power to boost Japan's brand image," because it reflects "Japanese sensitivities and way of thinking."

A good example of Japanese soft nationalism in action is the popular TV anime, *Captain Tsubasa*, which, renamed as *Captain Majed* and dubbed in Arabic, has been widely popular throughout the Middle East ever since it first aired there in the 1990s. The series, named as one of the top 100 TV animated series of all time by *Animage*, one of the most respected anime magazines in Japan, is about a boy, Ozora Tsubasa,

who dreams of becoming a great soccer player. Since the Iraq war, the Japan Foundation made broadcasting the new 2001–2002 series on Iraqi national TV one of the key priorities of its cultural diplomacy. Coinciding with its broadcast, Japanese coalition forces working on economic cooperation projects obtained permission from Shueisha Inc. to put Captain Tsubasa stickers on their supply trucks (*The Daily Yomiuri* 2006a). The reason for this was simple, according to a Japanese Foreign Ministry official from the cultural exchange section: "We believe children, who will shape the future of Iraq, will be filled with dreams and hopes by watching the show, and boost pro-Japanese sentiment even more" (*The Daily Yomiuri* 2006b). In effect, Captain Tsubasa as "Captain Majed" became an important part of the Japanese government's public relations campaign to propagandize its reconstruction efforts. He became a symbol of the bright future Japan was helping to create for Iraqi youth who love soccer just like the Japanese do (Massankay 2006).

Here, Janimation is used as a cipher of Japanese identity. For some, *Captain Tsubasa* communicates Japan's true spirit as a peace-loving, soccer-playing foreign power who sincerely acts for the good of the Iraqi people. Any Iraqi can understand this by simply tuning into the show. It works to convey Japan's "brand image" to non-Japanese consumers, who assimilate *Captain Tsubasa* into their positive conception of Japan. Manga and anime, therefore, offer their own Orientalist iconography "in the complicit exoticisation of Japan" (Berndt and Richter 2006, 207).

On the other hand, Iwabuchi and others point to "ambivalence" at the heart of this "soft nationalism." Janimation is, after all, deliberately produced for transnational mass consumption. Many would agree that, as J-cult becomes increasingly global, it becomes difficult to discern any cultural distinctiveness because "it at once articulates both the universal appeal of Japanese cultural products and the disappearance of any perceptible 'Japaneseness'" (2002, 456). For instance, Iraqis who view *Captain Tsubasa* as *Captain Majed* may not explicitly identify its connection to Japanese culture. The show may not trumpet Japaneseness in the way that McDonalds and Disney seem to trumpet Americanness, since Captain Tsubasa's identity is fluid enough to get an Arabic name unlike Ronald McDonald or Donald Duck (Moeran 2004, 8). As such, Janimation in this and other examples seems "culturally odorless" (*mukokuseki*), by which Iwabuchi means "racially, ethnically and culturally unembedded and or erasing national/cultural characteristics" (2002, 455).

Another good example of J-cult's cultural odorlessness is Shirō Masumune's recent computer-generated imagery (CGI) anime, *Appleseed* (*Appurshido*, 2004). Set in the year 2131 C.E., it is a postapocalyptic story about a woman warrior-for-hire named Deunan Knute. Its scenes, such as "Battle in the City," unfold in a utopian city called Olympus, which is controlled by a supercomputer named Gaia. While some of *Appleseed's* characters have Japanese-sounding names, like Hitomi and Yoshitsune, others are named after figures in Greek mythology, like Athena and Hades. *Appleseed's* pastiche of Japanese and Greek names of persons, places and even gods (for instance, Gaia is the ancient Greek goddess of the earth) supports John W. Treat's point that "[I]t is now impossible to write or even conceive of 'Japanese' popular culture without

involving much of the rest of the world . . ." (1996, 13). It can be argued further that *Appleseed's* cultural references, though diverse, are also superficial, since there is little about the characters or the landscape that is identifiably Japanese—or ancient Greek for that matter. Iwabuchi concludes that key to the global success of Japanese anime and manga is that “they leave their use-value to consumer tastes and cultural traditions outside Japan” (2002, 463), allowing themselves to be appropriated according to local preferences (see Allison 2006, 192–233). *Appleseed* is culturally odorless, with nothing to keep it from being consumed globally.

Cultural odorlessness also extends to the media themselves. Manga and anime are no longer solely the provenance of Japanese artists. In the case of manga, this has already happened in Asia with, for example, the development of Manhwa, a homegrown version of manga in Korea. In the United States, this process of indigenization of the media is just beginning. An example is the new Japanese-style comic *The Adventures of CG*, which was first published in the August 2005 issue of *CosmoGIRL!* This serialized manga, a collaboration with TokyoPop, features a “spunky every-girl hipster,” an Ohio State college sophomore named CG who is living in Tokyo. While CG’s face is drawn according to manga conventions with oversized eyes, her story is about an American coed during her semester abroad. The artist, Svetlana Chmakova designed CG’s character to appeal to *CosmoGIRL!* readers (Memmott 2005).

Such original English language (OEL) manga are increasingly being sold in book format as well. The online comic *Megatokyo* (www.megatokyo.com), by popular American Web comic manga artist Fred Gallagher, for example, is now being published by CMX/DC comics (Aguilar 2007). TokyoPop has released twenty-eight OEL titles in 2005 and planned to double the amount in 2006 (Cha and Reid 2005). Viz Media’s vice president of publishing Alvin Lu sees increasingly a “greater convergence of what we call ‘comics’ and what we call ‘manga.’ I don’t know how long using these terms [as separate categories] will be applicable . . .” (Cha 2007). TokyoPop’s editorial director Jeremy Ross agrees with this, adding that manga is now an “internationalized style of visual storytelling that transcends national origin. We’ve seen the globalization of manga taking place” (Cha and Reid 2005).

The Approach and Scope of This Book

Given manga and anime’s globalization, we must avoid essentializing the themes, content, and aesthetic qualities of manga and anime as indicative of a uniquely distinctive Japanese culture (Berndt and Richter 2006, 7, 205). Toshiya Ueno, for example, is highly critical of some analyses that fall into this trap by overplaying manga and anime’s cultural specificity. Some academic studies fall too readily into the trap of parroting the soft nationalism discussed earlier by concluding that certain key features, themes, or ideas present in manga and anime reflect an underlying quintessential Japaneseness. Ueno finds fault with Antonia Levi’s book *Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation*, for this reason. He argues that Levi errs with her overly facile interpretations of anime, which she bases upon

timeless and eternal Japanese themes like “the Shinto love of nature” and “the spirit of *bushidō*.” Such an approach, Ueno argues, is overly reductionistic, and lapses, in the final analysis, into a crass Orientalism (2002, 98).

It is important then not to fall into the interpretative trap of Orientalism, whether it comes from Western fantasies of Japan as the exotic other or indigenous Japanese fantasies inspired by soft nationalism. On the other hand, it is also important to avoid assuming that since manga and anime are part of the global mediascape, they are invariably culturally odorless. The authors in this book eschew both interpretative extremes by taking three different approaches.

The first approach highlights the specific historical period and social contexts in which manga and anime are produced and then discusses how the works are discursive responses to those times. The goal is not only to learn about when they were produced, but how their production and consumption created identifiable communities of sentiment. Yulia Mikhailova’s essay, “Intellectuals, Cartoons, and Nationalism during the Russo-Japanese War,” takes such an approach. Mikhailova carefully examines the origin of political cartoons and their particular ideological uses during Japan’s first major conflict with a foreign Great Power. Mikhailova’s essay is typical of others in this volume that show how these materials were often intended for Japanese rather than transnational circulation. As such, they have a “cultural odor” that both reflects and refracts the ideas, issues, and conflicts that were central to the social, political, and cultural realities of the time in which they were produced. Their very success depended on whether they, in fact, appealed to their predominantly Japanese readership. This kind of interpretative approach is fairly typical of many academic studies on Japanese pop culture (see, for example, Craig 2000, 12; Ogi 2003; Grigsby 1998; Allen and Ingulsrud 2003, etc.).

A second approach analyzes how manga and anime “move from one social arena to another, and circulate in and across cultures . . .” (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 6). Mizuki Takahashi, for example, in “Opening the Closed World of Shōjo Manga,” traces the history of generic conventions of girls’ manga as they developed over time from the pre- to postwar periods. Lee Makela’s chapter “From *Metropolis* to *Metropolisu*: The Changing Role of the Robot in Japanese and Western Cinema,” also examines the circulation of images cross-culturally, in particular, how the robot image moves from Fritz Lang’s famous 1927 movie masterpiece to the manga world of Osamu Tezuka and, finally, to the 2001 anime version of those stories by Rintaro and Katsuhiro Ôtomo.

A third approach treats manga and anime as new media for constructing identity. According to John W. Treat, what makes popular culture so powerful is that it is “actively constitutive of experience rather than passively reflective of it,” and therefore provides “myriad ways in which modern people experience what makes them ‘modern’ or even ‘people’” (1996, 6–7). In some cases, the artists see their medium as the message, a way of reconstructing their own sense of self, whether it is a localized notion of Japaneseness or a dislocated transnational identity in a postmodern globalized database world. Several essays in this volume, such as Shiro Yoshioka’s “Heart of Japanese-

ness: History and Nostalgia in Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*," carefully examine how artists use these media for their own ideological purposes. The ambitious goal of this volume, then, is to offer a selective survey of the discursive practices, historical development, and generic richness of the vast field of manga and anime.

Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime begins with two chapters that give a general historical and thematic overview of both media. Kinko Ito's "Manga in Japanese History" briefly surveys the history of manga from its genesis in premodern Japan to the newer subgenres, such as *redikomi* (Japanese ladies' comics) and sexually explicit fare known as *yaoi* or *shōnen ai* (BL, or boys' love comics). Ito argues that the power of manga is tied to its versatility; it can offer political and social commentary, educate, socialize, and create fantasy worlds to escape or reflect upon everyday life. Similarly, Gilles Poitras's "Contemporary Anime in Japanese Pop Culture" explores the rise of anime in postwar Japan. His essay clearly distinguishes anime from early Western animation in terms of emotional content, visual conventions, and cinematic effects.

The rest of this book covers a selection of major artists, genres, and themes in manga and anime studies. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the towering figure in the world of Japanimation, "the god of comics" Osamu Tezuka. In Chapter 3, "Characters, Themes, and Narrative Patterns in the Manga of Osamu Tezuka," Susanne Phillips surveys Tezuka's career, which confirms that he was one of the most prolific and important Japanese artists of the twentieth century. In particular, she shows how Tezuka evolved as an artist, changing his narrative and pictorial styles to meet the new needs of his readership as well as to suit his own maturing aesthetic tastes. Phillips's essay questions the standard manga histories that sometimes praise Tezuka too simplistically as "the founder of modern manga." While Tezuka was a major trendsetter, he, in turn, was deeply influenced by other artists, and of course Western comics. Phillips's analysis frees us from uncritically lapsing into the widespread ideological nationalistic view that has elevated Tezuka into one of its preeminent icons of Japaneseness.

This project of recontextualizing Tezuka's work within the global flow of media culture and Japanese pop culture continues in Chapter 4, "From *Metropolis* to *Metropolisu*: The Changing Role of the Robot in Japanese and Western Cinema." In his essay, Lee Makela examines how Tezuka's manga artistry was not only deeply influenced by Western cinema, but, in turn, influenced Japanese anime. Makela would accept Mark Gilson's observation that "[m]ost people's imagery of robots comes from the world of fantasy" (1998, 367). However, the key question is how this fantasy object becomes a global signifier for a host of issues, ideas, and meanings and transmogrifies as it moves through an increasingly globalized popular culture. Tezuka's 1949–1951 *Metropolisu* was a reworking of the basic idea behind Fritz Lang's 1927 classic film *Metropolis*. A half-century later, Tezuka's robot tale was the inspiration for Rintaro and Katsuhiro Ōtomo's 2001 famous anime of the same name. Makela argues that by juxtaposing Lang's film with Tezuka's and Rintaro and Ōtomo's reworkings we can gain some basic insights into different Western and Japanese artists' understandings of "the soul in the machine."

Chapters 5 and 6 study *shōjo* (girls) manga. This genre, originally written for teenage girls, is largely neglected by critics, particularly in the West, where comic books were, until just recently, considered a boy's preserve. Like *shōnen* (boys) manga, *shōjo* manga developed in the postwar period. Originally pioneered by male artists, the genre developed after new women artists took over the field, writing stories that appealed to a wide range of readers, including adult women. Since the end of the 1970s, *shōjo* manga have proliferated into a complex number of subgenres including science fiction, fantasy, boys' romance, and ladies' comics, the latter specialty niche marketed to young women office workers and housewives (Thorn 2004). Since the late 1990s, these manga have had an impact on the global market as well, with adolescent girls, for example, now making up 60 percent of the readership in the United States (Trautlein 2006; Camper 2006). Another sign of *shōjo* manga's growing international popularity is the Japan Information and Culture Center's recent exhibit, "Shojo Manga! Girl Power! Girls' Comics from Japan," in Washington, D.C. (January 29–March 16, 2007).

In Chapter 5, "Opening the Closed World of Shōjo Manga," Mizuki Takahashi explores the historical roots of this form of cartooning by tracing its origin to prewar girls magazines. Takahashi shows how young women's magazines and novels offered "idealized images of girlhood." What makes *shōjo* manga distinctive is their use of pictures rather than plots or story lines to express powerfully the inner psyche of their heroines.

In Chapter 6, "Situating the *Shōjo* in *Shōjo Manga*: Teenage Girls, Romance Comics, and Contemporary Japanese Culture," Deborah Shamoan concentrates on the development of the genre since the 1970s, especially such recent examples as Kiriko Nananan's *blue* (1996). Shamoan argues that it is more useful to see such works "as part of a continuing process of generic experimentation and innovation" than as a static form. While *shōjo* manga in the classic works of the 1970s are defined by an "aesthetic of sameness" that highlights formulaic features, such as layering panels and cloud-like and flowery dreamy backgrounds, since the 1990s the genre has changed significantly. Artists like Nananan have abandoned the earlier aesthetic style for an "aesthetic of flatness" characterized by closed rectangular panels, stark backgrounds, and a tendency to obscure the characters' faces and eyes. Both Takahashi's and Shamoan's essays show the complexities behind the historical and artistic evolution of this major manga genre.

Another important theme in manga and anime is Japan's wartime past. In Chapter 7, Yulia Mikhailova discusses early newspaper cartooning in Japan, a genre that combined cartoon picture styles from the premodern period with caricature techniques imported from the West. Mikhailova shows how famous Japanese political cartoonists during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) were instrumental in forging an "imagined community," whipping up Japanese nationalistic sentiment through their graphic caricatures of the enemy "other." By closely analyzing the political cartoons from the period, Mikhailova concludes that they were as "important as the railroads and postal system in the making of modern Japan."

Eldad Nakar continues to explore the connection between war manga, Japanese identity, and nationalism in Chapter 8, “Framing Manga: On Narratives of the Second World War in Japanese Manga, 1957–1977.” Nakar is especially interested in how society shapes people’s memories of World War II. By surveying a large number of examples from this genre, Nakar identifies two different “hegemonic” war narratives that developed in the postwar period—those that emphasize Japan’s aerial war as a heroic struggle against an implacable but craven enemy, and the later works that are harshly critical of the horrors of war. He concludes that these mass-produced manga, designed primarily to entertain boys, reflect disparate but deeply felt collective moods about the war, which reflect changes in sentiment over time.

Both Mikhailova’s and Nakar’s essays underscore the fact that, as Arjun Appadurai has described it, “imagination is a social practice.” Political cartoons and war manga are not escapist fantasies from the real world, nor are they ruminations of an elite class that are irrelevant for ordinary people. Manga, instead, are examples of a field of social practice that redefines reality through a process of a “negotiation” between individual artists, their readers, and their increasingly “globally defined fields of possibilities.” As Appadurai notes, “[t]his unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche . . . to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors” (1996, 31).

The key topic of the next three chapters is the tie between manga, anime, and religion in Japan. Manga and anime can transform reality as well as simply reflecting it. As Stuart Hoover has recently observed, the complex interplay between mass media and religion is particularly important in this regard since “religion operates in the integration of experience, identity and meaning” just as media does, shaping a sense of self and community in everyday life (2001, 147).

In Chapter 9, Richard Gardner looks at religion, mass media, and identity in his “Aum Shinrikyō and a Panic About Manga and Anime.” Aum is the religious movement responsible for the sarin nerve gas attacks on the Tokyo subway system in 1995. Gardner is interested in how Aum members and their critics describe the role of manga and anime in shaping Aum’s eschatological vision of the end of the world as well as the events leading up to Aum’s terrorist attack. As it turns out, both Aum and Japanese cultural commentators were highly critical of the dangerous effects of mass media, technology, and virtual reality on human life. Did apocalyptic manga inspire violent visions for Aum members, as well as for the generation of Japanese growing up at the end of the millennium? Was mass media the means used by evil forces to brainwash humanity and control the world? This is the debate between Aum and its detractors over the meaning of mass media.

Chapters 10 and 11 examine specific examples of manga and anime that draw upon traditional religion in order to wrestle with the question of contemporary identity. Raj Pandey’s “Medieval Genealogies of Manga and Anime Horror,” focuses on the popular horror-manga artist Hideshi Hino. His Kafkaesque tales, like *Hatsuka Nezumi* (White Mouse), which are marketed to teenage girls and boys, have recently attracted new fans in the United States after being translated into English. Pandey asserts that it is wrong to categorize Hino’s horror manga as a Japanese version of the Western horror

genre. While Hino’s gruesome spectacles of bodily mutilation and disintegration are fascinating postmodern evocations of the “decentering and dispersal of subjectivity,” Pandey argues that Hino’s expression of postmodernism is heavily indebted to the traditional pictorial styles of Japanese medieval hell scroll paintings that offer a profoundly Buddhist spiritual vision.

In Chapter 11, “The Utopian ‘Power to Live’: The Significance of the Miyazaki Phenomenon,” Hiroshi Yamanaka reveals the spiritual dimension of Miyazaki’s hit anime *Spirited Away*. While it enjoyed only modest success internationally, the anime was a huge box-office hit in Japan. Yamanaka argues that the film’s popularity came from its ability to provide “psychological healing to those Japanese people suffering from an identity crisis.” Like Pandey, Yamanaka argues that Japanese religion is a powerful source of inspiration. Yet, Yamanaka’s point is that the *kami*-like spiritual beings in *Spirited Away* are not awe-inspiring divinities (*kami*) of traditional folk religion so much as lovable and friendly characters that express Miyazaki’s own optimistic view that there are positive forces in the world. Miyazaki’s faith also actively contests the more chauvinistic forms of Japanese nationalism.

Chapters 12 and 13 deal with another key theme in manga and anime: nostalgia for a lost past. Such a longing, as Pickering and Keightley have recently noted, is endemic to modern life. It can be couched either as a conservative reactionary form of “social amnesia,” or an escapist fantasy in reaction to “the velocity and vertigo of modern temporality” (2006, 923). However, Pickering and Keightley also see a third, more positive, form of nostalgia that “attempts a form of dialogue with the past and recognizes the values of continuities in counterpart to what is fleeting, transitory and contingent” (923). In other words, nostalgia can have a critical and subversive potential in some cases.

This third form of nostalgia is exactly what Shiro Yoshioka and Melek Ortobasi find in their studies of the anime of Hayao Miyazaki and Satoshi Kon respectively. In Chapter 12, “Heart of Japaneseness: History and Nostalgia in Hayao Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away*,” Yoshioka observes that Miyazaki created an imaginary link between Japan’s past and present. But after the horrors of World War II, Miyazaki was disgusted by the exceptionalistic myth of the Japanese nation-state that fostered what he saw as a dangerous form of nostalgia glorifying Japan’s imperial past. According to Yoshioka, Miyazaki constructs a notion of Japanese identity that is cosmopolitan, culturally diverse, and protean.

Nostalgia is conceived quite differently in Satoshi Kon’s 2001 anime *Millennium Actress* (*Sennen joyū*). It is another case of a film well regarded in Japan that did poorly at the U.S. box office. In Chapter 13, “National History as Otaku Fantasy: Satoshi Kon’s *Millennium Actress*,” Melek Ortobasi argues that Kon’s “movie about movies” is a nostalgia film in a way that is very different from Miyazaki’s films. While Kon’s film pays tribute to the modern golden age of Japanese cinema from the 1930s to the 1960s, it does not dish up heartwarming nostalgia, nor does it present an idealized history of modern Japan as revealed in the actress-idol Chiyoko’s recollections of her life on screen and off. Instead, the story is a fantasy of Genya, the idol-obsessed fan

in the movie for whom Chiyoko is his desired object. Here, the otaku of *Millennium Actress* is not the typical negative mass-media stereotype of the passive introvert, or deviant antisocial threat, or lost soul whose life is lived in a fragmentary “depthless present” of hyper-reality. Instead, he is the embodiment of the new Japanese otaku subculture that practices “consumption as production,” and symbolizes new possibilities for Japanese identity. This kind of otaku nostalgia is a positive one—productive rather than passive in the sense that it is “potentially democratic, opening up new spaces for the articulation of the past and acting as a mode of assimilating this to the rapidly changing modern environment” (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 923).

Chapter 14 concludes the book with a theoretical and methodological critique of Western academic studies. In “Considering Manga Discourse: Location, Ambiguity, Historicity,” Jaqueline Berndt offers a wide-ranging critique of “manga discourse,” which she defines as the ways social institutions, the mass media, and the academic world understand manga and its social relevance. The essays in this volume are all examples of this discourse, and, therefore, should be read in light of Berndt’s criticisms.

Berndt judges that such studies often suffer from “methodological blind spots.” For example, she notes the widespread tendency to treat them as “mirrors of Japanese culture.” She observes that scholars often fall prey to a version of what might be called a “natural attitude” by assuming that these texts resurrect an immutable given from the real world beyond them. Their fault does not lie in some mistaken faith that Japanimation somehow duplicates the world. Few today would be so naive as to think that “Life does not mean, Life is; and the degree to which the image, aspiring to the realm of pure Being, is mixed with meaning, with narrative, with discourse, is the degree to which it has been adulterated . . .” (Evans and Hall 1999, 25). Mostly, the problem is that critics overemphasize the fact that manga and anime are meaningful. First, they often uncritically assume a homogeneous audience, and prefer making interpretations that concentrate on narrative analysis and identifying key themes. As a result, their studies are often biased toward story manga rather than genres that deemphasize plot and are “less centered on thematic content,” and favor their own rather than the audience’s discourse on the media. Second, these critics ignore “the history and present variety of animation in Japan” as well as the unique conditions of Japan’s culture industry, its own patterns of publication, distribution, and consumption. Berndt cautions that we must take into account Japan’s own highly successful culture industry that has its own unique patterns of publication, distribution, and consumption.

To delve into Berndt’s point more deeply, taking a particular example proves useful. How, for example, should we interpret *yaoi*/BL (or boys’ love) manga? One has to first recognize that not everyone reads this type of manga. It caters not to some generalized inchoate “Japanese audience,” but rather to a particular niche market of readers. Some of them describe themselves as *fujoshi*, a pun literally meaning “rotten girl” but also a homonym for woman. Any study of this subgenre must understand who its audience is, and how it goes about consuming it. Moreover, *fujoshi*-centric works, in fact, have almost no plot to speak of with episodes that seem designed

primarily to feature prominently pretty-boys (*bishōnen*) in homoerotic scenes (Comi Press 2006). Why do artists create such romances about gay men? Who is reading this subgenre and why is it so popular that it merits its own separate aisle containing hundreds of titles at the manga annex at Kinokuniya’s bookstore in Shinjuku? Doing plot analyses or looking only for thematic interpretations may miss the point of *yaoi* manga. Such an approach certainly ignores the myriad ways pop culture is consumed in Japan.

Berndt also contests the fact that manga discourse inclines toward emphasizing the close connection between manga as a medium and as a uniquely Japanese premodern pictorial art. Such a view ignores the real “historical ambiguity inherent in manga” and the rich cultural hybridity that has made it fluid and dynamic as a medium to the present day. Here, Berndt is more interested in how a discourse that traces manga back to premodern picture scrolls, for example, “in itself establishes traditions.” In this respect, she might be critical not only of Ito’s seamless history of manga in Chapter 1, but also Pandey’s account of the genealogy of Hideshi’s Hino’s horror manga in Chapter 10.

To conclude, echoing Paul Ricoeur’s famous comment about symbolism, I think that the essays in this volume show us how manga and anime “give rise to thought.” What we should make of these two forms of Japanese mass art is a question of our historical moment as they evolve in the rapidly changing global mediascape and marketplace. It is my hope that this volume adds in no small way to the ongoing academic discussion.

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Note

1. Many reasons have been given for declining manga magazine sales in Japan, such as the lower birthrate, the economic downturn, the sharp decrease in neighborhood bookstores, the increasing popularity of computer games, the preference of consumers to read manga in book format, and the rise of new media like the Internet and cell phones (Sato and Sakanari 2007; Shuppan Kagaku Kenkyūjo 2005, 246).

1

Manga in Japanese History

KINKO ITO

Manga, or Japanese comics, have traditionally been a significant part of Japanese popular culture. However, Japanese comics do not exist in a vacuum; they are closely connected to Japanese history and culture, including such areas as politics, economy, family, religion, and gender. Therefore, they reflect both the reality of Japanese society and the myths, beliefs, and fantasies that Japanese have about themselves, their culture, and the world. The history of manga shows how they reflect and shape Japanese society and how they came to be what they are today.

Antecedents of Manga in Premodern Japan

Manga has a very long history in Japan that begins with caricature. The Japanese word *fūshi* (caricature) refers to criticizing or slandering the defects and shortcomings of society or of particular people. The word *fūshi-e* or “caricature pictures” refers to witty and sarcastic pictures that carry out this function (Shinmura 1991, 214). For example, Hōryūji temple was built in 607 and was rebuilt in the eighth century after a fire. In 1935, caricatures of people, animals, and “grossly exaggerated phalli” were found on the backs of planks in the ceiling of the temple (Schodt 1988, 28). Another temple, Tōshōdaiji, also has ancient caricatures suggesting that exaggerating features for humorous effect was a popular pastime (Kawasaki 1996, 8).

The most famous early caricature that many scholars consider a prototype of the manga form is Bishop Toba's (1053–1140) *Chōjū giga* (The Animal Scrolls). This work is a four-volume monochrome picture scroll (*emakimono*) of humorous brush-and-ink drawings of birds and animals. The scrolls show frogs, hares, monkeys, and foxes parodying the decadent lifestyle of the upper class. In one of the pictures, a frog is wearing a priest's vestments and holds prayer beads and sutras while other “priests” are losing at gambling or playing strip poker.

Later picture scrolls take a more serious treatment of the subject of religion, such as the *Gaki zōshi* (Hungry Ghost Scrolls), drawn in the middle of the twelfth century, and the *Jigoku zōshi* (Hell Scrolls), painted at the end of the twelfth century. Both