２０１３年度　（平成２５年度）

博士論文

"OEL" Manga: Industry, Style, Artists

「OEL」マンガ：出版業界、 表現、作家たち

２０１４ 年 ３月
京都精華大学大学院
芸術研究科芸術専攻
Angela Moreno Acosta
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To my mother,

Thank you for everything.

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I explore the emergence, creation and current situation of original manga intended for commercial purposes, through the framework of the case of "OEL" (Original English-Language) manga, a market created for the commercial publishing of original manga in North America. I focus on works that are published by medium to large American manga publishers (such as Tokyopop) as opposed to original manga in English uploaded to the internet by self-supporting artists, although these are also discussed for comparative purposes. I concentrate on industry-published "OEL" manga and its creators in order to position them within manga and comics markets. I argue that, thanks to the anime and manga boom of the 2000s, many young people outside of Japan were inspired to pursue manga as a profession. Furthermore, for young women it was an invitation towards considering a career in what had tended to be a male-dominated profession. As such, some embarked on the manga career track. In North America, they were assisted by Tokyopop's "OEL" manga marketing platforms, and several achieved commercial success. However, this became short-lived as fans heavily criticized "OEL" for not being "Japanese" enough to deserve the manga label, making it difficult for publishers to sell it. I propose that, although "OEL" manga is not very well recieved within mainstream manga markets, it remains relevant as a form of manga (and career), and can contribute creatively at both local and global scales.

In order to set the framework of this study, I begin by studying the emergence of the label and market known as "OEL manga." I introduce the label and its definitions in the first chapter. Also, I present findings from previous and related research as well as outline its current situation and problems. The methodology for analysis is presented here as well: the arguments of the thesis are explored through three main case studies of "OEL" manga artists and their works, all chosen based on their reputation as professionals within the manga

industry in North America. The studies are supported further by data gathered through direct participation in workshops, manga conventions and interviews, as well as through surveys and related literature. In the second chapter, I explore the origins of "OEL" manga through the ways in which certain alterations of Japanese manga titles — for the purposes of translation and sale in American markets — led to a specific aesthetic look regarded as "Japanese" amongst fans/insiders and how "OEL" manga replicated this look in hopes of selling alongside the translations of said titles. Furthermore, the first case study, of Nina Matsumoto's "OEL" manga titled *Yokaiden*, is discussed as an example of the effects this percieved "Japaneseness" and the discourse around it can have on the public reception of an original manga title and its artist.

In the third chapter, I discuss first the specific visual characteristics that constitute "OEL manga style:" the visual dis/similarities between them and mainstream Japanese manga. These characteristics are discussed as "OEL" manga's "Japaneseness," or the percieved degree and method by which an "OEL" manga can be regarded as similar to a mainstream Japanese manga, and the reasons why this is seen in negative light. The second case study follows, dedicated to Takeshi Miyazawa's *Spiderman loves Mary Jane,* which pursues the applications of "manga-style" in American superhero comics and the new creative perspectives the resulting "hybridity" offers, as well as the professional possibilities for original manga artists (and styles) within the mainstream market. The second section focuses on the narrative characteristics of "OEL" manga, which move "OEL" manga away from the traditional mode of manga production as understood in Japan, and closer to book and graphic novel publishing. To illustrate the differences between them as narratives (and markets), a comparative analysis between Toriyama Akira's *Dragon Ball* and Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* is presented. Since they are both based on the same story, the ancient Chinese folk tale *Journey to the West*, which tells the story of The Monkey King, this

similarity helps highlight the ways in which the particularities of manga and graphic novels (such as the creative process and publishing method of the work) affect the contents of the work. The third case study, a textual analysis of Svetlana Chmakova's *Dramacon*, finalizes the discussion by presenting ways in which "OEL" manga can contribute creatively beyond "Japaneseness," with unique perspectives on "OEL manga narrative."

The fourth chapter sees the whole problem of original local manga through the eyes of emerging artists, some interviewed directly, and some discussed through publications. The choice to pursue manga as a career is discussed according to their personal experiences and expectations. Exploration of manga practices outside of Japan (which reflect the reality of the North American manga market) are discussed through findings based on a workshop with local female manga artists in the South-East Asian region, through which five different perspectives about non-Japanese manga artists, and (non-Japanese) women in manga can be viewed. Also, the chapter comments on the evolution of the label "OEL," the changes in the perception of the trademark, which stem from changes in how artists feel about the label nowadays.

The works and artists chosen for the case studies in the 2nd and 3rd chapters (Industry, Style: visual & narrative) were picked due to their popularity, not within fan communitites, but within the industry, through sales and promotion of their works and themselves. This is to stress the point that they are manga artists interested in manga as a career, not just a hobby. Takeshi Miyazawa has been drawing for Marvel Comics[1], one of the giants of the American comics mainstream, for years, and is known for using manga-style and narrative within mainstream superhero comics (Comic Book Resources, 2011). Nina Matsumoto has built on her name as a professional artist through her work for well-known American entertainment

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[1] http://marvel.com/comics/creators/495/takeshi_miyazawa (Last access 2013/11/06).

series such as *The Simpsons*, and has even been the recipient of the Eisner award[2], one of the highest honors in the world of comics. Svetlana Chmakova was one of the winners of the "Rising Starts of Manga" competition, a contest held by Tokyopop, the leader in manga publishing in the United States, and through this award was granted a book deal to publish her magnus opus, *Dramacon.* Thanks to this, she became a professionally published manga author in the North American manga market. The analyses of their works and experiences were undertaken with acknowledgement of their specific strengths as artists and their particular interpretation of "manga style" and "manga narrative." Although there are quite a few "OEL" manga artists published, these three case studies have been chosen for analysis due to the points each of them raise in relation to the issues discussed in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of this thesis. Their experiences as artists are tied to the analysis of the material I gathered from other artists, presented in the 4th chapter, collectively highlighting the experience of becoming manga artists. Their vantage point is subsequently contrasted against artists in other countries and other stages of their careers. Interviews and questionnaires were conducted with each of the participating artists, and responses from this data collection inform the discussion throughout the thesis.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to contribute to further understanding of manga practices outside of Japan and of manga fan-creator-industry relationships for the benefit of interested artists. It contributes to Manga Studies by placing emphasis on culture, industry, institutions, stylistics and narratology as well as artists' positions within these areas. "OEL" manga lacks a solidity onto which concrete definitions, and therefore predictions, can be placed. But as this thesis demonstrates, it is precisely this fluidity what allows for new styles and modes of storytelling to emerge and enrich what manga can be and do.

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[2] http://www.spacecoyote.com/resume.php (Last access 2013/11/06).

INTRODUCTION

There is abundant interest within manga studies in the practices of manga fans, and more

recently, in the practices of fans outside of Japan, particularly North America and Europe.

The growing popularity of certain manga genres, such as "BL" (boys' love) has seen a lot of

commercial success due to growing trends within fandoms, such as the popularity of slash or

yaoi fan-comics and fanfics, which in turn has led research into fan-based art and writing to

make waves within academic circles, especially with studies that take into account fan

creations, such as *dōjinshi*[1]. Dōjinshi could be seen as a mode of manga creation that is both

original and imitation, as it offers a personal interpretation, or "reading," of a certain manga

series, while it utilizes the established characters, narrative and style to base this new reading

on (Bauwens-Sugimoto and Renka 2013: 193). In this way, the fan-comic copies or imitates

elements from the manga that are considered "official"[2] and introduces a new story/reading

within it. It is not only in narrative that dōjinshi can be creative, but also in the style of the

artwork, for each dōjinshi artist offers a reinterpretation of the official author's style through

their own. It is also well known that more than a few dōjinshi artists have gone on to become

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[1] The definition of dōjinshi is typically "fan-comics," although it is not exactly accurate. Dōjinshi can also contain fan fiction without images, therefore, a more precise translation would be "fanzines."

[2] "Official," as understood within fanfiction studies, points towards the source material/text on which the fanfic or fan creation is based on. For further information, please see Bauwens-Sugimoto and Renka 2013, Noppe 2013, and further definition of this term as related to OEL manga in Chapter 1.

professional manga artists, or *mangaka*[3]. Dōjinshi creation is considered amateur[4] in Japan, and it is usually through publishing a completely original story through a publisher that a mangaka can make their debut as a pro in the industry[5].

In North America, it is another story — manga is a small market, existing within the fringes of the mainstream comics industry, which is mostly concerned with a large variety of superheroes. Nonetheless, since the early 2000s a growing interest in Japanese manga and anime has started to have an impact; such that manga studies have now begun to take into account the fan-creations and practices of North American manga fans, and more recently, begun to take a closer look at their original creations and creators (Berndt 2007, 2013, Bauwens-Sugimoto 2013, Noppe 2010, 2013, Sell 2011). However, the research has focused so far mainly on manga's transcultural flows and fan practices, as well as markets and even cultural modes of production. As distinct from that, I will focus on a not yet highlighted aspect, such as that there are not yet enough analyses of artists, and this is the gap this thesis tries to help fill. However, how is it possible to create manga and be a manga artist in locations without a manga mainstream? The practices of non-Japanese mangaka are still a largely under-researched area, not only within mangaka studies in general but moreso within

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[3] Regarding the manga-related terminology used in the dissertation, words such as *mangaka* and the word "manga" itself, as well as other very common ones like *shōjo, shōnen, dōjinshi*, etc., will not be italicized through the thesis because the terms are well known and common within Manga Studies. However, they will be briefly refreshed in the text. Only in cases where the Japanese word is not as known or somewhat obscure, will the word be put in italics. This will also be done for words in languages other than English or Japanese. The Japanese terminology will be written using the Hepburn romanization system (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hepburn_romanization). Japanese names will be written in the traditional method of surname first, followed by given name. Same will be done with Chinese or Korean names. Names from other nationalities will be written with the given name first, followed by the surname. Referencing of dates will be made in the following way: year/month/day, as in the footnotes regarding websites, i.e: "Last access 2013/09/06."

[4] Not necessarily at the artistic level, but rather because dōjinshi are parody of already existing work and are not sold commercially. "Amateur" in this sense relates to shared/self-published material instead of mass-produced or commercial, rather than to a lack of technical ability.

[5] As in the case of the famous mangaka group Clamp.

manga studies, and if they are touched upon it is usually regarding them as just fans, leaving

out the element of artistic creation and those who desire moving from fannish practices

towards a professional career. In this thesis, I am interesed in exploring the practices of

manga fans-turned-original manga creators who pursue this as a career path. Furthermore, I

am interested in analyzing their original works[6] through the framework of "OEL" (original

English-language) manga. The study of "OEL" manga, as the first established market for

professional original local manga and a signal of evolution within manga fan practices and

professional manga creation helps position these artists and this discussion; I focus on

career-oriented artists rather than fans who do not aim at professionalization. Furthermore, I

have made this study in hopes of adding to the understanding of manga pratices of artists

outside of Japan, specifically in anglophone markets. I also hope to extend the knowledge on

how manga is re-interpreted as narrative and style; how it points to Japan as its source

through maintaining traditional stylistic conventions of Japanese manga localized with the

intention of expressing original content that relates to its source locality.

Initially, I outline the framework for the thesis by studying what "OEL" manga is and how

this market emerged. Chapter 1, Definitions, begins by exploring what the label "OEL"

stands for in order to understand what the specific requirements are for a work to be

considered "OEL" manga in the first place. The chapter also attempts to position "OEL"

manga in relation to other comics and manga practices, as well as its relationship with other

areas of Manga and Comic Studies. In chapter 2, Industry, we take a look at the emergence

of a market for original manga in North America (the "OEL" manga market) by outlining

the development of the manga market there through studies of localization of manga by

translation companies. As we understand the operations of companies such as Tokyopop and

Viz Media, we can trace back the origins of "OEL" manga and the initial intentions and

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[6] "Original" as distinct from parodies.

goals behind their professional release into the North American manga market. We also take a look at the concept of "Japaneseness:" a set of expectations in the minds of manga companies and consumers for "OEL" manga works to resemble Japanese manga translations. These expectations stemmed from ideas and notions created by the marketing decisions of manga translation companies. In the first case study introduced, Nina Matsumoto's *Yokaiden*, we look at the way these preconcieved expectations of "Japaneseness" can affect the public reception of an original manga, and affect the artist's career and identity directly. Chapter 3 is concerned with the study of "style;" this diffuse concept of a specific style that can be recognized as "manga," and what the characteristics for such "style" are supposed to be. It is an attempt to break down the notion of "Japaneseness" into recognizable categories that can be, in theory, "replicated" in order to ensure a work is officially regarded as an original manga.

The second case study, Takeshi Miyazawa and his manga-style comic *Spiderman loves Mary Jane* is introduced in this chapter as an analysis of the way "manga-style" works in mainstream American comics in an effort to understand how visual characteristics are recognized as "manga" in the American mainstream comics market. The second section of the chapter deals with the characteristics of "manga-style narrative," for there are also specific expectations as to what a story should contain; what manga tropes, genres and character stereotypes it should touch upon and its mode of "flow" that are included under the umbrella term of "manga-style." Two case studies are introduced here: the first is a comparative analysis of narrative between Toriyama Akira's *Dragon Ball* and Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*, the second is a study of Svetlana Chmakova's *Dramacon* as an example of an "OEL" manga that moves beyond the limiting expecations of "Japaneseness." The first is done in the hopes of understanding what North American audiences regards as "typical" of a mainstream Japanese manga with respect to narrative;

what they expect to read in both Japanese and original manga. The second hopes to clarify the ways in which an "OEL" manga can negotiate these reader expectations by providing them with a work that both addresses their need for "manga-specific" content and form but delivers an original interpretation that connects to them on a more genuine level, without blindly emulating "Japaneseness."

In the last chapter, Beyond "OEL," we address questions of professional goals and identity through the personal experiences of several original non-Japanese manga[7] artists and explore how the label "OEL" has changed since its inception. A large part of the "original manga" concept comes from the ideas and notions of what "manga" are to artists and readers. Furthermore, the term "OEL" also depends greatly on how the artists regard it and themselves. As their concept of "manga" and "mangaka" evolve along with their self-awareness as an artist, so does the term "OEL" itself. Their place within markets and community is therefore essential to understand. In the first section, I introduce the proceedings of a workshop about women in manga and manga-style comics in the Southeast Asian region, to comment on the practices of manga-style comics outside of Japan and through the eyes of women. It is also a commentary about women in comics, and the influence manga has had on non-Japanese women who choose the path of comics professionally, despite economic, professional and sometimes even political disadvantages of making comics in their local communities. In the second section, I focus on artists in English-speaking regions, introducing interview data collected from professional manga artists in the United Stated and England, with one exception from Malaysia. These interviews, collected through personal communication both in person and online, can serve

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[7] "ONJ," or "Original Non-Japanese" refers to original manga that is created by non-Japanese artists, usually applied to original manga made in Western countries. This term encompasses works, like "OEL" manga, created by local artists in their own language, such as German manga, Malaysian manga, Australian manga, etc. It does not refer to Chinese manhua or Korean manhwa, which are comics industries of their own. The term was coined by Cathy Sell (2011).

as insight into the situation of manga artists on local and global scales. This chapter seeks to illustrate how the label "OEL" has changed, publicly and personally, for artists and the market. It touches upon the questions, issues and problems set in the previous chapters, from the artists' point of view, about how they see themselves and their work in the manga industry, their relationship to readers and fans, and ultimately what their professional goals and personal message as artists are.

Simply put, this study seeks to outline the production and distribution processes of original commercial local manga through which the artist seeks a career in manga. Clearly, the emergence of "OEL" manga in North America is the best example to study for this regard, as such artists (regardless of nationality) all started out as manga fans who began appropriating the works of their favorite authors and creating fan comics out of them, and this is used as the starting point of this investigation. Through this practice, manga fans become producers, and, once they decide to create original work in manga style, manga artists. Furthermore, in this digital era of ubiquitous information, manga fans have extremely easy access to almost any manga title they wish to read thanks to scanlations. The direct involvement of fans in fan art, scanlations and the like gives rise to emotional attachment and a sense of ownership of manga products. Through this, a new space that links the source and target cultures is created and can be observed through on and offline anime and manga communities, related events and cultural activities of scanlation groups, translation workshops, anime clubs and conventions. It has become apparent that "OEL" manga artists emerged from these spaces. Thus, making manga slowly moves away from being a practice reserved only for Japanese professionals, and becomes simply another comics language in which to tell a story. German Scholar Heike Jüngst, through the eyes of Translation Studies, admitted that "...young readers perceive manga less and less as part of Japanese culture but rather as one way of

drawing comics among others."[8]

In the early days, the truth was that for these artists (and particulary for those published by a company like Tokyopop) the idea of being a "manga artist" lay in how "Japanese" the artwork and topics were. Jüngst herself reportedly noted that "...the notion of 'Japaneseness' has become the chief concern of many who work in the field and who prepare texts for German readers, to the point where the German version is more Japanese than the original" (Jüngst in Zanettin 2008: 63). This reflects why she felt compelled to dismiss "OEL" manga as "pseudo;" mainly because of this necessity of "Japaneseness," even after it is understood that manga can be divorced from "Japan" as it is adopted in the West through fan practices[9]. Later, Wendy Wong warned that excess of "Japaneseness" is harmful for the healthy circulation of manga and anime products in American markets (as seen from the success of *Pokemon* and the failure of *Sailor Moon*), because what North American audiences ultimately want to experience is a "creation of imaginary world(s) that strike fans with a mixture of familiarity as well as fantasy" (Wong 2006: 39).

"OEL" manga opened up a new space in the world of manga and graphic narratives and whatever value these works may have as commodities, it is also important to look at them as a indication of the new direction into which manga may be moving in as a mediator of Japanese culture and of new types of consumption and creation. Jüngst argues that "most

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[8] Jüngst quoting personal communication w/ Joachim Kaps, editor -in-chief of Tokyopop Germany, see also Kaps 1995 and 2000.

[9] Feeling uncomfortable with fans who are clinging to "Japaneseness" is characteristic of late 1990s/ early 2000s Manga (Fan) Studies; see also Jens Balzer's essay translated into Japanese in *Manga Kenkyū*; http://www.jsscc.net/publish/manga_studies/132 (Last access 2013/11/11).

world comics[10] are not part of mainstream comics. They do not look like manga, bande dessineè or comic books anymore; they are something new and hybrid." (Jüngst, 2006: 249). But the problem is that these artists appear to be displaced; they have difficulties positioning themselves in the market and operating in it professionally. Further, the "new space" "OEL" manga has opened up is unstable and undefined, and part of what is already a subculture since manga is an alternative, minor realm, and "OEL" manga a niche within it.

Focus: The position of "OEL" manga artists

As previously stated, this dissertation seeks to clarify the position of "OEL" manga within industries and visual styles, their function on global and local scales and their modes of production and distribution. I should clarify that, although the thesis focuses on industry-published works and artists, I place equal value on online original manga even though it does not conform to manga's traditional definition through print form. As previously explained, manga is primarily understood as "style[11]" by publishers and fans alike in the American markets/communities. Therefore, even manga-style comics there that have not yet made it to print can be considered "manga" if they meet the requirements of originality of contents, English-language text and manga "style."

However, the stress is from the artists' point of view, as I am a manga fan/artist studying others in similar vein. Thus, a main concern of this study is to relate the existent literature,

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[10] "World Comics" is a relatively new term used in the industry to refer to comics that do not have an immediately recognizable style in relation to a source culture (i.e American, Japanese or European), but rather look like a mix of mainstream and sometimes alternative comic styles. Therefore, it is considered "global," "multicultural" or "worldly."

[11] And not as "media" - last but not least due to the lack of manga magazines comparable to Japan's.

research and theories to the experiences of "OEL" manga artists and their work. It also hopes

to further knowledge on how manga works as a cultural product on a global scale, the

current situation of original manga publishing, and local manga artists' works and careers.

The potential contribution of such a study to Comics Studies in general is large: it can it help

us understand the prospect of "homegrown manga" not only in English-speaking countries,

but also in any other place where artists are making manga in their own languages, which in

a wider sense gives us a clearer idea of the impact that the transcultural flow of manga is

making on a global scale. What this thesis would like to suggest is that "OEL" manga

functions as a hybrid form of manga (which itself is already hybrid) that comes from the

individualization process of appropriation and interpretation of Japanese manga's

conventions as understood by manga fans through their personal experiences with manga.

Further, it is targeted towards local manga subcultures which function basically, both

commercially and on a personal level, through self-distribution in fan communities, both on-

and off-line.

In summary, I seek to outline the ways in which manga can exist outside of its original

environment and remain recognized as "manga." I decided to concentrate on the artists

themselves, seeing them as creators rather than fans, but also including that aspect into their

manga production practices, to connect it to the outline of the shift of fan-creation to original

creation of manga. Although there are other manga practices in North America for the

creation of original manga, such as manga-style webcomics, the label "OEL" is not about a

fan product for fan consumption and sharing (on or off-line). This label is in a large way

defined by refering to a product created for the purpose of sales and revenue on comics

markets, and with the involvement of companies and marketing staff[12]. I chose the case of "OEL manga" because these graphic narratives, as a product and market, have within it the story of how manga was localized in the West and how this came to be the starting ground for original manga intended for emerging manga markets outside of Japan. Since I am interested in describing and understanding the careers of professional manga artists in North America, I chose to study artists and works that had been commisioned by North American manga publishers. Also, I would like to clarify that there are, of course, original manga publishers and markets in many other countries but the largest amount of published works still remains by North American companies.

That being said, this study can also point to original manga creation practices worldwide, at least in matters of the artists' perspectives. There is original manga being made in countries that have no comics culture of their own, some in countries that do not have a high comics literacy at all. They are, for the most part, still limited to online distribution, especially in places that have no comics publishers, or have economic difficulties with publishing any sort of written media. This thesis regards "OEL" manga artists as a combination of fans and original creators, and their working processes, professional goals and artistic intentions as one and the same. It is supposed to aid aspiring artists by contributing to a higher awareness of non-Japanese niche manga markets through studying "OEL" manga, so that they may find a way to pursue their careers in professional manga making if they so wished.

This dissertation is stressing the importance of the artist, not just in the content, but in the

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[12] The definition of "OEL manga" that this thesis wishes to use (as a starting point for the overall discussion) is that of a commercial product that mirrors the artists' career-oriented intent of obtaining financial rewards for their artistic output, as would any industry-published author. This is in line with the intent and origin of the term itself, examined closely in Chapter 1. However, the label has since changed to encompass online "OEL" manga simply because of its employment of "manga-style," and opened up the term to include free online distribution. This change is further discussed in Chapter 4.

whole structure of the thesis, by focusing on the artists' experiences and the analyses of their manga. This is because it is a thesis about artists by an artist. I undertook this project as I would a new artistic project: in order to understand the intentions behind the creation of such works, to position myself and this particular sort of artist within an industry, and how to build on a career based on the artwork and stories I want to create. However, although the main vein of this work is empirical, it is not lacking in theoretical background. By putting this research in the form of a thesis, I hope for it to also function as an artist's statement on some level, as it contains my ideas and theories of what manga can be and become.

CHAPTER 1   "OEL" MANGA: DEFINITIONS

Since 2005, manga-style comics created by anime and manga fans-turned-artists from the West (particularly North America) who grew up influenced by Japanese anime and manga in the early 1990s through the 2000s have come to be called "OEL manga." As adults interested in creating comics that have that "manga look," a large number of them aspire to do this professionally in comics industries and markets. Based on their deep appreciation of manga, many of these artists strive to make their manga as closely resembling the manga they are fans of; a desire towards "Japaneseness" is latent in their work. Upon closer inspection, this is mostly equated with a specific way of graphic storytelling, that is to say, the deployment of a highly codified mode of expression which favors the shared visual language over idiosyncratic style and narration; an enormous variety in regard to page layouts, speed and impact lines, comics-specific pictograms and onomatopoetic signs; a preference for clean (at first glance impersonal) line-work and monochrome, for mechanical rather than manual lettering, amongst other examples. Due to their roots in special magazines, manga narratives are usually extensive serializations that eventually come to an end (as distinct from American superhero series). In terms of story content, "OEL" manga tends to favor fantastic and unrealistic stories that serve as a form of escape from daily life—just like the majority of recent Japanese manga. Also noteworthy is the use of Japanese script (mostly in the form of sound effects and symbols) as a form of decoration rather than text.

Naturally, as these emerging artists try their hand at creating manga, they use what they know as fans as guides for creating their own. Sometimes without background training or precedents, whatever they have learned from the manga they read is what they utilize as foundations. However problematic this may sound, this trend has only grown as manga's allure reaches across borders and inspires those in foreign lands to pursue careers in manga.

As such, it is the aim of this study to clarify how and why these works are being made, for what audiences and ultimately, understand the professional aims of the artists behind them. This chapter starts off the entire investigation by first addressing the necessity to clarify what the label "OEL" stands for in order to understand what how certain works are considered "OEL" manga in the first place. Furthermore, it is concerned with understanding in which ways "OEL" manga is connected to other original manga practices, in and outside of Japan, and which spaces it exists in (such as manga and anime fan communities), as well as a profile of what an "OEL" manga artist (what is considered to be a "professional manga artist" in the West) can be regarded as. In this way, this chapter seeks to understand the basic foundation for the identity of "OEL" manga as a label through studying its definitions.

Section 1   Introduction to "OEL" Manga

What is "OEL" manga?

On April 28th, 2005, Carlo Santos, a regular columnist of *Anime News Network*[1], an online portal concerning information and news about anime and manga in the United States, allegedly made the first ever recorded use of the acronym "OEL" in his personal blog[2], to report on some new releases from Tokyopop, the most important manga publisher in the country at the time ("No Blood for OEL," 2005). The term "Amerimanga" was already in existence to describe manga that was not Japanese, but this of course implied that all manga that was not Japanese was American. Santos, thus, came up with the buzzword to encompass original manga made in English that was not limited to works or authors from the U.S, as one of the releases mentioned was *Dramacon* (by Svetlana Chmakova) who is Russian-

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[1] http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/ (Last access 2013/11/05)

[2] http://comipress.com/backstage/incomplete/patachu/Irresponsible-Picture/irresponsible.patachu.com/index.html (Last access 2013/11/05).

Canadian. Many emerging "local" authors, like Chmakova, were not American[3], and thus

Santos felt it excluded them and their work. In an attempt to avoid the excluding

"Amerimanga" term, "Original English-language" manga, as a definition, was created out of

a necessity to easily describe a new manga product from Tokyopop. Santos explains the

acronym-creation process in his 2005 blog entry as such:

" The most distinctive feature of these comics is that it is similar to manga but is written in

English.

English manga? But that might make some people think it's just, well, ANY manga that's

been translated into English.

Original English manga? Well, that addresses the fact that it's "originally in English," but

it might mislead others into thinking it's "manga originally made in England."

Original English Language manga? OEL manga? Okay, close enough."

The term Santos wished to avoid, "Amerimanga," was a shortened version of "American

manga," a line of original manga-style comics issued by Viz Media as early as 1993. It is

regarded as the earliest term for manga made in English ("I.C promotes Amerimanga",

2002). Since then, a myriad of terms have emerged, such as "Western manga," "global

manga," "world manga," "manga-influenced comics," "neo-manga," "Original Non-Japanese

manga" (coined by Catherine Sell, 2011), yet, "OEL" tends to be a widely-used term for any

original manga made in the English language, perhaps more than the others. It encompasses

works that not only originate in English-speaking locales such as Canada, Australia, U.K.

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[3] Such as Queenie Chan, Australian of Chinese heritage (already publishing in 2005), or Felipe Smith, Argentine-American.

and the United States, but any manga (regardless of the nationality or location of the artist) that is originally made in the English language.

The acronym was short and easy to use, which accounts for its wide use by media and industry professionals, journalists and bloggers. Since Santos' first mention of it, the term "OEL" has been used extensively in both media ("Manga in English: Born in the USA", 2005) and academia (Sell 2011, Shiina 2012).

"OEL" = "Original" + "English-Language"

According to Santos' reasoning, it is understood as "original" a distinction from previously published (and translated) Japanese manga, but more specifically, a distinction from translated manga that publishers, such as Tokyopop, release on the market. As Santos explained, "original" is to be understood as "originally" made in English (language), as in not previously translated from any other language (namely Japanese)[4]. Therefore, it would serve to clarify that "original" should also point to the nature of the story itself as well as distinctions in visual style, which can be seen through individual interpretations of such. In other words, "OEL" manga is not a) a translation of a pre-existing Japanese manga and b) a story that is an off-shoot of a pre-existing manga but rather, contributes with creative content.

However, the issue of being in the "English-language" presents the problem of insisting that "OEL" only define manga that is "originally conceived of in English." What this means,

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[4] Essentially, this would not exclude dōjinshi, in the sense that they can be written initially in English and are certainly influenced stylistically by Japanese manga. However, they would be excluded with respect to non-original contents, so the placement of dōjinshi within OEL manga's definitions becomes problematic.

exactly, is unclear, as a manga can be written in a different language but be published in English, and its "original qualities" would remain intact. Cases artists such as Svetlana Chmakova (Russian-Canadian) or Queenie Chan (Australian of Chinese descent) may suggest that they do not necessarily conceive of their ideas and stories in English, but certainly publish them in this language. The "English" part of the terminology is clearly defined by the market label, imposed by Tokyopop on these type of comics and their need to conform to the specific niche in the manga market of the United States, which of course, reads primarily in English. This labeling also points to intent of global circulation, as manga fans worldwide use the English language as *lingua franca*. A clearer definition could be more helpful. "English-language" could, thus, point to "OEL" manga that is published in (not translated from) English, whether self-published or by companies like Tokyopop.

What is OEL "manga"?

Santos' acronym suggests that "OEL" manga can be thought of as comics that resemble Japanese manga stylistically, produced and published in the English language. This vague definition is, for the most part, held in place by the assumptions that fans and industry-related professionals have about these "manga." Assumptions such as that the authors are unequivocally non-Japanese[5] or that the manga must do "a solid job of looking, feeling and reading like a [Japanese] manga" ("The Reformed: Advanced Review", 2008). Again, this complicates the issue, as in the cases of Japanese-ethnic-yet-Canadian-raised "OEL" manga artists such as Nina Matsumoto, award-winning artist and author of *Yokaiden*, and of Takeshi Miyazawa, author of *Spiderman loves Mary Jane* and *Los Robos, Arizona*. Both of these artists are well-known manga artists of Japanese descent, who would be excluded from this particular definition of being manga artists, ironically, because of their Japanese heritage.

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[5] http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20051017/29378-manga-in-english-born-in-the-usa.html

Therefore, it may be more beneficial to adjust what the whole term "OEL manga" stands for, perhaps as "manga written and published in English, influenced by the conventions of Japanese manga but that offers new perspectives through the remixing and re-interpretation of these conventions, as well as creative, original content, created by anyone who can write in the English language and publish in such." This opens up the scope of artists and works that can be collected under this umbrella term, not in an attempt to limit or constrict their contributions, but rather, to expand on what manga can become through the creative process of re-interpretation. Understandably, this may lead to lack of clarity regarding the term "manga," since it may then not be possible to define these works as "manga" if it is being manipulated through individual remixing of content and style. It does, however, open up the term to mean a highly conventionalized shared style; a participatory kind of comics which involves a specific kind of "individuality," which is more in tune with what we are seeing currently through artists' interactions on a digitally globalized space.

It is also important to clarify that the term "OEL" itself was created with the sole purpose of describing a Tokyopop product, therefore, its existence has been tied to the company, as is the way in which the word "manga" is used alongside it.

"Manga:" Japan's and North America's

Before we can understand how the word "manga" is used in regards to "OEL," it may serve to remind ourselves of what manga is typically regarded as, in and outside of Japan. For fans as well as "OEL" manga artists, manga signifies not just Japanese comics, but a specific type of Japanese comics, and further, a specific drawing style, as well as a set of conventions regarding narrative, form and language that originated in Japan. Linguistically speaking, in

Japan, all comics are "manga." As Jaqueline Berndt explains in her essay, manga can be distinguished from other forms of graphic narratives by the institutional and commercial framework in which it is produced (Berndt 2007). All its particularities, conventions and distinguishable characteristics derive from the system in which it is created. A crucial part of this system are the magazines in which manga is serialized: large anthologies that collect several stories at once, a chapter of each released weekly. Each magazine has a specific readership, organized demographically by gender and age, in which editors play a leading role regarding the way these stories are produced and distributed to these particular groups of readers by adjusting style and content to ensure maximum sales. All these factors and the decisions made through the entire chain of production are responsible for its distinctive aesthetic and cultural specificities such as colorless and cheap printing, use of monochrome screentone, genre and gender-specific drawing styles ("boy's manga" style, "girl's manga" style), multi-chapter and multi-arc narratives that are updated weekly but can go on for years, to name a few. Indeed, "manga" is not created (nor can it be defined) in a vacuum.

The use of the word to signify a specific comics product of Japanese descent is then, not entirely incorrect. Although American manga publishers[6] use the word "manga" to signify comics that are of Japanese origin, they are not referring to all Japanese comics. They refer to Japanese comics that have a specific look. Tokyopop's "manga" is not just a matter of place of origin, it directly means a distinct "style." Specifically, this "style" is understood to be based on the conventions of *shōnen* and *shōjo* manga, the largest and most popular manga demographics of Japan. This is mainly due to the fact that the majority of manga titles imported and translated to the West stemmed from these two groups of manga genres.

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[6] Such as Tokyopop, Viz, Harper Collins, amongst others.

Demographics, genders and genres

As previously explained, Japanese manga is classified demographically by gender and age.

Each magazine targets a specific audience/manga demographic, which broadly speaking, can

be grouped as: *kodomo* (small children, of both sexes), *shōnen* (young teenage boys), *shōjo*

(young teenage girls), *seinen* (initially young adult men, today by tendency including adults

of both gender[7]) and *josei* (adult women). The largest and best-selling of these groups are

shōnen and *shōjo* manga, initially targeted to boys and girls of middle and high-school age,

but so popular that their readership has vastly extended beyond them, and the gender divide

does not necessarily apply to the actual readership anymore.

Shōnen and shōjo manga are not just distinguishable by the nature of the content of the

stories, but by clear differences in the drawing style and panel layouts, allowing them to be

recognized at first glance. Typically, shōnen manga is characterized as stories with high-

paced action, often with many battles and a male protagonist. Also, the themes of

camaraderie amongst friends, groups or squads of fighters and striving towards a common

goal are often used. To emphasize these elements visually, shōnen titles typically use

drawing styles characterized by bold, quick strokes, action lines, and solid backgrounds; the

sequencing of panel layouts has a "cinematic" feel, which allows the reader to follow the

unfolding action and battle scenes visually as one who would be watching a movie (Berndt

2013: 377-379). This, of course, is a generalization, as there are many styles and variations

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[7] See also female artists publishing in such magazines.

of these characteristics, as well as artists who, regardless of their own gender, draw for both groups of readers in the same style[8].

Regarding shōjo manga, it traditionally depicts stories about romantic love and emotions. There are many genres of shōjo manga, such as science fiction, fantasy and historical dramas, but ultimately, they are stories about relationships, as opposed to focusing on the action and fight of shōnen manga titles. Stylistically, this tends to mean soft, airy backgrounds, pictures of flowers and nature, and emphasis on the character's emotional gestures and features. Basically, the focus in on interiority; the exploration of the inner world of characters. Takahashi Mizuki delves deeply into the roots of these stylistic conventions in shōjo by pointing out the legacy of *jojō-ga* (lyrical painting/illustration) within it, a distinct example being that of one of manga's most famous particularity, that of the "big eyes," which are meant to visually signify a deep soul and a rich inner emotional world (2008: 117, 120, 124-127). However, this is also a large generalization, as Western readers are also familiar with the diversity of shōjo titles that feature elements "typical" of shōnen, such as battles, duels and a desire to overcome one's own limitations in order to become stronger (Saitō Chiho's *Revolutionary Girl Utena*) or fighting squads and a mission to protect the world (Takeuchi Naoko's *Sailor Moon*). Similarly, current shōnen manga has been found to have elements traceable back to shōjo (Itō 2011). For example, Berndt illustrates how one of the most famous shōnen manga of current times, Masashi Kishimoto's *Naruto* employs many aspects typically found in shōjo manga, such as the "visualization of characters' 'inner selves'," and the "inner voice of boys" presented in "a post-cinematic way when lexia of

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8 An example is the highly-popular Takahashi Rumiko, a female manga artist who writes primarily for boys and young men. She is the creator of "Maison Ikkoku" (published in the seinen manga magazine *Big Comic Spirits* from 1980 to 1987), "Ranma ½" (in *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* from 1987 to 1996), "Mermaid Saga" (in *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* from 1984 to 1994) and "Inuyasha" (in *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* from 1996 to 2008). Nonetheless, her works tend to appeal largely to both genders.

inner monologue are spread over numerous panels and related to the character only by means of his huge eyes" (Berndt 2013: 378).

Berndt asserts that "mise-en-scène and framing is not representative of manga in general but particularly *gekiga*[9] and with it the majority of productions in the male genres of shōnen and seinen manga" (2013: 377), when discussing the aforementioned 'cinematic' quality of shōnen. The exchange that occurs between shōnen and shōjo allows for their differences to mean something other than simply gender, and have shifted, amongst other things, towards a difference in the reading experience: "in it's emphasis on feelings and atmosphere, shōjo manga favored collage-like multi-layered page designs with borderless panels to support its narratives, which approximated literary rather than 'cinematic' realism" (2013: 378). With such interplay between them, it can be said that what most clearly defines these two groups of manga, rather than content, style or even readership[10], is simply the demographics of the magazines they are published in.

When manga was first introduced in the West, specifically in the United States, the titles that publishing companies released as translations were those that had already proven to be best-sellers in Japan, and naturally, these tended to come from the two largest demographics: shōnen and shōjo. Their proven market success meant these manga crossed borders more successfully[11] not in their initial magazine format, but in the secondary publication format,

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[9] *Gekiga* literally means "dramatic pictures." The term was coined by Tatsumi Yoshihiro and adopted by other more serious Japanese cartoonists who did not want their trade to be known as manga or "whimsical pictures." It is similar to American cartoonists who started using the term "graphic novel" as opposed to "comic book" for the same reason.

[10] In the sense of "real" readership, rather that the targeted audience the magazines intend upon initial publication (which is dependent on the demographics of the magazine).

[11] As opposed to their initial introduction through serialized magazines similar to Japanese manga magazines, which proved to be less profitable than the sales of tankōbon versions (see Chapter 2: Industry, for more information).

that is, *tankōbon* (book volume) editions. Also, fans overseas find it more convenient to directly purchase the volume versions, which allow them to read more of the same content (Sell 2011: 97). When these already massively popular series first crossed over to the West, publishers attempted to serialize the titles in magazines resembling the weekly, or monthly, publications[12] from Japan. But as previously explained, once a series is bound into volumes, fans could simply skip the magazine and buy the volume (or several ones) instead. It was, then, easier for publishers to simply directly translate the tankōbon and focus on selling the manga titles as book series instead. Also, the size of the manga volumes changed from their original Japanese tankōbon size[13] to a standard American size, a trend started by companies to make their manga, translated and OEL, the same size as a DVD case[14], "so that anime and manga could be shelved together" (Sell 2011: 97). This is not unusual in the West, where "anime" and "manga" are often interchangeable as terminology (many fans as well as artists often "confuse" one for the other[15]) as well as merchandise, which is often shelved together at shops, bookstores and specialty stores. Other companies followed in suit, as it made it easier to organize manga in large numbers in bookstores and shops.

It seems that the term "manga" can be further redefined by the process of localizing manga in a new environment. As it made its way into the American comics market, manga began to be defined as specifically "Japanese comics," distinguishable by the visual style in the manga

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[12] Such as *Mixxine* and Viz's *Shōnen Jump*.

[13] Roughly 13 × 18 cm, or 5" × 7".

[14] 5" x "7.5" , also known as the "Tokyopop trim size" (Brienza 2009).

[15] Usually, interest in manga is sparked by animation (Schodt 1993: 155). The frequent interchangeable use of the terms "manga" and "anime" by consumers in the West is most likely due to the integrated marketing campaings employed by publishers and distributors in the early stages of import (1980s) to make manga more attractive by promoting it as a "combo" alongside animation. Roger Sabin explains that "as anime became more popular among Western audiences in the 1980s and 1990s, […] publishers producing manga worked even more closely with the film and video companies, to such an extent that they became reliant upon each other, and their futures became largely intertwined. The specialist comics shops would soon take the extraordinary step of erecting shelves for manga and videos next to each other" (Sabin 1996: 229).

titles (mostly shōnen and shōjo) that were imported, without taking into account the vast array of styles, content and genres existing in Japan which are part of manga's identity as well. Even though many sources define manga as "a Japanese comic book or graphic novel[16]," for manga publishers and professionals in the American comics industry, "manga" is clearly a "style[17]."

Tokyopop's "OEL manga"

It is important to point out that "OEL" manga are typically published by companies specialized in manga translation. These companies base their operations and marketing strategies on the business of importing and translating already existing material. Decisions such as that of Tokyopop, who specializes in manga translation/import, to shelve localized media with original media as if they are the same thing, is therefore a natural occurrence since the company is not originally in the business of product creation so much as it is in re-launching altered media to new markets. For this reason, "OEL" manga, although an original creative product, was made to conform to the same marketing strategies as translations, which include preserving a consistent book size and cheap, black-and-white printing process that is used on the translated material. This also includes rate of publication, price and sales promotions and campaings[18]. It can also be seen as a reflection on the staff that handle and create "OEL" manga.

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[16] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manga (Last access 2013/11/05).

[17] Or "visual language" (Neil Cohn 2008, 2012).

[18] Such as Tokyopop's decision to launch together the "Rising Stars of Manga" contest, which called for original manga entries, along with the "100% authentic" manga campaign, which promoted imports of "un-adultered" Japanese manga to its consumers. This is further explored in Chapter 3.

As previously explained, the mode of production of manga in Japan is a large portion of its definition. As Berndt clarifies, "manga" and "comic books" are descriptions of completely different cultures of production, distribution and consumption (Berndt 2007). Manga is often created in teams, with a lead artist supported by assistants, in close cooperation with the publishing company editors, who may assume the role of producers and who are normally the decision-makers in regards to what will be published and sold in the magazine. Manga publishing houses in Japan, are thus, entirely dedicated to the production and distribution of new content, and have the staff to support that. They are obviously not concerned with translating or adapting manga[19]. Therefore, the professionals working on manga creation are specialized for this job as distinct from the case of Tokyopop and similar North American manga publishers, whose employees are versed in translating, adapting and re-mixing foreign contents, but not necessarily specialized in creating new material. The same could be suggested of the artists, who in many cases, are not trained in manga, except perhaps through self-education. The combination of artists, editors and publishers who lack the specialized training in manga creation complicate the nature of "OEL" as "real" or "original" manga, as it follows the conventions of translated manga in the U.S.

"OEL" manga: a new direction in manga and comics

Taking the previous discussion into account we have, in summary (Fig.1):

[Fig. 1 - Diagram of "OEL" manga's specific targets. Source: Angela Moreno Acosta, 2013.]

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[19] In Japan, translations of foreign comics, such as American or European comics, are usually done by professional comics critics, such as Ono Kōsei, who translated *Superman*, *Fritz the Cat* and *Doonesbury* (Schodt 1993: 154).

This is a loose representation of the components of "OEL" manga, as a manga product derived from and for English-speaking markets. Here, the "O" in "OEL" tells us that the content in these manga is of "original" nature. It is not simply a matter of being first written in the English language, but rather, of contributing a new, original story to readers. The content is dependent upon cultural and syntax-related specificities of the publishing language. The "EL" portion of the acronym points to the language of publishing, reading direction, industry/market and cultural references that are not just addressed in the story content, but also in the artwork itself through onomatopoeia, signs and labels, characters' and places' names, amongst other ways. It symbolizes the space in which these manga are created in and the form they take on when created in an English-speaking comics environment. Then we have the complex terminology of "– Manga," which as we have come to understand, points to manga's origins in Japan, but more truthfully, to its ability to be distinguishable through style from other forms of comics, such as American superhero comics or European *bande dessinée*. It also describes the particular set of visual clues, conventions, techniques and symbols recognized as "Japanese" the artist is using to convey their specific message/ content. Essentially, it signifies "manga style," to the extent that it is clearly recognizable by audiences as such.

Ultimately, "OEL" manga, as a system of comics production and distribution, consists of a specific set of requirements (original story instead of a translation, English language and market, "manga" style) that need to be met by new creations in order to be recognized as "OEL" manga.

Section 2   Previous Research

Globalization, Localization and "Glocalization" of manga

"OEL" manga are often thought of as products of manga's globalization and transplantation in Western markets. Manga as mainstream media is only possible within the Japanese market, but when extrapolated to foreign markets, particularly those with their own large comics culture, such as France/Belgium and the United States, manga can only exist within the fringes, as a subcultural practice. As Kristin Anderson-Terpsta explains in her thesis, globalization is not only apparent in mainstream cultures, but also in subcultures (Anderson 2012: 8). Subculture is a natural occurrence wherever there is a mainstream, and as Terpsta explains, what is considered mainstream popular culture in once place might be considered subcultural in another. This is why Hebdige (1979), who has set the groundwork for subculture studies, stressed the importance of studying fringe cultural practices.

However, even within countries with cultural similarity in regards to comics, manga does not play a lead role in the comics scene, and it obviously cannot in countries without a mainstream comics culture or no comics culture at all. Wendy Wong explains in her essay that within Asia, Japanese manga made its transnational migration at first to Hong Kong and South Korea; followed by other Southeast Asian countries and lastly mainland China (2006: 34). While it is easy to see the reasons behind the problem of embracing Japanese manga in South Korea and the People's Republic of China, it is not as clear as to why manga's migration to Southeast Asia was slower. However, Benjamin Ng explains that Singapore and Southeast Asia were more influenced by Hong Kong and Taiwanese comics due to proximity, and Japanese manga had to compete in the market against imported American titles and local Singaporean comics. Also, the same mode of consumption for manga that existed later in North America, that of book volumes instead of magazines, applied here as

well, which consequently slowed down and weakened the impact of Japanese comics in the region (Ng 2000: 55).

Wong further explains that while cultural proximity or similarity was considered the reason for manga's popularity in Asian markets, it did not hold for its integration into non-Asian cultural markets, such as the European and American ones. This, according to her, was mainly thanks to what Iwabuchi (2002) calls "cultural odorlessness," the suppression of Japanese references, visual or literal, which may help the work be more easily accepted by in Asian markets[20]. Iwabuchi points out that this comes from Japanese popular culture's own history of localizing foreign influences; rather than being "colonized" by outside influences (particularly American after WWII). Japan "quickly localized these influences by imitating and partly appropriating the originals" (2002: 94-95). The tensions created between reception of manga as something coming from Japan (at the discourse level), and the fundamental cultural hybridity of "manga style" (at the level of works/aesthetics) point to the differences in Asian and Western markets; differences that can be examined through the reception of manga published in North America and particularly in the creation of "OEL" manga. As a process that developed within North American manga fan practices when they encountered Japanese manga and went on to create their own manga, "OEL" manga can be looked at through the lens of globalization; what some scholars calls "Asianization of the West" (Wong 2006: 25). Furthermore, another important factor in the emergence of "OEL" manga texts is dependent on the time/year that manga and anime first became widespread in North America. "OEL" manga, as previously shown in the definitions chapter, first made its appearance as a key word in 2005, but respective texts were in production ante litteram, that is, as early as the mid-1990s (Schodt 1996, Gravett 2004, Sabin 1996). The "big boom"

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[20] "Odorlessness" is supposed to be important in Asian markets, against the background of Japanese imperialism, while in Western markets the emphasis on "Japaneseness" relates to traditions of Orientalism and is good for business.

occurred in 2002 with Tokyopop's "Rising Stars of Manga" nation-wide contest, which made it possible to create manga professionally in the United States and become a manga artist as a career. As Wong explains, this was facilitated by the media-mix strategy that Japanese producers employed in the 2000s to export their products into foreign markets, exporting anime, manga and merchandise licenses generously to the American markets. This opening was due mainly because "the domestic manga market in Japan has been declining since the mid-1990s, making publishers[21] seriously push for international licensing and start to focus on the U.S market" (2006: 37). The period from the mid-1990s to 2002 in North America, with its influx of Japanese cultural media, can be thought of as an "incubation period" where a whole generation of fans were cultivated and inspired to appropriate Japanese manga and add their own cultural experience as manga artists. In this way, "OEL" manga can be regarded as representative of the "glocality" of manga; the ways in which manga in general (including translated editions) operates on both global and local scales.

Manga (fan) studies on "OEL" manga

Studies on manga fans and audiences and the ways in which they consume Japanese cultural products are still limited, but they have begun to include ways in which fans consume media in the form of media creation and in which they develop interactive creation practices. Such studies include works by Jenkins (1992, 2006, 2012), Hills (2002), and Napier (2000). In particular, Jenkins is known to promote the notion of "participatory culture" related to how fans remix media content into different forms of entertainment (Jenkins 2006). Such practices can include fan fiction, fan art and scanlations. Fan fiction and fan art creation are quite well known, but scanlation is often still not accepted as a creative cultural activity. Scanlation is the fan practice of scanning a whole chapter of a manga, then inserting text

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[21] Such as Kodansha and Shogakukan.

translations into the pages (text not limited to word bubbles) and uploading the whole

chapter to an online forum where other fans can read the newly-translated chapter of their

favorite manga series and comment on it. These sites are particularly popular in places where

manga volumes are difficult to purchase, due to scarcity of published volumes or

unaffordable high prices, such as Southeast Asia and Latin America. But even within North

America, scanlation sites remain popular as they allow for easy access to the latest

developments in manga stories, and foster fan community[22].

This last point, fan community, is an important element of manga fan practices. Sites such as

deviantART, an online art community where people can post their artwork and receive

feedback from other users, have become hubs for emerging manga-style artists, who

interrelate or combine their fan practices of online manga remixing and community

participation with their strides as original manga creators. With its ease to foment community

and easy distribution of content, deviantART has made it possible for artists, such as

Yuumei[23] (Fig. 2), to launch online careers in comics, gaining massive popularity, followers/

readers and free publicity, without having to depend on traditional publishing methods.

[Fig. 2 - From Yuumei's online manga, *Fisheye Placebo*.]

Yuumei, whose real name is Wenqing Yan, is a Chinese-born U.S-based illustrator and

comics artist who has been active in the deviantART community for over 10 years. In her

personal deviantART profile, she writes: "I am a Practice of Art major at UC Berkeley with a

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[22] The practice of scanlation is also related to discontent with publishing houses; their choices of works to be translated and their neglect towards 'minor' series (meaning, not considered for import by publishing houses).

[23] She can be found at http://yuumei.deviantart.com/, as well as through her Facebook artist page, through which her fans are kept updated on news and latest releases - https://www.facebook.com/YuumeiArt. (Last access 2013/11/12).

focus on environmentalism and cyber activism. I specialize in digital art but I also enjoy traditional watercolor, sculpting, and origami.[24]" Although she describes some of her comics as "flash comics," meaning she animates them using Adobe Flash[25], Yuumei's work is considered manga within the deviantART community[26], even though it is rendered in full color and does not employ panel sequences or page spreads. What is more, even though she is Chinese in origin and her comics focus on China's particular issues (Fig. 3) with pollution[27] and media censorship[28], she chooses to employ a clearly recognizable Japanese style to create her works. Like her, many more make this decision independently of culture and context-related particularities, and simply out of a love for the "style." But what is more, she writes her comics originally in English for an English-speaking audience, which sums up what "original manga" is as understood by North American fans essentially arrive at: multiplicity of definitions and re-definition through multi-cultural points of contact; how manga was dynamically accepted as a style which could be applied by anyone of any culture, and this is a way in which this thesis would like to contribute in relation to 'glocal' manga fan practices.

[Fig. 3 - From Yuumei's online manga, *Knite*.]

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[24] http://yuumei.deviantart.com (Last access 2013/11/12).

[25] http://tapastic.com/yuumei (Last access 2013/11/12).

[26] She regularly participates in anime and manga-related conventions, such as Anime Expo in Los Angeles. She does specify in her FAQ page that she draws in "anime" style, which tends to be equated with "manga" style for many fans - http://yuumei.deviantart.com/journal/FAQ-233198678 (Last access 2013/11/12).

[27] Her online flash comic, *Knite*, is about China's struggle with pollution, told through the story of a poor Chinese boy and the rich son of a Chinese official - http://tapastic.com/series/79 (Last access 2013/11/12).

[28] Her most recent series, *Fisheye Placebo*, deals with China's strict internet regulations, cyber-activism and the consequences of oppressive governments - http://tapastic.com/series/fisheye (Last access 2013/11/12).

Many scholars have described how fans create work based on their favorite TV shows, such as Bacon-Smith (1992) regarding *Star Trek* fandoms. However, most of the studies on manga and manga fan practices focus on dōjinshi creation and delve into the myriad of readings of the work they are based on. There is little, if any, research regarding the creators/creation of original manga by non-Japanese artists. Studies on manga creation tend to focus on the history of official publishing and editing manga in Japan (Kinsella 1999, 2006, Itō 2005), manga's visual 'language,' 'grammar' and literacy (McCloud 2006, Cohn 2008, Inoue 1995), or gendered genres, especially female manga (Ogi 2001, 2003, Thorn 2001), this last subject being a highly popular topic within current Manga Studies. When Manga Studies does touch upon manga's localization in the West, specifically North America and manga practices there, it is usually in regards to "cultural production" (Brienza 2009), transcultural flow (Wong 2006) or translation of manga (Kaindl 1999, Sell 2011). Heike Jüngst is one of the few who has studied homegrown manga a little more closely[29], in her locale of Germany. Admittedly, they were published at a very early point in time (and not continued), but her work voiced a negative opinion on grassroots manga, ultimately regarding it as "simulacrum" and "pseudo-manga" (Jüngst 2004, 2006, Sabin 1996). There is yet to be a consistent, well-rounded study that focuses on non-Japanese manga practices, works and authors in the West, and this thesis would like to contribute to filling that lack.

Manga "prosumers" in the digital age

Fan fiction and other fan practices can also be seen as instances of emerging "prosumerism," a blurring of the distinction between consumer and producer. The idea was first introduced by media studies specialist, Marshall McLuhan, in his book *Take Today* (1972: 04), and the term was coined later by Alvin Toffler in *The Third Wave* (1980), where he theorized that

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[29] Paul Malone has also researched original manga in Germany, but from a more positive perspective (2010).

with the advent of the internet, the information age (what he called the "third wave" of human development) and the increase of saturated markets, consumers would engage in creative practices of customization and remixing of media[30]. Don Tapscott refined the idea in his 1995 book, *The Digital Economy*, and applied it to the Gen Y generation (typically understood as those born after 1980), claiming that it is not just a matter of blurring the lines, as "producers and consumers have always been the same group of people: collectively, we produce the value that we collectively consume. What is different about prosumerism is the blurring of the line between producers and consumers at the micro level of economy," and further suggesting that this practice is commonplace amongst the "net generation." He suggests that today's youth "treat the world as a place for creation, not consumption," thanks to the freedom brought about by the internet age (Tapscott 2005: 209). Sites such as deviantART and Pixiv (online art communities and self-printing/publishing services), CafePress and Lulu (self-publishing book and magazine services), Etsy (online self-owned shop platform), etc., are evidence of a growing trend in personalized manufacturing by today's consumers. A large part of this trend is dependent on social networking, and all of the mentioned services function as social networks primarily, making the lines between fan/consumer/producer basically inexistent. Nowadays, one can use services such as Twitter or Facebook to not only connect with friends, but to also promote one's work[31]. And the fact of the matter is that these social media are being used in large degree to promote one-man businesses. Social networking itself is, as Tapscott predicts, "no longer about hooking up online […]. It is becoming a new mode of production. Social networking is becoming social production" (2005: 210).

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[30] See also Park Suin's essay regarding manga and prosumerism (2012).

[31] Such as my own Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/peccosa.art) where I promote myself as an artist/business, and which is different from, yet linked to, my personal Facebook profile.

Similarly to the cases of fan fiction and fan art, the current practice of creating original manga-style comics in North America is, for the most part, an occurrence within communities that largely exist online. Even if the work is not uploaded to a site, it is still discussed for the most part on internet social communities, in specialized blogs or forums, such as Tumblr or Livejournal, in the same way fannish works are created and consumed by today's manga fans (a subject which Noppe thoroughly explores in her 2013 essay). One need only go to these sites and browse to be witness to the immense amount of original manga-style works by unknown artists, many of whom merge their fan practices with their professional aspirations, as original work is created and distributed in the same method and places as fan works.

Section 3   Problem Setting

Essentially, the main issue of "OEL" manga is that they are original manga works, created in large part by North American manga fans who have little or no institutional training in manga creation and who base their artistic knowledge on their personal readings and interpretations of the manga they like. These works are typically made by a single author, who may self-publish online and/or be published by a comics publisher (most likely by Tokyopop or Viz Media), and distributed by these companies, who are, in essence, manga translation companies rather than creators of original content, and who distribute the books with the same publication rate, price and format, for the same market they would distribute imported and translated Japanese manga for. If the author chooses to publish online, they tend to do so in the same manner and for the same communities as manga fans.

This gives rise to questions, such as: What does the term "OEL" signify, and how has the meaning evolved through stages? What are the professional aspirations of "OEL" manga

artists? Can their work be recognized as "manga"? What is regarded as "Japanese" in their work and why is regarded as such? In which ways is "OEL" manga "original" and in which ways does it "imitate"? What can be understood as "OEL" manga in regards to style and content? Are there representative (as in "typical") characteristics of "OEL" manga?

As will be apparent throughout the dissertation, these questions often lead to more specific issues, such as locating these manga and artists within a specific comics industry when they stem from a combination of conditions set in motion by both the North American and the Japanese comics markets. What can be said at this point is that "OEL" manga has not been given closer consideration due to its misguided rejection by fans[32], media and academia. This is regrettable as there is danger in dismissing great work and much potential, simply because of a misused (or rather, misunderstood) label.

Section 4   Methodology

Data and Samples

The primary data utilized for this dissertation consists of case studies of "OEL" manga artists and their works: Nina Matsumoto, Takeshi Miyazawa and Svetlana Chmakova. All three of these studies were chosen well-known within manga communities but more importantly, within the industry, as they are considered professional manga-style artists in the North American market. Matsumoto's *Yokaiden* was published by DelRey manga, with a total of 2 volumes out. She is also known for her work as a penciler in *The Simpsons*' official comics and the *The Last Airbender: Prequel: Zuko's Story* graphic novels ("San Diego Comic-Con International 2009: Del Rey, 2009"). Takeshi Miyazawa is known for his work for Marvel

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[32] In this forum, a reader posted a survey asking users if they consider "OEL" manga "manga". Most people replied negatively and even called OEL manga "dirty" <http://www.smackjeeves.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=31&t=7903 > (last access 2013/12/08).

Comics in manga-style, and Svetlana Chmakova was picked up by Tokyopop to produce *Dramacon*, which is a good example of how Tokyopop handled the production of original manga as well as the careers of aspiring artists. Svetlana's case also serves on other levels as insight into the practices of manga fans-turned-creators, through both the manga's narrative and the artist's experience with Tokyopop. Ultimately, is proves itself as an example of "OEL" manga at its best, and as such, a model.

The main method of data gathering from artists consisted of in depth face-to-face interviews of the case studies, email questionnaires and secondary analyses of existing interviews of the artists and related persons in the case studies[33]. In-person interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews contain a strong emphasis on the subjective accounts of the sample cases of the study. Secondary data include literary citations, interviews with editors, publishers and other people involved in manga and comics industries and communities, as well as comics, graphic novels and "OEL" manga works, which were used in the case studies of this paper.

Direct Participation

Data was also collected by actively participating in events, conventions and projects directly related to "OEL" manga and the issues around it. In the case of conventions and visits to publishers, the data was gathered in-person via structured and unstructured interviews.

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[33] Example of email questionnaires used for interviews of artists in the second section of Chapter 4 can be found in the Appendix.

（１）"OEL" manga communities: In the case of "OEL" manga communities, both online and off-online, direct observation techniques as well as participant observation techniques were employed.

（２）Conventions: The comics and manga conventions used for locating and interviewing local manga artists in person were chosen according to relevance to the product studied: Comic Con 2011 and Anime Expo 2011 in California, United States, were chosen due to being large venues for original local manga talent and recruiters.

（３）Workshops: collaborations with other non-Japanese manga artists and workshops that deal with the questions and issues of this research were also carried out. This resulted in the workshop led at the "Research in Women's Manga: Subjectivity, Globalization, and the Possibilities for Expression" Conference at the University of Singapore in Singapore, February 2011 in which I was the moderator of the "Global Manga Workshop," for the purpose of gathering information for this research project.

Limitations and Delimitations

The participants were clearly and fully informed of the purpose of this study and were given a consent form. As a researcher, I clearly explained the purpose of the study and the expectations of such in a manner that the participants clearly understood. Interviews were not carried out until the participant confirmed that they are aware and in agreement of those terms. The consent forms, which they have signed at free will, stand for their agreement to their statements appearing in this dissertation. The forms and filled out questionnaires can be found in the appendix section of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2　"OEL" MANGA: INDUSTRY

The emergence and growth of manga publishing in the United States owe its rapid expansion

and success to the well-established global fan networks that allowed for manga to come from

Japan to North America in a relatively easy way. For manga to have been so well received in

the American comics market despite its highly foreign qualities, some groundwork had to be

made; preconditions had to be met[1]. Anime helped pave the way by accustoming audiences

to Japanese popular media through popular animation; series such as *Speed Racer* were

regular on American national TV networks since the early 1970s[2]. *Astro Boy*, Osamu

Tezuka's best known work in the West, was allegedly exported to the United States soon after

it began airing in Japan in 1963[3], so it is apparent that there was already a partial familiarity

with Japanese cultural imports long before manga appeared on the scene[4]. This was

expanded upon in the early 1980s with the arrival of the Nintendo Entertainment System

console and videogames such as *Super Mario Bros*., making videogames and Japan and

obvious pair in the minds of a whole generation of American children. Since then, what

experts call "Cool Japan" or "Japan Soft Power"[5] has made its presence strongly felt within

North American popular media.

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[1] Brienza 2009: 114.

[2] Kelts 2006.

[3] Schodt 1993: 154.

[4] A comic book featuring Astro Boy was released in the United States in 1965. It was re-scripted, re-drawn and colorized, but it was clearly recognized as a 'supplement' of the animated tv show of the same name (Schodt 1993: 154).

[5] Galbraith 2009.

However, even though manga did make an appearance in the United States around the same time as Japanese videogames, most people did not really become aware of manga until Viz Media, an American manga publisher, literally created the market in the late 1980s. Prior to this, there were attempts at publishing manga but they were not well received by the comics community. Nakazawa Keiji's *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen) was published in a magazine serialization that ran from 1980 to 1982, but it was aborted due to its sheer volume of pages (1,400 approximately). Educomics then took his autobiographical accounts of the atom bomb in Hiroshima, *Ore wa Mita*, and published it as *I Saw It!* in 1983[6]. Also, a short story titled *Violence Becomes Tranquility* by Kaze Shinobu appeared in the March issue of *Heavy Metal* in 1980[7]. However, both stories remained commercially unsuccessful and obscure. A prepared audience was needed to make Viz's operations successful in 1987, and introduce manga to the "prepared masses" on a wider scale.

Section 1   First Wave: 1987-2001

Viz Media's localization and stigma management strategies

Shogakukan and Shueisha, two of the largest manga publishers in Japan, are the holding companies of Viz Media, founded in 1986 by Horibuchi Seiji, a Japanese businessman based in San Francisco, California (Schodt 1996). According to Matsui Takeshi's essay on the subject, when asked by Shogakukan to conduct market research to assess the success possibility of publishing manga in the American comics market, Horibuchi consulted Frederik Schodt, one of the very first manga translators in the U.S., who advised him to

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[6] Schodt 1983: 155.

[7] Schodt 1983: 158.

"adapt manga to the American comics market," based on his skepticism from failed earlier

attempts at manga publishing (op. cit. Horibuchi and Iiboshi in Matsui 2009: 12). This led

Horibuchi to implement what marketing experts today call localization:[8] the adaptation of

manga "to suit traditional American comics format in order to attract comic readers who

were not familiar with manga" (Matsui 2009: 03). Using this strategy, Viz Media began

serialization of three manga series: Shintani Kaoru's *Area 88* (shōnen, military), Shirato

Sanpei's *Legend of Kamui* (historical, seinen) and Kudō Kazuya's *Mai the psychic girl*

(supernatural, shōnen). Their success inspired others to bring in more titles, such as First

Comics' serialization of Koike Kazuo's renowned *Lone Wolf and Cub* in early 1987[9].

However, it was Epic Comics'[10] serialization of Otomo Katsuhiro's *Akira* in 1988 what

caused huge waves in the market with a rise in the numbers of readers. This was also aided

by the release of the animated movie in 1990 and its overwhelming success (Sabin 1996:

231).

Perhaps the adaptation of manga to fit American comic book conventions helped audiences

somewhat accustomed to Japanese popular media to accept the introduction of manga, but it

created another plethora of problems at the same time. Viz's localization strategy required

manga to be "flipped," that is, the panels in the original manga are re-arranged to fit the

English-reading direction (left-to-right). Because Japanese is read right-to-left, the artwork is

laid out in this way as well, so it is not just the text, but also the flow of the artwork that

[8] A term utilized in international marketing theory (Levitt 1983; Ryans, Griffith, and White 2003).

[9] In September 2000, Dark Horse Comics began to release the full series in 28 tankōbon volumes, completing the series with the 28th volume in December 2002. Dark Horse reused all of Miller's covers from the First Comics edition. In October 2012, Dark Horse completed the release of all 28 volumes in digital format, as part of their "Dark Horse Digital" online service.

[10] A subdivision of Marvel Comics.

follows this direction. "Flipping" caused irritation for the creators of the manga titles

imported, as they did not wish their artwork to be tampered with, and in contrast to American

comics' industry regulations, in Japan, the authors hold a large part of the copyright of the

manga, so their decision is not easy to overrule. Also, flipping the manga caused many issues

with translation, since the work did not contain Japanese in the text only; there were also

abundant sound effects, onomatopoeia and floating text that would be affected with the

alterations. Colorization is when manga is digitally colored[11] (as manga is normally printed

in monochrome) to appease comic book fans who are used to reading comics in color. This

also proved to be an unwise choice as well, since it overshadowed manga's use of graphic

subtleties. Lastly, many problems were caused by forcing manga to fit the 32-page "floppy"

or "pamphlet-style" publication format used for most American mainstream comics and

called the "comic book"[12]. Although manga had been published locally before in magazine

serializations, early manga publishers in the U.S. still needed the translations to fit in the

shelves of local comic book stores, as there was no other venue for manga to be sold at, at

the time.

Critical fan response led Viz to adjust their strategies and re-group efforts to ensure manga

was well-received. Their "stigma management" (Goffman 1963 and Lopes 2006 in Matsui

2009: 04), a concern with the establishment of "the legitimacy of manga as an acceptable

form of entertainment" in the U.S. market, was a result of a "stereotyped" comic

environment, where comics had as their main target a mostly male demographic interested in

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[11] For example, Otomo's *Akira*, was first introduced into the market in color, which was added
digitally.

[12] Glossy cover, 5 × 7.5 inches and 24-30 colored pages per issue (Lefèvre 2000).

superhero stories. Matsui argues that in "a society in which people view comics as stigmatized media, early manga publishers were forced to choose titles carefully and sometimes modify the contents," (2009: 04) thus, making it understandable that, at the time, there was a need for the localization that Schodt suggested.

Dark Horse: catering to the (male) audience

With the growing popularity of manga at the end of the 1980s[13], more translation and localization companies started to enter the expanding manga scene. Dark Horse Comics, one of the largest independent comics publishers in the United States, began to publish manga. Their main release was Shirow Masamune's *Appleseed* in 1988, which was apparently chosen alongside titles such as *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Akira*, for "their similarity to mainstream American comics and "cultural acceptability[14]" (Sabin 1996: 229). What is implied by this statement is that these manga were chosen because the pace and artwork of the stories resembled American comics; "U.S readers prefer detailed artwork" (Schodt 1996: 320), and these series differ from other Japanese manga in that their style is very complex and includes a lot of fast-paced action, as do most of superhero comics. Their use of screentone was also quite heavy and detailed, and in some cases (like with *Akira*), backgrounds were painstakingly meticulous. These manga are not regarded as "representative" of their genres in Japan and in fact, a lot of the imported series, like the

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[13] Sabin 1996: 231.

[14] Also, as Sabin notes, Shirow's *Appleseed* as well as his most accomplished work *Ghost in the Shell* began to be imported due precisely because of *Akira*'s success, which had made the field increasingly "science-fictional;" also, the titles were imported with their anime counterparts: "anime became a significant branch of the home-video business, with new labels starting up to specialize in the area," while "the manga industry expanded exponentially" (Sabin 1996: 231).

aforementioned ones, were not necessarily close to what was typically regarded as "mainstream" in Japan at the time.

These manga were also, obviously targeted towards male readers, which is what early manga publishers felt was where they needed to put their efforts into, as they were the largest demographic of comics readers in North America. According to Matsui, by the end of the 1990s, Viz had published 43 shōnen titles and 23 seinen titles, Dark Horse following close with 26 titles in total, mainly boys/men oriented. Viz only published 12 shōjo titles in the entire decade (Matsui 2009: 17). Nonetheless, despite all the efforts, manga in the 1990s North American comics market was but a small, obscure niche.

Sailor Moon's legacy

Another title published by Dark Horse was Fujishima Kosuke's *Ah! Megami-sama* (*Oh My Goddess!* in the American market). Although this title was considered seinen manga in Japan, it became popular amongst female fans due to its large cast of female characters. By the beginning of the 21st century, the market saw an increase of female readers thanks to the mid 1990s TV broadcast of *Sailor Moon*, the hugely popular Japanese animated series based on the shōjo manga by Takeuchi Naoko, through which many young girls were exposed for the first time to female heroines who were strong, smart and dedicated to saving the world. Not only that, but the anime (and manga) revolved entirely around girls' concerns: love, romance, boys, friendship, dreams, magic, school, and everything else that adolescent girls go through. *Sailor Moon's* TV syndication was cancelled in 1995 (Napier 2007), but it was groundbreaking in many ways, for it encouraged the practice of reading comics in girls,

creating a shift in the perceived stereotypes of what reading comics is about in the United

States. The publisher of the *Sailor Moon* manga was Mixx Entertainment, a small manga

translation company founded by Stuart Levy in 1997, an American lawyer who had spent

time in Japan and became interested in anime and manga while there. Upon returning to the

U.S, he founded Mixx to begin import of manga, but unlike his predecessors, he saw the

potential in shōjo titles and began serializing *Sailor Moon* in Mixxine, a manga magazine

(Fig. 1, 2). This anthology[15] ran from 1997 to 1999 and serialized not only *Sailor Moon*, but

also *Magic Knight Rayearth* (another shōjo title by the famous women mangaka studio

Clamp), and non-shōjo titles such as Takahashi Tsutomu's *Ice Blade* and Iwaaki Hitoshi's

Parasyte, both seinen. It may seen odd to have seinen titles in the same anthology as shōjo

titles, but as is apparent, manga at the time was not being categorized through gendered

demographics yet; it was too-small a field. Rather, companies were trying to reach as many

consumers as possible, thus taking liberties and in many cases, risks, as to which titles would

be financially wise to publish. Levy's Mixx was banking on girls' new-found interest in

comics through anime and manga to secure higher number in readers and, therefore, sales.

By the time *Sailor Moon* began to be collected into *tankōbon*, small volumes of more than

200 pages (and comparable to graphic novels in this regard), about 70% of manga readers in

general were 13-year-old girls (Harris 1998).

[Figures 1, 2 - (1) Cover of the December 1997 issue of Mixxine. (2) Page spread of Sailor

Moon from the June 1998 issue of Mixxine. © Mixx/Tokyopop.]

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[15] Back issues of these anthologies can be bought online as collector's items, in online shops such as:
http://www.avaneshop.com

Section 2   Second Wave: 2002-2008

Girls go to bookstores, not comics shops

Many critics admit that in North American comics culture, reading comics is "something that guys do." It is equated with the archetypal image of lonely, maladjusted male customers that frequent small, obscure comics shops in strip malls, at least according to media and critics[16]. With the arrival of *Sailor Moon*, many girls began to realize that comics are not exclusively a male practice, and that there are comics made solely for them (and by women authors!). Along that came the question of where to acquire these comics. The logical answer would have been "at the comics shop," but as it was pointed out, these were uninviting and obscure to most young women. A girl in a comics shop was seen as an anomaly. A girl at a bookstore was not.

With this in mind, and taking into account the dwindling sales of manga being sold as floppies in comics shops across the country, Mixx began to take steps to depart from the comics field and enter the book field. Mixx saw several reasons to make this jump: first, manga was not growing in sales despite being adapted to fit the standards of the American comics field. Also, publication rates were slow. For example, Viz followed Mixx's example and began serializing manga targeted towards girls, in their monthly magazine *Animerica Extra*[17] (Fig. 3), where they brought over titles such as Yoshida Akimi's *Banana Fish*, Watase Yuu's *Fushigi Yūgi*, Saitō Chiho's *Shōjo Kakumei Utena* (published in English as *Revolutionary Girl Utena*), Katsura Masakazu's *Video Girl Ai* (which is actually a shōnen

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[16] Wolk 2008: 60.

[17] A companion to their monthly manga and anime news magazine, *Animerica*.

manga, included in the monthly nonetheless) and Clamp's *X/1999*. Although it didn't start as

a shōjo-centric magazine, it eventually became one.

[Fig. 3 - cover of Animerica Extra #704. © Viz Entertainment.]

The magazine ran from 1998 to 2004, and produced several tankōbon volumes of each of

these series. The problem was that, although manga was being published in similar vein as

American comics books, manga is meant to be read at a faster pace[18]. The tankōbon volumes

that collected the issues published in the monthly were being put out every 6 months for each

title, relying on readers to follow the story mainly through the magazine. With this rate in

mind, and in the case of another of their publications, Toriyama Akira's *Dragon Ball*, its 42-

volume series would have taken Viz "over 20 years to bring to the market in its

entirety" (Brienza 2009: 108). Mixx saw this as an indication that manga can be published

solely as volumes, as there was more than enough material to be published in book form at a

faster rate, and that these books could be shelved alongside graphic novels at books stores,

rather than force the issue further in the comics shops.

In Japan, manga is a part of the book field, of which the manga magazines is also a part of;

there is no separate field for comics, as there is in the United States. Graphic novels,

however, bridge this gap in the North American market, between books and comics. It may

be called insight what led Levy to place manga within the space created by graphic novels in

the book field, as well as an understanding of the market they were catering to: women read

and purchase more books than men in almost every category (except history and biography)

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[18] Schodt 1993: 18.

and they represent 80% of the book market[19]. It has also been widely noted that girls are often more willing to read books that appeal to boys than vice versa. Mixx understood that "growth within the comics field as a whole, given the overarching structure of the field (its insularity, its narrow demographics, its boom and bust cycles), was already spectacularly difficult; specificities of the manga field made it nearly impossible" (Brienza 2009: 108). Moving from the insular comics field and into the more open book field resulted in an increase of sales (bookstores now drive approximately two-thirds of manga sales) (Brienza 2009: 113). Furthermore, by placing their magazine in bookstores instead of comic book shops where it would be passed over by boys and men, they provided manga the necessary visibility to attract young women (Brienza 2009: 110). This, combined with the re-airing of *Sailor Moon* on cable television by the USA network in 1998 (Napier 2007), solidified the existing readership into a strong (female) fan base of manga. It also placed manga closer to the book (and graphic novel) field[20] rather than to the comics field (Brienza 2009: 111-113; Matsui 2009: 10, 14, 19, Gravett 2004: 29, Weiner 2003: 60).

As both companies battled ground, Mixx split *Mixxine* in 1999 into two separate magazines: *Tokyopop* and *Smile*, with the latter intended solely for girls. At this point, both companies, Viz (with *Animerica Extra*) and Mixx with these two magazines had become accustomed to the idea of separating magazines into gendered demographics. But as previously shown, manga was better suited for book form and sales suggested that it appealed more to female

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[19] "Why Women Read More Than Men," Weiner 2007 (Web source).

[20] In his book, *Faster Than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel*, Stephen Weiner locates manga in the graphic novel field and links it to women's reading trends: "Manga, which includes everything from teen romance to sports and horror stories and more, offers more choices for readers than the superhero fantasy adventures that still dominate mainstream American comic books. **Manga graphic novels** are produced in a smaller size, and often are thicket than other kinds of graphic novels. **They fit into bookstore shelves with relative ease**. In recent years, manga **has created a new comics readership: girls** –and lots of them" [emphasis mine] Weiner 2003: 60.

readers rather than male ones. Placing the stories in tankōbon form at bookstores, then, would make it more accessible to the rising number of girls interested in manga.

2002: The birth of Tokyopop and "100% authentic" manga

The year 2002 was an important one in the world of manga in North America for several reasons: first, Mixx changed their company name to that of their main manga magazine, *Tokyopop*, and stopped serializing manga in favor of selling stories in tankôbon editions. But the specifics of their manga volumes were announced as "100% authentic manga." This campaign meant that from then on, all their translated manga would meet the following standards: leaving the pages "unflipped," that is, in their original (Japanese) reading direction (right-to-left), leaving the sound effects untranslated, employing a smaller book format similar to Japanese tankōbon (5 x 7.5 inches) and selling them at an affordable price, not going higher than $9.99 a book[21]. Tokyopop's resistance to the standards created by the American comics industry and its campaign to embrace manga's foreign qualities allowed sales to grow exponentially going from $60 million in 2002 to $210 million by 2007, the year in which the North American graphic novel market (as distinct from the comics market) was around 375 million dollars, out of which 56% was represented by manga (Brienza 2009: 103, 113; Matsui 2009: 10).

However, this "authenticity" campaign was less motivated by admiration for an untampered "Japaneseness" of manga, but rather by cutting back on costs and maximizing production

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[21] As opposed to early manga editions, which usually went by $16 to $32 when flipped and artwork re-touched, such as in the case of Viz's titles (Thompson 2008).

and sales. Viz' localization strategy had ultimately proved unsuccessful because flipping and translating the sound effects of their manga titles resulted in conflicts with license holders in Japan. Tokyopop's 2002 strategy of "providing identical[22] products in foreign markets" (Matsui 2009: 18), was in many ways a response to this problem, seeking to cut down on the expenses of flipping and modifying artwork by leaving as much of it untouched and import more titles to the U.S. Also, as previously explained[23], the special tankōbon size they decided to use made manga easy to shelf next to its anime counterparts in large multimedia/book stores (Gravett 2004: 156). This format has since become a standard for all published manga in North America (Sell 2011: 97).

The new trim size, cheaper price and "reverse" reading direction (following manga's visual flow of right-to-left), made Tokyopop's "100% authentic" manga distinct from other titles published at the time, and more attractive to fans who were growing interested in Japanese popular culture through their exposure to anime and manga. Tokyopop's accelerated publication rate (1 book per series every month) made it almost impossible for competitors to keep up, and created a major shift in the manga market later when all publishers adopted the standards created by Tokyopop. But it also encouraged book publishers to enter the field: Random House began publication of manga under their sublet Del Rey manga and DC comics did as well with their section titled CMX. Yen Press, another manga publishing company, was formed by the Hachette Book Group. Oni Press and Image Comics are also known to publish manga and manga-style comics along the same lines as the others. Since

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[22] "Identical" here is referring to the foreign being perceived as having no alterations when localized in a new market. Therefore, the word is not truly accurate, but rather, refers to the intent of allowing "Japaneseness."

[23] In Chapter 1, regarding what Tokyopop considers "manga."

then, the manga field has grown immensely – 350% from 2002 to 2007 (Brienza 2009: 113), while female fans represent the single most important demographic and have influence on the titles being brought over from Japan.

"Rising Stars of Manga"

Tokyopop's "100% authentic manga" campaign included an original manga talent-seeking contest called "Rising Stars of Manga," whose purpose was to find local talent and publish original, local manga. "Rising Stars of Manga" started in 2002 and ran until 2008, putting out an annual anthology with the winners of the year's contest. Participants were asked to submit a one-shot manga story of approximately 15 to 20 pages in length, from which 10 prizewinners would be picked; 8 runner-ups received cash prizes of $800, the second-place winner received $1000 and the grand-prize winner $2,500 as well as a book deal with Tokyopop to be published in the same fashion and for the same audience as their translated manga ("Tokyopop Announces Rising Stars of Manga Competition," 2002). An example of published manga from this competition is *Mail Order Ninja* (Fig. 4), an "OEL" manga by two winners from the 5th year of the competition (2006): Joshua Elder (writer) and Erich Owen (artwork). *Peach Fuzz* (Fig. 5), by Lindsay Cibos and Jared Hodges, was the grand-winner of the 2nd year of the contest. Tokyopop even created a version of the contest for the U.K. scene[24] in 2005 ("Rising Stars of UK," 2005).

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[24] Besides London, Tokyopop also has offices in Hamburg and Tokyo. Their Los Angeles home office is currently non-functional.

[Figures 4, 5 - (4) Cover from *Mail Order Ninja* © 2006 Joshua Elder and Erich Owen, Tokyopop. (5) Cover from *Peach Fuzz* © 2003 Lindsay Cibos and Jared Hodges, Tokyopop.]

Some argue that Tokyopop began "Rising Stars of Manga" because their sales were decreasing by 2005 (Matsui 2009: 19), and this was a way to fill the quota of published titles they needed to stay in business. Although this may be true, it may also be the case that OEL manga was regarded as a natural "next step" in the manga field, and encouraging local talent a not so far-fetched idea. It also may signify the ways in which the marketing strategies employed by the key players in the field along the years nurtured a sort of hybridization, reflected in audiences as well as in the emerging artwork. Casey Brienza (2009) argues that:

" *When 'manga' stops signifying 'Japan' and starts to signify comics published in a certain trim size, irrespective of country of origin, a near-identical, easily-dividable clump shelving found in every chain bookstore in the nation, or, alternatively, a category of comics read by girls and women, it stops being a product that invokes a global consciousness, and starts to be a product invoking a purely local-and gender-biased-one* " (p.115).

She goes on to add that the "Japaneseness" encountered through the "authenticity" campaign (the necessity for the works to look as "Japanese" as possible) was simply appreciated for allowing manga to be economically and massively imported from Japan. Manga's "cultural odor" (Iwabuchi 2002) is preserved through in the content, she claims, and fans certainly appreciated that they could acquire manga that was allegedly "unadulterated, straight-from-Japan," translated into English, at the convenience of their nearest bookstore (or a click on Amazon.com).

However, for those who participated in Tokyopop's contest, being a fan was not just a matter of collecting their favorite manga; as they shifted towards creating, their interest in manga's "Japaneseness" was being reflected in their work. As mentioned earlier, Tokyopop's "OEL" manga contest winners were collected in tankōbon format anthologies and published alongside their regular translated manga publications. Although there had been original manga published by other companies[25] and the amount of manga-style original comics on the internet was ever rising, "OEL" manga as such was not truly explored and promoted until Tokyopop's contest appeared on the scene, and the label became part of the marketing strategy (see chapter 1) as was the claim that Tokyopop's products were "100% authentic." It is clear that this authenticity simply labeled a specific publishing format and rate, and that "OEL" manga was but a part of this marketing strategy. But from the fans and artists' perspective, this meant that Tokyopop's manga was in some ways "certified" and in regards to "OEL" manga, the "official" way to get published and become a professional mangaka by winning a real book deal, instead of remaining an amateur that publishes online. It would appear as the ideal situation for many aspiring artists who were serious about their career aspirations, and it made sense from a marketing strategy point of view. Thus, it came as a big surprise when the contest failed to launch prospering careers for these artists and "OEL" manga was not well received in the market.

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[25] Schodt 1993, Gravett 2004.

- Case Study #1 ("OEL" manga's criticism): "Not Japanese enough:" Nina

Matsumoto's *Yokaiden*

"OEL" manga has been meeting criticism mainly from two sides: from the hands of

academia and of fandoms. The rejection was possibly stronger from purist fans of the

medium, for whom "OEL" was not "Japanese" enough (Gravett 2004: 157). The Tokyopop-

alleged "purism" regarding their translations described earlier through their "authenticity"

campaign seemingly made readers feel they were reading manga as close to the original as

possible.

When the same criteria was applied to "OEL" manga, it created the opposite effect. "OEL"

manga naturally had to be accomodated to fit the standard Tokyopop set for the North

American manga market, since it is shelved and sold alongside translations. However, this

was seen as a form of imitation of "real" manga; disliked because it was "not Japanese," or

not "Japanese enough," even if the works published were very faithful to manga technique-

wise. Iwabuchi (2002) has explained (with regard to Asia) that only popular culture which

has been divested of all distinctive, identifiable "Japaneseness" succeeds in the West and

this trend still prevails (Brienza 2009: 108), but as distinct from Asian consumers, American

readers of manga have consistently put down any attempts to diminish the "Japaneseness" of

manga. This initial "Japaneseness" refers to maintaining the works as close to their original

form, for example keeping pages unflipped and uncolored. When this was first demanded of

the imported titles, it created an ideal of "authenticity" that fans felt comfort from. When

applied later in the original ones, it created a secondary "Japaneseness," than created unease

in them. This dual "Japaneseness" appears to be the fuel of the success of Tokyopop's 2002

"100% authentic manga" campaign and the sky-high benchmark for any OEL manga, such as Nina Matsumoto's *Yokaiden*.

Nina Matsumoto, an "OEL" manga artist of Japanese-Canadian descent, is best known for her manga titled *Yokaiden* (Fig. 6), which is a story about a boy named Hamachi who is fascinated by Japanese spirits (*yōkai*). It documents his travels into the spirit world in order to search for and retrieve his grandmother's soul, stolen by one of the spirits.

[Fig. 6 - *Yokaiden* Vol. 1 cover. By Nina Matsumoto © 2009, Del Rey Manga]

From webcomics to print

Matsumoto gained recognition as an artist when an illustration she did depicting the characters from *The Simpsons*, went viral on the internet which led to Nina being offered the chance to draw in the official Simpsons' comic book, where she wrote a story for the "Treehouse of Terror" special titled "Murder, he wrote", a cross-over[26] between the popular manga series *Death Note*[27] (Ohba Tsugumi and Obata Takeshi) and *The Simpsons*. This comic won her an Eisner Award[28] at the 2009 San Diego Comic Con. In later interviews, Nina stated that her biggest artistic influence was *The Simpsons*[29].

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[26] A storyline combining characters or settings from separate fictional properties.

[27] First serialized by Shueisha in the Japanese manga magazine *Weekly Shōnen Jump* from December 2003 to May 2006.

[28] She won in the category of "Best Short Story."

[29] http://animealmanac.com/2009/12/04/manga-review-yokaiden-vol-2/ (Last access 2013/09/12).

Yet prior to that, she had been discovered on deviantART. Her personal gallery on this site[30]

received notice by Dallas Middaugh, a publishing agent at Del Rey Manga, a subsidiary of

Japanese publisher Kodansha, through Random House Books[31]. Middaugh asked her for a

proposal for an original manga and she came up with the concept for *Yokaiden*. He then

reported that he liked the concept in its original conception and that he liked the main

character because it reminded him of Son Goku from *Dragon Ball* (Aoki, 2008). *Yokaiden*

received many compliments from the critics, being named the best "OEL" manga of 2008 in

several online manga and anime portals.

Story and Artwork

Yokaiden starts off with Hamachi, a 9 year old boy who lives in a small village in ancient

Japan, trying to conjure up the *yokai*, a variety of folk spirits and ghosts, to appear. He has

organized a ritual to call them forth by setting up candles around in a circle, and called on

two friends to come and help him. However, Hamachi's "friends" only make fun of him and

soon leave Hamachi alone in the forest. He tries to conjure up the yōkai by himself, but falls

asleep soon after starting the ritual. A yōkai later appears and carries him off to his house in

safety.

We learn quickly in the story that Hamachi is something of an odd-ball in his community,

and that his "friends" actually bully him relentlessly for his strange interest in ghosts and

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[30] http://spacecoyote.deviantart.com/ (Last access 2013/11/19).

[31] Del Rey stopped all activities in October 2010 after they were taken over by Kodansha's U.S division, publishing directly through Random House since December 2010.

spirits. The rest of the villagers do not take him seriously either, regarding the yōkai as dangerous and in most cases annoying. Although they dislike Hamachi for his awkward demeanor and his interest in yōkai, they put up with him out of pity; Hamachi's parents died when he was 5 years old and he has been in the care of his (very ill-tempered) grandmother ever since. Despite the entire town's rejection, Hamachi frequently appears high-spirited and innocent.

Matsumoto has said that, regarding Hamachi, she wanted to depict him as an ever-cheerful character to contrast with the bleak aspect of the story, as well as to have opportunities within the plot for dark humor (Aoki, 2008). On one hand, the story is about an orphaned boy, ostracized by his community, who loses all the family he has in the world and sets off on a quest into the spirit world alone. But Matsumoto's take on this premise is light-hearted and fun. She introduces difficult situations with humor and creates jokes with each development. To raise an example, early in the first volume (Fig. 7), after the failed conjuring, Hamachi is violently woken up by his stern grandmother and ordered to make himself of good use through a flurry of insults. Hamachi simply takes it lightly and sets off happily to do his morning chores.

[Fig. 7 - Page spread pp.14-15 from vol. 1 of *Yokaiden*, by Nina Matsumoto. © 2009 Del Rey Manga.]

This scene reflects also the cheerful yet adventurous tone generated by Matsumoto's artwork; her bold strokes convey dynamism and her page designs (uncomplicated paneling but dynamic alteration of angles) make the story easy to follow visually. It is clear that

Matsumoto is well-versed in manga; she makes use of monochrome tones to convey space, color and light, and patterned backgrounds (pp. 20, 23, 110) to express an inner emotional state, as is typical of manga. Despite the topic being somewhat obscure for Western audiences (and perhaps exotic), Matsumoto's decision to write about Japanese *yōkai* comes from wanting to introduce readers to this particular topic of Japanese culture and lore. She herself (and perhaps mirrored by Hamachi in the story) is very interested in *yōkai*, and recalls explaining their existence to her friends who did not know what they were (Aoki 2008). Matsumoto clarifies (and it is also observable in the manga) that she was deeply influenced artistically by Mizuki Shigeru and his *Gegege no Kitarō*[32], one of the representative works of supernatural manga narratives. She also explained that her character Mizuki Inukai, who acts as a sort of mentor to Hamachi, is a direct homage to Mizuki Shigeru himself. She introduces him visually for the first time on page 21, as a scholar dedicated to the study of *yōkai* (which mirrors Mizuki's reality as a yōkai scholar). His picture is surrounded by Japanese script, which is both readable and serves as a form of decoration (Fig. 8). Japanese language is often used as decoration[33], however, in Matsumoto's manga, it surfaces also in intelligible form, such as on p. 38 in the sign Hamachi carries around advertising his wares. It reads *take* (bamboo) in katakana syllabary, and the translation in English is written alongside. In this sense, Matsumoto has blended the uses of Japanese for both decorative and semantic use in her manga, which can be seen in

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[32] Although Mizuki's manga was not amongst the earliest manga imported and translated, Matsumoto was able to read it due to being fluent in Japanese since childhood.

[33] Typically seen in the works of artists who are do not have good command of the language - expanded upon in chapter 3.

other instances of "OEL" manga as well, especially in the works of authors who can read and write in the Japanese language[34].

[Fig. 8 - panel depicting Mizuki Inukai, *yōkai* scholar, p. 21. From *Yokaiden*, by Nina Matsumoto volume1, pg. 21. © 2009 Del Rey Manga.]

Perhaps due to her mixed cultural background, Matsumoto's manga is replete with narrative references to both Japanese and American cultures. Her *yōkai* designs are an interesting blend of Japanese tradition and western popular cultural references, such as the gangster-like tattooed kappa (p. 33), the obsessive-compulsive bean washer spirit (p. 73), cute-looking grime-licker ghost and skin-slicer demon (p. 67), etc. Even the king of hell, Lord Enma, makes a short (but humorous) appearance (p. 86). On pages 132 to 133, Matsumoto introduces a *nué*, a chimera-like creature that consumes the souls of innocents, as the main villain. However, she designs the character as a sophisticated, arrogant villain that closely resembles (both visually and in personality) the character of Scar, from Disney's *The Lion King* (Fig. 9). This light-heartedness and blend of comedy with supernatural themes is not uncommon in North American pop media[35], represented mainly in movies and television. Matsumoto's use of comedy and horror can be regarded as influenced by not just Mizuki's manga but these media as well.

[Fig. 9 - *Nué*, pp. 132-133, in *Yokaiden*, by Nina Matsumoto. ©2009, Del Rey Manga.]

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[34] Expanded upon in section 1 of Chapter 3 – visual characteristics of "OEL" manga.

[35] See for example, the television show *Supernatural* (2005-ongoing) or *Scary Movie* (2000).

Matsumoto has clarified in interviews that her manga is intended for American audiences, not Japanese. For that matter, she goes to great lengths to explain Japanese terminology and traditional topics in sections at the end of each chapter. The "Mizuki's field guide" simulates pages from the book Hamachi takes with him into the forest for the conjuring in the beginning of the story, and then later when he sets off in search for his grandmother's soul in the *yōkai* realm (p. 37). The pages have detailed descriptions of the *yōkai* introduced in the previous chapter. There is also "Hamachi's journal" (p. 58) at the end of other chapters, where Hamachi introduces information about Japanese artifacts and figures, such as the *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute) or *rōnin* (wandering samurai). Both serve as a sort of running glossary.

As we can see, Nina Matsumoto makes her intentions of creating manga specifically for North American audiences clear in her work, mixing styles and conventions from Japanese manga traditions into understandable terms and formats for those who like manga but are fans of other non-Japanese media as well. For example, she uses simple pictograms, such as speedlines to convey anger or urgency (which readers tend to associate with shōnen manga) and flower and sparkled background to express happiness or softness (which most North American readers can normally associate with shōjo manga) (p. 110). But she also adds English-specific cultural references such as showing Hamachi crossing his fingers as he tells a lie (p. 26), a reference to the idiom which harks back to the American/Western belief that crossed fingers can ward off the negative effects of lying. Her word bubbles are small, but horizontal in most cases, which comfortably accommodates English script (and precisely

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[36] See section 1 of Chapter 3, "OEL" visual characteristics on "word bubbles", for more details.

therefore may easily be regarded as non-Japanese[36]). In short, she creates manga that "fit" the intended North American manga market.

Criticism

Soon after Matsumoto's manga hit the shelves, several negative reviews appeared. Carlo Santos of *Anime News Network* (the very person who created the term "OEL manga") claimed that *Yokaiden* was certainly beautifully drawn and had a "creative" story, but lacked a certain depth that prevented it from being truly "haunting" ("Rosario and Clover - RIGHT TURN ONLY!!," 2008). This perception was shared by several other critics who found that Matsumoto's storyline in *Yokaiden* lacked coherence and a good understanding of manga scenario and story development. A critic, who goes by the name of "Scott" from an online portal called *Anime Almanac*, reviewed the second volume of the series, and stated that the story was almost impossible to follow and that the main character's motive for going into the underworld to search for the soul of his grandmother remained obscure. He also questioned the influence of *The Simpsons,* although the series had been praised in the past for being a fusion between Japanese and Western cultures, and even though Matsumoto had claimed it was her biggest influence. He wrote:

"*Yokaiden has almost none of that western flavor in it. The story is buried incredibly deep into Japanese folklore, but it is not told with the familiar Japanese tone that we've come to expect with stories in this genre. This culture clash doesn't combine well, and it comes off as*

being "fake" Japanese, like a North American otaku trying to write an authentic Japanese

story" (Manga Review: *Yokaiden* (vol.2) 2009)[37].

He went on to offer that:

" *'You need to read the first volume' is not a valid excuse because manga is made to be*

picked up at any time. And since Yokaiden is an 'OEL' manga and is being marketed to the

same audience who reads Japanese manga, it needs to be held up to this standard."

Here, he casts the main blame of what he perceived was the inadequacy of Matsumoto's

series on her natural inexperience in manga publishing since this was her first multi-volume

series. Also, either he ignored Matsumoto's efforts to provide detailed explanations of

Japanese terminology or considered them ineffective. As is known, Matsumoto's manga (as

is typical of "OEL" manga) was not serialized in a magazine prior to being bound into

volumes, which of course affected the structuring of the story. "Scott" is indeed correct in

assuming that Japanese manga artists cannot depend on their readers being up to date with

all previous chapters of the story, and must sometimes assume that they will pick up the

manga at any point in time and should still be able to understand the story and connect with

the characters. This results in the need to constantly re-establish relationships within the

story. Matsumoto indeed failed to do this by relying on the publication mode of her manga,

that is, tankôbon volumes instead of magazine issues, and thus expecting her readers to read

the volumes in the intended order. Even though a recap is offered in the beginning of volume

two, the reviewer claimed that it wasn't enough for him to fully grasp the story and enjoy it.

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37 http://animealmanac.com/2009/12/04/manga-review-yokaiden-vol-2/ (Last access 2013/11/19).

However, in analyzing these comments, several interesting points emerge. First, the critics that disliked *Yokaiden* did so because of a perceived cultural "fakeness." Secondly, they criticized Matsumoto's storyline and manga writing as exhibiting "amateurish" mistakes. In contrast to the Japanese convention of publishing manga in magazines and then republishing popular stories in tankôbon volumes, North American "OEL" manga generally start out in the latter format. Because Matsumoto was approached by a book publisher to create *Yokaiden*, her manga was developed as a book, not a magazine serialization. As such, the characters, storyline and style were created without direct intermittent feedback from readers or editors[38]. Also, it was completed prior to publication with minimal external modification. Therefore, her storyline naturally flows at a different pace than most Japanese manga. Characters are not re-introduced nor plot re-established as it is assumed the reader is able to access the entire volume, and therefore may also lack the cliffhangers that would keep readers hooked between chapters in a series. Matsumoto is a solo artist — she does not have the assistants necessary to create manga in a abundant and fast-paced manner as in Japan. She admits that she prepared the entire script for the volume prior to drawing and that the entire creation of one volume took her up to 8 months (Aoki, 2009).

Conversely, readers had to wait a long time between volumes. This may have distorted the fast-paced nature of a manga's flow, creating the "fake" and "amateurish" feeling that fans

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[38] This refers to the role editors play in the creation of manga in Japan: they are trained specialists in the field and their decisions play a heavier role on the content of the work than that of the author him/herself in many cases (Gravett 2004: 17). In Western manga markets, due to lack of trained specialists in manga, there is little, if any, support for "OEL" manga artists regarding manga creation. Advice may come regarding the work as a "book," and the artist treated rather as an "author." Editor's roles in Japan and the role of "OEL" manga "editors" is touched upon in chapter 1, and the issue of "OEL" manga artists as "authors" is expanded upon in chapter 4.

and critics found frustrating, because they expected the work to read like the manga

translations they were familiar with (fast paced, open-ended and reader-inclusive). Rather, it

reads like a novel; slow to develop, with a closed linear plot whose development is

dependent solely upon the author rather than on interactions with readers. Ultimately, the

reviewers that discarded *Yokaiden* were simply expecting as much, used, like most manga

fans in the U.S, to translations of Japanese manga.

"Japaneseness" of "OEL" manga: misconceptions and possibilities

As Matsumoto's critic "Scott" made clear, "OEL" manga is supposed to meet the same

standards as Japanese manga; a belief that has turned the desired "Japaneseness" of manga

against "OEL" manga, because it cannot fulfill it. It becomes apparent through cases such as

Matsumoto's that if an artist wished to publish their manga in an "official" way, that is

through a book publisher, and even if said artist could draw manga in the "real" way, their

work would have to meet the "Tokyopop standard" for publication (the size and format

mentioned before) regardless of what publisher they went to. This imposition undoubtedly

shaped what "OEL" manga looks and reads like, and ultimately how it is received by the

fans. The problem harks back to "OEL" manga's beginnings as part of Tokyopop's "100%

authentic" manga campaign which may be misleading. This situation raises several questions

such as how "authenticity" is measured and by whom, a query which is important to decipher

for most "OEL" artists if they wish their work to be commercially successful. But ultimately,

the real question that underlies this whole issue is: just how "authentic" was Tokyopop's

manga to begin with?

It is obvious that translated manga had to be somewhat adapted and modified in order to be consumed by the local readers; despite efforts to supply unmodified products, they were inevitably altered[39]. Therefore, what was being sold and consumed, was not in truth, "100% authentic," and such a possibility never actually existed. The text was translated linguistically, along with a localization of puns, slang and wordplay, but it was also altered visually—the artwork follows the Japanese reading direction (right-to-left), since the pages stayed unflipped, but the text naturally flows in the Western reading direction (left-to-right). In order to remind readers (and educate new ones) that manga should be read in the Japanese reading direction publishers placed small arrows on page corners, or markedly labeled the back and front of the book. Thus, translations look different, but Tokyopop marketed them as "100% authentic," which may have led to certain beliefs about what "OEL" manga must adhere to.

"Japaneseness" in Tokyopop's translations was initially considered desirable by fans, perhaps because it created a sense of trust in the products. This sense was also transposed to "OEL" manga. But the crucial issue of "Japaneseness" did not cross over for "OEL" manga; it actually harmed its reception by creating a sense of mistrust due to its perceived intent on "imitating" or "pretending" to be "real" manga. This is complicated even further by the fact that "OEL" manga is imitating, not original versions of manga but manga translations. Furthermore, "OEL" manga appears to do this precisely because of how and for whom it was created: by a manga translation company and for a niche market that belongs to the book sector, not the comics segment.

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[39] As seen in the examples in section 1 of Chapter 3.

"OEL" manga cannot be a simulation of "authentic" manga, because "authentic" manga is a misconception to begin with: translated manga, which is what is being regarded as "authentic" is not unmodified Japanese manga. Also, "OEL" manga cannot help but "resemble" translations of manga if it means to be published, as this is the only model available in North America. There are the comics field and the book field, the latter of which has come to include the graphic novel market. It is obvious that "OEL" manga has had to make negotiations with this. It cannot be serialized either as manga or translated manga, as the manga market is now within the book field and companies have stopped serializing altogether. This affects how "OEL" manga looks, reads and sells. In many ways, "OEL" manga functions essentially like a graphic novel: single – not multiple – authored (for exceptions see case study #2 in chapter 3), although it will be usually marketed with a main author as representative. It is also highly subjective; one author creates and controls the entire storyline and character development, usually without the input of a manga editor, as there is a lack of trained manga editors with a focus on original creation rather than translations.

Scott McCloud concludes his chapter on "making manga" (2006: 219) by suggesting that emerging artists in North America, influenced by manga, are creating comics that differ greatly from what is typically seen in the American comics market. Rather than catering to clichés and stereotypes of both American and Japanese comics preconceptions, they are making stories that speak about personal, local issues (p. 222). He suggests that artists are taking inspiration from their own lives and equates the innovative potential of these artists to their ability to dive into everyday life details and into the "emotions and sensations they've known first-hand" (p. 223). This is another reason "OEL" manga would fit naturally within

the graphic novels category, of which autobiographical and daily-life content is a common theme.

Perhaps the graphic novel field can be a welcoming field for original manga titles and the hybrids emerging through manga's appropriation and highly individualized interpretations by fan/artists. Of course, this would deserve to be investigated further, but what is certain is that, due to their contrast with Japan's manga system, "OEL" manga artists seem to have been treated as book authors in North America, even if they (or their critics) were unaware of it.

CHAPTER 3   "OEL" MANGA: STYLE

Early research tended to regard "OEL" as "pseudo-manga," some experts considered that it simply mimicked Japanese manga without contributing creatively (Jüngst 2006: 251) and not without reason. Artists who started out writing and drawing "OEL" manga during the manga boom in the West (2002-2008) imitated what they perceived to be manga aesthetics, such as monochrome shading, arranging panels in the Japanese reading direction or usage of Japanese scripts for onomatopoeia regardless of if they or their readers possessed a working knowledge of the language. This was done with the intention of creating original works to be consumed in the same manner as imported Japanese manga, but it led them to be compared by the public as inferior and "unoriginal" imitations (like in Matsumoto's case)[1]. It ultimately led to "OEL" manga (and the prospect of being a "mangaka" in the West) getting a bad reputation within the American comics industry and anime/manga communities.

In 2006, Tokyopop, the best-known publisher of translated and "OEL" manga in the United States, announced that they would be renaming their original manga, calling it "global" manga instead of "OEL" or the other often-used label "world" manga[2]. The intention was to move away from the negative reception the word "OEL" had as a label and expand beyond the stereotypes born from early examples. However, changing names to avoid criticism did not refrain some from continuing to categorize "OEL" (/world/global/etc.,) manga by inabilities, problems and mistakes. It also led to an oversimplification of the medium and

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[1] This refers to the link between "imitation" and "amateur" in regards to skill. What is (perceived as) imitation is considered "inferior" against what is considered "original," therefore "authentic" (meaning "not imitation") ("Authenticity & Originality," 2010 - Web source).

[2] "Tokyopop to move away from OEL and World Manga labels", 2006 (Web source).

obscured its potential. Ultimately, this move by Tokyopop signaled that the meaning behind the label "OEL" began to change at this point, when the company that created the "trademark" recognized the need to move away from the stereotypes that had been building up for "OEL" in the manga and anime community. This began the process of detaching from "Japaneseness" for original manga in North America.

"Japaneseness": the creation of "OEL" manga's (stylistic) identity

As internet use became more and more widespread in the late 90s, online exposure allowed fans to encounter the original sources of the manga and anime they had been consuming in the form of translations and adaptations. It also enabled them to connect with each other on a massive scale and collaborate in creative projects (in forums, online anime circles and online art communities such as deviantART), through which critical discussion of the work was quite usual, spawning interest in its cultural background: Japanese culture. This first wave of fans, cultivated in the late 90s, shifted towards a preference for works with less modifications from their source versions (and an increased appreciation for Japanese language and culture)[3]. As explained in chapter 2, up until the early 2000s, American distributors and publishers of anime and manga (such as Viz and Tokyopop's previous incarnation, Mixx Entertainment) had "utilized the 'culturally odorless' (Iwabuchi 2002: 94, 95) principle in their manga and animation-related products […] toning down the "Japaneseness" of their products"[4] so they may be better accepted by Western cultures. This move, according to Wong, had been previously applied to Asian markets with relative success. Regarding manga

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[3] Bolałek, 2011.

[4] Wong 2006: 36.

specifically, this toning down of "Japaneseness" basically consisted of adapting the work to fit the local tastes[5], such as: coloring manga pages which are normally monochrome, flipping artwork and panels so they will read left-to-right and translate and re-write large amounts of text/dialogue if necessary to fit the language, cultural background and expectations of the target audience[6]. However, to satisfy the new "pro-Japaneseness" trend in consumption that fans were moving towards, these companies then shifted to marketing anime and manga with minimal alterations, such as subtitles in favor of dubbing, to name a few.

The biggest impact to this marketing strategy shift was the "100% authentic manga" campaign launched by Tokyopop in 2002. They focused on supplying what they called "authentic" Japanese manga: i.e, manga that is uncolored, unflipped and that still carries all the Japanese script from onomatopoeia and sound effects untranslated. In addition, Tokyopop decided to use the same format and size as a Japanese tankōbon, which is sold at an affordable price (no more than $10 a book). This proved cost effective as publishing with minimal alterations meant a lot of saved time and money ("The Tokyopop Effect", 2011). Further, not only did Tokyopop manage to meet fans' demands, they single-handedly carved out a space for the large amount of fans who were jumping on the manga boom bandwagon by deciding to become manga artists by means of their talent-seeking contest, "Rising Stars of Manga," which started in 2002 as part of the "100% authentic manga" campaign. The winners were granted a book deal with the possibility to start careers as professional mangaka, something never-before seen in the West. Fans eager to pursue manga

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[5] What was discussed in Chapter 2 as "localization" of media to fit the target culture (See Chapter 2 for details).

[6] Brienza 2009: 103, 113; Matsui 2009: 4, 10; Wong 2006.

professionally submitted their stories, and for the first time there was an "official" position within the industry for artists who wanted to work in the business through manga.

The problem began when these inexperienced artists (they were, after all, mostly fans of manga and anime with little to no formal training in comics or art) submitted stories and artwork based on their understanding of the medium through their experience as readers. This unfortunately led to the criticism of "simulating" manga by media and academia (Jüngst 2006, Balzer 2003[7]) because (naturally) the artists did not have a proper understanding of manga creation and drawing techniques. This was further complicated by negative criticism artists received from their own peers due to the fact that Tokyopop were marketing these manga in the same way and spaces as their manga translations, which led to confusion as to what to expect from these original manga; as they were sold together, they were unconsciously expected to also look similar. These problems point to a loss of awareness of the reality of manga as an altered product, that happens when fans shift from reading to creating their own manga; as their knowledge is sourced from experience in reading translations, they may sometimes unknowingly re-create them stylistically. Basically, the same desire for "Japaneseness" that fans feel towards "100% authentic" manga plays itself out in "OEL" manga as well, resulting in frustration and consequently, rejection, when the work is not considered "Japanese" enough by other readers (as seen from the Matsumoto case study in chapter 2). Naturally, this rejection raised questions about how to circumnavigate negative responses, and suggested that perhaps, for all original commencially-intended local manga, departing from "Japaneseness" might be the answer.

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[7] Balzer criticized Christina Plaka, a well-known German manga artist (discussed in section 3 of this chapter), for using Japanese names in her manga.

However, in order to understand how this can be achieved, we must first look into what constitutes this perceived "Japaneseness" in order to avoid said pitfalls. In the following discussion, this "Japaneseness" is broken down into sections: section 1 deals with visual characteristics ("OEL" manga drawing style) and sections 2 and 3 deal with contents characteristics ("OEL" manga storytelling). Publication format, which would be no. 4, has already been introduced in the previous chapter's discussion but it will be continued to be touched upon throughout the text.

Section 1   "OEL" manga's Visual Characteristics of Expression ("OEL manga style")

In summary, in the attempt to get their works professionally published, many "OEL" manga artists created their manga according to their expectations as readers about manga. This gave rise to several issues that resulted in an over-generalization of "OEL" manga as an attempt at "Japaneseness." Therefore, what can be considered "OEL manga style" stems from the categorization of (a) artists leaning on Japanese manga translations as model for Japanese manga, (b) readers judging "OEL" manga from the perspective of "Japaneseness" as shaped by translations, and (c) categorizing deviations from this ideal as "mistakes"[8]. These "mistakes" are as follows:

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[8] Although I argue that these could, in part, also be regarded as creatives, thus transcending "Japaneseness." This idea is explored below in the 3rd case study regarding Chmakova's *Dramacon*.

（1）**Panel layouts and "flow"**

When drawing comics and/or manga, the way a page is designed depends greatly upon the reading direction of the text. It is imperative for good storytelling to create a smooth flow of visual panels for the gaze to follow, so that the narrative can proceed in an unimpaired way. Usually, "OEL" manga artists adopt the conventions of the manga (translations) they read, while disregarding that they are looking at unflipped yet re-arranged pages. Although fans expect "authentic" manga to be laid out in the Japanese reading direction, many do not notice that their image of a "standard" manga involves discrepancies with regards to the visual "flow." An early example of manga translation is "Blade of the Immortal" (*Mugen no Jūnin*[9]), which has been steadily released in the U.S. by Dark Horse Comics since 1996. Dark Horse did not alter the panels or artwork in any way (an innovative move at the time), and it even left the sound effects on the page untranslated, offering a translation in a glossary. But it arranged the translated text to fit English-speaking audiences, and so, the books read from left-to-right. To facilitate this reading direction, the panels were individually re-arranged by means of cut-and-paste, but the artwork inside them was not "flipped." As a result, the narrative/text as such proceeds in the English reading direction, while the artwork in the panels (drawn originally to fit the Japanese reading direction) guide the reader's gaze in the opposite direction, i.e. the direction the characters are facing or running toward[10].

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[9] By Samura Hiroaki, first published in *Afternoon*, Kodansha (1994- ongoing), 29 volumes so far.

[10] Takemiya Keiko (*Kaze to Ki no Uta*) explained that in order to ensure a good flow of the page (and therefore a good flow of the story) the characters and elements on the page must face the reading direction. (Source: personal conversation, October 2011, at Kyoto Seika University, Kyoto Japan).

（２）**Word bubbles / speech balloons**

Additionally, the disparity in macro and micro reading directions mentioned above is compounded by the need to accommodate horizontal text in what is, by design, a vertical page layout resulting in a slightly mismatched narrative flow. For example, most publishers leave the word bubbles (or speech balloons) untouched and translate only the text inside. However, in Japanese manga, this text is written vertically instead of horizontally, and to accommodate vertical script, word bubbles tend to be very thin and tall[11]. Typically, manga artists take typography requirements into design consideration, so that the bubbles do not obstruct the underlying artwork, and vice versa. However, in translations, publishers insert horizontal English script into the bubbles often without altering their vertical shape, to adhere to "authenticity." Because English needs more space to convey meaning than Japanese, the latter relying on ideograms[12] to express an idea, translations into English are usually very lengthy which often leads to cuts and re-writings. Consequently, word bubbles in translated manga contain English text with too much blank space on the bubble's top or bottom. But for "OEL" manga artists vertical bubbles were an unquestionable standard, and so they started to design their word bubbles in the same fashion, even if their text was horizontal[13].

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[11] As was the case with the translation into English of *Sailor Moon* ("Bishōjo Senshi Sailor Moon," in *Nakayoshi*, Kodansha (1991-1997). Published in the U.S in Mixxine, by Mixx Entertainment, USA.

[12] *Kanji* (Sino-Japanese characters).

[13] A good example would be *Dramacon* by Svetlana Chmakova (Tokyopop 2005-2007), also discussed in this chapter. This also applies to Thai girls' manga (see Mashima Tojirakarn in *IJOCA* 2011: 143-163) and Korean manhwa (see Yoo 2012).

（3）**Screentones**

Japanese manga is normally published in monochrome form; in lieu of color, artists use

screentone prior to digitalization, in the form of adhesive paper with half-tone patterns on

one side to indicate depth and help distinguish objects. Once it had become affordable in the

late 1980s, it was easy to reproduce. Their use gives manga a very distinct look which is

another characteristic of what manga "should look like" in the "Japaneseness" issue[14].

"OEL" manga artists also make use of screentone patterns in their manga, however, they

tend to make manga digitally[15] so they often do not use original sheets of screentone but

rather create the half-tone patters digitally using graphics software (such as Photoshop).

Although it is currently possible to find the same paper, screentone sheets, pens, quills, ink

that Japanese manga artists use at art and specialty shops (and of course, online), most

"OEL" manga artists prefer to make their manga on their computers and still mostly stick to

monochrome. Some artists like to combine methods and will work traditionally up to a

certain point (drafts, panel layouts, pencils), and then use the computer for the rest of the

process (editing, inking, lettering)[16].

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[14] Although some well-known "OEL" manga artists such as Queenie Chan (*The Dreaming, Small Shen*), Svetlana Chmakova (*Dramacon*), and Felipe Smith (*MBQ, Peepo Choo*) use screentone, some have started to move away from it, such as Christina Plaka, in her recent works.

[15] Which could suggest that without digital tools "OEL" manga wouldn't have emerged in the first place.

[16] Some examples of artists who use this mixed process are Thai manga artist Laksami Wasitnitiwat (*Angkor Endless Love*), Malaysian manga artist Kaoru (*Maid Maiden*) and American manga artist Dirk Tiede (*Paradigm Shift*). All of these artists and their processes are further discussed in chapter 4.

（４）**Manga-specific pictograms and symbols**

"OEL" manga also employs pictograms native to manga to convey certain emotions within the context of Japanese society and manga culture over time (Cohn 2010: 8). Further, we can find the application of "Japanese" speed lines and impact lines, lines drawn at straight angles to convey speed and urgency, or to bring attention to the action and the character it surrounds as emanata[17]. In addition, sweat drops, used frequently in manga, convey embarrassment or exasperation. Nosebleeds surface mostly in shōnen manga to express sexual arousal, but there are also other pictograms such as the "bulging nerve," an expression of anger or frustration, or the "dropping lines" which signify fear or anxiety[18].

（５）**Physical deformities to express emotion**

Manga-style is also characterized by a physicalization of emotion, called "SD" (Super Deformation). In Japan, it is known as *chibi*, which means "small" in Japanese. It refers to smaller, chubbier versions of a certain character are drawn whenever something surprising or funny happens to them (a tool initially typical of shōjo manga but not exclusive to it and especially flourishing since the late 1990s)[19]. "Bulging eyes" means what the name says, that eyes are drawn in an exaggerated size usually to express rage or extreme surprise (Fig. 1).

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[17] Walker, 1980.

[18] Natsume and Takekuma (*Manga no Yomikata*, 1995): pp. 78-111.

[19] A great example of this is Masami Tsuda's *Kareshi Kanojo no Jijō* (also known as *KareKano* in the American market), serialized in shōjo magazine *LaLa* (1996 - 2005) and collected in 21 tankōbon volumes by Hakusensha. Chmakova's *Dramacon* makes use of the tool in very similar ways, which could imply Tsuda has an influence on her as an artist. Although this has not been officially stated in interviews or articles, it does fit as a possible influence due to the timing and reach of the publication in North America (2000).

[Fig. 1 - Pictograms. Source: Angela Moreno Acosta, 2014.]

（６）**Backgrounds**

Likewise outstanding as "Japanese" are stylized backgrounds used to express inner feelings.

Backgrounds not only signify a characters' spatial position but also indicate characters'

emotions, his or her nervousness, fear, or anger. This aspect has been described as a defining

factor of Japanese manga, and part of its allure to fans (McCloud 2006: 216-220)[20]. By using

certain visual patterns inside the background of a panel, it may be possible to "read" into the

character's inner world[21] . They create a window into the characters' souls and allows fans to

participate in the drama and emotionality of the story. "OEL" manga artists will usually

include them in their work, and there are also many non-manga artists who have become

familiar with them and interpret them in their own comics[22].

- Case Study #2 (Style) - "Manga Style" in the American comics mainstream: Takeshi

Miyazawa's *Spiderman loves Mary Jane***.**

The characteristics previously explained constitute what is recognized as "manga style," for

many manga fans in the Western hemisphere. However, these characteristics as explained

above also form what is considered "Japaneseness" which, in the case of "OEL" manga, is

undesirable and is the key factor in its lack of support from manga industries and

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[20] This is very prominent in shōjo manga, as it emphasizes the emotional aspect of the story, which is crucial to those who enjoy these comics.

[21] Certainly the best example of this, in regards to manga that fans in the West are familiar with, would be *Sailor Moon.*

[22] It is not unusual to find usage of backgrounds that signify emotional states in alternative comics (Hatfield 2005).

communities. They are considered common mistakes and what causes the manga to appear like an "imitation" of (Tokyopop's) "authentic" manga.

Following on the previous discussion, for many artists, part of the move to detach from "Japaneseness" brings up the question of whether manga can occupy a space within comics markets, such as mainstream comics, or even, if its possible for them to participate at all in the mainstream as manga artists and have their works be sold at that level. Because a lot of "OEL" manga suffers from an attempt at "Japaneseness," the mainstream it aims at is the Japanese one (or at least, readers and critics seem to categorize it that way). But as local artists, it is impossible in a lot of cases to work in the Japanese comics mainstream and, therefore, a problem arises in regards to which mainstream (Japanese manga or American superhero comics) original manga can hope to be a part of.

Nonetheless, it is not impossible for manga to "claim" a space within non-Japanese comics mainstreams. Since around 2003, several artists[23] have successfully carved out a space in the American comics mainstream using manga as style. Such is the case of Takeshi Miyazawa, penciler at Marvel Comics, of Japanese descent born and raised in Toronto, Canada.

Manga-style superhero comics

Initially, some fans believed that only Japanese people can be a "real" mangaka[24]; this belief usually came from realizing the high workload that mangaka in Japan have to face, with tight

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[23] such as Jo Chen (http://jo-chen.com/main-data/jo.html) Last access 2014/03/12.

[24] Some still do, but this and the meaning of "mangaka" has since changed to reflect on the reality of manga artists in the West, which is more connected to how they personally interpret manga as "style." See Chapter 4 Section 2 for more details.

deadlines and tough demands by the industry. Fans understand the difficulty for a foreigner, who would not just have to adjust to the industry, but to the culture and country as well. It is why so many of them simply give up on the idea of becoming mangaka[25] and/or encourage others to do so. This realization fed the assumption that being of Japanese descent may "make it easier," as the cultural difference is (supposedly) already transcended. Yet cases such as Matsumoto's proved otherwise. The deployment of manga style always involves the need to respond to the (local) readers' expectations of stylistic "authenticity," even if there are bloodties to Japan, if only by way of the name on the cover. These expectations can affect the reception of the work in a negative way, but it can also offer a completely new dimension for visual expression of mainstream works that can connect to a completely different scope of readers on new, undiscovered levels.

Rather than participating in the insular field of American manga readership, Miyazawa applies manga style to the vast mainstream of American comics: he is the main penciler of *Spiderman loves Mary Jane*, a spin-off of the Marvel Comics *Spiderman* universe narrative in which the protagonist is Mary Jane Watson, Spiderman/Peter Parker's love interest. The series was first published by Marvel Comics in 2005, and it soon became highly popular. As it is known of Marvel as well as other giants of the comics industry in North America, the work for each book is divided into tasks, but the tag of "stardom" usually falls on the penciler. In Miyazawa's case, he is actually just one of the pencilers for *Spiderman loves*

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[25] As reflected by this personal post on a manga fans' blog - http://photoshopfornoobs.tumblr.com/post/55125031000/give-up-on-being-a-mangaka-or-hold-more (Last access 2013/11/26).

[26] The secondary penciler is Valentine de Landro. Source: http://www.amazon.co.jp/Spider-Man-Loves-Mary-Jane-Adventures/dp/0785122656/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1386486161&sr=8-1&keywords=0785122656 (last access 2013/12/07).

Mary Jane whilst the writer is Sean McKeever[26]. Also, the color is the responsibility of the colorist who inks and colors digitally; in this case, Christina Strain[27].

Since it is rendered in color and thus does not really fit the (above mentioned) specifications of "OEL" manga, it would not be precise to label it as one (and which perhaps allows it to escape the responding criticism). Rather, it can be seen as an example of manga style in American mainstream comics, precisely because Miyazawa's pages appear manga-like, not just in the drawing style, but in the way they guide the reader's gaze. Another manner in which Miyazawa's work is referencing manga is in the particular way it tells the story, both visually and in narrative.

This shift in perspective, thus, creates a completely different set of expectations (personal and professional) from critics and readers of his work; apparently a closer appreciation and permissive attitude towards manga style surfaces in comics because it does not attempt to be "manga" or even "OEL" manga. This, in turn, allows for "manga style" to begin to be perceived through its strengths and possibilities in general.

Setting - "particularities of storytelling"

The second volume of *Spiderman loves Mary Jane*,"The New Girl" (2007), chosen for this analysis, features a Mary Jane who is very much aware that she has feelings for Peter Parker,

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[27] Who, incidentally is the writer half of the American "BL" manga duo Emirain (artist/penciler is Emily Warren). They are further discussed in Chapter 4.

but is too shy to confess her love to him. Alternately, she also harbors feelings for

Spiderman, which generates some confusion inside her. The matter is further complicated by

the arrival of a new student, Gwen, who also falls for Peter and seems to have won his

affection in return. The comic explores how Mary Jane reaches out for support and advice on

the matter to two close friends, Liz and Flash, and how they help her through it. The

following scene chosen for analysis was due to its emotional intensity. This emotional

intensity drives the entire story, instead of the physical action typical of *Spiderman* comics.

Additionally, the intensity is subjective and coming from Mary Jane, who is the female

protagonist, not Spiderman or even Peter Parker. Emotional focus and a female lead

character are important points to raise in relation to Miyazawa's referencing of manga, in that

it happens not just in the drawing style.

Page flow

On pages 103-104, there is a double-spread[28] depicting a scene (Fig. 2) where Flash (one of

Mary Jane's friends and quaterback of the football team) is trying to convince his teammates

to stop a prank attack on the drama club, of which Mary Jane is a member of. The scene calls

for tension between Flash and his teammates, which Miyazawa has illustrated by placing

Flash inside very constricted panels, echoing his internal struggle between going along or

standing up against his friends. But the manga-specific aspect of this page spread is the way

panels read into each other. Miyazawa has designed both pages to read together seamlessly:

on the top corner, Flash is standing, his figure facing right. Three panels later, there is a close

up of his face also facing right, which bleeds into the third panel of the next page, featuring a

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28 Two inward-facing pages drawn as one unit/page.

mid-length shot of him. This is then placed next to a close-up of his eyes on the last panel, facing left. Thus, when reading these pages, the panels with Flash facing in opposite directions bring cohesion to the page spread as a whole, as well as allowing the eye to gaze from Flash at the top-left corner through both pages in a diagonal pattern, visually going through all of Flash's moods and inner feelings in the process. Double spreads that flow in similar patterns appear frequently in manga.

[Fig. 2 - pages 103-104 of *Spiderman Loves Mary Jane*, Vol. 2: "The New Girl," by Miyazawa Takeshi, ©Marvel Comics, 2006.]

On the following page spread (Fig. 3), we see an example of what Scott McCloud (*Understanding Comics*, 1993) called "moment-to-moment" frame shifts. McCloud explains in his book that this type of frame shifts, along with aspect-to-aspect transitions, abound in Japanese manga, whereas not so much in American superhero comics. In the first panel, Flash is pushing one of his teammates into a locker (the panel features speedlines and a visible onomatopoeic sound effect). This is followed by seven panels that, although silent, move moment-to-moment through Flash's emotions, as he finally surrenders to his team's final decision on the attack. Without any text, we are able to understand Flash's feelings and decision by following the flow of panels or "micro-moments." Silent transition is common in manga, which tends to narrate by means of visuals rather than verbal text. Also noteworthy are the fire flames in the second panel as a representation of Flash's "inner" anger (his "outer" anger clearly visible on his face) and the use of sweatdrops (and complete black background) in the third panel serves to express his frustration and helplessness.

[Fig. 3 - pages 105-106 of *Spiderman loves Mary Jane*, Vol. 2: "The New Girl," by Miyazawa Takeshi, ©Marvel Comics, 2006.]

Manga-native pictograms

As shown in the previous figures, Miyazawa has used speedlines in the second panel of the second page where Flash is yelling at his teammate, as a visual representation of his anger. He uses them in other instances throughout the book as well (pp. 109-110, 111). As previously explained, speedlines constitute part of the "toolbox" of manga to express inner feelings visually. Miyazawa uses sweat drops to express anxiety and breath to express exasperation, as it is usually done in manga. He tweaks the background a little when a character is having an intense emotion known only to themselves, which is an especially common characteristic of shōjo manga[29].

Word bubbles

His word bubbles fit the English reading direction (horizontally and left-to-right), but they are hand-drawn in a way that they complement the art of each panel they are in. Japanese and "OEL" manga typically regard word bubbles part of the decorative elements of the art, not just a functional object. Miyazawa has avoided the pitfall of making long, and thin word bubbles typical of "OEL" manga by placing the text in appropriately shaped word bubbles.

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[29] See chapter 1.

Publication format

Spiderman loves Mary Jane is not an auto-conclusive story. The book analyzed is book 2 of

a series of 4 books, but the series continued up to issue #20 until it was cancelled in 2007. It

is a high-school romance story that develops over several chapters. It is very similar to

Japanese shōjo manga in this respect. The size of the books is also very similar to Japanese

tankōbon and is cheaply priced ($8.99) (Fig. 4).

[Fig. 4 - front and back cover of *Spiderman loves Mary Jane*, Vol. 2: "The New Girl," by

Miyazawa Takeshi, ©Marvel Comics, 2006.]

Shōjo Superhero Comics

Typically, women in American superhero comics are depicted as highly sexualized figures

who are strong and sometimes have superpowers of their own (Wonder Woman being the

best-known example). However, they are generally employed to draw attention to the work

through the manipulation of sexual desire. These types of comics tend to exploit the physical

attributes of women to elicit emotional responses in their (generally male) readership, but

this emotional response is usually sexual. In these comics, the inner emotional world of

women stays unexplored and unimportant; women are valued through physical attractiveness

and abilities. Their emotional abilities are often discarded and even though there are works

that explore the inner realities of women to some degree[30], these are often used in the

narrative to justify a male character's desire for revenge, retribution or to add depth to their

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[30] Such as *X-Men*, which has a large cast of female characters that are often featured individually.

backstory[31]. Mary Jane, in the traditional *Spiderman* narrative, exists solely for the purpose of being Peter Parker's love interest and inspiration to do good in the world. Even though aspects of her life are explored (such as her dream of being an actress and her feelings towards Peter), the driving reasons for these dreams and desires are unknown.

Conversely, shōjo narratives/manga, as is typical within manga traditions, focuses on the inner emotional reality of the characters (especially the protagonist, who is almost always female)[32]. The stories tend to feature high school girls who struggle with romance issues and explore the reasons behind their emotional reactions. In "The New Girl," Gwen's arrival into Mary Jane's world and Peter Parker's heart is the catalyst that drives Mary Jane towards emotional introspection, of which we are spectators of thanks to Miyazawa placing the overall visual focus on Mary Jane and on her life as a high school girl in love.

Mary Jane does not face an antagonist bent on destroying Spiderman[33] who uses her as bait to get to him (as is often the case in the original *Spiderman* narratives). Rather, she has to clarify her feelings towards him, overcome her fear of rejection and surrender herself to love; a theme which appears frequently in mainstream Japanese shōjo manga. Furthermore, by having a more female focus, the contents also have shifted in the way they have originally told the story of Spiderman and Mary Jane in past, more male-oriented versions. During her introspections in the volume, Mary Jane remembers her struggles with her own identity post-

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[31] This tends to be common in videogames as well.

[32] It was precisely due to their focus on girls' emotions that shôjo manga became popular outside of Japan (Ogi 2003).

[33] Although there is a villain that Spiderman ultimately faces as defeats in the story, it is used more as a backdrop to reference Spiderman's typical *modus operandi*. The main focus of the story is clearly the love-triangle.

breakup with a boyfriend and how she altered her looks to separate herself from the "mainstream," which was regarded as immature by her friends. Later on, she examines her attraction to Peter and Spidey though in more personal and internal ways and finally she confronts the problem head-on, earning the respect and admiration of her peers. The story promotes cooperation and community, which is typical of shōjo.

As we know, within the superhero genre, narratives that feature a female protagonist without any superpowers are an exception. Admittedly, like in the traditional narrative, the character of Mary Jane in Miyazawa's work also exists only in relation to Spiderman, but she does so through her love for Peter Parker and this is the element that drives the entire story. This places Miyazawa's comics in the teenage romance genre[34], not a large genre within American comics[35], but forming an essential part of the manga industry now (both in Japan and the West).

"Japaneseness" as identity

Like Matsumoto, Miyazawa has had to deal with the issue of being of Japanese descent as part of his identity as a manga artist. Regarding the belief that having Japanese blood can be advantageous to aspiring "OEL" manga artists, Shiina Yukari[36], agent of OEL manga artists in Japan who has represented Miyazawa before, clarified that while being Japanese has been somewhat beneficial to him, it wasn't as much as expected. Miyazawa learned Japanese

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[34] Along with such works like Jo Chen's manga-style penciling in the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* comics (http://jo-chen.com/cgi-bin/main/nicky.cgi?ctgry=1) Last access 2014/03/05.

[35] See for example Trina Robbins' works (1996, 1999) or Ogi Fusami (2009).

[36] Personal interview in Tokyo on March 28th, 2012. Referenced through audio recording.

thanks to his father, who worked for Toyota and would take business trips to Japan and bring

him back issues of *Doraemon* (Fujio Fujiko) and *Asari-chan* (Muroyama Mayumi). He also

swapped manga at his Japanese Saturday school, and thus grew up reading *Dragon Ball*

(Toriyama Akira), *Dokaben* (Mizushima Shinji) and *Buddha* (Tezuka Osamu) in their

original language. He "believes his parents let him read so much manga because it would

improve his Japanese language skills, although he is not sure if they liked the fact that it also

inspired him down the career path of manga making."[37]

Being exposed so early to Japanese manga in its original form gave Miyazawa an advantage

over his colleagues in that he started to create manga at a younger age and developed his

drawing skills a little earlier than others. But it did not predestinate him for a future in the

world of manga. He joined the Marvel Comics workforce and made his mark within the

American comics mainstream in 1998[38]. However, he felt the need to "go back to his

roots" (for both personal and professional reasons) and moved to Japan in 2007, where he

has been drawing "Lost Planet," a sci-fi manga, for *Dengeki Comics* since 2011. Even so, he

has difficulties successfully selling his work in Japan, a problem related, among other things,

to his style, as Shiina suggests. Miyazawa (born in 1979, before manga started to be widely

published in North America) grew up with more access to manga than non-Asian children in

his surroundings, but he was also exposed to the same TV shows, music and other pop

cultural media as his peers. In other words, he had access to the same limited number of

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[37] As stated in Shiina's artist biographies in the leaflet of the "OEL" manga exhibition: "Is this Manga Too? Manga artists active in North America" at the Kyoto International Manga Museum, January 5 - February 5, 2012 [http://www.kyotomm.jp/english/event/exh/manga_style_2011eng.php] (Last accessed 2013/08/20)

[38] http://comicbookdb.com/creator.php?ID=1861 (last access 2013/12/05)

imported Japanese manga titles, which at the time (1986-1997) were being altered to cater to

American comics readers. Early imported manga titles were often already outdated in Japan,

yet, having proven their popularity there, but consumed at a later date in North America.

Thus, Miyazawa developed a manga style which appeared outdated when "reimported" to

Japan by him in the late 2000s. Ironically, Miyazawa's strength in the American scene and

main difficulty in selling in Japan lies precisely in his style, derived from the manga and

anime with which he grew up; a style his Japanese readers regard as out of fashion, or

"classic" (Shiina states that Miyazawa is often cited as being stylistically influenced by

Otomo's *Akira*, for example, which, in America is seen positively, but in Japan it is

outdated). This does not apply to his technical skill, but rather to the fact that his style does

not "fit" the current fashion of the Japanese mainstream.

While not acknowledged as a manga artist in Japan, he is regarded as such in North America,

as well as an artist that represents a sort of "fusion." The latter relates to Miyazawa's recent

contribution of a sci-fi short story to an English-language anthology titled *Shattered: The*

Asian American Comics Anthology (2012), a compilation of stories that touch upon Asian

American identity from many different perspectives: theme, characters, style, and language,

to name a few. His pencil-art piece, "Los Robos, Arizona" (Fig. 5) is a story set in the distant

future, where giant robots land on Earth (specifically in the state of Arizona) and cooperate

with the American military to fight against an alien invasion. The paneling and layout is

closer to shōnen and sci-fi manga (featuring action scenes with giant robots). He uses

screentone as well as speedlines to denote both movement (p. 114-115) and urgency (p. 116),

and being monochrome, no colorist was needed, so Miyazawa likely penciled and inked it

himself. Being well received, this regards Miyazawa as a manga style comics artist in the

American comics scene, both mainstream and otherwise. His reputation as a successful

manga artist in Japan, however, remains elusive.

[Fig. 5 - from "Los Robos, Arizona" (art and story by Miyazawa Takeshi) in *Shattered: The*

Asian American Comics Anthology, (2012), edited by Jeff Yang.]

Miyazawa's case may invite readers to reconsider how hybrid publications such as

Spiderman loves Mary Jane, function within a mainstream environment, and this can give

insight as to how it applies to the case of "OEL" manga. "Japaneseness" can be seen as an

appropriation of initially Japanese (although actually hybrid) elements, such as manga's

"visual language," localized within a specific environment. Miyazawa's work is part of the

role manga style is taking within the American comics and entertainment scene, as a

different form of visual storytelling. Recently, manga style surfaces more and more in

mainstream American comics, with Japanese, or Asian, identity being ascribed to its form

rather than content.[39] But there is an increasing number of American mainstream comics that

also make use of the visual language and genre conventions of Japanese manga, due to a rise

not just in interested readers, but also interested artists. Perhaps, these are the shifts that are

helping manga gain acceptance within wider comics communities.

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[39] In the U.S., manga as form in comics is best represented by Frank Miller's *Sin City* (1993), in which the evidence of Japanese-influenced speedlines and dynamic page layouts is clearly evident, as well emphasis on monochrome by way of his use of black inking technique. Miller had already been interested in manga since the release of *Lone Wolf and Cub* and even produced a series featuring a wandering samurai (*Ronin*, 1983, DC Comics), influenced by Koike's and Kojima's work (Sabin 1996: 234). Also, this trend is apparent in recent popular television shows for children, such as *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, *Thundercats* (2011 remake) and *Teen Titans (2003- 2006 Warner Bros.)*, to name a few.

Section 2   "Manga-fying" a story: The Legend of the Monkey King (*Journey to the West*) as seen through *Dragon Ball* and *American Born Chinese* (Japanese manga and Independent Asian American Graphic Narratives), a comparative analysis.

Are there particular ways of telling a story in manga? Are there themes, topics or storylines that are more manga-specific, and therefore regarded as more "Japanese" than others? There are characteristics in regards to style that can be used to identify a particular visual style in "OEL" manga as "manga." There may also be ways of identifying or ascribing "Japaneseness" to the contents of a story. To better understand how the structure and flow of narrative changes depending on the type of publication (manga or graphic novels), a comparison of works that share the same background story, but render it differently, *Dragon Ball* and *American Born Chinese*, both of which are based on the ancient Chinese legend of the Monkey King, can help to distinguish such particularities, and thus, we can outline (as in the case of the study on "manga style") what constitutes "manga narrative."

The Monkey King

Dragon Ball (Toriyama Akira) is an example of what is considered a classic and "proper" manga both in the West and in Japan, and a good example of the "Japaneseness" that was so eagerly pursued in the West. It tells the tale of Son Goku: an alien boy raised by an old man in the far away mountains of what appears to be the Chinese countryside, who has super strength and powers and is soon thrown into a world of adventures, mythical quests and

battles. It is inspired by the ancient Chinese legend, *Journey to the West*, also known as the

Tale of the Monkey King, on which *American Born Chinese* (Gene Luen Yang) is also based.

American Born Chinese features the story of Jin, who is at odds with his identity as a

second-generation Chinese son of immigrant parents. Since he was a child, he has felt

discriminated by his community for being Asian, and feels that his looks are getting in the

way of being completely accepted by them. The comic simultaneously features the story of

the Monkey King of Fruit Mountain; a deity in his own right, but scorned and humiliated by

his "peers" in heaven, who don't consider him their equal because he is a monkey. Both Jin

and The Monkey King go to considerable lengths to change their appearance in order to

enter what is "mainstream society" for them, but in the process, encounter deep inner

conflict. The comic explores the resolution of such conflict.

Storytelling/Writing

Dragon Ball tells the tale of Goku, considered the strongest warrior of Earth (and even other

realms). He was discovered by a young explorer named Bulma who was in search for the

legendary dragon balls: a set of seven golden spheres that when collected and put together,

summon a giant dragon called Sheng Long, who can grant the summoner any one wish they

desire. Bulma, who is immensely rich, is in search for the spheres to wish for the one thing

she doesn't have: a boyfriend, and during her expedition in a deep valley, she finds the child

Goku. It is later learned that Goku is actually not from Earth, but a being of an alien race,

who arrived here in a space pod, sent by his father from a distant planet in the brink of

destruction to save his son's life[40]. Goku and Bulma travel together to find the dragon balls

and encounter many adventures on the way. But the story evolves immensely, introducing a

huge cast of main and side characters, and the story expands to encompass all of Goku's

childhood, his adolescence and ultimately his adult life, where he must balance saving the

world with raising his two sons, Gohan and Goten, as well as manage his married life.

It is important to remember that contents of a graphic narrative are greatly influenced by the

way a comic or manga is published. As a typical mainstream manga, *Dragon Ball* was first

serialized in a weekly magazine[41] before being put into volumes. The story plot and twists in

it were obviously dictated by the popularity fluctuations of the series. Characters or events

were introduced to "spice things up", others "brought back to life" because the readers

requested it so or made sense from a marketing standpoint. These decisions, made by the

author, editors and even readers, shaped the overall product over a long period of time

(*Dragon Ball* ran in serialization for close to 10 years). Yang's *American Born Chinese*, on

the other hand, is largely a one-man effort and its content may have deviated little, if at all,

from its original intention when subjected to outside influences[42]. Also, it is important to note

that, regarding markets, Yang's comics are not positioned within the American mainstream,

they are independent comics and therefore have a much smaller publication range than

Toriyama's *Dragon Ball*. Having been in print for many years allowed for the story to

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[40] Which is a striking parallel to the *Superman* story. It is unclear if this is a direct or an unconscious reference.

[41] Originally serialized in *Weekly Shōnen Jump* by Shueisha (1984 -1995). The 519 individual chapters were followingly published as 42 *tankōbon* volumes. Published in the U.S in *Shonen Jump* by Viz Media (2003-2005).

[42] As in Matsumoto's case, which apparently caused the criticism of her manga series, for falling back on to American graphic novel writing conventions although it is trying to sell as "manga."

develop immensely over time, thus changing the way the narrative ultimately reads, as distinct from Yang's work.

Characters

The development of characters is thus also affected by the type of narrative style employed. In regards to protagonists, Yang has separated the human and animal sides of the Monkey King into three separate characters: the Monkey King of Flower-Fruit Mountain as the animal side and Jin/Danny as the human side, whereas Toriyama integrated the identity of the Monkey King into the same character: Son Goku when he is human and the animalistic Giant Monkey form he takes on whenever he looks at a full moon. However, Goku cannot recall anything he does while under the monkey phase, suggesting a mental separation of identity rather than a physical one like in Yang's comic.

As for the rest of the characters, in *Dragon Ball* as in *American Born Chinese*, there is a multi-ethnic cast and their physical differences are heavily stressed. In *American Born Chinese*, however, these differences are stressed in the form ridicule and criticism, pushing the characters to question, reject and transform their identify via physical alterations: the Monkey King grows taller to resemble a human being (he also starts wearing shoes, p. 60) (Fig. 6) and Jin sheds his "Asianness" and transforms into Danny, a caucasian-looking boy (p. 197) (Fig. 7). Visually, Yang stressed this point not just by enlarging or transforming the physical forms of the characters, such as stature, hair style, clothes, etc., but also through his use of color: Jin's skin changes from having a yellowish tone to a more pinkish one when he transforms into Danny.

[Figures 6, 7 - (6) p. 60, The Monkey King pretending to be human by wearing shoes. (7) p. 197, Jin transforming into Danny. From *American Born Chinese*, by Gene Luen Yang, First Second Books, (2006).]

Conversely, in *Dragon Ball*, although there are visual differences between characters, these physical differences are not made to create a feeling of "otherness." Rather, the difference stressed between characters in the manga is focused on their levels of strength. Son Goku is the star of the story because he is the strongest, not because he is the Monkey King. There is discrimination between characters and there is ridicule as well, but judgment is based on their abilities and power, and not so much on their looks. Admittedly, in *American Born Chinese* the looks are not the final subject of judgement but the ethnicity which they indicate. However, in manga, judgement of difference is usually placed on an internal quality rather than on an external one; manga has a natural indifference towards ethnicity issues due to its use of monochrome and simplified faces. Characters' physical difference, which is a driving issue of both stories, is thus illustrated using strikingly different story structures: a game-like contest of strength vs. an account on social issues of ethnic discrimination.

That is not to say that there are no mentions of social rejection due to physical difference in *Dragon Ball*. For example, in the story it is well known that Goku is an alien, not even human, and that he had a monkey tail as a child (Fig. 8). He was visually different from his peers. However, his tail was removed after one of his Giant Monkey phases to avoid him transforming again and harming people. When he leaves the isolation of his mountain, he enters a very multi-ethnic society (Fig. 9) , but doesn't change physically (or

psychologically) to conform to it, with the exception of the removal of his tail (which was not so much not for personal gain but for the safety of others). This does not mean he is instantly accepted into society. Throughout the story, Goku has to fight for his place in the world, but his struggle is about asserting his power precisely through his difference. With regards to gender representation, Toriyama is far more generous in his handling of women than most shōnen manga, or mainstream American comics. Goku's closest friend, Bulma (Fig. 10), is not excluded from going on adventures with him because of her gender. Rather, it is she who takes Goku on the "journey to the West" in the first place as the leader of that expedition. She is regarded as a free woman with the right to live her life as she chooses and go on long, epic adventures for her own personal reasons. In some rare instances of the story, she doesn't participate in a fight or adventure because she simply isn't a martial artist, but the cast of *Dragon Ball* is full of other female characters who are and fight equal ground with the male characters.

[Fig. 8, 9, 10 - (8) Son Goku (young version with tail). (9) The main cast of Dragon Ball. (10) Bulma, Goku's friend and travel companion. From "Dragon Ball" by Toriyama Akira, in *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, Shueisha ©1984-1995.]

Both stories place great importance on friendship. In *American Born Chinese*, Jin and Wei-Chen, a transfer student from Taiwan, became close friends, despite Jin initially rejecting Wei-Chen for his too-apparent "Asianness" (p. 38, Fig. 11). In the story, both characters alter their appearance as a response to bullying: Wei-Chen starts to dress in more "urban" clothes (reminiscent of hip-hop) and starts smoking, instead of wearing the "nerdy"-looking attire so commonly attributed to the Asian stereotype in America. Jin, in turn, literally

becomes "white." Both also find ways to insert themselves into mainstream society as a way

to rebel: against responsibilities (Wei-Chen) and against stereotypes of "Asian" (Jin), which

may be able to be proven wrong if one seamlessly integrates into the mainstream. The two of

them, along with Suzy Nakamura, constitute a small but close-knit group of friends who

share a similar cultural background. However, neither of them feels integrated to their

environment, and they operate on very individualistic agendas, as each wants a specific type

of experience during their time in school: Jin wants to be popular and believes that this can

only be so if he becomes "white," Wei-Chen wants Jin to accept him as a friend and Suzy

wants to be part of a group of girls from school. Their friendship is founded upon their

feelings as outcasts, thrown together by circumstance (being the only Asians in the class,

ostracized by all the others). They became friends apparently because they had no other

choice, which does not make for a solid base for deeper connections. Nonetheless, one does

develop between Suzy and Wei-Chen when they start dating, and between Wei-Chen and

Jin[43] (which is why they can go back to being friends later after a falling out) (pp. 228-229,

Fig. 12).

[Fig. 11, 12 - (11) Jin rejecting Wei-Chen, p. 38. (12) Jin trying to reconcile with Wei-Chen,

who has changed his appearance to appear less "Asian," p. 228-229. From *American Born

Chinese*, by Gene Luen Yang, First Second Books, 2006.]

The portrayal of friendship is also stressed heavily in *Dragon Ball*, in many instances

touching upon the theme of rejection and abuse as well, but the story does not focus on the

feelings of isolation of the characters. Rather, the stress is on overcoming the barriers that

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[43] When Wei-Chen helps Jin get a date with Amanda, the girl he has a crush on in class.

obstaculize their integration into a community. An interesting point of *Dragon Ball* is that this community is not exclusive to only friends and family, but to rivals and outright enemies as well, as storylines of rival-turned-ally are used frequently in serialized manga (and necessary to keep the reader hooked and the story interesting in cases of very long serialization). A counterpart to the story of Jin and Wei-Chen is that of Goku and his friend and training partner, Krillin[44]. Goku and Krillin met as children when both studied under the same martial arts teacher. Krillin initially disliked Goku for his "strangeness" and rejected him. He also played a lot of pranks on Goku, and would insult him constantly. But Goku was not the least concerned with Krillin's dislike of him and actually considered Krillin his best friend. As Goku grew stronger and his power increased, Krillin rejected him less and came to admire him. He understood how wrong he had been to mistreat Goku and tried to make amends with him. Goku, who could have turned him down based on years of bullying, instead completely accepted Krillin as if nothing had ever happened. Later on in the story, during a battle, Krillin is murdered in front of Goku's eyes, which enrages him to such heights that he turns into a "Super-Saiyan" (an evolved form that signifies having reached a transcendent level of power). Soon after, he manages to collect the dragon balls to summon Sheng Long for a wish. Even though he had just become the strongest fighter in the universe and could wish for anything, Goku uses his one and only wish to wish for Krillin to be brought back to life.

Toriyama's handling of friendship in *Dragon Ball* is in many ways about transcending abuse and rejection, and not allowing it to dictate beliefs about the abilities of oneself and others. It is also about love in the form of deep bonds betweens friends and family and the sacrifices

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44 Also known as "Kuririn" (romanized Japanese) in the Japanese version.

that must sometimes be made in their name. Even though *Dragon Ball* is a martial arts action-adventure manga for young boys primarily, it also points out the importance of commitment in any relationship, even touching upon marriage: Goku marries at 17 years old a girl he was betrothed to when he was 7, because he promised to and thus, kept his word. Many other characters in the story take spouses and bear children, who then become part of the adventure themselves. The long and detailed development of the character's lives throughout the story is due to its long serialization, but the details of such and the themes Toriyama wishes to touch upon (friendship, love, family, overcoming weakness and strife) are characteristic of shōnen and shōjo manga.

Krillin came to become part of Goku's circle of friends, in which no fighter ever fought alone: Goku always fights alongside his friends, unless he is somehow separated from them. Also, common goals (saving the Earth) were placed above individual ones: at a certain point in the story, Goku dies in battle. Consequently, his friends gather the dragon spheres again to wish him back to life, but Goku declines saying his strength is needed more in the afterlife/ heaven than on Earth, and that they (the team) can protect it in his stead. The team manages to keep Earth safe while Goku is "away" but only through working together. Eventually he comes back, but again, joins his team in order to fight to save the Earth instead of doing it by himself (even though he was immensely stronger than any of them at this point). This is not to say that characters never had any personal aspirations (they all wanted to become as strong or stronger than Goku) but these were usually put at the service of a higher ideal. Characters that were highly individualistic (wanted all the power for themselves) were usually portrayed as evil. *Dragon Ball* is a story about strength, moral and ethical, rather than physical; a message that is abundant in shōnen manga. However, Toriyama's personal

point throughout the story is that moral integrity and a loving commitment to one's friends and family is what truly makes a warrior the strongest.

American Born Chinese is also a tale of morality, as it ends with Danny accepting and embracing his "Asianness" and identifying with the tale of the Monkey King that served as an allegory to his identity struggle as well as a moral lesson. However, Yang's interpretation of the story differs greatly from Toriyama's in this aspect. Where as Yang handles the legend of the Monkey King as a quest of acceptance and integration into a (certain) society as realism, Toriyama is interpreting the legend as a moral battle of good vs. evil as fairytale, where the Asian "odor" of the story is lacking and the ethnicity of the characters is de-exoticized to bring attention to their deeds and integrity. Like fairytales, *Dragon Ball* may serve as a parable which can be applied, among other things, to social inequalities, given a conscious reader.

Readership

Yang's *American Born Chinese* has won several very prestigious awards, namely the Michael L. Printz Award and the Eisner Award, both in 2007, and has become a title acclaimed by academic circles and regarded as a mature, thought-provoking deep narrative (Fig. 13). These praises have lifted Yang's book to a higher status, well-placed amongst literary discourse and analysis alongside works like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* and Allison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. Together, these works discuss identity in a way that Hillary Chute would describe as a refusal to "mitigate trauma; in fact, they demonstrate how its visual retracing is enabling, ethical and productive," refusing "to show it [traumatic history]

through the lens of unspeakability or invisibility, instead registering its difficulty through

inventive (and various) textual practice" (Chiu, 2008: 112). Since the awarding of the

Pulitzer prize to Spiegelman's *Maus*, graphic novels have stepped away from the rest of the

comic book world and have since been regarded as "proper" works of art and literature, their

status lifted from simple cheap entertainment to demanding more sophisticated attention.

They have more approval by parents and the school system. This might entail that their

readership is not as wide as say, superhero comics, but it consists of a more intellectual

community of fans than those who look to comic books for entertainment. But its precisely

this narrowness that then impedes some of these narratives to reach audiences and

communities outside of their own.

[Fig. 13 - Cover of *American Born Chinese*, with seal from award (by Gene Luen Yang, First

Second Books, 2006.)]

How then, did *Dragon Ball*, a graphic narrative so "Asian," full of martial arts references,

based upon a Chinese folk legend, drawn in a style and reading direction so different from

any other comic style from the West, manage to cross cultural barriers and appeal to a global

audience? It is important to note that when *Dragon Ball* was being serialized in Japan

(1984-1995), the editors naturally had only the Japanese consumer in mind and had no way

of knowing how massive its overseas reception would be some years later. Therefore, the

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[45] In regards to narrative, if we do not take into account the necessary alterations due to translation.

product that overseas fans consumed was identical[45] to the one created for Japanese

readers[46].

The answer may lie precisely in the issue of ethnicity that both works touch upon, but in very

different ways. While *American Born Chinese* is deeply concerned with the problem of

ethnic bullying and its power to ostracize in American society, *Dragon Ball* shifts the

concern outwards. *Dragon Ball* has martial arts fighters and tournaments, characters with

Japanese names, it's based on a Chinese tale and it's drawn for a Japanese audience in a

Japanese medium. But its contents are of universal reach, through the use of manga's

potential to be "arquetypal" in its narration. The story takes on fairytale qualities: themes of

love and camaraderie, the struggle to overcome one's obstacles and reach one's goals in life,

love and respect for one's friends and family and for the Earth. These are ideals and

emotions that any person from any background can relate to; such is the intention and

purpose of fairytales. It was this "opening" in the narrative what appealed most to fans all

over the world, despite language, cultural and even gender differences, which allowed them

to easily insert their own personal life experience in their reading of the manga. The message

of *Dragon Ball* unites despite differences, and *American Born Chinese* reminds of

difference, which could be the reason behind their highly different readerships. Yet, how

exactly does manga style facilitate this narrative universalness?

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[46] As opposed to *Naruto*, which benefiting from *Dragon Ball*'s success in the West, used the
popularity of martial arts in the West intentionally throughout the conceptualization and development
of the manga in order to reap popularity from overseas markets.

Different styles, different identities?

Would the issue of "Asianness" in Yang's *American Born Chinese* be received differently and by different audiences if his comic was a manga? Would his work in manga form stress his point on discrimination and identity, or weaken it? How would the use of manga style function to tell this tale?

These questions stem from the relevance of "Japaneseness" in "OEL" manga and its application it and perhaps even other styles of comics. To illustrate better how manga style works to tell a story and attempt to answer these questions, 8 pages from *American Born Chinese* were re-drawn in manga style by me[47] and shown to the panel of scholars at the "Frame by Frame and Across the Gutters: Theorizing Asian American Graphic Novels" Conference at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures of the University of Hong Kong[48] in Hong Kong in May 2012. The pages selected to be re-drawn were pp. 185-188, a scene where Suzy Nakamura is sulking outside school and Jin approaches her. He inquires about her moodiness and she replies that she had been victim of bullying at school because of her Asian features. In the original comic, the scene is drawn with emphasis on the characters' faces to illustrate how the way they look is subject to discrimination and hostility at school. It is therefore important that the reader recognizes the characters as Asian. However, when the same scene is re-drawn in manga style, as pointed out in the characteristics analysis, the "Asianness" of the faces disappears. All we are left with is the characters' statement of what happened, but visually, it is impossible to see why they would

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[47] Available in the Appendix: 8-page "manga" on *American Born Chinese*, pp. 185-188.

[48] Conference website: http://amstudy.hku.hk/news/graphic2012/index.html (Last access 2013/09/11).

be considered visually 'different', since in manga all the characters are drawn with ethnically indistinguishable faces.

This point was brought up by several scholars at the Hong Kong conference when presented with the manga-style version of the scene. They argued that the issue of race disappeared from sight and that it was therefore difficult to understand the point of Suzy's complaint. As one scholar pointed out, "it is impossible to racially discriminate if you can't see somebody's race." Yet, one of the distinguishing characteristics of manga is the homogeneity of style, the point being that all characters should look similar to each other[49], rendered in the recognized manga style. It seems that this makes manga, as a style, an inadequate tool to highlight physical differences between people. In turn, race becomes visible when it no longer blends in, undermining the expectations towards manga style.

 Nonetheless, Yang's story, as a story about minorities, echoes "OEL" manga's struggle at being accepted into a specific mainstream, aggravated by its roots as an Asian comics style in an American environment. It struggles with identity ("Japaneseness") as to which of these mainstreams it should please, ultimately desiring acceptance by its peers. Toriyama's *Dragon Ball*, in turn, may suggest that perhaps, it is time to cast aside attempts at altering the form in hopes of integration, and rather focus on individual strengths, creativity and common goals (ideas and emotions that can connect to like-minded peers), to obtain the desired acceptance.

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[49] Although this applies more to shōjo manga than to the male genres, the idea that manga characters' have similar faces is a common (mis)conception of manga in the West.

Section 3　"OEL" manga's Narrative Characteristics of Expression ("OEL" manga storytelling)

（１）**Scenario / Narrative: "slower" stories**

Clearly, manga has its own unique way of telling a story and thus, writing for manga differs from other forms of comics writing. As previously explained, manga usually starts out serialized in magazines, and the series may run over long periods of time in these magazines (sometimes decades). The narrative is, therefore, shaped over time. Characters may disappear to be introduced later, or new ones created.

Readers also play a very big part in the creation of the manga narrative. Their fan letters praising or criticizing certain events or characters can lead to changes, usually enforced by the editors, who sometimes have more power over the story than the artist him/herself (Schodt 1993: 144). Normally, within the mainstream manga industry, alterations in the story are business decisions designed to ensure the profitable edge of a manga series. This may sound similar to superhero comics writing techniques, but the difference lies in that manga narratives are not necessarily linear, rather developmental[50], and in this way, novel-like (Hatfield, 2005: 152-162), where as superhero comics' narratives tends to be open-ended so that they may run indefinitely.

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[50] As shown in the previous section regarding *Dragon Ball*, whose story spanned for almost 10 years and through which the life of Son Goku is told, going from his childhood, through his adolescence and finally reaching adulthood.

Another particularity of manga storytelling are "cliffhangers," unexpected twists in the story which the manga artist introduces into the end of each chapter as motivation for the reader to continue reading the series. As stated before, most manga start out serialized in magazines and each publishes one chapter a week, sometimes month. Serializations tend to use cliffhangers as a way to keep the story fresh and exciting for old and new readers alike. By keeping a high number of readers, the series stays in serialization longer, which leads eventually to tankōbon sales that can then bring in royalty fees for the artists. Usually, the artist earns very little from the initial magazine serialization (the higher cuts go to publishers, distributors and editors, though they don't earn much either in order to keep the magazines cheap enough), but they can earn much more once their series are bound into volumes. Therefore, it is in everyone's interest to use cliffhangers to ensure the manga's success. Clearly, manga scenario writing is specific to its publishing format.

The comparison study between *American Born Chinese* and *Dragon Ball* touches upon the particularities and differences amongst manga and graphic novel storytelling. As it was pointed out in Chapter 2, comic book publishers in the United States interested in manga moved towards the book field. Manga was being shelved along with graphic novels (Weiner 2003: 60), which had been rising towards their own boom since the late 1970s (Sabin 1996: 157). As graphic novels opened up new possibilities in storytelling for readers and creators, they allowed for longer narratives, which allows for more time/space for building up tension and generating atmosphere. The visuals were of better quality, since there was more time to draw them, and also because the work was supposed to be of higher status[51]. Works such as Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight* (1986, D.C Comics), Alan Moore and Dave

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[51] Sabin 1996: 165.

Gibbons' *Watchmen* (1987, D.C Comics/Titan), and Neil Gaiman's (authored) *The Sandman* (1989, D.C Comics) set the tone for comics that can be associated with novels[52].

Nina Matsumoto stated that it roughly takes her 8 months to put out a book in completed form and Chmakova's *Dramacon* took 3 years to publish in its entirety. This "pace" fit perfectly with translated manga published in North America. Translated manga, and therefore "OEL" manga's, linkage to graphic novels is then not simply a matter of merging markets and publication strategies. What is at play at the story level is that "OEL" manga is following on the traditions of book publishing due to manga's localization in the book field, and this of course, affects the style and speed of the narrative. When "OEL" manga artists create "slower" stories that are more deliberate narratives with careful tone-setting, instead of being shelved with publications that stretch the story through many volumes and can take years to publish like serialized manga, they naturally are better located in the shelves alongside artists such as Miller, or comics writers such as Moore or Gaiman.

（２）**"Japan" in Characters and World-Building**

Another particularity of manga storytelling is the development and design of characters and their surroundings. It is of course, not unusual for Japanese manga to have characters with Japanese names (usually, but not always, as in the case of fantasy and/or sci-fi manga), and be located in Japanese locations (again, recognizable rather by their names or verbal inserts than pictorial representation - usually but not exclusively). Reference to Japan whether in

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[52] Graphic novels "in essence […] were what they said they were: novels in graphic form. More specifically, they could be defined as: 'lengthy comics in book form with a thematic unity' " (Ibid.)

characters' names or in the name or location of the story is a way to stress "Japaneseness" in

"OEL" manga. This was done not just in "OEL" manga, but in manga from other countries

as well, as in the case of Christina Plaka's[53] work (German manga) and Kaoru's[54] work

(Malaysian manga). Kaoru (further referenced in chapter 4) is an example of how

"Japaneseness" can be stressed not just in the work but through the artist him/herself: her real

name is Liew Yee Teng and she is a Malaysian citizen of Chinese ethnicity, but publishes

using this Japanese pseudonym in order to hide her "Chineseness" so that it does detract

attention from her manga, and at the same time make her accessible to a non-Chinese

audience within her country (Gan 2011: 172). Although the manga is published first in Malay

(afterwards, English and Chinese translated editions) and for a primarily Malaysian

audience, the publisher strives to make her manga "odorless," to accommodate her fans'

demands of "Japaneseness." Although this tends to happen to manga in North America, the

type of "odorlessness" is different in this case because of Asia's colonial memory of Japan,

and in Kaoru's case, there are the internal Malay tensions between Chinese minority and

Muslim majority to be aware of (Gan 2011: 172-174). Kaoru is referencing Japan by

drawing stories set in places removed from reality but related to Japan through visual cues,

such as the use of Japanese text on signboards or price labels[55] (Fig. 14).

[Fig. 14 - Kaoru's illustrations from the *Sugar Addict* artbook, published by Gempak, 2010].

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[53] Born 1983 in Offenbach, Germany. Her best known works are *Prussian Blue* (2004) and *Yonen Buzz* (2005- ongoing), both published by Tokyopop Germany, the latter also translated into English.

[54] Born 1982 in Perak, Malaysia. Author of *Helios Eclipse* (2004-2008), *Kaoru's Cake House* (2007-2008) and *Maid Maiden* (2009- ongoing), all by Gempak Starz, Kuala Lumpur.

[55] As Gan (2011) explain in her essay: "In Kaoru's fourth volume of *Helios Eclipse*, the front cover design employs Chinese calligraphy in the background, which is rare and visually attractive. It is nonetheless obvious that those elements are merely decorative without suggesting any deeper meaning" (2011: 172).

In her manga titled *Yonen Buzz* about a rock band in Japan, Christina Plaka places her

characters within a meticulously drawn Tokyo, even though the entire story is told in

German and is was initially made for a German audience (Fig. 15).

[Fig. 15 - pp. 54-55 from *Yonen Buzz*, Vol. 2, by Christina Plaka, published by Tokyopop

Germany, 2006].

Admittedly, there is an English translation is available as well, but as is apparent from the

image, her artwork flows in the Japanese reading direction, whilst the text flows in the

German (which is the same as the English) reading direction. However, this causes the

tension in reading described earlier[56] that many readers associate with "false authenticity" in

the manga, which scholar Paul Malone (2010) has been keen in observing within German

manga. The manga industry in Germany evolved very much like it did in North America:

first through serializing translations in magazines, and consequently, launching them as

tankōbon volumes. In addition, German manga publishers, namely Carlsen, EMA and

Tokyopop's German branch[57], began manga contests through which they could source local

talent, such as Carlsen's *Manga-Talente* and Tokyopop's *Manga Fieber*, both running since

2002 and 2005 respectively (Malone 2010: 228). Further, similarly to how it evolved in

North America, German manga publishers used labels such as mangaka and "authentic

manga" to attract readers. Malone explains: "The very term mangaka, which is so frequently

[56] As explained in Section 1, panel layout/flow characteristics of "OEL" manga.

[57] Which is still currently in operation, although the headquarters in Los Angeles is no longer open
(website - last access 2014/03/05).

used to refer to these German artists by their publishers, the wider press and scholars alike, is a token of this ideal" (p. 231)[58].

Part of this ideal is to reference "Japan" in the environment, or "world-building" of the manga. Plaka, as well as her peers, tend to set their stories in Japan, or in "Japan," an un-specified yet vaguely-recognizable as Japanese location (as in Kaoru's case), and this is also achieved by giving characters' Japanese[59] or pseudo-Japanese names[60]. Regarding this, Malone cites Gina Wetzel's *Orcus Star* (2005, EMA) whose protagonist is named Maiko, although the story is not set in a Japanese setting. Also notable is Lenka Buschová's *Freaky Angel* (2006, EMA) whose heroine is named Hikari. Sometimes this occurs in the title of the manga, such as in the case of Nina Werner's *Jibun-Jishin* (2006, Carlsen), which translated from Japanese means "I-Myself" (p. 230). Another frequent element in German manga is the appearance of sidebars or sidenotes in which the author addresses the reader directly, usually regarding information about the process of the book, characters and themselves. Plaka uses them in her books extensively (Plaka 2006, 2008).

Ultimately, Malone regards such "Japan" references as negotiations the artists must make between the opposing poles of "tension between conforming to a supposedly exotic aesthetic[61] and simultaneously being promoted as 'local talent' for a relatively small

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[58] He quotes Brian Ruh (2005), about the American scene: "the use of Japanese language is intentional –it distinguishes manga creation as separate from other types of comic art and serves as a market of **authenticity**" [emphasis mine] (op. cit. Ruh in Malone 2010: 231).

[59] Plaka's main characters in *Yonen Buzz* are named Jun, Sayuri, Keigo and Atsushi, and the rest of the main cast has similarly real Japanese names (Plaka 2008: 7).

[60] Ibid.

[61] He is referring to Japanese manga translations.

market" (p. 232). He is, however, more optimistic of the ideal of "authenticity," in that he

feels it "creates a kind of virtual community […] a space where 'cultural material may be

seen to be moving across national boundaries[62]," which allows for an "exotic, but neutral

place[63] for artists of differing backgrounds to contribute to a field that had become

'multicultural'."[64]

（３）**Genres: emphasis on emotion**

There are no clearly defined "genres" within "OEL" manga nor are specific titles targeted

towards specific groups of readers, for example, only male or only female readers. In fact,

"OEL manga" is in itself considered a "genre" of manga (both in the West and in Japan) and

contains within it sub-genres popular in the Japanese mainstream, such as sci-fi[65], fantasy[66],

romance[67], action-adventure/quests[68] and even BL (Boys' Love[69]). Furthermore, stories about

daily life ("slice of life") and coming-of-age have also become quite commonplace within

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[62] op. Cit. Appadurai (1996) in Malone 2010: 232.

[63] Malone also links the de-emphasizing of the ethnicity of the mangaka to the importance given to the "superficial authenticity" of the work (p. 232) Kaoru achieves this also through her pen name (further investigated in Chapter 4).

[64] Ibid.

[65] For example, Miyazawa's" Los Robos: Arizona" short manga for the *Shattered* anthology book (2012).

[66] *Paradigm Shift* by Dirk Tiede (2008, BookSurge).

[67] *Dramacon*, by Svetlana Chmakova (2008, Tokyopop).

[68] *Hollow Fields*, by Madeline Rosca (2007, Seven Seas).

[69] Manga that focuses on male-male homoerotic romantic relationships, usually created by female fans of the genre for female fan readers like themselves. Source: http://classic-web.archive.org/web/20080417001927/http://www.guidemag.com/temp/yaoi/a/mcharry_yaoi.html, (Last accessed 2013/09/11). An example would be *Teahouse* by Emirain (2011, Transcontinental), further referenced in Chapter 4.

"OEL" manga canon. Scott McCloud points out in one of his chapters on manga (2006), that:

> "*Manga and anime fans from the mid-90s have joined the ranks of this decade's promising young artists. But despite their influences, they haven't just been telling stories about Japanese schoolgirls and samurai. Instead, these new Japanese-influenced artists are **veering closer to their own lives for inspiration, and closer to their reader's lives in the process**"* [emphasis mine] (pp. 222-223).

These type of stories were rare outside of alternative or independent comics, but have now begun to take place within local original manga. It becomes apparent that beyond the particular topics and themes, as well as narrative styles derived from manga, the focus of original manga stories seems to lie on emotion: the expression and exploration of relationships, bonds and a deep connection to the inner realities of the characters. Even within works about battles, quests and adventures, attention is placed upon the characters' emotional development just as much (if not more) as the strengthening of their physical abilities and/or the success of their mission.

In summary, the emphasis is on emotion, but more specifically, it is about 'universality of theme.' As it was pointed out in Chapter 2, Japanese comics could not, in the beginning, cross borders in their original format, therefore, those works that were the least "Japan-specific" were the most likely to be chosen for import (Schodt 1983: 158). It was necessary to pick titles that Western audiences could connect with as easily as possible. This is why

most were fantasy and sci-fi, but also romance. The focus in on imaginary worlds and

emotion, which can transcend cultural barriers. The analysis using *Dragon Ball* in section 2

suggests that this 'universality' can also exist in martial arts manga or manga that have

references to specific cultures or real locales if the message centers on experiences anyone

can relate to, such as love and friendship. North American manga artists (as well as many

others from other parts of the world) are referencing these universal themes in their work,

not as 'escapism', but rather due to the thematic focus of the works imported that they grew

up on.

- Case Study #3 (Contents): Possibilities beyond "Japaneseness:" *Dramacon*, by

Svetlana Chmakova.

It seems manga style has seen a rise in acceptance within mainstream American

entertainment media, with an increase in TV shows that employ Japanese anime style, as

well as many of the visual specificities of manga previously outlined in this chapter.

Examples of such are *Avatar: The Last Airbender*[70] (commissioned by Nickelodeon, 2005),

the recent remake of *Thundercats* (Warner Bros., 2011) and *Teen Titans* (Warner Bros.,

2003-2006, 2013). All of these and other similar shows borrow from anime and manga's

conventions and re-interpret them, creating new, innovative styles and stories that expand the

scope of manga and American cartoons. The popularity of such shows[71] may indicate that

American audiences are comfortable with such hybridity. However, these shows are not

attempting to simulate Japanese anime. The visual reference is clear, but the content has been

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[70] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0417299/ (last access 2013/12/06).

[71] *Thundercats* has a 7.5 star rating on imdb.com, whereas *Avatar* has a 9.0 - http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1666278/?ref_=fn_al_tt_2 (last access 2013/12/06).

localized to reflect the cultural reality of its specific audience[72]. This may have played a role

in the positive reception of these particular manga and anime-influenced animated TV

shows.

The emotional response from critics in Matsumoto's case study[73] reflects on "OEL" manga's

failure to make readers feel comfortable. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that this could

be the result of attempting to reference Japan-specific cultural and emotional cues, which

feel foreign to readers, naturally, because they expect that from Japanese (foreign) manga,

but not from local manga. By attempting "Japaneseness," the resulting work is detached

from the emotional reality of its source language and culture. In order to receive more

positive reception, making successful original manga in English may ultimately lead towards

connecting to readers on a deeper, perhaps more subjective, level. It is clear that fans of

Japanese manga culture are used to reading manga-specific symbols of emotions in Japanese

manga, but seem uncomfortable when these symbols are used to covey an emotional reality

of a different cultural source. As suggested by McCloud (2006), "authenticity" for "OEL"

manga cannot come from adhering to manga style or other modes of cultural and contextual

referencing of Japan, but from referencing the emotional reality of readers through the

"familiar" (and therefore, comfortable and enjoyable) (p. 223). When it speaks to the

emotional reality of the reader through familiar expressions, words, images and so on, rather

than through mastering how to portray Japanese manga references "correctly," "OEL" manga

can be "good," create enjoyment and feel "authentic."

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[72] In the most recent series, *Teen Titans Go!* (2013, Warner Bros.), the Titans are no longer fighting crime and the series focuses on their daily life activities as regular teenagers ("slice-of-life").

[73] See Chapter 2 for Case Study #1.

Dramacon can be seen as an example of "OEL" manga that tries to reference emotional realities relevant to its source culture. This is made interesting by the fact that its creator, Svetlana Chmakova, is not originally from North America: she was born in the Soviet Union in 1979 but immigrated to Canada when she was 16 years old. Relocating to Canada not only influenced her through being exposed to this new culture, but also granted her access to Japanese media through broadcasted anime and fansubs, as well as imported Japanese manga of the time[74]. It also provided opportunities to engage in anime/manga-specific community activities in her local area, activities such as cosplay, anime circles and conventions (from whence the inspiration for *Dramacon* would come from). Inspired to pursue a career in sequential art, she started making manga and publishing it on online in 2003. Not long after, she was approached by Mark Paniccia (her initial editor contact at Tokyopop) who was impressed by the talent in one of her online comics, "Chasing Rainbows," and signed her with Tokyopop to create *Dramacon*.[75] She "figured the book might at least interest a few con-goers and romance lovers" (Chmakova 2008: 612). Working closely with her editor, she developed characters, storylines and panel layouts that appealed to readers' tastes, in content, style, and form[76]. Although *Dramacon* was released annually (2005-2007) in book form and readers therefore had to wait a comparatively long time in between volumes, it gained a

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[74] As stated in Shiina's artist biographies in the leaflet of the "OEL" manga exhibition: "Is this Manga Too? Manga artists active in North America" at the Kyoto International Manga Museum, January 5 - February 5, 2012. http://www.kyotomm.jp/english/event/exh/manga_style_2011eng.php.

[75] *Dramacon* Ultimate Edition, p. 607

[76] *Dramacon* Ultimate Edition, p. 607

reputation as a successful product and helped cement Svetlana's fame as a successful

professional artist who can be trusted to create more successful work[77].

Localizing narrative and genre

Dramacon is about a high-school girl named Christie, who is a newcomer to anime/manga

conventions. She attends one with her boyfriend with whom she has created an original

manga, which she hopes to sell at the convention and perhaps get noticed by a publisher.

However, her boyfriend, Derek, seems more interested in flirting with other girls at the con.

Overwhelmed by the place and very frustrated, Christie storms off angry and crying,

inadvertently bumping into Matt, a handsome and mysterious cosplayer. The love story

which then develops, filled with drama and obstacles, is a typical subject of shōjo manga and

thus nothing new in this respect, except perhaps as a reference that Chmakova may have

been one of the many female artists inspired by the influx of shōjo manga and anime

imported to the U.S and Canada in the early 2000s, mainly *Sailor Moon*[78].

Dramacon addresses the need to connect to the target audience by re-interpreting shōjo

manga tropes and localizing them into a scenario familiar to North American female readers.

The specific characteristics of the characters' psyche (the nerdy/quirky high school manga

fangirl, the sarcastic and jaded "badboy," the abusive boyfriend) reference the readers' shared

realities, for they themselves are most likely nerdy/quirky high school manga fangirls as well

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[77] Chmakova is currently producing *Nightschool*, an "OEL" manga about a high school attended by
supernatural creatures. 4 volumes are out, by Yen Press.

[78] Which, coincidentally, also features a love story between a high school girl and a college boy.

and may have come across boys like Derek and Matt. The locations and more importantly, the situations these characters face are particular to their experience as North American high school-aged anime/manga fans.

Shōjo manga emphasizes the emotional aspect of the story, crucial to those who enjoy this kind of manga. *Dramacon* portrays characters who are comprehensible emotionally to their readers because they mirror them. Characters' actions can be easily understood by readers due to similarities in their cultural/social background. For example, in the following figure, we see Matt and Christie, becoming very close physically prior to actually establishing a formal relationship with each other. While not unusual in the West, it may be seen culturally out of context in Japan, where a developing love between characters would often be internalized first before reaching physical expression (Fig. 16).

[Fig. 16 - Example of Matt and Christie kissing. *Dramacon*, pp. 522-523 © 2008 Svetlana Chmakova. Courtesy of Tokyopop.]

Another way *Dramacon* references its source culture is in representation of multi-ethnic characters. Beth, who is African-American, is introduced in volume 2 as Christie's new manga artist to replace Derek. Two other "non-white" characters, Hyu-Jeong (Korean-American) and Raj (Indian-American), are introduced at the same time and become Christie's and Beth's friends. Rather than treat them as agents of exoticism, the text focuses on the internal characteristics of their personality for their character development, mostly through a lot of dialogue, getting readers to focus on the character's relationships rather than their looks. The colored skin is not verbalized, therefore, regarded as "natural," or rather,

"invisible." This is also supported by the use of manga as style, which tends to not translate race visually. This illustrates the point of racial depiction in graphic novels and manga in the previous discussion on *American Born Chinese* and *Dragon Ball,* where it was argued that manga's drawing style tends to detract from physical difference. Race is "invisible" in manga, which is a stance supported by North American society and serves Chmakova's treatment of racial differences in her text.

Meta-referencing

As a manga that reflects on North American manga fandoms and practices, *Dramacon* addresses the problem of "Japaneseness" in "OEL" manga and manga-related activities within North American fandoms. It does so not only on surface level but also explicitly within the plot itself as a heated debate amongst fans about whether "OEL" manga can (or should be called) "manga." Through her story, Chmakova comments how few fans encourage creators to reinterpret the medium, which results in artistic stagnation focused on fanart instead of publication of their original manga stories or the creation of comics in a style better suited to the industry's/readers' demands. This resistance creates great obstacles to aspiring manga artists who would like industry jobs. She uses a scene early in the second volume to bring awareness to this problem: while waiting for customers, some kids stop at their table and look at Christie and Beth's comic (p. 234). They like it, but one girl comments that it is "not real manga." The others disagree but do not end up buying it either. Christie is frustrated at this situation and Raj, sitting nearby, overhears and explains that he and his team make dōjinshi and fanart of popular Japanese titles instead, as they sell better. When

Beth asks if they have ever created original characters, Raj replies "Ha ha, no - we tried once, and we bombed so bad!" (p. 236)[79].

Later, a young boy approaches the table as people are praising Beth's manga but he yells out that it is not manga. The other fans challenge him, saying that "it looks like manga," but he aggressively disagrees. Lida, a professional "OEL" manga artist, tries to calm things down and is recognized by the fans as "Lida-san, the manga artist." This angers the young boy even further, replying that she is not and her work "isn't manga either" (p.251). After Lida's fans insist her work really is manga, he screams that it is not because she is not Japanese and only Japanese people can make manga. When this view is challenged further by Lida applying the "pizza counter-argument" (that by the same logic, a pizza can only be pizza if made by an Italian in Italy), the boy yells that Lida cannot make manga because she is not Japanese, and neither can Beth because not only is she not Japanese, but "she's not even white" (p.254).

Another issue raised by this scene is the "OEL" mangaka's identity, when the boy classes Lida as inferior to a Japanese person in regards to her ability to be a mangaka. Furthermore, racism is added when he places Beth even lower down the scale because she is black. These prejudiced and racial slurs may indicate underlying sentiments within manga fandoms in North America—as outlined in chapter 2. Chmakova is not unaware of manga's ability to hide such a loaded subject, and chooses how to discuss this issue through the story, knowing that the style is insufficient to drive the point. The scene also reflects the power that original

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[79] This scene can also serve as a commentary on the issues of authenticity surrounding "OEL" manga, as seen from Chmakova's perspective.

manga can have in changing mindsets based on prejudice through discussing the issue of "authenticity" openly in the text, thus encouraging fellow artists and addressing further issues of great importance to the fandom and industry.

Re-imagining femininity in shōjo manga.

Christie repeatedly admires Beth for having a "strong work ethic"(p. 528) and pursuing her dream in spite of adversity (pp. 276, 332, 377, 531-532). Beth is regarded and appreciated as a talented artist capable of holding any kind of position in society rather than those arising from stereotypes about her gender/race. Christie, in turn, is encouraged to find her own strengths rather than seeking a "strong, male presence" in her life. Only when Christie is able to assert herself independently of Matt in her professional and personal life, do they come together as a couple.

Christie, Beth and the rest of the female cast exist without the need of male presence/power. The opposition they face is not some external force making them suffer or destroying their world or their love, but rather their need to grow beyond personal expectations. This addresses the audience's ideals in regards to the empowerment of women, especially women in love. With a cultural background that involves the revolution of women's rights, North American fans of anime and manga are familiar with women like Christie and Beth. That is, those who do not take their identity from their relationships with men and who can assert themselves.

Further, the stereotype in comics and even videogames is that female characters are "in need of saving" and this is reinforced as "very attractive," and not just in the shōjo genre. Some exception to this can be seen in *Sailor Moon*, where female characters have power of their own and are allies with men instead of competitors for their attention/power, but they are also encouraged to be feminine and not be ashamed of expressing emotion. This could be why *Sailor Moon* gained so many fans in the West[80]. However, in *Sailor Moon*, "girl power" and strength comes from "femininity:" their magic comes from artifacts that resemble makeup tools and though they are warriors whose goal is saving the world, "ultimate success" is still considered as beauty, marriage, and children.

In inverse examples of role-reinterpretation such as *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, the lead is a female character that asserts herself as equal to men, but in order to do so, casts away her femininity as weakness. In *Dramacon*, traditional female roles and counter-roles are reinterpreted by having women who pursue professional success over romantic relationships without the need to act "male" as a definition of strength[81] and who are not particularly interested in being "pretty" (pp. 542-543). Furthermore, by having male characters that support, admire and are attracted to them for this (pp. 270, 554-555, 593-594), the women in *Dramacon* take on multiple levels of female identity that reflect on women's roles within their communities and ultimately reinterpret what it means to be "strong", "beautiful" and "lovable" in manga.

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[80] Perhaps enhanced also by the "Girl Power!" movement of the early 2000's, as seen in the emergence of girl bands (Spice Girls) and girl-centered animated shows (*Powerpuff Girls*).

[81] As in examples such as in page 235, where Christie openly and unapologetically allows herself to cry and feel sad without feeling inferior for doing so.

Culture-specific references in pictograms and gags

The artwork and style is supported by the emotional focus of the story by use of abundant page spreads with floating panels, expressive patterned backgrounds and facial closeups, in which can be found abundantly in mainstream Japanese shōjo manga (Fig. 17 as well as pp. 119-120, 218-219, 307-308, are only a few of the myriad of examples).

[Fig. 17 -Examples of patterned background depicting an emotional state. *Dramacon*, pp. 102-103 © 2008 Svetlana Chmakova. Courtesy of Tokyopop.]

Pictograms, such as sweatdrops, crosshatches, speed and impact lines can be found with high frequency. Chmakova also uses mini-panels inside larger ones, and these are filled with *chibi* ("SD") versions of characters which depict Christie's feelings towards people and events in her life[82]. Another example is when we see a background of lightning bolts expressing Christie's mortification at being outed as a con "noob" (newcomer) (pp. 16-17). Early in the first volume, Christie gives Matt a nudge on his shoulder with her fist, to jokingly get him to stop teasing her, a gesture that may come across as more "American" than Japanese (p.19). A more culturally-specific example can be seen in a scene where Christie is drawn with jagged teeth and a split tongue, resembling a snake. Although a crosshatch is used, the "snake tongue" gag specifies that Christie's retort is "venomous," as such reactions are sometimes described in English (p.31). By employing these elements, that reference inside jokes and

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[82] Which can be seen as one form of storytelling/expression of first-person perspective.

idioms relative to source culture, *Dramacon* manages to alleviate tension that usually results from too much "Japaneseness" in the contents of the story.

"Flow"/reading direction

As stated previously, manga should arrange all visual elements (artwork, dialogue, speech bubbles, landscapes) in the same direction to ensure seamless "flow" of the reader's gaze across pages. This allows for a comfortable reading/consuming experience. Observing the English reading direction from left to right allows Chmakova's artwork and layout to be "scanned" seamlessly[83]. In the example figure below, she has used a dynamic 45° angle from top-left to bottom-right panels, creating a "slope" that the reader can visually "ride" as they read the text. To relieve the tension created by such a strong diagonal line, she places a close up of Christie facing up and right in the bottom-left corner panel. The angle of Christie's hand and gaze match that of Matt's on the top-right corner of the spread. This creates an opposite-angled imaginary line that holds the artwork in balance like an invisible "x" (pp. 20-21, Fig. 18).

[Figure 18 - Example of an "OEL" manga page spread. *Dramacon*, pp. 20-21 © 2008 Svetlana Chmakova. Courtesy of Tokyopop.]

Of course, reading direction is not just an issue of character placement, since agents such as word bubbles must enhance page flow as well. As is typical of most "OEL" manga,

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[83] And I argue, preferable to avoid/alleviate visual tension regarding panel and artwork "flow" (see section 1 of chapter 3 regarding common OEL manga style "mistakes.")

Chmakova draws randomly-shaped bubbles, sometimes referencing the light and flowing ones seen in shōjo manga. Nonetheless, she draws them for the most part horizontally instead of vertically, to better accommodate English script, and refrains from inserting too much dialogue into each bubble (pp. 62-63). That being said, the manga is not without mistakes regarding the placing of the bubbles within the artwork and panels: In one scene, the dialogue between Matt and Christie in the third panel is supposed to read: "you're soaked", followed by, "so are you" (p.355), but the bubble containing the second phrase is placed a little higher than the first. The eye registers the higher bubble first, mixing up the order.

Onomatopoeia and mimesis

Cathy Sell suggests that while "OEL" manga artists do not need to use a lot of onomatopoeia and mimesis in their work, when used well, they can add "powerfully to the aesthetic of the artwork" (Sell 2011: 99). They are a rich part of Japanese manga's tradition and are an inextricable part of the stylistic identity of manga. In order to adhere to this characteristic of manga's style, one method that "OEL" manga artists use to increase their use of onomatopoeia is employing Japanese script or romanizations of Japanese terms, as a way to reference Japan (Sell 2011: 100), and *Dramacon* is full of references to manga-specific onomatopoeia (pp.17, 54-55, 84 and 483 are just a few examples). The manga does, however, try to include references to English language slang as well, such as Christie and Beth drawn as animated floor carpets to visually represent the phrase "lying like rugs" (p. 333). Many sounds used are typical of English, such as "tromp" to symbolize trampling and "hahaha" as laughter (pp. 50-51), but many words are also used as mimesis, such as "squish",

"push" and "shove". Using word/sound references specific to the source language may help the work position itself closer to the target audience's emotional comfort zone.

Localizing characters

Matt is written as an aloof, sarcastic college guy who is handsome but difficult to get along with. Chmakova emphasizes his emotional detachment by drawing him with perpetually-on sunglasses. While there is a backstory that explains this, the visual prop also immediately gives insight into his personality (i.e., his "closed-off" nature). Christie, on the other hand, is drawn in a way that clearly shows her profound sensitivity: large eyes and a very wide range of facial expressions (as well as chibi-versions of herself). However, Chmakova also draws attention to Christie's practical and assertive side by dressing her in baggy jeans and t-shirts rather than girly, elaborate outfits[84]. Characters are multi-layered: Matt is not always interested in "doing the right thing" and Christie appears more concerned with pursuing a career than a boyfriend. These choices in characterization regarding physical attributes, fashion style and personality traits may challenge stereotypes regarding the traditional hero/ heroine in a romantic manga story and may bring the characters "closer to home" for North American readers.

Furthermore, the only distinguishing characteristic between white and non-white characters is in the use of darker tone for their skin[85]. But nothing in the facial features suggests racial

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[84] The only time she ever wears a skirt or dress in the whole series is when she is cosplaying, and there were no instances of her wearing high heels at all.

[85] Possible thanks to making the tones digitally.

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differences; a point explored in the earlier analysis, of manga's tendency to disregard race. In an interaction between Raj and Beth late into the third volume, there is nothing in the drawing style that points to their different ethnicities (p. 553, Fig. 19). As people "of color," the same intensity of screentone is used, and no other distinguishing characteristics (for example, dressing Raj in traditional Indian costume or Beth in something "African-American") are made to tell the reader that these characters are physically different from each other in any way other than gender.

[Fig. 19 - Depiction of POC (people-of-color) characters in *Dramacon*. *Dramacon*, pp. 552-553 © 2008 Svetlana Chmakova. Courtesy of Tokyopop.]

Localizing emotion

What makes *Dramacon* enjoyable and readable is that it does not try to be a Japanese manga. Instead, it admits its position as an "OEL" manga and as a product of its environment: an original English-language manga created by a North American manga fan for North American manga fans. It explores its potential and its cultural background, as well as the ways in which it can re-interpret manga in a personal, localized way.

Some scholars believe that, "less 'Japaneseness' is better for the transnational circulation of manga and anime [….]. For the American audience, they might have found a 'mixture of familiarity' in Japanese manga from their imaginations and the collective memories **within their own cultural context** [emphasis mine]." (Wong 2006: 40). This "mixture of familiarity" requires a delicate balance between the use of Japanese manga elements and

referencing what is familiar for the audience. This relates to how "OEL" manga's attempts at "Japaneseness" caused criticism and drove readers away even from works that have been awarded for being superior in technique. It is well known that a lot of "OEL" manga tends to be set in fantastic make-believe worlds, where referencing a culture-specific issue is not particularly important to the story and in some cases, even undesirable[86]. But this need not mean that the default cultural context original characters should always perform is Japanese, especially after its become apparent that most dislike this tendency.

Beyond the label

What is Japanese manga? It is manga written/drawn in Japan in Japanese by Japanese for Japanese. What this chain illustrates that Japanese manga is produced or targeted for Japanese readers, and this is still the case even when translated and consumed abroad. "OEL" manga was an attempt at creating the same effect but from within, and finally it has become clear that it must negotiate its roots (Western) with the borrowed style (Japanese) but this inevitably causes tension. The problem lies in cultural context, rather than the usage of manga "style." If the intention were to make a Japanese manga, then it would not be an issue if the work was as "Japanese" as possible. However, the point of "OEL" manga was to publish original stories in English that serve for entertainment, same as any comics mainstream. It is obvious that regarding language, certain rules must be obeyed and in the case of the artwork, "manga style" may sometimes need to be negotiated aesthetically to fit a language it was not conceived for. Perhaps through original handling of "manga style" and

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[86] Such as in the case of Malaysian manga artist Kaoru and her adaptation of shōjo tropes to fit within the highly censored media situation of Malaysia (Gan 2011).

referencing the familiar and the emotional reality of its source culture, "OEL" manga may be capable of offering novel perspectives on traditional manga genres and tropes, as well as allow for a hybrid form of expression to emerge through the sampling and remixing of media content.

However, at this point, it is no longer useful to keep discussing these works as "OEL" manga because, as it has become clear throughout the overall discussion, "OEL" and "Japaneseness" have become terms that are mutually exclusive. One means the other and are linked forever in the minds of those involved in manga and anime communities in North America and worldwide. "OEL" was the project of manga translation companies, mainly Tokyopop, to supply readers with official local manga, an ambitious project that was undertaken with profit as the main reason and goal, and which overlooked the complicated issue of localizing manga (and the artists themselves) in a way that would fit the reality of the North American anime and manga community and market.

From the beginning, as Santos explained through his creation process of the buzzword, it was understood that "OEL manga" is just a label, and it is inextricably linked to Tokyopop's "100% authentic manga" marketing campaign. For lack of a better word, it has been attached to emerging works in the market but it does not signify (anymore) original manga made in English. It means (and always did) a project by Tokyopop to create local manga and sell it like their translations, but perhaps it is time to move away from the label for good. Words and phrases like "manga," "anime," "mangaka" and "original local manga" have taken completely different meanings since, pointing to a much more mixed and individual approach.

With *Dramacon*, I would like to finalize the discussion of "OEL" manga, taking it from buzzword, to label, to style to leaving it as a signifier of a business model by Tokyopop, and thus continue onwards by focusing on what original local manga really is and how it works. The "original manga made in English" (or other languages) that is being created now has little to do with the early titles published by Tokyopop and similar publishing houses; it is much more hybrid and deliberate in its use of "manga style" and much more experimental with narrative and other such settings. Also, it no longer sources its definition or value from being published by manga translation companies, although some of it continues to be sold through them. The questions in artists' minds, such as "how can I be a professional manga artist where I am?" or "how can I and my work be recognized as 'manga'?" are the heart of this whole study, which used the case of "OEL manga" to uncover the inner workings of original local manga publishing and the phenomenon of people across the globe who want to work in comics by referencing manga. Ultimately, we can either expand the definition of "OEL" to encompass this phenomenon, or leave the buzzword in the past, to simply mean the manga Tokyopop and related companies launched through their marketing projects, but that failed to truly grasp what original local manga is becoming[87].

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[87] Such as the recent work of Queenie Chan, "OEL" manga artist of Australian-Chinese descent. She has published several books where the paneling of her manga merges with text in an innovative way. For further information, please see her book "Small Shen" (http://www.queeniechan.com) Last access 2014/03/13.

CHAPTER 4   ARTISTS: BEYOND "OEL" MANGA

Perhaps the biggest singular issue that stands out regarding original manga practices is that as manga certainly gained an impressive amount of popularity in the United States and Europe, it was for the most part amongst young women. For some of these girls, whose only interaction with comics had been with the male-dominated worlds of superhero comics, it was the first time they encountered works that offered a female perspective. This experience encouraged many to aspire to make careers in the comics business, many of them hoping to work specifically in the manga industry. Learning of women in Japan who had flourishing careers made them realize that comics were definitely not a "boys only club." The spread of manga's influence overseas, amongst female readers in particular, and the subsequent rise of women as manga artists was precisely what the conference titled "Women's Manga beyond Japan: Contemporary Comics as Cultural Crossroads in Asia" at the National University of Singapore, in February of 2011 wished to address. As part of this conference, a workshop titled "Using Manga to tell Local Stories" was held, in order to explore manga's "glocality" (a portmanteau of "global" and "local"), or more precisely, the ways in which manga as a cultural product that is consumed on a global scale, is appropriated and used by artists on a local scale. This aim was explored through the works and experiences of the 5 invited artists to said workshop, all South-East Asian women with careers in comics, some of whom had chosen such paths specifically thanks to manga. The proceedings of said workshop, followingly presented, expand on the point suggested at the end of chapter 3's case study, that perhaps a more "local" approach at storytelling, while continuing to use "manga style," could contribute towards a more positive reception for local manga, while at the same time, providing a more in-depth view into the artist's personal experience as such.

Although the artists from this workshop are not by definition manga artists[1], by looking at their experiences as local artists we can gain insight as to how the goal of becoming a professional manga artist is being carried out by different people across the globe. These testimonies and analyses also serve to trace how the label "OEL" itself has evolved since its inception, and understand how it is being treated currently. As we have come to understand through this study, "OEL manga" is, in essence, original manga made for North American audiences, but that needs to reference its source culture to be accepted by readers. For this reason, it is beneficial to study other cases of artists who do local manga who are not Japanese nor are from places with manga or even comics industries. This forces the artist to accommodate manga into the media framework of their own society and culture in specific ways. In understanding the position of local manga artists, we can understand the future of non-Japanese original manga industries in general.

Further, although it is possible to gather some understanding of this through the personal experience of the three cases studies of Matsumoto, Miyazawa and Chmakova previously presented, studies that focus on the artist's experience are often lacking. To contribute to this scarce area of study, this chapter closes with personal insights from several original manga artists from different parts of the world and at different "stages" of the professional scale. Interviewed personally at comics conventions as well as through email contact, they discuss expectations and goals in regards to manga-creation as well as opinions on their local situation of "manga." These interviews were made to professional and amateur artists, from both anglophone and non-english speaking countries, in an attempt to gather wider perspectives on pursuing manga as a career, possibilities, current situation and, possibly, an idea of future trends.

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[1] Since they are artists from South East Asia, and their comics are not originally written or published in English, they cannot be considered "OEL" in the strict sense of the word. Further, "OEL" as a Tokyopop label also cannot be applied here. Nonetheless, they are original manga artists who undergo similar challenges and experiences as "strictly defined" OEL manga artists, and they are presented here for comparison and analysis.

Section 1 - On "Women Using Manga to tell Local Stories" in South East Asia: a workshop

As previously mentioned, most of the research on manga's globalization has been focused mainly on readers and their fandoms[2]. If the artist become the subject of research, critics often point out how their manga are global but not really local in terms of contents. This became evident when in December 2009, at the 1st International Conference on comics and manga at the Kyoto International Manga Museum, comics critic Lim Cheng Tju spoke about the current situation in Singapore and Malaysia, stressing the importance of historical reference in regards to contents. He argued that without a sense of history, the work loses its relation to social reality, as "we are products of our own experience and history"(Lim 2010: 187). However, it seems that Singapore's comics culture no longer shows a strong inclination towards social and political change (Lim 2010: 194), and young Malaysian artists prefer recently to draw in an emulation of Japanese manga style rather than in the local style created by the country's most famous cartoonist, Lat[3]. They rather tell stories about sci-fi or fantasy themes than explore the issues their country is going through socially, politically and economically in their work (Lim 2010: 196-198). Apparently, comics don't live up to the critic's expectations if they make no reference to their local histories. However, is it really the case that comics artists from Singapore and Malaysia (and especially those employing manga style) do not wish to speak about local realities[4]? Does this also apply to other parts

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[2] For example: Toni Johnson-Woods, ed. (2010) *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*, Continuum; Roland Kelts (2007), *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the U.S.*, (Palgrave). This trend can also be seen in the works of Susan Napier and Anne Allison.

[3] His full name is Datuk Mohammad Nor Khalid, born in Kota Baru, Perak, Malaysia in 1951.

[4] Further, could this also be a reflection on how manga is being used in Western countries, particularly those without their own comics industries.

of Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia and Thailand? The comics/manga[5] artists we invited to our workshop — Laksami Wasitnitiwat , Foo Swee Chin, Hu Jingxuan, Sarah Joan Mohktar and Dwinita Larasati —come from these four places, and none of these countries have what you can call an established[6] comics industry or a local comics style. Although Lim argues the contrary for Malaysia, Lat's style is precisely that: Lat's style. He has become representative of his country's comics culture, but his style is not the standard for the whole nation, or there would certainly be a majority of Malaysian comics artists drawing in a very similar way to him, and apparently there are not.

What we see in present Malaysia, Singapore, and even in Indonesia and Thailand are people doing comics that resemble Japanese manga. Yes, they are about outer space and fantasy worlds most of the time, but it's not the majority, because there is no majority. In these countries, comics are already a subculture and manga-style comics, albeit pretty popular, are an even smaller niche. The artists that make them are isolated cases, but their number has been increasing with incredible speed. The age of digital media has made it possible to for them to emerge with relative ease, and so we now have thousands, if not millions of young men and women around the globe, writing and drawing their own comics, which thanks to globalization, are often manga-esque in style.

When the style we now know as Japanese manga began to emerge in post-war Japan, it was, at least partially, in response to comics from the West, particularly American comics (Berndt 2007: 33; 2009: 211, 214-215). The opposite seems to be occurring now: Japanese manga is serving as inspiration for other comics cultures affecting more regions than just America or

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[5] When used in this way, "manga" refers to the drawing style, rather than to comics of Japanese origin. When used alongside the term "comics" in unison, it refers to how these artists sometimes make comics (not in "manga" style) and sometimes manga (comics in manga style).

[6] For example: American superhero comics, Francobelgian *bande déssineé* or Japanese manga.

Europe. Stylistically, these comics may be reminiscent of manga in most cases, but they do not really escape their local reality, starting from the fact that they are usually made and published in the local language, and their content greatly depends on the particular regulations, if not censorship laws of their country of origin[7]. This, however, is a matter of social environment, and what are comics if not the popular media product of a particular society? Making manga in places where comics are culturally less acknowledged than in Japan, is in its own way a form of defiance, or "deviant art."

The wave of globalization propels manga beyond national borders and previous genres, themes and styles. There does not seem to be a majority, nor benchmark for defining these new works: all that can be seen is a growing tendency. Against this background, it was the intention of the workshop to gain some insight into this trend by talking with artists that are directly involved in "manga" as well as in telling "local" stories. The examples of the five participants may help to gain a better understanding the current situation of "women's manga" but more so in the current comics/manga world of Southeast Asia, and this again may comment on what is happening on a worldwide scale.

Women as professional manga artists

Probably, the most notable effect of manga's globalization has been the rise of women[8] making manga and aiming for careers as professionals in this field. But often, the main question in the minds of these artists is: can I truly be a professional, as in work full-time as an artist in comics/manga? The women at the workshop, as well as many in other sides of the

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[7] As in the case of Malaysian manga artist, Kaoru, referenced throughout this dissertation. See Gan 2011.

[8] In the case of Asia, I refer to women from Asian countries without strong comics industries as distinct from Japanese, Korean or Chinese women who can rely on manga, manhwa and manhua respectively.

world who are also striving for this goal, face this issue on a daily basis. Apparently, the answers are very personal, as are the criteria by which they are measured. However, if such criteria were to be based on how closely the artist's work process and status in the industry matches the Japanese model, Laksami Wasitnitiwat could then be considered a "pro" manga artist *par excellence*, and she does view herself as such.

（1）**Thai shōjo manga: Laksami's "Dim Sum Studio"**

Laksami Wasitnitiwat is a Thai manga artist that leads a three-artist team called "Dim Sum Studio[9]." Their first series was a comicalization of Thailand's famous romantic *lakorn* (Thai word for romantic TV series) *Dang duang harutai* ("Like the heart"). Their latest and best-known one is *Angkor Endless Love*, a romantic historical fantasy story set in ancient Thailand about a Thai girl who is transported into this ancient kingdom and is entrapped into the political problems of the time.

Laksami has been drawing manga for over ten years. She became interested in manga when she was around seven to eight years old, but being exposed to shōjo manga is what made her want to go into the comics business and focus on romantic stories. She brings in most of the story herself, while her team does the penciling, inking and lettering. The studio is organized hierarchically, similar to how manga studios work in Japan. The main difference is that the assistants are not assigned one specific job, i.e. one person for pencils, one for inks only, but rather every person can do a little bit of everything. At present, there are only three women beside her in the team. However, they are part of a larger company called EQ Publishing

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[9] For more information on Dim Sum Studios and Laksami, please refer to Mashima Tojirakarn's essay (2011).

(Tojirakarn 2011), which deals with not just manga, but other kinds of comics as well and even other media such as games magazines. Dim Sum Studio is specifically the section that specializes on shōjo manga.

As distinct from Japan where manga pages are typically drawn on specially made B4 sized paper, Laksami normally does her artwork on regular A4 paper, which is then manually inked by one or two of the other artists, and scanned for digital screentoning done in Photoshop, made to look almost indistinguishable from manually-rendered Japanese screentones. The reading direction follows Thai script, which runs left to right. After it is lettered, the work goes directly to tankōbon format, since manga magazines haven't taken root in Thailand and people are more used to pocketbook editions.

Global style, local story

Laksami explained at the workshop that part of the success of *Angkor Endless Love* is the theme of "forbidden love," which in Thai culture is a popular topic in romantic stories. While stylistically resembling the stereotypes of Japanese shōjo manga (big, sparkly eyes and flowing hair, beautiful boys, depictions of flowers in the backgrounds, and romantic settings) (Fig. 1), Dim Sum Studio prefer local subjects for their content, such as folk love stories, local TV dramas or historical tales. For Dim Sum Studio, keeping the setting "close to home" and offering artwork that resembles what manga readers in Thailand are used to, is obviously the best strategy for commercial success.

[Fig. 1 - From Dim Sum Studio's *Angkor Endless Love*, vol. 2, EQ Publishing, Thailand, 2009.]

Nonetheless, the way that Laksami creates manga and her views on "being a professional" in the manga business, as well as her marketing strategies are not necessarily shared by other female artists who make comics or manga outside of Japan. In some instances, as in the case of Singaporean comics artist FSc, there is an different approach, with a style more individual but still resembling manga, and stories which are still local, but in a highly personal manner.

（２）**Edging towards individual expression: FSc and Hu Jingxuan**

FSc

Foo Swee Chin, better known as FSc, is a comics artist from Singapore. She has been drawing comics for about eighteen years, starting out when she was fourteen years old. At first her comics were published in Singapore, and later in Taiwan, the U.S. and even Japan. She is currently drawing for Neko Press[10] and Slave Labor Graphics (SLG)[11], both independent comics publishers in the United States. Her best-known work was on SLG's series *Nightmares and Fairytales*[12], written by Serena Valentino, a renowned comics scenario writer based in San Francisco. FSc has also created numerous books of her own, including the reverse alphabet book called *Zeet*, which can be found on her personal website[13], and a webcomic called *Clairvoyance*, serialized in both English and Japanese on a monthly web comics website called POCOPOCO (Otha publishing)[14].

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[10] www.nekopresscomics.com (last access 2013/09/06)

[11] SLG is well known for publishing darkly humorous, offbeat comics (www.slgcomic.com) (last access 2013/09/06).

[12] She worked on volumes 1 and 2 (SLG Publ., 2004, 2005).

[13] http://fscwasteland.net/manga/main.html (last access 2013/09/06)

[14] http://www.poco2.jp/comic/clairvoyance/ (last access 2013/09/06)

FSc is a very introverted person. "I don't do well with crowds," she explained during the workshop interview. For her, comics are a way to relate to the "outside world." Her drawing style functions as a very personal form of expression. Stylistically, it could be described as a type of manga with gothic-like qualities (i.e dark colors or just black and white, sharp instead of soft and round edges, themes relating to death, dark supernatural beings such as vampires or werewolves, sado-masochism, suicide, etc.).

Although wanting to create a career out of making comics, FSc is more concerned with developing a style that focuses on expressing her very own thoughts and emotional states. Her work process is rather intuitive as opposed to a more calculated, industrialized approach, such as Laksami's. Although she draws comics meant for the public, her intention is self-exploration, both in narrative and style (Fig. 2). However, she has had to make some compromises in order to be able to publish her stories. For example, the panel-layouts of her pages differ for American and Japanese audiences (Fig. 3, 4). She feels she has had to succumb to a more "typical" manga style for the work to be well received in Japan, whereas American audiences seem to have no problem with her original form. Ultimately, she prefers to do dōjinshi because they are free from the constraints of editors' influences and the need to be marketable.

[Fig. 2 – A sketch done by FSc on top of the conference handout on Feb. 26, 2011.]

[Fig. 3 – From the series *MuZz*, a webcomic published in print by SLG (Published online in 2004, in print in 2008).]

[Fig. 4 – From the series *Morikaiko*, published by Asukashinsha in Japan (2008).]

Because her drawing style is so personal and obscure, her comics cater mostly to very specific groups of readers, such as dōjinshi circles, not just in Singapore, but overseas as well. She participates frequently in Japan's Comiket[15], where she is very well known as a dōjinshi artist. In fact, she has gained most of her readers through direct appearances at such events. Similarly, Laksami also connects with her fans in an approach that could be considered "very direct" by Japanese standards. She receives a lot of fan art of Dim Sum Studio's titles, and she responds to the fans by email personally. She does fan service — that is, inserts something into the narrative, changes in the story a little bit or even adjusts the content of subsequent volumes to please fans' requests — as long as the suggestions are not improper. She has even had instances of cosplay of her company's titles at the annual Thai book fair.

In the end, Laksami and FSc want to be professional comics/manga artists, but both have their own idea of what that entails. For both, becoming a professional manga artist is pretty much a trial and error process as there are barely any precedents in either of their countries of origin. But while Laksami considers herself an accomplished professional manga artist because she has gotten to a point where she earns her living from it, FSc claims that for her it's not about the money, though she admits that money is also necessary. Ultimately for her, doing comics is about the act of creating more than anything else.

Local settings like Laksami's are not the only way in which manga can be made relevant to the place where it is made and consumed. Experimenting with style is another way of localizing manga. Like FSc, Hu Jingxuan, who is also from Singapore, uses manga style to create comics that become a window into her inner world

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[15] Otherwise known as Comic Market, it is the world's largest self-published manga fair, held twice a year in Tokyo.

Hu Jingxuan

Hu Jingxuan is originally from Singapore but resides in Chicago, where she worked towards a master's degree in Fine Art, and is also publishing a monthly strip in a local newspaper. She has had extensive experience with manga since high school, when she balanced homework and exams with putting out at least 20 manga pages a month for several local newspapers and being a "manga correspondent" for Singapore Press Holding (2003-05). Her debut work was a story titled "Lament" in the local manga magazine *Mugen*, a story she is still working on. More recently her story titled "Harpy Lullaby" was included in the 1st volume of the Southeast Asian Anthology *Liquid City*, edited by Sonny Liew. She also sometimes does illustrations for mainstream Chinese comics magazines, but since living in the U.S. she has been taking on projects from both countries as a freelancer.

Jingxuan began drawing manga in 2003, inspired by watching Japanese anime series on local TV, such as *Dragon Ball* and *Sailor Moon*. Her drawings started out as illustrations, which later developed into single page comics, expanded into short stories and progressed towards longer narratives in time. Though she claims to be interested in making manga, she calls herself a "graphic novel artist," since she feels her style is not exactly manga, but a combination of many influences with a preference for long narratives. She shares FSc's sentiment about manga-making as a lonely endeavor. Eventually, Jingxuan developed a distinct drawing style that is heavily influenced by gothic culture and Japanese *visual-kei*[16] and which she describes as "organic," "decorative" and "ornamental" (Fig. 5). Sadness and

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[16] Japanese for "visual style" or "visual system," a trend among Japanese male musicians characterized by the use of make-up, elaborate hairstyles and flamboyant costumes and often, but not always, coupled with androgynous appearances reminiscent of *bishōnen* characters (beautiful boys) in female manga genres.

other negative emotions especially are what propel her to draw. For her, drawing is a way to deal with her feelings, similar to keeping a journal or writing poetry. Some of her influences in style are the Japanese artists Yuki Kaori (*Angel Sanctuary*) and Amano Yoshitaka (*Vampire Hunter D*). The "gothic" quality[17] of her work is something she does not consider mainstream, at least for Singaporean audiences, and its acceptance is usually an issue of worry for her. This worry was confirmed when a Chinese publisher told her that her work was very good, but a little "too dark" in the mood and topics. As distinct from the U.S. she had to make respective changes to be published in Mainland China.

[Fig. 5 – From "Lament" (2007), *Mugen Magazine*, vol. 1.]

It is important to point out that Jingxuan, like FSc, is a published author, both in her country of origin as well as overseas. Yet, even as commercial artists, the intention of both of them is to explore their inner selves and psyches, and use their work as an emotional outlet, rather than catering to what may be most profitable to draw. Nonetheless, the usage of comics as a platform for self-exploration has not been an obstacle for achieving professional author status. While it has been difficult for them to break into the Japanese and Chinese markets, their works have been well received in the U.S, where non-mainstream stylistic approaches appear to be encouraged. The fact that they use manga-based drawing styles for experimentation is not so surprising, for "manga," while mainstream in Japan, is but a subculture elsewhere, and subcultures typically invite difference (Berndt 2011, Hebdige 1979). Manga's industrialized system of production and distribution changes when used overseas: particularly female artists use it as a tool that is "foreign," and therefore free, to talk about what is taboo, intimate and different (Merino 2008: 74-76, 82). What has been

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[17] Black and/or dark colors, death/pain related themes, dark supernatural beings, sharp edges and intricate Victorian-like designs.

stated about Japanese anime applies to manga as well: anime was very well received in the U.S. mainly due to "its thematic complexity compared to other animation," but also because it was outside of the mainstream, exotic, and different. Made not just for children, it does not always have to be politically correct. "There is a sense of freedom (of expression) which tends to lack in [the] American counterpart"(Napier 2000: 249-250). This freedom opens up possibilities for anime and manga to be used in local popular media.

Manga's influence on young women comics artists and cartoonists from Southeast Asia can certainly be felt in Laksami's works, but also in FSc's imaginative interpretations and Jingxuan's intricate designs. Although very different, all three have their artistic origin in Japanese manga. For Malaysian artist Sarah Joan Mohktar, it served as a kind of foundation, onto which she is creating an original style of her own, one that does not resemble manga as much anymore.

（3）**Hybridity of style: Sarah's "Rojak-ness"**

Sarah Joan Mohktar began her career in comics at the age of fifteen, which gained her great recognition as the youngest comics artist ever published in Malaysia[18]. She started out publishing short strips in local newspapers, and her debut work was a comic strip titled "Awek Aspuri[19]" that was based on her personal experiences in a Malay all-girls boarding school. It was first published in *Ujang* Magazine, a bimonthly comics and games magazine[20], in 1998. The strip continued until Sarah left *Ujang* in 2001 to focus on her

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[18] As claimed by herself during the workshop (sourced from audio recording, 2011).

[19] *Awek* in Malay means "chic" or "cute" and *Aspuri* can be translated as "princess" or "hip girl."

[20] Itself a spin-off of *Gila-Gila* Magazine, considered to be the pioneer of Malaysian comics and cartoons magazines (Mahamood 2010: 336-337), *Ujang* means "dude" in Malay, according to Sarah.

university studies: an undergraduate in Fine Arts with a focus on printmaking, and later on a master's degree in the same field. After a break from comics, she returned to the scene with *Rojak*, a short story made for the Malaysian version of the "24-Hour Comic Challenge[21]." While she liked *Tintin*, *Asterix*, *Calvin and Hobbes* and *Archie Comics* in primary school, later on in high school she quickly became a big fan of manga, such as Toriyama Akira's *Dragon Ball*. As a result, she uses visual gags prominently and has a preference for comedy in her stories (Fig. 6). She also worked on an ongoing series titled *My Spy*, made under auspice of the Malaysian Creative Development Corporation.

[Fig. 6 – From "Awek Aspuri," by Sarah Joan Mohktar, *Ujang* Magazine, 1998.]

[Fig. 7 – First page of *Rojak*[22], by Sarah Joan Mohktar.]

In 2006, after a five-year break from the comics scene, Sarah decided to participate in the 24-hour comic challenge when she was four months pregnant with her first child[23]. The result turned out to be the story *Rojak* (Fig. 7) done in just one day as stated by the rules of the challenge. Based on her memories about being an Irish-Malay girl at a Muslim all-girls boarding school, she titled it with the Malay word *rojak* which signifies both a salad made of mixed ingredients and someone of mixed race. Generally, this "rojak-ness" bleeds into Sarah's work, as her comics look more like a hybrid of Asian and Western influences. Considering that Japanese manga is itself a stylistic hybrid, her works may be called manga-esque in spirit, even if they don't look so.

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[21] http://www.24hourcomicsday.com (last access 2013/09/06).

[22] Complete at http://issuu.com/pixipress/docs/rojakpdf (last access 2013/09/06).

[23] http://sarah-joan.blogspot.com/p/artist-resume.html (last access 2013/09/06).

Like Jingxuan, Sarah believes that female comics artists are loners and contrary to what many believe, not "girly girls." At first she didn't have any peers around her either. However, rather than participating in a like-minded community of peers, for her the benchmark was to get published in a local magazine, as proof of her competence as an artist. To be a "professional" initially meant not being a freelancer, but a well-paid comics artist with a monthly salary at a magazine, like during her time as a commissioned artist at *Ujang* Magazine. This is in line with Laksami's concept of professional success. However, since *Rojak*, Sarah has rejected the idea of just being an "employee" compromising personal motivations for getting a stable position at a company. She has developed a more individual approach to making comics experimenting with style, themes and ultimately "being true to oneself." She is a big fan of Lat, whose work is what she considers the key combination for a truly professional comics artist: "being a bestseller and being true to yourself." Thus, Sarah stands between Laksami's concept of success and FSc's devotion to creating. Or rather, she stands at a merging point, where the artist does not need to opt for one or the other. Nowadays, Sarah is fully engaged with her audience through social media communities and her work reflect a Sarah much more comfortable with herself and her "inner journey" as an artist rather than someone concerned with commercial success.[24] But is it really possible to be a professional comics/manga artist without ever having to make any compromises, whether in art or in business? The idea may not be so far-fetched considering that manga in Southeast Asia is still waiting for its rules to be fully written.

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[24] As apparent through her frequent postings of sketches and ideas through her Instagram newsfeed (www.instagram.com/sarahjoanmohktar) Last access 2014/03/04.

（４） **Beyond manga style: Dwinita Larasati (Indonesia)**

Dwinita Larasati's (or "Tita" for short, as she refers to herself usually) participation in the group is of particular interest because she was the only participant without roots in manga. She is an industrial designer who doesn't even consider herself a "proper" comics artist. But draws them nonetheless. Her first publication as a comics artist was with Comic Highlights, a publisher from the U.S. and with independent Belgian artist groups. She had lived in the Netherlands for ten years while doing her Master and PhD degrees, before she returned to Indonesia. There, she published comics for the first time in 2008, and these comics take the form of "graphic diaries[25]." In the beginning, these "graphic diaries" (single page, strip-like comics about her daily life) were meant for her family instead of letters, in which she would tell them about her experiences abroad. At first she drew on the back of used paper, and it quickly became a habit. Since then, she has been drawing about her life in incredible detail on an almost daily basis. For her its like keeping a photographic album, but even more meticulous, because she can record not just facts, but also thoughts and feelings, in an engaging way (Fig. 8). Tita's comics sometimes have a political edge to them. Because of her country's specific conditions, she has only been able to publish them online. However, she explains that since the change in government in 2008, it has become more likely to publish them in print as well.

[Fig. 8 –"Graphic Diary" sketches detailing parts of the conference, sketched by Tita as she listened in the audience on Feb. 25, 2011.]

As previously mentioned, Tita had her work published abroad, but upon returning to Indonesia, she learned that publishers were only interested in "girly" manga (specifically,

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[25] Her comics are further explained in her own paper in *IJOCA*, Fall 2011.

shōjo manga) like in other Southeast Asian markets. Finally, she managed to publish some of her graphic diaries with a friend who owned a publishing house and already had connections to printers and distributors. Later on, she became co-founder of that publishing company but she claims it's hard to earn money, because readers in Indonesia are used to different kinds of comics. According to Tita, the comics scene in Indonesia is divided into three categories: firstly, there are those who love *wayang*[26] comics of the 1960s, focused on good guy vs. bad guys with super powers. Secondly, the younger generation that likes manga, but makes it mostly for themselves (dōjinshi). These two groups rarely mix, in practice and in reading material. The third group is smaller, and they prefer American superhero comics (Marvel and/or DC). Its members sometimes work for publishers abroad, and thus are not truly linked to the Indonesian comics scene. Tita and her partner are trying to open up another space in the comics scene in Indonesia, broadening the options for readers as well as artists who are interested in making local comics.

As distinct from the other participants, Tita's comics resemble cartoons like those found in newspapers, rather than what is known in Japan as "story manga": long narratives that unfold over the course of many chapters, even volumes. Her stories are short blurbs about her daily life. She is an example that not all women who go into the business of comics do so because of Japanese manga's influence. Yet, this does not mean that she cannot relate to the struggles of her peers. In the case of women who do comics, raising a family is a part of the struggle. Particularly for artists who are married and have children, such as Sarah and Tita, because it is still the case, in some places more than others, that women are expected to take charge of the whole household and childrearing. Sarah and Tita want to be professionals in comics, but prefer to accommodate comics to their life, instead of the other way around.

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[26] Comics based on local stories or legends. The word comes from a traditional Indonesian form of entertainment with puppets.

Coincidentally, out of the whole group, they are the ones whose works least resemble "typical" manga style. This could be related to the fact that, traditionally, manga artists have to put out as many pages as possible in very short time spans due to tight deadlines. Meeting such requirements is very taxing on the artist, and trying to do so with the added responsibility of housekeeping and raising children is quite unrealistic.

Almost all of the artists present at the workshop mentioned at some point that being a girl who does comics meant being an introverted, emotion-driven, socially isolated artist. According to what they shared with us in the workshop discussions, even while some of them may have had male peers, they tended not to interact much with them or even other girls, and did not participate much in team-related activities while in school. This doesn't come as a surprise, since it has been found that many women artists tend to be very active in online communities, where its much easier to meet kindred spirits in a comfortable, non-intrusive manner, as opposed to outwardly socializing (Katz 2008: 143). Interestingly, these online communities function similarly to small, obscure dōjinshi circles, like the ones FSc frequents. While it can't be assumed that all women artists avoid socializing, it is a fact that women who do comics are not easy to meet, and many tend to avoid collaboration in favor of solo work.

Finally, the workshop confirmed that manga has tremendous power to influence (many of today's rising comics artists have their stylistic roots in manga), to inspire (it is the driving force behind many people's decision to become professional comics artists and writers) and adapt (it has been "localized" in many countries, providing opportunities at comics careers for many local artists), amongst many other attributes. Though some have made the choice to become professional comics artists independently from manga's influence, manga did help women in many places to even consider such a career. The workshop also provided insights

into some of the endeavors of such artists in Southeast Asia, and glimpses of the future of manga at large.

Section 2   Voices of emerging "glocal" manga artists: a glimpse into the future
The *mangaka* label

A *mangaka* is a manga creator. In Japan, successful mangaka lead whole teams of artists in studios, where they race against the clock to create weekly installments of the stories we love, to be published in thick anthologies called *manga zasshi* (serialized manga magazines) which are then published as tankōbon when the series reaches critical mass in popularity. Most people familiar with manga know this chain of production well, as it is an essential part of what makes manga *manga*. What may not be so well known is how this setup is mainly due to the speed at which these weekly chapters need to be put out, making it it virtually impossible for the mangaka to produce the series alone. Mangaka in Japan lead very hectic lives; this is because of the industry's pressure to put out a huge volume of stories in a very short time, and "rank" amongst artists is measured by who can run the most stories in the most magazines simultaneously (Schodt 1983: 139). Thus, mangaka need to use assistants in order to meet the deadlines. And yet, it is solely the series' creator's name that appears on the tankōbon cover and the chapter in the weekly magazine. Understandably, *mangaka* is a title that is often related to very hard work. Yet, in the West, this label is applied to those who make original manga, or manga-style comics, and it is often applied loosely. It is somewhat detached of its heavy background of immense pressure from publishers, tight deadlines and consuming work that leaves no social life. For the artists here mentioned, as well as the fans and emerging manga market in English-speaking manga markets (and others as well), a *mangaka* is an artist who makes manga, in their own way, in their own time.

In April of 2010 at the Kyoto International Manga Museum, I interviewed a visiting comics artist from London named Karen Rubins, whose work is "manga influenced" (as she herself put it). She did not call her comics 'manga' and resisted being categorized as *mangaka* because according to her, in the U.K., such a term is considered "amateurish." Karen prefers to use the word "fusion" when she refers to her comics, since calling oneself a *mangaka* there is seen as emulating manga, or trying to do so. These "amateurish" connotations seem to come from the idea that manga fans have about being a mangaka in the West; for the most part, a fannish ("amateurish") practice.

For an artist concerned with having a career, it is ultimately a financial decision: "it puts you in a box, a cool box, but still a box, therefore making it hard to get work in general," she claims.

（5）**U.K. "manga:" Karen Rubins**

Karen Rubins is a member of an online guild of self-proclaimed manga artists called "Sweatdrop Studios[27]," who identify themselves as "a U.K.-based independent publisher and comic collaborative creating original manga-styled comics" (as noted on their website). Although based in the U.K., they have members from other parts of the world as well, such as Russia (Irina Richards[28]), Austria (Joanna Zhou[29]) and Malaysia (Faye Yong[30]). They

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[27] http://www.sweatdrop.com/ (last access 2013/11/29). Note: Karen is no longer listed on the roster of the member's area. Since I have not had contact with her since this interview, I would assume she has branched off on her own.

[28] http://irinarichards.blogspot.jp/ (last access 2013/11/29)

[29] http://www.chocolatepixels.com/ (last access 2013/11/29)

[30] http://fayeyong.com/ (last access 2013/11/29). She has also left Sweatdrop Studios and is freelancing on her own.

consider themselves professional for the fact that they are a publisher, and not just an online

art community (such as deviantART), though many of them still participate in this site.

This distinction is what they consider elevates them from being a mere manga enthusiast to

belonging officially (and more importantly, professionally) in the comics/manga industry.

In her website, Karen introduces herself as a "comics creator and illustrator." She cites her

status as an "an award-winning comics artist and former librarian, living and working in

London, U.K.," and cites her references as being "comics and graphic novels from all over

the world, particularly indie titles from the U.S. and U.K., and Japanese manga," further

adding that her "inspiration comes from many sources: comics, films, books, dreams and

even real life."[31] Her peers at Sweatdrop make similar citations regarding their identity as

comics artists; in the "about" page of the website, besides their influences[32] and interests[33],

authors cite the clients they've had, as well as any awards they may have received or where

they studied. Since Sweatdrop only accepts as members U.K.-based artists, most of their

"staff" consist of graduates from local colleges, such as St Martins and Chelsea College of

Art & Design[34]. Sonia Leong, a member, is the winner of the Tokyopop "U.K. Rising Stars

of Manga" competition for 2005/06[35], and this is mentioned in her profile. It is interesting to

note that, like Rubins, the Sweatdrop staff make it a point in their introduction page to state

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[31] http://karenrubins.com/about/ (last access 2013/12/06).

[32] Ken Sugimori, Tetsuya Nomura, Shirow Miwa,Tite Kubo, Hiroyuki Takei, Brian Lee O'Malley, CLAMP, Yoshiyuki Sadamoto, Kiyo Kyujou, Ogure Ito, Atsuko Nakajima, Yumiko Igarashi, Chiho Saito, Yuho Ashibe, Miwa Ueda, Kim Kang Won, Meredith Dillman, Janny Wurts, Lois McMaster Bujold, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Ashinano Hitoshi, Kyoko Hikawa, CLAMP, Scott McCloud, Sanrio, Kidrobot, Shoichi Aoki/FRUITS, Takashi Murakami, Nintendo, Jason Brookes, Tord Boontjes, Simone Legno, Yoshitomo Nara are amongst those mentioned by the whole staff; a reflection on the various sources of influence, which are both local and foreign (Japanese), although the amount clearly leans towards Japanese influences.

[33] *Lord of the Rings*, video game design and theory, Japanese culture, website design, fashion, interior design, travel (USA, Japan, Sweden), gothic, lolita, cosplay and couture, are amongst those mentioned by the group.

[34] http://www.sweatdrop.com/about-us/joanna-zhou (last access 2013/12/06).

[35] http://www.sweatdrop.com/about-us/sonia-leong (last access 2013/12/06).

that they have "clients," some of big stature, such as the BBC and the Embassy of Japan in the U.K. Same as Rubins, for them it is important to clarify that you can be a manga artist and a "professional" working artist.

Separation between being regarded as an amateur and a professional seems to be a key issue within localized original manga artists, as this can also become a value judgement on the quality of the manga. Karen illustrates:

> *"A lot of the fans, usually girls, will not read manga unless it's "100% Japanese," meaning made in Japan by a Japanese author. They demand authenticity. They feel manga not made by a Japanese person is not authentic, they call it "fake" or "pseudo-manga" and mostly avoid it […] fans are mostly teenagers, though can go up to 30 yrs old but not usually over that, and they are a relatively equal mix of girls and boys alike, not just guys."*

According to Rubins' experience, the criteria for the status and value of these manga is fan/reader based. This view merges with what was illustrated in Chapter 3, that negative criticism of OEL manga arose from early attempts at simulacrum of Japanese manga and readers' expectations of "authenticity." Such attempts are considered "amateurish" on behalf of the fans as well as industry. Although she claimed that this view is not usually shared by the authors, and yet most authors of Western manga are fans/readers as well, who often participate in the communities that pass these judgements. This, contrary to being close-minded, may be a reflection on the market itself and the "global" quality of manga. To her, manga and anime are a global subculture. This subculture can be very cohesive, and it can sometimes become problematic when an insistence on sameness (in the tastes and value criteria of their participants) causes them to become excessively exclusive. She elaborates:

"They [the fans] like manga because it's exotic. They understand it but their parents

don't. They also use Japanese culture to further exclude others and create group identity,

i.e using Japanese words such as kawaii (cute), sugoi (awesome), etc."

In regards to the new generation of Western manga artists in the U.K., she commented that

they are mostly girls, and this is because the Japanese manga that they consume has a wider

range of themes and style, it's more 'girl friendly' because there is more emotion rather than

just action. She quotes Scott McCloud on manga characters (Iconic vs. Representational):

"When you read an American comics, its like you are outside and just looking at the

action, but you don't become a part of it. With manga, you can feel the emotions, you

become the character, you see, you feel what is happening because you're inside. They

[fans] are also attracted by the drawing style."

She claims that the "drawing style" is achievable by anyone. Whereas in *amekomi* (Japanese

term for American superhero comics) and *Bande Dessinè* (Franco-belgian style comics) the

drawings are so intricate and detailed that they become intimidating to those that admire

them and want to draw like that, manga is simple enough to make a person feel like they can

also do it. The fan can achieve a relatively successful drawing without having to be a prodigy

at it, therefore making it more motivating to keep going and working at it. In contrast, a lot

of fans who try their hand at American comic style quickly give up because the level of skill

required to even reach a similarity in the drawing is too high for them.

Perhaps this perceived "ease" in manga drawing is what causes artists like Rubins to feel that

the manga label may indicate a lack of professionalism; that the artist is not willing to do

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"hard work." Interestingly, her work clearly shows the trace of moving away from manga that is apparent in her identity as a professional comics artist. Although her work is quite hybrid, in *Tales by Ghost Light*[36] (2008), the influence of manga as style is noticeable. The story is illustrated in black and white simple lines, tones are created using cross-hatch techniques and the setting is Japanese ghost culture, so the backgrounds and locality of the story is ancient Japan. She also uses moment-to-moment transitions (McCloud 2006) in page 5, as well as floating panels (p. 2-5). When looking at her earlier work, however, the influence is much more clear. In *Tsuchigumo*[37] (2007), not only is the title Japanese, her character designs are much more related to manga: the main character, Kintaro, vaguely resembles Son Goku form *Dragon Ball* in both looks and backstory (Kintaro was raised by wild animals in the mountains and is doted with superpowers). The story also features the Japanese military general Minamoto no Yorimitsu (p. 2). Although the story is monochrome, it was drawn in pencil rather than ink. The word bubbles are hand drawn but the text is digitally placed. In contrast, her most recent work, like *Score and Script*[38] (2012) and *Chatterbox* (2013), feature paneling that is tight, small square and rectangular-shaped panels, the linework is completely digital including the word bubbles, and the style is quite detached from manga. In addition, *Chatterbox* is digitally rendered in color. Both of these works are short, *Chatterbox* is 4 pages long and *Score* is a 1-page comic, where are *Tales* and *Tsuchigumo* are longer (8 pages and 20 pages respectively). The move towards color and

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[36] Written by Andy Smith and illustrated by Karen Rubins, published by Itch publishing - http://karenrubins.com/portfolio_category/comics/ (last access 2013/12/06).

[37] "Tsuchigumo" was originally published in *The Mammoth Book of Best New Manga 2*, Constable and Robinson, 2007. Sourced from the website - http://karenrubins.com/portfolio_category/comics/ (last access 2013/12/06).

[38] Rubins created the comic for Comica 2012, the 9th London International Comics Festival, and theScore and Script Exhibition (http://www.comicafestival.com/index.php/festival/festival_detail/score_and_script). Paul Gravett commented on his site about the event: "In comics, visual form and narrative content constantly inform and imply one another. But what could be revealed about the process of visual storytelling if an attempt were made to perform that separation? In the Score and Script exhibition, devised by cartoonist & researcher John Miers and co-curated by Megan Donnelley, 23 cartoonists, working either from an entirely verbal description of a single-page story, or a visual diagram based on that same page, present a unique set of answers to that question." Source: http://paulgravett.com/index.php/articles/article/john_miers (last access 2013/12/06).

shorter stories can be seen in her short story *Blood Magic* (2009), which although

monochrome, uses elements in red (digital coloring) and has "tighter" panel layouts.

 It is clear that during her manga-influenced period, she applied the same principles that most

"OEL" manga artists do: usage of monochrome, a mix of digital and analog tools, stories

that reference Japan. She has since "elevated" herself and her craft using a more western-

look, usage of color, shorter, more concise storylines that can be continued as strips and a

drawing style that no longer references Japan. Like she mentioned earlier, this allows for her

to be more easily picked for freelance work, than if she were to promote herself as a

mangaka. Although she rejects the label, she is still professionally regarded as a "specialist"

in manga-style[39]in England. She is also regarded as a trained visual artist "graduated from

Middlesex University […] with a degree in Visual Communication Design (Illustration)[40]"

worthy of an artist residency at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. It is clear that

Karen has made concessions to "elevate" the status of her work by becoming more hybrid.

The goal is usually to acquire a stable, rewarding status as a professional in comics,

therefore, the work's style will always differ to accommodate their source cultural

background.

Karen considers herself to be in the space where the "West" and "East" in the world of

comics and manga overlap, and she reckons a lot of other U.K. "manga" artists are in the

same space. Mostly she is open to learn and read different things, not just comics. In her

opinion, the more an artist moves into the professional field, the more they start to lose

interest in fan activities in general. To her, this move is seen a sign of "elevation" mentioned

before.

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[39] http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/karen-rubins/ (last access 2013/12/06).

[40] Ibid.

（6） **Pseudonyms and (self) censorship: Malaysia's "Kaoru"**

In February of 2010, an article published in a local English-language newspaper of Kuala Lumpur called "Variety"[41] appeared about a girl nicknamed "Kaoru," who was dubbed by the newspaper as a "Malaysian *mangaka*." The article appeared in a section of the newspaper called "Otaku Zone", and it offered information about the position of manga in the Malaysian cultural context.

"Kaoru," whose real name is Liew Yee Teng, is a Chinese-Malay girl from Perak, Malaysia and has been working for over 10 years for a publisher called "Gempak Starz," a "line of comics and products under the Kuala Lumpur-based Art Square (the group responsible for Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese magazines including *Gempak*, *Utopia*, *Comic King* and *Starz*)" (Variety 2010). She mainly writes romantic (shōjo) manga, but she has also written action-adventure (shōnen) manga. Her major works are *Helios Eclipse* (2004-2008), *Kaoru's Cake House* (2007-2008) and *Maid Maiden* (2009- ongoing), all published by the Art Square Group in the magazine *Gempak Starz* as well as in individual volumes (subsequent to the Malay edition also in English and Chinese). She is currently considered a full-time shōjo manga artist at Gempak, responsible for the creation of romantic stories in manga-style.

In the article, when asked about what her influences were for starting to draw manga, she accredits Inoue Takehiko (*Slam Dunk*, *Vagabond*) for sparking her interest in this medium, which is interesting because her works are for the most part romance-centered. But what she likes about him is that the artwork style makes his story accessible to everyone. She has also been cited to be a fan of Ono Natsume and Yoshinaga Fumi, both of whom are considered unconventional in the shōjo manga world (Gan 2011:176).

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[41] Image of the newspaper article is available in the Appendix in section ３． Other interviews/ materials．

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When asked about her own experience writing romance stories for a Malaysian audience, Kaoru's response helped illustrate the challenges in the receptiveness of manga in Malaysia:

> *"A lot of people may think it's easy, but it's not. There are restrictions, for one, we cannot show characters kissing, or even hugging. So you have to think of other ways to create scenes that grab the readers' attention so that they will remember the story. [...] Due to the many restrictions, I had to use unconventional ways to tell the story in my manga, Kaoru's Cake House. It had to be unique, especially the storyline. I spent a lot of time on the ideas; the script as well as the dialogue. Since kissing is a no-no and readers of romantic tales like to see the characters getting intimate, I have to find other ways to attract the readers."* (From the article).

Manga in Malaysia

Scholar Sheuo Hui Gan has examined closely the career of Kaoru as a manga artist in Malaysia in her essay (2011). Although, as we have seen up to now, being a commercial manga artist outside of Japan and in non-Asian locales is certainly not a strange occurrence anymore, being one in Malaysia takes on a completely different meaning. As there are many local implications for the artist and the manga, it also reflects on manga's international role, through the process of appropriation and re-localizing. Chmakova's case study highlighted how original manga can reference local culture without falling into "Japaneseness," which is done through referencing closely its source cultural context. This is why it is important to locate each artist to their locality/community and the demands these places have in regards to

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artists who do comics, so that we can therefore position their works too, as they are inevitably linked and mutually influenced.

With this in mind, Gan sees Kaoru as part of a "generation of [manga] artists who have not confined their idea of identity to the usual geographical or national constraints" (2011:164). Nonetheless, they are inevitably influenced personally by their locality, and so are their works. In Malaysia, there are many ethnic and religious tensions to be aware of, and dialogue between ethnic groups is "still limited by prejudices and language barriers" (p. 173). As explained in section 3 of chapter 2, Kaoru references an "imaginary Japan" to avoid tensions linked to ethnic issues, by using manga-style and Japanese names and imagery. Gan explains that although "employing Japanese manga style and imaginary narrative settings that have apparently little to do with the reality of Malaysia, it provides a comfortable platform to entertain diverse audiences." Thus, [it results in] readers "learning little about the artist's distinctive cultural background," and "such settings have successfully functioned as an imaginary spot to consume romance and relationships beyond the morals of the various social ethnic groups in the country." (p. 172).

What Gan is referring to is that, in Malaysia, the manga artist must adhere to the cultural code of the nation (in other words, appease) in order to be able to publish, and this might mean obscuring ethnic elements from both artwork and the artist's person, but this brings about a new "space" from which the artist can interact with groups outside her/his own. The criteria for the specifics is decided by government agencies who regulate the contents of media in the country, and since Malaysia is an Islamic state[42], it is based on a religious code.

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[42] A state that has adopted Islam as its foundations for political institutions or laws.

Like Kaoru herself explains in the previous quote, she had had to accommodate her artwork to her country's rules regarding the publishing of media. Gan elaborates:

> "Infringement of 'traditional morality' is of great concern in the creation and distribution if comics in Malaysia, as the government (Kementerian Dalam Negeri KDN) tightly enforces regulations […] on the depictions of characters' intimate relationships and sexuality. This naturally affects the kind of shōjo manga romances that form the core of Kaoru's work. Kissing scenes are not allowed, nor is any other behavior that could be erotically stimulating" (p. 172).

Kaoru, like Chmakova, is referencing her own social and cultural background through her work by adapting to these regulations, which dictate how she can show romance in her manga. Chmakova reflects the reality of romance specific to North American girls who are manga fans. Both artists are considered shōjo manga artists in their respective locales/markets. Yet the works differ greatly (stylistically, contents-wise, etc.), precisely because of their original manga reference their specific source culture[43]. Original local manga (shōjo or otherwise) is therefore, difficult to categorize stylistically, unlike Japanese (shōjo) manga which, though vastly varied, all has the same cultural roots. Original manga's style and narrative particularities are therefore highly dependent upon the local culture, but more specifically, upon the artist in question.

Furthermore, in *Dramacon*, Chmakova raises a point about legitimacy (is it "real" manga?) and authenticity (is it "original," as in, not a parody?) in regards to North American manga, as well as issues of racism. The concern about race is also apparent in Yang's *American Born*

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[43] Which Gan relates to the translations and publication of manga in the U.S and Europe, which "grew out of fan enthusiasm and appropriation, rather than a Japanese promotion of manga for overseas markets" (2011: 174).

Chinese. It is similarities such as these, in cultural concerns, between North American manga like *Dramacon* and graphic novels like Yang's *American Born Chinese,* that bridge the gap between them across style and publication mode, bringing them closer than what would be possible between Chmakova's and Kaoru's work, even though both are manga. Both Chmakova and Yang discuss an issue of cultural-specificity, such as racism and discrimination in America; a very loaded discourse there. They discuss it directly, in the text (*Dramacon*) as well as through the artwork (such as Yang's usage of skin color and facial features to point out racial difference; for him, relying only on the story is insufficient to drive his point). Kaoru's manga, on the other hand, seems unconcerned with discussions on race, or even on authenticity, because, as Gan explains, "manga-based comics in Malaysia, including those by Kaoru, have a tendency to avoid the depiction of specific localities. In her work and that of her compatriots, aspects of Japanese manga culture are used to create imaginary places that provide a space which is relatively free of the ethnic tensions of everyday life[44]" (p. 174). This is naturally so, because it is easily observable that open racial discussion in Malaysia is not as possible as it is in the United States, where freedom of expression and media is greater. It is about what is part of the culture, and therefore a daily reality for both North American comics artists like Chmakova and Yang,[45] as well as Malaysia's Kaoru.

However, it can be argued that "Japan" here is being used to discuss issues of race and prejudice, by finding a neutral ground onto which it can be dealt with. Usually, sentiments echoed through scholars and reviewers in regards to local manga and the like say that it is

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[44] This serves as a reminder of the specifics of how this is apparent in her work, a point which is explained in Section 3 of Chapter 4 - OEL manga's Narrative Characteristics of Expression (OEL manga storytelling).

[45] Even Miyazawa touches upon race and discrimination (and of minorities) in his short manga "Los Robos, Arizona," (2012) where the hero of the story is Chinese and a janitor and his rival is Korean, and of higher socio-economical status. This could reflect upon the relationship between occupation and nationality as is apparent in the United States, perhaps specific to dynamics and hierarchies within the Asian communities there.

"escapist," unconcerned with current events and the local reality. Kaoru's experience as a manga artist in Malaysia and her works are evidence of the contrary, in that, by creating an imaginary space, they function as a potential "neutral" mediator for communication and integration (p. 173), making it possible for different ethnic and cultural groups to meet somewhere. What is being censored in the work, when looked at in relation to the source culture of the manga, make it possible to locate the artist within a context, in this case, Malaysian manga. Therefore, cultural specificity is important for original manga artists and helps with their positioning in the industry. Their work will always reflect the reality of their source culture through what is said/shown and what isn't. In similar vein, Kaoru's works reflect the difficulty of direct open racial discussion in Malaysia.

Attracting attention and enjoyment

In the article, Kaoru later mentions that it is precisely because of the readers that she has the motivation to make manga, and that it is ultimately their praise that she seeks:

> *"Drawing comic is one of the media I used to tell my story . Beside, manga style is the easiest way to attract readers because it is popular in the whole world […] I'm interested in Japanese culture and i hope can add more Japanese's elements in my comic.* **I only draw what I like to draw because people said , if you like your comic also then people will like it too***. So I didn't force myself to do something which is not suitable for my style."* (emphasis mine).

By enjoying her own experience as a manga artist, Kaoru is also using manga as a source of comfort[46] , to ease her and her reader's tensions, on personal and social scales. In this way she and her readers are using manga like it is used in Japan (Schodt 1993: 26-27). This usage of manga for relaxation and enjoyment is also part of the nature of original local manga, where the goal is ultimately to enjoy oneself (like a fan) whilst being on the career track. This is observable in the cases of artists who are focused on self-expression, like FSc, Hu Jingxuan, and Sarah Mohktar's recent stance.

Obviously, Kaoru's work cannot be labeled "OEL" manga since her works are first written and published in Malay, then translated into Chinese and English subsequently (Gan 2011: 164). However, her personal experience as a manga artist is unsurprisingly similar to those who publish for the English-speaking market, which indicates that original manga outside of Japan is a small and developing market dependent on local conditions, to which the artist adapts to.

On the home-front: perspectives from "OEL"'s birthplace - The United States

We know that "OEL manga" originally emerged in the United States (as early as 1993, Japan owned Viz issued a line of American manga, which they called "Amerimanga", the term changed shortly afterwards to "OEL"). In the United States alone, the biggest comics convention regarding anime and manga is Anime Expo in Los Angeles. Of course, there is also the well-known Comic-Con in San Diego, which also hold a reserved section solely for anime/manga products, companies and creators. Both conventions are held in California,

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[46] "Manga" as *iibashō* (literally meaning "good place"). Schodt (1983) explains that manga "serves as an instant escape into a fantasy world" (p. 26-27). Due to overcrowding and social pressure, Japanese people turn to manga to alleviate their daily stress; manga becomes their "haven" or *iibashō*.

typically in the month of July and are considered to be two of the biggest comics events in the world.

AX

Anime Expo (often abbreviated "AX"), is an American anime and manga convention traditionally held annually on the first weekend of July in the city of Los Angeles, California, United States, at the Los Angeles Convention Center (although in the past, it has also been held in other U.S. cities, as well as Tokyo, Japan in 2004). It is sponsored and organized by the Society for the Promotion of Japanese Animation (SPJA), a non-profit organization. It is considered the largest anime and manga convention in the United States. The year I attended the convention, 2011, marked AX's 20th anniversary, dubbed "The Year of the Fan," and up to 128,000 people attended the convention that year. Special guest, Japanese virtual idol Hatsune Miku of "Vocaloid," gave a concert at the convention to mark the occasion.

Because of its notoriety, Anime Expo is a favorite venue for aspiring local manga artists to bring their works and offer them up for sale, as well as promote themselves as artists to possible recruiters. Many make the journey from all corners of the U.S., and sometimes even from other countries, to come and be able to show their work and skills to agents and publishers.

Comic-Con

The San Diego Comic Convention, better known as "Comic-Con," is the United States' biggest and most famous comics, games, and entertainment media convention and the fourth largest in the world after the Comiket in Japan, the Angoulême International Comics Festival

in France and the Lucca Comics and Games Convention in Italy. It has been traditionally held in the city of San Diego, California since 1970 at the San Diego Convention Center, and brings in an annual regional economic impact of $162.8 million in revenue for the city. In 2011, over 130,000 people attended it. Because of its reputation and size, many aspiring artists come here as well to try and break into the industry, especially because this convention brings in high-profile guests and companies from the comics, games and media world such as Marvel, D.C Comics, Image, Dark Horse, as well as many other big comics publishers who come to the convention to both sell and promote their products and artists, as well as recruit for new talent.

These conventions tend to serve as a launching platform for people interested in creating manga on both large and small scales. It holds a lot of hobbyist and dōjinshi circles but it also functions as a medium for the distribution of self-published manga and to some, offer the opportunity to get in touch with publishers. A lot of big-name comics companies, such as Marvel and DC, hold portfolio reviews[47], where company artists go through a participants' portfolio in search of usable talent, and if the candidate is considered technically acceptable, they could be offered a position in the company, or in some cases, freelance work. These giants of the American superhero comics scene are not the only companies that recruit talent at these conventions. Other smaller presses such as Image, Dark Horse and a smaller, less-known publisher of original manga called EigoManga[48] also hold portfolio reviews there. These conventions, in turn, seem an appropriate ground to scout the opinions of local manga artists on publishing, copyrights, authorship, and possibilities to flourish in the American comics market, as this does not differ much from the situation of non-Japanese manga in other countries, as evident from the previous artists' examples. This section, thus, focuses on

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[47] http://www.comic-con.org/cci/portfolio-review (last access 2013/12/06).

[48] www.eigomanga.com (last access 2014/03/04).

studying their specific experiences against the background of "OEL," as original local manga and as a commercial trademark.

（7）**American "BL" manga: Emirain's** *Teahouse*

Teahouse is a comic published by a two-member artist group called "Emirain." It tells the story of the "Teahouse", a small but very exclusive brothel in a made-up kingdom owned and managed by a man called Xanthe Atros. He and his group of men and women work there as pleasure courtesans, and the story deals with the (sexual) relationships between each other and with their customers (Fig. 9, 10, 11). The main relationship "pair" is that of Rhys and Axis; Rhys is a rich aristocrat who is a regular at the Teahouse, and Axis is his favorite of the "courtesans" available. Emirain create contrast between these two characters in the form of temperaments for added sexual tension, where Rhys is cool and collected and Axis is hot-headed and passionate. The comic features other pairings, such as that of Xanthe and Linneus, a delicate looking boy but who is the highest earner in the household. The comic follows on traditional *seme/uke*[49] pairing dynamics apparent in Yaoi and BL manga, though here, the cool character is the *seme* (Rhys) and the hot character is the *uke* (Axis)[50].

 Teahouse could be considered as "original American 'Boys' Love' manga," as it is a sexually-explicit original manga focused on male-male sexual relationships. The story is initially published on their website[51]. They upload one page a week, and when a chapter is

[49] *Seme* (top) and *Uke* (bottom) are the respective positions the pair take on when having sex, which is part of the dynamics of same-sex relationships as depicted in BL/Yaoi manga. The terms are said to derive from martial arts where seme derives from the verb "to attack" while uke is taken from the verb that means "to receive" (Kinsella 2000).

[50] Warren also explained that this is the reason for the colors chosen for their respective hair colors: Rhys' hair is blue and Axis' hair is red. Also, Linneus, the most delicate-tempered character, has pink hair. (Sourced from the interview).

[51] www.teahousecomic.com (last access 2013/12/06).

done, they have it printed and sold through conventions such as AX as well as their online store[52]. The entire story can also be read online.

[Figures 9, 10, 11 - (9) Cover for *Teahouse: Chapter One*. (10) Cover for *Teahouse: Chapter Two*. (11) Illustrations in *Teahouse: Chapter Two*. *Teahouse*, by Emirain, 2011.]

Emily Warren[53] is the penciler and colorist for "Emirain." She attended animation school in Chicago, and while at a comics convention there, got recruited through a portfolio review to work as a colorist for Marvel comics, upon graduating. She worked on titles such as *Secret Invasion*[54], *X Babies*[55], a one-shot called "Cloak and Dagger" (with Mark Brooks)[56]. In 2009, she quit coloring to try her hand at penciling. She penciled 14 pages for Adam Warren's (manga-influenced) *Empowered* (2007, Dark Horse) and since then has been working solely as a freelance illustrator. Although she worked as a colorist (and later, penciler) for Marvel for almost 10 years, it was always as an outsourced artist, meaning, she never held a full-time position at the company. So even though she is now working as a freelance illustrator, her current situation does not differ much from her previous one. One of her current clients is Wizards of the Coast, for whom she is designing cards for their *Magic: The Gathering* card game. Warren works alongside her writer Christina Strain, former Marvel colorist. Strain colored *X-men* and *Wolverine*[57] issues amongst many others, as well as issues in the

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[52] The first 2 chapters have been sold this way.

[53] http://emilywarrenart.tumblr.com/ (last access 2013/12/06).

[54] http://marvel.wikia.com/Secret_Invasion_Vol_1_4 (last access 2013/12/06).

[55] http://marvel.wikia.com/X-Babies_Vol_1_2 (last access 2013/12/06).

[56] http://marvel.wikia.com/Cloak_and_Dagger_Vol_4_1 (last access 2013/12/06).

[57] http://marvel.wikia.com/Category:Christina_Strain/Colourist (last access 2013/12/08).

[58] http://marvel.wikia.com/Runaways_Vol_2_8 This issue was also penciled by Miyazawa (last access 2013/12/08).

Runaways[58] series. Interestingly, Strain is the colorist of Takeshi Miyazawa's previously discussed *Spiderman loves Mary Jane.*

Warren's early influences include *Sailor Moon* and *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, and mostly girl-oriented titles. The influence of manga, and more specifically shōjo manga, seemingly bled into her artistic style. Like Rubins, Warren was preoccupied about being able to find commercial work successfully using this style, but apparently was able to find a lot of work that seeks out anime/manga-influenced images.

[Fig. 12 - Usage of manga-specific pictograms and Super-deformed characters (chibi) (crosshatch, sweatdrops, chibi-forms) as well as English-specific references ("WTF!?") in *Teahouse: Chapter One*, pp. 6-7, by Emirain, 2011.]

Artwork

It is difficult to categorize as manga, since the work is digitally colored. Emirain clearly employs the strengths of the duo in their specific roles: Warren is experienced in drafting pencils for superhero comics, which is clear in the choice of paneling: small, tight rectangles digitally drawn (as apparent in Fig. 12). However, she does use open panels that bleed out of the page (p. 9) as well as floating panels (p. 17) more reminiscent of manga. Also, as it is apparent in the above figure, Warren employs use of manga-specific pictograms, such as the cross-shaped vein of frustration on Axis' forehead in the last panel of page 6, or the sweatdrop over Rory's head in the last panel of page 7.

Publication and Narrative

Teahouse was published in print by the authors themselves in order to sell booklets at Comic-Con and Anime Expo that year (2011). The main bulk of the story, however, is meant to be read online, in the comic's website. Here, one can not just follow the story, but also read and leave comments on its development. In a sense, it functions as a "serialization" online, and the comments are taken into account by the authors about the direction of the story and of the characters' developing relationships in the same manner as "fan service."

There is a danger of thinking *Teahouse* behaves like a dōjinshi because it is not released by a large publisher and relies on sales at conventions and fans' support and interaction at conventions and online. Another way in which it could be mistaken for such is by thinking the story centers around the sexual interactions between characters as the ultimate function of the story. The *Teahouse* comic is clearly a long narrative in development, with foreshadowing elements: in pages 21-22 of *Teahouse: Chapter Two*, Rhys is seen speaking inside a carriage with his friend Reed, after their visit to the Teahouse. In the conversation, Reed asks Rhys about the wedding and it is understood that Rhys is marrying Reed's cousin. Reed also asks Rhys about his father's health, to which Rhys does not reply, but is shown clearly concerned. The reference is later confirmed in *Chapter Three*, which is only available online[59], where it is revealed in page 66[60] that Rhys' "ill father" is actually the King, thus, making Rhys the prince of the unnamed kingdom *Teahouse* is set in, thus explaining the need for his marriage to the cousin of his aristocrat friend. In the following page, his new

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[59] At the time of the interview, only Chapter One and Chapter Two were available in print. Currently, Chapters One through Four can be purchased on their online shop: http://sharkrobot.com/collections/books (last access 2013/12/08).

[60] http://www.teahousecomic.com/comic/?id=67 (last access 2013/12/08).

bride makes it clear that the union is a political one, and that her intention is becoming Queen (p. 68)[61].

Emirain's example illustrate how original manga can encompass more than just fantasy and sci-fi, as well as evolving modes of production and distribution. It also serves as an example of long serializations of original manga online[62], and maintaining fan support through close interaction at conventions and through the net.

（８）**Original local manga as 'indie' comics: Dirk Tiede's *Paradigm Shift***

Paradigm Shift stands a little aside from the aforementioned examples. Although there is a slight tendency for original manga artists to set their stories in fantastic, unreal places, Tiede's manga is set in a real city (Chicago), and he was very particular in showcasing the his hometown's highlights quite accurately. Nonetheless, the story is quite fantastic. It is the story of police detective Kate and her partner Mike, who are sent to investigate a strange series of animal maulings throughout the city. During one case, she gets scratched by a creature. Eventually, she starts to develop strange symptoms, which slowly turn her into a savage beast. The manga is a mix of mystery solving and the classic werewolf tale, both of which tend to be uncommon genres in original manga. This title is the ongoing project of artist Dirk Tiede, a graphic designer, illustrator and professional comics artist whose passion is manga. He has been working on this particular story for over 10 years, which he originally published online, on his personal website as well as other online comics forums. He puts out a self-published book once a volume is finished. So far he has published 4 volumes on his own (Fig. 13).

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[61] http://www.teahousecomic.com/comic/?id=68 (last access 2013/12/08).

[62] Much like FSc and her online serializations on her webpage.

[Fig. 13 - cover of Paradigm Shift, part one, by Dirk Tiede, 2008.]

 Tiede has been drawing manga for over 12 years. He started when he got picked up for a webcomics site in 2002, and he released a book compiling his webcomics a year later. According to him, he didn't know if he could make a career out of it, but all he wanted was to spend as much time drawing comics and the best way to go about that is to try to get paid for it. The first manga he ever "saw" (making a common mistake when referring to anime as manga) was *Appleseed* (Shirow Masamune) who quickly became one of his favorite artists. He considers Shirow to be a big influence on his work, as well as Katsuhiro Otomo (*Akira*)[63]. He claims to have drawn inspiration from Otomo's *Domu*, a work prior to *Akira*. He also deeply appreciates *Gunsmith Cats* (Sonoda), from which he took influence in character design styles and was later pleasantly surprised to discover that Sonoda's story was set in Chicago. Of this, he commented that ever since he moved to Chicago, he realized that Sonoda was not true to the details of the city but was rather more focused on drawing the guns and chase scenes.

Contrary to this, Tiede makes it a point to show Chicago as accurately as possible. Although he grew up elsewhere, he started his career there and it greatly inspired him in regards to the story of his comic. Another reason for focusing on environmental realism was wanting to emulate a characteristic (at least according to him) of manga, the importance of establishing shots. Tiede quotes McCloud's books on this being an essential part of manga and tries to incorporate aspect-to-aspect transitions in order to make his work more "true" to manga, as he understood it through McCloud's analysis.

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[63] This relates to Chapter 2 regarding the timing of his influences.

Why manga and not *amekomi*?

Tiede is drawn to the cinematic quality of manga (as he is also a big movie fan). When he read manga he felt as "if he were reading a movie storyboard." Before encountering manga, he had always imagined the story he wanted to tell as a movie. As he got to know the possibilities manga offered, he realized that he could make his "movie" using manga form, and that the cinematic qualities would transition over (Fig. 14), where as with American comics, he realized they would read more like a book or novel. American comics felt more centered on narrating a story as a text and manga seemed to narrate "visually" for him.

"There's more emphasis on the words, and less on letting the visuals really do the heavy lifting of the storytelling." (about American superhero comics)

Around the time he got into comics in the 1990s, American comics were still very much superhero centric, and while he also enjoyed that genre, he was more interested in others such as science fiction and horror, and this was another thing about manga that drew him in: that it did not "focus" itself on single genre. Ultimately, it was mainly the influence of abundant science-fiction examples (mainly through Shirow's and Otomo's work) that finally convinced him to take the manga route as an artist.

[Fig. 14 - pp. 42-43, "cinematic" scene using tight angles and speed lines (manga-reference) in *Paradigm Shift*, Part One, by Dirk Tiede, 2008.]

He categorizes his story as "action" and "horror." Though it starts off as a police drama, it soon turns into a werewolf story. Without wanting to spoil too much, Tiede declares that the story turns out to be a sci-fi story in the end. Regarding his choice to employ manga style, he

admits to admiring the simplicity of black and white and the clean and crisp feel of a manga page as opposed to an oversaturated color page of American superhero comics. The emphasis on line and page composition was also interesting to him (though, he says, this is based on what he read and liked 10-15 years ago). He feels that manga is being picked up more and more in the U.S and it is "injecting a whole lot more interesting fuel and creativity to the field."

Work Process

He starts with an outline for a story. From there, he does a page breakdown depending on how many pages does he think each scene will need, and then he writes the script for the scenes, which may include cliffhangers in order to "keep the story interesting and fresh and keep it unpredictable" each episode. Tiede explained that he'd prefer to have a whole script already done for the whole story but due to time constraints he can only write as he goes along, while using a general outline for the plot. He continues with thumbnails of the pages, which are about the same size page as the ones printed would be, and decides how many panels each page is going to be, including spaces, pauses, etc. He then inserts the dialogue from the scenes he wrote using his computer and pastes it onto the word balloons using graphics software. After editing, he moves on to pencils and then on to the finished, inked page. He works in batches, laying out a whole scene in script and thumbnails, then penciling and inking the whole batch of pages for that scene. He does all the steps of the work on his own, with no assistance from helpers. Due to the amount of work this entails, he can only put out a book every 3 years, so the 3 books already published have taken a total of 9 years to

complete. Like many self-sustaining manga artists in the West, the manga is done on the side in whatever free time is left over from full or part-time jobs and/or school[64].

Tiede admits that this method of production is inefficient and quite different from "commercial manga"and hopes to one day reach a point where he can afford to pay people and have a studio. Although he did have some interns at one point, he wasn't able to involve them too much with the artistic part of the work because he admits he's very attached to his story. The interns did other non-drawing related work for him such as scan pages, post content online or manage his website while he focused on the creative process entirely. He chose this system because he didn't feel the interns had the required skills he was looking for in regards to drawing his manga pages. Nonetheless, he admits to being open to train someone to be his assistant in the future. Tiede does concede that he could work in a more collaborative environment, but perhaps not for this story, of which he is so protective of.

"I'm writing with me as the reader in mind: I'm writing what I would like to see in comics. I think of it (my story) as a personal expression rather than as a product".

His approach towards writing is different from artists such as Chmakova, Matsumoto or Miyazawa, who do so with a specific audience in mind. Such is also true for Laksami, who targets young Thai girls interested in *shōjo* or even Emirain whose manga clearly cater to fans of *yaoi*/BL manga and slash fanfiction. Tiede falls more in the category of "self-expressive" manga artist like FSc and Hu Jingxuan, seemingly focused on telling the story primarily for the pleasure of doing so, and to express a personal opinion through it. Nonetheless, there can be, and there clearly are, artists who engage in both, self-expression

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[64] As in the cases of Sarah and Tita, previously mentioned, responsibilities such as school, jobs, children and supporting a family can also play a big part in the way and speed in which these artists' manga is created.

and fan/market service (like Kaoru, who balances both according to her local culture's expectations). However, all of the aforementioned artists had/have contracts with publishers and consider this as the primary evidence of their "official" status as manga artists.

Perhaps it may be the case that, within a culture that highly values individual expression, some American manga artists may in turn be affected by higher expectations or pressure (self or otherwise imposed) to work solo and to uphold their personal vision over "conforming" to the market's expectations. Tiede admits to feeling uneasy where he to put only his name on the cover if there were other artists involved in the project, regardless of being well aware that this is how it works in Japan. Manga-making for him is about self-expression of personal vision rather than being a producer of a consumer commodity. He equated the world of commercial manga as being similar to the system of art production described in the movie *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, by the well-known U.K. street artist, Banksy[65].

Although aware that backing by a large publisher can ensure wider distribution and possibly higher returns on sales, he is of the opinion that one of the reasons American artists interested in drawing manga are so opposed to creating manga as a commercial product is because of the culture of independent comics in the U.S. (within which he included American dōjinshi artists).

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[65] He made the parallel with the movie's main character, the graffiti artist "Mr. Brainwash," who ends up being a prominent name in the art world. "Mr. Brainwash" gained "success" making "fine art" using teams of workers who would pump out thousands and thousands of prints and works for him,while he did basically none of the actual artwork with his hands.

"OEL" manga as independent comics

There is a tradition in the independent market, according to Tiede, of the solo-artist production:

> *"I've got a story and I'm going to draw it because I don't have any money to pay anybody to help me and even if they did, its my story and I don't want anybody to tamper with it anyways."*

According to Tiede, in the case of a writer/artist team, they publish as double author always. Even in the case where a team is sharing the work load, it is usually carried out in the more traditionally "american" style: one person for writing, one for inking, one for penciling, another for lettering, all of whose names will undoubtedly appear on the cover. Like many American manga artists who do not have a contract with a publisher, he distributes mostly through conventions and online. At Comic-Con he is seen as an independent artist, whereas at an anime convention, he's recognized as a manga artist.

Original local manga, in the U.S. or otherwise, is a seemingly evolving amalgam of not just form and styles but of personal experiences and opinions. The market is highly individualistic and culture specific, and thus, it can quite possibly have a place within the traditions of independent comics. For example, most of the people Tiede admires in American comics are independent authors who work in styles clearly derived from Japanese manga. He identifies with artists such as Carla Speed McNeil, creator of a sci-fi story called *Finder*, which has been appearing online since 1996[66]. She puts out a book every year, and though her work is done primarily for the web, it is entirely monochrome. However, Tiede

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[66] http://www.lightspeedpress.com/ (last access 2013/12/06).

doesn't consider it manga, because for him, there is an emphasis in realistic-looking characters in it and it is inked with brush-like strokes, rather than the clean, technical lines he admires and attributes to Japanese manga. That being said, the work can certainly be considered independent comics, which is beginning to encompass many works that may not be manga strictly, but also draw from manga traditions. Tiede feels that to market it as "manga" would create confusion:

> *"The comics market in the U.S. is a little schizophrenic when it comes to manga: they love it, but only if it's from Japan. However, anime has definitely bled into mainstream american animation with examples such as Avatar, Thundercats (drawn in Korea, written in America), Supernatural (Korea/American) and even the Xmen (made in Japan, written in America). So the public loves it as long as nobody points out its not Japanese."*

Original manga in the U.S. may get wider acceptance as more "fusion" titles do well. Ones such as *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, *Thundercats*, even *Scott Pilgrim*, which have recognizable manga influences, but are widely accepted and not casted aside for their Japanese influence. If more more titles such as these increase in the market, publishers will feel safer to invest in new coming talent. Currently, publishers are not picking up many local original manga titles; its difficult because the issue revolving around "OEL" as a label and "Japaneseness" has forced the standard to be very high: "if the work is not done very well, instead of receiving praise as a good fusion or manga style comic, it could be casted aside as being simply amateurish."

Regarding publishing in Japan, Tiede is conscious though that his book might not be well accepted there, due to the fact that he is personally interpreting manga as style and could be

missing cues that Japanese people know by heart. He understands that his interpretation of manga "grammar" could create a clash instead of good reception. Tiede does concede that he would like to be picked up by a large publisher, reason for which he preferred to be seen as independent, a seemingly more professional label than being viewed as a manga artist (a view Rubins also described as being preeminent in the U.K. scene). Part of his reasoning to move away from being solely self-published was because "it involves a lot of logistics that take time away from creating."

Following on his words, it would have made sense for Tiede to approach Tokyopop about work, as he is a self-published manga artist and has proven he can create original manga. The reason he gives for not approaching them is mainly due to the terms of their contracts, which according to him, would have taken away about half of the artists rights (as Fawn Lau points out below). Complete creative control and expression is a reason why Tiede, and original manga, can be positioned within "independent" comics.

（9）**Supporting the artists: Fawn Lau**

"FIXIT" (also known as "FXT") Magazine[67] is a comic art and illustration magazine published independently that showcases new talent in these two artistic areas (Fig. 15). This is actually a personal project by comics editor and art producer Fawn Lau, who states online of the magazine:

> *"[FIXIT Magazine] is being developed as a quarterly and serialized comic and*
> *illustration magazine to showcase the talents of creators that don't quite have the*

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[67] http://www.fixit-mag.com/

chance to realize their ideas in print. It's not our intention to revolutionize the print industry, just to provide a place to keep the creative juices flowing from the emerging talents who are entering a tough industry today." (From the site's introduction).

[Fig. 15 - Cover of *FXT magazine*, issue two. Edited and produced by Fawn Lau, 2011.]

The magazine runs serialized stories that continue in each subsequent issue. They are made by artists who have not yet made it in print, so this becomes their first experience in being published (Fig. 16, 17, 18). So far, Fawn has published 3 issues; the third was widely sold at AX 2010 at her booth there. Trained and employed as a graphic designer, she creates book covers and logos for Viz Media as well as other comics and art books publishers as an outsourced artist. Additionally, she uses her expertise in art book publishing to make books where her friends (and other participating artists) can publish. Lau claims that she started this magazine to support artists since she has a lot of artist friends who complain that publishing is simply too hard. *FXT* is a side-project during her free time.

[Fig. 16, 17, 18 - (16) "Musik Non Stop," by mbp (humdrumroutine.com), pp. 14-15. Example of serialized colored comic (17) "Plastic," by Mia S. (super-villain.org), pp. 42-43. Example of serialized black and white comic (18) "Hidden in Ice," by Sires R. Black (blackstarr513.com), pp. 104-105. Example of serialized "OEL" manga. All in *FXT magazine*: issue two, ed. Fawn Lau, 2011.]

According to Lau, there were not enough jobs or support in the American industry for the illustrators that were coming out/graduating at that time, who either could not afford to print their own stuff or simply didn't know how to. Through this magazine, she hopes to bridge a little the gap between graduating and finding a job in the industry. Fawn Lau personally

remunerates the artists for publishing in her magazine (from the money of the sales), "but not a lot," she says. Just enough to encourage them to stay on track and to help support their cause. Her main motive came from witnessing how friends who were illustrators and/or comics artists were taking second jobs at places such as McDonald's, and she though "I wish you were drawing instead of doing this." Therefore, the magazine is meant to encourage them to stay in the artistic track and keep drawing. Publishing with her is not enough to pay rent with, she admits, but at least it helps them feel like they're working towards their real goal, "which isn't to make burgers."

Instead of going digital as a lot of independent comics are doing, Lau still feels that print media have a charm that many people still enjoy and that "one is not going to replace the other; they're completely different media." A lot of people still like to own a physical copy of the book, and, she explains, there is also a practical angle to this decision: with increased ease for uploading artwork online, there a surplus, an excess of work and no straightforward way to find it. Most people probably know most webcomics from word of mouth, not from a catalogue or magazine. This is an area where magazines can come in handy, to introduce works and artists that would otherwise remain unknown floating around in the internet.

"With a printed book, you have actually easier access to the information about artists. The webpage can change, the content can be deleted, but in a book, the artists name and work will always remain, and its probably easier to find the book on your bookshelf than from a long list of bookmarks in your internet browser."

In regards to the quality of her books, Lau said that she intentionally wanted to make them in higher quality paper than that of a manga anthology magazine from Japan (which she considers "throwaway-able") because she intends for the books to be kept, collected and

stored by the people who purchase them. Furthermore, she does not keep the copyrights to the artists works – after publishing with her, they can publish their work anywhere else they like, or on their own if they so prefer. This point is clearly in response to cries like Tiede's, for creative control within the publishing industry.

Since her magazine serializes stories, she considers creating a compilation volume, similar to a tankōbon, should the story become popular. "If there were investors in this project, I could look that far ahead, but right now, each issue is its own challenge," she points out.

Artists are chosen through open submission, made public on the magazine's website. This is done to not just favor her artist friends, and also to help artists learn to use the internet to find publishing possibilities and go through the process of pitching to a publisher, as they would for a larger company. She advertises the submissions through deviantART, as well as word of mouth on the internet from friends and colleagues. She chose to promote her project mainly through deviantART because it is a large art community, which to her knowledge, happens to house most of the aspiring original manga talent of the United States, and of which she has been a member for many years. Understandably, she knew the community well enough to know how to pitch to them. The magazine also holds a page on the Kickstarter[68] website, where entrepreneurs can publish a project online and receive funding for it. It works as a kind of catalogue for projects that need funding, and where anyone can go and support the project of their preference by donating money to it using the site's system. Many of the artists Lau publishes came to her through Kickstarter (as donors and applicants). So far, most of the advertising for *FXT* magazine has been word of mouth, mostly because it is Lau's

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[68] http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/fawn/fixit-magazine-for-comics-and-art-help-support-o%22
(last access 2013/12/02).

personal project, funded mostly by her, and has no corporate investors. It becomes expensive if she wants to advertise on magazines, or other media other than the internet.

Regarding readers, Lau had in mind an older, more sophisticated audience as her target audience for her magazine. She wants to market the magazine towards art-oriented people. For the interviews and content in the magazine, she steers it towards how the artist got into the industry, their art education and how they got into comics in general. This is to give readers (some of whom are artists trying to enter the market) some insight into how the process for breaking into the industry goes. She picks the interviewees with this in mind, choosing several per issue who had completely different methods and histories from each other, to expose to readers the many different ways one can become a professional comics artists in the Unites States.

An "OEL" manga artist's education

Lau personally considers that the situation artists who draw in manga style face is not as negative as some make it out to be. According to Lau, a lot of art schools in the U.S. actually discourage the manga style, but this is mainly because teachers want students to be more diverse by trying other techniques and not become too narrow in their choices, she explains. Such sentiments were shared to her from friends who are still in art school, advice she considers to be quite wise. She agrees with it because she believes that a lot of original manga artists think that because manga is in black and white, its pretty simple and easy to draw, (a point Karen Rubins also mentioned, so it may be a sentiment not exclusive to the U.K.) However, Lau elaborates:

"I feel like a lot of manga artists in Japan do know a lot of the fundamentals, but maybe it doesn't show completely through their black and white work. But if you look at their illustration work, like for example, Kishimoto-sensei's for Naruto, you may think that his manga pages are quite simple, but when you look at his color covers, you can see that there's a lot of training behind it."

She added that perhaps it could also be a result of most artists looking solely at manga, specifically *Shonen Jump* or other serializations, which are published quite quickly and thus their pages are drawn very fast, and in some cases, artists may think that they need not worry much about the quality of the pages. Furthermore, Lau thinks there may be art professors in the U.S that discourage students from making manga, due to being an older generation that does not read it. This could reflect on why there are very few art schools in the United States who know manga well enough to teach it, if any[69]. This may, of course, change after some time when some of today's young manga-style comics artists come of age and go into teaching.

Inside Tokyopop

Fawn Lau worked for Tokyopop for several years as a graphic designer, touch-up artist, production designer artist letterer[70]. However, during her time there, she felt that Tokyopop, while having good intentions in regards to the "OEL manga incentive," generated many of the problems related to it due to not having the appropriate staff to handle the project properly. For her, the failure of the Tokyopop "OEL" manga project was not because it was labeled "OEL," but because of bad management. It gave original local manga a bad

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[69] Such as the School of Visual Art, in New York (website)

[70] http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/people.php?id=12796 (last access 2013/12/02).

reputation, with people not realizing that the idea of original local manga was not the problem, but how it was handled by the company.

> *"Perhaps Tokyopop didn't commit to it enough, to the work as comics. Rather, Tokyopop picked out stories that they could later make into movies, and withheld the rights to them, instead of allowing the artists to keep claim to their own stories. In short, they had more intentions on making the most money out of the stories, rather than focusing on the product as a comics first and foremost. Basically, Tokyopop wanted to expand the stories into as many media as they could, but this hurt the comics because they were being pushed too far too soon. "*

According to Lau, Tokyopop spent more time pitching the stories to movie studios than promoting the work. Lau wishes that the advent of "OEL" had fallen on the hands of a company more interested in developing the project to its full potential, taking original manga to a new level, and offering readers an innovative idea, instead of being more interested in "milking" them for movie rights, a view manga researcher and translator Matt Thorn has agreed with in his own article on Tokyopop (2011).

As of now, there are a few companies (such as Onipress) that are publishing what could be called "OEL manga" nowadays, although they're mostly comics with visible manga influence in regards to style, but they're not promoted as "OEL" precisely because of the bad reputation the label has gained and because, as we have seen, original manga is not categorizable by style, as works are different in individual ways. Rather, they are simply called "Onipress comics," or whatever the name of the publishing company happens to be, and this trend, or avoiding the "OEL" label has been growing also amongst publishers. There

is the example of *Scott Pilgrim*, published by Onipress, which fits this problem of "un-categorizable manga."

Is *Scott Pilgrim* "OEL manga"?

Lau thinks that not many people associate "OEL manga" with *Scott Pilgrim,* but this is mainly because it came from Onipress, rather than Tokyopop. As we know, there is a link between recognizing a manga as "OEL" depending on the publisher, rather than the style, as Lau suggests. "If you break it down, SP has many "OEL manga" characteristics: black and white, long page count (over 200 pages per volume) and published in tankōbon-like volumes instead of thin issues." It was not serialized in magazines first, but its been handled the same way that Tokyopop published their "OEL" manga books in many respects. Lau echoes Carlo Santo's initial opinion that Tokyopop liked to use "buzzwords" to promote their products, and so, "OEL" and "manga" were used not so much as a way to describe these works stylistically, but rather a way to categorize them and make it attractive to consumers, mainly because the word "manga" is what attracted their focus groups to their translated manga titles, and it was that word specifically which got them the sales they were getting.

This whole issue made the word "manga" gain multiple meanings in the world of the comics industry in the U.S. However, Lau says she, and many artists nowadays, use the word as any Japanese person would use it, to mean simply "comics" and adds that the reason we have this "stylized definition" of the word is mainly due to Tokyopop. This is the reason why there are comics being published in the U.S. right now that could be called "OEL" but are not, simply because they are not being published by Tokyopop.

Breaking into the industry

Such issues may have caused the trouble for emerging manga-style artists who are trying to break into the industry because many companies are simply not interested in investing in those kind of comics. However, they do acknowledge that they are marketable[71]. So, what many companies are opting for is making manga versions of already popular media titles, such as the *Twilight* book series[72]. These projects create pressure in artists to be diverse if they want to work in the industry, and to accept that they must take on projects like these if they want to have work. But, as Lau points out, since it happens that very often manga artists see themselves as "solo creators" (they are the brains and machine behind their stories) and see their function as artists oriented towards self-expression, they are very discouraged when faced with the possibility of not get their own story published, and drawing someone else's story just to have a job. Also, many companies, in order to reduce costs, simply comission artists currently employed to start drawing in a more manga style, instead of hiring new talent (as in the case of Emily Warren, for example). In order to break into the industry, it is almost impossible to avoid doing commission work for someone else, at least in the beginning, which while completely understandable, makes some artists reluctant to even try.

However, Lau feels that although the prospects for a full-time job doing manga in the American comics mainstream is somewhat bleak, it is better to get some experience in the business rather than staying out of it, because it is important to understand how the industry works and build up a reputation as a trusted artist (reliable in terms of work quality and deadline-keeping) as well as make important connections, so that the artist can learn to pitch their own story and receive the desired support. "Even if you're not doing your own story and

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[71] As in the case of the manga-style X-men comics.

[72] http://www.amazon.com/Twilight-Graphic-Novel-Vol-Saga/dp/0316204889 (Last access 2014/03/13.

you're drawing someone else's, you still have a lot of things to learn, such as storyboarding, layouts and many other technical things which you can start to develop and can help your own project down the line," she explained. For the artists that definitely do not want to work for the comics industry and just want to do their own stories, she suggests that they try to break in with webcomics and build up from there (as Tiede and many more have opted to do). But "if they want to see their stuff printed, and more specifically, mass-produced, they would have to follow the conventions of publishers, at least a little," she advices. She thinks there could be some cultural differences as well, with Japanese artists being more generous and yielding easily to an editors' complaints, as opposed to an American artist, who would most likely fight the editor against making changes they do not like.

> *"In Japan, comics artists treat manga making as a job, and if the editor wants a certain thing, they just treat it as part of the job. In the U.S., the artist reacts in regards to their work more as an overprotective parent to a child, calling it their 'baby' more often than not."*

Regarding female artists, Lau feels that manga helped girls become a bigger demographic in the world of comics, because of Japanese shōjo manga addressing the wants of girls. She recalls when she was in elementary school, she would draw X-men characters alongside with her male friends: for them perhaps quite natural to do so, but for her it was simply the only (apparent) option. "Then manga came along and changed everything for girls, and for some it became the only option if they wanted to write and draw about women," she states. This could indicate a perceived trend within American women illustrators and comics artists, who for the past 20 years, have worked almost solely with manga-influenced style.

A continuing investigation

The previous discussions as well as the artists' statements herein presented pose many questions regarding the position of original manga according to locality, as well as within the world of comics. It is unrealistic to expect to answer them all here, but what can be said is that "OEL manga" has moved from being a discussion about a label and trademark to one about a phenomenon; a global movement of artists actively pursuing careers in comics using Japanese manga as style and reference. This advocates strong sentiments in those who are close to manga, and this in turn indicates a large movement, given the scope of influence that manga currently has globally. What is more, artists who take from manga for influence and inspiration is a trend that will only continue to grow. This in itself has many implications for manga and comics in general, and it would serve to investigate further the different points of entry to this subject: definition, industry, market, style, genders and artists, in order to enrich the stores of knowledge on manga and comics; as fans, scholars, and of course, as artists.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I attempted to explore original manga made in English and with commercial intent, as well as the artists that create such works, in an attempt to locate them as "manga" in the North American comics market and define them as such through the cultural and stylistic conventions that Japanese manga represent. I have described the practices of creating original commercial manga by artists who started out as fans of anime and manga through the localization marketing strategies of translation companies in the comics publishing scene, initially by defining and localizing "OEL" as a "supplementary" product marketed alongside translated manga by Tokyopop, the leading manga publisher in North America. Contrary to the main opinion of scholars and industry professionals who dismiss "OEL" manga as "imitations" of manga, I argue that "OEL" manga is is not, in all actuality, simulating manga or translations of manga; what is happening is a necessary negotiation of its creative potential against it's publication format and distribution method (which are exactly the same as those of translations). "OEL" manga is essentially treated as if it were the same product as a translated Japanese manga from a marketing point of view. The unexistence of publishers or market for original commercially-intended local manga forces "OEL" to conform to the same publication formats, sizes, prices, rates and print runs that translations are submitted to. Therefore, "OEL" manga can be seen as original manga in English that is published by manga translation companies in North America, but regarding its creative content, it is beyond these limitations.

Through exploring the position of "OEL" manga within the North American manga market, I go on to explore the characteristics that make "OEL" manga identifiable from other types of manga and comics. The study of the created "Japaneseness" that originated from fans expectations nurtured through their reading practices of translations create "OEL" manga's

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visual and narrative particularities. From a stylistic viewpoint this equates to action lines, monochrome pages, use of screentone, iconic characters with simple, emotive faces (McCloud 2006: 216), use of Japanese script for decoration and onomatopoeia, amongst others. Regarding narration, "OEL" manga tend to follow genre-specific tropes, derived from the manga titles that became popular; the main of these being fantasy, sci-fi and samurai/action manga (McCloud 2006: 226). I argue that the "OEL" manga canon tend to be composed of many works in these genres due to fans's main exposure to these, through the translations they read growing up. Furthermore, this study also touched upon the high number of women in comics who entered the field directly through their experience with manga, and their experience as local manga artists. I suggested that this is due to the influence of shōjo manga being introduced into the North American comics scene, allowing comics to become approachable to young women, as well as providing a specific space for comics that were emotion and romance-centered.

As we move away from the label "OEL" and focus on what the work and artists are trying to convey, we realize that these manga are a point of encounter of Japanese manga's maturity of genre and content in addition to simplicity in style, with the American tradition of self-expression and self-exploration in comics. This may suggest that manga, as it is appropriated and localized in different cultures, merges with a specific necessity within the narrative traditions of that particular culture, which was apparent in the interview studies regarding manga in South East Asia in chapter 4. Some of the artists in these localities have had to make negotiations with their community in order to create manga professionally[1]. This is also true in the cases of American manga artists, who migrate towards more independent publishers, self-printing or webcomic creation in order to preserve their autonomy as

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[1] Such as Kaoru, who cannot publish manga depicting romantic physical touch due to her country's censorship laws based on Islamic law (Gan, 2011).

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creatives due to strong copyright limitations with some of the larger comics companies. This

is largely fueled by a sense of "community." In summary, these are the areas that were

explored by the case of "OEL" manga and their findings:

1)   Fan Community: "OEL" manga artists function as fans, within the same fan

       communities (online deviantART, Pixiv) as would a fan who only draws for fun and for

       the pleasure of online sharing. What "OEL" manga and "manga" as understood by

       North American fans essentially arrive at is: multiplicity of definitions and re-definition

       through multi-cultural points of contact; remixing of media in individual ways, while

       pointing to "Japan" as source for the style.

2)   Style: "manga" means "style," specifically, "manga style." This has evolved into a

       specific expectation from readers and fans of what they recognize as "manga" within

       these comics. "OEL" has to have certain elements present in the drawing style, in the

       narrative and in the publication mode/format (discussed in chapter 3) in order for it to

       be recognized as "manga," and the criteria for recognizing a work as "manga" comes

       from assumptions and beliefs born out of the experience of reading manga translations.

       Mainly, "OEL" manga is expected to look and read like manga translations. But on a

       deeper level, artists reinterpret what "manga style" is, in personal ways. The label has

       since changed. It can be discussed on the following levels:

       - As a trademark: "OEL" manga was created as a "buzzword" to describe a Tokyopop

       product. It is a commercial label. It points to manga that is created for sales in comics

       markets, but specifically it is the trademark of the manga translation and distribution

       company Tokyopop. Originally, "OEL" manga meant, almost exclusively, original

       manga in English published by Tokyopop.

- As a label: Following on the expansion of Tokyopop's campaign, "OEL" began to be used as a label for all original manga published in North America. However, due to the failure of sales for "OEL" manga because of "Japaneseness" expectations that were not fulfilled by the manga, the label became negative and thus, avoided by companies and individuals concerned with the manga market in North America. In order to disassociate themselves from the negative impact that "OEL" as a label was causing sales, artists began to shy away from calling themselves "mangaka" or their works "OEL manga." Further, they began to experiment and personalize their style even more, while maintaining enough elements in it for it to continue to be recognized as "manga" or at least "manga style."

- As a legacy: "OEL" as a label has evolved. It is no longer used (or at least, its heavily avoided) or linked solely to Tokyopop. Rather, it is now seen as a chapter in the story of manga in North America; the beginnings of a space within the manga market in the West for original local manga to emerge and be consumed. These manga come in many shapes and styles and forms, and tell many different stories, but it all targets the same audience: fans of Japanese manga and anime, who are also the creators of these manga.

3) "OEL" manga artists as "solo creators:" most artists tend to be introverts or just prefer to work alone. For the artists in the study, online communities help them be sociable (for personal and professional reasons) in a way that is comfortable. It makes self promotion much easier for those who have difficulty relating with others on a daily basis, as well as provide spaces for discussion and sales without having to interact directly with others. This indirect mode of social interaction (further enhanced and supported by Facebook and similar sites) support the natural tendencies of "OEL" and

original local manga artists which is why the trend has managed to grow exponentially. Having this community encourages others to "launch" themselves into the business by starting their own online blogs, portfolios and shops and participating in online discussions and critiques. It also makes it easier for work to be seen and consumed on wide scales, without having to re-locate to Japan (like in the case of FSc). In essence, social media has made it easier to be an original manga-style comics artist, and it is what allowed for artists to "escape" the necessity to be labeled "OEL" or conform to Tokyopop's standards for original manga publishing, allowing them to explore their own style and message through an individual interpretation of Japanese manga without it necessarily signifying failure or lack of professionalism in regards to being "officially" published, and therefore, not considered a "real" artist. Not being published by Tokyopop or like companies or not being considered "OEL" does not signify "amateur" or " anymore. The artist relies on him/herself for meaning and purpose, as well as defines what the views of the community are, and, as we have seen through the study, this value is no longer placed on the publisher or label, but on the artists and the works as creations rather than commodities or simple entertainment products.

4) "OEL" manga artists as "authors:" Matsumoto's case proved that the technique is not the main problem regarding the positive reception of a manga in the market - the story is; specifically, the way the characters and narrative are presented. According to the criteria of sales and reviews, *Dramacon* did better than *Yokaiden*, not necessarily because the drawing technique is "better," but because the story as a whole (narrative) was better accepted. Not everyone can be a writer, this is why mangaka in Japan do not often write their own stories. The narrative must draw readers in and makes them feel connected; this element is crucial and has the potential to make a piece of artwork or book into a cult favorite. One of the main issues with "OEL" manga is that often artist

and writer are the same person ("OEL" manga artist as "solo creator," above mentioned) but that does not necessarily mean they are adept at both. These artists tend to be very reluctant to both draw someone else's story and/or accommodate their own stories to fit the market better, something Japanese mangaka have to do most the time. In Japan, mangaka can publish their own stories unchanged usually after they've achieved relative success (and even then, there are massive changes done regardless) and/or through informal means such as dōjinshi or alternative comics magazines. In other words, "creative freedom" (or rather <u>more</u> creative freedom) lies in subcultural spaces, but certainly not in the mainstream. In America, manga is a subculture, but at the same time, it is treated as a business. This is somewhat confusing for artists because they expect to have that creative freedom, but at the same time, have to perform and accommodate their creative vision to fit the business or marketing strategies of the company they work for. This results in artists who do manga moving more and more towards freer spaces, such as independent comics publishers, self-publishing or simply doing manga for their own pleasure, thus,s foregoing career aspirations in manga and obtaining their sustenance elsewhere.

Furthermore, when "OEL" or simply professional manga artists do have the fortune of obtaining a book deal with a publisher, they usually do not have the appropriate support from editors, who can only do so much as to just ask for a story and leave the rest in their hands, as they do not participate actively in the creative process due to the nature of the production system for original manga in the West. Chmakova's case was different in that her editor played a key role in the story creation process, ensuring that the narrative would be consistent and relatable to the target audience. What is missing in this chain of production is cooperation, amongst artists and industry, to create work better suited for the market (which implies also clearer understanding of the market),

and uplift the potential that is already there.

Another point this thesis raised was the issue of "OEL" manga's difficult placement within the comics field in North America. As a part of the manga field, which in itself is a genre of American mainstream comics, "OEL" manga belongs next to translated manga, at first through serializations in monthly magazines similar to those in Japan, and later, in book format similar to Japanese tankōbon, with monthly publication. The rate of publication and print format of the books have created a natural gravitation towards the graphic novel sector. It has also created narratives that are slower to develop and more linear than the open-ended fast-paced chapters in serialized weekly manga. Finally, artist's interest in including autobiographical elements in their work and in creating "coming-of-age" stories create a compatibility with traditions of the alternative, independent and graphic novel fields within comics in North America. Also, having manga a part of the book field has allowed for for manga to be more widely received by female readers, who frequent bookstores much more than comic book shops. Nonetheless, "OEL" manga is not simple to define and locate within Comics or Manga Studies because it is a part of many different issues relating to these fields. It raises questions regarding the state of graphic novels and the alternative and independent comics fields. It also raises the issue of the future of women in comics. Within Manga Studies, it constitutes part of the research about manga's globalization and it's "glocalization," as manga's influence emerges recognizable in varied (and ever-growing) examples within popular media across the globe. Also, from a stylistic point of view, it can reflect on manga's evolution as style through hybridization. This study can contribute to these fields by providing example cases on these subjects. It is also useful as a contribution to the understanding of the practices of manga fans in the western hemisphere. It serves to approach the case of "OEL" manga in research because it has implications on the development of all of the mentioned areas of studies. Also, it can help gain perspective on

the direction comics, manga and global popular media are taking.

Moreover, within Manga Studies, the artist's experience is often left out of the study, as well as the manga's relation to its target market, all of which are inextricable parts of its identity and provide the essential information necessary for its understanding. When original local manga made for mass publication is the subject of research, the focus is usually on the content of the work, more specifically, the narrative (Brienza 2013) or on it's market relationship (Sell 2011, Matsui 2009, Brienza 2009, Gravett, etc.). When it is discussed regarding style, it tends to be in derogatory light (Jüngst 2007). It is surprising that it is not taken more seriously by manga or comics studies, considering that it is a direct result of manga's influence in current global popular media, fashion and entertainment. This research could be taken up by those within comics and manga studies, as well as fan and popular media studies, who are interested in the emerging practices of globalized manga. By studying how "OEL" manga provides spaces for new kinds of stories to emerge and opportunities for manga/comics careers, this thesis contributes to ongoing debates within manga studies about issues of representation and form, and particularly the role of hybrids deriving from both comics and manga practices. In this way, those who seek to further the research about "OEL" manga can do so from a less-biased platform, by taking into account "OEL" manga's condition as a purely local product of the North American manga industry, targeted for North American manga readers specifically. This prevents "OEL" manga from being forced to perform as Japanese manga, nor American graphic novels, and allows for it to be studied and appreciated for its creative contributions in both. This also aids artists who are seeking to create manga professionally in this market, to gain more legitimacy (and possibilities) as professionals. This could be extended in detailed research into other countries and cultures where manga is being made, or where there are those who are interested in careers in comics because of the influence of manga in their experience as

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artists. This last point would be an immense contribution to the expanding field of world/ global manga.

Understandably, "OEL" is difficult to place within any research field of comics. This could be the reason why most of the research on OEL manga is done in scattered, indirect ways, usually relating it to a different topic of focus or sometimes as a simple mention about eclectic manga practices. Perhaps the most innovative contribution this thesis wishes to make is to integrate and compile what has been investigated (directly and indirectly) regarding this subject and weaving it into a cohesive story, adding to it the subjective, personal experience of those behind these works and an insider view into their creations, so that this material and topic can be much easily accessed. The message-oriented, "storytelling" aspect of this thesis is a reflection of my own identification as an OEL manga artist, and a reminder that this is a study from an artist's point of view. Lastly, I would encourage that this study also be carried out in practice by artists, to continue re-defining manga through their individual interpretation by the inclusion of their own personal message and experience in the process[2]. Just as OEL manga is not an isolated product, independent of its source culture, manga is no longer synonymous with Japan. Japan is often recognized as a point of origin, but its present state is more dependent on global influences and impact. Perhaps due to our increased connectivity nowadays, manga is functioning as a sort of "open-source" project in which anyone can participate, and it is nearing recognition as simply "another word for comics," as Scott McCloud (2006: 223) (and myself) conclude.

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[2] Which I will continue doing through my own work and artistic career.

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    Larasati. Personal interviews at the workshop "Using Manga to tell Local Stories"
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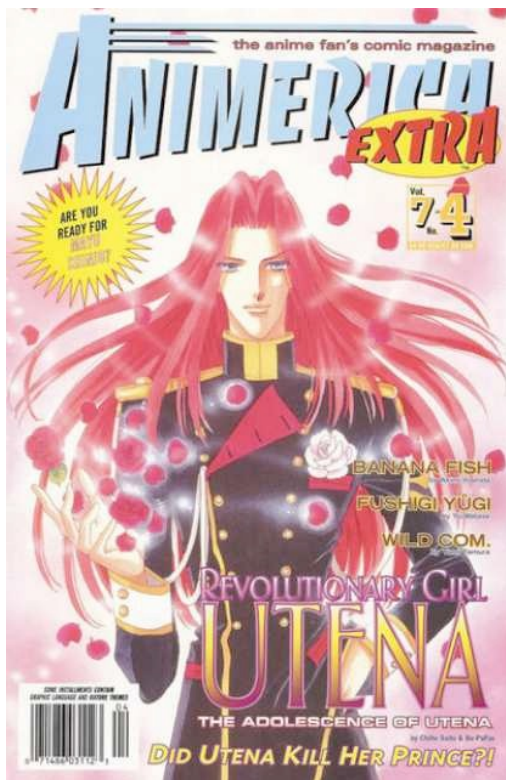
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[Fig. 6 - *Yōkaiden* Vol. 1 cover. By Matsumoto Nina © 2009, Del Rey Manga]
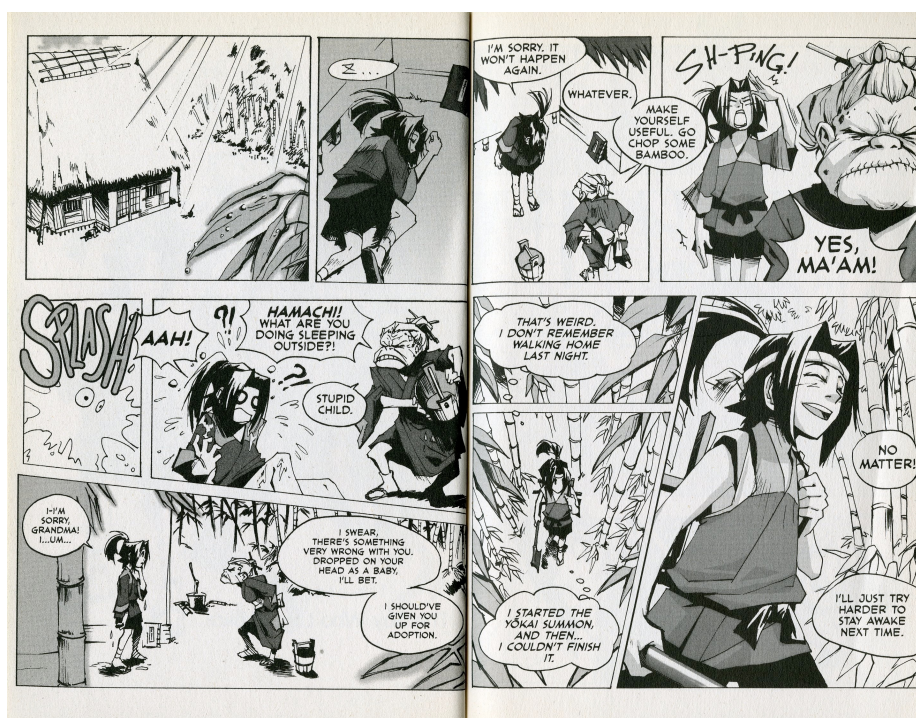
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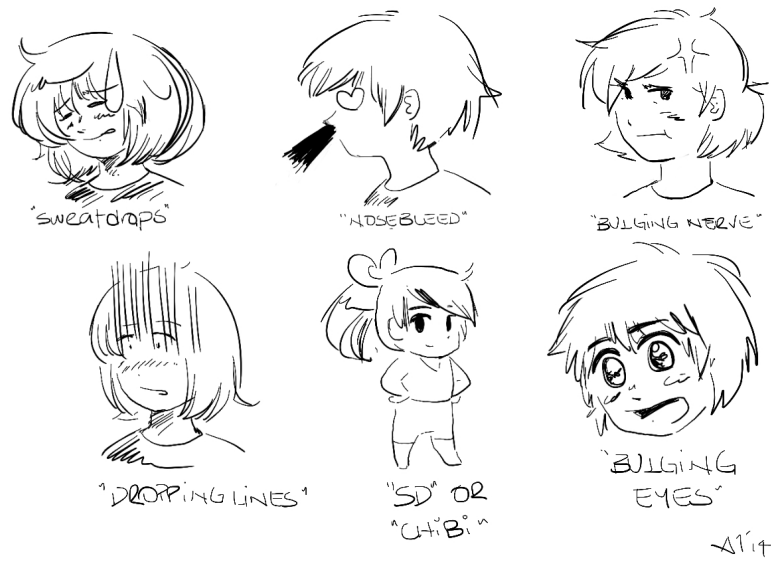
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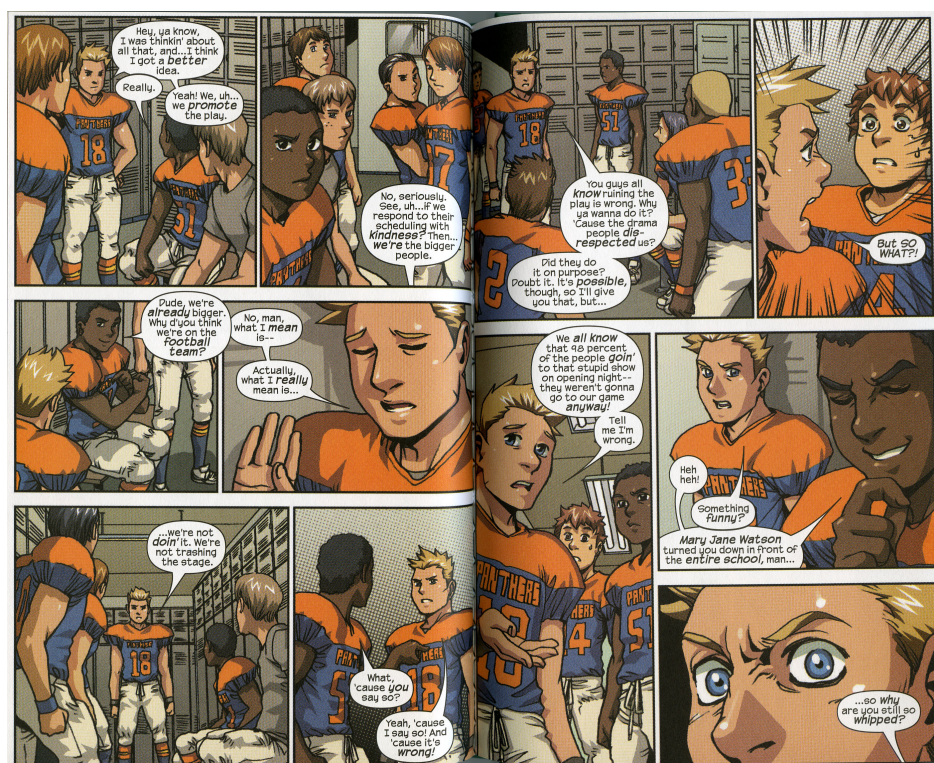
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[Fig. 3 - pages 105-106 of *Spiderman loves Mary Jane*, Vol. 2: "The New Girl," by

Miyazawa Takeshi, ©Marvel Comics, 2006.]

[Fig. 4 - front and back cover of *Spiderman loves Mary Jane*, Vol. 2: "The New Girl," by

Miyazawa Takeshi, ©Marvel Comics, 2006.]

[Fig. 5 - from "Los Robos, Arizona" (art and story by Miyazawa Takeshi) in *Shattered: The Asian American Comics Anthology,* (2012), edited by Jeff Yang.]
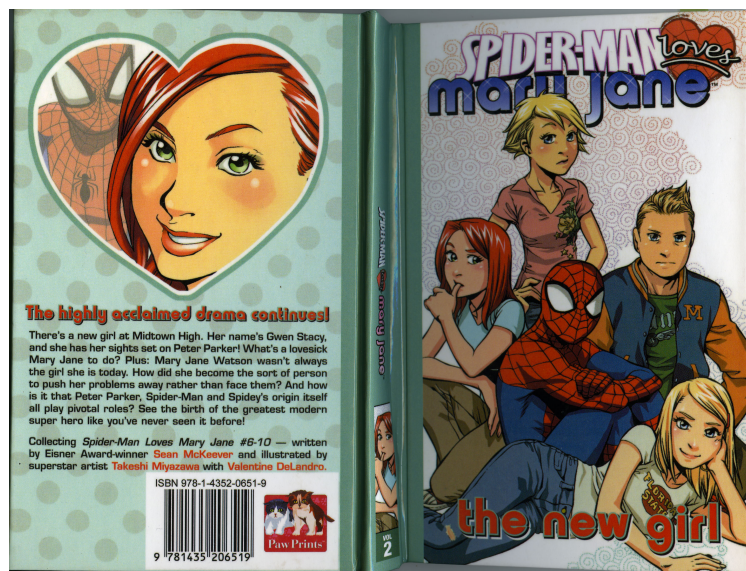
(7)

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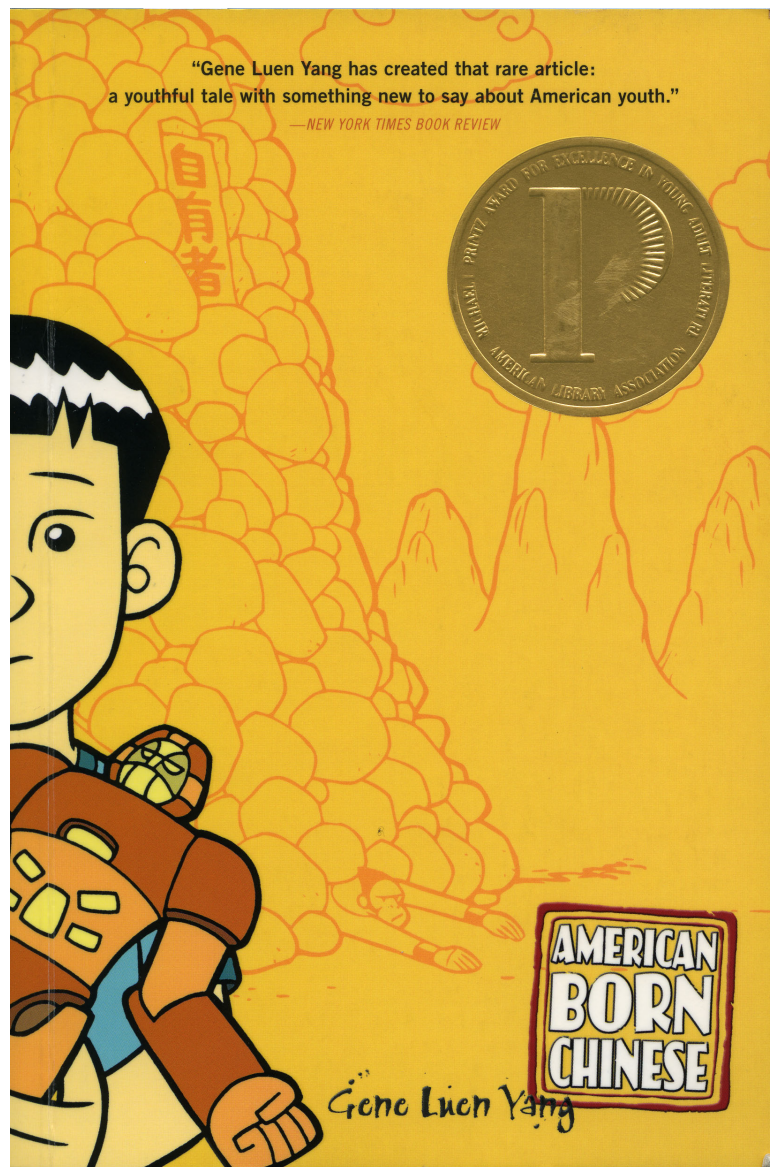
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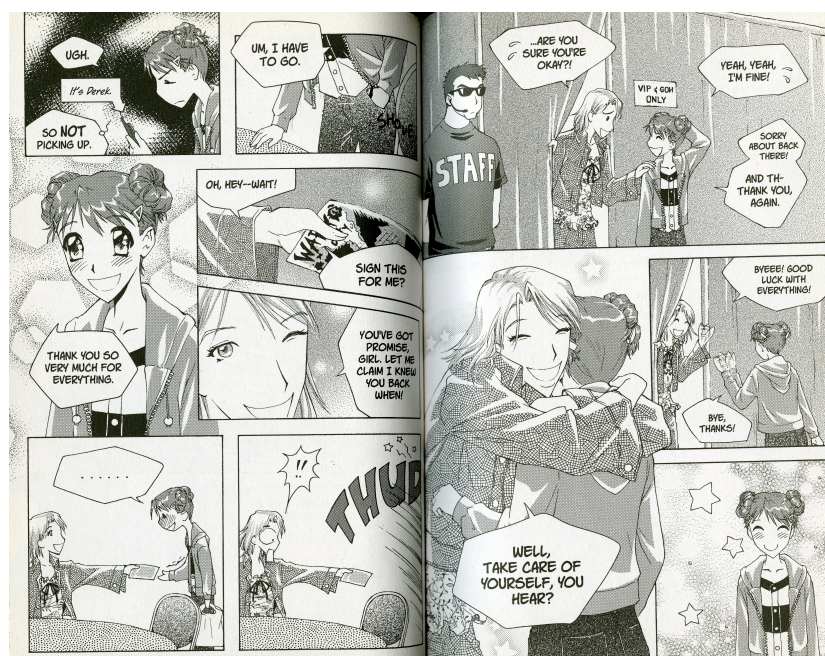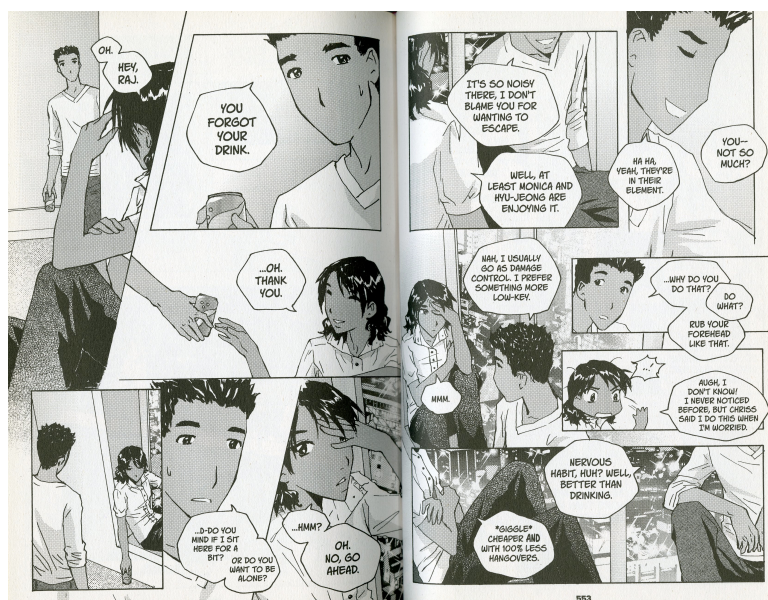

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Dramacon, pp. 102-103 © 2008 Svetlana Chmakova. Courtesy of Tokyopop.]
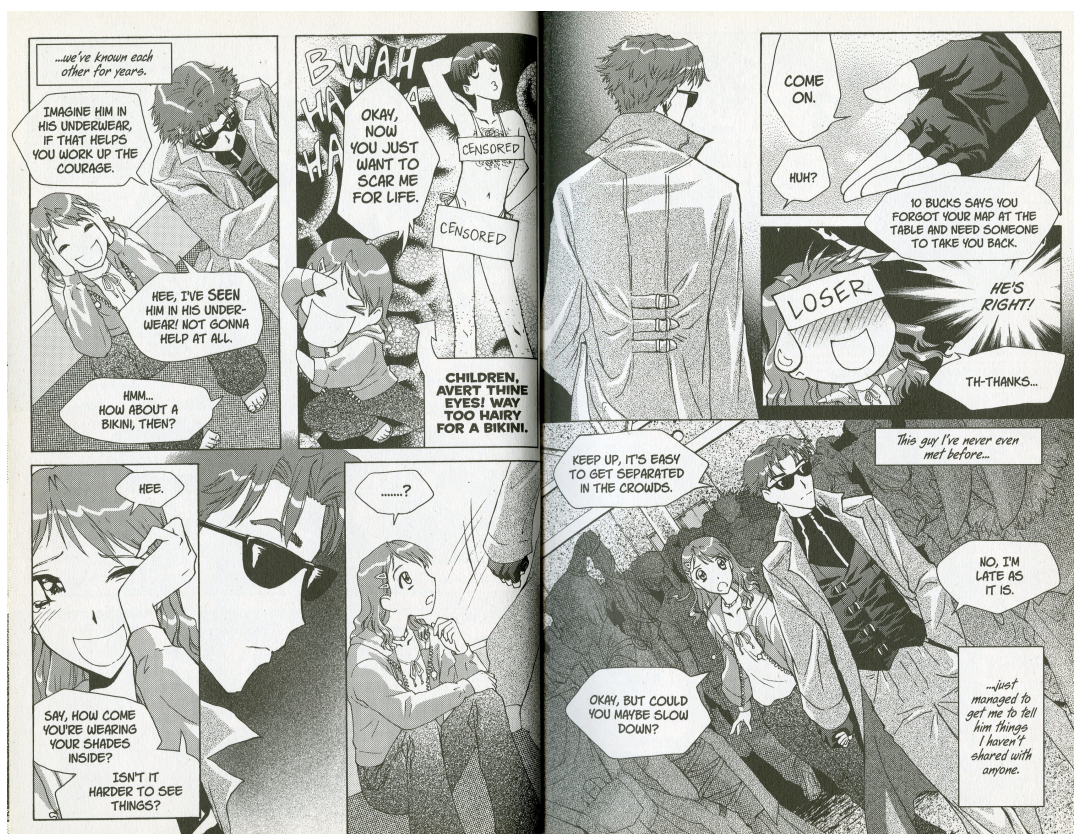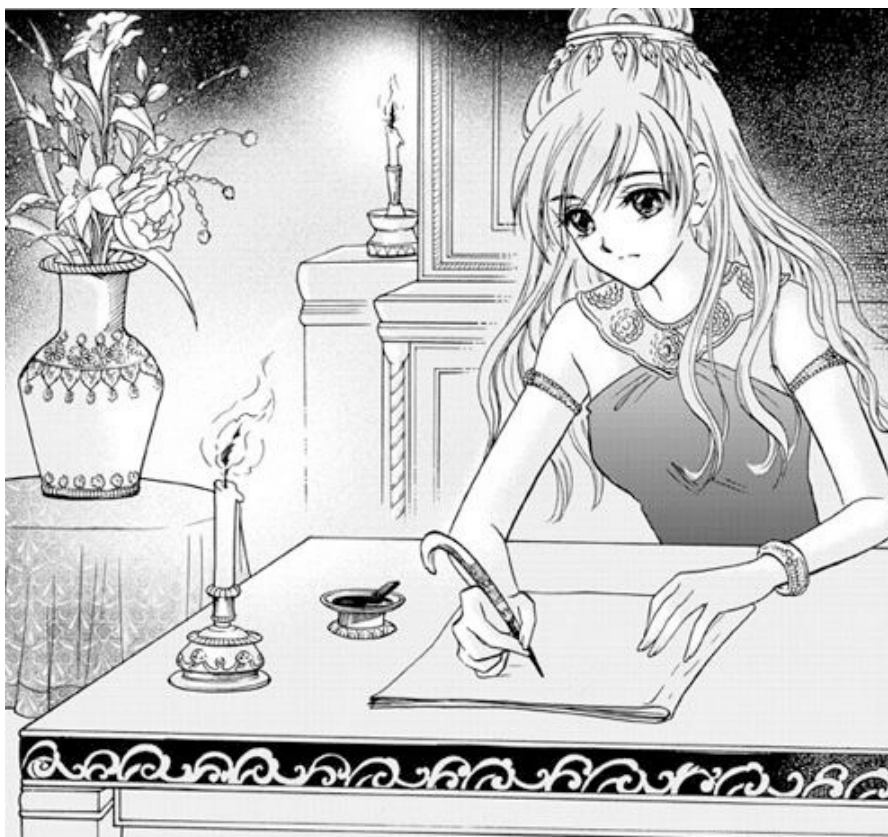
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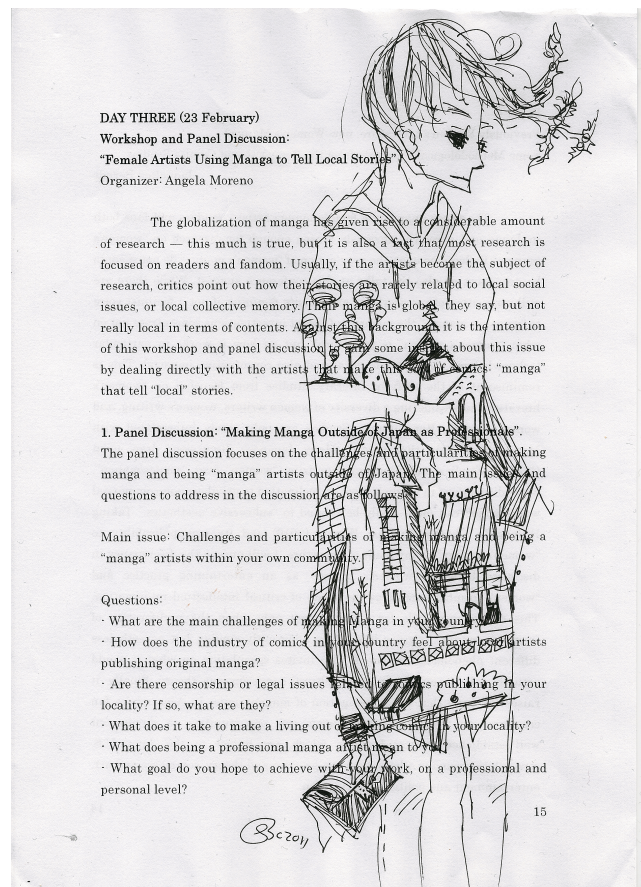

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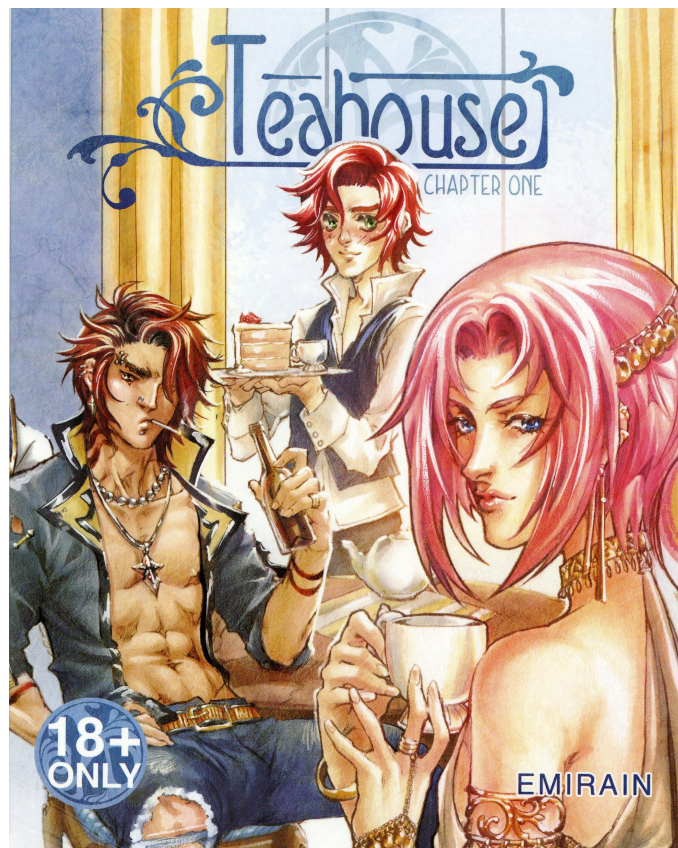[Fig. 6 – From "Awek Aspuri," by Sarah Joan Mohktar, *Ujang* Magazine, 1998.]

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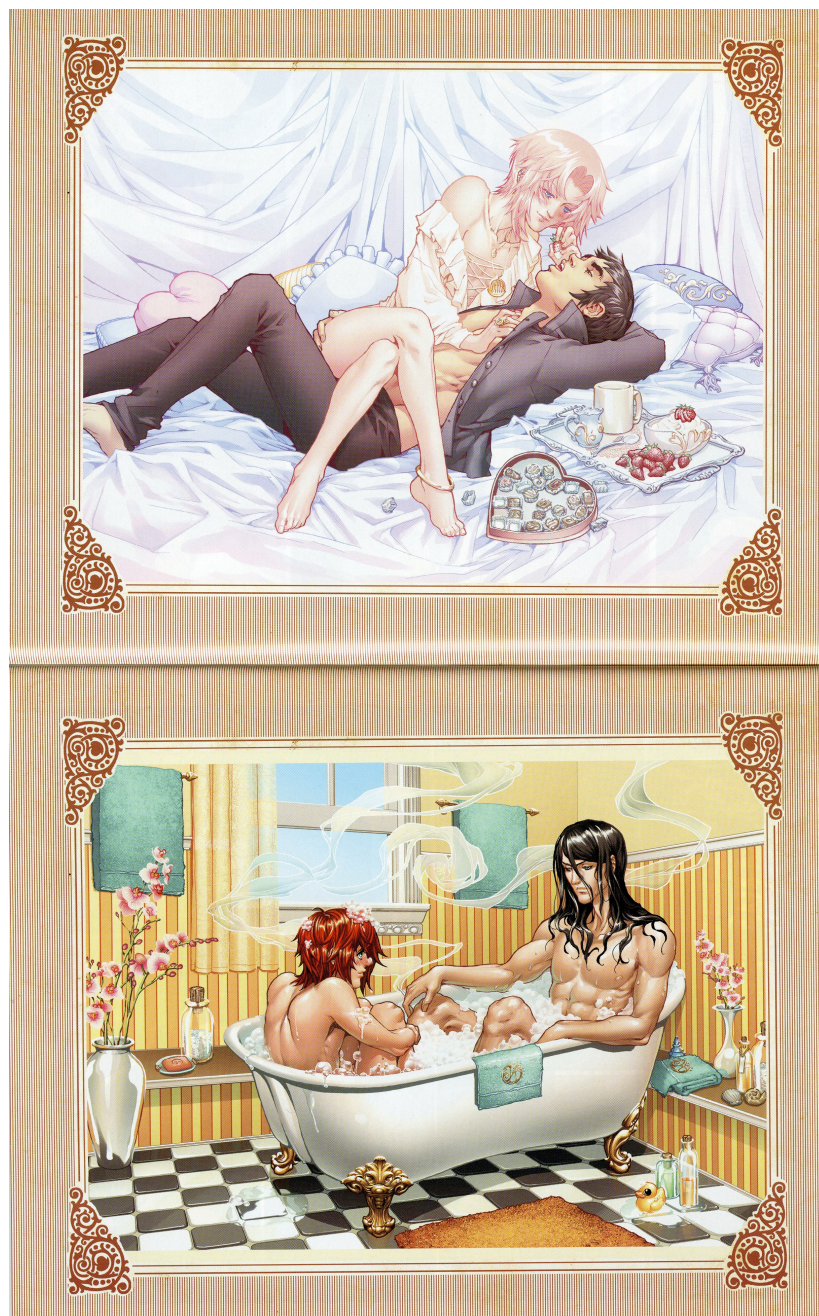
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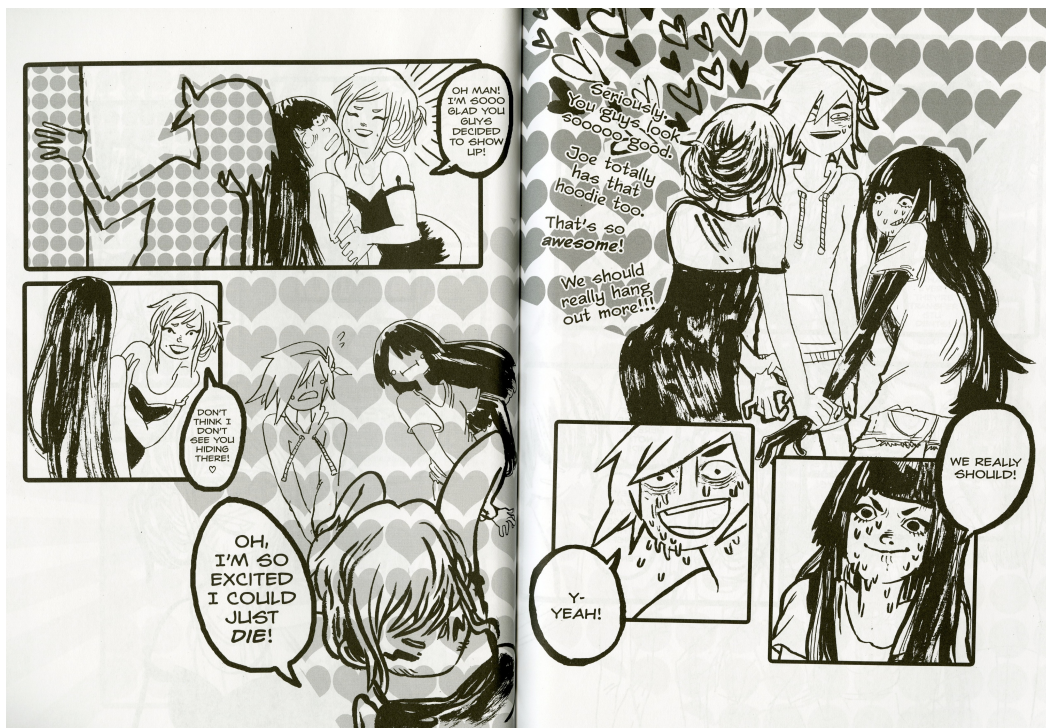

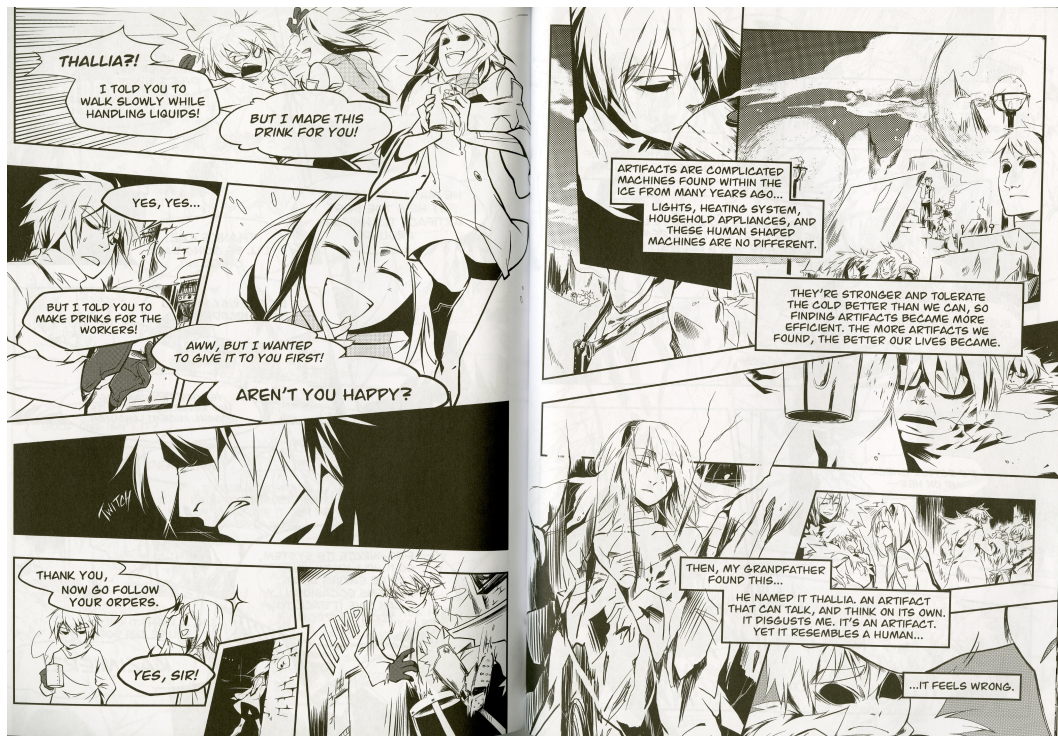[Fig. 13 - cover of Paradign Shift, part one, by Dirk Tiede, 2008.]

[Fig. 14 - pp. 42-43, "cinematic" scene using tight angles and speedlines (manga-reference) in *Paradigm Shift*, Part One, by Dirk Tiede, 2008.]

[Fig. 15 - Cover of *FXT magazine*, issue two. Edited and produced by Fawn Lau, 2011.]

(16)

(17)

(18)

[Fig. 16, 17, 18 - (16) "Musik Non Stop," by mbp (humdrumroutine.com), pp. 14-15.

Example of serialized colored comic (17) "Plastic," by Mia S. (super-villain.org), pp. 42-43.

Example of serialized black and white comic (18) "Hidden in Ice," by Sires R. Black

(blackstarr513.com), pp. 104-105. Example of serialized OEL manga. All in *FXT magazine*:

issue two, ed. Fawn Lau, 2011.]

1. **8-page re-drawn scene of *American Born Chinese*, pp. 185-188.**

HEY

HEY

WHERE'S WEI CHEN?

MATH CIRCLES

OH

...

YOU ALLRIGHT?

I'M...

...TIMMY SAID SOMETHING STUPID TO ME TODAY

OH

YOU KNOW, OVER THE WEEKEND, I WENT TO THIS BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR LAUREN SUZUKI, MY BEST FRIEND IN THE SECOND GRADE

YAY!

B'DAY CARD

WE USED TO GO TO JAPANESE SCHOOL TOGETHER. I HADN'T SEEN HER IN YEARS! SO, WHEN MY MOM TOLD ME WE WERE GOING TO HER BIRTHDAY PARTY, I WAS PRETTY EXCITED!

ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES INTO THE PARTY, THOUGH, I FIGURED OUT THAT LAUREN DIDN'T ACTUALLY INVITE ME.

HER MOM WANTED TO HANG OUT WITH MY MOM, AND I SORT OF JUST GOT BROUGHT ALONG.

LAUREN AND HER FRIENDS HAD THEIR OWN THING GOING,...

...SO, I SPENT THE REST OF THE PARTY WATCHING T.V IN THE LIVING ROOM.

I FELT SO EMBARRASED!

...TODAY, WHEN TIMMY CALLED ME A CHINK, I REALIZED...

...DEEP DOWN

INSIDE...

...I KINDA FEEL LIKE THAT...

ALL THE TIME!

b

SMACK!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, JIN?!

２．OEL Manga artists' interviews and questionaires.

　(i) Sample OEL Manga Artist Interview/Questionaire sheet

OEL (Original English Language) Manga Artist Written Interview [Kyoto Seika University, Graduate School of Art, Story Manga course – Angela Moreno Acosta, PhD student]

*Disclaimer for Release: Although I ask for you name here (so I know who's who when filing the data), I will use the answers provided here anonymously and completely unchanged, as a source of data for my thesis. If you agree, please sign/write your name and date below, and go ahead and fill in the questionnaire. Thanks!

Name:

Date:

Section 1 – Personal History

1.1 – Personal Data

When were you born (full birth date):

Country of origin (and/or where you grew up):

Current location:

Website/Shop:

Blog:

Any other interesting details you'd like to share, please do! :

1.2 – Trajectory

- Since what age have you been drawing manga/manga-style comics? Do you make a living from doing so?

*What does being a professional manga artist mean to you?

- What made you decide to start drawing manga/manga-style comics with professional purposes/intent? In other words, why did you decide to be a professional manga/manga-style comics artist?

1.3 – Genres and Influences

- What titles and type of manga/anime have you been reading/do you remember best and how has it influenced your work?

- Are there other artistic influences (i.e non-manga-style comics artists, musicians, writers, filmmakers or other people whose work you admire) that influence your work?

- How would you describe and categorize your comics/works (i.e - comics, manga, graphic novels, cartoons…?

- Genres and topics (i.e: romance, high-school, mystery, horror, superhero, science-fiction, fantasy, etc.):

- What is it about Japanese manga that you prefer over other types of comics, like for example, American comics (Marvel/DC) or Francobelgian bande dessineè (TinTin, Moebius)?

Section 2 – Work Process

- What materials/tools do you use to make your comics with?

- How do you get these materials (i.e buy them online, in a store, in Japan, etc.)?

- How do you handle the reading direction and other issues of manga/manga-style comics when it comes to the creation of the work? Do you draw the work left-to-right, or vice versa (vertical/horizontal script)? How about use of onomatopeia and sound effects?

Section 3 - Publishing and Distribution

- How do you publish and distribute your manga/manga-style comics?

- What are the main industrial/legal challenges of making manga/manga-style comics in your country? Are there censorship or legal issues related to comics publishing in your locality? If so, what are they?

- What changes would you like to see in the comic's industry, both in your community and worldwide?

Section 4 – Community

- What is the readership/fanbase of manga like in your country?

- What is your relationship with readers? Do you want to reach a specific group of people, or a general public? Do you draw/write for your readers, or is your work more focused on self-expression? What do you want your readers to appreciate? (style, gags, messages)

- Do you personally participate in fan-related activities such as conventions, cosplay, fanart production, and the like? How about in online communities (i.e DeviantArt, LiveJournal, etc.)?

- It seems that the recent increase of manga artists from outside of Japan is composed almost solely of women artists. Do you agree? Is this the case in your particular country? Is your readership gendered (more girls than boys, or vice versa)?

- Finally, do you have any words of advice and/or tips to other artists out there who are interested in becoming manga/manga-style comics artists themselves?

--

That's it! Thank you so much for helping me with my research! I sincerely appreciate it and wish you lots of success in all your endeavors~

Best wishes,

Angela Moreno Acosta

1st year PhD Student, Graduate Student of Art, Story Manga Course

Kyoto Seika University

Tlf: +81.090.9111.8202

angela.bma@gmail.com

(ii) **Completed OEL Manga Artist Interview/Questionaire sheets**

- Lew Yee Teng (Kaoru)

Email response/confirmation:

Student from Japanese University interested in your work and have some questions~

naisa kaoru <naisa_kaoru@yahoo.com>   Mon, May 3, 2010 at 2:59 PM
To: Angela Moreno Acosta <angela.bma@gmail.com>

hi, Agela,
my english is poor, hope you can understand and do contact me if any problem,
thank you,
kaoru

From: Angela Moreno Acosta <angela.bma@gmail.com>
To: naisa_kaoru@yahoo.com
Sent: Mon, April 26, 2010 11:16:22 AM
Subject: Re: Student from Japanese University interested in your work and have some questions~
[Quoted text hidden]

📄 **ONJ[1].Manga.Artist.Written.Interview.doc**
6K

- Completed interview/questionaire

Original NON-Japanese Manga Artist Written Interview [Kyoto Seika University,

Graduate School of Art, Department of Manga, Story Manga course – Moreno ,

Angela, 2nd year master's student]

*Disclaimer for Release: I will use the answers provided here <u>completely unchanged</u>, as a source of data for my master's thesis. If you agree, please sign/write your name and date below, and go ahead and fill in the questionnaire. Thanks!

Name:LIEW YEE TENG (pen name: KAORU)
Date:

All right, let's start with a little bit about yourself!

How old are you? (Please also include your full birth date) note: I know this is kind uncomfortable to answer, but it's the central focus of my thesis, so please include it. I'll only be using birth years in the paper, so don't worry, your age won't be disclosed ϑ

-28, D.O.B : 04 Feb 1982.

Country of origin (and/or where you grew up): Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Current location: Kuala Lumpur

Website/Shop: facebook: naisa_kaoru@yahoo.com

Blog:

Any other interesting details you'd like to share, please do! :

- When did you become interested in Manga and/or Anime? Can you explain a little bit how and why you were drawn to this style in particular?

I work as comic assistant in a comic publisher (Gempak Starz) since i was 18 years old. After 2 year, i become a comic book artist (in house comic book artist). I like to read manga since i was young and i think the manga style will become popular in Malaysia too so i start doing something different with the tradisional comic style in Malaysia. My company be the first publisher in Malaysia which produced a lot of comic using manga style.

- What made you decide to start drawing Manga with professional purposes/intent? In other words, why did you decide to be a mangaka?

As i said just now, i love manga very much and i'm the one who like to create story. Drawing comic is one of the media i used to tell my story . Beside, manga style is the easiest way to attract readers because it is popular in the whole world.

- What materials do you use and how do you publish your work? What resources do you use to put your manga out there?

I work as a in house comic book artist in Gempak Starz , my works will straight away publish in the comic magazine name Gempak every issue and finally will sell in the novel graphic type also. Actually the way is quite similar with japan's market.

- How do you handle the reading direction and other issues of Manga when it comes to the creation of the work? Do you draw the manga left-to-right, or viceversa? How about use of onomatopeia? Can you talk a little bit about your particular choices in regards to the structure of your manga?

normally we will follow the way to create manga like japanese mangaka but some are different. Reading habit in Malaysia is from left to right and we must also consult consumption power of Malaysia reader's is a bit low compare with other country, so we need to maintain the cost and only 6-8 pages in each capther. It is the most difficult way when create a comic story because there is not enough page and finally the structure of every pages of the comic become too complicated and sometime hard to read. By the Way, i use japanese katakana to create the sound effect in my comic, although some readers can't understand it but it still used as a decoration.

- What made you choose this particular style of comics to visually represent your stories? In other words, why Japanese Manga style and not another, like for example, American comics or French Bande Dessine?

I'm interested in japanese culture and i hope can add more japanese's elements in my comic. I only draw what i like to draw because people said , if you like your comic also then people will like it too. So i didnt force myself to do something which is not suitable for my style.

- What titles and type of Manga do you read? Also, do you have other influences (besides Manga and Anime) that inspire you?

Inoue Takehiko sensei was the first mangaka inspired me in drawing comic , i like to read all titles and type of manga although there are not related with the type of comic i do , because i believe different mangaka have different way of thinking so every one of them also have a creative way to tell a story. I enjoy reading the mind of different mangaka.

- What is your relationship with the readers? Do you have any sort of message you want to send out to them through your work?

I think all the readers who love comic have a dream to become a comic book artist someday, i wish they can try their best and make the comic industry more active and wonderful.

- Finally, do you have any words of advice and/or tips to other artists out there who are interested in becoming mangakas themselves?

Just do what you like to do, keep up the good work and do not disappoint the readers.

--

That's it! Thank you so much for helping me with my research! I sincerely appreciate it and wish you lots of success in all your endeavors~

Best wishes,

Angela Moreno Acosta
2nd year Master's Student, Graduate Student of Art, Story Manga Course
Kyoto Seika University
Tlf: +81.090.9111.8202

angela.bma@gmail.com

- Completed questionaire/consent forms

Lau, Fawn

OEL (Original English Language) Manga Artist Written Interview [Kyoto Seika University,
Graduate School of Art, Story Manga course – Angela Moreno Acosta, PhD student]

*Disclaimer for Release: Although I ask for you name here (so I know who's who when filing the data), I
will use the answers provided here <u>anonymously and completely unchanged</u>, as a source of data for my
thesis. If you agree, please sign/write your name and date below, and go ahead and fill in the
questionnaire. Thanks!

Name: FAWN LAU

Date: 7.3.11

Section 1 – Personal History

1.1 – Personal Data

When were you born (full birth date): CANADA

Country of origin (and/or where you grew up): AMERICA

Current location: CALIFORNIA

Website/Shop: www.fixit-mag.com

Blog: ←

Any other interesting details you'd like to share, please do! :

WORKED PROFESSIONALLY IN THE US MANGA INDUSTRY.
10 Yrs.

1.2 – Trajectory
- Since what age have you been drawing manga/manga-style comics? Do you make a living
from doing so?

*What does being a professional manga artist mean to you?

- What made you decide to start drawing manga/manga-style comics with professional
purposes/intent? In other words, why did you decide to be a professional manga/manga-style
comics artist?

1.3 – Genres and Influences
- What titles and type of manga/anime have you been reading/do you remember best and
how has it influenced your work?

1

Tiede, Dirk

Name: DIRK I. TIEDE

Date: JULY 23 2011

Section 1 – Personal History

1.1 – Personal Data

When were you born (full birth date): APRIL 23rd 1975

Country of origin (and/or where you grew up): USA (ST.LOUIS, MO)

Current location: BOSTON, MA

Website/Shop: www.paradigmshiftmanga.com

Blog: www.dynamanga.net

Any other interesting details you'd like to share, please do! :

1.2 – Trajectory

- Since what age have you been drawing manga/manga-style comics? Do you make a living from doing so?

    *What does being a professional manga artist mean to you?

- What made you decide to start drawing manga/manga-style comics with professional purposes/intent? In other words, why did you decide to be a professional manga/manga-style comics artist?

1.3 – Genres and Influences

- What titles and type of manga/anime have you been reading/do you remember best and how has it influenced your work?

Warren, Emily

*Disclaimer for Release: Although I ask for you name here (so I know who's who when filing the data), I will use the answers provided here <u>anonymously and completely unchanged</u>, as a source of data for my thesis. If you agree, please sign/write your name and date below, and go ahead and fill in the questionnaire. Thanks!

Name: Emily Warren

Date: July 2, 2011

Section 1 – Personal History

1.1 – Personal Data

When were you born (full birth date):
August 8 1984

Country of origin (and/or where you grew up):
United States

Current location:
Los Angeles

Website/Shop:
frozenlilacs. com

Blog:
frozenlilacs. tumblr. com

Any other interesting details you'd like to share, please do! :

1.2 – Trajectory

- Since what age have you been drawing manga/manga-style comics? Do you make a living from doing so?

*What does being a professional manga artist mean to you?

- What made you decide to start drawing manga/manga-style comics with professional purposes/intent? In other words, why did you decide to be a professional manga/manga-style comics artist?

1.3 – Genres and Influences

- What titles and type of manga/anime have you been reading/do you remember best and how has it influenced your work?

3．Other interviews/materials

- Karen Rubin's interview/transcript

Interview with Karen Rubins (born in 1979 – 30 years old).

2010.04.10 (Saturday)

@ Kyoto International Manga Museum

- When asked 'Do you make Manga?' she replied: "I make comics."

- She considers herself to be in the space where the world of comics and the world of Manga overlap, and she considers a lot of other UK "manga" artists in the same space.

- She admires and is attracted by Manga's diversity of topics.

- When asked what do you read, she replied: British and American comics, and Japanese Manga. Not so much European comics. Recenty she is into Autobiographical comics such as Allison Bledchel's (sp?) "Fun Home". Also she is reading Hellblazer.

- Mostly she is open to learn and read different things, not just comics.

- The manga she is currently into/likes is: Vagabond, Blade of the Immortal, NaNa, Full Metal Alchemist, Naruto. Other non manga titles she likes are Jaime Hernandez's "Love and Rockets", plus other Independent titles, both frm the US and Britain.

- She also reads he fellow ONJ Mangaka's works, mostly from Sweatdrop Studios, where she is also active as an artist.

- Some other of her influences are: X-men, Teen Titans, Spiderman and mostly Elfquest.

- She explained the differentiation of comics vs. manga as: Comics usually refer to amekomi, or American comics, fans are 30 years old or over and usually me). Also the comics fans don't understand Manga, what is is, how to read it and that leads to a lack of interest in it ("they don't understand and they don't care"). In regards to Manga, is refers to Japanese comics, fans are mostly teenagers, though can go up to 30 yrs old but not

usually over that, and they are a relatively equal mix of girls and boys alike, not just guys. She also explained that this differentiation is made by the readers themselves, not the artists.

– In regards to the female fans of manga and ONJ manga, she feels they should grow up and not be so judgemental of ONJ manga and the ONJ artists. A lot of the fans, usually girls, will not read manga unless it's "100% Japanese", meaning made in Japan by a Japanese author, they demand authenticity. They feel Manga not made by a Japanese person is not authentic, they call it "fake" or "pseudo-manga" and mostly avoid it. Karen feels they need to be more mature about their stance on this issue.

– In regards to the new generation of Western manga artists in the UK, she comented: they are mostly girls, this is because Japanese manga that they consume/ed was a wider range of themes and style that is more 'girl friendly' , because there is more emotion rather than just action. ("When you read an American comics, its like you are outside and just looking at the action, but you don't become a part of it. With manga, you can feel the emotions, you become the character, you see, you feel what is happening because you're inside." – relatively accurate). They are also attracted by the drawing style (here she quotes Scott McCloud's book on what he wrote about Manga Characters: Iconic vs. Representational. Also the drawing style is "achievable" by anyone. Whereas in amekomi and BD, the drawings are so intricate and detailed that they become intimidating to those that admire them and want to draw like that, Manga is simple enough to make a person feel like "Well, I can do that too!". The fan can achieve a relatively successful drawing without having to be a prodigy at drawing, therefore making it more motivating to keep going and working at it. In contrast, a lot of fans that try their hand at American comic style quickly give up because the level of expertise required to even reach a similariry in the drawing is too high for them.

– Mercy (Karen's friend) : "Getting started is relatively easy". Amecomi–intricate–give up. Manga–easy–keep going.

– When asked if UK fans like Shojo Manga she said that actually most girls consider Shojo manga "extremely girly" and rather avoid it.

– Karen is also active in the Sweatdrop Studios Online Forum, where a person can chat and communicate with Manga creators

and upcomic artists alike. She also participate in a Yahoo comics group, for comics's fans, not just manga, but she says it can be difficult and easy to get into arguments, since aprox. 90% of the users are males over 30 yrs old who are mostly interested in American titles only.

– When asked about American comics, she said that she feels they should only be taken at surface value since their stories have been recirculated from over the years and they use repetition of topics and characters (i.e superheroes are repeated) .

– When asked about bishonen: "We like bishonen!" (direct quote). They made us want boys that were like manga boys. They're more attractive than real men. You can project a fantasy onto them. I think this is because of the awkwardness of teenage years, it makes it hard for you to relate to people (therefore escaping into a fantasy). Real vs. fantasy man. But then when you grow up, you start to realize people are not perfect, you start to accept the reality of things.

– When asked why do you draw manga and why do you want to be a manga/comis artist: "Because we love it (referring to UK artists, not just herself). You love the work so much you want to produce it yourself, as a representation of your love for it"– direct quote. (the product) <<< PROSUMER CONFIRMATION.

– There is also aesthetic appeal (of manga), because of anime influence (anime/manga boom because of Gen Y theory), and its availability (Internet).

– Karen feels artists need to learn how to draw a lot of things in you're going to be working in comics, not just a manga face (this could be hy she reads not just manga, and not just comics)

– About the fans: they like manga because it's exotic (Exoticism): club, exclusive, they understand it but parent don't.

– They also use Japanese culture to further exclude others and create group identity, i.e using Japanese words such as kawaii, sugoi, etc.

– In regards to the use of the Internet and Manga: "Manga and Anime are a GLOBAL sub-culture."

– In regards to reading direction, how do you handle this issue when you make your comics: Karen uses left-to-right (English) reading direction because she doesn't think there is a reason to

draw in the opposite (Japanese) reading diection. She sees no logical reason to do so. Also, she explains that when fans/artists make manga using Japanese reading direction although the text is in English, its regarded as amateurish and is highly discrouraged (by the fans themselves). "Who are you drawing it for?" is a question she used to counter the one I asked, meaning the artist shuld think about their audience when addressing this problem. When fans draw in an opposite direction, for no real reason as they are not writing in Japanese, she says "it makes you look more like a fan" (in contrast of bein g a professional artist, which is what ONJ Mangaka want to achieve). She also said this wont get you published in the UK. I denotes obsession rather than professionalism, and when you look like you're too much into manga (i.e Otaku), its not good and wont get you work. Its rather about evolution.

– UK Tokyopop publishes in the English reading direction, according to Karen (research this!!!). Also they make a very clear note on their manga to differentiate the translations from the original ONJ work, using a label that reads: "100% real Japanese" (almost like a food label).

– Going back to influences, Karen says her biggest manga influence comes from Eflfquest (research too!!!), which she started reading/watching when she was 7 yrs old. (her first manga)

– In regards to being a manga artist, Karen says she prefers to use the word "Fusion" when she refers to her comics. If you call yourself a manga artist, it looks as if you are emulating, or trying to do so. To her is a financial decision: "it puts you in a box, a cool box, but still a box." (therefore making it hard to get work in general).

– Other artists she regards as influential in the UK ONJ manga scene is Emma Viecelli, creator of Dragon Air. Also she said to check out the DFC British Children Comics, And the MCX Expo which happens twice a year (May 29th/30th and in October, towards the end).

Mercy's info:

Mercy Makinde

Mercy_makinde@hotmail.com

Interview with Karen Rubins (born in 1979 – 30 years old).

2010.04.10 (Saturday)

@ Kyoto International Manga Museum

- When asked 'Do you make Manga?' she replied: "I make comics."
- She considers herself to be in the space where the world of comics and the world of Manga overlap, and she considers a lot of other UK "manga" artists in the same space.
- She admires and is attracted by Manga's diversity of topics.
- When asked what do you read, she replied: British and American comics, and Japanese Manga. Not so much European comics. Recenty she is into Autobiographical comics such as Allison Bledchel's (sp?) "Fun Home". Also she is reading Hellblazer.
- Mostly she is open to learn and read different things, not just comics.
- The manga she is currently into/likes is: Vagabond, Blade of the Immortal, NaNa, Full Metal Alchemist, Naruto. Other non manga titles she likes are Jaime Hernandez's "Love and Rockets", plus other Independent titles, both frm the US and Britain.
- She also reads he fellow ONJ Mangaka's works, mostly from Sweatdrop Studios, where she is also active as an artist.
- Some other of her influences are: X-men, Teen Titans, Spiderman and mostly Elfquest.
- She explained the differentiation of comics vs. manga as: Comics usually refer to amekomi, or American comics, fans are 30 years old or over and usually me). Also the comics fans don't understand Manga, what is is, how to read it and that leads to a lack of interest in it ("they don't understand and they don't care"). In regards to Manga, is refers to Japanese comics, fans are mostly teenagers, though can go up to 30 yrs old but not usually over that, and they are a relatively equal mix of girls and boys alike, not just guys. She also explained that this differentiation is made by the readers themselves, not the artists.
- In regards to the female fans of manga and ONJ manga, she feels they should grow up and not be so judgemental of ONJ manga and the ONJ artists. A lot of the fans, usually girls, will not read manga unless it's "100% Japanese", meaning made in Japan by a Japanese author, they demand authenticity. They feel Manga not made by a Japanese person is

– Kaoru's Newspaper Article in *Variety*

Her forte is romantic tales but this Malaysian mangaka is game for action adventure too.

Playing cupid

By SHAUN A. NOORDIN

KAORU is the resident *shojo* artist of Gempak Starz, the line of comics and products under the Kuala Lumpur-based Art Square (the group responsible for Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese magazines including *Gempak*, *Utopia*, *Comic King* and *Starz*).

The 28-year-old from Perak, who has been with the company for 10 years, is known for her romance-themed stories, among them *Siri Maskeret Cinta – 143*, *Colours* and *Daisuki*.

One of her more popular titles, *Kaoru's Cake House*, was a finalist at the 2005 Oriental Animation and Comics Competition in Beijing, China.

However, the mangaka who writes in Chinese and Malay isn't just into romantic stuff as she has

also tried her hand at a different genre, namely her action adventure series *Helios Eclipse*.

Her current *Maid Maiden*, on the other hand, is a return to the love stories she's noted for. The series is about a destitute girl forced to become the maid of a rich (and handsome, of course) boy.

OtakuZone had the opportunity to sit down with Kaoru recently to get her take on comics, drawing and writing love stories.

How did you get started with drawing comics?

I started drawing because I love comics. It wasn't until I was in Form Two that I took it up as a hobby. I learned how to draw and after that I couldn't stop drawing comics.

When did you enter the comics industry?

I joined Art Square as a comics assistant after I finished Form Five. I

had wanted to continue with Form Six but got the offer from Art Square. It was a good way to develop my skills. After two years as an assistant, I was promoted to comic

Kaoru a.k.a. Liew Yee Teng, 28
Hometown: Perak

artist. At that time, Gempak Starz lacked artists who could draw romance stories.

What kind of comics influenced you? Did you read a lot of shojo?

I didn't really read a lot of those. But after reading *Slam Dunk*, I began drawing manga.

What are the challenges of writing a good romance story for Malaysian readers?

A lot of people may think it's easy but it's not. There are restrictions – for one, we cannot show characters kissing, or even hugging. So you have to think of other ways to create scenes that grab the readers' attention so that they will remember the story.

How did these challenges apply to one of your more popular stories, Kaoru's Cake House?

Due to the many restrictions, I had to use unconventional ways to tell the story in my manga, *Kaoru's Cake House*. It had to be unique, especially the storyline. I spent a lot

of time on the ideas, the script as well as the dialogue. Since kissing is a no-no and readers of romantic tales like to see the characters getting intimate, I have to find other ways to attract the readers.

Although you're more well known for love stories, you also have a series called Helios Eclipse that's of an action/adventure/fantasy nature. Are you expanding into new genres?

I'm just trying something new. I've been experimenting a lot with different styles and ways of telling a story. Although *Helios Eclipse is a lengthy series, it's not as well-received as Kaoru's Cake House* and the romantic stories. It's just a way for me to try something new and to improve myself.

What projects are you currently working on?

I'm working on *Maid Maiden*, a new comic series. It's a love story revolving around a penniless girl who is abandoned by her parents, and ends up serving a rich boy in his home. It's ongoing. After *Helios Eclipse*, I felt that I'd improved. I have more confidence in creating this story. Also, I've come up with my first art book; it's out now.

■ *Find out more about Kaoru and her work at www.gempakstarz.com.*

FanArt

Love stories

Manga Reviews

THE following is a review of three of Kaoru's books published under Gempak Starz – Meet Cupid (134 pages; ISBN: 978-9675288081), Daisuki (128 pages; ISBN: 978-9833882816), and Kaoru's Cake House (132 pages; ISBN: 978-9833882625); they are suitable for all ages.

PROMINENT local artist Kaoru's earlier works are collected in this trio of books featuring short romantic stories that are mainly culled from the series *Siri Maskeret Cinta – 143* (roughly translated as "A Piece of Love") published in *Gempak* magazine in the early 2000s.

Meet Cupid is a compilation of 16 of Kaoru's first works featured in the magazine. Among the stories are the tale of a mute boy and his crush on a childhood friend; a bodyguard who falls in love with her charge; and a wife who suspects that her husband is cheating on her.

It being her maiden effort, the art is rather rough and disappointing, with weird facial features and blocky details. The translation from Bahasa Malaysia to English is quite

awful, with odd choices of words in certain parts.

Despite these shortcomings, most of the tales are simple enough to understand and some are even touching. Watch out for the cliches, however. Kaoru tends to have a blend of East-West romantic tropes but the result is less than stellar.

Daisuki has 13 stories, of which some are spread over two chapters. The tales are influenced by *shojo* anime or manga so you have a guy who is smitten with a girl 20cm taller than himself, and a girl who is continuously bullied by the bloke she adores.

Kaoru's art here shows a marked improvement, particularly in the characters' facial features and general details.

Among the more interesting items in this book is one about a motherless child's search for his father's first love in a bid to reunite the former lovers and make his father happy again. While it doesn't work out perfectly, the ending is pretty heartwarming.

In another tale, a girl realises that her boyfriend has never apologised to her and makes him do so. Soon, she realises that apologies are inconsequential in love when the most important thing in a relationship is trust in each other.

Finally, there's a story that doesn't really revolve around love. It's about two boys: one's a meek rich kid, and the other an aggressive troublemaker from a poor family. The two accidentally swap bodies when they tumble down a staircase together. Both gradually discover that there are no perfect lives, and happiness is what you make of it.

Kaoru's Cake House follows a similar style of vignettes, but this time the story centres on the eponymously named bakery. The 13 stories in this book are much more varied in style and set-up.

The cake house is owned by the gruff and cynical baker Wing, who employs three workers: the often-bullied Denny, cool and quiet Izz, and the ever-energetic Bob. The quartet are pretty much a tribute to popular "boy harems" found in *shojo* manga, and while I am not generally impressed by them, they aren't unlikeable. They are, however, reduced to supporting cameos as the story progresses.

Of the three, I enjoyed *Kaoru's Cake House* the most. Art-wise, it's comparable to *Daisuki*, although Kaoru employs a lot of *chibi* characters here.

Overall, these three books are a good read for those who have a weakness for lovey-dovey tales. The short-story format ensures that the tales aren't too draggy and are told with impact. – KUROGANE
(**Rating:** Meet Cupid: **2**; Daisuki: **3**; Kaoru's Cake House: **3**)

Kyoya Hibari from Kateikyoushi Hitman Reborn! by Neko Mirai, 17, of Selangor

RATING GUIDE

1 = Very poor.
2 = Needs work. Sigh. It could've been better.
3 = Average. Not bad, not that great either.
4 = This rocks! Seriously!
5 = Just perfect!

Top 10 Manga

FOR week ending Jan 31, 2010:

1. *Naruto* Vol.47
2. *Maid Sama* Vol.3
3. *Oishinbo: Japanese Cuisine*
4. *Black Bird* Vol.3
5. *Oishinbo: Izakaya – Pub Food*
6. *Yotsubato* Vol.7
7. *Black Butler* Vol.1
8. *High School Debut* Vol.13
9. *Otomen* Vol.5
10. *Night Head Genesis* Vol.1

■ *List compiled by Kinokuniya Bookstores Suria KLCC, Kuala Lumpur.*

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– Daily Yomiuri newspaper article about *Yōkaiden*

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DY WEEKEND

A procession of countless demons
From animated trash to sharp-toothed education mamas, there's a yokai for everything

By Tom Baker
Daily Yomiuri Staff Writer

On a narrow mountain road, a long-nosed tengu glares at a solitary traveler from the branches of a tree. Below the mountain, a web-fingered kappa lurks in the dark water beneath a bridge. Downstream, there's a rustling sound in a garbage dump as discarded items eerily come to life as tsukumogami. And on city streets, a seemingly ordinary woman known as Kuchisake Onna uses a cold-sufferer's sanitary mask to hide a gaping mouth full of sharp teeth.

Each of these entities is a yokai.

Their weirdness makes them prime fodder for manga, anime and film. But what are yokai?

In his 2009 book *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* (University of California Press, 291 pp, $24.95), Indiana University Prof. Michael Dylan Foster writes that this question "often elicits not a definition, but a list of examples." In other words, they are defined by their indefinable variety.

The yokai concept has its roots in records stretching back nearly a millennium that refer to a "night procession of 100 demons," a terrifying event that could be fatal to look upon, Foster writes.

But the visual variety suggested by 100 supernatural beasties is irresistible for artists, especially modern mangaka.

Manga and Western comics that feature a wide array of yokai, often shown in crowded tableaux or parades, include *Cat Eyed Boy* by Kazuo Umezu, *Yokai Doctor* by Yuki Sato, *Yokaiden* by Nina Matsumoto and *Usagi Yojimbo* by Stan Sakai.

The most famous yokai artist is Shigeru Mizuki, whose long-running manga and anime series *Gegege no Kitaro* has featured dozens of traditional yokai characters. One prominent example is Konaki Jiji, who looks like an abandoned baby until a luckless passerby picks him up, after which he turns into a crushingly heavy old man.

An exhibition of Mizuki's work, *Gegege no Tenrankai*, is running now through Jan. 23 at the Hachioji Yume Bijutsukan art museum (www.yumebi.com), a 10-minute walk from JR Hachioji Station in western Tokyo. Admission is ¥500.

[...] what might be the ultimate yokai parade—a series of pictures called *Yokaido Gojusantsugi*, punningly named after Utagawa Hiroshige's 19th-century ukiyo-e series *Tokaido Gojusantsugi*, or *53 Stations of the Tokaido Road*.

Like the original prints, each *Yokaido* picture shows scenery from a journey between the Kanto and Kansai regions. But in Mizuki's version, the iconic landscapes are populated with hundreds of yokai.

Before visiting the show, I read up on the creatures. *Yokai Attack!*, a 2008 field guide by Hiroko Yoda and Matt Alt (Kodansha International, 191 pp, ¥1,600), was an especially informative and accessible introduction.

Thanks to that book, I immediately recognized that the denizens of the *Yokaido* scene in Yokkaichi, a town on Ise Bay, included Nure Onna, who has the upper body of a hag and the lower body of a colossal snake, and Kara Kasa, a one-eyed umbrella that hops about on a single leg.

Another resource for understanding Mizuki's yokai imagery is *Anime and Its Roots in Early Japanese Monster Art* by Hosei University Prof. Zilia Papp (Global Oriental, 180 pp, ¥93), published earlier this year. Papp traces the visual genealogies of many of Mizuki's characters, with an 18th-century yokai catalog by Toriyama Sekien shown to be an important source. A copy of Sekien's book is included in the Hachioji show.

But Mizuki hasn't just followed in the footsteps of earlier artists; he gave yokai new social roles. Papp writes that yokai long ago represented things that were truly strange and scary—diseases, forces of nature, foreigners—but now they are mainly cute, nostalgic reminders of an idealized past. The popularity of *Gegege no Kitaro* had a lot to do with this shift, which Papp call "mascotization."

But there are exceptions. Foster writes that "some Japanese scholars have suggested [Kuchisake Onna, in addition to the yokai parade] may represent a sort of education mama turned monster: the image of her confronting children...on the twilit streets between school and supplementary lessons at juku, was born of anxiety felt by children about pressures exerted by their own mothers."

In a phone interview with The Daily Yomiuri, Eisner Award-winning Canadian comic book artist Matsumoto speculated that Kuchisake Onna is "something adults can use to scare children. It's a very useful urban myth. 'Children, don't stray too far, or go with strangers.'"

Fiction writer John Paul Catton, who gave a talk on the Japanese supernatural at the Japan Writer's Conference in Tokyo this autumn, told The Daily Yomiuri his own psychological theory about Konaki Jiji: "When you look at it—a baby who changes into an old man who drags you down, who crushes you to death—to me it represents the fear of responsibility and the fear of parental obligations which you can't keep, which turn into a millstone around your neck. And this is a literal example of that."

In Matsumoto's *Yokaiden* manga, about a boy who slips into a parallel universe, yokai run the gamut from scary to cute. Her menacing kappa, with piercings and tattoos, would be at home in a biker gang, while her umbrella yokai, unable to hop on its one leg, walks on its knuckles instead. (That may sound grotesque, but she makes it endearing.)

Only two volumes of this excellent series are in print, but Matsumoto has been looking into continuing it as a Web comic.

As creative as her depictions are, Matsumoto didn't stray far from tradition because she hoped to educate North Americans who aren't familiar with the yokai they may see in movies and video games.

Sato, writing for a Japanese audience, had no such limits. In *Yokai Doctor*, only part of which is available in English, the ugly Nure Onna is shown as a beautiful mermaidlike creature who adopts a human baby, and Konaki Jiji is even more radically recast as a kindly obstetrician.

Popular culture is a long way from exhausting yokai's potential. Warner Bros. in Japan plans to release *Tofu Kozo*, a 3-D computer-animated feature about an innocuous-looking yokai who serves tofu, next spring, while Hiroshi Shiibashi's manga *Nura: The Rise of the Yokai Clan* will be published in February in an English translation by Yoda and Alt.

And so the yokai parade marches on.