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The Dōjin Journal Philosophy: Theory, Practice and Intersectionality

Welcome to the foundational issue of the *Dōjin Journal*, your academic, yet amateur, review about Japanese subcultures and their worldwide diffusion. This initiative, supported by the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto and its popular culture research project, will involve the annual publication of a themed collection of papers including academic peer-reviewed articles, essays written by practitioners, as well as research notes or fieldwork reports by students. On paper, this proposition does not sound so different from other journals already established in the field, so why do we need a new one?

Here, our ambition is to provoke discussions between the different actors participating in the various levels of production of subcultural knowledge and the institutionalisation of the histories of Japanese popular cultures. Scholars, artists and fans alike are invited to contribute to our common understanding of the development of "Japanese" subcultures within and outside of Japan. Transnational and regional points of view are therefore more than welcome. We aim at the deconstruction of essentialist gazes that often overemphasize the "Japaneseness" of so-called otaku cultures, or limit their focus to heteronormative gender constructs. While the trendy themes of the transnational circulation of Japanese popular media and "Cool Japan" are still present in academia, less attention has been given to the productive exchanges allowed by local and regional transformations of otaku cultures. To cite only one major case, we can note the recent impact of boys' love cultures in Asia on the current discussion about marriage equality and LGBTQ+ rights.

The aesthetics and benefits of an amateur take on academic writing

As part of an incentive to support similar sociocultural movements within and outside of academia, we see our work here as a *dōjin* fanzine. Despite our serious academic backgrounds, we also face difficulties in conducting and distributing certain forms of research that do not always completely conform to accepted standards of academic publishing. For these reasons, the *Dōjin Journal* is designed as "a third space", that is to say, a platform for encouraging writing styles that experiment with methodologies and theoretical frameworks through collaboration with more artistic, when not conventional and empirical, modes of enquiry. The Japanese word *dōjin*, which means coterie, was used in Japan at the end of the Meiji Era (1868) and in particular, in the Taisho Era (1912), to designate publications (*dōjin zasshi*) made by people sharing the same interests. These publications became important media that supported the literary movements of the time. This "*dōjin* philosophy" furthermore translates today into other aspects of research and publication. In most cases, *dōjin* works are not produced by individual creators. We welcome collective projects articulating academic excellence with the daily experience of subcultures. As an example, we will organise in future two round tables with scholars, publishers, artists and consumers to examine gay manga and indigenous media. By definition, *dōjin* cultures also represent a volatile media environment featuring slippery movement between material and online cultures. We therefore aim to produce a free, open access journal that discusses the complexities of subcultures for educators and fandoms alike.

Intersectionality and transcending the apparent object of "Japanese" subcultures

In our opinion, mixing the theoretical, practical and empirical aspects of manga, anime, video games and their derivative cultures in a *dōjin* (fanzine) also represents an important step towards inclusive and intersectional practices. Researching, writing and teaching subcultures means that we also need to ethically interact with fans. Some histories are still understudied, when not erased, from our discourses and representations of popular media cultures. Despite the urgency to address these missing elements in the vast spectrum of Japanese subcultures and their global adventures, we do not suggest that intersectionality is an "alternative". On the contrary, recent works in the fields of media mix, manga and anime studies have demonstrated how "minorities" actively participated in the shaping of certain technical, representational and economic aspects of otaku cultures. While in the past two decades, the examination of racial, ethnic, gender and sexual minorities has become more prominent in fan studies, the field of Japanese subculture studies tends to still struggle to integrate such perspectives. Bringing the diverse communities of worldwide otaku fandoms into the discussion may help to us to develop a critical understanding of convergent and divergent issues. Our responsibility will be to situate, contextualize and articulate together the various histories, practices and experiences of Japanese subcultures.

Beyond SF and bishōjo

To conclude this short introduction, here are some perspectives that will be discussed in this inaugural issue as well as some that will be developed in future issues. We hope that these discussions will help us to better understand the past, present and future transformations of Japanese subcultures and, eventually, revise the epistemological reach of minorities inside official discourses. A first subject that has been explored in projects at Nichibunken for some years is the complex history of media mix. Many surface readings of "Japanese media convergence" get stuck either on the Japanese specificity of Japan's media ecology or the particularity of its franchising strategies. In fact, specialists including Ōtsuka Eiji and Marc Steinberg have described how different regional "transmedia" models responded to each other. When looking at the long history of multimedia adaptations, we cannot deny the transnational and (post)colonial issues raised by the colliding of propaganda, the war effort and racial stereotypes, which were later reworked into the current model of media mix. Media mix is also adapting to foreign audiences and is not distributed equally around the world. This diversity of experiences brings us to another theme: transnational fandoms and social movements. From the fan activism of K-pop audiences to the inscription of fan art into the Black Lives Matter movements, our current situation illustrates the mobilization of media mixed cultures within social action. We hope to discuss how Japanese subcultures may foster forms of expression, media, and spaces supporting the visibility of fandoms of colour. On the question of the place of minorities in the media mix, other topics including indigenous media like Ainu manga, or grassroots media mix emerging from gender and sexual minorities, should also be included in the discussion.

Please enjoy this first issue, and we hope that you will join us for the next one!

Two-Page Spreads and War: Battlefield Representations and Individual Expressions in *Norakuro*

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Abstract

In the manga series *Norakuro*, author Tagawa Suihō employs a multifaceted, multilayered style of expression to depict a variety of scenes related to war. This manga series for children was published between 1931 and 1941 and centered on the military exploits of a stray dog called Norakuro. In the series, Tagawa effectively uses two-page spreads – one image across two pages – to convey both the expansive nature of the battlefield and the individual experiences of the characters involved in conflict. Over time, as the issues and themes of war appeared more frequently in children's manga, Tagawa's use of the two-page spread increased, and this form of expression became indivisible from the depiction of battlefields. In this paper, I will examine not only the ways in which the forms of expression employed in two-page spreads in *Norakuro* transformed as the lived realities of war influenced manga content, but also the ways in which Tagawa's own worldview and ideals informed his depictions.

Keywords

Manga history, War and manga, *Norakuro*, Tagawa Suihō

Introduction

In this paper,[1] I will consider how manga balanced depictions of wars – large-scale events that transcend individual people – and the individuals caught up in these events, with a focus on two-page spreads in 1930s manga. I will pay particular attention to a popular manga from that period called *Norakuro*, by Tagawa Suihō.

Previous research on the *Norakuro* series offers analysis of the structure and how the main character matures, as in the work of Miyamoto Hirohito (2002); there has also been examination of the relationship between two-page spreads and the depiction of the battlefield in work by Ōtsuka Eiji (2013). Building on this previous research, this paper analyzes the transformation that occurred in depictions of the battlefield in two-page spreads in the *Norakuro* series. These depictions transform from a flat style of spatial expression to a perspective style of spatial expression that supposes an imaginary camera. In the *Norakuro* series, this transformation can be regarded as one of the effects of the realism that was forced into manga content and expression by the realities of war.

However, it is important to note that this transformation was not necessarily one that developed in a single direction, that is, from a two-dimensional format into a format using perspective. While many of the manga that featured war in wartime undertook a single-direction transition, the style used by Tagawa transformed in multiple directions. Namely, Tagawa's style did not always develop following a single direction from two-dimensional, flat images into the use of perspective. He employed both formats depending on the content represented or the social context, and even came to mix both formats together. This style is related to Tagawa's conceptualization of the battlefield and of the numberless soldiers as a mass. Hence, in this paper I examine the multi-faceted, multi-layered nature of the expression in two-page spreads in *Norakuro*.

The analysis in this paper draws on observations about the contradiction that arises when artists attempt to convincingly depict large-scale events and the individual characters caught up in them. That is, in order to depict the entirety of a significant event (unifying multiple scenes), a scene with perspective is needed, but such depiction results in individuals becoming lost.

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1   This paper is a major revision of part of my unpublished Master's degree thesis titled *Manga no 'mihiraki' no hensen – Senzen, sengo no jidō manga sakuhin ni okeru kindaika no tasōsei [Changes in manga two-page spreads – The multilayeredness of modernization in pre-war and post-war children's manga]* (2013).

Conversely, focusing on individuals when drawing one scene can render the overall event invisible.

Figures 1 and 2, which depict the Battle of Hakodate between the former shogunate forces and those of the new government in the early Meiji period (1868-1912), clearly express this discrepancy. Figure 1 is a war scene painted by Shimooka Renjō, who was also a leading photographer at the dawn of this technology in Japan. This is an oil painting which was based on photographs and expresses with realism multiple scenes of countless soldiers fighting, with Hakodate Bay, the actual scene of the battle, depicted in the background. This painting was exhibited and discussed at an oil painting teahouse, and its large size – 2 meters high and 5.7 meters wide – would have helped to convey a sense of proximity to the battle (Kinoshita, 1993). However, because the painting has a linear perspective based on a photograph, the soldiers in the rear of the scene are obscured as countless individuals in its wide perspective. Since the painting has no center and the individuality of its subjects becomes lost, viewers likely walked along this large scene and viewed it in an arbitrary order. However, the interpretation provided by storytellers at the oil painting teahouse would have complemented the individuality lost in the painting, therefore bringing the people in this great event into relief.

On the other hand, in the *shimbun nishiki-e* (a type of multi-colored woodblock print for newspapers) by Nagashima Mousai in Figure 2, individual soldiers are clearly depicted through a focus on one scene where Matsudaira Tarō, the magistrate of the former shogunate infantry, is placed in the center in an exaggerated fashion, out of perspective. Conversely, because of the very dramatic screen composition focused on Matsudaira, and the sense of unreality created by its very nature as a woodblock print, this depiction seems less clear than Shimooka's battle scene in terms of realistic portrayal of the battlefield and an overall grasp of war.

Figure 1

Excerpt from Shimooka Renjō's Hakodate Battle Scene *(1876) (Shimooka, 1993, p.139)*
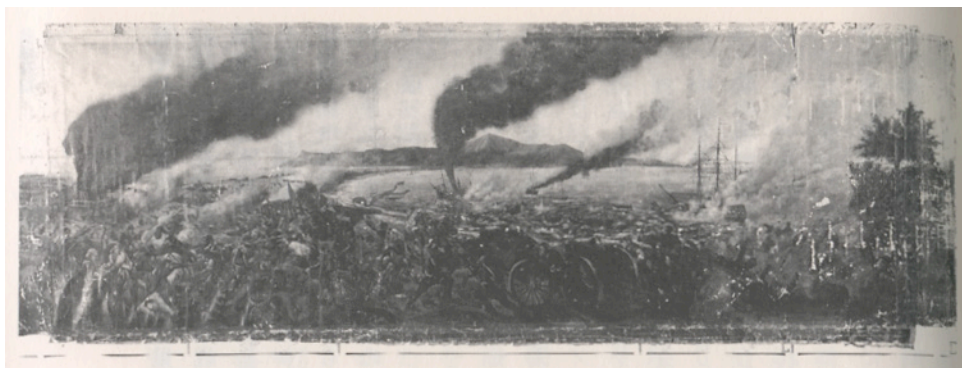
Figure 2

Excerpt from Nagashima Mousai's Land and Naval Battle of Hakodate *(1869) (Nagashima, 1993, p.149)*

Thus, through this gap between printing in the mid-Meiji period and modernization through changes in the visual system, we can see the difficulty in depicting the overall image and reality of a significant event as well as the individuals involved in one image.

My goal in this paper is to examine how the above contradiction developed in manga, referencing a number of works, with a focus on Tagawa Suihō's *Norakuro*. The manga addressed in

this paper are composed of multiple frames and were published for children as magazine series or in books. A two-page spread – one image across two pages – is the representation with the most perspective in manga expression. Two-page spreads began to frequently appear in framed manga in magazine series and books in the 1930s, and their use during this time is not unrelated to the fact that supposedly fictional manga had to portray the reality of war.

Issues in Manga Two-page Spreads

Figure 3 is an excerpt from the manga "Moon World Tour", which ends with two pages of two-page spreads. This manga was included in Tagawa's first anthology-type book, *Canned Manga* (1930). In "Moon World Tour", a number of scenes from a single event (a tour of the lunar world) are depicted on the screen. Portraying multiple perspectives on one screen resulted

in the lack of a center, so viewers looked at individual scenes in random order. The viewer's gaze was therefore scattered, and appreciating the two-page spread took time. However, what is different from the war scene by Shimooka Renjō is that Tagawa's style of spatial expression does not use linear perspective; instead, individuals are depicted in equal size without depth. Such depiction borrows a style of expression used in *kakushomeisho-zu*, a map-like two-dimensional image common in the Edo period, which depicted from a bird's eye perspective a collection of famous places. Furthermore, by giving characters in the scenes individuality in the form of spoken lines in speech bubbles, a characteristic of manga, we see a variety of people in one significant situation, each with their own actions and thoughts. That is to say, manga speech bubbles play the role of the stories in the oil painting teahouse, and manga, with their two-page-spread depictions that combine drawings and words, thereby resolve the aforementioned contradiction.

Figure 3

Excerpt from Tagawa Suihō's "Moon World Tour" in Canned Manga, *(Tagawa, 1930, pp.98-99)*

Tagawa's wife, Junko Takamizawa, describes his use of two-page spreads during that period as follows:

> Every day, he (Tagawa) was busy drawing manga and then going out to sell them. He drew two-page landscape and scene spreads that no one had ever drawn before. In his manga, he drew scenes like amusement parks, mountain climbing and cleaning in painstaking detail with amusing actions and interesting incidents (Tagawa and Takamizawa, 1991, p.129).

We cannot be sure that "no one had ever drawn" these kinds of representations. At the start of the Showa period (1926-1989), there were many single two-page spread manga in this format, which also frequently appeared in *Shōnen kurabu* and *Yōnen kurabu* for younger children. In most of these single two-page spreads, as exemplified by "Moon World Tour", the main character is the overall event, so there is no need to emphasize

main characters in the way the abovementioned *shimbun nishiki-e* does, and the people are mostly the same size regardless of perspective. Although readers can enjoy these two-page spreads for a long time because they depict multiple scenes, this format also makes it difficult to focus on a main character.

However, some years later, with Tagawa frequently using such two-page spreads in framed manga in books, his screens became multi-layered in character. For these reasons, I will use Tagawa Suihō's representative work, *Norakuro*, which was the longest and most popular manga series in the 1930s, as subject matter to examine this transition. First, though, I would like to outline the conditions surrounding manga with two-page spreads in the 1930s.

Since two-page spreads use two pages for one image, there were issues with space costs when they were used in serialized framed manga. However, the rapid increase in publication of luxuriously bound, two-color or multi-color printed books of over 100 pages from the early 1930s, when Tagawa's previously

mentioned anthology books were published, was a situational factor enabling widespread use of two-page spreads. By tracing the development of manga publishing processes from the Meiji period, we can gain some understanding of how two-page spreads became such a key factor in Tagawa's work.

From the Meiji period, the publication of manga followed one of two processes. In one of these processes, used mainly by large publishing companies, multiple-page framed manga series, single-frame caricature manga, and four-frame manga were published in newspapers and magazines. Works that became popular through serial publishing, such as *Shō-chan no bōken* [lit. *Adventures of Shō-chan*] (1924–1925) by Oda Shōsei and Kabashima Katsuichi, and Okamoto Ippei's *Hito no isshō* [lit. *The Life of a Person*] (1927), were later published in book form, but they did not have as many pages as the books in the 1930s.

In the second process, manga were published directly in book format. It was small and medium publishers, like Nakamura Shōten, and not large publishing houses, that used this process. In some cases, works using characters made popular in manga from large publishers (in a sense pirated texts) and nonsensical stories were printed in a cheap and crude manner and called "punch" or "punch books." These manga were collectively called *akabon* (lit. red books). Since the author wrote the work for publication in book format from the start and not for a magazine serialization that would later be adapted to book form, they gained the equivalent of a full book of space, resulting in a greater degree of freedom than serialization in terms of cost. However, the format was mainly horizontal, and there were not that many pages in these books.[2] These two publishing formats ran parallel from the Meiji period almost up to the 1930s.

In the case of *Norakuro*, publication followed the first process; that is, it went from magazine serialization to book form. However, works with characters resembling Norakuro were also drawn for books. *Norakuro* was basically serialized in four to six pages in each edition of the magazine *Shōnen kurabu*, and was first published in book form in 1931. Then, in 1933 Nakamura Shōten started publishing direct-to-book format manga of over 100 pages. While in both cases the books were at least 100 pages long, the level of freedom of expression for the author differs, based on the fact that one is drawing from the start assuming a 100-page story, and the other draws a serialized work that is later published in book form. Through planning from the outset, direct-to-book format manga came to be used as a "laboratory" where two-page spreads (which encountered cost issues in serialization) could be frequently used.

However, although direct-to-book format manga enabled a mix of framed and two-page spreads and allowed authors to experiment, from the Meiji period on two-page spreads did not frequently appear in red books. One potential reason for this limited use could be that compared to book format manga in the early Shōwa period, red books had fewer pages and there were variations in format, such as smaller, horizontal, and square formats. What is important for this paper is why these two-page spreads became popular in the 1930s even though

they had not served as general means of expression previously. The answer to this question is related not only to the fact that the main subjects in children's manga at the time were war and foreign (southern) countries, but also to the issue of how modern war was described. In other words, because the use of the two-page spread as a form of expression is indivisible from the depiction of battlefields in early 1930s manga, it can be assumed that analyzing this relationship will lead us to the reason behind the frequent use of the two-page spread in this period. So, let us examine the issues related to the depiction of significant events and individuals, using two-page spreads in *Norakuro* as an example. Since it was the longest running serialized manga during WWII, there is ample material for analysis of changes in the forms of expression.

## Individuals and Groups in Two-page Spreads in Norakuro

Norakuro was first serialized as "Norakuro nitōhei [Private Norakuro]" in the January 1931 edition of *Shōnen kurabu* (first published in 1914), and with "Norakuro tankentai [Norakuro Expedition Party]" in the October 1941 edition, the serialization ceased under pressure from the Home Ministry. In parallel with magazine serialization, luxuriously bound and boxed books were published at a pace of one book a year for a total of 10 books. Norakuro, the main character, is a stray dog who steadily advances in the military, and the way in which the series depicted a new method of social advancement for a character at an equal or lower status than children made it the most popular work among pre-war manga.

If we look at two-page spreads, including in appendices, they were used only three times in the magazine versions of *Norakuro*. Cost problems in terms of space were significant in this regard. Figure 4 is the first two-page spread in "Norakuro daijiken [The Great Norakuro Incident]", serialized in magazine form in the May 1933 edition of *Shōnen kurabu*. It depicts Norakuro visiting an exhibition tent, but at a glance the main character is so hidden in the scene that we cannot see where he is. Here one two-page spread contains multiple scenes around the exhibition tent with speech bubbles above individual people. While the depiction of the scene extends into the tent itself, people are shown in equal sizes in the same flat format as "Moon World Tour".

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2   Sasaki Minoru, while discussing the relationship between the two publishing formats, points out the possibility that the "quantity and richness of 'drawing for books'" (that is, manga drawn for direct-to-book publication) might be a phenomenon specific to Japan both before and after the war (2012, p.84). For more information about red books in general, see Miyamoto (2001).

Figure 4

The First Two-Page Spread in the Magazine Publication of Tagawa Suihō's "Norakuro daijiken [The Great Norakuro Incident]" (1933), reprinted in Norakuro manga zenshū zen'ikkan [Norakuro Manga Complete Works Volume 1] *(Tagawa, 1967, pp.154-155)*
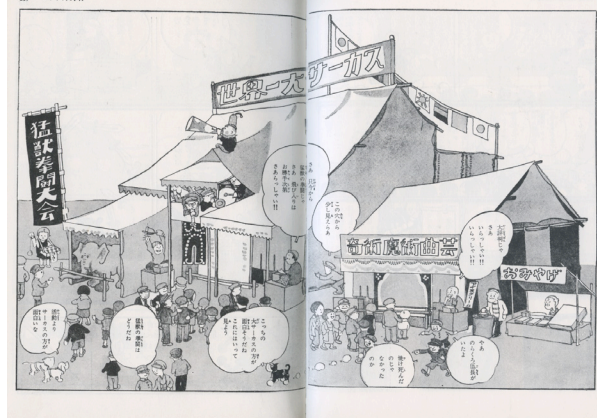
On the other hand, two-page spreads first appeared in book form in *Norakuro jōtōhei [Private First Class Norakuro]* in 1932, one year before this type of expression was used in the magazine publication mentioned above, "Norakuro daijiken [The Great Norakuro Incident]". There were no two-page spreads in the magazine edition of the same story; they were added. The format was the same as other spreads, with people represented in equal sizes and speech bubbles added to individuals. Based on my earlier discussion, since books have more space and can thus better accommodate two-page spreads, it seems a logical consequence that these spreads appeared more frequently in books than in magazines.

Miyamoto Hirohito (2002) ordered the *Norakuro* texts chronologically and analyzed both how war was depicted and changes in the worldviews undergirding these works, and based on that analysis, classified the content into four periods. The table in Figure 5, developed with reference to these four periods, shows the number of two-page spreads used, as well as the scenes depicted.

Figure 5

Overall Count and Breakdown of Two-Page Spreads in Book Editions of the Norakuro *Series*

Time period	Title	Year of book format publica-tion	Num-ber of two-page spreads	Breakdown
Period 1	*Norakuro nitōhei (Private Norakuro)*	1931	0	n/a
	Norakuro jōtōhei (Private First Class Norakuro)	1932	5	Exercises: 1, festivals: 1, mazes: 1, battles: 2
	Norakuro gochō (Corporal Norakuro)	1933	1	Exhibitions: 1 *same as the first two-page spread in the magazine edition
Period 2	*Norakuro gunsō (Sergeant Norakuro)*	1934	0	n/a
	Norakuro sōchō (Sergeant Major Norakuro)	1935	2	Mazes: 2
	Norakuro shōtaichō (Platoon Leader Norakuro)	1936	1	Curious onlookers: 1
	Norakuro shōi (Second Lieutenant Norakuro)	1937	0	n/a
Period 3	*Norakuro sōkōgeki (Norakuro's All-Out Attack)*	1937	12	Battle: 7, setting up camps: 2, consolation: 1, marching: 1
	Norakuro kesshitaichō (Commando Squad Leader Norakuro)	1938	8	Battle: 3, setting up camps: 2, reconnaissance: 1, marching: 1, maps: 1
	Norakuro buyūdan (The Heroic Exploits of Norakuro)	1938	11	Battle: 6, marching: 5
Period 4	*Norakuro tankentai (Norakuro Expedition Party)*	1939	7	Recognition parties: 6, mines: 1
Note. Classifications follow Miyamoto's (2002) discussion. *Private Norakuro* is included in *Canned Manga*.				

There was an intensive increase in two-page spread use in Period 3. The works in this period were direct-to-book format manga, not magazine series in book form. One cause for the increase in two-page spreads was likely the increase in page count based on the direct-to-book format. One episode of a magazine series was around four to six pages, and about 20 pages if there was an appendix, which did not compare with the books of over 100 pages at the time. Since drawing for this number of pages gave the author more control over stories and expression, it was easier to include experimental content. So, how was this publication process related to content? The fact that Tagawa used two-page spreads so often in Period 3 suggests that there was some content that he could not have drawn without them. Moreover, of the four periods, Miyamoto (2002) points to Period 3 as a turning point in Tagawa's work:

> Period 3 brought a dramatic change in the worldview of the works. This is particularly conspicuous in the three books from *Norakuro sōkōgeki [Norakuro's All-Out Attack]* to *Norakuro buyūdan [The Heroic Exploits of Norakuro]*. These three books featured a continuous story across all three volumes, different from books up to that point which had a number of independent episodes in each one. The story in which the "pig country across the sea" starts a war so the Fierce Dog Regiment goes to "the continent" to fight is original content that was completely independent from the magazine edition, and these books followed an unprecedented pattern in that there was a concentrated publication of three volumes from 1937 to 1938 (p.56).

According to Miyamoto (2002), Period 1 featured, "the same kind of pretend soldier play and the same type of 'war' that the children reading the manga engaged in every day" (p.55). He also notes, "Although scenes of heads and torsos flying off due to explosions were directly depicted, there were no depictions of blood or pain" (p.55). While Period 2 had mostly the same worldview as Period 1, in place of corpses, there were almost no depictions of heads and torsos blown off because of "educational considerations" (p.55). In Period 4, the absence of preposterous success stories and actual war stories indicates a separation from real-world society. Here, we will focus on Period 3, which was a turning point in Tagawa's work and which had frequent two-page spreads.

Period 3 was composed of *Norakuro sōkōgeki [Norakuro's All-Out Attack], Norakuro kesshitaichō [Commando Squad Leader Norakuro],* and *Norakuro buyūdan [The Heroic Exploits of Norakuro]*, drawn originally in direct-to-book format against the backdrop of the Second Sino–Japanese war that started in 1937. The content of the period was underpinned by a rational and realistic worldview, and its most significant characteristic was that Norakuro appeared in fewer frames. In place of Norakuro appearing in frames, there is a multilinear story structure in which characters with names and personalities appear and perform in clearly delineated supporting roles, such as Corporal Deka, Norakuro's direct subordinate, and Colonel Mall. In other words, Period 3

showed realities not depicted in Periods 1 and 2, including the position of the Fierce Dog Regiment (the name of the army in which Norakuro serves), maps of where the war took place, and Norakuro's wounds.

So, what did the two-page spreads in Period 3 contain? If we take another look at the table in Figure 5, we see that two-page spreads of battle scenes were the most common, surpassing other scenes of military life, such as marches and setting up of camps, in earlier works. In Periods 1 and 2 there are two two-page spreads of battle scenes, but in order to present realistic, rational forms of expression in Period 3, we can see that the depiction of battle scenes – which took place on the Chinese continent, where there are broad stretches of land – required two-page spreads characterized by perspective. These spreads reflected the width and depth of continental battlefields and throngs of soldiers, including Norakuro, involved in battle.

Both Figures 6 and 7 are two-page spreads depicting battles in a text from Period 3. Each of them, however, has a different style. Figure 6 has the same style as the spread in "Moon World Tour", and by depicting the characters as equally sized and in a flat fashion, and by giving them speech bubbles, both the overall battlefield and the individuals involved are conveyed. While the main character, Norakuro, is hard to see on the battlefield to the extent that his raised arms cover his face, both the attacking and retreating sides have lines in speech bubbles, so the spread presents many scenes occurring within the one event.

In Figure 7, the main character, Norakuro, is a large figure running from the back of the screen to the front right, and due to a linear perspective style of spatial representation, the soldiers get smaller the further to the rear they stand. This style symbolizes the realistic and rational story space of Period 3, with even the ground and the vegetation represented in a more realistic fashion than Figure 6. However, since the smaller soldiers in the rear also have speech bubbles similar to Figure 6, Tagawa attempts to represent them on the screen despite their small stature. Later, I will explore the way in which that Norakuro's figure is only exaggerated in these two-page spreads. In this image, there is an exaggerated representation because the injured Norakuro is depicted in an indirect narrative in *Norakuro buyūdan [The Heroic Exploits of Norakuro]* that he relates through reminiscing.

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3 Reflecting the propaganda of the Sino-Japanese War, the text employed discriminatory expression in which the enemy was regarded as animals.

Figure 6

Excerpt from Tagawa Suihō's Norakuro sōkōgeki [Norakuro's All-Out Attack], *(1937) reprinted in Norakuro sōkōgeki* [Norakuro's All-Out Attack], *(Tagawa, 1969, pp.154-155)*

Figure 7

Excerpt from Tagawa Suihō's Norakuro buyūdan [The Heroic Exploits of Norakuro], *(1938) reprinted in* Norakuro buyūdan [The Heroic Exploits of Norakuro*], (Tagawa, 1969, pp.138-139)*

Although these two styles of depiction share the common feature of speech bubbles, we could say that the difference between them is that one is a linear perspective style of spatial representation that supposes an imaginary camera, as in Figure 7, and the other is a flat style of spatial representation where there is no imaginary camera, as in Figure 6. Moreover, these two styles are mixed together in the three works produced after the Second Sino-Japanese war, during Period 3 in the above-mentioned table. Here, the key characteristic of the two-page spreads is the use of a flat style of spatial representation when depicting a large group, such as in battle scenes, particularly in close-quarters battle and victory scenes. Certainly, the increase in two-page spreads is not only inseparable from the publishing medium and format of direct-to-book manga of over 100 pages, but also from the realistic, rational worldview that informed the depiction of war as a main topic in these works. Even compared to other works of the same time period, the realism of war permeated manga, and there was a need to describe battles not in a flat manner but in a realistic way that captured the wide expanses of the Chinese continent. Indeed, even in other works from Nakamura Shōten, which published many direct-to-book format manga in the same period, we see such spreads with the same realistic depictions. Figures 8 and 9 are two-page spreads of battle scenes in works by Niizeki Seika and Shaka Bontarō, respectively, that were published by Nakamura Shōten.

Figure 8
Excerpt from Niizeki Seika's The Patriotic Comic Commandos,
(1938) (Niizeki, 1998, pp. 180-181)

Figure 9
Excerpt from Shaka Bontarō's Shanghai and Nanjing Thousand
Miles Unit, *(1938) (Shaka, 1998, pp. 202-203)*

Niizeki and Shaka's battle scenes have the same linear per-spective style of spatial representation as the two-page spread from *Norakuro* in Figure 7. While Niizeki's main character, Hanamaru Marunosuke, floating in the air due to a propeller growing from his buttocks makes the representation seem flat, the small size of enemy soldiers blown up in an explosion in the left rear of the frame shows that this is a linear perspective representation of space, like a camera. What characterizes these two spreads is the portrayal of Japanese soldiers in action facing the reader, similar to the scene in Figure 7, and although a real-istic and rational style of spatial expression is used, unrealistic actions are also depicted, such as the main characters flying in the air toward the screen. Furthermore, since there are few char-acters and only one battle, there are no groups of soldiers on the battlefield such as in Figure 6, which shows a number of simul-taneous battles. Thus, focusing on a main character who does unrealistic things in a space depicted in a realistic and rational

manner neglects other aspects of the battlefield. Considering the propaganda aspects of these works during wartime, this was a typical style of depiction for children's manga on the subject of war at the time.

It is important to note that the mixing of styles in *Norakuro* was unusual even compared to such spreads in other manga. In the third period of *Norakuro*, the following three styles of ex-pression in two-page spreads are mixed together: 1) a flat spatial expression style with speech bubbles but without camera-like perspective, as in figure 6; 2) a camera-like linear perspective style of spatial expression, with speech bubbles, and exaggera-tion of the main character (only used in one case), as in figure 7; and 3) a camera-like linear perspective style of spatial expres-sion (drawn from behind without exaggeration of the main char-acter), as in figure 10.

The different ways in which these styles were used to convey narrative content can illuminate the ideologies that informed

Tagawa's work. Concerning the changes in *Norakuro* in Period 3, Miyamoto (2002) focused on how war was portrayed in *Norakuro buyūdan [The Heroic Exploits of Norakuro]*, the third of the three works in this period, and states:

> What was happening in the war was conveyed by radio and telegram, and even more surprisingly, that was how civilians learned that the enemy's stronghold just fell… These three works realistically recreated and presented to readers of the time what was actually happening in the war on the Asian continent, as well as the circumstances on the home front that could only be learned indirectly from the news media. Readers were separated from the experience of witnessing war in real time with their own eyes, expecting to be fulfilled by reading manga. Here, the basic policy of realistically depicting war was carried out to a point that the expected role of the work itself was seriously jeopardized (p.60).

Although *Norakuro's* main audience at the time, children, wanted to experience war (as play) in "real time", the series did not offer such depictions. It is precisely the realistic depiction of war that is cited as a reason for disappointing these expectations. However, in terms of the expression used in two-page spreads, the style is inconsistent and mixed. Even though depictions that exaggerate the activities of the protagonist alongside realistic, up-front camera-like portrayals of space – as in the styles of Niizeki, Shaka, or style 2) in *Norakuro* – enabled the safe enjoyment of war through manga, in most two-page-spread scenes in *Norakuro*, reader expectations are dashed in order to use styles 1) and 3). We can see similar contradictions as those found in Tagawa's mixed style in the war paintings of the same period, a topic I will examine in the next section.

One more characteristic of two-page spreads of *Norakuro* in Period 3 is the common depiction of multiple soldiers facing away from the reader on the battlefield (Figure 10). If we were to emphasize the propaganda aspect of these works, based on readers' expectations, regardless of whether depicting the battlefield with the realistic and rational style of spatial expression used by Niizeki and Shaka, or emphasizing the victory of the main character by having Norakuro seem to approach the viewer, are considered effective forms of expression, would one bury the protagonist with a flat style of depiction, or portray soldiers with their backs to the reader? The discussion in the following section will focus on this very question.

Figure 10

Excerpt from Tagawa Suihō's Norakuro kesshitaichō [Commando Squad Leader Norakuro], *(1938) reprinted in* Norakuro kesshitaichō [Commando Squad Leader Norakuro], *(Tagawa, 1969, pp.82-83)*

The Backs of Soldiers

As demonstrated by the oil paintings and *nishiki-e* of Shimooka Renjō, even in the Meiji period, the theme of war was something that artists felt had to be depicted, and we are left with many war paintings that were in a sense demanded by the country and the spirit of the times. During the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, there was a change from *nishiki-e* and picture scrolls of battles to realistic war paintings with an emphasis on visual presentness. Kawata Akihisa (1995) points out that there was a change in the characteristics of war paintings during the Asia-Pacific War, but this was a different level of change to that which occurred during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars. He writes:

As is always the case in total wars, while in the Sino-Japanese War the value of any citizen was not redeemed in terms of their effectiveness as soldiers, this unjust war could not persuasively build an understanding of painters as different from common soldiers. Although many accounts of the war by painters at the time emphasize that they suffered similarly to soldiers, paradoxically it is also said that "a soldier called a painter" on the battlefield is merely a self-contradiction. In fact, the backs of soldiers had never been depicted as much as they were by Japan in the Sino–Japanese War, and this shows that there was indeed someone lingering behind the other soldiers who was not a soldier, but a painter. Works where figures face the audience

and eloquently tell the details of an event with as much dramatics as they can muster were rare in this period. This may be the result of thinking that this type of stag-

ing involved the manipulation of soldiers into othered models, that is, as frames to make a screen (p.248).

Figure 11

The Backs of Soldiers as Depicted by a Military Artist: Pursuit Operation in Wuxi *by Minami Masayoshi, (1938) (Minami, 1996, p.65)*

Kawata (1995) compared the composition of war paintings during the Sino-Japanese War with those of the Pacific War, with a focus on the depiction of soldiers facing away from the painter, in order to determine whether the paintings differed in the degree to which the soldiers were "produced" as others (Figure 11). He states that unless war is understood as justified, it becomes a fiction, and if war paintings cannot eloquently describe an incident in detail to the audience, as the works of Goya and Delacroix do so effectively, then the lack of belief would create differences in the artistic expression. In comparison to the Sino-Japanese War's system of total war, painters in the Pacific War had no other option than to depict the soldiers facing away from the viewer, using only their experience in the military as reference, because of their feelings of unease caused by their belief that the war lacked justification.

On the other hand, picture books published by Kodansha

during the Second Sino-Japanese War have a strong militaristic tone, and although there was very little close-quarters combat in this modern war, the "exploits" of the Japanese military are portrayed in a realistic graphic style, as in Figure 12 and Figure 13. Despite the chances of seeing combat as a member of the military being low, and even though most images of the conflict were merely battlefield photographs of distant artillery fire (Figure 14), books ended up depicting heroic feats in hand-to-hand combat. Furthermore, that these books were not able to graphically represent the unstaged reality of actual hand-to-hand combat (something which was not seen on the battlefield) was likely because Kodansha picture books sought to focus – based on a desire to boost fighting spirit – precisely on early modern close-quarter combat.

Figure 12

Bazume jun-i no sanrokuningiri [Warrant Officer Bazume's 36 killers], *Unsigned, in* Glorious Achievements in the China Incident, *(1937–38) (2002, p.136)*

Figure 13

Takeuchi butai no funsen [Takeuchi Corps' Desperate Fight], *Unsigned, in* Glorious Achievements in the China Incident, *(1937–38) (2002, p.136)*

Figure 14

Battle photograph titled Joshū sakusen [Operation Xuzhou] *by a military photographer in the Sino-Japanese War (1938), reproduced in Koyanagi and Ishikawa (1993, pp.38-39)*

Most manga artists were not actually on the battlefield. They were domestically based and only indirectly saw images of battle from newspapers, pictures in magazines, and newsreels. At that time, the philosophies informing the 'staging' of these images, based on indirect experiences, likely caused differences in artistic expressions. Military painters on the battlefield portrayed soldiers with their backs to the viewer because they were unable, regardless of what they were directly experiencing, to stage the depictions due to their belief that the war lacked justification. On the other hand, manga artists who only knew war indirectly ended up staging representations of the Japanese military in heroic exploits, such as in the Kodansha picture books.

However Tagawa, despite only experiencing war indirectly, had an individual philosophy when it came to such staging. At the beginning of *Norakuro*, fictional wars involving fights between dogs and monkeys were depicted in a flat manner. When, in Period 3 *Norakuro*, the actual Sino-Japanese War became base material, contrary to other manga, multiple battlefield scenes and groups of soldiers were depicted using a flat style of spatial expression, and there were soldiers drawn with their backs to the reader. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 15, both the soldiers with their backs to the reader and the enemy in their trenches on the other side are depicted with speech bubbles, resulting in countless, undefined soldiers appearing in the screen.

Figure 15

Excerpt from Tagawa Suihō's Norakuro buyūdan [The Heroic Exploits of Norakuro] *(1938), reprinted in* Norakuro buyūdan [The Heroic Exploits of Norakuro], *(Tagawa, 1969, pp.132-133)*

The following is a recollection of Kobayashi Hideo, Tagawa's brother-in-law, of a conversation he had with Tagawa:

We would sometimes meet, and we'd usually have a drink and talk about foolish things, but one day he looked at me with a straight face and said, "Actually, you know, *Norakuro* was all about me" (1979, p.51).

In front of Kobayashi Hideo, Tagawa said that Norakuro was he himself. While a person's experience of going to battle can never be reduced to fiction, Tagawa's method of using Norakuro to represent himself through fiction in this way is meaningful. The incorporation of side characters that take part in the action, as well as episodes where Norakuro gets injured, contributes to the creation of a staging of a battlefield that is supported by a realistic worldview. Moreover, that such staging has the function of denying the main character omnipotence makes it an even more realistic form of expression. On the other hand, in order to depict multiple events on the battlefield that would be impossible to capture if taken by an imaginary camera, Tagawa adopts a flat style of expression considered unrealistic. This kind of approach by Tagawa is the reason that a line can be drawn between his work and the so-called modern manga of other authors of the same period, the expression of whom falls, paradoxically, into a kind of fiction. In other words, Tagawa Suihō imagined the reality – depicted precisely by means of fiction – that he, as a modern individual, must depict, and thereby chose his own form of expression based on his ideals.

Conclusion

In the fall of 1938, the Home Office National Books Division issued *The Policy of Juvenile Culture and Science of Education*, and the controls therein resulted in war no longer being depicted in manga. The change in material for children's manga was particularly influenced by regulations encouraged by a spirit of scientism, under which works that stimulated the attainment of scientific knowledge, and not works of fiction like adventure tales, were promoted. In the buildup for a total war system during the transition from the Sino–Japanese War to the Pacific War, there was an underlying notion that the upcoming war would be a modern war, that is to say, a scientific war that would include a war of propaganda and thought (Ōtsuka, 2013.). The format of manga itself was also regulated, as narrative was removed and manga was reduced to playing the role of a source of scientific enlightenment. Although under the influence of such regulations the flat two-page style of expression that Tagawa Suihō adopted based on his ideals vanished with the end of the serialization of *Norakuro*, it reappeared as panorama manga in the post-war works of Tezuka Osamu.

When it became essential for 1930s manga to depict the reality that is war, there was a transition from a flat style of spatial expression to a camera-like, rational style. Tagawa Suihō realized, however, that with this method there were some things that could not be drawn, and for other things, there was not enough space to draw. Later, Tezuka Osamu again followed Tagawa's method of manga expression for depicting great events and the individuals caught up in them, as seen in in his work *Crime and Punishment* (1953).

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Towards a Queer Perspective on Manga History: Sexy Stillness in the Gay Art of Yamakawa Jun'ichi

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Abstract

This paper aims to construct a theoretical and methodological approach for discussing, on a textual level, the intersections of queer and homosexual representations in gay manga produced by gay men and cisgender women. The main argument is that gay manga revolves around alternative takes on the representation of the mobility (animation) of characters, a phenomenon that will be framed through the notion of *sexy stillness*. The analysis of this new notion of sexy stillness is conducted through the comparison of the technical aspects of gay manga artist Yamakawa Jun'ichi's art with canonical girls' manga series. Great care will be given to the specific moments describing the inner motion of characters, as well as the place of these scenes within the visual composition of narratives. Analysis of some elements of the media and social context will also be incorporated in order to explore the meaning of sexy still techniques within manga history and LGBT movements in Japan. In doing so, the goal is to present similarities in terms of the visual expression of queerness as a basis for supporting future works on the different social or communal projects, media production systems, and political impact of gay manga genres.

Keywords

Yamakawa Jun'ichi, Manga, Media History, Queer

"Uho! Ii otoko"

Ooh! A hunk! (Michishita Masaki, main character of "Kusomiso tekunikku" by Yamakawa Jun'ichi, published in Barakomi *issue 2, 1987)*

Many people familiar with Japanese meme cultures (see Saito, 2017) and online platforms like 2Channel and Niconico video (see Li, 2017; Steinberg, 2017) must have said, heard, seen, or written this sentence a lot since the discovery of Yamakawa Jun'ichi's gay manga by mainstream audiences in the early 2000s. At the time I am writing this article, the online Niconicopedia page dedicated to Yamakawa Jun'ichi indicates a daily activity of 600 comments, tags and other "Uho" themed videos posted on Niconico.[1] While some of these videos have been replayed millions of times, feature hundreds of thousands of comments, and have created dozens of internet slang terms frequently used across Japanese social media, little to no academic work has been undertaken about their original content. In reality, gay manga, movies and even gay porn actors have been appropriated by non-LGBT audiences as "funny" memes and transformed into animated images disturbing the flows of compilation videos on Japanese streaming websites for more than a decade now. For these reasons, this paper goes back to the art of Yamakawa Jun'ichi (or Yamajun) to work towards the critical inclusion of gay media within Japanese media histories, starting here with manga.

Here, I also participate in the resurgence within Asian fan studies, including so-called "otaku studies", of the exploration of popular cultures as an intersectional space mediating a wide range of sociopolitical issues surrounding ethnic, gender, racial and sexual minorities. While works from Morimoto (2013), and edited collections like *BL ga hiraku tobira (BL opening doors)* (Welker, 2019) have illustrated how the transnational circulation of popular cultures may open the door to social change, we are still to address the legacy of the national history of gay subcultures in Japan. In recent decades, the historiography of manga expression has often highlighted the impact of *shōjo* manga (girls'

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1   The article was developed in early 2020, during a period of decline in the popularity of so-called "Inmu" slang. Inmu refers to multiple titles in the gay porn film series Babylon. Since "Uho" is only one keyword inspired by gay pornography or Yamajun's manga in general, it is rather difficult to evaluate the exact online activity of Inmu slang that spread across multiple platforms, including Twitter. Videos on Niconico also tend to be erased when a certain limit on comments is reached, and although the Inmu train is losing steam, multiple references to Yamajun's work continue to circulate in niche subcultural online communities.

manga), and especially homoerotic genres like *shōnen ai* manga, on male productions like lolicon or "fighting girl" characters (Yonezawa, 2007; Saitō, 2006; Sasakibara, 2004). Following these perspectives, more recent works including those of Galbraith (2020) and Boyd (2016) also mobilized queer theory within their study of male otaku fandoms and Japanese animated media. Although I fully support the directions taken by these transversal and intersectional approaches towards fandoms and visual expressions, I am also alarmed by the lack of acknowledgement of LGBT arts and audiences within Japanese subcultures, and on a larger scale, Japanese media history.

From the 1970s, *shōjo* manga had very influential neighbors in the gay magazines *Barazoku* and *Sabu*, followed by *G-Men* and *Badi* (see Saito, 2018) in the mid-90s. If it is usually acknowledged that the feminine revolution of manga led by the Year 24 group used male homosexual imagery to reinvent gender and sexual representations in provocative pieces that exposed discrimination, the encounters between *shōjo* manga and gay subcultural magazines are too often limited to brief citations in primary texts, including famous female *mangaka* (manga artist) autobiographies (Takemiya, 2016). Scholars (Ishida, 2008) and practitioners (Tagame, 2019) alike have furthermore emphasized the close yet conflictual relationship of girls' manga and gay manga by separating their audiences and styles, opposing effeminate figures with "macho" masculine aesthetics (see also Armour, 2010). If distinguishing between grassroots gay media and *shōjo* manga is crucial to prevent the reduction of various representations of homosexuality into a heterogenous amalgam, it also continues to cultivate a certain isolation of gay manga from the broader historical developments of Japanese visual subcultures. As such, Baudinette's recent investigations (2017) of the interconnectedness of gay manga and *shōjo* manga audiences framed genres like boys' love as part of gay manga history. Despite this productive proposition, the constant distancing of the two genres within more popular discourses currently condemns gay manga's content, expressions and techniques to being framed as "not *shōjo* manga". What we have is a tautological definition of an undetermined object of study with a blurry history; "gay manga is made by gay men for gay men".

The social response towards *shōjo* manga, and therefore queer representations, as "a fantasy" (Mizoguchi, 2000; Hori, 2010), continued to isolate gay manga production even with the emergence in the 1990s of LBGT rights movements, as well as the exotic representation of homosexuality in women's magazines during the gay boom (McLelland, 2006). Both academic and popular discourses moreover participated in the erasure of queer authors through the sustained attention given to *yaoi* (slash manga written by women; see Welker, 2015). One infamous example is the *yaoi* controversy that involved questioning the objectification of male homosexuality by heterosexual women in the feminist *minikomi* CHOISIR (Lunsing, 2006; Satō, 1994, 1996). On a textual level, lesbian activist Mizoguchi Akiko addressed this erasure of "real" queerness into "a fantasy"

as an expression of the limitations in the negotiation of gender stereotypes by heterosexual fan movements (2000). This situation is nevertheless changing and Mizoguchi's more recent work aims to find potential intersectional feminist practice in slash romance (2015). Manga's capacity to convey LGBT struggles to mainstream audiences has furthermore resurfaced with the fresh success of new manga series, including Tagame Gengoroh's *Otōto no otto* (2014-2017; see also Baudinette, 2018).

Although many female and queer scholars are currently trying to productively articulate these collaborations and oppositions within theoretical frameworks and methodologies to study Japanese visual subcultures, there is still a risk of limiting these vibrant social debates. The question of queerness in Japanese subcultures is frequently emptied of any actual LGBT subjectivities, artists, and expressions. While valid as a tool for textual analysis, the "queering of texts" has become a wall obstructing the real presence of queer actors in visual subcultures. In response to the apparent need to introduce more queer theory and practice at the intersection between Japanese subcultures, fan studies and manga studies, I therefore propose to compare *shōjo* manga and gay manga in terms of their composition techniques (*komawari*, see Itō, 2005) in order to discuss the visual representation of queerness.

The art of Yamajun (1983-1988) demonstrates an interesting transition in manga composition techniques. It presents similar interrogations as those raised by the evolution of *shōjo* manga expressions from *shōnen ai* in the 1970s to amateur *yaoi* and the fanzine *Aniparo* in the 1980s (see Nishimura, 2002) and industrial boys' love in the 1990s (see Mori, 2010, 2012). While reductive in its scale, this study of the main features of Yamajun's compositing invites us to identify potential technical specificities of gay manga, and position its participation in the long history of hybridization of moving image techniques from across cinema, animation, comics, and other visual media arts. The objective is not to get stuck on the issue of misrepresentation of queer lives in comics, but to contribute to the reconstitution of an inclusive moving image and media history. In doing so, my goal is to give some theoretical and practical flesh to subcultural queer representations by mobilizing the insight of *tōjisha* LGBT artists.[2] This comparison will also help to retrospectively integrate LGBT manga into the academic frameworks and methods of the historiography of manga expressions.

Sexy stillness: Yamajun as an Object of Study, Manga Composition as a Method of Analysis, and the History of Manga Expression as Context

Yamajun is the pen name allegedly given to an anonymous gay manga artist, whose work was published in the gay magazine *Barazoku* and its affiliated manga magazine *Barakomi* from 1983 to 1988. The mystery surrounding Yamajun has been only partly explained by his former publisher, Itō Bungaku. Itō nos-

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2   The term *tōjisha* (lit. concerned person) was coined by feminist scholars to describe and validate the grassroots knowledge coming from underprivileged positions, including from a wide range of minorities. As such, *tōjisha* is often in opposition with academic knowledge or modes of knowledge production that collide with power structures.

talgically described numerous times the erratic visits of a young man bringing original manga to his office (that is, his house) in Shimokitazawa (a district in Tokyo; see Itō, 2010. Itō also claimed that even though *Barazoku* mostly relied on anonymous submissions received via the mail, Yamajun was one of the few artists he was able to meet in person and pay for his contributions (Itō, 2010). The artist nevertheless disappeared suddenly after 1988 and never claimed any royalties even after the viral outbreak of his manga on online social networks in the 2000s. Yamajun's works are now published by the NPO Fukkan publishing house, which specializes in out of print books, as one volume: *Uho ii otoko tachi* (*Ooh hunks!*), a title reminiscent of the text on the first page of his most famous piece, *Kusomiso tekunikku* (1988).

If it is difficult, if not impossible, to comment on the author's personal life, in terms of length, genres and themes, Yamajun's oeuvre includes over 40 short pieces of approximately 15 pages covering high school comedies, grotesque thrillers, historical drama and fictional diaries recollecting sexual encounters. This diversity of genres featuring a graphic interest in gay sexuality was nevertheless criticized by his peers. The harsh critiques of his manga by some of *Barazoku*'s editors and readers described Yamajun's distinctive art-style as "too feminized" with *shōjo* manga-esque features in the characters and plots (Itō, 2010). Manga by gay artists have indeed often expressed a certain degree of distancing from the narrative and aesthetic tropes of slash-manga and *shōjo* manga during the exponential growth of the *yaoi* market in the 1980s. *Barazoku*'s manga was also questioned by later generations of gay manga artists who did not accept the discriminatory term of bara or *barakomi* (terms that can be roughly translated into "pansy" or "pansy manga"; see Ishii et al., 2015 and Fabrissou & Edo, 2013). While it is interesting to note how Yamajun was apparently not "in sync" with more common modes of the reinvention of homosexual masculinities through visual media in the Tokyoite community, the critiques he faced also open a discussion about the various strategies mobilized to represent male homosexuality and queerness in manga.

Yamajun's recurrent use of inner dives (introspective moments of personal reflection) points at a stylistic and technical proximity with diverse genres including (erotic) *gekiga* (realistic manga) and *shōjo* manga. Since similar techniques are also present in other gay comics published in the 1980s like Yamaguchi Masaji's *Futari no dōwa* (1985), we can speculate that gay manga stands in between these influences. That is, at least, before its next institutionalization in *G-men* (1995-2016) and *Badi* (1994-2019) in the mid-90s, two gay magazines mostly known for the more macho aesthetics featured in works by artists like Gengoroh Tagame, Ichikawa Kazuhide and Jiraya. For these reasons, I suggest we revisit Yamajun's art as a sign of a potential moment of intersectional manga history, when different gender and sexual minorities influenced (or rejected each other's influences

on) the development of specific visual techniques addressing questions of discrimination, sexuality, gender expectations and societal pressure, here through the representation of the inner spaces of fictional characters. In what follows, I analyze the use of still image and inner monologue techniques in four of Yamajun's pieces to draw connections between his representation of intimate queer times and spaces and the establishment of queer characters and slow-motion techniques in canonical *shōjo* manga (and probably beyond manga as a medium) (Ernest dit Alban, 2020).

However before we dive into the comical yet tragic, campy yet genuine art of Yamajun, I need to summarize a key debate about the relation of gender and sexual representations to the composition of moving images. In the realm of Japanese visual subcultures, including manga and anime, the mobility of the images of characters' bodies is usually considered as the main technical, aesthetic, and narrative aspect of animated media (Lamarre, 2009; Tsugata, 2004). As such, the canonical lineage connected to Tezuka Osamu's twin careers in manga and anime set the grounds for the technical expression of anime and manga in terms of cinematism, or at least, a composition of visual motion inspired by cinema. In the case of manga, this composition is usually called *komawari*, literally "comic striping", or the construction of blank pages into an ensemble of coherent and readable comic strips. As an example, compositing streams of images in manga includes using techniques to express the order and connections between images: in the Tezuka style, each element is treated as a shot filmed by a camera that pages will organize into a film. Characters and their stories are developed by the composition of their corporeal movement inside and between shots. As such, characters are "moving images", that is to say, images that "come alive" through a diverse range formal, technical, media and even material mobility.

Scholars and practitioners have moreover noticed how manga and anime rapidly created their own "symbolic reality" that moved away from the "realistic" gaze usually affiliated with cinematism (Ōtsuka, 2007). While I do not intend to re-enter the slippery slope of "manga is just a fantasy" while discussing gay manga, I will note how manga as a media has been repeatedly used to invent representations of gender and sexuality through the animation of fictional bodies. The period between the 1970s and 1990s in particular embodies another key moment in the stabilization of the gendered genres of boy (*shōnen*) or girl (*shōjo*) amateur and industrial manga in technical terms. Precisely, the divide between "masculine" and "feminine" representations lies in different philosophies about animating bodies on corporeal or inner levels. As such, the animation of fictional bodies in "boy" and "girl" manga expressions tends to rely on different approaches to *komawari* (page compositing) and visual composition (Mori, 2012): within the Tezuka Osamu model usually affiliated with male expressions, characters' bodies are animated in a

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3   This distance does not mean that the genres and audiences never interact. In fact, many authors undertake double careers in boys' love manga and gay fanzines. (See Fabrissou & Edo, 2014)

4   The term *bara(zoku)*, or rose tribes, was later criticized as an external stigma created by heterosexual nomenclature. Despite Itō Bungaku's role as an ally, some members of the community where allegedly uneasy with having him as an editor in chief. This dissension might also explain the later distancing of 1990s famous gay artists with the production model, expression and style of *Barazoku*.

"filmic" fashion. Characters come alive through corporeal mobility and speech that manga "as a film" compresses into a series of shots. Bodies exist mostly in a physical realm, and animation (the act of giving life to characters) focuses on keeping the character mobile to develop a story.

However, *shōjo* manga's literary use of poems and illustrations tends to evade this simple approach towards corporeality as physical mobility: we are shown a dynamic stasis revealing the deep thoughts of characters. The composition of movement in *shōjo* manga emerges out of emotions, not physical motions (or at least emotion becomes the motion driving the mobility of characters). Bodies therefore exist at the crossroads of physical and psychological realms and animation focuses on the convergence of these inner and corporeal motions. One technique originates from the "pure animation" of symbolic bodies, the other from a focus on animating sexualities, psychologies, and subjectivities from the inside. In sum, while boys' manga and its heroes focus more on the cinematographic capture of corporeal motions in fights or sports, women's expressions in *shōjo* manga are well known for mixing still images like illustrated poems alongside more cinematic composition (Hata, 2013; Ishida, 2008).

This dichotomy of movement in manga's gender and sexual representations is often suppressed by the overall focus of male academic works on so-called otaku cultures that followed Azuma Hiroki's (2009) database analysis in the early 2000s. As they focus mostly on the symbolic dimension of characters as fixed images (in order to dissect them into more images) and storylines, and not as moving images or a complex ensemble of images, it appears that the way individuals "animate" characters is the same. Similar critiques were formulated by Azuma Sonoko (2015) when she noticed how theories in the field always presuppose that women's (and by extension any person within a minority) practices of image animation and consumption are "probably the same" as the usual object of study: straight male fandoms. In sum, gender and sexuality in manga is not limited to symbolic representations but also extends to animation techniques organizing the relation in between images.

How, then, can we frame representations of male homosexuality and queerness in terms of "a composition of image streams"? The circulation of gay magazines *Sabu* and *Barazoku* in famous book clubs held by *shōjo* manga artists Takemiya Keiko and Hagio Moto in the early 1970s might help us to grasp the stakes of reinventing visual composition in manga. These blurry boarders of homosocial (if not homosexual in this case) communities and their Tokyoite urban territories responded to a specific need of marginalized communities for a subcultural agency over gender and sexual representations. If academic works usually focus on women's "reinvention of themselves" in manga (see Fujimoto, 1992), Kinjō's (2013) groundbreaking examination of

the reinvention of homosexual masculinity in the gay magazine *Badi* extended this analysis through his investigation of the vocabularies used to describe male genitalia in gay manga. Saito's (2019) pioneering exploration of romantic narratives in gay manga then adopted a similar approach when looking at shifting definitions of male homosexuality and relationship goals since the 1980s.

Despite these important contributions, one overlooked element of the subcultural representations of queerness and homosexuality common to women's and gay magazines in between the 70s and 90s is the visual techniques mobilized to introduce the representation of subjectivity within animated sexualized bodies. Mori Naoko's work (2010, 2012) demonstrated how *shōjo* manga's legacy of inner dives and still imagery has been appropriated in a wide range of erotic and pornographic manga art: the suppression of the gaps in between frames became a strategy to represent sexualized characters as subjects. This reduction of frames and cinematic composition makes the interiority of characters legible; in most cases *shōjo* and gay manga subvert the narrative focus emerging from the corporeal motion of characters in between shots to unify pages into a psychological space. In other words, their composition of visual motion reveals the inner motion of characters, from their agency over their own sexual drives, to their daily social struggles. Yamajun's manga utilizes similar strategies of sexy still imagery to sexualize yet subjectify his gay characters.

The academic consensus finds the most likely origin of this strategy of subjectification within 1970s *shōnen ai* homosexual romances (Ueno, 1998). Introducing "slow motion" techniques transforms the space around the sexualized bodies of young male characters into inner spaces, if not *queer spaces*, pausing the motion of bodies and the narrative flow of stories to reflect upon the situation. Ishida (2008) named this phenomenon the "*overflow of subjectivity*": a new composition logic organizing pages and shots into a single moment of personal introspection. While Tezuka-like "montage" focused on dividing pages into four to six cinematic shots, *shōjo* manga's literary poetry organized them as one image including written text directly inscribed (for example, outside of speech bubbles) as part of the visual ensemble. I propose to call this convergence of temporary stasis with the sensual introspection of characters *sexy stillness*, a form of expression noticeably employed in inner monologue techniques, fused comic strips and other interruptions of montage using full- or double-page illustrations.

My first hypothesis is that, in the context of 1970s and 1980s manga, sexy stillness is a *queer motion* both in terms of content and technique: inner dives introduce queer characters and disturb the Tezuka canon's inclination for cinematographic "montage" and gender representations based on the corporeal motion of characters. In other words, given that post-Tezuka

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5   I am here repeating Lamarre's criticism of Azuma's lack of filmic analysis (2009). Characters are not just detachable parts of images created by a postmodern technologized condition, but emerge out of a complex media history of moving images. One element added to this critique by Azuma Sonoko (2015) is the lack of reflexivity from male practitioners/academics in the field who tend to create general theories and methodologies presupposing female consumers' habits (for example, Ōtsuka's "world" 1989). I would add that this assumption also re-emerges out of the way we frame techniques or technologies of moving images as a neutral basis used in a pseudo-generic way by "everyone". If intersectionality, and to an extent, a wider schematization of the otaku cultural phenomenon, is indeed important, the evaluation of the participation of minor and alternative modes of moving image production and consumption in the larger spectrum of animated media history in Japan is a key element that should not be overlooked.

manga expressions focused on animating bodies to explore their stories, the dynamic and temporary immobility of sexy stillness techniques opened up a queer time and space to invent new motions and representations criticizing gender and sexual stereotypes. As such, *shōjo* manga proposed a queer alternative, a "see through" technique revealing the hidden "real" subject invisible to the eye, which stops the mere corporeal motion of a gendered body otherwise reduced to its exteriority and "apparent' sex (see also Ueno, 1987). Although many scholars have rightfully tied Tezuka's legacy with *shōjo* manga (Iwashita, 2013), the emergence of sexy still techniques in the 1970s incorporates a new psychological, intimate and sexual dimension of moving images by playing with the unification of panels, pages or double pages into a single intimate space inspired by popular feminine literature (Ōtsuka, 2007).

My second hypothesis is that sexy still techniques are also reminiscent of a complex media history of visual techniques in and out of manga; it includes subcultural productions like erotic *gekiga*, *gurabia* from a variety of porno magazines, and *jojo-e* and *poemu* in women's magazines that featured pure literature, film analysis and photography (see Ishida, 2008; Hata, 2013. The so-called literary invention of *shōjo* manga was immersed in gay cultures, both "high" (in the sense of pure literature and the arts) and "low" (obscure magazines and pornographic materials). If in our current academic literature *shōjo* manga's composition of movement – as a set of visual techniques mostly used in manga allegedly produced by cisgender women for cisgender women – has no apparent relation to LGBT populations, Yamajun's famous art pieces nevertheless demonstrate very similar approaches to sexy still representations of inner dives, sexual drives, subjective space and surviving social discrimination. "Queering manga history" might ask us to have a wider look at the history of these trans-textual (if not transmedia) exchanges that have fostered strategies to represent alternative takes on gender and sexuality.

When asked about Tezuka Osamu's impact on his oeuvre, gay artist and activist Tagame Gengoroh responded that gay manga might have started with Tezuka's MW (1976; see Tagame, 2019). Far from another blanket statement on Tezuka's "godly" presence in the field, Tagame's comment asks a fair question: when does gay manga's history start? Since we do not have any official history yet, one hypothesis could be that, as grassroots expression, gay manga "starts" with the invention of techniques queering representations of the self, not with the mere illustration of homosexuality.

Sexy Still Motion and Inner Dives: Finding a Space for Queer Intimacy in Manga

The main technical aspect of Yamajun's expression of a *queer time and space* is the interruption of image streams by individual strips or full-page illustrations revealing the inner monologues of naked homosexual men. On a graphic level, Yamajun's erotic images usually feature written text in their top corners. This translates, on a narrative level, into a disruption of the sequencing of the action into multiple linear shots: written texts and full-page illustrations explore the inner monologue of homosexual characters to open a dimension that is not just driven by

corporeal movements, social stigma, and external appearances. Yamajun's manga often mixes exterior and interior logics of image stream composition; the rhythm of his pieces tends to switch from a corporeal motion (using multiple shots) to a subjective organization of the page's compositing (on a full page). The openings of his works frequently mobilize a rather realistic, graphic and erotic *gekiga* style featuring a complex organization of multiple shots on the same page. Yamajun nevertheless counterbalances these moments of exposition with the progressive introduction of still imagery as an intimate rhythm taking over the narrative: the composition of his image streams invites us to dive beyond the corporeality of pornographic content and graphic sex scenes into the subjective, psychological and intimate space of the protagonists' queer lives.

Yamajun's strategy to reveal homosexual characters as subjects of (mostly carnal) desires moreover heavily resembles the techniques introduced with sexually ambiguous beautiful young boys (*bishōnen*) in *shōjo* manga in the 1970s (Ishida, 2008). Here, I want to build on the pioneering work of Mori (2010) on pornographic manga. Mori previously stated that after the 1990s, erotic and pornographic manga have internalized the inner dive techniques of *shōjo* manga to describe the agency of queer and feminine bodies over their experience of sexual pleasure. In this perspective, Yamajun's oeuvre would represent a moment in grassroots gay manga history contemporaneous with *shōnen ai* (1970s-1980s) and the reshaping of manga composition techniques around sexy still imagery. Following Yamajun's capacity to both sexualize and subjectify his characters, my analysis will focus on the comparison of his works with Takemiya Keiko and Hagio Moto's manga, including "Ki to kaze no uta" ("The poem of wind and trees", Takemiya, 1976-1984) and "Tōma no shinzō" ("The heart of Thomas", Hagio, 1974). In doing so, my goal is to continue Mori's dialogical inquiry of *shōjo* manga and gay manga. In sum, the common trait of Yamajun and *shōnen ai*'s sexy stillness is that their representation of sexuality does not reduce animated fictional bodies to sexual objects; it opens the door to the exploration of characters' agency over their own bodies and lives.

There are nevertheless differences in their aesthetic and technical interest in the representation of an invisible dimension of characters: as an example, despite the inclination of both genres to express social struggles, sexual desires and subjective agency invisible to the eye, Yamajun's art is not as decorated or ornamented as the pages of *shōjo* manga. His characters are also very different from the refined, literary, and bourgeois characters of *shōnen ai*. The following analysis therefore aims toward a first raw delimitation of gay manga's aesthetic, media and technical aspects, going beyond its non-definition as "not *shōjo* manga" to record its contribution in the history of manga expression.

On that note, the narrative goals and themes affiliated with the use of sexy stillness techniques in Yamajun's art are quite specific and tend to diverge from the 1970s *shōjo* manga literary aesthetics of works like "Sanrūmu ni te" ("In the Sunroom", Takemiya, 1970) or "Jūichigatsu no gimunazumu" ("The Gymnasium in November", Hagio, 1971). There is a clear genre division in his works, with historical drama, gore thriller and *shōjo* manga-esque juvenile comedy not using any kind of sexy still composition of image streams. Since all of Yamajun's graph-

ic descriptions of gay sex and homosexual characters do not necessarily mobilize sexy stillness, the question of when this technique is used becomes fundamental to understanding its significance. Sexy still monologues, full-page illustrations and subjective montage appears in sexual diaries, coming out stories and sexual fantasies. Despite the lack of information that we possess to discuss the evolution of Yamajun's art from 1983 to 1988, it is interesting to note that he apparently used sexy still motion montage on and off, depending on the themes of his manga. Thus full-page nudity might not represent an early stage of his art, just as written inner monologue may not indicate an incapacity to produce a "cinematic" composition of image streams.

My current research moreover argues that Yamajun's manga responded to a complex media ecology surrounding subcultural manga and pornographic magazines that featured multiple forms of illustration and moving image techniques, including *gurabia*, *jojo-e*, *poemu* and other illustrated novels. On the one hand, recognizing these minor modes of expression might help us to address the media history of manga composition; how did readers interact with the materiality of magazines? This diverse mix of various art forms conjointly using image and text in subcultural magazines not only challenges established ideas about the hybridization of manga montage techniques within certain printed media artifacts, it also reminds us of the rather crude and eluded issue of manga as a masturbatory media. The configuration of *komawari* techniques might be affected by this convergence of certain image formats and intimate usage. On the other hand, Mori's statement (2012) that slash manga evolved technically from the 1970s as a montage strategy in between the gendered "male" cinematic and "female" literary modes of manga expression could be relevant for historizing manga produced by gay authors. In a way similar to the reconfiguration of gender and sexuality proposed by boys' love in the creation of a middle ground in between mobility and immobility, corporeal motion and subjective motion, Yamajun's position in between *gekiga* and *shōjo* manga presents a certain queer hybridization of usually gendered approaches towards montage that flows on the borders of cinematism and illustration. Yamajun's art of sexy still motion nevertheless works in a rather different way than in other genres in the 1970s and 1980s, as it conjoins a need for visual pornography (a feature absent from *shōjo* manga) with the graphic representation of sexual minorities' struggles in the intimacy of their hidden thoughts (a feature absent from usual *gekiga* scenes).

This mix of influences strives to find the space within manga compositing to narrate the hidden truth of gay lives in Yamajun's coming out stories, sexual diaries and sexual fantasies. When navigating different montage legacies, Yamajun proposes a queer motion that reconsiders the relation between visible corporeality and invisible subjectivity: shots of homosexual lives do not stop on the surface of objectified muscular bodies, they capture characters as whole subjects. The flesh and minds of his typical, average male characters let readers know that there are people behind the images. Combined with the rather nonsensical and camp humor of the author, this intimate compositing of the visual field of the manga page could be one of the reasons why mainstream audiences got attached to Yamajun's openly homosexual characters in the early 2000s: as these men share their inner space with readers through inner monologues, full-page illustrations and limited montage, a compelling, intimate connection emerges out of their sexy still images.

Coming Out of Frames: Straight Faces, Gay Inner Monologue

The iconic first pages of "Sanrūmu ni te" ("In the Sunroom", Takemiya, 1970), constitute a typical example of inner monologue in *shōjo* manga: the story begins with an unknown narrator's recollection of memories inscribed on a mysterious landscape. As such, inner monologue becomes a dramatic tool for slowing the flow of cinematic montage and narrative for readers to understand the main characters' motives and personal backstories. If inner monologue existed in previous *shōjo* manga, it was mostly used as a narrative technique within speech bubbles to introduce characters and avoid more visual descriptions (and therefore sequencing the action into more shots) (Ishida, 2008). During the so-called *shōjo* manga revolution, the representation of inner monologue became more common in queer storylines as well as in stories about social or ethnic pariahs facing discrimination and oppression, as in "Ki to kaze no uta" ("The Poem of Wind and Trees", Takemiya, 1978) or "Tōma no shinzō" ("The Heart of Thomas", Hagio, 1974).

Technically speaking, the most distinguishable aspect of the technique of inner monologue is the way it transforms multiple images into a double-page or one-page illustration, inviting readers into a subjective composition of montage. If reducing the pace of image streams represents its most distinguishable technical aspect, one rarely considered aspect of inner monologue is that it also appears in individual strips mobilized by more cinematic compositions of the page. For these reasons, and as mentioned by Ōtsuka (2007), inner monologue embodies a hybrid mode of personal enunciation inspired by a miracle junction of literature and cinema within manga: as speech becomes freed from speech bubbles, it is directly written on the image and becomes one with it. This unification of written speech with visual elements transforms, on the expression level, into a literal nudity of the body and the soul: inner monologue exposes characters' subjective unity by allowing image flows to oscillate between corporeal and inner motions.

This sexy still yet dynamic dimension of the (im)mobility of manga characters is employed by Yamajun to explore the personal stories of closeted gay men who feel a disjunction between their social and inner selves. His manga solves this dichotomy by erasing the gap separating gay characters' bodies from their minds: Yamajun's use of inner monologue reveals the conjoined psychological and physical process of breaking free from heteronormative norms during a first homosexual sexual experience. As such, Yamajun's take on the "realism" affiliated with inner monologue is drastically different from canonical *shōjo* manga: for example, it is not a highly estheticized recollection of the personal thoughts emerging from a refined and literary character, inspired by French realist novels or German *bildungsroman*, and living in the fictional homosocial sanctuary of a school for

rich boys in a faraway European country.[6] Yamajun's character is usually a middle-class, when not working-class, homosexual man hiding his true self from society. His vocabulary is crude, sometimes vulgar, when not reminiscent of the lexicon of gay porn magazines. In many cases, his inner monologue narrates a moment of unspoken coming out, when he realizes how crushed he is by societal pressure and strives to become true to himself by explicitly embracing his sexuality. The sexy still techniques of inner monologue describing the transformation of the main characters of "Umi kara kita otoko" (lit. "The Man Who Came From the Sea", 1984) and "Sōe wo nugu hi" (lit. "The Day I Took Off My Robe", 1988) particularly embody these dynamics: Yamajun's montage of sexual encounters creates a time and space where sexual pleasure helps bodies to free minds from social policing.

At first glance, "Umi kara kita otoko" (lit. "The Man Who Came From the Sea", 1984) may look like a typical *gekiga* with a cinematic composition of the page: even the overall presence of inner monologue is mobilized as a voice-over explaining the filmic "montage" of the pages from within narration bubbles. The story follows a man who came to drown himself on a beach after reading about a similar recent suicide in the newspapers. His inner monologue explains his motivations through an exhaustive flashback: his family left their home because he was not "fulfilling his role" as a man by sleeping with his wife. As he enters the sea, he meets a younger surfer, also considering suicide, who abruptly invites him to have sex, right now, on the beach. Compositing techniques re-enact the extremely detailed preparation for the sexual act (with up to eight shots in one page) echoed by the protagonist's vivid inner monologue description of the scene. The narrative turning point of this story is however expressed through one full-page illustration recollecting various moments of the two men's intimacy. Three shots, one of them together, one of anal penetration and one of the young's man face, are brought together into a single intimate time and space where the protagonist's thoughts finally come to the realization of his homosexuality. This sexy still pause in the almost filmic montage of the sex scene acts on both formal and content levels as a coming out: his mind analyses what his body is experiencing while having sex with a man for the first time. The film-like compositing then resumes to end the sex scene as the protagonist is now assertive about his owns desires; he is no longer the person other people ask him to be, but his true self, freed from heteronormative alienation. The story has a happy ending as both men decide not to drown themselves and to start a new chapter in their life together.

"Sōe wo nugu hi" (lit. "The Day I Took Off My Robe", 1988) presents a similar narrative and technical structure with a long inner monologue detailing a first homosexual sexual experience within a coming out story. A monk with no wife nor apparent sexual drive (yet?) is on his way back from work. As he passes through a forest, he hears moans coming from behind a tree. He discovers two men having sex and flees as his heated body is showing an unexpected reaction. Unlike "Umi kara kita otoko", the overall composition is rather simple with only a few shots per page. Inner monologue is furthermore directly inscribed within images, reinforcing the control of the monk's intimate processes on storytelling. Followed by the two men

and undressed, the monk then realizes that he feels a certain carnal attraction towards them. The sequencing of the sex scene is regularly hijacked by two full-page illustrations and one double-page illustration describing their sexual encounter from the monk's point of view. These sexy still shots gradually express his own realization of his alienated inner drives: as he is progressively stripped of his clothes and his duty towards society as a monk, his body and mind evolve at the same time towards the conclusion that he is imprisoned by certain norms and expectations. Although the discourse of his inner monologue focuses on the corporeal pleasure of sex, it is important to note that Yamajun's manga rarely objectifies sexualized bodies. Graphic sexual representations take the time to follow the psychological state of protagonists: sexy stillness slows the rapid carnal movements of sexual acts to incorporate the subjective transformation that occurs through sexual liberation from heteronormative values. The final full-page shot concludes the story with an illustration of the former monk dressed in a t-shirt and jeans, urinating in the forest while waiting for his two new lovers. His inner monologue written next to him now rejects Buddhism and social pressure for "his own nature".

In sum, Yamajun's first use of stillness balances the vivid description of gay sex with the expression of protagonists' struggles against heteronormative expectations. The slower tempo provided by the interruption of film-like montage by inner monologue brings an important queer time and space describing homosexual characters in their own intimate terms as fully developed subjects, mind and body now united through the discovery of homosexual sex. If full-page illustrations may be reminiscent of pornographic *gurabia* in gay magazines, Yamajun's sexy shots are not just sexual images: as landmarks for the representation of the conjoined physical and psychological process of coming out, they also enact a similar role as the illustrations in *shōjo* manga's literary approach to the composition of image streams in order to subjectify characters. As such, Yamajun's hybrid art potentially stands at the crossroads of a diverse range of aesthetic, media, and technical elements gathered from subcultural manga magazines.

Diving Into Yourself: Manga as a Masturbatory Media, Sex as an Autobiography

It might not sound ground-breaking, but rather tautological, to identify erotic representations as potential supports for masturbation. Framing manga as pornography, that is to say as masturbatory media, is nevertheless a rare claim made in the study of manga expression. The pioneering works of Nagayama (2014), Mori (2010) and Jones (2002) nevertheless tackled this question when looking at how pornography in women's manga used montage techniques to represent sexually liberated characters. Even when raped or succumbing to sexual pleasure, female characters in ladies' comics, and passive characters in hardcore slash romance, do not lose their agency over their bodies or selves because sexy still techniques continue to conjointly express their inner spaces. This strategy apparently evolved from the inner monologue illustrations of *shōnen ai* manga in the 1970s towards an internalized monologue in the 1980s and the representation of couples' mutual sexual pleasure in the 1990s

(Mori, 2010). Inner monologue and sexy still imagery are therefore often employed in the reconciliation of objectified sexualized bodies with their invisible agency over carnal pleasure. Canonical examples in *shōjo* manga include the case of Gilbert in "Ki to kaze no uta" ("The Poem of Wind and Trees", Takemiya, 1976-1984), a character struggling to reconcile the contradictions of his sexuality and desire for intimacy. Gilbert is often featured in sexy still "bed scenes" and inner dives exploring the complex traumas he suffers.

As mentioned with the two previous examples from Yamajun's oeuvre, gay manga also demonstrates a similar "safety net" preventing gay sexuality from being reduced to a mindless carnal impulses that decrease the agency of characters over their own sexuality and life choices. Indeed, if the creation of pornographic content is one goal of gay manga, another motivation is to support precarious populations in the imagination and representation of their own sexual experiences. Treating gay manga as pornography opens the door to interrogations about the personal construction of gay sexual pleasure through the[7] consumption of the moving images of subcultural magazines. Yamajun's "Ore no onanii time" (lit. "My Masturbation Time", 1985) and "Boku no seikatsuron" (lit. "My Sexual Life", 1988) engage with these questions during the AIDS crisis; as sexual intercourse becomes more dangerous, his manga tend to focus on masturbation as the last (self-)pleasuring act of preservation left for homosexual sexuality. Characters in sexual diaries imagine or remember having sex with other men. The overall composition oscillates between summary cinematic shots and sexy stillness, with a heavy preponderance of full-page illustrations narrated by inner monologues. This variation sustains the creation of an intimate safe space for these characters to explore their own pleasure. Sexual acts themselves are less about the objectification of the protagonists and more about the control they have over their own sexual practices. This *mise-en-abîme* of masturbation in fiction and the likely usage of this media by readers moreover reconfigures the construction of sexy still composition in gay manga: subcultural magazines are both the representation of queer intimate times and spaces, and the media allowing the creation of such moments in real life.

"Ore no onanii time" (lit. "My Masturbation Time", 1985) opens with the filmic presentation of a high schooler coming back to an empty home, and an opportunity to masturbate without being caught by his parents. The opening is expressed through cinematic composition narrated by the protagonist's inner monologue, where he presents himself as "a young homosexual (*chibi bara*), a bit sad because he has no lover". After this introduction, reminiscent of the meeting board section of gay magazines, the next page stops on a full-page illustration of the naked protagonist gazing at himself in the mirror. As he discusses his "narcissistic fetish," a limited montage of three shots is mobilized to represent his progressive erection, followed by a dream-like sex scene with an imaginary "masturbation pet" (a fantasy representation of himself when he is older). The compositing of pages repeats a few graphic focus shots progressively zooming in on the protagonist's anus and a dildo molded on his

own penis a few years ago. Aside from the proclaimed narcissistic fetish, this masturbation scene mostly acts as a sexual autobiography, retracing the story of the protagonist's discovery of self-pleasuring acts: both narrative and image flows follow the conjoined expression of his memories in inner dialogue with the graphic, physical details of his routine. Inner monologue nevertheless progressively stops as he focuses on his own pleasure, as shown in a full-page illustration and a two-page illustration revealing the climax. The story ends on a twist as inner monologue techniques reveal the protagonist's motivation to have sex with a real man one day and end this fictional relationship with himself.

This gradual recovery of subjectivity through the reintroduction of inner monologue after the orgasm prevents the objectification of the main character, while also questioning the media specificity of Yamajun's images of male naked bodies. As a piece published in a pornographic gay magazine, the fact that "Ore no onanii time" (lit. "My Masturbation Time", 1985) focuses on large and graphic illustrations of men's physiology seems rather to be expected; naked *gurabia* and other illustrated novels often appeared in *Barazoku* (Itō, 2010). But this choice of a large image might also come from the *mise-en-abîme* of certain media usage: one hypothesis is that as a masturbatory support, gay manga probably needs to be held while performing. *Komawari*, montage, must therefore give audiences erotic moments to gaze into. This possibility also challenges the narcissistic stereotype presented through the main character: even though gay masturbation temporarily separates subjects from heteronormative settings (here mentioned as the school and missing family), it is also a form of isolation. As a young gay man with no lover, the protagonist only has his own reflection in the mirror (and a mold of his own penis) as media to represent sexual objects while masturbating. Yamajun's manga might also point to how readers are in a similar position, using the image of a character they identify with to realize their sexual needs. More than self-idolatry, Yamajun's sexual diaries tend to reveal the lived isolation and mediated sexuality of gay men in the 1980s through subcultural pornographic media production.

This commentary becomes more prominent in "Boku no seikatsuron" (lit. "My Sexual Life", 1988), a manga directly addressing the potential confinement of gay sexuality during the AIDS crisis. Although I have no intention to mix Yamajun's fiction with the reality of the disease in Japan, the representation of masturbation as an act of self-preservation appears in a few of his final manga in 1987 and 1988. Similar to other "narcissistic" characters choosing a life of mediated sexuality duplicating their own image for them to masturbate to, Michishita Takashi, the protagonist of "Boku no seikatsuron" (1988), is a young man scared by the AIDS crisis and left to remember his sulfurous past. The piece introduces Takashi wearing only underwear on his bed. He also presents himself in a style reminiscent of the advertisements placed at the end of gay magazines. Overall, the composition of the piece is limited to a few essential shots gazing upon his body and progressively retracing the stories of his former exciting sexual adventures. Within this intimate

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7   I do not intend to claim that gay manga is always pornographic, neither that it necessarily revolves around sexy stillness. The examples that I examine here demonstrate however the important impact of pornography and still imagery.

montage, guided by Takashi's inner monologue, flashbacks are told through full-page or double-page illustrations. A preliminary twist nevertheless accentuates Takashi's isolation: the first shots of his erect penis are contrasted with his inner monologue regretting the confined loneliness keeping him safe from the disease. His personal recollection includes a foursome with students, casual sex on the beach with a fisherman, fisting an American in a sauna, and getting humiliated by a teacher. Each scene is introduced by a full-page illustration of his former lovers followed by a limited montage of their encounter. I want to highlight two consequences of Yamajun's choice to use montage in "Boku no seikatsuron" (1988): the emergence of autobiographical queer times and spaces retrieving subjective agency in sexual acts, and, the representation of the mediatization of gay sociality during the AIDS crisis.

On the one hand, most episodes of Takashi's former glory can be categorized as extreme from a heteronormative point of view; his activities involve multiple male partners, hardcore practices and scatology. The biographical and subjective montage of sexy still images in Yamajun's manga nevertheless subjectifies a graphic sexual representation that could be attacked as "deviant". The climax of Takashi's sustained love relationship with the character "Professor K" summarizes Yamajun's strategy to insert a psychological, intimate and agentive dynamic into crude and masochistic practices. Their abusive story ends with an introspective inner dive scene characterized by a full-page illustration: past Takashi is at the top of the page, oozing multiple fluids, and present Takashi at the bottom, finding in this past moment an explanation for his present acquired taste. If this page acts on a narrative level as a transition from Takashi's reverie to his current situation, it also intervenes on a technical level to unify the various queer times and spaces that have supported Takashi's personal growth over the years. By queer times and spaces, I am here referring to both moments of homosexual intimacy hidden from society and an "art of queer" failure (see Halberstam, 2011) enacted by the characters choosing to abandon their normative roles as teachers, students, or workers and concentrate on their sexual adventures. Takashi even describes himself as "a bad teacher" when leaving his students to meet a sexy fisherman, acknowledging his failure to perform as a teacher as a key queer recurrence in his personal construction.

On the other hand, "Boku no seikatsuron" (1988) ends on a historically contingent issue faced by Takashi's intimate journey: he can no longer be his true self. The AIDS crisis, and Takashi's distancing from gay social networks organized around sexual encounters, leaves him alone with a *Barazoku* magazine. "I feel like each of these encounters made me grow. But I am too scared by AIDS. It is a deadly weapon that steals interpersonal relationships. From now on, paranoid men like me will only have their own hands to satisfy their needs" (p. 281). The confrontation between the *mise-en-abîme* of mediated sex (featuring the actual magazine the manga was published in) with real sex (Takashi's past encounters) potentially highlights the position of gay manga as media working as a node inside gay communities. With the various sexy still portraits of Takashi's lovers, Yamajun fills the sexualized bodies of stereotypical male characters with a human connection, a "love" built through social networks relying on homosexual sex. Media like *Barazoku* therefore emerge as an alternative for homosexual sexual practices when the human network crumbles under the impact of disease. Although beyond the scope of this article, further analysis of the relation of gay media to AIDS in Japan would likely demonstrate that the expression and media form of gay manga aimed to build both real and fictional queer times and spaces from which individual as well as group subjectivities and identities could emerge.

Despite sharing common technical traits of inner monologue montage and sexy still imagery, Yamajun's strategy to build "my place" through manga expression (Fujimoto, 1998) is ultimately slightly different from the canonical *shōjo* manga expression taught in the classroom sections of the famous *shōnen ai* magazine *June* (Ishida, 2008). While inner monologues support *shōjo* manga protagonists like Yuri from "Tōma no shinzō" ("The Heart of Thomas", Hagio, 1974) or Gilbert from "Ki to kaze no uta" ("The Poem of Wind and Trees", Takemiya, 1978) in their struggles against the way others sexualize them, Yamajun's characters have already resolved this issue; inner monologue is a part of their sexual life and personal construction as queer subjectivities. Sexy stillness techniques, as well as their narrative use, might therefore vary depending on the agenda of the different grassroots communities using them to discuss their own positions in society. Yamajun's emphasis on masturbation or sex as an autobiographical practice moreover opens a *mise-en-abîme* of subcultural magazines as a key media production in the creation of communities, networks and territories affiliated with gay sex. In light of Ōshima's work, it is well known that gay magazines were also used after the 1990s as grounds for grassroots activism (2019). Although Yamajun's depreciated art might not have had the same activist role within *Barazoku*, we can still consider the impact of his subjectification of male homosexual intimacy and sexuality on the audiences of the magazine. The clear distancing of artists and readers from Yamajun's art after the 1990s might suggest a need for stronger practices of self-representation.

Conclusion: Sexy Stillness and Japanese Media History

This paper explored the close relation of gay manga homosexual romances produced either by female or queer authors, to certain "still" techniques of image flow composition. As such, this discussion contributed, across various fields, to the elaboration of the notion of *sexy stillness*, that is to say, a set of techniques negotiating through dynamic stasis the representation of queer subjectivities. My goal was to break from the systematized academic focus on *shōnen ai, yaoi* and boys' love texts. If we want to consolidate a scholarly account of the subcultural intersections of *shōjo* manga and *gei komi* (gay manga), we need to go back to the relatively unexplored history of gay manga artists, publishers and audiences. In this perspective, Yamajun's gay manga brings light to both the similarities and specificities of female and gay artists working in the genre of homosexual romances in the 1970s and 1980s. His technical proximity to *shōjo* manga pushes us to include the legacy of queer authors within the theoretical and methodological canons of manga history and historiography.

As a conclusion I would like to mobilize the key elements of

my analysis of Yamajun's work to quickly develop two potential perspectives for future research on gay manga as well as its inclusion in the fields of film and media studies, fan studies and media mix studies. One possibility is to continue to elaborate on the question of image flows inside of media: what counts as a "queer" expression in the realm of Japanese animated media? How has it evolved in more recent popular gay art? If integrated into the field of film and media studies, gay manga may participate in the rejuvenation of an old debate about characters, bodies, and the representation of life through animation. This falls inside of what Ōtsuka called the liberation of *shōjo* manga from the "symbolic curse" of post-war manga that struggled to address the depiction of subjectivity, notably because of its reliance on cartoonish characters and corporeal mobility (2007). Gay manga testifies to the existence of an alternative take on the equation of life = external motion (that is, life = the alternation of exterior and inner motions) and could therefore be part of a more inclusive analysis of popular animated media cultures including manga, anime and video games. In a similar stance, the literary field of boys' love studies in Japan usually discusses the gender and sexual performativity of manga through the question of the representation of subjectivity or inner spaces. Adding gay manga to the mix of already existing scholarship extends analyses by scholars like Mori Naoko on the changes in rhythms within image flows typical to the representation of homosexuality in Japanese animated media.

As such, Yamajun's art presents a strange dichotomy of image flows, one that treats a rapid, almost cinematographic flow as a heteronormative storytelling tool from which it is necessary break away. Alternating between corporeal and subjective rhythms of compositing ensures that characters are building their own narratives, not the one imposed on them. His pieces that avoid sexy still imagery usually illustrate the complete alienation of characters by these societal stereotypes. Yamajun's strategy is however not complete "pause" of the flow, but a moment when exterior actions and interiority become one in a personal experience. Gay manga aims at a personalized tempo, one that gives a time and space for queerness to exist. This style evolved in recent years into what online audiences called *bara*, a pornographic genre that is often reduced to its interest in muscular, hairy, macho corporeality. As an avid reader of *bara*, circle member, and author of an amateur book on the subject, I think that we might have overlooked the technical aspects the genre. If Yamajun and *bara* may look at first like total opposites, the focus on bodies inside of current gay fanzines and manga might testify to an evolution of sexy stillness. Bodies in *bara* rarely move. Or at least, they are in an energetic inertia overcompensated by multiple dynamic shots. Pages usually compress time and space into an intimate experience of sexy and still bodies. Future research may have a close look at how the representation of queer bodies and their lives have evolved, how they respond to certain sociocultural or historical contexts, and what relation they maintain with their media forms (is it a magazine? A webcomic? How is it read? Shared?). The global networks of so-called *bara* manga could also echo current works on Asian boys' love cultures and transnational fandoms, and future analysis might ask, how did the genre transform through transcultural exchanges?

A second possibility for future research is to investigate, in the field of fan studies, the history of otaku debates and their framing of sexual expressions from a queer point of view. How is queer animation used by different communities to discuss social pressure? How integrated are minorities within subcultures and their fandoms? Readers accustomed to otaku studies and North American anime studies will notice that my analysis of gay manga in this conclusion uses a vocabulary usually affiliated with "general" approaches toward the flexibility of otaku expressions and their gender/sexual representations (Lamarre, 2009; Galbraith, 2020). In many cases, previous literature has framed the personalization of image flows describing otaku, *fujoshi* and other subcultures as less important than the creation of a larger theoretical framework capable of supporting the analysis of *any kind* of personal arrangement. As a (maybe unfair) provocation, I suggest that, actually, personal compositing of image flows embodies important marks of the historical development of otaku subcultures. The so-called "general practices" related to moving images in Japanese subcultures might have in fact internalized, if not appropriated, queer perspectives since the 1970s.

The study of gay manga takes us back to an erased reality in the otaku-ologyfield: the dominance of sexy still techniques that emerged from the encounter of female and queer practices within subcultures. It is a known fact that otaku cultures emerged out of the meeting of male and female fans of science fiction and *shōjo* manga at fanzine conventions. If we do some supplementary media archeology of the media expressions of *shōjo* manga so central to the birth of institutions like Comic Market, the relation of *shōjo* manga to gay magazines becomes very clear. Although these "neighbors" might have sought different goals, and experienced different levels of discrimination and privilege, their discussions should be integrated into the story of the birth of male otaku eroticism and pornography.

Now, I have no intention to reclaim the whole history of otaku cultures as a "queer thing", but the study of their media expressions might shed fresh light on the inclusive past that has led to the current state of Japanese subcultures. The common trope that an interiority is hidden behind the image of moving characters forever changed after the introduction of female and queer composition techniques in the 1970s and 1980s. There have been alternatives to the beautiful young girls and cyborgs that we tend to systematically focus on as *the* most representative element of Japanese subcultures. I think that it is still too easy to erase the actual impact of the legacies of minorities in otaku cultures. For these reasons, we face an urgent need to revisit the foundational texts that have set the academic basis for the analysis of the emergence of otaku. This includes Lamarre's central contribution (2009) explaining otaku cultures from the merging of personal visual expressions with technologies mechanically animating images, this time with an emphasis on the intersectional context supporting the transformation of otaku expression techniques.

Eventually, this analysis may also be applied to media mix studies (Steinberg, 2012) and their focus on moving images as the center of the Japanese transmedia. As images animated across media, gay manga characters express gender and sexuality through their motion while supporting the constitution of homosocial communities emerging around gendered and sexual

expressions (Azuma, 2015). As moving images, gay manga characters may participate in the reimagination of life through the visual composition of motion (Levitt, 2018). As moving images, gay manga characters are also spread across multiple media in concrete urban spaces in everyday life (Steinberg & Ernest dit Alban, 2018). If there is something "queer" in manga, it might not be only the characters and their stories per se, but also the overlap of 1) techniques of animation negotiating non-normative representations of gender and sexuality in their composition of visual motion, 2) modes of manga production participating in LGBT lives and 3) urban media ecologies emerging from the circulation of animated images. Future research may therefore examine the history of minorities through participative cultures and media mix models, while critically investigating the integration of queer perspectives on moving images into mainstream modes of cultural production.

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"If no one else will bring it, I'll do it myself": The Role of Fandom in the Distribution and Promotion of Anime in Mexico

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the role of Mexican fans in the promotion and distribution of Japanese media content in Mexico, focusing mainly on anime. During the 1990s, in the middle of the global craze for Japanese content, Mexican audiences became highly involved in the consumption of Japanese animation. While new television broadcasting companies began partnerships with Japanese enterprises, such as Bandai and Tōei, to bring Japanese media content to Mexico, fans or otaku became not only active consumers but also promoters of anime, hoping that bigger audiences would prompt large media companies to supply more of these cultural goods. After Japanese content was removed from mainstream media in the early 2000s, some of these fans decided to take matters into their own hands and get more involved in the distribution of anime and other related products by starting their own companies. Through trial and error, these entrepreneurial fans discovered ways to navigate the business environment in Japan and establish successful arrangements with Japanese companies that met the demands of the Mexican market, becoming cultural intermediaries that revitalized and created a second "boom" in anime consumption in Mexico. This research argues that Mexican fans of anime have evolved from text readers and poachers into cultural brokers who form a bridge between Japanese anime producers and Mexican consumers, and are, therefore, a central part of the distribution of anime and other Japanese content in Mexico.

Keywords

Anime, Mexico, Japan, Japanese Pop Culture, Participatory Culture, Cultural Brokers, Poachers

Introduction

In the 1970s, Japanese television content arrived in Mexico and came to occupy an important place in children's programming. Animation, live action dramas and science fiction shows, like *Tetsujin 28-Gō, Kimba: The White Lion (Janguru Taitei), Speed Racer (Mahha GōGōGō), Ultraman (Urutoraman), Ultra Q (Urutora Q) and Miss Comet (Kometto san)*, among many others, were an important part of the daily family-oriented broadcast schedule in Mexico (Peláez Mazariegos, 2019; see also *Teleguía* 1970A, 1970B). Through the eighties, science fiction animated shows that depicted future technologies and robots such as *Mazinger Z (Majingā Z)*, ("Felices 40", 2012), the franchise *Robotech* and Tezuka Osamu's *Astroboy (Tetsuwan Atomu)* became very popular, attracting young audiences from every corner of the country (Peláez Mazariegos, 2019; "Felices 40", 2012; Martínez, 2007; Olvera, 2005).

In the course the 1990s, the convergence of three events opened the way for Japanese animation to enter into the Mexican mainstream. First, during this decade the global craze for Japanese pop culture that started in the 1980s consolidated, attracting both Eastern and Western audiences that were thirsty for new content (Iwabuchi, 2002); second, the Mexican economy went through radical changes that culminated in the signing of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), leading to the transformation of the Mexican telecommunications market, which enabled the establishment of new broadcasting companies; and third, the Japanese toy manufacturer Bandai decided to make Mexico the base of its operations in Latin America (Peláez Mazariegos, 2019). In this context, Mexican fans of Japanese animation or, as they call themselves, otaku, became not only active consumers but also promoters of anime, hoping that bigger audiences would prompt large media companies to supply more of these cultural goods. The Japanese word "otaku" is commonly used to refer to people who take part in a subculture centered around Japanese pop culture, such as anime, manga, or cosplay. In Japan, this term portrays devoted fans of such content as having unfavorable characteristics that make

them some type of social reject; on the contrary, international fans have embraced this word to proudly define themselves as members of an alternative cultural movement (Kinsella, 1998; Galbraith, 2010; Galbraith & Lamarre, 2010; Kam, 2013). Mexican otaku gathered in specialized stores and adopted them as the space for their social interactions, created clubs with members that shared similar values, and attached great importance to those who possessed deep knowledge of different anime and manga. They worked together to buy expensive goods to make them accessible for club members, created fanzines and organized screenings to increase their numbers. In other words, they became what Henry Jenkins (1992, p.22-24) described as *textual poachers*, going beyond the consumption of mass media content to appropriate it as the basis of their own creative culture (Jenkins, Ito and Boyd, 2016).

Nevertheless, in the early 2000s Mexican broadcasters increased their production of original content and gained exclusive rights to broadcast the content of large American media conglomerates such as Disney. As a consequence, broadcasting of Japanese animation was gradually reduced until eventually it was no longer on the air (Peláez Mazariegos, 2019). This vacuum encouraged some fans to take matters into their own hands and get more involved in the distribution of anime and other related products. These fans were able to navigate the business environment in Japan and establish successful arrangements with Japanese companies that met the demands of the Mexican market, becoming cultural intermediaries that revitalized and created a second "boom" in anime consumption. These intermediaries or brokers were not a new phenomenon; they always appear wherever there is a cultural border, where different cultures encounter each other, to build bridges and pathways that link people over the barriers that separate them (Szasz, 2001).

Intermediaries play a very important role in the flow of cultural goods, especially when we talk about the international movement of these commodities. Different authors have recognized the necessity of actors that work as intermediaries that link the different cultural goods with their target audiences. Paul M. Hirsch (1972, p.649), for example, recognized the existence of "boundary-spanning agents" that connect producers with the mass media and introduce new cultural goods to audiences. The work of Victoria D. Alexander (2003) on the sociology of art recognizes that the link between cultural objects and audiences is never direct; instead, there must be an intermediary between them. Howard S. Becker (1988) also emphasized that intermediaries have the important task of incorporating artists into the economy by bringing artists' work to the people who are able to appreciate it and are willing to pay for it.

Still, very few works have focused on understanding intermediaries, their characteristics and their contributions to the global flow of cultural goods. In contemporary society, with the establishment of a global economy and networks that can connect new cultural products with consumers all around the world, the role of intermediaries has become more important than ever. Their role is not only to find appropriate audiences for these goods, but to understand the cultural complexities of both producers and consumers. Effective cultural intermediaries possess the skills to travel across two different cultures, select the media content that will work in their local market and introduce it to local audiences.

The case of Japanese animation in Mexico provides a notable example of the importance of intermediaries in the flow of cultural goods between two countries. Mexican fans of Japanese animation took upon themselves the task of promoting it with the goal of building its audience, unaware that their poaching activities were also an entrepreneurial enterprise that worked to popularize Japanese animation in Mexico, driven not by profits, but by their love for anime. This set up the basis for some of these fans to take their entrepreneurial activities to the next level, taking on risks and challenges that the established media companies would not. They had to negotiate with both Japanese companies and local audiences to create a stable link between two countries through media content.

Therefore, this paper analyses the role of Mexican fans in the promotion and distribution of Japanese media content in Mexico, focusing mainly on anime. It argues that Mexican fans of anime have evolved from text readers and poachers into cultural brokers, constructing a bridge between Japanese anime producers and Mexican consumers, and as such play a central role in the distribution of Japanese content in Mexico. Until now, various scholars have centered their attention on understanding the meanings inside fan communities of anime in Japan (Kinsella, 1998; Azuma, 2009; Galbraith, 2010, 2013, 2014) and abroad, mainly in the USA (Eng, 2012A; 2012B; Ito, 2012). This paper expands on current academic research in three ways. First, it focuses on the impact of Japanese popular culture in a region which has not been deeply studied before, Latin America, and more specifically, Mexico, and allows us to understand both similarities and differences between fandom in this region and other fandoms around the world. Second, through ethnographic research and semi-structured interviews, it enables us to understand the role of non-traditional actors in the global cultural flow. Finally, this work breaks with the productionist and consumptionist bias that has dominated sociological studies of culture, allowing us to have a deeper understanding of how cultural goods reach their final audiences. In this aspect, local actors play a critical role in overcoming obstacles, such as cultural discount, in the international distribution and promotion of media content. Their knowledge of the local market allows them to understand the forces that drive audiences to engage with a specific content (Bielby & Harrington, 2008). As anime is still considered niche content, fan entrepreneurs that become successful cultural intermediaries become crucial in the success of this content abroad. In order to comprehend how these fans become successful cultural intermediaries it is important to understand the concepts of textual poachers, entrepreneurs and cultural brokers.

Understanding Fandom: Textual Poachers, entrepreneurs and cultural brokers

Henry Jenkins (1992, p.23) defines fans as "active producers and manipulators of meaning." In other words, fans appropriate popular culture and rearrange it in a way that serves their own interests, reworking the experience of consuming mass media content such as TV shows, films, comic books and so on into a sophisticated and rich participatory culture. They treat texts

produced by popular culture as if they deserve the same level of admiration and acknowledgment as so-called high culture. Consciously or unconsciously, fandom represents an act of resistance to cultural hierarchy not only in terms of the objects fans choose to appreciate and interpret, but also in terms of the way in which they approach texts. Fans embrace their favorite texts and integrate different media content into their own social experiences. They raid mass culture to reshape it into their own creations and incorporate it into their very own cultural and social interactions. Fans also build up their cultural and social identity by appropriating images from pop culture. Fans cannot be understood as simple spectators, but rather as "active participants in the construction and circulation of textual meanings" (Jenkins, 1992, pp.18, 23-24).

Jenkins (1992, pp.23-27) noticed that the activities of fandom are very similar to the behavior among active literature readers that Michel de Certeau defines as "poaching" (1984, pp. 166-174). Similar to fans, readers raid literary works taking away only those parts that they consider useful or pleasurable. In this context, we can understand fans and readers as nomads who travel across different creative works or content they did not produce, poaching material for their own enjoyment (Jenkins, 1992; de Certeau, 1984). As such, consumers cannot be assumed to be passive receptors of the messages expressed in popular culture or literature. They are selective and choose what they think is worth refining and incorporating into a particular subculture. This means that fans are not the only textual poachers in existence, but they "have developed poaching as an art form" (Jenkins, 1992, p.27). They constitute a community of consumers who are very vocal and active and whose social experiences center around poaching and producing new texts by discussing individual interpretations with other fans. Therefore, fandom can be defined as a participatory culture that reshapes the experience of media consumption by producing new texts and new communities that develop their own culture (Jenkins, 1992).

In today's world, fandom is not restricted to local communities or networks. In many ways, fans are able to connect with foreign content for their poaching activities and the formation of their own subcultures. In his original conception of "participatory culture", Jenkins (1992, p.26) perceived fans in a constant position of marginality, dependent on producers or distributors, and always from a local perspective. However, in a world now filled with active online communities, fans play an important role in the global flow of media content and creation of meanings. Some of them have even become entrepreneurs who are involved in the production and distribution of popular culture goods.

Entrepreneurship has been normally understood as an economic and business management concept that refers to individuals who pioneer and introduce change in existing institutions and overcome traditional rigidities by applying new ideas and creative problem-solving solutions. Enterpreneurs are seen to bring about change by recognizing new opportunities and taking calculated risks (Otmazgin, 2011, 2014; Daliot-Bul and Otmazgin, 2017). According to Michal Daliot-Bul and Nissim Otmazgin (2017), entrepreneurship in cultural industries can be defined as a process through which entrepreneurs identify new opportunities and commodify cultural innovations. Entrepreneurs play a central role in the international marketing and distribution of cultural commodities, as well as dealing with cultural differences (Otmazgin, 2014).

On the surface, popular culture entrepreneurs are the same as their business-driven counterparts. They are constantly looking for business expansion opportunities locally and overseas, developing new markets, searching for new products and taking advantage of new forms of promotion to draw the interest of their potential consumers (Otmazgin, 2011; Otmazgin & Lyan, 2019). Nonetheless, there are some important differences that need to be considered when discussing fan entrepreneurship. First, popular culture entrepreneurs face a high level of uncertainty: the environment surrounding popular culture goods is highly dynamic, in that consumer preferences are not stable and easily change; as a result, products may have a very short marketing period. In other words, popular culture entrepreneurs are not only affected by changes in consumption caused by macroeconomic conditions, but also by hectic and unpredictable changes in consumer preferences, which means that entrepreneurs must be constantly alert to cultural trends and be very close and familiar with their customers (Otmazgin & Lyan, 2019).

Second, the work of popular culture entrepreneurs has broader social and cultural implications for consumers. The value these entrepreneurs generate is not only measured in economic terms, but also in terms of the emotional response – for example, excitement and enthusiasm – that is produced among consumers through connection and identification with cultural content. More than any other commodity, cultural content provides the means for fulfilling personal and social aspirations. In other words, it is the center of new "participatory cultures". This aspect is linked to the third and final characteristic of fan entrepreneurs that differentiates them from other categories: their motivations are not entirely commercial; they are also strongly connected with their fandom. Their activities are not purely driven by a desire to generate income, but to open paths for cultural content that connects with their local fan communities (Omatzgin & Lyan, 2019). For example, as we will see later in this paper, the first generation of Mexican otaku entrepreneurs created fanzines and organized screenings with the goals of promoting the content that they loved and offering more information to other fans without profit in mind. Even the more business-savvy entrepreneurs among the next generation of fans had similar motivations to those of their predecessors, as they also wanted to introduce and promote the content that they deeply enjoyed.

Until now, there has been an assumption that all fan entrepreneur activities result in successfully introducing new media content and linking different cultures. However, although it is true that fan entrepreneurs play a crucial role in promoting and distributing cultural commodities, it is also true that despite their enthusiasm, very few of them have been able to accomplish such a difficult enterprise. Those fan entrepreneurs who are successful possess both a deep understanding of their local market and fandom, as well as the ability to negotiate with foreign producers, and as such act as *cultural brokers* in the process of introducing new media content into their countries. The term *cultural broker* describes people from different backgrounds

who work as intermediaries that build bridges between cultures and are essential for intercultural communication (Szasz, 2001). Cultural borders occur whenever two or more cultures meet, and successfully moving across such frontiers requires exceptional skill. Cultural brokers possess such skill, because they are capable of understanding the ways and manners of the other side, how they think and behave, and are able to respond accordingly. They become "repositories of two or more cultures; they change[ ] roles at will, in accordance with circumstances" (Szasz, 2001, p.7). In doing so, they act as mediators that build intercultural understanding among people from disparate cultures. Brokers can come from many different backgrounds: they may be native or non-native speakers of the language of the other community, interpreters, language facilitators, traders or entrepreneurs; however, they all understand the different mechanisms of the other culture. They may also work in various fields, such as education, religion, arts, science or even politics or activism (Szasz, 2001; see also Coleman, 2001; Mathes, 2001; Moses, 2001; Gentemann & Whitehead, 1983; Braester, 2005). Their main role is to build bridges and forge strong links of understanding wherever two or more different cultures meet. In the Mexican media market, cultural brokers took on such a role in the introduction of Japanese content; analyzing anime fandom in Mexico during the 1990s enables us to understand how fans became entrepreneurs and, in the process, emerged as powerful and effective intermediaries.

Poachers as entrepreneurs: Mexican Anime Fandom during the 1990s

Japanese television shows were first broadcast in Mexico during the 1970s. Nevertheless, it took around 20 years for the perfect conditions to align to allow anime to take over the Mexican television market. First, during the 1980s and 1990s, Japanese content such as music, TV dramas and especially anime and manga made a major breakthrough in media markets. All around the globe there was a craze for Japanese pop culture, and especially in the West, anime was among the most popular content. Second, Mexican telecommunications went through some radical changes during the 1990s. In 1993, following the development of an open market economy in preparation for the implementation of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Mexican government adopted a new policy for the audiovisual communications industry. Based on the idea that the government needed to retreat from this area, the Mexican Television Institute (IMEVisión) was privatized to open the way for a new competitor, TV Azteca (Aztec TV), putting an end to the monopoly that broadcaster Televisa had over the Mexican market for almost 30 years, and creating opportunities for the introduction of new content. Third, in the previous year Bandai, a Japanese toy manufacturer, opened a local office and brought with them a marketing strategy of using animated shows to promote their products (Peláez Mazariegos, 2019).

In 1993, Bandai, along with Tōei Animation, established a partnership with TV Azteca to broadcast the animated show *Saint Seiya (Seinto Seiya)*, with the aim of promoting the accompanying line of toys. This alliance was a huge success, as the following year *Saint Seiya* obtained 47 percent of the child television share with a rating of 12.3. This allowed Bandai to expand their merchandise offerings to 90 percent of the toy stores in Mexico and enter other Latin American markets like Argentina, Colombia, Chile and Venezuela. This success started a wave of popularity for anime that lasted around a decade, encouraged other broadcasters to include Japanese animation on their daily schedules, and even motivated the biggest comic book publisher in the country at the time, Editorial Vid, to license manga (Peláez Mazariegos, 2019; see also Lozano, 2007).

In this context, a very active Mexican community of fans or otaku was born. This new subcultural group had a significant role in the popularization of Japanese content. Aiming to understand the characteristics of this fan scene, I interviewed two people who were deeply involved in it. First, I had a conversation with Victor, a founding member of Anime Project, a "club" or community built around anime fandom. He is currently a professor at the National Pedagogic University in Mexico City; however, in his free time, he continues covering the most important aspects of the anime and manga scene in Mexico on his blog. With Victor's assistance, I was also able to meet Rolando, who was deeply involved as a collaborator on *Domo*, one of the most popular fanzines about anime and manga in the 1990s. Today he works in the area of computer systems engineering, focusing on hardware and software development. He has worked for different companies in Mexico, the USA, Taiwan and Japan, and by the time of the interview he was self-employed.[1]

Both of them agreed that during the 1990s, the limited amount of Japanese content that was accessible through public and commercial television worked as "points of entry into a broader fan community" (Jenkins, 1992, p.40). Both anime and manga presented new and interesting alternatives for consumers who were tired of a market inundated with American animated shows and comic books. In the words of Rolando:

> In those times, the majority of the people who developed an interest in Japanese culture did it through the few shows available on TV... anime, some cultural shows on Canal 11 (Channel 11)[2] like *Can I do it? (Dekirukana)*... For example, *Robotech* was an outstanding watershed; it made me search for more. (Rolando, personal communication, February 27th, 2015)

Victor explained that the structure and complexity of the stories was another point of entry:

> Japanese animation and comics normally have a beginning, development and ending. That was something new for us, because normally, in the American products that we were used to consuming, there was no ending. Japanese manga and anime provided closure to the people

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who were following the story. That was something that the American content did not have. […] The narrative in anime and manga is way richer; different characters have more time on the main screen, allowing for the development of their own background. (Victor, personal communication, February 24th, 2015)

As fans slowly migrated from consuming American media to Japanese content, they appropriated specialized stores as the gathering centers for their nascent fandom. These stores played an important role in forming a new subculture as they allowed Mexican fans of Japanese animation to find common ground where they could meet people with similar tastes. In one sense, without the appearance of these specialized businesses, it would have been more difficult for Mexican otaku to establish the basis of their new participatory culture. Even if they did not consume goods, fans would still meet at these shops to talk and discuss their favorite anime, share theories about the meanings of the content or simply meet other people with whom they could identify. Many of these businesses were already selling American goods; however, the popularity of anime, boosted by TV networks such as TV Azteca, compelled them to change their products and, little by little, these places transformed into the most important gathering spots for anime fandom. Rolando recollected that La Casa de la Caricatura (The House of Cartoons) was one of the most important shops where Mexican otaku used to gather:

> The store became the meeting place for all the people who really liked anime. Although other stores started to stock them [anime and anime related products], this shop became the most specialized place for those types of goods. The owner was always very nice; he asked for our feedback and allowed us to use the store as our gathering place. (Rolando, personal communication, February 27th, 2015)

Weekly attendance at these stores and meeting other fans were essential parts of the experience of consuming anime, and communities were formed around Japanese animation and other related cultural goods. In a way similar to that described by Patrick Galbraith in relation to the development of otaku culture in Japan, "circles" or "clubs" began to form in order to "share their resources and knowledge" (2011, pp.154-155). For Mexican otaku, consuming anime was a social activity, and the content worked as the common ground that enabled fans to socialize. Anime became an excuse for them to find friends and stores became the space that they used for social interactions. Víctor remembered that a shop named Mundo Comic (Comic Book World) had an important role in the formation of fan clubs. The store invited fans to visit on the weekends and meet other people who enjoyed similar hobbies. He remarked, "As a fan, you would go every weekend; it was a great chance to make friends who shared your love for anime."

Clubs not only became the basis of the social relationships of fandom, but one of the most important means for the consumption of anime related goods. Since the large majority of these products were imported, fans had to join forces to be able to enjoy them. Similar to what Jenkins (1992) has observed in other fandoms, technology such as VCRs as well as practices such as exchanging or sharing videotapes became common, essential tools in anime fandom in Mexico. However, fans engaged in these practices not to "hold their own copies […] and watch them whenever they want" (Jenkins, 1992, p.70), but because of the low level of purchasing power of many of the Mexican otaku. Victor explained to me that during the years in which anime became popular in Mexico, the country went through a serious economic crisis. Before being involved with manga and anime, he used to be an American comic book aficionado. He was already used to saving his earnings in order to buy the cultural goods he enjoyed; however after the country experienced one of its most difficult financial crises in the years of 1994-1995[3], he had to cooperate with other fans in order to be able to access imported anime-related goods. Although there were some older fans who already had a stable income and could buy things for themselves, many of the young Mexican otaku needed some form of support in order to be able to access the content that they wanted to consume. In his own words:

> Many people would not have had the opportunity to get access to these products if the clubs had not existed. Those who had the economic means to buy the original products shared them with the rest of us. In those times, it was almost impossible to buy any original goods, therefore, many of us came together to buy them and later made copies or watched them together. (Victor, personal communication, February 24th, 2015)

It is clear that some of these groups indirectly promoted the illegal distribution of copyrighted material, but it is important to emphasize that not all clubs made copies of the products they bought. Rolando explained that his group had strong feelings against the illegal distribution of content; whenever they got a new videotape, for example, they took turns to watch it or organized a raffle to choose who should keep it.

Despite the importance of such cooperative practices among participants, these clubs were not always open to new members. The positive perception of fandom tells us that old fans will teach new ones about "the basic interpretative strategies and institutionalized meanings common to the group" (Jenkins, 1992, p.72), but Victor remembered that it was a very difficult process to be accepted into one of these associations. Older members expected that newcomers would already understand the different values and conventions popular within the community. In Victor's words, "It was like applying to a fraternity; if you wanted to be part of the group you had to prove your knowledge, you had to have something that the other members wanted." He even mentioned that the relationships between some people that he knew from those days who participated in those clubs ended in strong disagreements. Many of them initiated the club and anime fanzine scene in Mexico, but today they will not even meet each other in person. This unhealthy competition among clubs

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3   For more information on the Mexican economic crisis of 1994-1995, see Rousseau (2001).

and members encouraged him and some of his friends to create Anime Project, a club that "removed all those requirements, becoming, as he called it, the "the club for the underdogs". Victor explained:

> I cannot say for sure we were the first ones to do it, but we accepted people from different social backgrounds. Our only rule was that you paid for your meal when we gathered. Some of our members had the ability to buy original goods and then we shared those with the other club members. This way, people who didn't have the means to access anime became aficionados. For example, we used to share copies of specialized magazines or manga, and that really didn't bother me because we were sharing the things we loved. (Victor, personal communication, February 24th, 2015)

In spite of the above-mentioned problems, the contribution of clubs to the distribution and promotion of anime during this period is undeniable. These communities represent the first attempts at fan entrepreneurship in Mexico; they were a creative response that aimed to bring Japanese content closer to audiences and overcome obstacles presented by traditional business rigidities, driven by the excitement that anime generated among the community. Emotional and intellectual involvement in anime fandom and the incorporation of anime into social interaction led fans to appropriate Japanese content to create their own interpretations, which they wanted to share and discuss with other fans (Jenkins, 1992). Eventually, some of these clubs created fanzines, worked on the translation of new texts, organized festivals and screenings at universities, and even reached out to Japanese producers with the hope of obtaining new material.

Rolando was more active on this scene; he participated in the creation of *Domo*, a fanzine that "aimed to help people know more about the products they were buying or the cartoons they were watching." They were not business-driven; their main goal was to explain as much as they could, due to the fact that, in Rolando's words, "many people were attracted maybe by the designs or colors, but didn't know anything about [the products or content]." The content of *Domo* included reviews, introductions to new anime series, and character profiles, and little by little, it evolved to a point at which they could include advertisements for some of the specialized stores that they also used as their main distribution points.

Besides being part of this amateur publication movement, Rolando's group got involved in fan-subbing and organizing screenings, with the aim of promoting anime and increasing the number of people interested in Japanese content. Rolando explained, "We mainly showed them at conventions or at cultural venues, such as the National Film Archive." He also strongly emphasized that:

> We had the rule that whenever we subtitled any material to be presented at universities, festivals or anywhere else, we would not sell any pirated copies. Whenever we finished subtitling a new film or series, we had to be very careful in order to avoid it being copied and distributed illegally. Once a company obtained the license

rights, we would destroy any copies that we had and stop showing it. (Rolando, personal communication, February 27th, 2015)

Nevertheless, with the arrival of the internet it became impossible to avoid piracy. Even *Domo* and other fanzines were copied and distributed without the knowledge or approval of the original creators. Rolando commented,

> It sounds really crazy, right? We never got any real idea of how many copies […] were out there. We did have some print runs of thousands of copies, but many times we went to stores or events and they had more copies than the ones we printed. (Rolando, personal communication, February 27th, 2015)

This "boom" in piracy discouraged traditional fans like Victor and Rolando, who, on a certain level, believed that it was wrong to profit from their activities. The main motivation behind their activities was their desire to create a stronger bond between their communities and the content that they liked (Otmazgin & Lyan, 2019). According to Rolando, they "accepted products that were in a gray area, but that did not directly infringe copyright law." Victor expressed a similar concern, as he thinks clubs might have contributed to the formation of a culture of not buying original goods. "Being an open club was very good for the dissemination [of anime], but in retrospect, I don't like that some members didn't appreciate the effort it took to get original goods. Some people even thought that it was our obligation to give them copies, they demanded it." From his point of view, sharing content was good for promotion, but he is not sure how good or bad it was to unintentionally create an informal anime market. Rolando has a strong belief that the illegal reproduction and distribution of content was the main reason why little by little, large media companies and other official promoters lost interest and stopped bringing anime to Mexico. Without a doubt, clubs played a significant role in the promotion of anime in Mexico and represent the first attempt at fan entrepreneurship regarding Japanese content, however they could not build a stable bridge that connected Mexico and Japan in the field of popular culture. It would take a new generation of fan entrepreneurs to create new, stronger links between Japanese content creators and Mexican fandom.

Becoming Cultural Brokers: Entrepreneurs Among the New Generation of Mexican Otaku

After official distribution channels for anime and other related products had long disappeared, entrepreneur fans decided to take matters into their own hands and create new companies to continue the distribution and promotion of Japanese content in Mexico. In order to understand this trend, as well as the reasons behind fans starting their own enterprises, I interviewed the owners of two of these businesses. I spoke with Carlos López (from now on referred to as Carlos), the general manager of Distribuidora AniMéxico (AniMexico Distribution, from here on referred to as DAM), a company that started in 2010 and imports

and distributes collectible toys manufactured by Japanese companies such as Good Smile Company, Kotobukiya and Bandai's Tamashii Nations. *Saint Seiya* goods from Tamashii Nations form their main product line. I also interviewed Erika Rodríguez and Karla Bravo (hereon referred to as Erika and Karla), founders of KEM Media, a company that began operations in 2013 and is dedicated to the promotion of different Japanese entertainment products, mainly films (animated and non-animated) and music.

My initial interview questions centered on the interviewees' motivations for making the shift from fan or poacher to entrepreneur, and sought to illuminate the circumstances in Mexico that prompted them to become more seriously involved in the promotion and distribution of anime related goods and, in time, make such activities their professions. For Erika and Karla, the arrival of the Crunchyroll anime streaming service in Latin America in 2012 ("Crunchyroll launches", 2012; Hei, 2012) and the poor reception it got from younger fans was one of the first catalysts for their increased engagement in anime promotion. Despite the fact that Crunchyroll was a company started by fans, it lacked knowledge of the local conditions of the anime market in Mexico. Erika explained to me that:

> For almost ten years the only way you could watch Japanese animation was doing it illegally, mainly through the internet. Therefore, audiences that are 15 years old or younger never had the chance to see anime on TV. In their minds, it is something you get for free and it is even offensive if you ask them to pay for it. (Erika, personal communication, February 18th, 2015)

In 2012, Erika and Karla were already very active as fans: they had started a website to discuss Japanese animation and collaborated on podcasts sharing their love for anime. Since they had already built up a strong network with other fans, they thought that they might be able to help change the image of Crunchyroll. Therefore, they decided to approach the Mexican representatives of the streaming company and organize a screening of *Sword Art Online (Sōdo Āto Onrain)* with the aim of reintroducing the brand. The success of this event made them consider more seriously starting a company. At the same time, the film version of *Puella Magi Madoka Magica (Mahō Shōjo Madoka Magika)*, a series of which Karla is a fan, was being screened outside of Japan. According to Karla, "Aniplex did screenings in France, South Korea and San Marino. In that moment we thought, Mexico City alone has a bigger population and market than San Marino, so we decided to bring the film to Mexico."

Carlos started his business by making trips to Japan, buying figures and then reselling them back home. A longtime fan of *Saint Seiya*, he had "really wanted to get a figure of Pegasus (the main character in *Saint Seiya*), but until then, it wasn't available in Mexico." However, as he explained to me, his initial method of running his business had a lot of limitations, especially in terms of the prices of the products. Still, this experience made him realize that there was a lot of potential in the Mexican collectible toy market. According to him:

> The old market still existed, resellers brought things in illegally or made sales on the internet, avoiding

registering as sellers and not paying taxes, but still there were customers that wanted those figures. That's when I saw my opportunity; if I was able to contact the Japanese companies and establish a legal and direct distribution process, I could fill a gap in the market. (Carlos, personal communication, April 22th, 2015)

One thing that these new promoters have always understood is that the Mexican market has changed a lot from the early days when anime first arrived in the country. Nowadays, the market is composed of two groups of fans: people who are in their late 20s or early 30s that, just like the entrepreneurs, grew up during the anime "boom" of the 1990s and now have the income to consume anime and related merchandise; as well as a younger audience of mainly teenagers between 13 and 20 years old who are very passionate about anime but lack such financial resources. During the talk I had with Carlos, he explained that:

> When these shows [i.e. *Saint Seiya* or *Sailor Moon*] appeared on TV, the market for their products was huge, but that was because it was advertised as a children's product on free access television. Today, those kids have grown up; they are adults and their preferences have changed. That's why we focused on collectibles instead of aiming to distribute for a massive market. (Carlos, personal communication, April 22th, 2015)

Erika also emphasized that "the people who liked and supported our project were the people of our generation, those who wanted good quality content and were willing to pay for it." Hence in a similar way to Japan (Galbraith, 2010), in order to create a stable market, the involvement of adults was essential. This thorough understanding of the new conditions of the local market and, most importantly, their deep inside knowledge of the fan community in which they grew up were important tools they could use when they faced obstacles in the process of becoming cultural intermediaries. The most significant and difficult role for brokers in popular culture is working as mediators between producers and consumers. They must find the most suitable distribution channels and strategies for approaching their target audiences and reduce the uncertainty that is characteristic of cultural commodities (Friedman, 2014). The most important challenge for these new otaku entrepreneurs was to convince Japanese companies that they were serious about doing business with them and that Mexican audiences still wished to consume Japanese pop cultural goods. Based on previous experience, according to Carlos, Bandai thought that there were no opportunities for their products in Mexico. However, Carlos asserts that, "The market for these goods has always existed, since the 'boom' of the 1990s, and even after anime was no longer aired on TV, there was still a niche market of fans that wanted to buy the toys." Still, Carlos explained that Bandai and Tōei Animation were only interested in bringing content and products back to Mexico if they were part of a mass market strategy. Moreover, Tōei did not want to support any project that did not include anime being broadcast on national television. In the end, however, Carlos' proposed new marketing strategy matched with the aims of Bandai, which was developing Tamashii Nations, a prod-

uct line composed solely of collectible toys. In other words, he was able to negotiate and reconcile his project with the Japanese creator's ideas and way of doing business. He remarked,

> After we made them see that if we changed our main target to a collectors' only strategy there would be a bigger chance of success, we began doing business. They did not know about the changes that had taken place in Mexico, and we just had to show them. (Carlos, personal communication, April 22th, 2015)

Erika and Karla also had to walk a tumultuous road to convince Aniplex to let them organize a screening in Mexico. Erika commented, "It was a very long and difficult process, we had to travel first to Miami and then to Tokyo for them to see we were serious." Aniplex also demanded that the box office price was the same as that in the USA, fixing the prices of the tickets at $250 MXN ($12 US) for general access and $500 MXN ($24 US) for VIPs. Both of these prices were much higher than the average movie theater ticket price in Mexico, which according to the National Chamber of the Cinematographic Industry (Spanish acronym CANACINE) was $3.60 US in 2012 and $3.49 US in 2013 (Cámara Nacional de la Industria Cinematográfica [CANA-CINE], n.d.). Additionally, they requested that the subtitling be done in an American studio, increasing the operating costs for KEM Media. Erika explained,

> They wanted to have full control over their product and they didn't allow us to use a Mexican company for subtitling. It was impossible for us to meet the cost of their first proposal, however, after some negotiations, they let us do it with a cheaper company, still in the USA. (Erika, personal communication, February 18th, 2015)

Although the final product was at an acceptable standard, Erika noted that "the audience noticed that it wasn't done in Mexico. We had to explain to [Aniplex] that there are certain regional aspects of the language; that each country speaks Spanish in a different way."

By explaining things like the changes in the Mexican market and the cultural differences among Spanish speaking audiences, Carlos, Erika and Karla demonstrated the skill of understanding the needs and conventions of both the Japanese producers and Mexican consumers. Their role as intermediaries was to respond to the requests of Aniplex and Bandai, who had limited knowledge of the conditions of the Mexican market, and accommodate them in ways that also met the demands of the local anime fandom. More importantly, they proved their capacity to adapt and act according to challenging circumstances because they were able to read the behavior of their Japanese counterparts and react in a cordial and convincing manner, and as such earned their trust.

Once the Japanese partners were on board, there was one more hurdle: the doubts of Mexican consumers. During our interview, Carlos mentioned that:

> Even before we brought out our first figure, we had to fight against gossiping and bad publicity. No one

believed that someone was actually importing Bandai figures directly from Japan in a completely legal way. During those days there were a lot of people who tried to discredit us without any evidence. (Carlos, personal communication, April 22th, 2015)

Correspondingly, Erika and Karla faced problems related to the perceptions of consumers. Erika recalled:

> Everybody told us that we were crazy if we thought that people would pay such a high price for a movie ticket. Besides, no one believed it was an official event, there were many malicious rumors that it was an unlicensed screening. (Erika, personal communication, February 18th, 2015)

Nonetheless, with Aniplex's support, the trend changed, as Erika explained: "They made an official announcement on their website about our project, and not only that, they also sent official merchandise to give for free to attendees to compensate for the rise in the ticket prices." Fans also felt that Aniplex cared about them, because, as Erika remarked, "it was the first time a Japanese company put effort into an event in Mexico. They sent people to support us and this helped us earn the trust of the fans."

For Carlos, the change in consumers' perceptions took place once their first figure arrived. He also remarked:

> We have tried to keep our prices close to those in Japan, and this has created a competitive environment in which the final consumer prefers to buy locally instead of trying to bring the goods directly from Japan or rely on informal vendors. (Carlos, personal communication, April 22th, 2015)

Bandai has also provided strong support, as Carlos explained that Bandai "sent [us] prototype figures before they were available on other markets and they have even sent real scale armor of the *Saint Seiya* characters so that we could hold a Tamashii Nations exhibition."

Building mutually effective relationships with their Japanese partners became the key factor in earning the trust and confidence of Mexican fans and convincing them to pay higher costs, and thereby dealing effectively with the high level of risk and unpredictability that define cultural goods. Across the cultural borders of media content between Mexico and Japan, these fan entrepreneurs proved to have the skills and capacities to build bridges through intercultural communication, becoming the key players in bringing new Japanese content to Mexico and creating a second "boom" in the anime market. Today, despite all the predicaments they faced, the efforts of these entrepreneurs have paid off. According to information provided by Carlos during our meeting, among Bandai's distributors around the world, Mexico had the largest market growth during the fiscal year 2012-2013, estimated at around 130%. For the following year, 2013-2014, market growth was calculated to be around 110%, occupying second place worldwide, just behind the USA. In the case of Erika and Karla's *Madoka Project*, the audience responded better

than expected; the first four showings were sold out, which forced the addition of another five. This success encouraged Erika and Karla to create their own anime and Japanese cinema festival called *Konnichiwa!.* At the first festival, held in January 2014, 21,000 people attended in 22 cities around the country. In November of the same year they held their second festival, with screenings in 25 different locations, and more than 19,000 viewers attended. In August 2014, they established a new branch of their company, Love Japan Entertainment, which works to bring Japanese musical artists to Mexico City. They have arranged performances from bands like An Cafe, who played for an audience of 700; LiSA, whose sold out concert brought 900 spectators; and SCANDAL, the biggest event at the time of our interview, who performed to a crowd of 1,900 concertgoers. Without a doubt, we can say that anime has returned to Mexico thanks to the efforts of these entrepreneur fans who became cultural brokers.

Conclusion

Japanese media content found a steady niche market of loyal followers in Mexico which, thanks to the work of very committed fans, has grown steadily as time passes. Mexican otaku created a vibrant and sophisticated participatory culture by appropriating and remixing anime, making this Japanese media content the base for their social interactions and passionately incorporating it into their everyday lives. They appropriated specialized stores and transformed them into their own spaces for socializing and bonding with people who shared their love and passion for Japanese animation; they created clubs in which they discussed the meanings of the content they consumed and highly valued those who had deep knowledge of anime (although in some cases, a lack of knowledge was also used as a means to exclude newer fans). The more passionate fans developed a fanzine subculture, aiming to promote anime and increase its audience. More importantly, otaku culture in Mexico was not exclusive to the high or middle classes; thanks to these clubs, youth of lower incomes were able to gain access to these cultural goods. However, this does not mean that all fan activities had positive outcomes. Problems of exclusion and competition among fans created tensions and disagreements. At the same time, they strongly contributed to the formation of an informal anime market that became one of the obstacles that fan entrepreneurs like Carlos, Erika and Karla had to overcome.

Still, we should not forget that behind the success of any mass media product there must be economic gain. The partnership between TV Azteca and Bandai and Tōei Animation was the basis of the anime "boom" of the 1990s. It was this alliance that enabled Japanese content such as *Saint Seiya* to become mainstream. Consequently, a niche market of fans, or *textual poachers*, went beyond the normal consumption of anime and worked very hard to promote it, creating a very rich and active subculture, becoming the first fan entrepreneurs that ultimately failed in creating a stable link between two different cultures. It was some time until a new generation came to participate in the scene, but when these new fans did become involved they took on the role of not just *poachers* or entrepreneurs but of *cultural brokers*. In the era of globalization this term can have a very

broad application; as we have seen, cultural borders also exist in the world of media distribution, and those who are able to successfully introduce media content into new markets function as brokers or intermediaries. The people who work and live across these cultural borders are able to understand which content will work in their own country, while at the same time, are able to adapt and negotiate to successfully do business in a completely different culture. People like Carlos, Erika and Karla are not only fans of the content, but also have a deep understanding of Mexican fans and the local market, and as such have been able to build new links to bring more Japanese content to Mexico.

Today, Mexico once again has become an important market for anime. In May 2015 the animated motion picture *The Last: Naruto the Movie*, licensed by KEM Media, was very successful. Despite the fact it was exhibited only on weekends between May 23 to 31, it featured among the top ten most popular films of that period. The movie earned $4,528,046 MXN (around $294,500 US) in ticket sales from 65,725 viewers (CANACINE, 2015). The same happened in March 2017 when KEM Media brought the film *Sword Art Online: Ordinal Scale (Sōdo Āto Onrain: Ōdinaru Sukēru)* to Mexico, which made $7.5 million MXN in ticket sales and attracted 100,300 viewers (CANACINE, 2017). According to Carlos, nowadays, DAM distributes around 15,000 to 20,000 figures on a monthly basis. These successes are the result of the passion and commitment of fans such as Carlos, Erika and Karla. Thanks to their ability to create businesses out of their hobbies, they have become a bridge between Mexico and Japan, transforming from poachers into modern cultural brokers.

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Hatsune Miku and the Double Nature of Voice Library Software: Content Consumption and Production in Japan

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Abstract

Hatsune Miku, a software conceived to produce songs, has evolved as a fictional character in the hands of its users since its release in 2007, prompting the development of a strong identity around her image and initiating an innovative movement of amateur content production. In this paper, I examine the software Hatsune Miku, developed by Crypton, and its double nature as a character and as software. I argue that while the influence of Dwango's video sharing website Nico Nico Dōga (today Niconico) and the development of participatory culture on the internet were also decisive factors, it was this double nature that encouraged in a rather natural way the development of a stance towards, and later, a legal framework for, the intellectual property of voice characters like Hatsune Miku. This legal framework transformed the scene of content production and consumption in Japan by allowing not only free appropriation of the fictional character by users, but also its re-appropriation by companies for commercial exploitation. By focusing on how the de-appropriation and re-appropriation schema used by Crypton developed, this paper aims to explain recent transformations in Japanese content production and consumption.

Keywords

Vocaloid, Hatsune Miku, Fan production, Content industry

Introduction

Defined in narrow terms, Vocaloid is a genre of amateur songs produced using the Vocaloid software, developed by Yamaha Corporation, and its voice libraries, among which the most famous is Hatsune Miku, developed by Crypton Future Media, Inc. In a broader sense, the Vocaloid scene also encompasses all kinds of derivative creations related to these amateur songs or the fictional characters that give identities to the voice libraries. Examples of such derivative creations include content posted on internet platforms like Niconico or Pixiv, music animation videos, fan produced music albums, covers, dancing videos, illustrations, parodies, or cosplay pictures.

Beyond the amateur scene and the endless network of derivative productions, the Vocaloid scene also encompasses albums of some of the most popular songs or creators released by professional labels such as Sony Music or Victor RCA, and the production of the video game *Project Diva* by SEGA, which uses popular songs or designs of characters created by amateurs. The reach of Vocaloid-related content has also expanded to commercials and campaigns of many kinds, such as commercials for Toyota Corolla in the US (released in May 2011), a Google Chrome TV commercial titled 'Everyone, Creator' featuring Hatsune Miku and the theme song 'Tell Your World' by kz (released in December 2011), and a Japanese Domino's Pizza app featuring Hatsune Miku (released in March 2013). As in the case of *Project Diva*, on several occasions some of the Vocaloid genre-related content in the commercials was produced in collaboration with amateur producers.

Around 2014, Vocaloid expanded from being an underground genre of amateur music production to a media phenomenon where amateur content creation gained much attention. The fictional character Hatsune Miku was at the center of this phenomenon. Miku concerts were produced by Crypton and SEGA, where computer graphic models of Miku and other Vocaloid library characters produced by Crypton were projected onto transparent surfaces on a stage shared with live musicians, giving the impression of a hologram. Concerts were produced using popular songs that originated from the amateur scene, but mainstream singers such as Bump of Chicken (WILPOLIS 2014 Japan tour), Lady Gaga (ARTPOP Ball tour 2014), and the electronic music producer Tomita Isao also produced concerts with Hatsune Miku (2012). Through this process, Vocaloid and Hatsune Miku transformed into another icon of mass pop culture in contemporary Japan. Although in recent times Hatsune Miku and Vocaloid's popularity in the mainstream media has decreased, it continues to shape a huge network of content, creators and fans.

In this paper I focus on the development of the Vocaloid scene before Dwango (the company that launched Niconico) and Kadokawa merged in 2014, examining the way in which the popularity of Vocaloid voice libraries emerged. To do so, I will also present commentary from some of the key actors in the Vocaloid industry. From my own interviews, I include the perspectives of Kenmochi Hideki, from Yamaha, the developer of Vocaloid technology; a member of the advertising department at Crypton who remained anonymous; and the perspective of Murakami Noboru, President of Internet Co., Ltd., another company that produces popular voice libraries. I also examine commentary from Itō Hiroyuki, the CEO of Crypton, and Sasaki Wataru, who was in charge of developing the voice library Hatsune Miku, gathered from interviews published among the vast amount of information in Japanese on this topic. Given that here, my focus is on the systems developed by these companies, led by Crypton, I have not included the perspectives of users. An exploration of user activities will be presented in a forthcoming paper.

My examination of the role of the character is focused on its nature as content in relation to intellectual property. A broader consideration of the role of fictional characters in the imaginary and affective lives of users, or a more comprehensive discussion on the relationship between characters like Hatsune Miku and idol culture or *bishōjo* games in Japan, although beyond the aims of this paper, would complement the rather narrow perspective I take here. However, the focus this paper gives to concrete examples of the infrastructure behind Hatsune Miku and how it developed will hopefully provide a platform for further discussion on content production and consumption.

The material I present here is part of a research project on Vocaloid and *dōjin* culture in Japan that I began in 2010. I did most of the research on Vocaloid from 2013 to 2015, including 24 interviews with key actors from different parts of the Vocaloid scene. This paper is a reworking of some parts of the fourth chapter of my PhD dissertation (Hernández, 2016). I focus on Crypton and the development of Hatsune Miku's technosocial environment in order to argue that the commercialization of amateur content in mainstream media, here through the system of collaboration fostered by Crypton, was made possible due to the double nature of voice libraries both as tools and as fictional characters. Crypton itself has acknowledged this double nature by defining voice libraries as an *interface* or *platform*, as well as through the release of a licence that enables not only the free appropriation of a voice library character by users, but also its re-appropriation by Crypton for commercial use. However, to date there has been no exposition on this double nature of vocaloid voice libraries that focuses on how industrial practices and fan approriation developed together. Therefore, my aim here is to examine the specific technical nature of Vocaloid as a technology for fostering amateur productivity in the mainstream media and provide concrete examples of how this was accomplished.

Despite the limited number of academic sources in English, Vocaloid and Hatsune Miku is a topic already heavily discussed. In a relatively recent example of previous research in English, Leavitt et al. (2016) examine the Vocaloid phenomenon from the perspective of media convergence or media participation.

They follow the rich tradition in fan and media studies of showing how media technology, media industry and enthusiasts are linked together through *participation*, a term that is used to describe the nature of the core element of present-day media cultures. For such an approach, the work of Henry Jenkins on participatory culture (see, for example, Jenkins, 1992, 2006; and Jenkins et al., 2013), becomes highly relevant. Moreover, Hatsune Miku is the perfect example for examination because, as Leavitt et al. state, Miku is precisely "the result of creative peer production" (2016, para. 2).

Jenkins' work on the participatory nature of fan culture engages with the politics of communication, and in particular the role of media participation as empowerment (see for example the discussions collected in Jenkins & Ito, 2015). In a similar spirit, Ian Condry (2011) examines a live performance by Hatsune Miku, drawing attention to the social nature of Hatsune Miku's image, and identifies a clear link between media openness and what he calls "distributed collective action" (para. 6) or "distributed creativity" (para. 13) taking place in the democratic environment of participation. Moreover, he sees this relation between collective action, technology and media culture as one product of new *open* media platforms, and considers Hatsune Miku as one such platform. For Condry, Hatsune Miku is an open platform which, rather than focusing on representation, prompts action and therefore brings the democratic potential of media to the fore, allowing us to imagine new ways to create what he calls "communities of action" (para. 17).

In turn, many of these insights are in tune with research on the new possibilities in communication and action that information technologies are bringing about. A relevant example in this field is the work of Laurence Lessig (2004, 2006) on the uses of media cultures on the internet, which builds a framework to re-define intellectual property and commons for the purposes of these new technologies. The work of Pierre Lévy on collective intelligence (2013), which focuses on the managerial capacity of communities – regarded as "knowledge ecosystems" (p.101) – to maximize the production of knowledge also reassesses how information is collectively produced within platforms such as YouTube or Flickr. There is also earlier research that is particularly relevant in terms of shaping the corpus that has theorized media participation and information technologies, such as Alvin Toffler's *The Third Wave* (1980), which introduces the word *prosumption*, a fusion of consumption and production in a context he characterized as post-industrial.

It is important to note that both the scholars who have created theoretical frameworks to discuss Vocaloid as well as Vocaloid practitioners themselves have been influenced by research on media and communication. For example, Hamano Satoshi (2008, 2012) borrows from Lessig the word *architectures* to analyze how the website Nico Nico Dōga (today Niconico) prompted what he calls *N-order creations* (2012), which are something similar to what Leavitt et al. call *peer production* (2016). In terms of the people that built the technosocial infrastructure of Vocaloid, Crypton's CEO Itō Hiroyuki himself revealed his own theoretical literacy when he named one of his company websites Karent (discussed below), after Alvin Toffler's daughter, Karen Toffler (Uchida, 2013; Karent, n.d).

There is therefore, to some extent, a kind of self-fulfilling

circle in the interplay between media production and enthusiast practices, and the theory itself, which is particularly easy to track in the case of Vocaloid and Hatsune Miku. It is within this context that this paper aims, where possible, not to theorize but rather to show how aspects of the content production process already theorized in the research actually took form by focusing on a small but central element, the development and use of Hatsune Miku.

The Cultural Crossroad Behind the Vocaloid Scene

As a voice synthesiser, Vocaloid software allows users to use a vocal database recorded by a real person to perform as a singer. There are several voice databases or libraries developed by different companies. The most popular library among them is called Hatsune Miku, which features a Japanese animation-like character who is a 16-year-old girl. It was developed by Crypton Future Media using the technology of Yamaha's Vocaloid 2 and Vocaloid 3 software.

Users of the software can 'make the character sing' any lyrics they want. Therefore, the final product is usually a song performed by the fictional character of the library (i.e. Hatsune Miku) and commonly composed by the user. In many cases, this song is presented along with a video, which is also produced by the user or in collaboration with another user. The complexity of the video may range from a static image of the character to very complex 3D animation where the character dances and sings. These musical videos are released on the internet by creators under a pen name or nickname. Creators take on the role of producers (called 'vocalo p'), and, in many cases, their names are followed by the letter 'p' as an abbreviation for 'producer' (E.g. Kurosua-P, Akuno-P). Since Hatsune Miku was launched on the market in August 2007, the main showcase where Vocaloid producers show and share their productions with other users has been the Japanese video sharing website Nico Nico Dōga (today Niconico), which was launched at the beginning of the same year. Vocaloid technology, fictional characters like Hatsune Miku, and media platforms like Nico Nico Dōga, along with their users, are the main components of the core structure of the Vocaloid scene.

The environment in which this Vocaloid scene was born can be described as a cultural crossroad, where many different elements have merged. Some of the main participants in this merging include technology and DeskTop Music enthusiasts, internet and *dōjin* subcultures, and anime and character fans. DeskTop Music or DTM is the name of amateur electronic music in Japan, which is mainly produced using personal computers. This culture in Japan was established in the late 1970s and during the first half of the 1980s, following a decrease in the cost of digital synthesisers. The spread of personal computers and the MIDI standard, as well as the commercialisation of cassette tape recorders and other technical improvements in music production and reproduction, allowed the formation of an active group of electronic music enthusiasts (Shiba, 2014). The word DTM was used for the first time in 1988 for a cheap Roland synthesiser (Ideguchi, 2012). However, Shiba Tomonori has traced the roots of this culture back to hippie and counter-culture movements in

the United States in the 1960s, and to the club music and rave culture in the 1980s in the United Kingdom (Shiba, 2014).

The links between the early Vocaloid scene, Japanese DTM and the abovementioned cultural movements in the United States and the United Kingdom have multiple roots. One of these roots can be found in the connections between technology enthusiasts and counter-culture, which as Castells has pointed out, were central in the development of the internet and personal computers during the birth of the 'information society' (1996). These groups have a natural link with science fiction enthusiasts who, as Yoshimoto (2009) has documented, have had an active presence in Japan at least since the 1950s, when some of the first science fiction clubs were established. Shiba asserts that the same spirit that drove 1967's 'first summer of love' in San Francisco and the 'second summer of love' in Britain in the late 1980s was also the backbone of the Vocaloid movement (2014). However, I regard these roots more as the cultural substrata which supported the rise of the Vocaloid scene after 2007. This is because other accounts of the Vocaloid scene, including my own research and that by Shiba, show that the development of the Vocaloid scene can be more directly linked to key people in record companies, software developers and musicians like Tomita Isao (Shiba, 2014).

Following Ideguchi (2012), DTM culture can be classified as a kind of amateur *dōjin* music culture, focused only on computer-generated music. Ideguchi's analysis closely follows the development of *dōjin* music, which is part of the institutions and practices we may describe as *dōjin* productivity, although these activities are not necessarily related to the stereotype of otaku. As Ideguchi points out, DTM culture has its points of divergence from *dōjin* music (2012). In contrast to *dōjin* music, DTM music is not as closely related to activities like parodies or second creations. When in the 1980s club music became popular in Japan, and with the influence of house music, the practice of mixing and editing music also became popular. This kind of creativity is, however, different from *dōjin* productivity, which has a clear relation to the original or previous work. Moreover, in DTM as in hip-hop culture, the original is not necessarily the most valued work (Kanose & Barubora, 2005). In any case, DTM as a particular technique or way to create music using computers can be regarded as another practice absorbed by the logic of *dōjin* productivity. The rise of the so-called MIDI movement, at the beginning of 2000, is another an example of such a process.

As Masaki Yoshiaki, a representative of the Vocaloid fan organisation 'Mirai no neiro', and the Vocaloid producer and media writer Kobayashi Onyx have pointed out in interviews with the author, the MIDI movement should be regarded as a key antecedent of the Vocaloid scene and as a major factor in the scene's first stage of explosive popularity after 2007. The MIDI movement was essentially the activities of MIDI music enthusiasts who reproduced their favourite songs and music in MIDI format. They posted links to their creations on massive internet billboards like the famous 2Channel, where they also shared technical information and conversed. The relationships formed on the internet around these practices shaped a particular community of peers with a special feeling of belonging. This movement, however, ended abruptly due to what members of this culture have called 'the MIDI eradication incident'. This

eradication was undertaken by the Japanese Society for Rights of Authors, Composers, and Publishers (JASRAC) because of intellectual property infringements.

Another practice related to the origins of the Vocaloid scene is the subgenre of *dōjin* music based on 'cute girl games (*bishōjo gēmu*)'. These video games are a kind of dating simulation centred on pretty anime-like girl characters. As Ideguchi argues, at the end of the 1990s, an important segment of supporters of *dōjin* music comprised young males who liked to play these popular games. At the same time, many game companies approved the production of derivative works or secondary productions of the music of their games (Ideguchi, 2012, pp.40-1).

We can find one example of these practices in the *dōjin* music based on popular games from the visual novel studios Leaf (Aquaplus) and Key (VisualArts). The popularity of both the games and their derivative works has led to the use of the term 'Leaf-Key' by fans, a term that also refers to a specific genre of derivative works. Another example of a popular genre in *dōjin* music is work based on the *Touhou Project*, a popular amateur shooter game developed by the game programmer Zun (Ōta Junya). The large quantity of secondary productions in *dōjin* music related to these two genres makes clear the strong relation between amateur music production and the use of 'cute girl' computer games (Ideguchi, 2012; Tomita, 2008). It is also important to note the significant role played by the open attitudes of the abovementioned game software companies or creators towards intellectual property. The case of *Touhou Project* is again a representative example. The *Touhou Project* is perhaps the most long-standing and popular genre in the Japanese *dōjin* world. Zun, its creator, has maintained the status of his software as *dōjin* and has therefore avoided copyright issues. This open attitude towards intellectual property and the popularity of *dōjin* music based on games marks a similarity to anime-like character culture. As Ideguchi (2012) notes, the large number of CD jackets depicting beautiful anime-like female characters at *dōjin* music events like M3 leaves no room to doubt this connection.

The last factor that emerged in 2007 to give shape to the Vocaloid scene was the rising culture of internet platforms, and practices on those platforms that may be described as chains of parodies, exemplified by MMD or mash-up videos, hosted and made possible by what was at that time the recently launched video sharing website Nico Nico Dōga (currently Niconico). Some of Niconico's characteristics have been already addressed from the perspective of Kadokawa in Hernández (2018). Although Vocaloid networks were already developing before Nico Nico Dōga, the popularization of the website after 2007 coincided with the appearance of Vocaloid's most famous software.

The Impact of Hatsune Miku

Vocaloid software allows the user to input lyrics in a piano roll style interface. The software engine synthesises a voice, recorded from a real person and stored in a database, and the output is a singing voice of surprisingly good quality. Kenmochi Hideki, the developer of the software and former leader of the Vocaloid division at Yamaha, describes its characteristics in the following way:

> The software development began in 2000. […]. I began the development and, well, if you ask me what my goals were, I didn't imagine it would become anything like it is now, with Hatsune Miku or people listening to Vocaloid songs. It was designed simply for the music industry or for the field of music production. In the case of a professional producer, they can just call a singer […]. So it was designed for the previous stage, of pre-production, or demo songs. It was for provisional songs in those two cases, before having to call a real singer […]. I began the development hoping people could use it in that way. Just as a very specialised music production tool (Kenmochi Hideki, personal communication, March 28, 2014).

While many musical instruments had begun to be synthesised using computers, the tone of the singing voice had not. Then voice synthesising was initiated in the early 1960s at AT&T Bell Laboratories. In the 1990s, there were many examples of software in Japan that could synthesise a singing voice. However, the quality was poor and the software was not used in the field of music production; instead they were used in games (SHD, 2011; Kenmochi, 2012; Shiba, 2014).

The focal points in the development of the software were as follows: 1) intelligibility, so that the lyrics were comprehensible, 2) naturalness, to reproduce the peculiarity of human singing and 3) operability, to establish user-friendliness in song production. The Vocaloid synthesising system has the following components: 1) a user interface to input the lyrics and the notes, 2) a voice library composed of phonemes recorded from a real singing voice and 3) a synthesiser engine that selects and connects the phonemes from the library (Kenmochi, 2012). Based on this technology, Vocaloid was introduced in February 2003. In January 2004, the British company Zero-G Ltd introduced the first Vocaloid libraries Leon and Lola in English in the United States. Those libraries were commercialised in Japan by Crypton Future Media in April of the same year. The first Japanese Vocaloid library was Meiko, introduced by Crypton in November 2004 after another English library, Miriam, was released. In its first year, the software recorded sales of 3,000 copies, which for the DTM software market at the time was an exceptional success (SHD, 2011).

The voice synthesiser software developed by Yamaha became another product among the many musical instruments already developed by the company. However, as a musical instrument, it was a peculiar one. By incorporating a real human voice into the system, the result was a true hybrid between human and machine. This particular nature of the product would play an interesting role in the imagination of software users. Almost all the libraries had human names, but as Kenmochi emphasises, the intention was never to create a virtual singer. Vocaloid was meant to be a tool, but it turned out that this tool enabled ways of expression and uses unexpected by its creators:

> Considering it now from this current perspective, we thought of it as a substitute for a human singing voice, but, in reality, it was not only that […]. If I think about it now, I think there are some kinds of expressions you

cannot have if you are not using Vocaloid, right? To put it superficially, things like singing very fast or with a very high-pitched voice. There are things like that. But, in the end, it was the lyrics, right? They are quite unconventional lyrics that you don't have in current J-pop or related fields (Kenmochi Hideki, personal communication, March 28, 2014).

As Tomita (2008) remarks about the world of *dōjin* music, before Vocaloid was launched in 2003, there was no way to produce songs other than by asking a singer to sing, or by singing yourself. Technological innovations (synthesisers, personal computers, the internet) had lowered the hurdles in DTM production, and consequently, the number of enthusiasts engaged in the hobby was increasing when the Vocaloid software appeared. However, in contrast, the number of singers available was not increasing. There were, therefore, a significant number of amateur creators wanting to create music and in need of somebody to sing for them (Tomita, 2008). They were the people behind the modest success of the Vocaloid library Meiko. However, at the time of Meiko's release in 2004, it was not yet possible for the development of the movement that contributed to the explosive popularity of the Vocaloid on the internet. This environment was not established until 2007, a few months before the commercialisation of the Hatsune Miku library, with the rise of internet platforms.

As Kenmochi remembers, after the Hatsune Miku software was released, the reaction was substantial. Just after it was put on sale, at the end of August 2007, it appeared on the Nico Nico Dōga video-sharing site, and a great quantity of people uploaded songs or even what Kenmochi describes as "weird things you cannot call songs" using Hatsune Miku.

> …it was around August and the beginning of September. As you may expect, there were a lot of cover songs. […] But only one or two weeks later, one after another people began uploading original songs. Now, I think that more than half of the users are uploading original songs. [At that time], I was just surprised and thought, 'This is great!'. I just realised that there were lots of people wanting to make songs, wanting a place to share them. And with lyrics! I now realise those people were wanting to make songs with lyrics, but they were not able to do so (Kenmochi Hideki, personal communication, March 28, 2014).

When Kenmochi talks about Vocaloid as a culture, his emphasis is above all on the lyrics. For him, there was an increasing amount of people who wanted to express themselves through their song lyrics but had no room to do so, not only in the mainstream music industry, but also in any other way. Among the first wave of Vocaloid music, there was a significant number of songs with lyrics addressing bullying, disappearances, or suicide, or that presented a harshly ironical view of life. Importantly, digital technology provided the means to produce from scratch and distribute songs with complete anonymity.

Crypton introduced the Hatsune Miku software for Vocaloid 2 on the 17th of August, 2007, and released it on the 31st of the same month. It was the first software of the Character Vocal (CV) Series. Only three months later, it was described as a "revolution in the DTM scene" and Hatsune Miku was referred to as a "miraculous diva" (Maeda & Hiraiwa, 2007, para. 2). The software achieved sales of over 40,000 copies in the first year, becoming a megahit in its sector (SHD, 2011).

The 'Hatsune Miku miracle' was also an unexpected success for its developers. According to Kenmochi, by 2007 the Vocaloid software was not selling well, and the development team had been reduced to two people, including him. It was while discussing these difficulties with Crypton that they decided to "make something interesting before the end". The idea proposed by Crypton was to "make a synthesised voice sing like a virtual girl" (Kenmochi, 2013, para. 5). Sasaki Wataru, the employee at Crypton who was in charge of the development of Hatsune Miku, also remembers 2007 as a difficult year, as there was a continuous stagnation in the music industry in general. The idea of abandoning the Vocaloid project was also in the air (Shiba, 2014).

The Voice and the Image: Software with Cute Identity

The attempt to develop the new Hatsune Miku software was pushed by a feeling of crisis. Itō Hiroyuki, the representative director of Crypton, has stated that he did not have any particular connection with or understanding of otaku or character culture. However, from the beginning of the project, they had planned to use, in the case of Hatsune Miku's voice, a voice from an actor like those who work in the animation industry, rather than a singer.

The new challenge for the developers of Hatsune Miku was producing a character, which would then be commercialised as the first of the CV series. The selection of a voice that expressed the personality of that character was one of the first stages of development. In the words of Sasaki Wataru, "We were looking for a so-called 'Lolita voice' [...] a voice that conveyed, 'I am cute'" (as cited in Shiba, 2014, pp.104-5). As Itō recalls,

> Because Vocaloid 2 Hatsune Miku was developed using the recorded voice of Fujita Saki, who is a voice actress for animation, the main characteristic is that the software makes it possible to synthesise a cute girl's voice. In order to reinforce this characteristic visually, we used a character illustration of the kind that appears in animation on the software package (2012, p.477).

The person in charge of drawing the Hatsune Miku character was the illustrator KEI. When he was asked to join the project the concept was still unclear, but, as he relates, the design started by focusing on two elements: the use in Miku's character design of some visual characteristics of the Yamaha DX7 synthesiser, and the depiction of a "near futuristic" atmosphere (Maeda & Hiraiwa, 2007, para. 18). As Sasaki has commented, they chose to work with KEI because his illustrations evoke a feeling of "inorganic matter" (2008, p.12). KEI illustrations portray the qualities of cute animation characters but lack what Sasaki regards as *moe*: a sensuality that evokes the flesh of the body. For

Sasaki, "physical embodiment (*nikutaisei*) and Vocaloid are two entirely different things" (2008, p.12). They were searching for something more inorganic and machine-like.

In addition to this concept, there was also a marketing strategy. Hatsune Miku was produced as the combination of a *character* and *software*. Itō expresses it in a direct way:

> We wanted to sell a lot, so, to start with, we decided to create a character. But I thought that if its features were too overtly moe, perhaps the music fans would not accept it. So, we created the character illustration while also trying to maintain the product's identity as software (Itō & Murakami, 2013, p.99).

The design of Hatsune Miku thus targeted two different groups: the *dōjin* culture, and its orientation towards animation characters; and DTM fans, specialists in electronic music and computers.

It is important to emphasise here the difference between the sound produced by the software and the character imagined by the user. As Masuda Satoshi, researcher on popular music and media theory points out, voice and personality are closely related to each other (2008). Only when a personality is assumed does the sound that comes out from the software become a voice. Itō Hiroyuki also draws a clear distinction between the software of Hatsune Miku, which is a product for sale, and the character of Hatsune Miku, which they made openly available for non-commercial use.

The design of the character and the particular voice used in Hatsune Miku give her a personality that stands out from former voice libraries like Meiko or Kaito, also developed by Crypton. However, from the perspective of the advertising department at Crypton, the primary aim of the company was not to create a character or a virtual idol:

> The concept was not to create a character. Rather, we produced a clear concept of the product [by focusing on elements like] the voice quality or the character in order to be able to reach more users. Hatsune Miku was the first [product] for which our company planned a strong concept to this degree. [...] [But], after all, Hatsune Miku is software for producing music, so we do not use the definition 'idol' (Crypton representative, personal communication, July 31, 2014).

For Crypton, the character is the by-product of the development of software with a clear concept. Moreover, Hatsune Miku has a significant weakness as a character in conventional terms. Fictional characters are usually imagined as the protagonists of a narrative. Their personality comes to be in and through the narration. However, in the case of the Hatsune Miku software, the expression of personality is based mainly on the tone of the voice and on the visual features. Traces of a narrative can be found in her strange name, Hatsune, which in Japanese is written with the kanji for 'first' and 'sound', and Miku, which has the katakana for one possible reading of the kanji 'future'. Therefore, the name Hatsune Miku evokes the meaning of 'the first sound from the future'. There is also a basic profile on the

official Crypton website, with her age, height, weight and favourite music genres. As the representative from Crypton stated:

> The virtual singer characters from our company do not have any clear background like personality or birthplace. By omitting a detailed background, we are allowing the users to be freely inspired to create unlimited narratives. I think that it is precisely because of this diversity that the fans can also easily find a work, within a large amount of songs and narratives, with which they can 'sympathise'. [...] Hatsune Miku was not created to circulate content in the media, but rather [is a] package character for software intended for creators to produce songs. For that reason, we have purposely not included any detailed character background, and the character has been developed to make it easy for users to expand the image and create their own works (Crypton's representative, personal communication, July 31, 2014).

Crypton's aim to leave the development of the character in the hands of the software users and its fans led to the creation of content that was used in a similar way to a video game. At the beginning of the Vocaloid movement, when Hatsune Miku went on sale, one important segment of users was junior and senior high school boys. As Nijihara-Peperon-p, one of the creators I interviewed for this research commented, Hatsune Miku was cheap in comparison to the other voice libraries on the market in 2007, and, therefore, affordable for a high school student like him. Many of those boys were fans of 'cute girl' video games or animation. Among them, the video game *The Idolmaster* (by Bandai Namco Games) was particularly popular in 2007, and the animation adaptation, *Idolmaster: Xenoglossia* (by Sunrise), aired between April and October, just before the release of Hatsune Miku. Within that context and with the increasing popularity of the Nico Nico Dōga website, the creativity in the network undertook the shape of a kind of game where players can create and produce their own idol and make it famous on internet platforms.

Valuable Resources: The Character, the Tools and the Content

On the 4th of September 2007, five days after the release of Hatsune Miku, the user Otomania uploaded a flash animated video to Nico Nico Dōga called, *I Tried to Sing to Vocaloid 2 Hatsune Miku the 'Ievan Polka'* (Arimura, 2008). This video was perhaps the first hit for Hatsune Miku. In the promotion video for the song, the software package illustration appears first, but when the song starts, a cute parody of the character of Hatsune Miku appears, moving a leek up and down with her arm. The character parody, drawn by the user Tamago, was later known as Hachune Miku. In fact, the song uploaded by Otomania was a parody of another video, titled *Loituma – Ieva's Polka*, which was uploaded to Nico Nico Dōga on the 6th of March in 2007 by the user Tororo. In turn, the work by Tororo was a parody of the character Inoue Orihime from the popular TV animation and manga *Bleach*. This earlier video featuring the character from *Bleach* was only one of many videos uploaded by several users

depicting characters singing and moving a leek in circles, with the same background music. This is an example of the collective creations of MAD culture, representative of Nico Nico Dōga at its beginning.

However, the events that followed Otomania uploading the MAD video signalled an important turning point in *dōjin* culture and the content industry in Japan. The elements of Hatsune Miku shaking a leek and the parody character Hachune Miku were incorporated in the official product Nendoroid Hatsune Miku, a figurine or small model of the character that was released in March of 2008, six months after the video was uploaded on the internet. The figurine was produced by the major firm Good Smile Company, Inc., a manufacturer of hobby products, under the official licence of Crypton Future Media, Inc.. Behind the production of this small toy was a transformation in the structure of production and legal frameworks, which allowed the incorporation of amateur content into commercial products. By the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008, through trial and error, several companies like Dwango (Nico Nico Dōga), Crypton and Kadokawa were developing a new environment of production and consumption. In the case of Vocaloid, such an environment was born from the double nature of the voice libraries as tools and as characters.

For her creators and related industries, Miku is referred to as a character. As the title 'Character Vocal Series' and her name make clear, beyond the narrow definition provided by Crypton's advertising department, she is projected as a fictional character—as an android from the future (see for example the essays published in a special edition of *Eureka [Yuriika]* magazine in 2008). Moreover, the commercial interest in her is usually seen by the industry as part of the character business, in the context of the media mix in Japan. Nonetheless, for her creators as well as for the companies dedicated to producing and commercializing voice libraries for the Vocaloid engine, it has been essential to differentiate between the imaginary character of Hatsune Miku and the software. This differentiation is fundamental because Crypton decided to allow free use of the character in the form of non-profit fan activity.

As authors like Steinberg (2012) or Odagiri (2010) have shown, businesses centred on characters and their branding have been a common feature in the Japanese media market since the beginning of the TV anime industry, like in the case of *Tetsuwan Atomu*. Here, the migration of characters from narrative media like anime or manga to goods without narratives such as toys and candy does not always flow in the same direction. That is, a character may be launched in the market before the establishment of narrative settings, and these settings may be figured out after the character achieves commercial success, such as with the famous case of Hello Kitty (Odagiri, 2010). In any case, the strong personality or charisma of the character is the main driving force behind sales of the product. It is this strong presence that makes possible the appearance of the character in many different media and products, resulting in the so-called media mix, thereby making the character a valuable resource.

From the perspective of the content industry, to give away an important resource—such as a character—for free seems odd. However, this practice not only exists as a means for promotion or advertisement, but has also proved beneficial in sectors such

as the software industry. The Vocaloid scene presents an interesting blend of software and content which, within the spread of media platforms such as Nico Nico, became even more complex.

If a character is understood as content from the perspective of the anime or manga industries, which depend on the licencing system in order to develop a media mix and receive revenues from secondary markets, in the case of Vocaloid libraries, characters are first of all tools or instruments used to produce songs. For Crypton, the character is not content but, as Itō has stated, an interface. Here, it is important to focus on the characteristics of the interface as Itō describes it. From his perspective, "for an interface to be useful, it must able to be used by anybody" (Itō, 2012, p.478). In other words, once Vocaloid libraries become popular as characters, their voices and the concept of the character become a kind of language ready to be used to express any kind of message, but in this case, using the same voice or character identity. The important point here is that whether it is considered music software or a character, Hatsune Miku is intellectual property.

De-Appropriating Resources Under Character Identity

At the First Nico Nico Scholars Association Beta Symposium in December of 2011 (Etō, 2012), in a session entitled 'Creating Architectures for Creating', Itō Hiroyuki described the three main activities of Crypton. One is the importation and development of virtual instruments; Hatsune Miku, which is a virtual instrument, belongs to this category. The second is to provide the system and services of a music aggregator. As he explains it, this means taking the role of an intermediary by providing music files from an artist to each service for downloading, and receiving the profit generated by the downloads from each downloading service to distribute it to the artist (Itō, 2012). The third is to provide and manage web services. There are several types of web services provided by Crypton; two examples are Piapro and Karent. These websites are defined as "CGM (consumer-generated media) style sites for uploading", and described by Itō as "[services] focused on enabling the uploading of illustrations or the music of Hatsune Miku or other Vocaloid characters by creators, and the sharing of those works to enable their use by other creators" (2012, p.50). The structure that supported the transformation of Hachune Miku, a fan or amateur creation, into official content, is based on these three elements.

When considered as a virtual instrument, Hatsune Miku is Crypton's merchandise; it is software to be used as a tool. Consequently, as Itō has repeatedly stated, as in the case of any instrument, Crypton is not the rights holder of any of the songs produced by this instrument. However, Hatsune Miku as a character is a creative work; therefore, it is automatically protected by copyright law. For that reason, if Crypton has the basic policy of allowing the free use of the character by any user, it becomes necessary to issue a license.

Therefore, Crypton created a licence called the Piapro Character License (PCL). The aim of this licence, in the words of Itō, was to transform a "principle of NG (not good)" into a "principle of OK" (2012, p.478). Itō asserts, "Copyright law applies automatically to all creative works without taking into account the

creator's will" (2012, p.478). He also explains, "the copyright holder, by determining in advance the range of the authorization to exploit the creative work and making it public, is able to allow use of the creative work within that range by anyone, omitting the steps needed for individual authorizations" (2012, p.478). Crypton, which is the copyright holder of Hatsune Miku, abbreviated the process of issuing individual licences to each creator in order to allow use of the character. By changing their stance to "OK", they allowed the production of many secondary creations, transforming the status of this activity from a copyright infringement to a legal activity.

Crypton issued *Guidelines for Character Use* as early as December 2007, and as Itō relates, "it was the first time that all users became able to produce secondary creations with confidence in a legal manner" (2012, p.480). Furthermore, the Piapro Character Licence was issued in June 2009, allowing the free use of all the characters produced by Crypton whenever their use meets the following conditions: 1) it is for a non-commercial purpose and does not generate profit; 2) it does not violate public order and morality; 3) it does not infringe on the rights of third parties (Itō, 2012). Additionally, in December 2012, as the Crypton website states, "Crypton decided to adapt a 'Creative Commons License CC BY-NC' for the original illustrations of Hatsune Miku to support open creative activities all over the world" (Crypton, n.d., para 1). The company detailed the aims of this stance in the following way:

> Our aim was not to facilitate the character business; rather, it was to support the productive activities of the creators. Basically, secondary creations are not allowed without the agreement of the author. However, previously some secondary works were created within an unspoken agreement (a grey zone). To enable creators to produce their secondary creations with confidence, our company developed a licence regarding the use of the characters and decided to allow unrestricted production within that licence. Before us, the number of companies providing such a licence with that aim was limited. Therefore, I think it is possible to say that, in that respect, this was a new way of thinking (Crypton representative, personal communication, July 31, 2014).

Alongside Crypton's approval of unrestricted use of characters, their aggregating services and management of CGM style websites formed the structure that allowed the commercialisation of the creations of users, as with the example of Hachune Miku. It is interesting to note the emphasis from Crypton on not categorising this system as a character business, which is typically an important market in the content industry.

Through the management of licences and the identity of characters, it has also been possible for Crypton to further commercialise Hatsune Miku related content. This commercialisation was an innovative use of user-generated content (UGC) within Japan's character business and the music industry. The multiple uses of UGC for different products featuring Hatsune Miku are a good example of such innovation. Here, it is important to focus on the paradoxical fact that the creative works generated using Hatsune Miku may simultaneously be considered as original

content if Miku is regarded as a tool, but may also be described as secondary or derivative creations, if considered as use of the character. Hence, an understanding of the difference between tool and character is essential.

As in the example of the parody character Hachune Miku and the leek, the creativity rooted in the *dōjin* productivity behind MAD culture or in many creations on the internet is not generated by a single person's efforts. The practices of appropriation, which have been largely documented by fan studies, may be regarded as the collective construction of a stock of cultural resources. This content is, therefore, at the same time intellectual property and the shared resources of a particular collectivity. As such, we can understand this system—which allows creative collaboration between amateur users and industrial actors—as a marriage between commercial practices, based on creativity and the intellectual property of the content, and non-commercial practices, based on play and the idea of content as a cultural resource. This marriage has proven to be as conflictive as it is productive.

The role of CGM is central in this structure. In the case of Crypton, there are the examples of Piapro and Karent. Piapro was launched in December 2007, at the same time as the issuing of the *Guidelines for Character Use* mentioned above. It is a website where it is possible to upload music, illustrations, texts or 3D models. Its particular feature is that the uploader must be the creator of such content and must agree to the use of the uploaded content by a third party as a resource for producing new work. For that reason, the website has adopted the Creative Commons (CC) licence system. Therefore, it becomes possible to create various secondary works on the basis of an explicit agreement among the creators. This method of collective creation is usually called 'collaboration' in the Vocaloid scene, although most of the time it lacks the mutual commitment and communication between collaborators that a collective work usually entails.

The works that are created by using material available on the Piapro website usually take the form of a short video which can be shared on Nico Nico Dōga. The website allows content to be linked between both websites. As the website states, Piapro provides a "place for creators to make new content" (Piapro, n.d, para. 1). It is therefore an environment that supports what Hamano has called chains of creativity or Nth creations (2008, 2012). In addition, in 2008 the website Karent was launched as a record label that aimed to support, and be supported by, artists (Karent, n.d.). The users who upload content to this website can manage it by themselves, and can put their creations on sale using several downloading services such as the iTunes Store, Amazon MP3 and the Japanese Tsutaya DISCAS.

What were the motivations behind Crypton's encouragement of the free use of the character of Hatsune Miku? Similar to Kenmochi, Itō says he felt surprised when "the dynamic movement of so-called secondary creations" started soon after the release of Hatsune Miku, (Itō & Murakami, 2013, p.99). As he explains, "I thought, we will have to do something so this chain of creativity does not stop [...] we are Miku's protectors" (Itō & Murakami, 2013, p.99). Among the works focused on Hatsune Miku as a subject, there were not only songs, the output of the software, but also illustrations, various kinds of animation, co-

splay, amateur dancing or *odotte-mita* (lit. I tried to dance), and amateur singing or *utatte-mita* (lit. I tried to sing), most of them uploaded as videos to the internet. As Itō states, "It formed a kind of cultural space, and Miku became a platform for creation" (2012, p.50).

After the unexpected success of Hatsune Miku, Crypton decided to allow free use of the character because as a small company they didn't have the resources to respond to fan requests for permission for use. However, the system of management and the stance towards the intellectual property of the character that Crypton later adopted and refined was able to protect and foster the dynamism of creativity. This stance opened up new possibilities for *dōjin* productivity and for the development of new services in relation to those activities, linking industrial actors and consumers in a way that was seen as revolutionary by the end of 2010. Their stance towards the open use of the intellectual property of the character and the emphasis on the software as a creation tool became standard in the Vocaloid scene. Internet, Co., Ltd., the second company in Japan that began to produce voice libraries for Vocaloid, provides an example of how this position was adopted by others.

Internet Co., Ltd., debuted in the Vocaloid scene with the popular voice library and character Gackpoid (July 2008) followed by Megpoid (June 2009). These characters are among the most famous voices libraries and characters they have produced. Murakami Noboru, the president of the company, explains their position on the use of the characters as follows:

> We are not doing it as a character business. So, if it is about the use of the character for a commercial purpose, of course we issue a licence. However, Vocaloid itself is basically voice synthesiser software, so we regard it as an instrument, which is not a character good, right? We only added the character originally just to make easier to understand who is singing (Murakami Noboru, personal communication, April 4, 2014).

The stance of Crypton and Internet Co., Ltd. is clear. They are software companies and their focus is not on producing content, but rather on selling the software, or in any case, the environment of services and software. Unlike the content industry, they regard their customers as users and not as audiences. Therefore, they were able to conceive and build a system that enabled de-appropriation of the resource of the character, based on its free use, in a way that, in the content industry, may be regarded as an act of suicide, given the dependence on character licences.

Re-appropriating Resources: The Profit-ability of Participation

A large amount of songs and content related to Vocaloid may be considered original from an intellectual property perspective, but the collaborative process of production emphasizes the social nature of creation. The reluctance of many participants of the scene to call themselves creators or to claim authorship is an acknowledgment of this process. In Japan, after the success of Hatsune Miku, content has mostly been released on Nico Nico Dōga, Piapro and in recent years on YouTube as well. In the case of Nico Nico Dōga and Piapro, it is generally the original creator who puts the content into circulation among the internet community under his/her own pen name. This user-generated content is recognised as the original creation of each user and at the same time, as Miku's performance.

Along with the creation of songs, many users appropriate the iconic design of Miku and generate new images or videos. The website and internet community Pixiv has been an important forum for these graphic productions. Besides illustrations or videos, Mikus's fans also generate story-based content like amateur comics or novels or, in some cases, animation. This content is distributed among fan markets through many websites and fan-built media and fan networks, which like Comic Market or fan stores, are not always limited to the internet.

It is important to note that the free appropriation of Miku's character in many different fan productions is, in the majority of the cases, independent from Crypton's control. Creators also freely choose the channels through which to distribute their creations. Therefore, the networks that are developed (like the activities on Nico Nico Dōga or Pixiv) are also beyond any Crypton management. Thus, although beyond its management, Crypton encourages the fan appropriation of Miku as a fictional character.

Yet, Crypton also exerts its own direct management of Miku. This management has three general courses: 1) the management of fan-creators' creative activities and content; 2) the management of licences and the use of Miku by other companies with a commercial interest; 3) the management of a mix of both of the above. The website Piapro and its special PCL system, as well as the official "39ch Hatsune Miku Official Channel" on YouTube, the Facebook Hatsune Miku official account, and the official community of Hatsune Miku on the site mikubook.com are platforms owned by the company that play an important role in this management.

In the first category of management practices, we can focus on the encouraging role of Crypton towards the non-profit creation of user-generated content, related to the understanding of Miku either as a voice or as a visual icon. Here, the adoption of the CC licence system for illustrations of Miku and the PCL system for the content uploaded on Crypton's Piapro website is fundamental. The role of other websites and services in adopting these policies, although beyond Crypton's management, is also central.

An example of the success of this management was the rapid increase in Miku's popularity around 2014, along with the rise of many popular creators. They, in their role as Miku's producers, are central actors who shape the body of Miku and give life to her as a truly public good.

In the second category, we can find the direct licencing activity executed by Crypton, enabling the creation of content by other companies. Some examples include the creation by the Good Smile Company of licenced products, like figurines or toys that use the image of Miku; as well as some publicity campaigns or official merchandising with content produced for commercial use. In these cases, other companies obtain the licences to generate profit-making content using Miku's image.

The third category is perhaps the most important and distinctive in this model because of the lack of original content in the character designed by Crypton. In this category, we can

find a mixture of user-generated content distributed by various consumer-generated media and later commercialised by other industries as profit-making goods or services. This is where fan communities and their productive cultures meet the profit-making structure of content industries and their markets, and where creativity and new use-values become exchange-values driving the development of new markets. The content generated by the users is commercialised by a third company under the licence of Crypton, and the creator is invited to participate as an official collaborator. The most famous example here is the video game series *Project Diva* supported by SEGA. In this game, songs composed by users that gained popularity in internet communities are performed as part of the game by a 3D computer graphics design of Miku, who sings and dances in the game (alongside other characters from the CV series). The songs and the 3D CG Miku are also used to perform live concerts and the songs are also released on albums as song collections by Sony Music Direct (Japan) Inc. This way of managing Miku makes this model different from the standard character business model.

Finally, as part of the third category of management practices, there are also users who have become professional producers through the use of Miku, releasing their content through large companies like SEGA, Sony Music and Victor Entertainment. They occupy a space at the intersection of Crypton's Miku, user-generated content, and big media companies. Two examples of this kind of user are the producer ryo who leads the J-pop music group Supercell, and the producer kz (livetune) whose song "Tell Your World" is used as background music in a Google Chrome commercial. These two creators, as well as many others, have benefited from the technical characteristics of Miku as a tool and from its horizontal and consumer-based business model.

Conclusions

The Vocaloid scene represents the linkage of different groups and institutions in a relatively open network. Key among these groups are the industrial actors, who have an open and market-centred orientation, and *dōjin* cultures, who have a rather closed and community-based orientation.

The general overview of the Vocaloid scene I provided in this paper focused on the industrial actors, mostly Crypton, and the framework they developed based on the double nature of Vocaloid voice libraries as tools and as characters, or in other words, as software or platforms and as content. In particular, the strong identity of the voice library Hatsune Miku generated a framework that enabled the integration of the practices of *dōjin* cultures with the content industry practice of media mix or character business, through a system of de-appropriation and re-appropriation of the same media resource.

One of the innovative aspects of Hatsune Miku that encouraged such a boom of productivity was her lack of a precise background narrative alongside a strong identity, a feature derived from her double nature as a tool and as a character. This identity was, from her creation, expressed through her voice and her image, which were carefully designed to stand between two branches of amateur culture that were not directly related before: amateur electronic music (DTM) and *dōjin bishōjo* culture. Hatsune Miku was the hub that made possible such a

cultural crossroad, while Nico Nico Dōga provided the perfect environment for growth and propagation. Hence, Hatsune Miku was not a character without background, as commonly argued; her background and her world were the various cultural streams that converged into her apparent lack of content. With such a huge world on her back, and through a variety of texts such as songs, illustrations, cosplay pictures and music videos, the existence of Hatsune Miku as a fictional character has become the true embodiment of a collective creation. Therefore, it was the double nature of Hatsune Miku as a tool and as a character that made possible a structure that allowed the free use of her iconic presence within a unified yet heterogeneous productive system.

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