

The Cultural Biographies and Social Lives of *Manga*: Lessons from the *Mangaverse*

Mio Bryce, Jason Davis and Christie Barber

Introduction

In 2007 a Japanese *manga* series about wine called *Kami no Shizuku* [*Drops of God*] not only resulted in sale increases of imported European wine in Japan, but its Chinese and Korean translations had similar effects on wine imports in China and South Korea (Hardach 2007). In the same year in China another popular Japanese horror comic series entitled *Death Note* was denounced by the Chinese government and media as a harmful influence on children, resulting in the confiscation of both illegal copies of the series and the spin-off products such as *Death Note* notebooks (Katayama 2008). In 2007 in France, market data on the French comic industry indicates that *manga* were not only the largest source of new titles on offer from publishers, but also comprised the largest share of all titles translated for French readers (Comi Press 2008). In 2006 the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) released a report on the sales of translated *manga* in Germany containing the following market development: after combining market range estimates for Germany (50 to 70 million Euros) with market estimates for France (87.5 million Euros), European comic markets surpassed the US as the largest overseas market for *manga* (Comi Press 2006). At an everyday, local level in Sydney, consumer demand for *manga* is becoming more and more apparent in suburban comic stores and bookstores such as Borders or the CBD-based Kinokuniya — the shelves dedicated to graphic novels are becoming increasingly lined with English translations of *manga* series and these sections are easily the only places in bookstores where the near-silent congress of readers involves the intermingling of male and female pre-adolescents and teenagers of different races. (Curiously enough, in the Sydney Kinokuniya store the shopfloor location of shelves housing non-flipped English translations of *manga* titles exist as a liminal zone, the last English title section before entry into the Japanese language section of the bookstore.)

So, what are *manga*?

Manga comprise story-driven narratives, composed with stylised, exaggerated, deformed illustrations, flexible use of diverse and discursive frames, and linguistic (mostly spoken and onomatopoeic) text. Specific visual designs, font and colour schema are manipulated so that they function as iconographic, instantly identifiable vocabularies and registers and install temporal and spatial relationships, multiple voices and perspectives, specific ambience, diverse themes, personalities and mental states into the narratives (e.g., Yomota 1999; Takemiya 2001; Takeuchi 2005; Yokota-Murakami 2006). Intrinsically semiotic, *manga* continuously evolve, involving different genres, artistic methods and readerships. They are capable of dealing with "nearly every imaginable subject" (Schodt 1996), manifesting as powerful forms of social commentary combined with psychological depth and socio-cultural as well as historical insights.

As an integral part of contemporary Japanese visual culture, especially Japan's creative industries, *manga* or Japanese comics have for the past decade been an international publishing phenomenon that is involving preadolescents, teenagers and adults in a range of social worlds or communities, offline as well as online (Horibuchi 2006; Sugiyama 2006). *Manga* therefore represent interdisciplinary possibilities and challenges for teaching and researching popular visual cultures (Bryce and Davis 2006), and are capable of creating a "third place" for inter-cultural exchanges (Crozet and Liddicoat, 2000; Liddicoat, 2002). In fact, in the past fifteen years Anglophonic scholarship on *manga* has expanded beyond Japanese studies to include education and visual literacy, language learning and translation studies, law and copyright issues, girl cultures and representations, video game studies and narrative, children's social lives and media cultures, and sexuality and queer identity. Sharon Kinsella, for example, has documented the scope of the social and political assimilation involved in granting *manga* "cultural citizenship." Yet, as an inspection of English-language textbooks on visual cultures, especially texts used for undergraduate Cultural Studies and Media Studies quickly demonstrates, *manga* are strangely absent from

such introductory works.

Such shortcoming is related to the critical scarcity of academic references in English on *manga* as multimodal (hybridised visual and linguistic) texts. The limited references include Schirato and Webb's *Reading the Visual* and Walker and Chaplin's *Visual Culture: An Introduction*, which have cursorily referred to *manga* mostly to contrast aspects of the wordless textuality of *manga* with English-language comics. These references and the contextual reasons for their brief inclusion need to be developed further. Highlighting the uncaptioned sequencing of narrative information in *manga* storylines as well as the distinctive aesthetic visualisation of sound effects through onomatopoeic words acknowledges the defining visual differences between *manga* and Anglophonic comics. However, in order to understand the range of differences within, and the relationships between, the arrangements of visual elements in *manga*, it is necessary to recognise the multimodality of *manga* as a print medium. The medium is a perfect candidate for analysing, in terms of the creative development of aesthetic trends and counter-trends in *manga*, the different modes of semiotic resources utilised to represent as well as challenge representations of sound, movement, and subjectivity communicated through sequential storytelling. From its strong remediation of both traditional and modern forms of image (re)production, such as print making, visual design, cinematic framing, and televisual manipulation of movement and time, to the channelling of meaning through the interleaving of images with different textual or linguistic registers; from the striking use of lines, tones and textures to express movement and bodily form, to the remaking of conventional visual codes of established *manga* through parodies and reinventions of style; there are considerable dimensions to *manga* as a visual medium, even published English-language translations, to recommend it for inclusion as a form of multimodal communication.

This paper will focus on the need, and rich potential, of scholarly attention in Anglophonic visual and culture studies to *manga*, where the critical scarcity in this area is evident. It takes this oversight as an opportunity to introduce academic discourses on *manga* and unpack the relevance of the cultural biographies and social lives of *manga*. It will examine the Japaneseness of *manga*, and western readers' identification with *manga* and Japaneseness, in relation to questions of identity and global flows of popular culture. It will then look at the complicated intercultural issues involved in the reception of *manga* in a western context, through the discussion of "white" faces in *manga*, followed by an examination of the meaning-making capacity of *manga* in the lives of non-Japanese readers.

The Japaneseness of *Manga*

In his review of the edited collection *Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan*, Shawn Bender notes that since the collapse of Japan's economic bubble in 1989 academic studies of contemporary Japanese society have shifted their focus from socio-economic "sites of production" to "sites of consumption" including popular culture (Bender 2007: 146).

Whereas an earlier era of scholarship attempted to unlock the unique cultural patterns that made the Japanese 'economic animals' so formidable, studies in the post-bubble era emphasize the heterogeneity of Japanese society. This new scholarship embraces the products of Japan's dynamic popular culture, not just its traditional culture, as expressions of contemporary society. (Bender 2007: 146-147)

In terms of western academic interest in *manga*, this post-bubble shift has become increasingly evident since the late 1990s, with not only the scholarly legitimacy of *manga* being established and developed, but also its generativity as a scholarly object of research and as a teaching aid for learning about Japanese society. The purview of *manga* research concerns extends, for example, from the social worlds of children's media cultures (Ito 2007; Allison 2006), to the role of *manga* in bolstering nationalistic calls for the historical revision of Japan's war past and the promotion of anti-Chinese and anti-South Korean sentiments (Miller, 2004; Sasada 2006: 118-9); from American consumption of Japanese representations of sexuality (Cornog and Perper 2007, 2005; Perper and Cornog 2002), to the diffusion of *manga* as an international media influence in visual design and artistic production (Steinberg 2004; Uchino 2006; Looser 2006; Darling 2001). Moreover, French, Italian and German-language studies of *manga* (Berndt and Richter 2006) as well as research focusing on the economic influence of *manga* on European comic markets (Beaty 2007: 111-113; Bouissou 2006) and its aesthetic influence on French and Italian comic production (Vollmar 2007; Pellitteri 2006) are expanding the scope of international

scholarship on *manga* as well as providing further invaluable insights into the proliferating reach of Japanese culture beyond North America.

Outside of the academic marketplace, an everyday sense of growing Anglophonic interest in *manga* as an international publishing trend becomes apparent when visiting any Borders or Kinokuniya bookstore and browsing the bookshelves devoted to graphic novels, comic book reference sections and Japanese studies for recently published titles on *manga*, examples of which include *One Thousand Years of Manga*, *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics*, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, *The Astro Boy Essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, and the Manga/Anime Revolution*, *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture has Invaded the U.S.*, and *Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga*. Search Amazon.com and more titles can be added to this list such as *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, *The Japanification of Children's Popular Culture: From Godzilla to Miyazaki* and *From Impression to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West*.

As instances exemplifying trends in studies of globalisation and Japanese culture, the above examples of recent developments in both academic and popular publishing worlds deserve more attention than their cursory enlistment here. But they do serve as reminders of two key areas requiring greater scholarly attention in Anglophonic *manga* studies, areas of focus that we also contend represent significant opportunities for Anglophonic visual culture studies.

Firstly, insofar as *manga* is becoming increasingly understood as a cultural flow from Japan to Asian countries as well as to North American and European countries, "mapping" the consumption of Japanese visual culture requires recognising the growing cultural influence of Japan on East and South East Asian countries such as China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand and Taiwan as well as on Anglophonic and European countries in ways that are markedly different from the western focus of Anglophonic visual culture texts. In short, there is a need to recognise and articulate what is in effect the "recentering" of the loci of globalisation from western countries by virtue of the international appeal and trendsetting dimensions, especially in East Asia, of Japanese cultural products, including *manga* and animation (Iwabuchi 2002). Acknowledging the full scope of the range of factors shaping Japan's cultural influence of East/Southeast and Euro-American consumer markets is beyond the concern of this article, although it is possible to highlight some of the key issues that *manga* represents for understanding more fully the formation and consumption of visual cultures through globalisation. These issues include indirect Japanisation through the spreading of translated *manga*; the creolisation or glocalisation of *manga* through influences on the local production of styles; the creation of consumer markets for *manga* characters through image alliances involving audiovisual and print media promotion (Shiraishi 1997); Japan's role as a powerful mediator of western cultural products through their "Asianization", the "process of creolizing the West to suit Asian tastes" (Befu 2003: 11); and the strong appeal of the "cultural similarity" felt by Southeast Asian consumers towards Japanese media and entertainment products.

The second area requiring greater attention in *manga* studies relates to the institutional identity *manga* has been granted, especially the discursive work *manga* and *anime* perform as visual media in relation to Japaneseness. To return to some of the book titles identified above, such as *One Thousand Years of Manga*, as a critical cue: as much as these titles establish connections between Japanese visual traditions and contemporary *manga* production, as well as recognition of the diffusion of Japan's visual culture into international consumer markets, these book titles are evocative of wider discourses relating to Japan as a cultural superpower, so they serve as reminders of the analytical need for constructing critical, questioning engagement with the "national distinctiveness" or intrinsic *Japaneseness* attributed to Japanese cultural products.

Yet, as Jacqueline Berndt points out (Berndt 2008), what is becoming increasingly neglected in the growing field of Anglophonic studies are close analyses of the discursive enablement of *manga* as culturally *institutionalisable*. That is to say, understanding the discursive construction of *manga* as a cultural form requires going beyond *manga* criticism as there needs to be rigorous questioning of "the ways in which social institutions" — the mass media and the educational system, among others — "define *manga* and its social relevance" (Berndt 2008: 295). Put simply, *manga* studies need to include investigation of how *manga*, through institutional recognition and incorporation as mass produced commodities, are granted wider social and cultural legitimacy and agency. For example, the establishment in 2006 of Japan's first Faculty of Manga

and Manga gakkai (Manga Conference) at Kyoto Seika University, an institution that has been committed to *manga* scholarship in Japan since 1973, is suggestive of the growing acceptance of *manga* as an object of teaching and research in Japanese higher education (Fujimoto 2006). Yet such institutional legitimacy has been a very slow process and is not an outcome of academic trends engaging with popular perceptions of contemporary media in Japan. "Not even a decade ago", as Berndt reminds her readers, "professors at Japanese universities refused to supervise students who intended to graduate with a thesis on manga...some out of disdain for the topic, others out of an awareness of their own ignorance" (Berndt 2008: 300).

Similarly, recognition of the international popularity of *manga* which identifies *manga* as overlapping with pre-modern Japanese artistic traditions has involved privileging continuities *within* Japanese visual culture, as suggested in the title of the French publication *One Thousand Years of Manga* by the Japanese art historian Brigitte Koyama-Richard. Yet, this approach to promoting understanding of *manga* is inherently problematical. Establishing the medieval origins of *manga* as well as emphasising the lineage of pre-modern scrolls to early-twentieth century *manga* fails to recognise discontinuity within *manga* history.

Since the 1980s, the diversification of *manga*, and the fluid and frequent genre crossing in *manga* progressed in close relationship with intensified and sophisticated commercialism (Ōtsuka 1987). At the same time, the self-confidence of the Japanese increased, and Japaneseness has become a popular alternative to stereotypical western style, in terms of lifestyle, food, clothing, as well as the visual presentation in *manga* and *anime*. As a result, everyday features of Japanese life, and cultural items such as girls' school uniforms became popular as backdrops of *manga* and *anime* narratives. These replaced the strong fictionality and unreality derived from western settings and visual representations. Further intercultural issues have arisen with the developed appreciation of *manga* and *anime* abroad. Issues related to translation, particularly unintentional misinterpretation, both linguistically and culturally, of the Japanese source text is one case in point.

The re-interpretation of the text by the translator and the viewers, all of whom have subjective circumstances within which they engage with the text, means that text transfer from one language to another is an inherently unstable and dynamic process. As *manga* forge their place in social worlds outside of Japan, individual, cultural and economic forces mould and manipulate the Japanese source text (Hatim 2001; Hermans 1996). For instance, the devoted fan translator may privilege preservation of the Japanese original over readability or appeal; the large publisher seeks to produce popular culture texts which are sufficiently different to provide an alternative to North American or Franco-Belgian comics, but are also readily accessible to non-Japanese readers. These conflicting interests and the values associated with them certainly result in shifts in meaning of the original text. The translator becomes a powerful mediator, re-forming not just a text, but the way in which a culture and language is perceived (Barber 2007; Bell 1991; Hatim and Mason 1990).

These re-interpretations of *manga* also mean that any notions of an accurate or authentic understanding of the source culture through *manga* are unreliable. As translations have the power to shape, alter, exclude, incorporate and challenge cultures (source and target), the boundaries of where the authentic text ends and the localised version begins are fluid and blurred, and thus the borders of culture are also constantly shifting (Carbonell 1996; Pym 2001). *Manga* (and *anime*) in translation are ideal examples of this blurring of culture, as they become hybrid products, the integration of Japanese and non-Japanese elements.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the Japaneseness of *manga* is a powerful attraction for global audiences. Despite initially attempting to adapt *manga* to the North American market by colouring the images, flipping the reading format (from the original right to left, to left to right) and removing or translating the onomatopoeia and mimesis (e.g. phrases outside of speech bubbles such as "bang"), by 2002 North American publishers released Japanese-style *manga*. These *manga* are small novel size (*tankōbon*), and retain the right to left reading format and monochrome graphics (Schodt 1996; Thompson and Okura, 2007). Although the Japanese dialogue may be replaced (with varying degrees of preservation of the original), *manga* for global audiences will often preserve Japanese names of people and places, as well as the highly expressive onomatopoeic and mimetic Japanese scripts, which strike through frames and flow across backgrounds. Simultaneously, non-Japanese readers feel a connection with the characters, themes and plots of *manga*, which make them

familiar or in some way universal (Allison 2000; Levi 2006). Whether readers recognise it or not, the translated text occupies a space between both cultures.

So what can we make of this interwoven, multi-layered construction and interpretation of cultural products? It seems apparent that the notion of Japaneseness simultaneously influences, and is altered by, cross-cultural communication. McGray writes, "...cultural accuracy is not the point. What matters is the whiff of Japanese cool", but what exactly is "Japanese cool" (2002: 46)? When *manga* is re-interpreted by non-Japanese consumers, is it Japan that is "cool"? What the hybridisation of *manga* does show us is that the cross-cultural movement of texts is constant, and the interpretation and appropriation of texts, and thus cultures, is inherently unequal, subjective and inaccurate. A clear, fixed definition of Japaneseness is thus unattainable, despite the global penetration and growing familiarity of "cool" cultural products from Japan.

"Why do characters in Japanese comics look white?"

Despite the growing global popularity of *manga*, considerable and complex intercultural misconceptions often become obstacles for the appreciation of the medium. For example, the above question has been frequently posed by non-Japanese viewers on the visual representation of *manga* characters, particularly female characters in *shōjo* (girls') *manga* with "huge saucer eyes, lanky legs, and what appears to be blonde hair" (Schodt 1996: 59). Although now largely unremarked on in popular English-language books and media reports on *manga*, this recurring response from western viewers unfamiliar with human characters being depicted with abnormally large eyes and long, thin bodies has largely cast such representations as possessing putatively Caucasian features. Moreover, this observation is often compounded by the assumption that the Japanese *manga* creators and readers are in denial of their own identity, and desire to be "white" by identifying themselves with the "European West" and not the "Asian East" (Thorn 2004 [para. 9]).

Writing of their experiences of the popular knowledge shaping western reactions to the visual features of characters depicted in *manga* as unambiguously Caucasian, internationally recognised *manga* experts Frederik L. Schodt (1996) and Matt Thorn (2004) as well as Japanese language and literature academic Terry Kawashima (2002) have provided answers of varying sophistication. Recording initial responses as anecdotal evidence, Schodt, Thorn and Kawashima have probed these revealing questions in an effort to foreground and challenge the interpretative assumptions guiding viewers' claims. For Schodt, reactions to Caucasian-looking female characters in *shōjo manga* are telling indications of both the visual work comics are expected to do as realistic approximations, and unexamined acculturation to the perceptual cues that are represented as accepted "self-images" or "self-representations" (Schodt 1996: 60). What non-Japanese viewers are responding to when looking at Sailor Moon is an aesthetic arrangement or distribution of culturally distinctive visual codes or conventions being employed to economically convey, in the case of *shōjo manga*, youth, beauty, femininity and emotion.

Kawashima expands on these observations, situating assessments of the "whiteness" of *Sailor Moon*, a popular *manga* and anime for girls, in relation to the visual construction of race

Sailor Moon looks just as "Japanese" as she looks "white". If she looks exclusively "white" and not at all "Japanese" to a viewer, it is only because the viewer has been culturally conditioned to read visual images in specific racialized ways that privilege certain cues at the expense of others and lead to an overdetermined conclusion: there is nothing inherently "white" about the way in which Sailor Moon's bodily features are configured. (Kawashima 2002: 161-162)

Acknowledging Schodt's comment that attributing whiteness to *manga* characters brackets out any sense of the range of historical as well as media influences on post-war *manga* ranging from US animation to the mass marketing of western standards of female beauty (Schodt 1996: 60-61), Kawashima adds that

[w]hile the origin of the "saucer eyes" is significant, an analysis that relies upon the "origin" as an

exclusive explanation or source of significance ignores the constant process of recontextualization that gives rise to new discourses that may have little to do with the "original" meaning or context (Kawashima 2002: 168).

That is to say, understanding visual representations of faces in *manga* and *anime* requires that we engage with the changing aesthetic significance attributed to facial features in contemporary Japan. If the facial features of *shōjo manga* characters can be more productively understood by contextualising such visualisations in relation to the aesthetic conventions of existing faces of female models distributed through other visual media such as fashion or make-up advertising, this is because "only a reading based on preconceived 'appropriateness' of specific racial features can reach the conclusion that such characters 'look white'" (Kawashima 2002: 174). Moreover, attributions of racial meanings to physical features also involve habituated practices that assign fixed meanings to features; in this case, that "blonde hair" or "large eyes" always approximates "whiteness". As Kawashima points out, "the example of the *shōjo manga* effectively shows that 'race' itself can be defined as a visual reading process — that is, a process through which a viewer privileges certain parts and dismisses others in order to create a coherent whole according to assumed and naturalized cultural 'norms'" (Kawashima 2002: 175). Thorn likewise targets the unproblematic relation western viewers have with visual codes representing facial features by naturalising signifying systems as representing whiteness. Drawing on Roman Jakobson's structuralist conceptualisation of markedness and asymmetric binary relationships, Thorn underscores the unmarked or obvious nature of western visualisations of facial features in comics in relation to the western viewer and the absence of expected (by the western viewer) racial markers to represent Japanese faces in *manga* (Thorn 2004: [par.3-5]).

Although what we have presented above merely rehearses rather than assesses the critical purchase of key aspects of Schodt, Thorn and Kawashima's arguments, we have highlighted these arguments for two reasons. Firstly, they underscore how *manga*, as a visual medium eliciting and bearing overdetermined meanings, can be illustrative of discourses of racial visualisation in ways other than representations readily identified as racist caricatures. Certainly, there are examples of overtly marked racial imagery in *manga*. These include caricatures of villainous Others, as in the depiction of Japan's WWII enemies as having conspicuously long noses in war *manga* of the 1960s (Nakar 2003: 49-50), as well as racist stereotypes and caricatures of black Africans as dark Others, representations drawing on western racial categories and conventions, the "stylistic legacy" of which can be found in Osamu Tezuka's 1950's depiction of African "natives" in his *manga* series *Jungle Taitei* [*Jungle Emperor*] (Russell 1991: 12, Schodt 1996: 96). There is also Guy Jeans and Hiramitsu Minoru's *Reggie*, an early 1990s *manga* series about an African American baseball player, Reggie Foster, who is portrayed as a stereotypical black athlete needing control and guidance from his white agent (Hughes 2003: 347-348); and, more recently, the discovery by North American readers of "Sambo" caricatures of black Africans in the published English translation of a volume of Inagaki Riichirō and Murata Yūsuke's *manga* series *Eyeshield 21* (ComiPress 2007). Recognition of both past and continuing instances of racist imagery of black Africans and African Americans in *manga* in Japan, of course, requires contextualising *manga* production and consumption in relation to the intertwining of historical influences of western racial and racist representations with Japan's own colonial history of racial hierarchies as an imperial power in South East Asia (Russell 1991), the relationship of blackness to the articulation of Japanese identity during Occupation and the post-War period (Hughes 2003), as well as situating Japanese representations and subcultural consumption of blackness in relation to the commodified circulation of African American cultural identities in contemporary Japanese visual culture (Condry 2007; Cornyetz 1994; Darling-Wolf 2006; Toth 2008). Yet, there is also a need to critically unpack how the visual stylistics of *manga* and *anime* characters are being decoded or read negatively through articulations of whiteness and Japanese identity. These include the targeting by cultural critics of pictorial conventions depicting human characters in Japanese animations such as Hayao Miyazaki's historical fantasy *Princess Mononoke* (1997) as evidencing "ethnic self-denial" or "ethnic bleaching", forms of identification symptomatic of rejection of Japanese history and tradition aimed at becoming *Nihonjin-banare* (de-Japanized) (Satō 1997: 51), and the "reading" of the perceived whiteness of *manga* and *anime* characters in relation to discourses of blackness with *manga* characters "deciphered" as forms of Japanese "minstrelsy" or impersonations of whiteness (Wood 1997: 49). In these cases, the performativity of *manga* and *anime* characters — the way they are invested or *embodied* with racial and historical significance reflective of wider national concerns over identity — demonstrates the need for greater attention to how *manga* as visual culture performs racist as well as racial discourses.

Secondly, the above treatments of the meanings attributed to *manga* and the visual construction of race in relation to

discourses of whiteness, especially the critical insights developed by Kawashima, highlight how *manga* and *anime* represent highly relevant intercultural "objects" for studies of visual culture and race. The critical unpacking we have hinted at – how *manga* has become bound up with unexamined discourses of whiteness and racial impersonation, as well as historically unreflective accounts of colonialism, overlaps with and exemplifies aspects of much needed critiques of the "cultural intelligibility" of whiteness as a "privileged category" (Boucher, Carey and Ellinghaus 2007; Pugliese 2002: 152). Underscoring how *manga* discourses partake of unreflective assignations of whiteness in visual culture, as well as how critical treatments of this acceptance require examining the contingent, constructed "nature" of such representational practices, Kawashima's arguments highlight how the "cultural intelligibility" of *manga* can provide instructive material for examining racial discourses through popular visual media.

How do Japanese comics become part of social worlds of Anglophonic speakers?

The appreciation of *manga* is highly interactive, involving meaning-making "off the page", so to speak, by circulating as part of social identities, practices and exchanges generative of fan-based communities. The activities may be termed as otaku culture and involve private publication, *dōjinshi* (a journal for members of an association) and costume play, generally abbreviated to *cos-pure* in Japanese. In Japan, the number of *dōjinshi* has drastically increased as professional printing has become more accessible to amateur artists and authors, and events for fans have grown in popularity. Together their economic impact is now undeniable. For example, at Comic Market 73 (Dec 29-31, 2008) there were 35,000 stalls (from 47,000 applications) and 500,000 visitors in total (<http://www.comiket.co.jp/>). Despite a persistent negative public view of otaku culture in Japan, the *manga* and *anime* sub-culture is penetrating today's Japanese society (and beyond) (Kinsella 1998; Ninomiya 1995; Okada 1996/2000; Ōtsuka 2004).

Outside of Japan, personal interest in *manga* may brand fans as "different" — as members of a subculture which is not easily understood or digested by the uninitiated. They may identify with or be attracted to the peculiarity or difference (both in terms of visualisation and narrative) when they initially read *manga*, and thus seek membership of this subculture in order to express and nourish their personal feelings of alienation or dissatisfaction with normative roles or expectations (Macias 2006, Newitz, 1994, Norris 2005). Essentially, *manga* (and *anime*) fandom outside of Japan regularly becomes a label or designation, one which carries with it assumptions about fans' maturity, social skills and "normality" (assumptions not dissimilar to those made about otaku in Japan). It is not unusual, then, that the social worlds of *manga* fans outside of Japan can be tightly connected and brimming with passionate, highly knowledgeable people. These social worlds are not significantly different to other groups or cultures where members can find acceptance, inspiration and companionship (virtual or otherwise) with people of similar interests.

However, it is not necessarily the peculiarity of *manga* that these fans seek or become attached to; it is important that we recognise the role played by *manga* in the psychological lives of fans within and outside Japan. Indeed, as many scholars have written, the cultural appropriation of these texts is thorough and multi-faceted, and undoubtedly, this blurs notions of authenticity and cultural identity as readers and/or audiences manipulate and appropriate texts for their personal needs (Cubbison 2005; Levi 2006; Ruh 2005). Due to the limited availability of English-language translations of Japanese texts, fans regularly produce their own translations of *manga*, by scanning them, overlaying English text and then sharing them on the web (hence they are called scanlations), as well as sharing their own dubbed versions of *anime* (called fansubs). In fact, the role of fansubs (first produced in the 1980s) and then scanlations, in expanding the popularity of *manga* and *anime* outside Japan is widely recognised (Cubbison 2005; Diaz Cintas and Munoz Sanchez 2006; Hatcher 2005; Leonard 2005). Although this kind of fan-produced translation is illegal, it is an essential part of *manga* and *anime* fandom outside of Japan, not only because they provide new material for audiences, but because they are usually shared on websites with highly interactive virtual forums for fans. Further, the act of translating may be time-consuming and laborious, but it becomes central to many fans' expression and exploration of their interest (Diaz Cintas and Munoz Sanchez 2006; Nornes 1999). That is, translation of *manga* enables and enhances meaning-making, in that fans, as translators, are in control of the meaning of the texts, and produce this meaning for the enjoyment of other fans. In this intense process — whereby fans, through intimate involvement with a text, re-form and regenerate that text for others — fans create a deep attachment, and build a sense of authorship over the texts. Thus it is not just the odour of these texts or the way in which they are

appropriated, but the capacity for meaning-making that makes *manga* an interesting subject for examining the role of popular media in the social lives of readers.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the needs for scholarly attention to *manga* studies, contending that the inclusion of *manga* in Anglophonic visual culture studies offers significant opportunities to broaden the field, where the absence of the study of this medium is evident. This paper has presented the characteristics of *manga*, and its relevance and complexity, as exemplified by our discussion on the formation and consumption of globalised Japanese popular culture, the different perceptions of "white" faces in *manga* from Japanese and western perspectives, and the role of interactive regeneration of *manga* in the social lives of readers. Continuing globalisation facilitates profound, fluid and discursive intercultural exchanges in every facet of human lives today, and cultural products such as *manga* represent such flows of cultural integration, conflict, fragmentation and reintegration, creating numberless scenes of 'glocalisation'. Having Japanese cultural specificity, multi-layered symphonic complexity, both textually and culturally, *manga*'s presence and function in today's society becomes representative of post-modernism. It is rich material for interdisciplinary research, including Cultural Studies and Media Studies. Research on *manga* is still in its infancy, and the vast frontier of this medium is waiting for our exhaustive, critical exploration of it as a shared cultural commodity in the 21st century.

References

- Agi, T. and Okimoto, S. (2004) *Kami no Shizuku*, Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- Allison, A. (2006) *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Allison, A. (2000) "A Challenge to Hollywood? Japanese Character Goods Hit the US", *Japanese Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1.
- Barber, C. (2007) *Target-oriented Translation: An Analysis of Three Works*, Unpublished Honours thesis, Macquarie University, Sydney.
- Beatty, B (2007) *Unpopular Culture: Transforming the European Comic Book in the 1990s*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Befu, H. (2003) "Globalization Theory from the Bottom Up: Japan's Contribution", *Japanese Studies*, vol. 23 no.1.
- Bell, R. T. (1991) *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice*, London: Longman.
- Bender, S. (2007) "Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan" in Allen, M. & Sakamoto, R. (eds) [reviewed in] *Social Science Japan Journal*, vol. 10 no. 1.
- Berndt, J. (2008) "Considering Manga Discourse: Location, Ambiguity, Historicity" in Macwilliams, M. W. (ed) *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Berndt, J. and Richter, S. (2006) *Reading Manga: Local and Global Perceptions of Japanese Comics*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.
- Boucher, L., Carey, J. and Ellinghaus, K. (eds) (2007) *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the*

Construction of an Identity, Melbourne: RMIT Publishing.

Bouissou, J. M. (2006) "Japan's Growing Cultural Power: Manga in France", in J. Berndt and S. Richter (eds) *Reading Manga: Local and Global Perceptions of Japanese Comics*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.

Brophy, P. (ed) (2006) *Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga*, Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria.

Bryce, M and Davis J. (2006) "Manga/Anime, Media Mix: Scholarship in a Post-Modern, Global Community" in Atherton M. (ed.) *CAESS (the College of Arts, Education and Social Sciences) Conference: Scholarship & Community*, University of Western Sydney.

Carbonell, O. (1996) "The exotic space of cultural translation" in Alvarez, R. and Vidal, M. C. (eds) *Translation, Power, Subversion*, Clevedon, Philadelphia, Adelaide: Multilingual Matters.

Comi Press: Manga News and Information (2006) "New report from JETRO on the Manga market in Germany", September 4, <http://comipress.com/article/2006/09/04/675> , accessed 18 May 2008.

Comi Press: Manga News and Information (2007) "Discrimination in Japanese Manga", <http://comipress.com/article/2007/01/25/1399>, accessed June 1, 2008.

Comi Press: Manga News and Information (2008) "French Comics Market Data and Analysis", 20 April, <http://comipress.com/article/2008/04/20/3512> , accessed 14 May 2008.

Condry, I. (2007) "Yellow B-Boys, Black Culture, and Hip-Hop in Japan: Toward a Transnational Cultural Politics of Race", *positions*, vol. 15 no. 3.

Cornog, M., and Perper, T. (2007) "Step Up Love Story: Futari Etchi. By Katsu Aki", *Journal of Sex Research*, vol. 44, no.2.

Cornog, M., and Perper, T. (2005) "Non-Western Sexuality Comes to the U.S.: A Crash Course in Manga and Anime for Sexologists", *Contemporary Sexuality*, vol. 39, no.3.

Cornyetz, N. (1994) "Fetishized Blackness: Hip Hop and Racial Desire in Contemporary Japan", *Social Text*, no. 41, Winter.

Crozet, C., and Liddicoat, A.J. (2000) "Teaching Culture as an Integrated Part of Language: Implications for the Aims, Approaches and Pedagogies of Language Teaching" in Liddicoat , A.J. and Crozet, C. (eds) *Teaching Languages, Teaching Cultures*, Melbourne: Language Australia.

Cubbison, L. (2005) "Anime Fans, DVDs, and the Authentic Text", *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 56, Fall.

Darling, M. (2001) "Plumbing the Depths of Superflatness", *Art Journal*, vol. 60, no. 3.

Darling-Wolf, F. (2006) "The Men and Women of non-no: Gender, Race, and Hybridity in Two Japanese Magazines", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 23 no. 3.

Diaz Cintas, J. & Munoz Sanchez, P. (2006) "Fansubs: Audiovisual Translation in an Amateur Environment", *The Journal*

of *Specialised Translation*, Issue 6 July, http://www.jostrans.org/issue06/art_diaz_munoz.pdf, accessed June 8, 2008.

Fujimoto Y. (2006) "Nihon manga gakkai ga dekiru made: Jōhō no kyōyū ni mukete", *Eureka: Poetry and Criticism*, 38:1.

Gravett, P. (2004) *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics*, London: Laurence King Published in association with Harper Design International.

Hardach, S. (2007) "Manga Spreads 'Drops of God' in Asia", *Reuters News, UK*, June 4, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/entertainmentNews/idUKT29578320070604>, accessed May 14, 2008.

Hatcher, J. S. (2005) "Of Otakus and Fansubs: A Critical Look at Anime Online in Light of Current Issues in Copyright Law", *Script-ed*, vol. 2 issue 4.

Hatim, B. (2001) *Teaching and researching translation*, Essex: Pearson Education.

Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (1990) *Discourse and the translator*, London: Longman Group.

Hermans, T. (1996) "Norms and the determination of translation: A theoretical framework" in Alvarez, R. & Vidal, M. C. (eds.) *Translation, Power, Subversion*, Clevedon, Philadelphia, Adelaide: Multilingual Matters.

Horibuchi, S. (2006) *Moeru America: Beikoku-jin wa ika ni shite MANGA wo yomu yō ni natta kai*, Tokyo: Nikkei BP-sha.

Hughes, S. A. (2003) "The Convenient Scapegoating Of Blacks In Postwar Japan: Shaping the Black Experience Abroad", *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 33 no. 3.

Ito, M. (2007) "Technologies of the Childhood Imagination: Yu-Gi-Oh!, Media Mixes, and Everyday Cultural Production" in Karaganis, J. (ed.) *Structures of Participation in Digital Culture*, New York: Social Science Research Council, <http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/darfur/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/6-ito.pdf>, accessed June 1, 2008.

Iwabuchi, K (2002) *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, Durham; London: Duke University Press.

Katayama, L. (2008) "Death Note Manga Spawns Movie, Crime Wave", *Wired.com*, 19 May, http://www.wired.com/entertainment/hollywood/news/2008/05/death_note, accessed 20 May 2008.

Kawashima, T. (2002) "Seeing Faces, Making Races: Challenging Visual Tropes of Racial Difference", *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, vol. 3 no. 1.

Kelts, R. (2006) *Japanamerica: How Japanese pop culture has invaded the U.S.*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kinsella, S. (1998) "Japanese subculture in the 1990s: otaku and the amateur manga movement", *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24 no. 2.

Koyama-Richard, B. (2008) *One Thousand Years of Manga*, Paris: Flammarion.

Leonard, S. (2005) "Progress Against the Law: Anime and Fandom, With the Key to the Globalization of Culture",

International Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 8, no. 3.

Levi, A. (2006) "The Americanization of Anime and Manga: Negotiating Popular Culture" in Brown, S.T. (ed.) *Cinema Anime*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Liddicoat, A.J. (2002) "Static and dynamic views of culture and intercultural language acquisition", *Babel*, vol. 36 no. 3.

Looser, T. (2006) "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in 1990s Japan", *Mechademia: Emerging Worlds of Anime and Manga*, vol.1.

Macias, P. (2006) *Otaku in USA* [translated by Machiyama T.], Tokyo: Ōta shuppan.

MacWilliams, M. W. (ed.) (2008) *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

McGray, D. (2002) "Japan's Gross National Cool", *Foreign Policy*, 130.

Miller, J. (2004) "A Response to Kobayashi Yoshinori's On Taiwan", *International Journal of Comic Art*, vol. 6 no.1.

Nakar, E. (2003) "Nosing Around: Visual Representation of the Other in Japanese Society", *Anthropological Forum*, vol. 13, no. 1.

Napier, S. (2007) *From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West*, New York: Palgrave.

Newitz, A. (1994) "Anime Otaku: Japanese Animation Fans Outside Japan" in *Bad Subjects*, vol. 13, <http://bad.eserver.org/issues/1994/13/newitz.html>, accessed June 8, 2008.

Ninomiya, K. (1995) *Otaku shōjo no keizai-gaku: Comic Market ni muragaru shōjo-tachi*, Tokyo: Kōsaidō shuppan.

Nornes, A. M. (1999) "For An Abusive Subtitling", *Film Quarterly*, vol. 52 no. 3, Spring.

Norris, C. (2005) "Cyborg girls and shape-shifters: The discovery of difference by Anime and Manga Fans in Australia", *Refractory*, vol. 8, <http://www.refractory.unimelb.edu.au/journalissues/vol8/Norris.html>, accessed June 8, 2008.

Oba, T. and Obata, T. (2003-2006) *Death Note*, Tokyo: Shūeisha.

Okada T. (2000) *Otaku-gaku nyūmon*, Tokyo: Shinchō-sha (originally published by Ōta shuppan in 1996).

Ōtsuka, E. (1987) *Manga no kōzō: Shōhin, text, genshō*, Tokyo: Yudachi-sha.

Ōtsuka, E. (2004) *'Otaku' no seishin-shi: 1980 nen-dai ron*, Tokyo: Kōdan-sha.

- Perper, T., and Cornog, M. (2002) "Eroticism for the Masses: Japanese Manga Comics and Their Assimilation into the U. S", *Sexuality & Culture*, vol. 6 no. 1.
- Pellitteri, M. (2006) "Manga in Italy: History of Cultural Hybridization", *International Journal of Comic Art*, vol. 8, no. 2.
- Pugliese, J. (2002) "Race as Category Crisis: Whiteness and the Topical Assignment of Race", *Social Semiotics*, vol. 12, no. 2.
- Pym, A. (2001) "Four remarks on translation research and multimedia" in Gambier, Y. and Gottlieb, H. (eds.) (*Multi*)*media translation: Concepts, practices, and research*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Ruh, B. (2005) "Creating Amateur Manga in the US: Pedagogy, Professionalism, and Authenticity", *International Journal of Comic Art*, vol. 7 no. 2, Fall/Winter.
- Russell, J. (1991) "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture", *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 6 no. 1.
- Sasada, H. (2006) "Youth and Nationalism in Japan", *SAIS review*, vol. 26, no.2.
- Satō, K. (1997) "More Animated than Life: A Critical Overview of Japanese Animated Films", *Japan Echo*, vol. 24, no. 5.
- Schodt, F.L. (1996) *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga*, Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press.
- Schodt, F. L. (2007) *The Astro Boy essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, and the manga/anime revolution*, Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press.
- Schirato, T. and Webb, J. (2004) *Reading the Visual*, Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Shiraishi, S. S. (1997) "Japan's Soft Power: Doraemon Goes Overseas" in P. J. Katzenstein and T. Shiraishi (eds.) *Network Power: Japan and Asia*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
- Steinberg, M. (2004) "Otaku Consumption, Superflat Art and the Return to Edo", *Japan Forum*, vol. 16, no. 3.
- Sugiyama, T (2006) *Cool Japan: Sekai ga kaitagaru Nihon*, Tokyo: Shōdensha.
- Takemiya K. (2001) *Takemiya Keiko no manga kyōshitsu*, Tokyo: Chikuma shobō.
- Takeuchi, O. (2005) *Manga hyōgen-gaku*, Tokyo: Chikuma shobō.
- Toth, C. (2008) "J-Pop and Performances of Young Female Identity: Music, Gender and Urban Space in Tokyo", *Young*, vol. 16 no. 2.
- Thompson, J., and Okura, A. (2007) "How manga conquered the U.S.: A graphic guide to Japan's coolest export" in Wired, http://www.wired.com/special_multimedia/2007/1511_ff_manga, accessed May 28, 2008.

Thorn, M (2004) "The Face of the Other <http://www.matthorn.com/mangagaku/faceoftheother.html>, accessed May 22, 2008.

Uchino, T. (2006) "Globality's Children: Thinking through the 'Child's' Body as a Strategy of Flatness in Performance", *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol. 50, no.1.

Vollmar, R. (2007) "Frederic Boilet and the *Nouvelle Manga* Revolution", *World Literature Today: A Literary Quarterly of the University of Oklahoma*, vol. 81.

Walker, J.A and Chaplin, S. (1997) *Visual Culture: An Introduction*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Wood, J. (1997) "The Yellow Negro", *Transition*, no. 73.

Yokota-Murakami, T. (2006) *Manga wa yokubō-suru*, Tokyo: Chikuma shobō.

Yomota, I. (1999) *Manga Genron*, Tokyo: Chikuma shobō.

Scan is a project of the Media Department @ Macquarie University, Sydney