A STUDY OF POPULAR CULTURE AND FANDOM:
THE CASE OF JAPANESE MANGA

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By
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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF POPULAR CULTURE AND FANDOM: THE CASE OF JAPANESE MANGA

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September 2010

This thesis is an attempt to explore the practices, influence and reception of manga and anime as a global product of Japanese Popular culture as it concentrates on the emergence of manga as a popular culture product, how it became this wide spread in relation with the changing dynamics of internet and media relationship, and how it is perceived considering the relationship between Japan and West in a historical context.

Keywords: manga, fan culture, fandom, popular culture, uncanny, ideal-ego

ÖZET

POPULER KÜLTÜR VE FAN ÇALIŞMALARI: JAPON MANGASI

Bestem Büyüm

Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar
Yüksek Lisans
Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Aren Emre Kurtgözgü

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Bu çalışma Japon popular kültürünün global bir ürünü olan manga ve anime'nin uygulama, etki ve algısını bunların bir popular kültür ürünü olarak ortaya çıkışından, nasıl bu kadar yayıldığına, değişen internet ve medya dinamikleri içerisinde geliştiğine ve Japonya ile Batı'nın tarihsel süreç içerisindeki ilişkiside göz önünde bulundurularak nasıl algılandığına bakarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: manga, fan kültürü, fan toplulukları, popular kültür, uncanny, ideal-ego

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Manga is the Japanese comic and print cartoons that conform to the style developed in Japan in the late 20th century. It includes a broad range of subjects like action adventure, romance, sports and games, historical drama, comedy, science-fiction and fantasy, mystery, horror, sexuality, business and commerce etc.

The term 'manga' is started to be used in between the 1920s and 1930s and became a pop culture that represented a culture based on political opposition and open social organization; but it took the form that we know today after the 1940s in post-war Japan.

Today manga is a medium like a TV or a book, and it carries many different cultural materials. It is a way of socializing among the young generation and they form bonds while sharing and discussing the manga that they read. It also consist the social norms and the culture of the country through the fabric of its stories. Kinko Ito points that,

> Manga is immersed in a particular social environment that includes history, language, culture, politics, economy, family, religion, sex and gender, education, deviance and crime, and demography. Manga thus reflects the reality of Japanese society, along with the myths, beliefs, rituals, tradition, fantasies, and Japanese way of life. Manga also depicts other social phenomena, such as social order and hierarchy, sexism, racism, ageism, classism, and so on. (Ito, 2005, p. 456)

Thus manga can be considered as a mirror to the Japanese Culture, tradition and nation Manga has a wide range of genres according to its complex social and cultural fabric but it is basically grouped according to its different targeted readers. In the beginning manga was originally created for males and its production was also male dominated with male manga-kas , editors and publishers. But with the addition of new genres of Girls' manga starting from 1960s, the age and gender of the readers became heterogeneous by the 1970s and 1980s. The target demographic categories turned into stylistic categories to define the art style and the content of the manga.

Even though the history of manga traces back to thousands of years in Japan, its invasion of West happened recently. Japanese animation came to U.S in 1960s and the Japanese comic books, manga, followed after that. However with its unique style of graphic story-telling, paneling, symbolism and cultural background, manga differs from the conventional comic book understanding of West. Regardless, the Western Manga fandom has been growing more and more.

This thesis is an attempt to explore the practices, influence and reception of manga and anime as a global product of Japanese Popular culture. To be more specific, this study concentrates on the emergence of manga as a popular culture product, how it became this wide spread regarding the changing dynamics of internet and media relationship, and how it is perceived, in terms with the Freudian concept of Uncanny, considering the relationship between Japan and West in a historical context. Additionally this study will also try to look at the dynamics of manga and its contributions to the understanding of comics.

In the first chapter, titled 'The History of Japanese Comics and Comic Book Culture', I will try to look at the emergence of manga as an early form of sequential art which started with the 'animal scrolls' that is created by a Buddhist monk Toba in 12th century. As Japan's opening to West marked a change for its culture, it also prepared the necessary environment for the emergence of what we know as manga today. With the Western influence came Osamu Tezuka, who created the stylistic form used in today's manga, as he reinvented the term in the post-war Japan. In this chapter I will also have a look at manga industry, its production cycle and how the target demographics are determined while I discuss manga as a medium.

In the second chapter, titled 'Global Interaction and the Overseas Influence of Manga', I will start the discussion with how manga became a soft power within the historical context. I will take a look at Japan's opening to West in 1853, and how this affected Japan's relationship with West and the rest of the Asia, as Japan positioned itself as the cultural power and modern, western other. Also I will have a look at the stylistic character drawings, Japan's aesthetic understanding and West's influence on the nation from a Lacanian perspective, as Japan reconstructs its image while setting west as its ideal-ego. Then I will move on to how Japanese manga arrived to United States and became so wide spread in the global markets. Within the last part, I will discuss manga as a culture industry with its production and consumption as well as its global influence on others.

In the third chapter, titled 'Fan and Fandom in the Age of Internet and Manga Fandom', I will move on to the concept of Fandom and how it changed and reshaped with the emergence of online communities. I will take a look at manga and anime fandom and how this fandom acts within the global arena, its own dynamic, hierarchies

and fan artifacts. I will also try to discover how manga creates the basis for a transmedia story-telling and how this affects the fandom within the online communities of sharing and fandom hierarchy.

In this chapter and the following one I will use reception studies to some extent, in order to understand fandom's approach towards the text. For this I will try to look at and analyze fan essays and fan comments on forums and blogs. For the online communities of this thesis I will use some global online forums and blogging spheres that are commonly used by the manga and anime fandom. One of the forums I used is *BleachForums* that is found in 2004. It has 40,249 threads, 26,700 members and 1,372,077 posts [1]. The other forum that I used is *BleachAsylum* which has 12,360 threads, 14,675 members and 2,435,626 posts [2]. I have also looked at the *AnimeSuki* Forums that has been there since 2000 and has 76,270 threads, 107,767 members and 3,149,279 posts [3]. And lastly *Naruto Forums* which has 396,200 threads, 179,885 members and 24,052,306 posts [4]. In addition to those I have also used a Live Journal community called *Bleachness*, a blogsphere community with 1,400 members, 1,296 watchers and 1,918 journal entries.

In the fourth and last Chapter, titled 'Fantasy, Content and the Uncanny in Manga', I will discuss the stylistic, linguistic and content wise differences of manga and what kind of a role this plays in the global perception and reception of manga. I will use *Bleach* manga as my example, which is created by the Japanese artist Kubo Tite in 2001 and has been going on since then. I will also try to look at the effects of the stylistic differences mentioned in Chapter 2 and how it created a form of anxiety when the Western reader confronts with its Japanese content. I will take Freud's definitions of Uncanny, as it's

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[1] The statistics are taken from the forum's website http://www.bleachforums.com on August 15, 2010.
[2] The statistics are taken from the forum's website http://bleachasylum.com on August 15, 2010.
[3] The statistics are taken from the forum's website http://forums.animesuki.com on August 15, 2010.
[4] The statistics are taken from the forum's website http://forums.narutofan.com/ on August 15, 2010.

used in literature studies, while discussing this within a historical framework of West's

relationship with Japan.

1. THE HISTORY OF JAPANESE COMICS AND COMIC BOOK CULTURE

1.1 The Beginning: Sequential Art in Japan

In order to start writing about manga, first, one should look at the place of manga in history of Japan and its development as a cultural context. Japan, as a nation and a culture, has a long history with comics.

Comics, like comic strips or graphic novels, can be described as sequential art which is defined by Will Eisner (1994) and Scott McCloud (1993) as a narrative that is made up of images and sometimes text, and this narrative flows across a page with a sequence.

It is not known exactly when manga emerged but the history of sequential art in Japan traces back to 12th century; when a Buddhist monk called Bishop Toba created the 'animal scrolls' known as *Chōjugiga*. Those picture scrolls told the story of animals acting out as the clergy and the nobility, both as a critique and a parody of the religious life and the hierarchy. The important characteristic of the scrolls was that they were following a

certain sequence in its storytelling, which marks those scrolls as the earliest form of sequential art in Japanese history (Schodt, 1983).

It took a long time for these humorous pictures and scrolls to find their way to ordinary people. In those days almost all of the art was in the hands of the clergy and nobility. It was mid-17th century when simple cartoons started to be sold, and what started as Buddhist amulets for travelers became a way of entertainment with various subjects like demons, stories of warriors and beautiful women (Schodt, 1983).

This created the next shift in art in Japan's history with the artists starting to produce a kind of illustration with a specific style which was called ukiyo-e[5], which was consisted of topics like fashion, theatre idols, popular places to go and historical tales. Ukiyo-e were a part of their popular culture like the comics of today. The term *manga*, which is used today for Japanese comics and cartoons, was used first by an artist called Hokusai Katsuhika around 1815 to describe whimsical pictures or sketches (Schodt, 1983).

1.2 Meeting with the West

Japan's opening to West can be considered as a complicated historical period due to the social and political conflicts appeared at that time. The period that starts in Tokugawa

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[5] A term suggestive of life's uncertainties and the search for sensual pleasures to sweeten one's feeling of hopelessness. They were initially crude, monochrome prints that portrayed man and women cavorting at Yoshiwara, the red-light district of old Edo, now Tokyo (Schodt, 1983, p.33)

Era[6] (1600-1867) and covers Meiji Era[7] (1868-1912) caused Japanese society to have a political and cultural war between the supporters of West and the supporters of the tradition. There were sudden and violent cultural changes for tradition supporters and Japan had lots of catch up to do with Western technology in order to hold a position in the new world order. It was the period of struggle and conflict between the traditionalist politicians and West-leaning Emperor of the Meiji Era (Brenner, 2007).

Japan also met with the European-style cartoons during that era, through a French artist called George Bigot and a British artist called Charles Wirgman, who also built the political and cultural critique magazine *The Japan Punch* in 1862. The Japan punch was a huge success and was eventually taken hold off by Japanese editors and artists. The beginning of 20th century, around 1920s, was when Japan entered into a new colorful decade due to the political and social freedoms provided by the new Westernization and modernization which led Japan into discovering new ideologies and life styles. Due to the sudden modernization and freedoms found there happened social disruption and economic inequalities. The government adopted new militaristic and nationalist policies which caused suppression and censorship (Schodt, 1983).

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[6] Also called Edo period (1603–1867), the final period of traditional Japan, a time of internal peace, political stability, and economic growth under the shogunate (military dictatorship) founded by Tokugawa Ieyasu. As shogun, Ieyasu achieved hegemony over the entire country by balancing the power of potentially hostile domains (tozama) with strategically placed allies (fudai) and collateral houses (shimpan). As a further strategy of control, beginning in 1635, Ieyasu's successor required the domainal lords, or daimyo, to maintain households in the Tokugawa administrative capital of Edo (modern Tokyo) and reside there for several months every other year. The resulting system of semi-autonomous domains directed by the central authority of the Tokugawa shogunate lasted for more than 250 years (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/598326/Tokugawa-period#).

[7] Also known as the Meiji Restoration, in Japanese history, the political revolution that brought about the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and returned control of the country to direct imperial rule under the emperor Meiji, beginning an era of major political, economic, and social change known as the Meiji period (1868–1912). This revolution brought about the modernization and Westernization of Japan (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/373305/Meiji-Restoration).

Frederik L. Schodt summarizes the events of that era:

> But cracks were appearing in Japan's liberal façade. Even as artists were being politicized, an out of control ultranationalist military, bent on expansion on the continent of Asia, was taking control of the civilian government. Ideological artists like Yanase, frequently suffered arrest, and occasionally torture.(Schodt, 1983, p. 51)

This was followed by the second turning point, regarding the world of comics and Japanese culture, as World War II entered into the scene and changed Japan's history forever. It is a known fact that Japan's militarism and nationalism increased as an ideology with the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.

The new postwar era had a huge impact on Japanese manga. It was during that time that social control, regulations on media, and government suppressions increased and New Order of 1941 triggered an expansion in censorship and media control. They were also dark days for a number of comic artists who were put in prisons, tortured of even killed by the police. Even though the critical and politic manga publications and manga artists were under suppression and censor by government, children's comic strips and non-political manga continued its development with new innovations which eventually fall to that suppression and censor during the Pacific War era in mid-1930s (Kinsella, 2000).

The artists and magazines were divided into two; those who went under the government line and those who were radical artists. Soon it became almost impossible to survive as an artist without belonging to some group.

As Schodt puts:

> After Pearl Harbor in December 1941, cartoonists who were not banned from working or off fighting on the front were active in one of three areas: producing family comic strips that were totally harmless or promoted national solidarity;

drawing single panel cartoons that vilified the enemy in *Manga* or other domestic media; and working in the government and military service creating propaganda to be used against the opposing troops. (Schodt, 1983, p. 56)

Those struggles and censorships continued under Allied Occupation[8] for several years even after Japan's unconditional surrender in 1945. But political artists were allowed more freedom, children's magazines like *Shōnen Club* reappeared and Japan entered into an era which led them to recreate their economy and lifestyles (Schodt, 1983).

1.3 The God of Comics: Osamu Tezuka

The immense manga medium has flowered in the space of only four decades and like springtime in a desert it may disappear entirely from the face of society as rapidly as it appeared. Like the democratic political systems of the post-war period in which they flourished, pop culture like manga represent a highly specific form of culture based on the institution of political opposition and open social organization. (Kinsella, 2000, p.19)

The post war period in Japan led many changes in the social, political and economic structure of the nation. Manga reappeared and this time it was planning to stay long.

Osamu Tezuka appeared during that era and reinvented the term manga as a part of Japanese popular culture. His influence is not limited to Japan but he is also known as the 'God of Comics' and gained the title *Professor* for his contributions to the comic

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[8](1945–52) military occupation of Japan by the Allied Powers after its defeat in World War II. Theoretically an international occupation, in fact it was carried out almost entirely by U.S. forces under Gen. Douglas MacArthur. During the occupation period, Japanese soldiers and civilians from abroad were repatriated to Japan, arms industries were dismantled, and political prisoners were released. Wartime leaders stood trial for war crimes, and seven were executed. A new constitution (promulgated 1947), vesting power in a democratic government, replaced the Meiji Constitution; in it Japan renounced its right to wage war (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1383719/occupation-of-Japan).

world both in style and storytelling techniques. In today's manga and anime world he is the most referred person next to Hayo Miyazaki[9].

The reason of Tezuka's international popularity lies in the style that he adopted both for storytelling and drawing. His work was heavily influenced by American animation mostly from Walt Disney. He revolutionized the way of storytelling in the comic world by drawing novelistic stories of hundreds and hundreds of pages. Also in his drawing style, his use of panels like film frames, his combination of different perspectives and visual effects created the 'cinematic techniques' for comic books. Tezuka's cinematic inspirations also showed themselves in the sound effects used for comics, he took everyday sounds and applied them as text in order to create a more realistic storytelling. *Kimba the White Lion*, *Princess Knight* and *Astro Boy* are some of his widely known stories, which marked the beginning of a new era in conventions of manga and anime. Tezuka didn't stop at manga, he also tried to use those cinematic inspirations on animation, in 1960s, which ended up being revolutionary for that medium too. Astro Boy's anime can be given as an internationally successful and renowned example of this, which is still considered as a classic and already turned into a animated movie by Hollywood in 2009. He was the most influential manga artist in whole Japan and almost all of the major manga artists in industry today admits that they were influenced by him and many has chosen to become a manga artist after they read Tezuka (Schodt, 1983, 1996; Branner, 2000; Patten, 2004).

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[9] Hayao Miyazaki (宮崎 駿, Miyazaki Hayao, born January 5, 1941) is a prominent Japanese filmmaker of many popular animated feature films. He is also a co-founder of Studio Ghibli, an animation studio and production company. Miyazaki's films have generally been financially successful, and this success has invited comparisons with American animator Walt Disney. In 2006, Time Magazine voted Miyazaki one of the most influential Asians of the past 60 years. In 2005, he was named one of the Time 100 Most Influential People. Anime directed by Miyazaki that have won the Animage Anime Grand Prix award have been Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind in 1984, Castle in the Sky in 1986, My Neighbor Totoro in 1988, and Kiki's Delivery Service in 1989. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hayao_Miyazaki).

Schodt describes the era started after Tezuka's revolution like that:

> The result was a form of comics that has far fewer words than its American or European counterpart and that uses far more frames and pages to depict and action or a thought. If an American comic book might use a single panel with word balloons and narration to show how Superman once rescued Lois Lane in the past, the Japanese version might use ten pages and no words. (Schodt, 1996, p. 25)

What we call manga today owes a lot to Osamu Tezuka when it comes to style, storytelling and its unique cinematic language which no other comic book school has. Comic book world has changed since his revolutionary techniques are turned into the new traditions and convention of the modern manga.

Today, as Schodt (1996) says, "in a nutshell, the modern Japanese manga is a synthesis: a long Japanese tradition of art that entertains has taken on a physical form imported from the West."(p. 21).

1.4 Target Demographics and the Manga Industry

Aside from being grouped under its various subjects, manga is most basically grouped according to its targeted readers. It was originally created for males and its production was also male dominated with male manga-kas[10], editors and publishers. But with the addition of new genres of Girls' manga starting from 1960s, the age and gender of the readers became heterogeneous by the 1970s and 1980s. The target demographic categories turned into stylistic categories to define the art style and the content of the

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[10] Mangaka (漫画家?) is the Japanese word for a comic artist or cartoonist. Outside of Japan, manga usually refers to a Japanese comic book and mangaka refers to the author of the manga, who is usually Japanese. As of 2006, about 3000 professional mangaka were working in Japan(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mangaka).

manga. The most basic and commonly known categories are Shōjo and Shōnen with their grown up versions Josei and Seinen.

Shōnen manga is manga with a target demographic of young boys generally between the ages of about 10 and 17. They typically include high-action, often humorous plots featuring male protagonists. Female characters are attractive with exaggerated features are also common. The art style of shōnen is generally less flowery than that of shōjo manga, however it is also followed by girls, if they become popular series. On the other hand Shoujo manga is manga with a target demographic of female audience roughly between the ages of 10 and 18. It covers many subjects in a variety of narrative and graphic styles, from historical drama to science fiction often with a strong focus on human and romantic relationships and emotions. Shōjo manga is highly influenced by the dream-like aesthetics and its drawing style is unrealistic with large eyed, cute characters and their themes consist of romance, inner-world, relationships, fashion, school-life and drama. Even though both of these are targeting young boys and girls, they are also read by adult women and men.

Mari Kotani suggests, quoting the psychologist Watanabe Tsuneo, in her article "Metamorphosis of the Japanese Girl",

> It is the sharpness of the boundary between *shōnen* manga and *shōjo* manga that created sophisticated generic patterns as well as the possibility for the transgressing genre/gender. This is something of a paradox: the more socially conservative and rigid the worlds of *shōjo* and *shōnen* become, the more transgression becomes possible. (Lunning (ed.), 2006, p. 167)

Josei manga is created mostly by women for late teenage and adult female audiences. Basically the stories tend to be about everyday experiences of women living in Japan. The style is also a more restrained, realistic version of shōjo manga, keeping some of the

flimsy features and getting rid of the very large sparkly eyes. What defines josei is some degree of stylistic continuity of comics within this particular demographic; they can portray realistic romance, as opposed to the mostly idealized romance of shōjo manga. It tends to be both more explicit and contain more mature storytelling. The male equivalent of josei is seinen. Seinen is a subset of manga that is generally targeted at an 18–30 year old male audience, but the audience can be much older or even younger. It has a wide variety of art styles and more variation in subject matter, ranging from the avant-garde to the pornographic [11].

To start with, and give a major description of those target demographics, let's have a look at Shōnen first, which has the largest piece on the industrial pie chart, and then move on to Shōjo.

As mentioned before shōnen manga is the type of manga that targets young boys, so in relation the main genre that dominates this type of manga is action/adventure and the stories are based on the male character and his emotional and physical development as he gets through the difficulties in the plot. What is important in here is the fact that the male lead characters share very common characteristics that are defined according to the ideal Japanese masculinity. The shōnen manga adopts traditional gendered behaviour and roles for their male characters are mirroring the Japanese society itself. Some of the most common characteristics are being the provider, the protector and being authoritative.

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[11] Definitions of Josie and Seinen are taken from Wikipedia as Wikipedia is used as a source for the jargon in this thesis. The reason wikipedia is used because there are no dictionaries other then fan based terminalogy that is listed in the dictionaries of the fansites. Wikipedia provided a more commonly used and more dependable source for this kind of explanations. **Josei.** (2010). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved April 10, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josei_manga. **Seinen.** (2010). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved April 10, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seinen

Quiet opposite to shōnen, which has been there since the beginning, shōjo manga has gained its momentum back in 1970s with the entrance of many more female manga-kas into sector and they soon became manga written by women, about women for women. It was also the time when women in Japan started to choose different life styles then the traditional gender roles expected them to take. The target reader of shoujo manga is young, almost adult girls but it is also read by different age and gender demographics too.

Mari Kotani points that,

> Shōjo manga, as a category, was originally constructed *for* female writers and readers but controlled *by* decidedly conservative male editors. On the other hand, female desire has enabled women manga artists to create a range of different narratives and representations of sexuality, some of which take great risks and generate scandals. On the other hand, male authorities do not exactly frown on these forms, surely because they remain under the rubric of *Shōjo* manga. Thus, even as *Shōjo* manga construct hyperfeminized images of girls in a hyperfeminized society, *Shōjo* manga are also able to evade the imposition of patriarchal categories.(Lunning (ed.), 2006, p. 167)

The dominant genre of this category is romance. The female character is usually portrayed in pursuit of perfect love or happiness (preferably due to love) in life. Shoujo manga mainly deals with the future dreams and the heroine's adventure while trying to reach that future. The main female character is around the ages between a junior high student (12-13) and a high school student (17-18), but never older than a college student because it simply represents women before marriage. The dreams and hopes of the adolescent girls dominate the general mood of shoujo manga. The plot is usually (unless it's a long series) becomes secondary to relationship development between the heroine and her object of affection. The places chosen in the manga (especially in the short series) are also everyday places like school, home or the local bookstore/café. The

situations and the places are designed in a way so that the reader can identify with. Aside from that, many shōjo manga has the 'slice of life' part in it, promising that the happenings of everyday life events might turn into a fairytale like story.

1.5 Manga Industry and the Production Cycle

As much as it's a culture and a social medium, manga is also an industry with its own dynamics. Manga is something that is produced; there is a labor force, there is a market and there is a demand and supply.

In Japan, manga industry is a major part of the publishing industry, which occupies the forty percent of the publishing market in terms of volume.

- Shōnen(boys') magazines are on the top: 38.4%

- Seinen(men's) magazines are the second: 37.7%

- Shōjo(girls') magazines comes thrird: 8.8%

- Josei(women's) magazines are fourth: 6.7%

- Other audiences come last which includes, boys' love, gag manga, sports, hobbies etc.:8.4% (Gravett 2004; Brenner 2007)

Manga, in Japan, are usually serialized in telephone book-size manga magazines, often containing many stories each presented in a single episode to be continued in the next issue. If the series is successful, they republish the collected chapters in paperback books called *tankōbon*. A manga artist (they are called manga-ka) has few assistants and work in a small studio, with a creative editor from a commercial publishing company. If a manga

series become popular enough, then it ends up being animated after or even during its run.

Manga production cycle requires an intense work and is solitary in nature due to the fact that manga-kas own or co-own their creations, which is the opposite of U.S comic market. Unlike American comics artists, manga-kas have the freedom to create when, where and how they want. But this comes with a price: manga-kas have exhausting schedules and they have to dedicate most of their time to the creation of that manga. The art of manga is still done in the traditional way: by hand. This weighs down the major work on manga-kas shoulder and computers are only used for limited assistance; for backgrounds, screen tones and clean-up work (Lehmann, 2005; Brenner, 2007).

There is a routine and a group work that should be followed during the creation of manga. Since the time of Osamu Tezuka, the storylines increased in length and this is reflected on the number of pages. A manga-ka might devote the next ten years of his or her life for writing one manga like in the case of *Inuyasha* (1999-2009), *Bleach* (2001-ongoing) or *FullMetal Alchemist* (2001-ongoing), which are highly and internationally popular series that are continuously serialized for the past decade.

The weekly production cycle of manga has its own dynamics and requires a trustworthy and solid relationship between the manga-ka, editor and the assistants. This production cycle starts on Sunday night or early on Monday morning between the editor and the manga-ka in order to discuss what will happen in the next chapter. Then nēmu is created, as a rough pencil sketch of that chapter. When a decision is made on that pencil outline manga-ka begins to pencil the actual pictures, speech bubbles etc. which takes two to three days. The assistants and editors might provide research materials like

photographs or books on the subject in order to help the manga-ka during that creative process. Editors also stay with the manga-ka during that 'penciling' in order to supervise the artist. By Wednesday the draft is completed and checked by the editor. This process continues until the editor is satisfied with the work. Assistants who work on the draft continues to work after the draft is accepted by the editor; this time mainly for inking and drawing the backgrounds. This process also takes about two days and finishes about Friday. During that time the editor works on the typeset lettering of the speech bubbles and lettering that is ordered on a Wednesday usually arrives within the next day. Thursday is like a day off for the editors while waiting for the ink manuscript from the manga-ka until Friday. When the ink manuscripts arrive, manga script is cut into separate pieces and the lettering is glued into the speech bubbles. After that the completed manuscript is checked by the editor and then the chief editor or vice-chief editor for spelling mistakes, sentence and picture quality. After this last stage is completed the manuscript is sent to an art-work company or department, during sometime on Saturday. Sundays are marked as the day off for manga-kas until the new cycle begins on Sunday night or Monday morning (Kinsella 2000).

1.6 Manga as a Medium

This heavy production schedule and cycle serves for a purpose: creating a medium. As said before, manga is a culture and a social medium which has the contents to influence social subjects and become a source of socialization and communication.

As Frederik L. Schodt (1996) points, "in today's Japan, manga magazines are one of the most effective ways to reach a mass audience and influence public opinion."(p. 19)

Sharon Kinsella also states and gives the statistics in order to create an estimation in our minds,

> The actual readership of manga is approximately three times as high as their circulation figures. Each magazine sold is read by an average three people. Jump(a weekly manga magazine), which sold 6.5 million copies a week, may have been read by 20 million people or one sixth of the total national population in 1995. Reading books and magazines on the hoof in the book shops and convenience stores is a common pastime activity. Used manga magazines are often left on the train seats, public benches, or paper recycling bins, where other commuters (and illegal vendors of second hand magazines), can pick them up. Paper recycling bins located on train platforms double as free manga banks for passer-by. The most common form of 'multiple reading' however is between classmates and household members. (Kinsella, 2000, p. 43)

This numbers and facts show that manga is a medium that can reach any place anytime. The distribution shouldn't have to be made specifically but the social conditions achieve the goal on its own and manga becomes a part of that society without the concern of being able to reach masses. Unlike TV or newspaper, manga can get in and out of every hole, by the very hands of the social subjects with the slightest effort.

Schodt also mentions about this phenomenon and calls manga a 'meta media',

> Manga today are a type of 'meta media' at the core of a giant fantasy machine. A production cycle typically begins with a story serialized in a weekly, bi weekly, monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly magazine. The story, if successful, is then compiled into a series of paperbacks and deluxe hardback books, then produced as an animated series for television, and then made into a theatrical feature. For a particularly popular or long-running series, the cycle may be repeated several times. One manga story thus become fuel not just for the world's largest animation industry, but for a burgeoning business in manga-inspired music CDs, character-licensed toys, stationery, video games, operas, television dramas, live action films, and even manga-inspired novels. (Schodt, 1996, pp. 20-1)

Japan has accepted manga as a part of their national culture which accordingly turned manga into an important medium for Japanese government agencies and institutions. Manga started to be seen as a symbol of change for the institutions and individuals who want to reform national culture and politics; it was also important for altering the image of Japan around the world. Previously manga was seen as a culture of lower classes but as the nation promoted it to higher quality culture within domestic culture it became an indication of a more liberal and multicultural social environment. This also increased the acceptance of previously excluded social and cultural formations by the Japanese society. Japanese companies also started to use manga to overcome social barriers. Upon its entrance to Europe and America, manga also became a cultural messenger for the distribution of the new and reformed Japanese culture (Kinsella, 2000).

2. GLOBAL INTERATION AND THE OVERSEAS INFLUENCE OF MANGA

2.1 Manga as Japan's 'Soft Power'

As stated before manga became an important medium for Japan in reforming their national culture and politics; and altering the image of Japan around the world. With the rise of anime and manga as cultural products, Japan decided to use it to reconstruct its national image and political relations, starting with its Asian neighbors Korea and China.

During the World War II, Japan exercised hard military power, especially in Asia, due to the nationalist and militarist war policies of the government, which eventually damaged the image of Japan internationally. Today Japan is trying to rebuild the bridges in between and construct an image of a nation that is softer, creative and still traditional but more open to West in the eyes of the world by using its culture and cultural products.

As P.E. Lam puts,

> Post-war Japan cannot exercise hard military power to coerce other states. Shackled by constitutional restrictions (the no-war clause of Article 9) and mass pacifism after the nation's catastrophic defeat in war, Tokyo has to adopt a soft

approach like foreign aid and cultural diplomacy in its foreign relations. In this regard, Japan today is different from other great powers which wield both 'hard' and 'soft' power - it lacks the will and capability to exercise 'hard power'. (Lam, 2007, p. 354)

Soft power, as a term, is first defined by Joseph S. Nye in 1990, who used it to describe

the growing importance of using unconventional and non-traditional ways to influence

others. The ability of soft power basically lies in co-opt, rather than the traditional

coerce (Otmazgin, 2008).

Anne Allison summarizes and discusses Nye's description in terms of Japan,

> At work in here is a new kind of global imagination, or new at least in the way it differs from an older model of Americanization. Joseph Nye has defined the latter in terms of what he calls soft power, the 'ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments,' which 'arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas, and policies' (2004 x). Power of this nature comes from inspiring the dreams and desires of others through projecting images about one's own culture that are broadly appealing and transmitted through channels of global communication(such a s television and film). Thus far only the United States has had the soft power ─ in the strength of its cultural industries and the appeal of a culture that has translated around the world as rich, powerful, and exciting─ to dominate the global imagination. But not only America's soft power ebbing today because, in part, of the global unpopularity of such U.S-led initiatives as the Iraq war, so too is the desirability─ even in the United States─ of a more monolithic, monochromatic fantasy world.(Lunning(ed.), 2006, p. 17)

In Today's world there is a shift in the soft power and a competitor of U.S, with the rise

of Japan's *Kawaii* culture[12] and J-cool[13] that has spread all around the world with the help

of fashion, music and food. As N. K. Otmazgin (2008) states, "the Japanese

government's efforts to promote the country's cultural exports are being encouraged by

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[12] Since the 1970s, cuteness, in Japanese kawaii (literally, "loveable" or "adorable") has become a prominent aspect of Japanese popular culture, entertainment, clothing, food, toys, personal appearance, behavior, and mannerisms(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuteness_in_Japanese_culture).

[13] An abbreviation used for Japanese Cool, an emergin cultural new-age wave that includes Japanese popular culture items fashion, music, manga etc.

its realization that multimedia and culture related industries are occupying a growing segment of the economy." (p.77). One of the best examples of this is the worldly renowned fictional character of Japan, Hello Kitty[14] (Figure 2.1). The trademark of the Japanese *Kawaii* culture, the ambassador of cute, Hello Kitty was promoted as the Japan tourism ambassador in May 2008, in order to attract more tourists and spread the influence of 'cute' culture. Japan also has an 'anime ambassador' from another fictional character; a blue robo-cat called Doraemon (Figure 2.2), which has become one of the most successful character overseas both in terms of economic profits and cultural influence.

Figure 2.1
Hello Kitty
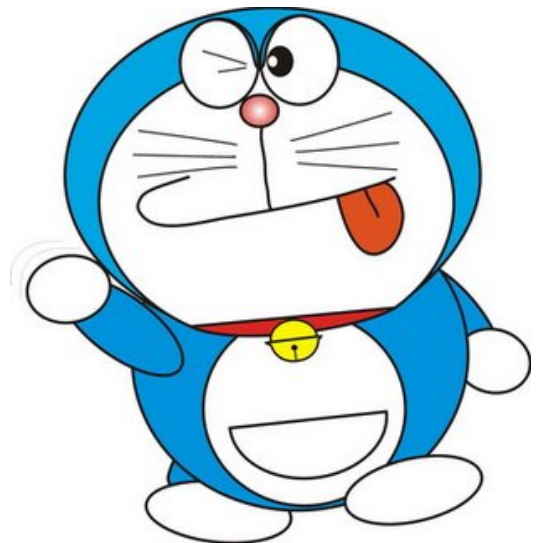
Figure 2.2
Doraemon

As one can see Japan uses the elements of popular culture, which has a high rate of return both economically and culturally, and it plays an important role regarding the

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[14] cartoon character whose likeness adorns hundreds of products for children and adults throughout the world. Created in 1974 by the Japanese merchandising company Sanrio and known internationally as Hello Kitty, Kitty White is a small, round-faced, white cartoon cat with black eyes, a yellow nose, no mouth, and a red bow perched on her left ear (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1488596/Hello-Kitty).

national image of Japan in the international arena. J-cool becomes a form of 'soft power' and manga, in terms of it, becomes one of the most efficient tools to spread that and tell the world what and who Japan is. Quiet accordingly, as a medium, manga is a wide platform with its broad subjects, characteristic styles and large variety of by-products like anime, toys and computer games. Through manga one can easily have a glimpse of Japanese traditions, family values, social roles and conduct, educational concerns, trends of the youth, understanding of love, life and death, Japanese food, fashion and of course Japanese language. It is a way in which Japan has the opportunity to talk about itself, spread the popular culture and inform the world about the imagination and the tradition of the Japanese.

As Susan J. Napier points and discusses,

> In fact, as we have seen in the last decade, Japanese visual and popular culture have become virtually synonymous with the term "soft power." Prevented by its constitution from possessing an army and yet wielding increasing economic dynamism globally through its pop cultural products (which ranged from video games, anime, and manga to the cuddly "billion dollar feline" Hello Kitty), Japan has come to seem the quintessential example of soft power. Moreover, soft power itself increasingly seems to be the quintessential late-millennium mode, a force created through a unique nexus of circumstances (the rise of technology in particular, developments in recording and communication; the development of amaan increasingly affluent and sophisticated consumer culture; and the opening of markets worldwide) that are now seen as integral parts of the larger phenomenon of globalization. (Napier, 2007,p. 170-1)

But aside from all, also considering the effects of globalization and colonialism throughout history, one has to look at the cultural, historical and political dynamics between the East and the West, in order to understand how Japanese popular culture has risen and became a subject of soft power.

Looking back at Japan's history, it is a country that encountered with Western civilization outside the colonialism context. This fact in itself changes West's attitude towards Japan, since the country was discovered in a way that West couldn't alter or reshape in the way of colonialism. As Napier (2007) puts, "in the Western imagination, Japan has existed as an object of respect, fear, derision, admiration, and yearning, sometimes all at once." (p.2)

Japan has opened its doors to West for the first time in 1853, when Commodore Matthew C. Perry forced them to do so. Back at then Japan was a semi-feudal island ruled under a military ruler; Shogun. There was a four-class system dominated by the large, warrior elite class Samurais, who were both warriors and bureaucrats. Japan was also maintaining a policy of isolation from other nations and avoiding foreign intrusion. Only the Dutch and the Chinese could do trade and each one has access only to one port. Russia, France, and England tried for many years, but foreigners were permitted so they couldn't succeed. It was Commodore Perry's naval expedition under United States that cracked Japan's trade and travel barriers for the first time.[15]

> A few decades after Perry, this system would be totally transformed—the four-class system and the samurai caste who ran it swept away by a mammoth wave of modernization and Westernization, in which the Japanese eagerly tried to import ideas from abroad. Unusually, this was a wave that the new Japanese elite was trying to control, or at least engage with, in a wholesale attempt to avoid following the colonial or at least semi-colonial fates of its neighbors, China and India, and, ultimately, virtually all of the rest of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. While Japan could not entirely avoid some initial Western dominance in the form of the forced opening of a number of its ports and an unequal treaty system, the country is one of the very few non-Western nations that retained its independence throughout the most intense years of Western imperialism. (Napier, 2007, p. 14)

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[15] **colonialism, Western**. (2010). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved May 28, 2010, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/126237/colonialism

Susan J. Napier points out, there are few possible reasons for Japan to stay uncolonized during the time that the world was swept by the Western imperialism. First was the fact that Japan was a small island with very few resources and second, by the time West recognized and turned towards Japan, they were ready and would do anything to avoid the cultural, economic and military suppression that India and China has gone under. Also, as we have mentioned earlier, the Westernization period that Japan went through caused many cultural and economic reforms which were based on Western models and capitalist system. And accordingly Japan did not only adopt Western military techniques but also West's colonial aspirations (Napier 2007). In the end Japan tried to adapt itself to the Westernization and modernization instead of West forcing them to adapt, by taking their culture and reforming, using their resources as they brought civilization as in the case of colonization. Furthermore Japan started to use what it has adapted; soon Japan was rising as an Imperialist nation within the Asia, becoming a military and cultural power on its own.

> Japan's hard power was bolstered by a continuous stream of soft-power successes. The tremendous admiration for Japanese arts and crafts that had been sweeping Europe and the United States since the late nineteenth century, combined with the respect toward the country's impressive military victories and the fact that they had become an imperialist power in their own right, meant that the West had to take Japan far more seriously. Soon, respect and admiration began to intertwine with a growing fear that Japan was becoming too good at following the path of Western imperialism. Ultimately, Japan's growing empire would provoke a backlash in the 1920s and 1930s as the European nations, in a panic that was partly racist and partly competitive, began to try to freeze the country out of great power status. In turn, these actions helped push the Japanese in an even more aggressive direction, the final fruits of which were their invasion of China, their attack on Pearl Harbor, and their ultimate defeat at the hands of American atomic bombs."(Napier, 2007, p. 15)

According to Koichi Iwabuchi (2006), before World War II, Japan was exercising the colonization strategy on the rest of the Asia, distinguishing itself from them, and setting its culture as a superiority. During this period of Japanese Imperialism, Japan came to

rise above other Asian countries, which ended up separating Japan from the rest of the 'Asia' as they became two separate entities. The fact that Asia was representing *traditional* or *underdeveloped* and West representing *developed* was important for Japan's construction of its national identity where the world order was modern and Wes-dominated. The role of the modern Other which was to be followed and emulated was played by 'the West', when 'Asia' represented a negative picture as Japan's past in order to show how Japan has been modernized regarding the Western standards. In the end an oriental Orientalism was what Japan has constructed against Asia (Allen & Sakamato, 2006).

> Japan is represented and represents itself as culturally exclusive, homogeneous and uniquely particularistic through the operation of a strategic binary opposition between two imaginary cultural entities, 'Japan' and 'the West'. This is not to say that 'Asia' has no cultural significance in the construction of Japanese national identity. Rather, the complicity between Western Orientalism and Japan's self-Orientalism effectively works only when Japanese cultural power in Asia is subsumed under Japan's cultural subordination to the West. While Japan's construction of its national identity through an unambiguous comparison of itself with 'the West' is a historically embedded project, Japan's modern national identity has always been imagined in an asymmetrical totalizing triad between 'Asia', 'the West' and 'Japan'.(Allen & Sakamato, 2006, p. 19)

This strategy seems like it affected the West's approach towards Japan. During the modernization and Japanese imperialism era, Japan made an impression on the others and created a different national identity than other Asian countries. All those military, economic and cultural reforms; and the so called 'opening to West', also, caused a different perception in the eyes of Westerns as well as it opened new opportunities for Japan in the sense of being a global cultural influence for arts, crafts and philosophy.

2.2 Manga Characters: West as Japan's Ideal Ego

Japan's fascination with West, western ideology and Western aesthetics manifests openly in one of the most specific and distinguishable feature of Japanese manga: character drawings. There is one stylistic feature of the manga phenomenon that is globally known and recognized, even by the ones who only heard it by name: it's the way that the characters are drawn. Stylistically speaking, manga characters are drawn with long legs, huge eyes-if they want to draw attention to young age, innocence or if it's a shōjo heroine-, beautiful hair in different colors etc., which seems to be depicting a Westerner rather than a Japanese (Figure 2.3, 2.4, 2.5).

Figure 2.3 *Bleach* manga, Chapter 119 color spread by Kubo Tite

Figure 2.4 *Bleach* manga, Chapter 317, color spread by Kubo Tite

Figure 2.5 *Bleach* manga, Chapter 335, color spread by Kubo Tite

As Schodt states,

> When most foreigners look at manga for the first time today and see characters with huge saucer eyes, lanky legs and what appears to be blonde hair, they often want to know why there are so many 'Caucasian' people in the stories. When told that most of these characters are not 'Caucasian' but 'Japanese', they are flabbergasted. (Schodt, 1996, p. 59)

It was during Osamu Tezuka's time that the Japanese artists realized drawing 'Caucasian' looking characters attracted more attention from their Japanese readers, so depicting Japanese characters with Caucasian features became established as a stylistic convention (Schodt, 1996). However this aesthetic tendency traces back in history and returns to the time when Commodore Perry forced open Japans doors to West in 1853.

Before that Japanese aesthetic understanding was different, the depiction of Japanese was more 'Japanese' in a sense with eyes and mouths drawn smaller and body drawn in different proportions (Figure 2.6). Also the way Japanese artists draw westerns have changed, previously 'Europeans' were drawn as hairy freaks with big noses. When Japan met West and Western concept of aesthetic, they had a major shift in their aesthetic understanding. Japanese started to take classic Greek model as basis for their drawing proportions (Schodt, 1996).

> Defeat in the World War II caused a national loss of confidence that clearly extended to Japan's self-image. Western ideals of beauty were not only accepted but pursued, of then to a ludicrous degree (operations to remove the epicanthic fold of skin over the eye, which creates the graceful, curved look in Asian eyes, are still popular). Nowhere was this tendency more pronounced than in manga. (Schodt, 1996, pp. 60-1)

Figure 2.6 A miniature god of wealth dancing, 19th century, by Kunisada Utagawa.

It is a known fact in Japanese history that during the Meiji Era (1868-1912), while Japan was going under modernization, Western influence and admiration was at its most. It was during that time that the West was idolized in the eyes of Japanese, and being 'western' and 'modern' was set as the highest goal. Referring back to Iwabuchi we remember that the West, Asia and Japan were set as three different cultural entities in the Japanese discourse. And Japan, while exercising cultural power and imperialism on the rest of the Asia, went under the cultural subordination of the West. While trying to adapt the western norms of modernization and culturally distinguishing itself from the rest of the Asia, Japan also set those norms and their adaptation as a distinguishing fact, as a step towards the westernization and modern national identity of Japan. Since then, for Japan, West has been the 'ideal ego', that Japan has been striving to reach, where Japan itself stays as the ego-ideal, the nation in transition with chaos and uncertainty.

Jacques Lacan describes ideal ego as the state of ideal perfection to which the ego strives to emulate. It comes out during the mirror stage and it is associated with the symbolic order. The mirror stage, according to Lacan's module on psychosexual development, occurs between the ages of 6-18 months. It is the stage when the subject sees himself in a mirror and recognizes himself as the 'I' and identifies with his own image. The image on the mirror, 'Ideal-I' (or ideal ego), is a representation of a simplified, bounded and whole form of the self, the way the subject wants to be, in opposition with the chaotic feelings and needs that the subject is in. On the other hand, ego-ideal is described as when the subject looks at itself from that ideal point of perfection and sees his imperfection and feels inefficient (Miller, 1981; Miller, 1988).

With in that context if we return back to Japan's place in history and recognition as a world power, we might explain Japan's relationship with West as the ideal-ego and its self-positioning within the Asia as it looks at itself as the ego-ideal. We said that for Japan, setting West as the ideal-ego was during the time when America opened Japan's doors. Before that Japan was a small feudal island, closed to others, and protective of its culture and land. However this forced meeting with the west, represents Japan's 'birth' and the first thing Japan sees is a modern West where the ideologies, politics and culture is different, more organized and even sophisticated; and this is when Japan starts to see West as the ideal-ego, an ideal of perfection that Japan should reach. On the other hand when Japan looked at itself from the western and modern perception what it sees was its traditional, closed self in opposition to West's image. So Japan set the rest of Asia as its ego-ideal, and started work to become like West, passed new laws and adopted new ideologies during the modernization period.

Iwabuchi puts this, referring to Stefan Tanaka and Sang Jung Kang,

> Japan is located in a geography called 'Asia', but it no less unambiguously exists outside a cultural imaginary of 'Asia' in Japanese mental maps. This points to the fact that 'Asia' has overtly or covertly played a constitutive part in Japan's construction of national identity. While 'the West' played the role of the modern Other to be emulated, 'Asia' was cast as the image of Japan's past, a negative picture which tells of the extent to which Japan has been successfully modernized according to the Western standard. (Allen & Sakamato, 2006, p. 19)

This, setting West as the 'modern Other to be emulated', also helped Japan to find its place in the community of others. West becomes the ideal-ego and, as we have stated Lacan associates ideal-ego with the symbolic order. Within the symbolic order subject enters into the language and accepts the rules of the society so that he can deal with others. This becomes possible when the subject accepts the Name-of-the-Father, in which the restrictions and laws regulates subject's desire and the rules of the communication. This entrance into language is also made possible when the self recognizes its image, and through that understanding of the place of that image, the subject negotiates his or her relationship with others (Miller, 1981; Miller, 1988).

By accepting the norms, laws and ideologies of the West, Japan sets Westernization and modernization as the Name-of-the-Father that are the laws and restrictions that controls Japan's desires and rules of communication within the modern world. By the rules and language of the Western other Japan has been trying to make itself a place within the world order, and in order deal with the western and modern others Japan had to distinguish itself from the rest of the Asia and talk the language of the West in terms of modernization. So by accepting West, Japan sets a relationship of its own with modern others. On the other hand, as Japan reforms its national and traditional expressions, leaving Asia as the ego-ideal, it negotiates for a place in that modern and global world

order. It establishes an 'I' that looks up to the West as the modern Other and Asia as its old, chaotic self. Within the context, the resolution of this chaotic self into the new national identity formation happens when the perception of West changes after the meeting with the West. A civilization which was depicted as the low other, the uncivilized and unsophisticated, started to be perceived as an ideal form of modernity and aesthetics (Figure 2.7, 2.8). This resolution represents a passage of West from the low other to ideal-ego, in the Japanese historical context.

Figure 2.7 Mid-19th century drawing of Commodore Perry by an unknown artist. This form of drawing vanished after a few years, only to be used in caricature.

Figure 2.8 A cartoon by Wirgman in Japan Punch, showing how Europeans 'must have looked like' to the Japanese. They are depicted as hairy and ungainly people with big noses.

Returning back, we can consider manga as one of the platforms where that negotiation with the others takes place. While trying to find a place and communicate with the communities of other, Japan uses the image of its ideal-ego, to represent its modern self to others (Figure 2.9). But Japan also keeps national and traditional side of its self, which tells that what is established can both be modern and traditional at the same time (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.9 Ichigo and Rukia depicted in Western outfit for a party theme for the *Bleach* card collection
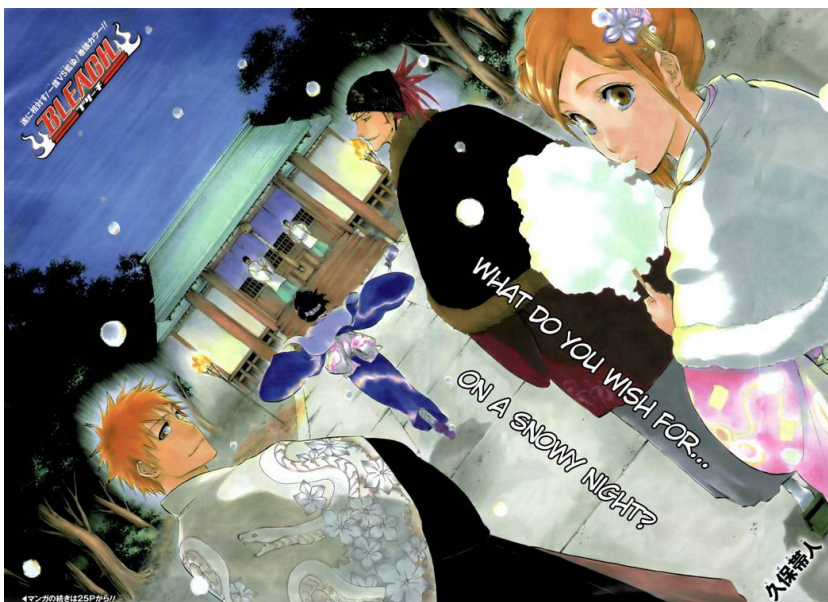
Figure 2.10 *Bleach* manga, color spread, by Kubo Tite: Characters drawn in traditional kimonos, visiting the shrine for Christmas wishing

2.3 The 'Invasion' of United States and Japanese Popular Culture

Japan's trial of redeeming its violent activities and policies during the World War II has a big role in its tendency towards the usage of the 'soft power' in order to make the world see Japan from a different perspective. Also using culture as soft power was not a first time strategy for Japan as, as we pointed before, due to its different cultural dynamics with West and how Japan is perceived as a place of creativity, imagination and an object of respect and admiration.

Furthermore there were the global new trends such as globalization, which gained importance and momentum, and the rise of cultural consumption; and the disarmament policies of the nations after the World War II created opportunities for the new kind of 'weapons' that are more powerful than real weapons and hard power to take over the world and get an acknowledgment. Popular culture, thus, became one of the most efficient 'weapons' of 21st century for a cultural 'invasion'[16] and an international recognition.

As Koichi Iwabuchi states in his article "Japanese Popular Culture and Postcolonial Desire for Asia",

> It was a time when Japan began reasserting its Asian identity after a long retreat following the defeat of World War II, when the cultural geography of 'Asia' reappeared in the Japanese national imaginary at the very time when Japan faced the challenge of (re)constructing its national/cultural identity in the era of globalization. While the Japanese popular cultural encounter with other Asian countries in the 1990s was more multiple, contradictory and ambivalent than a totalizing and cavalier Japanese Orientalist conception of 'Asia' would suggest, Japan's condescending sense of being the leader of Asia and the asymmetrical power relationship between Japan and (the rest of) Asia are still intact. Japan's cultural nationalist project has been reconfigured within a transnational and

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[16] It is the term used by Roland Kelts in his 2006 book 'Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture has invaded the U.S' to define the arrival and the following consumption of Japanese culture in United States.

postcolonial framework, which increasingly capitalizes on the regional cultural resonance in Asia. (Allen & Sakamato, 2006, p. 17)

In the light of that when we look at the history of manga and anime becoming popular in the global marketplace and culture, we see that the first region it reached was Asia, most particularly Korea and China, who was sharing minimum cultural and linguistic differences. Today Korea and China produces and promotes their own comic book cultures called 'manhwa'[17] (Figure 2.11) and 'manhua'[18] (figure 2.12) which has similarities with Japanese manga both stylistically and plot-wise.

Figure 2.11
Korean Manhwa

Figure 2.12
Chinese Manhua

It was during 1970s, due to Japan's geographical and cultural proximity, Japanese manga, both in terms of art and publishing style, were adopted and soon became popular enough to replace the American-style comics in Asia. Manga also travelled across Europe and met little resistance given to the cultural differences, and its

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[17] Manga from South Korea. Unlike Japanese *manga, manhwa* are read left-to-right, like western books. Subcategories include *sunjeong manhwa* for girls, *sonyeon manhwa* for boys and *seongin manhwa* for adults(http://www.mangaka.co.uk/?page=manga-abc).

[18] Chinese comics, published for the most part in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Unlike *manga, manhua* typically comes in full color(http://www.mangaka.co.uk/?page=manga-abc).

popularity was partly riding on the popularity of Japanese animation which was aired on T.V or rented as video. Chris Blackwell started to play an important role in the distribution of manga when he built Manga Entertainment in 1991 in England; which its entry effected both the market and the manga subculture on the continent and even in U.S. Although the approaches of the countries in Europe and Asia are different to manga, the manga in Europe often came from Japan via the English- speaking world even if the works were translated into the local languages (Schodt, 1996).

This was the beginning of Japan finding its place in the global arena of popular culture and becoming transnational by opening up to different markets, advertising its cultural products and creating a global image for itself.

As Iwabuchi puts, referring also to Arjun Appadurai,

> With the emergence of an Asian capitalist sphere in which Japanese popular culture finds wider audiences, Japan's exploitative articulation of Asian cultural commonality has been reframed to accommodate itself to the disjunctive transnational flows of capital, cultural products and imagination (Appadurai 1996). Transnational popular cultural flows highlight the fact that it has become no longer tenable for Japan to contain its cultural orientation and agendas within clearly demarcated national boundaries. Yet, or perhaps precisely because of the impossibility of controlling the globalization process within a national framework, the transgressive tendency of popular culture and its boundary-violating impulse of cultural hybridization are never free from nationalizing forces, desperately seeking to re-demarcate cultural boundaries. (Allen & Sakamato, 2006, p. 18)

2.3.1 Manga in United States

Manga in the English-speaking world, most particularly in America, is a different story, on the other hand. The entrance of manga and anime hasn't been as smooth as it is today. The marketing concerns, cultural and linguistic differences among with the

targeted audience at that time played an important role in the distance that manga and anime covered in the English-speaking world, especially in U.S. America was the place where the comic book culture was widely accepted and consumed as a part of the American popular culture. Japanese manga, in those terms, started its way slowly, going through drastic alterations and as a product of anime when in truth it was the vice-a-versa.

America's first exposing to Japanese comics traces back to the early 20s and 30s, when Japanese artists in the United States were modeling comic strips from manga for American newspapers. Then came Osamu Tezuka's *Tetsuwan Atom*, or *Astro Boy* in its English title, to American television in 1963, telling the story of a little robot boy (Figure 2.13). NBC imported it and issued it as an American-style comic book drawn by an American. Both the comic book and the Japanese hero was not linked to Japan, even though they looked like Japanese, because of the editing and the English dubbing (Schodt, 1983; 1996).

Figure 2.13
The cover for Astro Boy volume 1 and 2 compilation by Dark Horse Comics.

However until 1980s, the only manga in English available was *Barefoot Gen*, which was a

semi-autobiographical manga telling the story of Hiroshima bombing. This triggered a

series of translated manga which were mostly short stories and based on anime. It was

the early 80s where changes started to happen. They started to broadcast subtitled

Japanese animation in UHF channels in cities where Japanese speaking population was

high but soon they discovered that it was also followed by many of the non-Japanese

who were curious about Japan. So came the heavily edited and dubbed shows like *Battle*

of the Planets, Star Blazers and *Robotech*, in which the story was originally a combination of

three separate Japanese animation into one with a whole new script written by Carl Macek. *Battle of the Planets* were first discovered by a New Yorker, and a T.V producer Sandy Frank for its *Star Wars* like potential in the market. Frank made the arrangements and made some agreements with the Japanese producers of the series and edited it with a team of his own for broadcasting on American television (Schodt, 1996; Kelts, 2006).

> Frank's team attempted a western whitewashing of the darker undercurrents in Japanese animation: No one died, plot points were softened by the R2-D2 clone, anomie was replaced by logic, or at least some signs of cause and effect, and the entire series was moved to a distant planet to avoid earthly unpleasantness. Frank's staff could neither read nor understand Japanese, so they spent painstaking hours in the studio matching English words to the mouth movements of the cartoon characters. They interpreted the plots visually and replaced the quirky-sounding Japanese tunes with America-friendly soundtracks. (Kelts, 2006, p.14)

Battle of the Planets, in the end, came to be known as a huge success, even today. After that came other shows like *Star Blazers* and *Speed Racer* (Figure 2.14, 2.15), which the famous Wachowski Brothers of *The Matrix* and *V for Vendetta* adapted into a movie in 2008. The popularity of these shows and their effect on American audience triggered the formation of fan based organizations.

Figure 2.14
Speed Racer Anime

Figure 2.15
Speed Racer Movie (2008)

Fred Patten, today a leading name in studies of manga and anime in U.S., found the *Cartoon/Fantasy Organization* in 1977, in Los Angeles. He also started the underground movement which is known as 'fansubs' today with his literate translations of many anime dialogs (Patten, 2004). Also following these organizations and fan base Japanese artists like Osamu Tezuka, Gō Nagai, Monkey Punch started to attend comic conventions in America.

Things have changed since the arrival of the manga and anime. In the beginning Japanese products were changed/turned into something that required little knowledge or deciphering on the part of the readers and audience. They were turned into things that could be easily grasped by non-Japanese people. The plot, music, character names and dialogs were re-written in the beginning but now the context has changed; now the 'coolness' of it lies in the original text, the original music, the original characters and deciphering them in the Japanese context.

Yoshiro Katsuoka, a planning director for Marvelous Entertainment, states that it's not

Japan that has changed but its America. According to him Japanese companies do not

feel the need to localize their products of popular culture anymore, like they were in the

past, in order to attract the attention of American audiences. He points that the manga

which is translated in English today keeps certain Japanese phrases and writing and it's

still considered cool by the U.S readers even though it is illegible and undecipherable.

He also states that the American tastes started to become more Japanese (cited in Kelts,

2006, p. 24).

Pokémon[19] (Figure 2.16) can be given as an example to that shift since it is one of the

biggest phenomenon, with Yu-Gi-Oh (Figure 2.17) and Mobile Suite Gundam (Figure

2.18), which entered the scene and the market in 1996 and has been there with the same

steadiness for the last fourteen years. Accordingly Kelts explains the phenomenon,

> The Pokemon phenomenon can serve as a Rosetta stone for the Japanese anime
> industry: a critical translation device that unlocked for Americans and Europeans
> an entirely new language of entertainment. Pokemon presented American kids
> with an anime that, because of the universal appeal of its toys, allowed them to
> decipher Japanese cartoons without cultural or linguistic prejudice. American
> kids had been playing with trading cards— swapping them, comparing them,
> and designing battles involving them—for decades. In Rosetta stone terms, the
> toys and games were the underlying text. The anime style that accompanied
> them was the "Japanizer" of the theme, allowing their diminutive consumers to
> absorb the very character of a distinct cultural style. (Kelts, 2006, p. 90)

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[19] Pokémon (ポケモン, Pokemon, English pronunciation: /ˈpoʊkeɪmɑːn/, POH-kay-mahn[1]) is a
media franchise published and owned by the video game company Nintendo and created by Satoshi Tajiri
in 1996. Originally released as a pair of interlinkable Game Boy role-playing video games, Pokémon has
since become the second most successful and lucrative video game-based media franchise in the world,
behind only Nintendo's own Mario series. Pokémon properties have since been merchandised into
anime, manga, trading cards, toys, books, and other media. The franchise celebrated its tenth anniversary
in 2006, and as of 23 April 2008 , cumulative sales of the video games (including home console versions,
such as the "Pikachu" Nintendo 64) have reached more than 186 million copies
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pokemon).
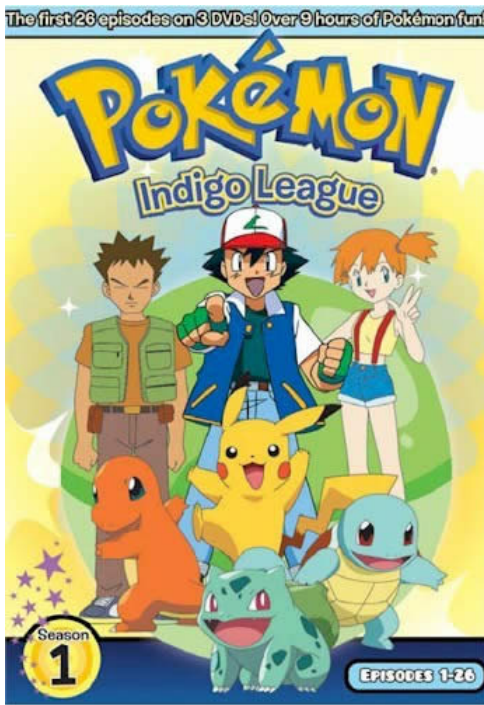
Figure 2.16
Pokémon: Indigo League DVD Box Set

Figure 2.17
 Cover of the Yu-Gi-Oh! Volume 1

Figure 2.18
Mobile Suit Gundam SEED Destiny

In Kelts' terms Pokémon started the 'colonization by anime' with its week-to-week plot

developments, new toy production system synchronized with those developments and

continuous demand for Pokémon related products in the market.

2.4 Manga as a Culture Industry

The continuous demand, huge market shares and increasing popularity of anime and manga triggers the exercise of soft power more easily. As mentioned before and Otmazgin (2008) points, soft power in today's international politics is used by a country with global influence to make others believe in the correctness and accept its principles and ideas. Culture, in this scheme, plays a role to strengthen the country's influence. And in this process, culture industries play a major role. "Propelled by commerce", Otmazgin (2008) states, "they are powerful carriers and distributors of values and beliefs; disseminating cultural products and images to accommodate a wide range of malleable audiences." (p. 77).

Today, for Japan, manga and anime occupy one of the biggest parts in Japanese Culture Industry, to promote the J-cool and make the world see the Japanese side of the story. What gives that power to manga and anime is the fact that they change and challenge the perceptions of the Western readers and audience. The subjects that are introduced and the way it's done helped the readers to develop different point of views and sometimes filled the gap that their own cultural products couldn't. As Susan J. Napier puts,

> In the late twentieth century the media of anime and manga countered the traditional notions of cartoons being only for children and may even have contributed to changing our consciousness as to what constitutes the nature of identity and reality. On a thematic level, manga and anime explorations of sexuality and romance offered not only compensation to young men uncertain about women, whom they increasingly saw as aggressive and selfish, but also a sense of liberation to gay and lesbian fans who found in the Japanese media representations of same-sex love, which were impossible in American media culture. The world of anime fandom itself can be seen as both liberating and compensating—allowing participants to try on new identities within a supportive communal space. (Napier, 2007, p. 8)

Within the dynamics of capitalism, globalization and the new era of technologies Japanese popular culture found its way as a culture industry. With the beginnings of the mass culture, the culture of consumption began to grow, as the line between high culture and low culture began to blur, and things became more accessible. Today's mass culture has infinitely broader and geographical and social reach, which helped the Japan boom to go beyond the elite and reach any consumer. The rise of new technologies, like recording technologies such as DVDs and the rise of Internet , also made it possible for Japanese cultural products to have a global reach (Napier, 2007). In addition, as Iwabuchi (2006) points, "the development of digitalized communication technologies has facilitated the simultaneous circulation of media information, images and texts on a global level. Various (national) markets are being penetrated and integrated by powerful global media giants such as News Corp., Sony and Disney."(Allen & Sakamato, 2006, p.15-6)

Manga and anime are a part of the culture industry because; one, they are one of the most globally consumed Japanese cultural product which are also the origins of other products like video games and toys; and two, their dynamics of production and consumption; like everything that belongs to culture industry, they are produced, reproduced and sold continuously. Their genres are like in the Hollywood movies, or maybe even more detailed and specific, creating a more distinct choice for the consumer. These genres are important for the production cycle because it helps to categorize, classify and determine the target demographics. A Shōnen manga, for example, might be targeting the young boys, but with the sub-genres it has in it, the potential for reaching more consumers is guaranteed. An action adventure sub-genre of Shōnen manga might not draw the attention of adults but if there is horror, mystery and

tragedy, like one of the most successful manga of the last recent years Death Note[20] (Figure 2.19), the targeted demographic of that manga enlarges so the production cycle changes and starts to make movies out of that manga for the adults while still producing the toys and cards for the younger generation.
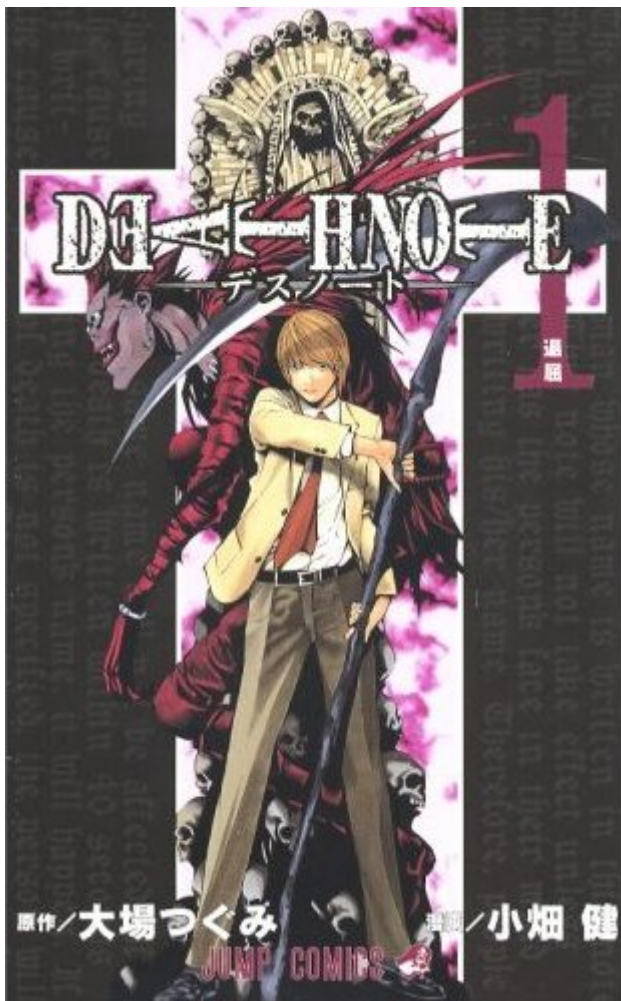
Figure 2.19
Cover of the first tankōbon for *Death Note* featuring Ryuk and Light Yagami

Also if a new genre gets established in the market, it's immediately taken into the culture industry, just like how Japanese anime and manga came to U.S. While America was a nation which is familiar with comic books and animations, Japanese version created an

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[20] Death Note (デスノート, Desu Nōto) is a Japanese manga series created by writer Tsugumi Ohba and manga artist Takeshi Obata. The series centers on Light Yagami, a high school student who discovers a supernatural notebook, the "Death Note", dropped on Earth by a shinigami (death god) named Ryuk. The Death Note grants its user the ability to kill anyone whose face they have seen, by writing the victim's name in the notebook. The story follows Light's attempt to create and rule a world cleansed of evil using the notebook, and the complex conflict between him, his opponents and a mysterious detective known to the world only as L (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_Note).

alternative that soon became a new genre. Remembering back, the subtitled anime were broadcasted for Japanese speaking population in the beginning, but soon its discovered that most of the followers were non-Japanese who were interested in Japan. Following this discovery and the potential behind it, they started to produce (production that consists editing, dubbing and sometimes even re-writing) those imported materials for the non-Japanese. And so the spread of Japanese culture began, as a genre of the existing culture industry, that soon became an important part of that culture industry.

Style-wise speaking, manga and anime style conform what Adorno and Horkheimer claims,

> To this the impulses of form have been reduced. As a result, the style of the culture industry, which has no resistant material to overcome, is at the same time the negation of style. The reconciliation of general and particular, of rules and the specific demands of the subject, through which alone style takes on substance, is nullified by the absence of tension between the poles: 'the extremes with touch' have become a murky identity in which the general can replace the particular and vice versa. (T.W. Adorno & M. Horkheimer, 1997, p. 102)

Though the Japanese style is still distinguishable, even through heavy editing and dubbing, its characteristic is generalized. Today 'manga-style' illustrations and drawings are widespread in use from children's books to flyers to toys, popular bands like Linking Park or Gorillaz, use anime-style animation for their videos (Figure 2.20). The high demand for the characteristic style triggers its common usage and cause a 'negation of style'. Today there are American 'manga' which is authored by Americans but drawn in Japanese style and resemble the Japanese version regarding its plot, characters and even page layouts. To form, in the end, loses its unique individuality while gaining a wide acceptance and reception on the way to its popularity and mass consumption. The

increase in demand for the style creates a serialization, a mass production as well as the generalization and negation of that style.
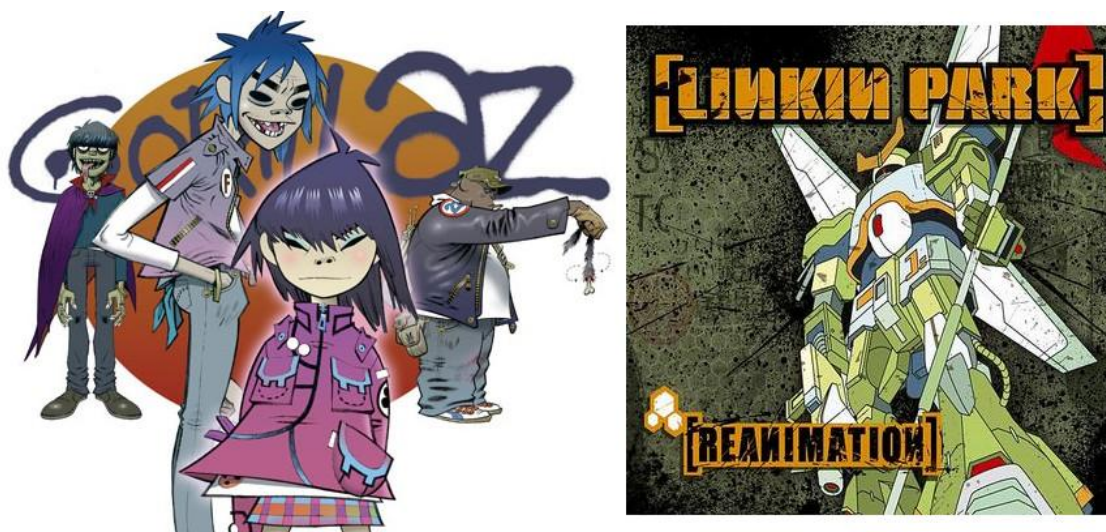
Figure 2.20
The cover of Linkin Park's Reanimation album and a poster of the band Gorillaz

The main point lies in the demand and supply for the Japanese style and the products of that style as "the culture industry endlessly cheats its consumers out of what it endlessly promises." (T.W. Adorno & M. Horkheimer, 1997, p. 111) The trick in the success of Pokémon over the fourteen years, for example, solely lies on that cheat. The promise of pleasure is in the plot that changes week-by-week, adding new adventures and characters. With everything new, of course, comes a new product, fresh out of the oven into the market, within the same week that the character is introduced in the series. The toy of the new character, character's game card and a series of new cards related to the characters adventure is added to the wide circle of products that Pokémon has.

Following, when something new is created, a new demand occurs and immediately supplied but it's not the last one, it never ends. The final satisfaction of seeing an end,

having all the toys and cards is never supplied and the consumer continues to demand more while waiting for the fulfillment of the promise of an end to come.

The plot-merchandise dynamic of Pokémon worked so good that Japanese toy producers, like Bandai[21], created new technologies to produce as fast and as detailed as possible.

Kelts explains this as,

> In April 2006, Bandai announced that it had developed a technology in which a semiconductor laser is used to create toy molds—with a level of detail that comes down to 40 microns. The technology is already in use at the Shizuoka factory, where Bandai makes the Gundam models. If you look carefully at the 4-millimeter pilot (with a magnifying glass?), you can make out his fingernails and the slight wrinkles in his tunic… Scratches and bullet holes custom tailored to match each episode of the narrative—this is tie-in merchandising at perhaps its most potent. Children's "nag factor" with parents—their response to a relentless weekend-morning barrage of anime with tie-in toy commercials—is usually restricted to a handful of toys. In Bandai's vision, now intensified with every week that passes, it is not enough to have just the toy from the cartoon: now you have to have a new toy for every twist that the story takes. (Kelts, 2006, p. 98)

Also with this much detailed production and the technology that helps you to distinguish the forty look-a-like characters of Mobile Suite Gundam from each other confirms the 'mechanical reproduction of beauty' as well as the endless promise of satisfaction.

Now the stylistic details that describes the beauty of that characters becomes available at all times. The monochrome drawing finds life in plastic in all its glory, from the imperial button on a shirt to the clipped fingernails. The individualized promise of beauty is in the detailed dolls and toys however there is nothing individual, aside from the promise

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[21] Bandai Co., Ltd. (株式会社バンダイ, Kabushiki-gaisha Bandai) is a Japanese toy making company, as well as the producer of a large number of plastic model kits. It is the world's third largest producer of toys. Some ex-Bandai group companies produce anime and tokusatsu programs. Its headquarters is located in Taitō, Tokyo. After the merger with game developer and amusement facility operator Namco, Bandai Co., Ltd. is now under the management of Namco Bandai(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bandai).

itself, since they are massly produced and fit in the same style while coming out of one mold. Though it's produced in thousands in number, its beauty, in form is still there to look and admire even if it lost its unique individuality in the production cycle.

Within the global picture, the production and consumption of Japanese cultural products increased and as we have pointed out before Japanese popular culture became a competitor for American popular culture. The fact that Japan has been using self-Orientalism for the past century is bearing its fruits as Japan started to take over the global popular culture market. Furthermore the changing dynamics of the Globalization has effected Japanese invasion of global markets.

Susan J. Napier explains and points out some reasons for the success of Japanese popular culture in the global arena,

> The fact that a non-Western cultural product should serve as an increasingly viable alternative to the American popular-culture dream factory is of enormous interest for a number of reasons. On a general level, it suggests that, even in the twenty-first century, the world is not nearly as homogeneous as might have been feared. Anime and manga clearly strike a chord by offering something different—stories, characters, and themes that were not only alternatives but were sometimes implicit critiques of the dominant Western entertainment industry. Furthermore, rather than being forced upon the public through mass advertising campaigns or other devices of some capitalist überestablishment, anime's popularity grew from a grassroots level, with considerable fan participation involved in its rise.(Napier, 2007, p. 5)

Japan has been subtly playing its cards and planning its way up in the global cultural market for a long time. Koichi Iwabuchi states that Japan has been practicing indigenization, starting with other Asian countries, which also created a model of modernization for them. Indigenization, as a term, describes a local appropriation of foreign cultures and cultural products where the foreign one is mixed up with the local

tradition and culture. As a configuration of indigenization Iwabuchi states that what he calls 'hybridism' is a key to understand the re-imagination of Japanese national identity in transnational cultural flows. According to him, Japan's response to globalization is creating a more curiously inclusive imagining of its culture and civilization within the global cultural flow. Also, as Iwabuchi refers to Tsunoyama Sakae (1995), Japan's status in the world as a new power plant, which is a major exporter of commodities, has increased with its capacity of indigenization of things Western (Iwabuchi 1998; Allen & Sakamato 2006).

Iwabuchi discusses this hybridism and how it affected and changed Japan's status in the global arena,

> Hybridism has continued to retain its place in Japanese nationalistic discourse, but there was another significant shift in the 1990s. It was a time when discussions about civilizational divides gained momentum in many parts of the world, particularly as the ascendancy of 'Asia' became so politically and economically conspicuous. Under these circumstances, the Japanese discourse of hybridism changed from an introverted form where Japan's domestic culture was seen as characterized by its ability to absorb the foreign (the West) to an extroverted form where Japan is seen as having a special role in developing hybrid cultural forms suitable to other Asian societies. The latter can be most clearly discerned in Japanese civilization theories which reconfigure Japan's role in Asia as a translator or mediator between 'Asia' and 'the West', presenting Japan as a prototype of the fusion of global and local. (Allen & Sakamato, 2006, p. 24)

Looking back, within the Global context, as Napier pointed, Japan is occupying a special place with what it offers. The reason that Japan can create a difference within a market of global cultural products is the fact that it offers some form of a dreamy, local culture that is indigenized with the modern Western culture which also suppresses and alters the curiosity towards the very culture that it indigenizes. Accordingly what effects

the tendency and desire towards consuming such indigenous products is the new direction that is taken in the understanding of Globalization.

Globalization is something that has been going on since the very early stages of humanity, where the basic human interaction started to occur with the trading between people and became what we are witnessing today. However the global homogeneity that it referred has changed and left it place to a global localization. Today the global consumption and distribution of local products and cultures gained a new level and importance with the help of new technologies and sharing platforms.

> What we are witnessing, and participating in, is not a homogeneous 'global culture', but various globalized local cultures, where the boundary between the original and copy, or the origin and destination, is constantly negotiated, reinvented and blurred. We thus propose a new framework of engagement with the topic of globalization and popular culture. It is clear that the local is not simply a counterforce to globalization, but a complex set of relations, some of which are, in fact, 'global'. (Allen & Sakamato, 2006, p. 10)

Japan seems to use this localization in global culture to its advantage both in the sense that it's promoting a 'local' cultural product and also create 'local' global community where these products are consumed. So considering the globalization and the market for those cultural products, fandom and its occupants, fans, gain an importance in this equation.

3. FAN AND FANDOM IN THE AGE OF INTERNET AND MANGA FAN

3.1 Fan and Fandom in General

The most aggressive promoters and dedicated consumers of Japanese Popular culture are probably the manga and anime fans. As Schodt puts, fans are the real contributors of the spread of manga and anime in the English-speaking world,

> Many fans─ despite being occasionally viewed by the outside world as members of a highly unusual, if not bizarre, fringe group─ have spent enormous amounts of time and energy proselytizing their favorite works and the medium in general. Starting in the late seventies, they began getting together and showing each other anime or trading information on manga. In the early eighties, they began screening works and trading information at comics and science fiction conventions around the U.S(where dealers had also begun selling untranslated manga). (Schodt, 1996, p. 328)

But to start everything let's have a look at what fan and fandom means. Fan, in most simplistic terms, can be described as the devoted follower of a band, artist, writer, trend, book, movie, T.V series etc. that s/he likes. But until recently, the term had a negative impact. As Jenkins (2006a) reminds, fans were "characterized as 'krooks' obsessed with trivia, celebrity, and collectibles; as social inepts, cultural misfits, and crazies." (p.39). However today the connotation of the word is less negative than the earlier version

within the consumption dynamics of the popular culture. With new global trends, active culture industries and the influence of Internet, fans and fan communities can exist and express themselves more freely.

According to Jenkins one cannot become a fan simply by viewing a show but s/he has to transform that viewing into a cultural activity either by sharing their feelings and thoughts with others or by joining a community with ones like them, who share the same interest on that particular show. So in a sense the personal reaction and feelings of a fan turns into a social interaction which becomes one of the basic characteristics of what is called 'fandom' (Jenkins, 1992).

Since the definition of a fan consist words like social interaction and sharing, a fan cannot survive 'alone' in this world, s/he has to find the ones like him/her, share the excitement and devotion that separates them from others. A fan is always the other for a non-fan, because of what they follow, how they appreciate, interpret or even reproduce it. So a fan exists in a habitat called fandom where the ones like him/her gets together to share their knowledge, devotion, desire and admiration on any imaginable level, and this is that sharing which makes them a fan.

One of the main characteristics of fandom is that it transforms personal reaction into social action as well as it transforms a spectatorial culture into a participatory culture. In order to become a fan, rather than viewing regularly, one has to translate, that viewing into a cultural activity. This is done by joining communities of other fans with common interests and sharing one's thoughts and feelings about the program. Within the fandom, consumption triggers a form of production, and writing is generated from reading (Jenkins, 2006a).

In all its glory, fandom can be thought as where fans actively participate in the sharing, consumption, production and reproduction of cultural meanings, symbols, texts etc. over the means of available resources of the convergence culture.

Elana Shefrin says that,

> As active participants, fans often appropriate corporate-generated imagery, and then embellish or transform it with personal artistic expressions such as poetry, songs, paintings, scholarly essays, creative fiction, photographs, digital films, collages, or clothing. Due to their personal identification with the texts, fans may also adopt attitudes, language, or behaviors that are an outgrow of their 'immersion in a special lexicon'. Thus participatory fandom is marked by a sustained emotional and physical engagement with a particular narrative universe-an engagement that visualizes a non-commercial, shared ownership with the media company that holds the commercial legal property rights"(Ezra & Rowden(eds.), 2007, p. 89).

Fans are the ones who gather on Internet forums on daily (or even on hourly) basis, they are the ones who update their blogs as soon as they hear a news, they are the ones who invest valuable time in making banners, Internet sites, arranging real-life meetings, writing fan fictions for the fellow members of their fandom. For Fiske fandom is "a peculiar mix of cultural determinations. On the one hand it is an intensification of popular culture which is formed outside and often against official culture, on the other it expropriates and reworks certain values and characteristics of that official culture to which it is opposed" (Lewis, 1992, p. 34). On the other hand Jenkins describes fandom as "a vehicle for marginalized sub-cultural groups to pry open space for their cultural concerns within dominant representations; fandom is a way of appropriating media texts and rereading them in a fashion that serves different interests, a way of transforming mass culture into popular culture." (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 40).

We said that manga and anime fans are the real contributors of the spread of Japanese popular culture; but in order to describe more accurately we have to separate manga and anime fans from the ordinary readers and audience. The ordinary manga and anime followers treat manga like any other comic book and anime like any other animation that they come across. They do not distinguish manga and anime from other forms of comic books and animations; so they do not care whether they read a licensed translation or fan scanlations[22] or watch dubbed or fansubbed[23] anime; which creates an important difference for the fans of manga and anime. Also these ordinary followers are regular readers and viewers who read and watch as the comic book or animation becomes available to them. They might read and watch it online or buy it from a bookstore but this doesn't have to be on regular basis.

On the other hand who we define as manga and anime fans tend to be very sensitive and conscious about what they read and watch. They follow the release dates of the chapters and read it online from the fan scanlations as soon as it becomes available to them and collect the bounded volumes as they are published for further reading. For them reading manga is something that they do on regular basis as they follow weekly, bi-weekly or monthly publishes of continuing series. Fans also choose fan translations over licensed one out of their loyalty to the original text and Japanese culture since the licensed translators are known to be for the appropriations they make for the targeted market and country that they are publishing the manga for. As Brenner (2007) also

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[22] Scanlation (also scanslation) is the scanning, translation and editing of comics from a foreign language into a different language. Scanlation is done as an amateur work and is nearly always done without express permission from the copyright holder. The word scanlation is a portmanteau of scan and translation. The term is most often used for Japanese (manga), and occasionally for Korean (manhwa) and Chinese (manhua) comics. Scanlations may be viewed at websites or as sets of image files downloaded via the Internet. (**Scanlation.** (2010). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scanlation)

[23] A fansub (short for fan-subtitled) is a version of a foreign film or foreign television program which has been translated by fans and subtitled into a language other than that of the original. (**Fansub.** (2010). In *wikipedia*. Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fansub)

points, "the difference between fan translations and the official English release are important to fans, and many find the scanlations superior to the released version" (p. 206)

Fans like to read manga with the tendency of deciphering an enigma. Fans also choose to share this experience of reading with other fans, unlike ordinary readers. What distinguishes fans from ordinary readers is also the fact that they read the text and images, trying to understand the Japanese Visual Language, since command over that visual langue brings a fuller understanding and more accurate interpretation of the text.

Robin E. Brenner describes manga and anime fans as follows,

> At its center, being a fan of manga and anime requires a love of the medium, but increasingly being a manga and anime fan leads to a wide variety of expressions of fan identity, including meeting other fans at conventions, communicating and creating fan fiction and fan art online, and becoming a manga creator oneself. Today more and more fans identify themselves as manga and anime fans, or *otaku*, with pride. (Brenner, 2007, p. 193)

This description also draws attention to a word that is used, or maybe even misused, by the manga and anime fans; *otaku.*

Otaku, in the beginning, was a slang term used in 1980s by amateur manga artists and fans themselves in order to describe 'weirdoes'. The word can be translated into English as 'nerd' or as 'fanboy', but its origin in Japanese means 'your home' in association with 'you', 'yours' and 'home' (Schodt, 1996; Kinsella, 2000).

Sharon Kinsella, referring to Takarajima(1989), puts otaku as,

> The slang term otaku is a witty reference both to someone who is not accustomed to close friendships and therefore tries to communicate with this peers using this distant and over-formal form of address and to someone who spends most of their time on their own at home. The term was ostensibly invented by critic and doujinshi artist, Nakamori Akio, in 1983. He used to word *otaku* in a series entitled *Otaku no Kenkyu* (Your home investigations) which was published in a low-circulation *Lolicom* manga magazine, *Manga Burikko.*" (Kinsella, 2000, p. 128)

However the term *otaku* had a negative connotation in the Japanese culture due to the 'Miyazaki incident' which can be considered as a real case for Julie Burchill's 'fan in the attic', where the fan is stereotyped as someone that is unreasonable, dangerous and unbalanced enough to commit crimes over the what or whom s/he is fan of.

Tsutami Miyazaki was a guy in his late 20s who kidnapped and murdered four preschool age girls. In searches during the investigation it was discovered that he was obsessed with manga and anime, especially the genres of 'splatter' and 'horror'. He became the living version of the biggest nightmare of manga and anime industry. And also he was discovered to be an amateur manga artist who sold his own manga in the doujinshi market, at Komiketto[24]. The moment that Japanese media took a hold of this incident, it immediately became a nationwide crisis. The incident happened in the late 1980s and changed the definition of *otaku* into someone who is obsessed with manga and anime; since Miyazaki was an otaku, all otaku were like Miyazaki. The word otaku was associated with connotations like sadistic, dangerous and deranged. However the buzz

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[24]Comiket (Komiketto), otherwise known as the Comic Market(Komikku Māketto), is the world's largest handmade comic book fair, held twice a year in Tokyo, Japan. The first Comiket was held on December 21, 1975, with only about 32 participating circles and an estimated 600 attendees. Attendance has since swelled to over a half million people. It is a grassroots, DIY effort for selling dōjinshi, self-published Japanese works. As items sold in Comiket are considered very rare (because dōjinshi are seldom reprinted), some items sold at Comiket can be found in shops or on the Internet at prices up to 10 times the item's original price. (**Komiketto.** (2010). In *Wikipedia.* Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comiket)

died down eventually, when the reasons of Miyazaki's actions were understood (Schodt, 1996; Kinsella, 2000; Brenner, 2007).

Media had a huge effect on how *otaku* came to be known as a positive term, today. It was described as a discriminatory term and media was blamed to be the reason of it. By the mid-90s the word was very popular and widely used; it was almost attributed to anyone with an obsessive likening to even things like stamp collecting to photography. Even otakus started describe themselves like that, which helped the word to lose its negative connotation and image in the public eye (Schodt, 1996).

Today the word otaku is fully and positively embraced by the non-Japanese fans for manga and anime.

> In the United States more than Japan, the term otaku has been reclaimed with pride by manga and anime fans. Among fans there is still some stigma attached to being an otaku— and peers will gently mock their friends who display obsessive tendencies by calling them 'true otaku'— but at this point, the term has lost its bite in the United States. The title lost many of its negative association through its addition to fan vocabulary and, although it still indicated a more than cursory interest, many fans wear T-shirts and other gear proclaiming their otaku status. (Brenner, 2007, p. 195)

3.2 Fan Culture, Fan Communities and Manga Fandom

3.2.1 Fan Culture and Manga & Anime Fandom

Today fan culture is a global subculture where the followers of particular taste come together regardless of their age, gender, race or nationality.

Henry Jenkins puts fan culture in words saying that,

> From the outset, an account of a fan culture necessarily signals its problematic status, its inescapable relations to other forms of cultural production and other social identities. Nobody functions entirely within the fan culture, nor does the fan culture maintain any claims to self-sufficiency. There is nothing timeless and unchanging about this culture; fandom originates in response to specific conditions(not only specific configurations of television programming, but also the development of feminism, the development of new technologies, the atomization and alienation of contemporary American culture, etc.) and remains constantly in flux. Such a culture also defines attempts to quantify it, because of its fluid boundaries, its geographic dispersement, and its underground status. (Jenkins, 1992, p. 3)

Style of consumption and forms of cultural preference defines the boundaries of this subculture; and it has five distinct dimensions accordingly. First, its relationship to a particular mode of reception, like the issues of textual proximity, re-reading and translation of program materials into resources for conversation and gossip. Second, the fan culture has a role when it comes to encouraging the viewer activist. Third, fandom in fan culture, functions as an interpretive community, making meanings out of texts and reproducing them within the fan culture. Fourth, fan culture, like other forms of cultures has its own particular traditions of cultural production. And last, fan communities are alternative social communities (Jenkins, 1992). Fan culture, thus, becomes a formation with multidimensional levels, unique dynamics, its own consumption patterns, economic structure and production style.

Before discussing it in detail later on, we should look at those five distinct dimensions of the fan culture and how they are appropriated to the fan culture of the manga and anime fandom. First of all manga and anime fandom has its own particular mode of reception which is based on understanding another culture and visual language Re-reading is a common practice for appropriation of the different cultural aspects and obtaining

knowledge about that culture and language through the text. It's also a collective activity that is done by fans all over the world, sharing the individual knowledge and experience to give meaning to the text in hand. Also the materials like romantic relationships throughout the series or possible fights create resources for the major fan gossip in manga and anime fandom. The fan gossip is mainly based on shipping[25]. Fans come together to discuss the situations that create possible romantic involvements of characters through the story. Also they make speculations about the upcoming chapters of manga or episodes of anime; regarding the developments and clues as the story unfolds.

This also brings us to another dimension of the fan culture; fan culture's function as interpretive community. Making meanings out of the text is one of the biggest interpretative activities of the manga and anime fandom since the original text belongs to a different culture and originally written in a different language, a language that's not even using Latin alphabet. So the interpretation in this fandom is mainly based on deciphering the cultural symbols and linguistic games as well as the possible hidden meanings under the visual language of the Japanese culture. Fans of manga and anime also reproduce these meanings through the creation of fan artifacts like fan fictions, fan art or fan essays etc.

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[25]Shipping, derived from the word "relationship", is a general term for fans' emotional and/or intellectual involvement with the ongoing development of romance in a work of fiction. Though technically applicable to any such involvement, it refers chiefly to various related social dynamics observable on the Internet, and is seldom used outside of that context. Shipping can involve virtually any kind of relationship — from the well-known and established, to the ambiguous or those undergoing development, and even to the highly improbable and the blatantly impossible. People involved in shipping (or shippers) assert that the relationship does exist, will exist, or simply that they would like it to exist. (**Shipping.** (2010). In *Wikipedia.* Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shipping_(fandom))

This means that the fandom and the fan culture have its own particular traditions of cultural production. For example, although fan fictions, fan essays, or fan art are commonly produced by many fandoms, manga and anime fandom has AMVs (Anime Music Videos), which are basically videos made out of scenes from the anime in order to tell a story within relation with the song playing in the background. For example an AMV about the 'love story' of two characters in Bleach, combined with a song from Mariah Carey or Kelly Clarkson. The scenes, that indicate a romantic possibility are arranged in a sequence according to the meaning that the fan appropriates and combined with the 'suitable' or maybe favorite music to make a music video for airing on Youtube or Vimeo for other fans.

Lastly, manga and anime fandom today is one of the biggest global fan communities with its multicultural, multilingual and multinational fan base and have millions of virtual communities as social platforms on the cyberspace. The global networks of this fandom are very wide with a considerable number of active fans on those virtual communities on daily basis. They provide multidimensional, multinational and multicultural networks of knowledge, communication and interpretation for the fandom.

3.2.2 Fan Communities and Manga & Anime Fandom

Fan communities are the most important social structures of the fan culture, they are the physical forms of fandom and basically that's where the main fan activity happens when it comes to the global fans. The experience of a fan is limited to what that fan makes of that fandom.

Fan communities today are, in a sense, like small network societies, and the definition in concrete terms of a network society is a society where the key social structures and activities are organized around electronically processed information networks. So it's not just about networks or social networks, because social networks have been very old forms of social organization. It's about social networks which process and manage information and are using micro-electronic based technologies.[26]

Network societies are where the flow of information is provided through written texts and networks over the Internet. It's not only a matter of changing words, its also about providing substance. As a fan one does not only share experiences, thoughts and critics over the text but also share the reproductions of that text and produce new meanings out of it.

Today the social networks of fandom are like social networks that Manuel Castells (2001) defines; they are organized around the information that is obtained through the electronic networks which is out there in the cyberspace. There are virtual communities in that space where interactive networks take place and there is a direct and immediate contact between the members of those communities.

The fandom of 21st century is also a part of what Jenkins names as "convergence culture". Consumption of media becomes collective activity and diverges into more than one media means. "Convergence represents a cultural shift as media consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content"(Jenkins, 2006b, p. 13).

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[26] Conversation with Manuel Castells, p. 4 of 6, Globetrotter.berkeley.edu

Considering the new information and making connections among different media content, manga and anime fandom presents a good example for a fandom as a part of the convergence culture. Japan has, long ago, adopted the transmedia strategy, for the production of manga and anime. They have been "integrating multiple texts to create a narrative so large that it cannot be contained within a single medium" (Jenkins, 2006b, p.95). Again Pokémon can be seen as one of the most successful examples of this transmedia experience but as of lately all the popular manga that has made a huge success in the market is turned into a *transmedia story* with byproducts like anime, movies, video games, game cards and OVAs[27].

Henry Jenkins describes what he calls transmedia storytelling phenomenon as,

> A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best— so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction. Each franchise entry needs to be self contained so you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game, and vice versa. Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise as a whole. Reading across the media sustains a depth of experience that motivates more consumption. Redundancy burns up fan interest and causes the franchises to fail. Offering new levels of insight and experience refreshes the franchise and sustains consumer loyalty. (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 95-6)

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[27]Original video animation (オリジナル・ビデオ・アニメーション, Orijinaru bideo animēshon), abbreviated OVA (オーブイエー / オーヴィーエー / オヴァ, ōbuiē, ōvīē or ova) (and sometimes as OAV by English-speakers), is a term for animated films and series made specially for release in home-video formats. The term originated in relation to Japanese animation (anime). Most producers of OVAs release them direct-to-video, without prior showings on TV or in theatres; however, there may be very rare occasions where, for example, the first part of an OVA series is broadcast for promotional purposes. OVA titles were originally made available on VHS, later becoming more popular on LaserDisc and eventually DVD. Starting in summer 2008 the term OAD (original animation DVD) began to refer to DVD releases published bundled with their source material manga. Like anime made for television broadcast, OVAs sub-divide into episodes. OVA media (tapes, laserdiscs, or DVDs) usually contain just one episode each. Episode length varies from title to title: each episode may run from a few minutes to two hours or more. (**OVA.** (2010). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OVA)

If we take *Bleach*, the example case of this thesis, it will provide a good example for the transmedia storytelling in Japanese manga industry. For starters, *Bleach* manga was published back in 2001 in Japan and following its success they released the anime in 2004. Today *Bleach* has three movies(fourth in the making),eleven CD soundtracks, nineteen video games aside from the cross-over games[28], Two collectible card games°, Five rock musicals with additional two live performances, two novels, three "Radio DJCD Bleach 'B' Station" CD season sets, with six volumes on each. The third season of it is still ongoing in Japan and there are eight drama CDs, featuring the original voice actors from the series, which have only been included as part of the DVD releases.[29] Bleach fandom follows the manga religiously for the past eight years but as soon as a new related media is released they link that with the manga and start to follow and consume it.

Manga is still considered as the original text due to the fact that it's coming out of the manga-ka first hand, without any alterations like the other products like anime, games and movies. But fandom considers every new release as a clue for what might happen in the manga. For example after the release of the fighting games of *Bleach*, like Bleach Nintendo Home Consoles series or Blade Battler series, the fandom started a heavy and detailed discussion on some of the fighting styles and sword releases of the characters that were put in the game before it appeared in the manga. The fans speculated over them in threads, on forums and tried to find possible fighting scenarios between the characters that might happen in the manga according to their powers and the releases of

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[28]A gaming crossover occurs when otherwise separated fictional characters, stories, settings, universes, or media in a video game meet and interact with each other. These may exist as a gimmick if two separate games in question are developed by the same company(**Cross-over Games.** (2010). In *Wikipedia.* Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fictional_crossovers_in_video _games).

[29]In Wikipedia. Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bleach _(manga)

their swords. They tried to predict who would come out of a fight if two characters were to face each other in the original text.

Fandom also use video games for the discussions related with shipping. The things written under character descriptions in the game are put under microscope. For example the shippers of male and female lead characters of *Bleach* talked about the word 'kizuna' and its meaning regarding their favorite couple and the couple's possible future romance; after it appeared in one of the games to describe the relationship between the characters of the fighters in that game. In processes like that, fans who know Japanese try to draw possible meanings of the word and cross examine it with the symbols that has been attributed to the characters or their relationship throughout the series; like the silk bond that the souls of these characters have in the manga and how the word kizuna has silk as one of its meaning within relation to that fact (Figure 3.1). In the end the knowledge obtained is added to the pool of the fandom that they gathered from their transmedia experiences and examinations.

Also the *Bleach* movies and musicals play an important role for the shipper fans. Fandom believes that the manga-ka gives clues for the possible ships by referring to the couple and their relationship through the movie or making the couple main plot of the movie like it happened in the third and last Bleach movie, Fade to Black: I Call Your Name (Figure 3.2, 3.3).

Kylara ○

Join Date: Nov 2008
Posts: 652

Good god, is the word "bond" so commonplace that we can just throw it around now and pretend it exists between any set of friends, whether or not they bring out any good in each other?

Yes, Ichigo and Orihime are friends, and she's important to him, but do **NOT** degrade the word "bond" as applying between those two. Morita Masakazu would surely cry.

This arc has demonstrated repeatedly and most cuttingly with the Lust arc that when push comes to shove, **Ichigo cannot rely on Orihime** (notice, he never tried, rejected her one attempt in the Sins arc, and never thought to rely on her later) and there is no mutuality between them. When Ichigo really needs help, **Orihime would rather depend on him.** Even the stuff with Ulquiorra is **Orihime mourning Ulquiorra and Ichigo being confused by it**; he doesn't understand why she cares so much because he doesn't understand her. The fact that she would rather depend on him when he needs help, how he doesn't appreciate her assistance or understand her feelings - bond? Oh good god.

I've said before that I don't think Western audiences understand the real definition and connotation of the word "bond" (kizuna) that is frequently used by Morita Masakazu and the Bleach merchandise to define Ichigo x Rukia. Me, I'm a word whore, so I asked a translator friend for a translation **so that at least everyone here can understand what a powerful word it is**.

[conversation edited to remove wackiness]

Kylara: Do you know what the Japanese word for "bond" is? The one that these people keep talking about
Friend: 絆
Friend: Kizuna
Friend: ^_^ I really like this word
sounds pretty, looks pretty, has a really romantic meaning
Kylara: Does it have a romantic connotation?
Friend: Well...what i mean by romantic...
Kylara: Because certain idiots are always trying to spork IchiRuki, saying they are love and we are a "bond" and somehow, bond is less than love
Friend: the word kizuna implies much more
It's not love per se
It is literally bond
but it is a "deep" bond
you wouldn't say there is a kizuna between you and someone you've only met
Kylara: Is it mutually exclusive with romance?
Friend: Nope, in fact it's pretty romantic
Kylara: so it happens over time, essentially
Friend: Yes

Friend: and interestingly
Friend: 絆 the kanji, half of it is "silk"
Kylara: like how silk is very strong?
Friend: Yes
And half of it is "half"
Kylara: okay that I don't get
Friend: haha, I don't get it either
but the silk part is more significant
It gives the connotation of being "tied together"

Friend: another kanji for kizuna is 綛
and the other half here means "world"
Kizuna can be used to mean tether as well
But when applied to human relations
it's a very deep bond
Kylara: fascinating. Wow.

Melodymix translated this as "the unbreakable bond"; my friend translated it as "the bond tied together".

Oh, and for any curious, they used the "silk half" version. It's like they're harking back to the red thread of fate.

That's IchiRuki, folks. Remember when **Sketchbaka** took a picture of the movie poster with Morita scribbling BOND on it?

Yeah. It's about a really deep connection, and right now, kissy-kissy or not, Ichigo and Rukia have such **a deep bond** that it is truly unbreakable, that Ichigo's speech in FTB written by Kubo says that he thinks it must have started in lifetimes before because it couldn't possibly have started in this lifetime. And of the kanji chosen, they chose the one with silk for Rukia's card.

Respect is deserved for this word and for the brilliance and power of the Ichigo x Rukia bond.

Figure 3.1 Fan comment about the description of 'kizuna', on Bleach Asylum Forums, by *Kylara*

Figure 3.2 Poster of Bleach Musical

Figure 3.3 The promotion poster of the 3rd movie Fade the Black

The last movie and the last musical served for a purpose for *Bleach* fans and followers; it was for the compensation of the slow flow of manga and constant fillers[30] in anime. Since manga is a weekly released nineteen pages long parts of the story, sometimes it takes months or even a few years for a character to reappear in the story. The promise was putting those Bleach characters that were widely liked[31], followed and missed. It also served to certain shippers of the Bleach fandom; both the movie and the musical was based on and underlining the relationship between the two most shipped characters both by the Japanese and global fandom.

Even before the movie was released the speculations began with a twenty second teaser and followed by the gross success of the movie both in Japan and global market. In the end the movie was the most successful of all Bleach movies and it was discussed, and is still discussed since its opening in December, 2008.

Looking at it, in general terms, we can say that anime and manga fandom tries to find answers to questions regarding the relationships, possible confrontations and the general mood of the manga by making cross references between different media products as in the case of Bleach. This cycle and transmedia storytelling strategy works both for the market and the fans. In terms of the industry and market, fans increase the consumption and triggers a certain flow for the market. When considered in terms of the fans, it

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[30]In media, **filler** is material that is combined with material of greater relevance or quality to "fill out" a certain volume. **Filler.** (2010). In *Wikipedia.* Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filler_(media)

[31]Weekly Shōnen Jump periodically polls the popularity of **Bleach** characters and publishes the results. There were four such polls as of February 2008. The third and fourth polls had their results published in the manga itself. The first poll was a character poll and the results were published in *Bleach* manga Volume 8. The second poll was a character poll and the results were published in Bleach manga Volume 13. The third poll was a character poll and the results were published in Chapter 214 of the Bleach manga. The fourth poll was a character poll and the results were published in Chapter 307 of the Bleach manga. The fifth poll is not a Characters poll but a Zanpakutō poll instead. The name of the top five Zanpakutō were first released in Chapter 348, with the full list released in Bleach manga Volume 40. The 6th Bleach poll is a best bout poll. The top ten were published in Chapter 392. **Bleach Popularity Polls.** (2010). In *BleachWiki.* Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from BleachWiki: http://bleach.wikia.com/wiki/Popularity_polls. .

triggers the collective intelligence[32] of the fandom while contributing to the new knowledge culture as it's carried out within the online communities of fandom.

3.3 Fan and Fandom in the Age of Internet

Technology plays a key role in process of development of the fan communities and the spread of that convergence culture. With the wonders of 21st century, a new site of interaction appeared for the more effective and global interaction of the members of fandom. Today fan communities occupy a large place in cyberspace as virtual communities that serve as a roof for every fan to gather under. Today message boards, forums, blogs like Livejournal and Facebook plays important role in maintaining the interaction between the fans all over the world. Matt Hills (2002) discusses that the internet newsgroups that offer constant access to fan communities and identities alter the ways of fan practices which he takes as an indication that online fandoms should not be viewed as versions of offline fandoms. So it becomes as Lawrence Grossberg states: "audiences are constantly making their own cultural environment from the cultural resources that are available to them" (cited in Lewis, 1992, p. 53).

Today the most available resource for instant information and communication seems to be the Internet. People can have access to Internet from their phones, MP3 players like

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[32]Collective intelligence is a shared or group intelligence that emerges from the collaboration and competition of many individuals. Collective intelligence (CI) can also be defined as a form of networking enabled by the rise of communications technology, namely the Internet. Web 2.0 has enabled interactivity and thus, users are able to generate their own content. Collective Intelligence draws on this to enhance the social pool of existing knowledge. Henry Jenkins, a key theorist of new media and media convergence draws on the theory that collective intelligence can be attributed to media convergence and participatory culture (Flew 2008). Collective intelligence is not merely a quantitative contribution of information from all cultures, it is also qualitative(**Collective Intelligence.** (2010). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_intelligence).

IPod, from their homes, schools or Internet cafes in their neighborhoods. Being able to have access to whatever you want, whenever you want and wherever you want makes Internet the most valuable source of information, communication and instant global interaction.

But the online interaction and fandom's involvement over Internet did not happen before the early 1990s. In early fandoms, the fan interaction was face-to-face, there were geographical boundaries for fans who wanted to come together. Whatever was produced in the fandom was also exchanged with physical interaction and the exchange circle was also limited to the ones who were living in the same geographical boundaries. The global interaction was very small and usually the members of the same fandom didn't even know that others like themselves existed. The fans would get together in conventions and would not know about other fans who didn't have access to their fandom.

However with the arrival of the Internet something significant has changed for the fan culture. Now fan interaction could take place anytime and anywhere around the world. Now fans could find others like themselves and built a global community for their common interests. The global interaction would help the fandom to gain new perspectives, new global resources and interact in a global network.

Also the new technologies and the digitalization of the fan products like texts and videos provided a ground for unlimited production and exchange of goods. Now a fanfiction writer can post his/her text on websites, blogs or forums and everyone can have immediate access; a fan who works on fan art can also share his/her art immediately and get instant feedback from the fandom. There is no need for hand-to-

hand exchange of VCRs or fanzines anymore, new episodes can be downloaded within few minutes from the sites and thoughts, comments and critics on that can be discussed in a topic within the next few minutes. Finally the fans can have their long waited social networks and unlimited exchange of fan artifacts on immediate bases. This online fandom which uses the instant resources that internet provides becomes what Matt Hills calls a 'just-in-time fandom':

> By this, I mean that practices of fandom have become increasingly enmeshed within the rhythms and temporalities of broadcasting, so that fans go online to discuss new episodes immediately after the episode's transmission time-or even during the breaks- perhaps in order to demonstrate the 'timeliness' and responsiveness of their devotion. Rather than new media technology merely allowing fans to share their speculations, commentaries, thoughts and questions, then, cmc has seemingly placed a premium not only to the quality of fan response(i.e. there is a social pressure not to be too far 'off-thread', unless this situation is inverted due to a huge influx of newsgroup regulars) but also on the timing of fan response. (Hills, 2002, p. 178)

Looking back at the early history of online fandom, GEnie was the first platform that allowed electronic correspondence. This was followed by an electronic discussion board that one has to subscribe; Usenet. Fans adopted as the new content delivery technologies like ListServ, which delivered messages via e-mail from a central server to individuals, became available. The focus of the posts could be particular T.V shows, fan fictions and the comments to those fictions in addition to the general discussion about the program. There were also bulletin boards and websites that were related to those lists. Users would log in to post comments on the forums of those websites. The beginning of 2ooos marked a change for the fan-created spaces when fans started to use blogspheres. Blogs provided people to write about both themselves and their fandom whereas electronic platforms like Usenet, ListServ, newsgroups or bulletin boards was focusing on particular fan topics. Thus blogs, as individual journals, became a mix of fannish and other personal topics like rants, political discussions etc., as well as

including fan fictions, fan art or commentary on a specific text (Hellekson & Busse(eds.), 2006).

What blogspheres provided people, different than other delivery systems did, was a return to a form of interaction with a person who has variety of interests; fandom. With this characteristic it turns into an interaction that is less topic driven and more personal which fans enjoyed before the Internet. In addition to this, it also changed the pre-internet fan interactions as online-constructed identities allowed their users to hide their names and other features.(Hellekson & Busse(eds.), 2006)

The online practice of fandom brings fans all over the world for a shared interaction. The online experience of fandom is very important for the fans of anime and manga due to various reasons which we will deal as we move forward. But the starting point is the fact that they consume the products of a foreign popular culture which requires both personal and collective work and knowledge during the consumption of its materials.

As we mentioned before, manga and anime fandom relies on what Pierre Lévy calls collective intelligence. According to him, internet is a place where people make use of their individual expertise towards the shared objectives and goals. Thus collective intelligence, in his terms, refers to the ability of virtual communities to pull the combined expertise of its members so that what one person cannot now and do on their won becomes a collective work of that community (Jenkins, 2006b).

Regarding, Jenkins explains, also referring to Levy, that,

> New forms of community are emerging, however these new communities are defined through voluntary, temporary, and tactical affiliations, reaffirmed through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments. Members may shift from one group to another as their interests and needs change, and they may belong to more than one community at the same time. These communities, however, are held together through the mutual production and reciprocal exchange of knowledge. As he writes, such groups 'make available to the collective intellect all of the pertinent knowledge available to it at a given moment.' More importantly, they serve as sites for 'collective discussion, negotiation, and development,' and they prod the individual members to seek out new information for the common good: 'Unanswered questions will create tension indicating regions where invention and innovation are required.'(Jenkins, 2006b, p. 27)

Manga and anime fandom is a great example for those kind of communities in terms of the mutual production and reciprocal exchange or knowledge. This fandom can be considered as an 'organized fandom'. "Organized fandom", as Jenkins describes, "is an institution of theory and criticism, a semi-structured space where competing interpretations and evaluations of common texts are proposed, debated and negotiated and where readers speculate about the nature of the mass media and their own relationship to it" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 86). The creation of fan artifacts, weekly spoiler and prediction dynamics and fan scanlations and subbing are the key factors of the fandom of manga and anime; in terms of becoming a community of collective sharing of knowledge and production of meaning.

For this fandom, spoilers, predictions, fan scanlations and fansubs are highly interrelated and interdependent. Starting with the spoilers, as Jenkins (2006b) explains, spoiling as a term goes back in the history of internet and emerges due to the "mismatch between the temporalities and geographies of old and new media" (p. 30). There was a time gap between the different markets as the series was played six months or more before in

United States before they broke in international markets. People would get a first-time experience unless they talked to each other. But when fans started to get on the internet, the time gap became important as they were going online and posting everything about the episode, which started to annoy the person who hasn't watched it yet. Thus the episode become 'spoiled' (Jenkins, 2006b).

In manga and anime fandom weekly spoilers are mainly provided by the Japanese fandom of that manga, since they have the immediate access to the text. Sometimes the manga is scanned in its raw[33] Japanese form and distributed to the forums and boards by the members who have access to the Japanese side of the fandom. Sometimes the spoilers come in the form of text, without the drawings, and this is translated within the fandom to get some clues for that week's chapter. Spoilers are the product of a global collective work of the manga and anime fandom.

For example Weekly Shōnen Jump magazine, in which Bleach is serialized, is released on Mondays, every week in Japan. The early spoilers arrive to the non-Japanese fandom on Tuesdays, as soon as readers put their hands on the magazine. The regular spoilers, which come in more detail, arrives around Wednesdays or if late, on Thursdays. And lastly the fan scanlated and translated chapter of that week is published online by the scanlating group on Fridays.

After the spoilers, fans come together to decipher whatever is provided as the spoiler. Not everyone can post the spoilers (Figure 3.4), some fans are known for providing reliable sources and some are known for being a part of the Japanese fandom. If the spoiler is a text from the chapter, like the dialogues between the characters', the fans

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[33] Raw is used for text which is in its original, non-translated Japanese form.

who know Japanese, and presumably who has a high rank in that online community, translate the given text. If someone scanned the raws, again it is presented for a rough translation by the forum member fans. Weekly spoilers also provide a ground for chapter predictions.
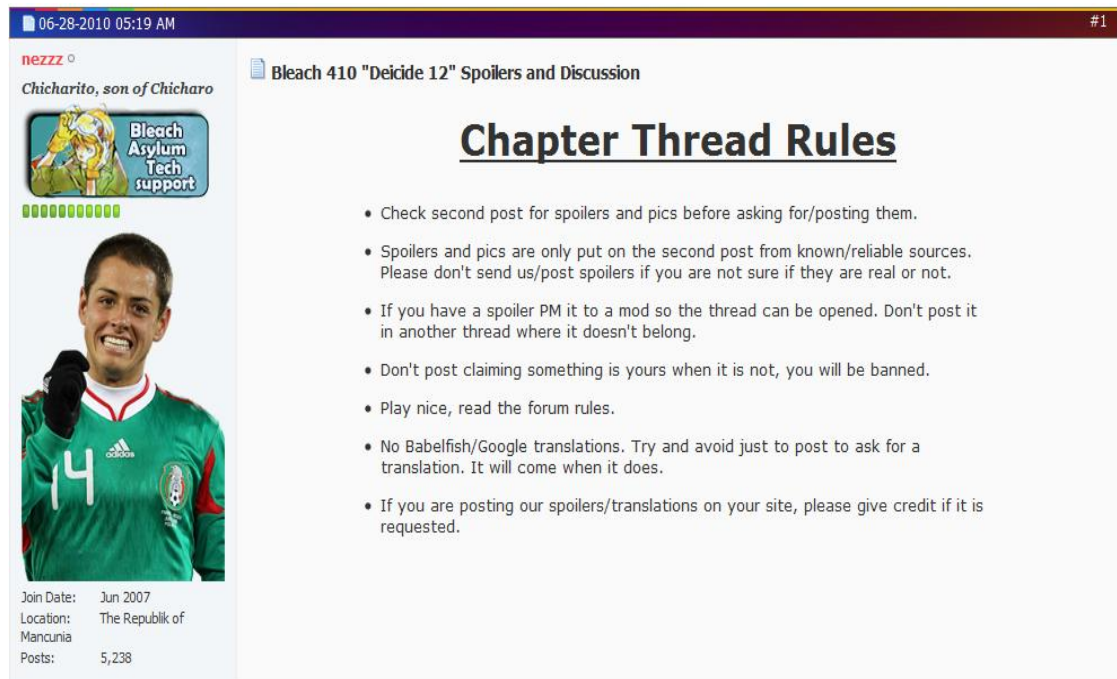
Figure 3.4 The first post of Spoiler Thread, includes Spoiler Rules, on Bleach Asylum Forums

What might or will happen is discussed in that weeks spoiler thread and then fans move on to the general upcoming chapter prediction threads for further discussion.(Figure 3.5, 3.6) The choice of reading the spoilers is left to the fans by discussing it under a different topic and in a 'spoiler' tagged thread on that forum. Sometimes long fan essays are written combining the symbol, the flow of events and the manga-ka's general attitude towards the story in order to make a point; sometimes the translations of interviews with the manga-ka, or the voice actors of the anime are shared and presented as clues. But for all the actions, different fans with variable resources, knowledge and

abilities come together, refer and rely on each other for that production and exchange of

knowledge.

Figure 3.5 A screenshot of a fan prediction, commenting on another fan prediction and making his/her own, Bleach Asylum Forums, Bleach Section, Thread: Upcoming Chapter Prediction[V7]
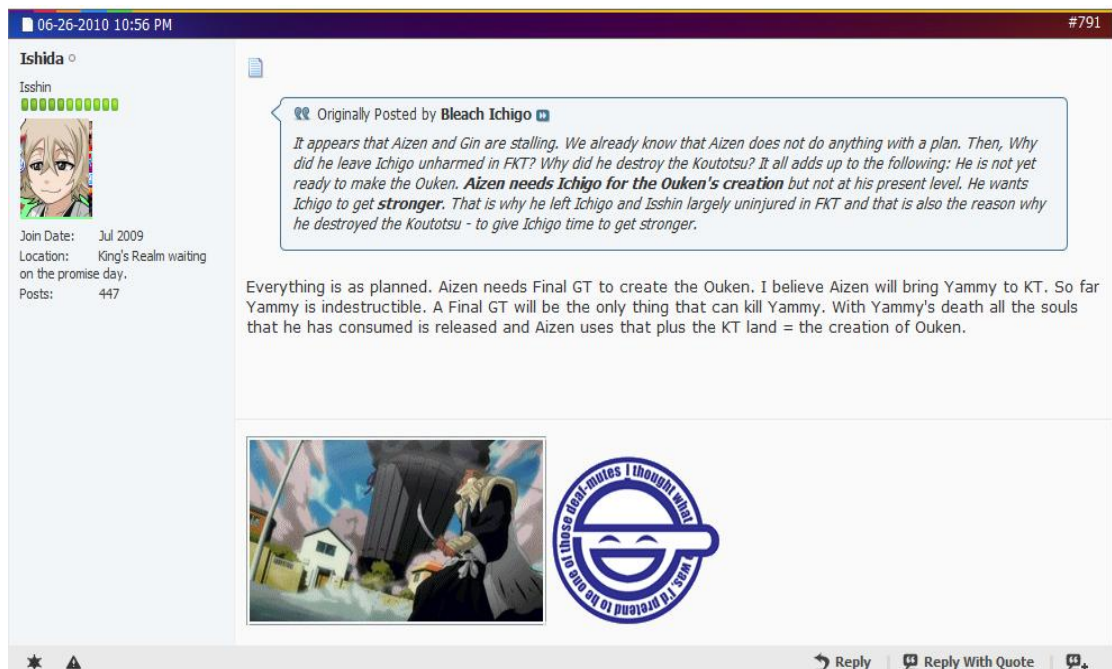
Figure 3.6 A screen shot of another fan prediction, Bleach Asylum Forums, Bleach Section, Thread: Crazy But Some Kind of Possible Theories[V2]
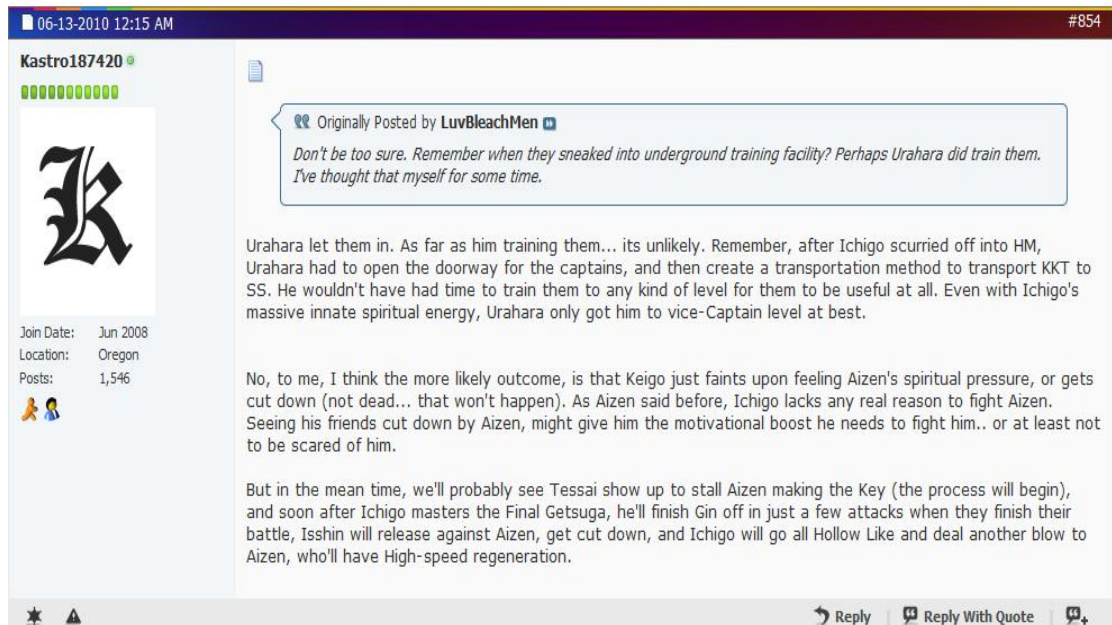
Pierre Levy makes distinctions between shared knowledge, where the entire group of people believes that the information is true, and collective intelligence, where the individual members hold the sum total of information that will be shared in response to a specific question. Henry Jenkins also points that it is not possible for anyone to know everything, however the things that the community needs to know in order to continue its existence and fulfill its goal are known by all. It is also important for the communities to analyze any information which will become a part of the shared knowledge for misinformation may lead to misconceptions (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 28).

This point brings us to another activity of collective intelligence of the knowledge culture of manga and anime fandom; fan scanlations and fan subs. Fan scanlations and fansubs have an important place and serves an important role for this fandom. First of all, fan scanlations and fan subs provide the most immediate access to the translated text; and second, it provides a translation that is not linguistically and culturally altered in order to adopt it to the global market. As mentioned before the legal distribution of manga in the global market takes place through the licensed publishers around the world. However this licensing issue takes several years and licenses are taken for series which are popular and have a ready target reader group. For example *Bleach* started to get serialized in August 2001 in Japan but it started to get published by Viz Media[34] in November 2007 in the United States. 44th (and for now last) volume of *Bleach* is being published on April 2, 2010 while the last volume published in U.S was the 30th volume, on March 2, 2010.

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[34]Viz Media, LLC, headquartered in San Francisco, is an anime, manga and Japanese entertainment company founded in 1986 as Viz, LLC. In 2005, the Viz, LLC. and ShoPro Entertainment merged to form the current Viz Media, LLC which is jointly owned by Japanese publishers Shogakukan and Shueisha, and Shogakukan's licensing division Shogakukan Productions (ShoPro Japan)(**Viz Media.** (2010). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viz_Media).

On the other hand, with the fan scanlations, a chapter released on Monday becomes available for non-Japanese fans most lately by Friday of the same week. The time gap between the licensed publishing and fan scanlations are too big for fans to wait and that creates the major difference between the ordinary manga reader and a fan; as we stated before, the fan seeks the immediate access and cares the interaction it will bring within the fandom.

Robin E. Brenner describes the scanlations as,

> Scanlation, a combination of scan and translation, involves the scanlator translating the dialogue and sound effects, scanning in each page from an original Japanese manga into a computer, and replacing the Japanese text with the translated English words using an image editing program. The availability of cheap scanners has allowed this trend to take over the fan releases of manga— there are many more Scanlations than translations at this point. It is not an easy or quick process, but fans put their knowledge of Japanese and desire for fast translations of personal favorites to use by creating scanlations. (Brenner, 2007, p. 205)

So basically scanlations is a collective work of scanning and translation of manga by fans for fans. It is non-profit and based on voluntary involvement of fans who knows Japanese, some software for cleaning and reorganizing the speech bubbles etc. and who has the means and necessary skills to create a website. Scanlation is also a group work rather than a solitary thing (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7 Scanlation group's cover page for Bleach manga

A few fans come together to build a scanlation group. Usually this group has a raw provider, who finds the original Japanese text. The provider might do the scanning or give it to another member to scan the chapter. Sometimes raw Japanese text is provided from the globally shared raw scans, but the credit goes to the main scanner in that case. After the scanning, the editor and the translator works together to translate and edit the text. Then another member adjust the new text into speech bubbles and adds translator notes[35] etc.; then the chapter is released. In the end the product becomes a work of collective intelligence of fans which requires different skills at different levels.

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[35] Translator Notes are the notes written by the translator of that Scanlation group. It is written in order to descirbe a word that cannot be tranlated, or lose its meaning through translation. Sometimes translators also write notes about customs and traditions that might give an insight to the reader.

As pointed before scanlations are weekly releases most generally, if the series is a popular one like Bleach. Scanlation group releases the chapter on their website either as a file or share it on online manga readers like mangafox.com or mangastream.com. Both ways their releases are anticipated and fans write about their appropriation as comments.

Fan scanlations has another advantage that works both for fans and the licensors. Scanlation groups provide access to manga that might never be translated into English by a licensor due to its lack of popularity in the market. And also Doujinshi[36] find its way to the fandom through those scanlating groups. A less popular manga might not get weekly scanlations but it gets translated and reaches to many readers and followers.

Brenner puts the positive impact of fan scanlations as,

> Manga publishers, including ADVs, have admitted they pay attention to scanlations to predict what will be popular in the marketplace. If hundreds of fans are clamoring for a particular manga scanlation, companies know to pursue the rights to translate that manga (Roth, 2005). Intriguingly, the system of scanlation does not appear to have a negative impact on sales—if anything, the buzz surrounding scanlated titles usually means more fans will purchase the title once it is published, simply because they are already fans." (Brenner, 2007, p. 206)

Of course the whole process is made possible by the fact that Japanese copyright differs from U.S copyrights. As Schodt puts, the Japanese law is not less strict than the U.S one

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[36]Dōjinshi (同人誌, often transliterated as doujinshi) are self-published Japanese works, usually magazines, manga or novels. They are often the work of amateurs, though some professional artists participate as a way to publish material outside the regular industry. The term dōjinshi is derived from dōjin (同人, literally "same person", used to refer to a person or persons with whom one shares a common goal or interest) and shi (誌, a suffix generally meaning "periodical publication"). Dōjinshi are part of a wider category of dōjin including, but not limited to, art collections, anime, hentai and games. Groups of dōjinshi artists refer to themselves as a sākuru (サークル, circle). A number of such groups actually consist of a single artist: they are sometimes called kojin sākuru (個人サークル, personal circles). Dōjinshi are made by artists or writers who prefer to publish their own materials(**Doujinshi.** (2010). In *Wikipedia.* Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doujinshi).

but its enforced less strictly. Copyright holders in U.S have to defend their trademark or else it ends up becoming a public domain. In Japan however creators tend to allow the creations of their core audience, fans, rather than alienating them (Schodt, 1996).

The same rules also apply for what we call fansubs today. The process is similar to the scanlations but it's for anime rather than manga. It is more of a complicated process and it requires more technical knowledge due to the fact that it includes digital video, audio and subtitle tracks.

As we have pointed earlier, fansubs started as an underground movement back in 1980s and its founder was Fred Patten. Today fansubs are done by many fan groups, which are like the scanlations groups in general. And the process of subbing and distribution became easier with the digitization and Internet. The fansub group is able to reach the digital copy of the anime the day its aired in Japan. The system works almost the same; there is a raw provider for the high-quality digital copy of that week's episode. The subbers[37] take it, translate it and release within a day or two. The quality of fansubs and fan scanlations are debated due to the accuracy and speed of the fansub or scanlations group; but none the less they provide the much needed and wanted weekly releases of both the anime and manga within the same week of its release in Japan.

Fansubbing also have the same advantages with the fan scanlating. It provides access to titles that might never be released and it advertises the anime as a medium for potential licensing by the industry in the future.

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[37]People who are involved in the Fansubbing process.

In the end fan scanlating and fansubbing provide the basic material that the fandom needs; manga and anime that they are fan of. As the starting point becomes possible by the collective intelligence and heavily depends on the voluntary investment of emotions, time and knowledge of the fans, what holds the fandom together is their collectivity and their sense of community.

> What holds a collective intelligence together is not the possession of knowledge—which is relatively static, but the social process of acquiring knowledge—which is dynamic and participatory, continually testing and reaffirming the group's social ties." (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 54)

Those social ties and process of acquiring knowledge happens within the global networks of manga and anime fandom; which is made possible by the existence of virtual communities.

3.4 Virtual Communities as Network Societies of Fandom

The concept of cyberspace gains importance in the discussion of today's online fandom for it provides an alternative space and holds the key to the communication and interactivity of the individuals on electronic platform. It provides virtual interactive experiences and global communication between the members of these electronic 'social' networks. The cyberspace becomes a 'space' where communication, interaction, exchange of information and networks are re-defined in an electronic context and through this what is real becomes virtual.

Basically virtual communities are communities based on common interests. The tempting offer is the instant communication and global interaction between fans and a sharing platform without the boundaries. Fans do come together under those communities to share their interests or communicate through those interests. Also as Jenkins puts, "fan reception cannot and does not exist in isolation, but is always shaped through input for other fans and motivated, at least partially, by a desire for further interaction with a large social and cultural community." (Jenkins, 1992, p. 76)

This interest defines also a person's subject position in that virtual community and in the cyberspace. Becoming a member of a virtual community is due to possessing that interest and it constitutes a common ground for the community. In real life it is hard to find so many people with common interests that are already in your physical environment, but Internet makes this possible by brining the disembodied subject, without bearing the territorial, physical space, in real-time.

Virtual communities today come in many different forms. There are forums and boards, Livejournal Communities and Blogspeheres, Mailing lists, Yahoo groups and social network platforms like Facebook. Once a fan becomes a member of his/her fandom's forum s/he joins other communities of that fandom too. Different virtual communities of a fandom create a network over the Internet to exchange fan artifacts, news, information, discussions and even members; a fan can have accounts from Livejournal, deviantart.com, fanfiction.net and many others and s/he will display that openly to invite others to join on other platforms. Those virtual communities are highly interrelated and mostly interdependent. For example, when the same fan with multiple accounts opens a Livejournal community, s/he and collects followers and readers from

that forum. In exchange what is produced, like fan fictions or fan art, is shared on that forum as a part of the interaction and networking.

Also these virtual communities of fandom are exclusive to fans of that fandom; from the language that is used in the formation of the forum to the topics discussed. For example BleachForums is a forum based on a popular Japanese anime and manga series called Bleach. The members of the forum consist of Bleach fans that follow the series religiously since its release. The promise of the forum is that: you will be able to reach latest news about the series and be able to come together with 'the ones like you' to discuss and share opinions about Bleach. However the structure of the forum requires a specific form of knowledge about the series. For example the base section of the forum, in which the subforums about news, rules and introduction of the new members takes place, is named 'The Kurosaki Clinic'[38]; and the subforums are also named in a way that only a fan can relate with.

The members should possess and share the same interest in the series and have a certain knowledge about the characters and places in the series so that they can make sense of the sections and subforums. For instance the Bleach Section in which the main discussion about the series takes place is named after Karakura 1st High School(the name of the school that the characters attend during the series) and the explanation of the section goes like this: Your single-stop for education in Karakura Town! Get schooled on all the latest things about BLEACH! The virtual subject is drawn to the forum with the expectation of finding others that shares his interest and knowledge with the same passion. The knowledge required is a simple test of a fan's interest and devotion; and becoming a member of that board gives a fan the subject position of a

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[38] This is the fictional Clinic that belongs to Bleach 's leading male charakter Kurosaki Ichigo's father. It is located under their huse and both his sisters are also working, helping his father in that clinic.

Bleach fan who is interested in Bleach enough to discuss about it and become a part of the forum.

Those little details give a sense of belonging to that fan in that community and strengthen the communal ties of that fandom. The instant communication and interaction that virtual communities provide for fans creates a continuity and solidarity for that fandom. The interaction on daily, or even hourly, bases provides new levels of personal communication between fans. One of the new trends in the fan based virtual communities is to have 'e-families'. A group of members come together and assign family roles to each other and become an e-family that *covers each other's back* on the virtual communities. The members of those e-families display the usernames of their e-siblings, e-parents or e-spouses in their signatures[39] which automatically appear after their every post.

Today it's not only blogspheres or IRc chats that they come together and become more personal; as we discussed, forums and boards works with the same dynamic, they have topics in which the members introduce themselves upon arriving to that forum and there are member-special parts that the members of that board could discuss and share their personal and less fannish experiences. Fandom, also, becomes a place not only for the discussion of specific topics but also many related topics depending on the other interests of the same fans. This also creates a series of new networking opportunities

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[39] A signature block (often abbreviated as signature, sig block, sig file, .sig, dot sig, siggy, or just sig) is a block of text automatically appended at the bottom of an e-mail message, Usenet article, or forum post. This has the effect of "signing off" the message and in a reply message of indicating that no more response follows. Depending on the board's capabilities, signatures may range from a simple line or two of text to an elaborately-constructed HTML piece. Images are often allowed as well, including dynamically updated images usually hosted remotely and modified by a server-side script. Signatures are seen as an art form by many of their creators, and there are many websites centered around their creation and display. Some of these websites have competitions, battles and signature of the week contests, where members submit their entries to have them featured on the website(**Signature Block.** (2010). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signature_block)

over different interests. Fans follow other fans into their other fandoms; the fandom of another manga or anime perhaps, or a T.V series or a rock band.

In the manga and anime fandom this triggers the consumption of other manga and anime as well as many different products of today's Japanese popular culture. The fan of a certain manga also watches the anime and movies of that manga. And soon with the discussions they start to follow the Japanese bands that make soundtrack music for the anime and movies. If they get interested they start to follow Japanese music, which has an increasing popularity around the world. As Brenner points, "many fans trade original soundtracks only available in Japan via BitTorrent the same way they exchange anime and manga" (Brenner, 2007, p. 207).

It also increases the interest and widens the socio-virtual networks of knowledge. For example a follower of *Bleach* might get interested into other manga that share the same genre with *Bleach*. Or, as we have said, since the members discuss and share their other interests, fans might dig into what is posted and try new stories, anime or games based on the common interest of other board members.

New experiences of culture, also, can be practiced through other manga fandoms and new information can be obtained within new networks. Since every manga has its own story and cultural elements, with every manga comes new information about that culture. For example a *historical romance* manga might have information about Japan's tradition, customs and gender roles on that specific historical era. Or a *slice of life*[40] shōjo

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[40] A slice of life story is a category for a story that portrays a "cut-out" sequence of events in a character's life. It may or may not contain any plot progress and little character development, and often has no exposition, conflict, or dénouement, with an open ending(**Slice of Life Story.** (2010). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slice_of_life_story).

manga might give an insight on the daily lives of Japanese students, the school system or exams since it covers real life topics in its plot. So when a fan makes a new discovery, finds a new manga for his/her taste, they also find a new source to obtain new information about that culture.

The virtual communities of fandom also bring together the fans that share the same geographical and physical boundaries. Virtual communities make it easy for them to communicate and come together in real-time and space; it creates a cross-media interaction for fans. For manga and anime fandom this 'get together' takes place in conventions. Aside from Japan, most of the conventions in the world are held in U.S throughout the year and they are held in most of the states.

> Like any gathering of fans, manga and anime conventions provide the sense of community that fans crave—the exhilarating feeling that they are not alone in their enthusiasm and that there are, in fact, other people out there who want to discuss Naruto as much as they do. A lot of that sense of community comes from online discussion today, but nothing quite beats the overwhelming feeling of acceptance that comes from walking into an anime convention and seeing people laughing, debating, and parading by dressed as characters from this year's hottest series. (Brenner, 2007, p. 209)

An example of the process is like, if the artist of the manga that the fandom follow, visits for a convention in U.S., the news immediately hits the forum and fans who live in U.S. and have the opportunity to attend that convention come together for a face-to-face fan experience. The fans attend the convention together and then return back to the forum to share the collective experience. They form new bonds and networks in themselves through that cross-media experience and continue to carry it on the virtual community that they share.

3.5 Hierarchies and Fandom as Social Formation

Today fans embrace their fan status and display their belonging to a fandom more openly then it was before. Networks of capitalism and culture started to support and encourage fan culture more openly due to their potential for consumption and cultural influence. Since the virtual communities of fandom provides a common ground for the fans all over the world, those communities become social platforms for sharing cultures, political ideas, artistic views etc.

Nowadays the term 'fan' is almost stripped of its negative meaning. We are in an era in which artists should thank their fans for the support because that's how they make money out of everything that they merchandise. Producers work specifically to create a solid fan base for a T.V. show or series and keep their interest by trying different ways, like in the T.V series Lost. Digital social platforms like Facebook also started to support the fan culture with its own contribution. There is a button called 'become a fan' that fans have to click in order to follow and have full access to the profile. Accordingly the friends window that shows the number of one's friends is turned into a window that shows the number of fans.

Since fandoms are social formations, they support their own forms of hierarchy and virtual communities are the platforms where those hierarchies are openly displayed. When we talk about a fan community we talk about a social formation in which the social members interact within the boundaries of social order.

The 'social order' on the forum also has its own dynamics. The community creates a sense of belonging as one has a determined status as a member. Being a part of that

board, being an active user and being a member whose words are respected and quoted(there is a 'most referred' section on every forum where the usernames of the most referred members are written) give a sense of belonging to that community. The member pushes aside the advantages of anonymity and fully embraces the communal activity. They start to share their pictures (real life ones) and put personal information on their profiles. They even share their real name with a select few, who share the same socio-virtual status with them and will never give it out.

So anonymity becomes reduced to a screen name as you become more integrated into that community. Accordingly, the anonymity leaves its place to popularity in the social circle. If one becomes a popular member of one fandom, this popularity is carried to other interrelated fandoms and virtual communities of that fandom. Popularity in a fandom depends on various aspects and plays an important role in the fandom hierarchy.

The hierarchy is determined through two things: the virtual community's rules and one's status and level as a fan. Every virtual community, like boards and forums, have their own set of rules that the members should obey and being a fan is not enough to join and become a part of that community. There are moderators and admins who go through the posts to check if there is any 'inappropriate' content. There are also filters that automatically delete one's reply if it includes some banned words. The reality is that the board informs participants about these regulations in the beginning (Figure 3.8). Every forum on Internet is based on the same standard structure but the designs of their interfaces differ. Every board has a base section where the members can reach forum rules anytime, anywhere, ask question to the admins and mods or make a complaint about a member or a post of a member.

Figure 3.8 Rules Section of the BleachAsylum Forums, rules are divided under topics for further details in each thread.

Michelle Willson quotes Mark Smith on the rules of virtual communities,

> Marc Smith writes that, as in 'real space' communities, virtual communities must invoke and maintain the commitment of their members; monitor and sanction behaviour; and carry out the production and distribution of essential resources. There are specific rules attached to each community, which participants must agree to follow in order to maintain participatory rights. Many of these rules are fashioned either by the participants themselves or, more frequently, by the person/s who originally constructed the community space (cited in Willson in Holmes(ed.), 1997, p. 150).

The interaction in virtual communities is defined through textual terms. One's post defines one's status as a fan as well as one's status as a board member. The quantity as well as the quality of one's posts, whether they spam[41] the board or not, determines a

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[41] Forum spam is the creating of messages that are advertisements, abusive, or otherwise unwanted on Internet forums. It is generally done by automated spambots. Spam posts may contain anything from a single link, to dozens of links. Text content is minimal, usually innocuous and unrelated to the forum's topic, or in a very old thread that is revived by the spammer solely for the purpose of spamming links. Some text is included to prevent the post being caught by automated spam filters that prevent posts which consist solely of external links from being submitted. Full banner advertisements have also been reported(**Forum Spam.** (2010). In *Wikipedia.* Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forum_spam).

sort of socio-virtual status, which can be considered as the honor or prestige attached to one's position in that virtual community, in that community. The members are ranked according to post counts and these ranks are a proof of the members credibility in the socio-virtual hierarchy that rules the board (Figure 3.9).

Top 5 Stats							
Latest Posts		Newest Members▼			Top Posters▼		
" Black Moon Rising" ~ Kurosaki...	BleachOD	1 Bobfonzo	02-07	0	1	spacecat	24,370
Crazy but some kind of possible...	Zura	2 Michiko-san	02-07	0	2	Rain	23,494
THE NEW TATSUKI FC: KUBO'S...	Saiyan5ninetail	3 Manduria	02-07	0	3	Arrancar_Fan	22,048
Kuroshitsuji 2 General News and...	Stripe	4 skyguy	02-07	30	4	Rayne	14,163
Inoue Orihime FC {v9}	Jasy	5 Lady Kuchiki	02-07	0	5	Katarzyna	10,252
							Reload

Figure 3.9 display of moment by moment statistics about whats happening on the board: the topics that latest comments take place, newest members with when they are signed up and their post counts so far, and the top posters with their reputation points on the right, their colored names also point their admin or moderator status.

As a fan, number of one's posts marks their 'active fan' status. The more one posts, the more the forum members become aware of that member's presence in the community and starts to read and follow him/her. One's *active fan* status and the quality of their posts increase their credibility in the fandom. The comments they evoke, the discussion topics they open and the speed and quality of the news that they share earn them popularity in the fandom and soon others start follow and read to see what that member thinks and shares.

In the most simplistic sense, fandom expects you to contribute to the collective knowledge of the fandom. The posts should contribute and follow the flow of thought on the topic. Posting news also increases the credibility of the poster, in manga and anime fandom, obtaining news and sharing them is an important process both in the sense of collective intelligence and obtaining knowledge from a wide range of global resources on immediate bases. Good posts, valuable news and contributing to the

discussions help the member of that forum to gain reputation[42], since other members can give them credit points as reputations. In the end members of the forums are ranked within the forum according to those credit points that they gain from reputations.

Accordingly posting provides certain popularity and credibility in the fandom as well as it puts a fan to a place in the fandom hierarchy. Another important factor that determines a fan's position is the number and quality of the fan artifacts that s/he produces for that fandom. In the fandom of manga and anime, being a creator of a fan artifact plays an important role, not only because it requires some skills but it also requires serious knowledge about a foreign culture, research and command over the visual language. Not every creator automatically receives a higher rank; the artifact should be related, relevant, well-thought and well-structured. For example well known fan fiction writers hold an important place in the fandom and are in the higher ranks of the hierarchy. Their posts are followed and they have high number of 'referrals'. Like every fandom this fandom has its own criteria for the authenticity and creativity of the artifact. Fan artists, writers, translators etc. are not only celebrated for their creativity but also for their loyalty to the fandom according to the time and energy they dedicate for the production of those artifacts.

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[42]Its a system that works in the same logic with a 'reputation system' that computes and publishes reputation scores for a set of objects (e.g. service providers, services, goods or entities) within a community or domain, based on a collection of opinions that other entities hold about the objects. The opinions are typically passed as ratings to a reputation center which uses a specific reputation algorithm to dynamically compute the reputation scores based on the received ratings(**Reputation System.** (2010). In *Wikipedia.* Retrieved in May 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reputation_system).
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3.6 Fan Artifacts and Manga and Anime Fandom

We said that with the digitalization, the sharing became more possible and immediate. That also created new opportunities for the fans who want to share their products. Today there are lots of sites that host fan fictions, like fanfiction.net, and bring fans as readers and writers together all around the world. There are also sites like deviantart.com that fans can upload their drawings, digital arts etc. Also fans create videos or even shoot fan movies and share on Youtube or Vimeo. The more the sharing becomes possible, the more people start to create and produce.

In the age of Internet the dynamics of the fandom is heavily based on these productions, reproduction, sharing, interaction and networking within the boundaries of the virtual communities. They are the places that make it possible for fandom to become a social formation. They are also the places where fan culture becomes powerful with each sharing and interaction.

In today's anime and manga fandom, producing, sharing and distribution of the fan artifacts creates the building blocks of the fandom. Production of those heavily relies on collective intelligence and the knowledge produced through that process. Sharing and distribution also requires serious work because of the language's foreign roots and connections with the Japanese side of the fandom. Today there are lots of Japanese doujinshi artists who have their own websites and network but the access to them is provided through the fans who know Japanese because their websites, blogs or artist accounts are in Japanese.

If we look at the fan creations of manga and anime fandom we can group them under a few main topics; digital art for decoration and personification; Anime Music Video (AMVs); and fanfictions, fanart and doujinshi.

3.6.1 Digital Art for Decoration and Personification

This group of fan creativity includes wallpapers, avatars, signatures, banners and web design. There are lots of websites, livejournal communities, blogs and art sites that fans use for sharing their manga and anime related wallpapers, avatars, banners etc. Wallpapers might be created from scanned images, fan arts or from the favorite scenes of its creator.

> Creators make collages, use illustration and design programs to edit, add effects, and adjust images to particular color schemes or themes, and image editing programs give fans free reign to manipulate the images in whatever way they desire, from adding effects to manipulating scenes so that, for example, characters from different shows appear in the same scene. The more adventurous manipulate characters, often romantically pairing together couples, whether it is a part of the original story "canon" or not. Images are also often linked together to create screensavers for fans to download, although this requires a bit more finesse with programming. (Brenner, 2007, p. 200)

The avatars, signatures and banners also created with the same ways. The creative and skillful fans produce those artifacts for their fellow fans and share it. For example Fan Clubs (FCs) within forums have their own threads and they open a new topic under the same name following the previous one, after 1000 posts. Each thread is considered as a volume and each volume has a banner of its own created by a select few members of that Fan Club who possesses the necessary skills and tools. The other members of the FCs are always appreciative. Some fans create 'avatar-signature sets' that has a matching

avatar and a signature for the FC or for the fandom in general. The credit goes to the original artist of that avatar, signature or banner(or all) and the artist is mentioned in the signature as a thanks and a reference. Also the artists, in some forums, get reputation points as a gift from other members for their thanks and appreciation.

There are also fans that contribute to the web designs of forums, boards and LJ communities, or fans who create their own fan websites from scratch. Each has a different level of expertise and skill but none the less all of them put forward a dedication, creativity and effort for that fandom.

3.6.2 Anime Music Videos

A trend started with the increasing availability of video production softwares and increased use of video sharing platforms like YouTube or Vimeo. The anime music video is made possible by editing the footage from the original anime in different ways or sequences, and adding a suitable or artist's favorite music to it. It is a very common practice within the Shipper FCs of manga and anime. The footage can be edited in order to make a point about the possibility of the romantic involvement of the particular characters or they may be edited in a way to create the impression that there is something in between them even if it has never been indicated in the original manga or anime. Today manga and anime fandom have AMV contests on their online communities or during conventions. AMV artist fans can also share their videos instantly on forums or YouTube; or provide link for downloading and get their feedbacks as comments or critiques immediately.

3.6.3 Fan Art, Doujinshi and Fan Fiction

Fan art, doujinshi and fan fiction are quiet close to each other; they all aim to tell a story over the original text but they all do that in a different way. Fan art and doujinshi are the visual expressions of fan's interpretations and storytelling. There are different skill levels and fan art varies from doodling to professional. Some artists create their art by using computer programs, some chose to do it with traditional tools like paper, colored pencils etc. and then scan it. But in the end they all draw within the same character design and sometimes even the same composition with their favorite manga or anime. Much like AMVs and fan fiction, fans aim to create their own worlds, own impressions while drawing their favorite characters, couples or scenes. Robin E. Brenner explains fan art and its relation to online fandom saying that,

> Much like fan fiction, part of the appeal of fan art comes from the community surrounding its creation, where creators get the instant gratification of immediately sharing their finished work with fellow enthusiasts and seeking their comments The comments surrounding a particular piece of fan art or a fan art gallery is simply another way of processing the story, both for the artist and for the fans. (Brenner, 2007, p. 204)

The next step following fan art, which is also a fan art, is doujinshi that requires the skill for both graphic storytelling and command over Japanese visual language, since doujinshi is basically a fan made, amateur manga. Today, there are lots of books, CDs or even softwares like Manga Studio FX, that teaches the basics of how to draw manga. Some doujinshi are drawn as a continuation of the original manga, some are drawn for shippers by shippers, some aim to create an alternate world with the same characters; but in the end it tells a fan written story in a graphic way.

Regarding, doujinshi artists are highly respected members of the manga and anime fandom for their skills in both art and graphic storytelling. Most of the doujinshi artists in the fandom, however, are Japanese due to the fact that they are more familiar with the culture and the visual language because of their exposure to it since early ages. Therefore providing it, again, requires a collective work on the side of non-Japanese fans. There are doujinshi artists who have their own web sites and publish their work online. Those artists also attend fan conventions, but most particularly their work is consumed globally within the online fandom.

A manga and anime fan can reach fan art through various resources. Deviantart.com is one of the biggest and regularly used site that hosts any sorts of art, online. Again some artists upload their won work to photo sharing sites like flickr or photobucket, some post their work on their blogs and some have their own web sites like the doujinshi artists.

Fan fiction, on the other hand, is the most widely created, shared and known form of fan artifact and this fact doesn't change for manga and anime fandom either. Fan fiction writing is a more global activity for these fans, unlike its graphic counterpart doujinshi. It also does not require high levels of technical or artistic skills like in fan art or other forms of digital art like banners, avatars or AMVs. Fan fiction also plays an important role in how fans read. According to Henry Jenkins, fan reading is,

> is a social process through which individual interpretations are shaped and reinforced through ongoing discussions with other readers. Such discussions expand the experience of the text beyond its initial consumption. The produced meanings are thus more fully integrated into the readers' lives and are of a fundamentally different character from meanings generated through a casual and fleeting encounter with an otherwise unremarkable (and unremarked upon) text. For the fan, these previously "poached" meanings provide a foundation for future encounters with the fiction, shaping how it will be perceived, defining how it will be used. (Jenkins, 1992, p. 45)

In this fandom, fan fiction is an important source for producing meanings and experiencing the original text since it provides knowledge about the culture, traditions and interpretations of it. A fan fiction writer is considered to be a competent one if s/he can fully grasp the Japanese culture and integrate it into either different worlds with the same characters or write a continuation for the original text.

Fan fictions have variable genres and stylistic categories. Some may be an Alternate Universe (AU) in which the original characters are portrayed in different worlds, in different times outside of the realm of the original text. On the other hand, some may be canon, in which the characters take place in the original story and setting put within a different plot. Aside from their difference both categories have two major things in common; one, they have to stick with the original character design and keep the characters in character; and two, they are written in order to fill gaps or fulfill the wishes of fans. And in addition to these two general characteristics, fan fiction about a manga or anime should provide the cultural and traditional consistency within the plot, especially when its canon. For example a Bleach fan fiction might be a canon story, taking place in Bleach time and universe, about what will be the case if Soul Society loses the Winter War. While another Bleach fan fiction might be an Alternate Universe, telling a love story between two leading characters Ichigo and Rukia; portraying Ichigo as a business tycoon living in New York, and Rukia as a popular writer whom he is a fan of.

Within the manga and anime fandom most fan fiction writers are female. The number of fan fictions dedicated to romantic couples, namely Ships, suppresses the number of fan fictions about other topics. Shōnen manga has more fan fictions written about them

then shōjo manga, no matter how popular the series are. If we look a little more deeply into that, these facts are interrelated.

In the beginning we have said that manga and anime genres have variable and a wide range of target demographics; manga written for boys/men is also followed by girls/women and vice versa. In this context, female readers of shōnen manga write about their romantic interpretations, and fulfill their desire of seeing any romantic interaction by writing fan fictions since shōnen manga, in its nature, do not leave much place for romantic involvement which creates a gap for many female readers. So the female side of the manga and anime fandom manifests in fan fiction and fan art. As we consider the target demographics, the opposite of the targeted group turns out to be the one to fill the gaps by writing alternate plots. But we should also keep in mind that those fan fictions are consumed by both male and female fans like any other product of the fandom.

All in all the creation of fan artifacts requires a certain dedication. It requires time, knowledge and an understanding. It is only made possible by sharing and collective intelligence; especially in the case of manga and anime. It does not only provide a constant circulation for the fandom but also triggers the participation as well as production. It determines your status as a fan and your place as a member of a socio-virtual community.

4. FANTASY, CONTENT AND THE UNCANNY IN MANGA

So far we have discussed the emergence of comic book culture and the roots of manga, as well as its popularity in global markets and success as a popular culture product. We have also discussed manga and anime fans and fandom regarding the virtual tendencies, transmedia consumptions, new forms of hierarchies and literacy.

In this chapter we will discuss the tendencies of the manga and anime fandom towards their readings and understanding of the text through the examples from Bleach. But before starting, I will a brief introduction to Bleach for a better understanding.

Bleach is a shōnen manga which tells the story of a 15-year old boy named Kurosaki Ichigo, who has the ability to see ghosts. He is living in a town called Karakura Town, with his father Kurosaki Isshin and with his two sisters Yuzu and Karin and he is often picked up because of his orange hair. One night after his encounter with the shinigami[43]

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[43] Shinigami (死神, "death god(s)"; Viz "Soul Reaper(s)") are a race of spiritual beings that act as enforcers and psychopomps who all share similar supernatural powers. They are souls with a high level of innate Spiritual Energy, recruited from the ranks of the residents and nobility of the Soul Society. **Shingami.** (2010). In *BleachWiki*. Retrieved in June 24, 2010, from BleachWiki: http://bleach.wikia.com/wiki/ Shinigami

Kuchiki Rukia, he obtains shinigami powers and saves his family from hollows[44]. During the first story arc Ichigo tries to rescue Kuchiki Rukia from her execution in Soul Society[45], while she is accused for sharing her shinigami powers with a human. During that journey, some of Ichigo's friends from school, Sado Yasutora(a muscular and tall half-mexican guy who talks rarely), Inoue Orihime(a cheery, happy-go-lucky girl with orange hair who has a crush on Ichigo) and Uryuu Ishida(a hard-working, intelligent student who happens to be a member of a spiritual race called Quincy). Together they take a journey towards Soul Society, with the help of an ex-shinigami who is on exile in the Living World, Urahara Kisuke. Until they save Rukia, Ichigo develops powers beyond most of the shinigami as he fights with Captains and various shinigami on his way. As he saves Rukia from execution it is understood that the whole thing was a conspiracy plotted against the Soul Society for its demise. A captain called Aizen Souske wants to create the God's key and take God's place above the heavens, so he escapes to Hueco Mundo[46] where he has been building a powerful army from hollows and experimenting on his own powers for centuries.

The following arc takes place in Hueco Mundo, where Inoue Orihime is kidnapped and Ichigo decides to save her. This becomes another journey that has its parallels with the

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[44] Hollow (虚, ホロウ, horō) are a race of creatures which are born from Human souls who, for various reasons, do not cross over to Soul Society after their death and stay in the Human World for too long. They are corrupt spirits with supernatural powers that devour the souls of both living and deceased Humans. Hollows are the principal antagonists at the beginning of the story and remain a primary threat beyond that point. Hollows settle in Hueco Mundo, but can cross over to the Human World and Soul Society. **Hollow.** (2010). In *BleachWiki*. Retrieved in June 24, 2010, from BleachWiki: http://bleach.wikia.com/wiki/Hollow

[45] Soul Society (尸魂界 (ソウル・ソサエティ), the Japanese spelling used literally translates to "dead spirit world") is the afterlife (also called the spirit world). It is meant to correspond to Heaven or Nirvana in Human belief systems. It is the place where most departed souls and the Shinigami dwell. **Soul Society. (**2010). In *BleachWiki*. Retrieved in June 24, 2010, from BleachWiki: http://bleach.wikia.com/wiki/Soul_Society

[46] Hueco Mundo is located between the Human world and Soul Society, though it is separate from the bordering dimension known as Dangai. It can only be accessed by tearing the dimensional fabric separating the worlds, allowing Hollows to travel to any other dimension at will. Depending on the Hollow, the effect of this process varies. **Hueco Mundo.** (2010). In *BleachWiki*. Retrieved in June 24, 2010, from BleachWiki: http://bleach.wikia.com/wiki/Hueco_Mundo

first arc where he saved Rukia, for Ichigo to develop both emotionally and physically. He struggles with his inner hollow which he obtained while trying to become a shinigami. He fights with different hollows, a more powerful and transformed version called Arrancars[47] which possessed both the shinigami and hollow powers; and witness different emotional philosophies on his way, as he power ups he also grows and learns the importance of friends and team work. He goes through a different world, Hueco Mundo, which was described in a different way by the Soul Society and discovers that his focus about protecting is shifting towards becoming more powerful.   He also discovers that his father was a shinigami once and they seem to have the same powers. Right now in the story, Aizen defeated the captains and came to Karakura Town to create the King's Key from the souls of humans that are living in Karakura. Ichigo on the other hand, is in a timeless place between the living world and Soul Society with his father, where he will be training, in the following chapters, to obtain one last power that his Zanpakutō[48] offers.

4.1 Manga Story-telling: Japanese Visual Language and non-Japanese Fans

For a non-Japanese reader the first obstacle in reading and understanding manga is the Japanese Visual Language (JVL). Most basically JVL is a graphic communication system and it's the 'language' that the manga uses in order to tell the story. JVL is important in

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[47] An Arrancar (破面 (アランカル), arankaru; Spanish for "To Tear Off", Japanese for "Ripped Mask") is a Hollow that has removed its mask and has gained Shinigami-like powers. Following the retrieval of the Hōgyoku and Aizen's emergence into Hueco Mundo, they have become the main antagonists of the series, in particular the Espada, Aizen's top ten most powerful Arrancar. **Arrancar.** (2010). In *BleachWiki*. Retrieved in June 24, 2010, from BleachWiki: http://bleach.wikia.com/wiki/Arrancar

[48]Zanpakutō are the trademark weapons of the Shinigami, Arrancar and Viazard. Capable of cutting spiritual bodies, they are amongst the few weapons which can be used to combat Hollows. Each Shinigami carries a unique Zanpakutō, and each Zanpakutō is unique: as the swords are both reflections of a Shinigami's soul and power, and sentient beings unto themselves. The Zanpakutō's name is also the name of the living spirit that empowers the sword and lends its strength to the Shinigami who wields it. **Zanpakutō.** (2010). In *BleachWiki*. Retrieved in June 24, 2010, from BleachWiki: http://bleach.wikia.com/wiki/Zanpakutō

two ways: one, it creates the basis of manga story-telling, and two it needs to be learned like any other language. Accordingly, for manga and anime fandom, being able to 'read' is made possible by acquiring the skill of learning that language.

As Schodt puts,

> … manga are merely another "language", and the panels and pages are but another type of "words" adhering to a unique grammar. Japanese say that reading manga is almost like reading Japanese itself. This makes sense, for manga pictures are not entirely unlike Japanese ideograms, which are themselves sometimes a type of "cartoon", or a steamlines visual representation of reality. (Schodt, 1996, p. 26)

Neil Cohn (2007) states that, "Japanese children are simply treating JVL in manga as a language, learning it through exposure, imitation, and practice." (p.6). The non-Japanese readers follow the same learning pattern; through exposure, imitation and practice. In the fandom, the more you have been into manga reading the more you have experience with the visual language so that your observations are more valuable than other fans and participants. A fan essay and fan fiction writer, and a renowned fan of *Bleach* puts her thought on the subject in one of her essays like this, "I'm a relative newbie to manga. I've only been interested in them for the last six years." Then she continues,

> Today (late summer, 2007) I don't know 1/10th as much as some of you fans out there, but like everyone else I have an opinion. All opinions, though, aren't equally convincing, sound, and valid. I'd trust someone who's been reading shoujo and shounen for the past ten years and watching cultural trends in Japan to predict a shipping outcome better than a Western newbie who's caught a few Bleach anime episodes and gets the low-down about the characters from Wikipedia.[49]

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[49] From the fan essay 'Authorial Intent in the Shounen Manga Form or Why Recent Chapters Don't Mean Luuuurve for IchiOri' by debbiechan. In *Livejournal*. Retrieved on November 28, 2009, from Livejournal: http://community.livejournal.com/bleachness/59138.html

As we have stated previously, reading and predicting requires a collective intelligence on the part of the fans. In here what this fan states as "I'd trust someone who's been reading shoujo and shounen for the past ten years and watching cultural trends in Japan…" shows us that some experience on the visual culture is expected as much as a knowledge about the cultural trends and events. This experience seems to be calculated with the amount and time of exposure to manga and anime. Though non-Japanese fans rarely 'practice' drawing manga, unless they are fanart artists, they learn it from long terms of watching and reading. In the end the level of experience heavily depends on how 'fluent' one becomes in reading that language. This 'fluency', coupled with searching and leaning about Japanese culture, myths and history, makes it possible for fans to have more accurate understanding and creates basis for more accurate predictions.

Japanese Visual language plays an important role within the global dynamics of manga. It does not only confirm that the visual culture belongs to a different and local culture in its origins but it also manages to keep the attention and devotion of the readers because of the so called 'hidden meanings' and the way it calls to the readers for the deciphering. It keeps the desire out there, in open, for the fan in this guessing game. It also provides a place for a reader regarding the level of one's knowledge about this visual language and how that one can relate it with the cultural subtext.

As one fan puts,

> The first thing I learned about this serialized form of story-telling is that I'm expected to guess what happens next. It's what the manga-ka wants me to do. It's what the publisher hopes I'll do so I'll buy more volumes of the story. What happens next is a natural game, whether you're playing it with a soap opera or a football game. Six years ago I would never have dared presume, even with a modicum of of knowledge about Western cartoons and literature teacher's penchant for playing "Where's Waldo?" with symbols and metaphors, WHAT

was going to happen next in a manga. I didn't know a shounen from a josei. I knew next to nothing about Japanese culture; I didn't know what the heck a sweatdrop was supposed to signify or why characters turned chibi every now and then.

Like any other iconic language Japanese Visual Language follows the same patterns that are not different from other visual languages on cognitive level. However when it's coupled with the style and content of manga, then it becomes more complicated for the untrained eye. There are two major stylistic differences that separate Japanese comic books from its Euro-American counterparts. One of them is manga's cinematographic narrative and the other is the fact that manga tells the story through the image not the words, so there is less text, aside from the dialogues, in manga than Euro-American comic books.

Frederik L. Schodt explains where a non-Japanese reader's meets with a Japanese text as,

> In the beginning, most non-Japanese (and even the few Japanese who don't normally read comics) find manga confusing. No matter how well translated, many are still very "Japanese" in story, visual style, and pacing. Pictures are intrinsically linked with verbal jokes and even puns. Sometimes characters seem to have nothing but dots in their word balloons, or to be gazing incessantly at horizons or making poignant gestures. Lecherous male characters suddenly develop nosebleeds. Plots seem to proceed in a rather roundabout way. Why don't they just get to the point? The answer, of course, is that manga are written and drawn by artists thinking in Japanese, not English, so it can take a non-Japanese a little more work and a little more patience to read them, even in translated form. A new visual and written vocabulary must be learned. Besides, manga are hardly a direct representation of reality. Most stories even if they depict normal people doing normal things, or impart hard information on history or the tax code—at their core are pure, often outrageous fantasy. (Schodt, 1996, p. 30)

Both of these stylistic characteristics are related to each other. The cinematographic narrative that the manga artists use helps them to tell more of the story, visually, without using any descriptive captions. So the cinematographic techniques make it possible for image alone to convey the narrative information. According to Schodt (1996), "the cinematic style enables manga artists to develop their story lines and characters with more complexity and psychological and emotional depth…The cinematic style also allows manga to be far more iconographic than comics in America and Europe." (p. 26)

The reason that Japanese artists can use such image based narration is the fact that they have more space in terms of number of pages, so that they can use as much as they want in order to draw attention and highlight a scene or a character. Shaded character drawings over white panels or techniques like fade-in or fade-out are commonly used as well as the subjective motion where the moving object is drawn stable over a streaked background, like the camera is moving with the object. Drawing motion has been in the stylistic characteristic of the Euro-American comics since the beginning but none of them has used motion as Japanese did in their comics, with the kino-eye[50].

Aaround Rommens in his article "Manga Story-telling/showing" writes about this phenomenon,

> In manga, there is no textual interference. Analytical montage entails the 'scattering' of a story event over different frames. A scene that would 'normally' (at least, from a western point of view) be captured in a single pane - with the necessary (or if you will redundant) descriptive information - is now cut up over different frames. The isolated frames, with alternating 'camera-angles', are put together in a visual continuum. Especially fighting scenes provide excellent illustrative material to this technique. (Rommens, 2000, p. 3)

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[50] It is a term developed by the filmmaker Dziga Vertov. It has many explanations and he talks about it as 'I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it.' In here, it is used for describing the technique as seeing the scene from the eye of the camera, moving with the object.

Bleach, as a shōnen manga, is a great example for this kind of narrative. The battle scenes are the most important parts of shōnen manga since they symbolize the struggle and victory of the hero within a more general context. They are drawn with great detail and from many angles. During those 'scenes' there are very few words written and the whole attention of the reader is drawn to the battle, the movements of the characters and their psychological moods and personal struggles throughout the battle. Sometimes a few minutes long battle can go on for weeks, for a few dozen pages, as it starts, evolves and ends. Ichigo's battle against 6th squad captain and Rukia's brother, Kuchiki Byakuya started in chapter 160 and continued for 8 chapters, which takes two months and 152 pages; it is still considered as the best fight in Bleach history[51] (Figure 4.1, 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.1c).

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[51] According to the 6th Bleach poll that was held by Weekly Shounen Jump, Ichigo Kurosaki Vs. Byakuya Kuchiki won the first place with 551 votes, and followed by Ichigo Kurosaki Vs. Ulquiorra Cifer (512 votes), Ichigo Kurosaki Vs. Grimmjow Jaegerjaquez (457 votes) and Ichigo Kurosaki Vs. Renji Abarai (457 votes). The results were announced and the top ten were published in Chapter 392 p.p 1-3

Figure 4.1 Bleach Manga by Kubo Tite(MangaRain Scanlation release)- V.19 Chapter 163, Kuchiki Byakuya against Kurosaki Ichigo Fight

Figure 4.1a

Figure 4.1b

Figure 4.1c

Continuing on the other fact, manga tells the story through the images and its visual narrative. So basically it means that reading manga is reading the images. Unlike it's Euro-American counterparts, it is rare to find a descriptive captions in manga. As Rommens (2000) puts, "in manga, such textual information would disturb the visual continuum in the sequence of images." (p.2). Its use is minimized, and the need for that is found unnecessary by manga artists, since they rely heavily on icons and symbols throughout their story. And as he also points, though Western comics have 'wordless comics' as a genre, it is still considered to be experimental and the sequence of images, unlike manga, is not based on analytical montage. The textual information in manga is in the form of dialogue, either between characters or in characters themselves; but this text is also integrated into the visual narration. "'Every image tells a story, so to speak." (Rommens, 2000, p.3).

Both of these points are important for the readers and fans of manga since this is where the guessing game begins. The authorial intent of the manga is believed to be hidden in those images and the way they are sequenced in the narrative. The panels are 'read' one by one and every little detail is pointed in order to prove the accuracy of the prediction or the support their point with references from the original text (Figure 4.2). The deciphering happens step by step, as a socio-virtual interaction, while fans exchange opinions over the 'reading'.

Figure 4.2 A page taken from a fan essay written by *debbiechan*

What we see in this Figure 4.2 is that different images are taken out of their panels and put together in order to make a point. The first image shows a combination of Ichigo's facial expressions, taken from different panels in different pages, combined in a sequential way to point the change. Also in the second image the author of the essay adds what she 'guesses' as the possible inner thoughts of the character (the guy standing

behind) in red. 'Reading' his body language (how his face is turned and how he is not getting involved), the author makes a meaning and links it to another discussion in the fandom regarding those three characters. In the last image she 'makes fun' of and criticizes the possible 'readings' done by other fans, which in this case is the fans of the opposite ship, of that single panel.

During my research I discovered that manga fandom heavily relies on the facial expressions and body language especially while trying to give meaning to romantic subtext. That tendency changes, and in our example, increases with the genre of the manga; as the subtexts become harder to find and not generally included in its form, the more the fandom relies on it. This is mainly observable for the romantic subtext search in shōnen; because shōnen tells a 'coming of a age story' of the young boy (the hero) and hardly includes romance and feelings are left out of the text as they become a part of the battles that the hero fights. 'Actions speak lauder than words' is the motto of shōnen, and that drives fans to pay more attention to the details in drawings and what it might convey. So, among the followers of serial manga it's common to hear/read different interpretations of facial expressions and panels. These interpretations can be refuted or supported by contextual panels, or comparing or combining different images in different chapters.

This leads us to another point which distinguishes manga from its Euro-American counterparts. In this fan essay, the fan writer, as we have stated, takes different panels form different chapters and when she combines them in another sequence they become meaningful again. The fact that panels can be separated from each other and will still have a meaning distinguishes manga from other forms of comic books. This characteristic of manga comes from both of the facts we have mentioned; from its

cinematographic narrative and using text in minimal. While not relying on text, like its Euro-American counterparts, manga artists come to rely on the images to convey the moods, the feelings of the characters, the impact of the scenes etc. This only makes image stronger and less dependent on the text, as the image becomes more meaningful in itself. Single images create a narrative within the sequential flow but they also carry meanings in themselves, without any need for a text.

This characteristic of Japanese manga also breaks the linearity of the text. A break in the linearity becomes unimportant, unlike the disruption it will create in a text, as single panels create meaningful combinations with other panels. In the example above, all of these panels are taken from different chapters and some have a yearlong gap in between. However as the writer combines them to make her point, they become meaningful in a new context, when used within a new sequence. They don't have to necessarily follow each other in order to make a point, tell the story etc. , they contain the feeling of the character, the mood of the moment or the focus of the action in themselves, enough to convey a message without a text and out of its own sequence and narrative.

From a Barthesian perspective this difference between Euro-American comic books and manga can be explained with what Barthes describes as "anchoring" and "relying". According to Barthes, linguistic message have two functions; the first one is "anchoring", where readers are helped and guided by the text to choose the right level of perception, or pay attention to correct details. Also this function has an ideological component in which the text becomes repressive compared within a relation to the freedom of what images signify. In the second function which he calls "relying", on the other hand, the text falls behind the image and serves as a supplementary source of information, for which dialogue balloons in comic books can be given as an example.

Unlike what anchoring does, in relying, text becomes an important component of the story for full comprehension of the image, rather than leading the reader towards a preferred reading (Barthes, 1977). In this context, what Euro-American examples of comic books, which are found too 'wordy' by Japanese artists, do is anchoring, using the text to lead the reader towards a preferred reading of the image, not leaving much space for the reader to neither play nor guess. On the other hand manga uses minimum text, heavily relying on what the image signifies. Manga leaves the reading to the reader, using dialogues to give hints and provide a more clear understanding of the image. Text is used to support the image, thus the image itself remains meaningful even without the text and the linguistic linearity of the text.

Another context that this characteristic gains importance is fandom. Manga offers its fans the opportunity to play. Fans can create their own narratives with chosen panels, piecing them together in their own sequence. Many different readings and meanings can come out of this as the readers have access to different images that do not lose its meaning when used out of its context. Fans use this characteristic as a part of their guessing game, relying on how and what panels are telling. They combine different panels or panels that depicts different emotions or reactions of the characters to make comparisons and defend their points, using those images and how they interpret them (Figure 4.3).

Contextual Identification of the Tender Looks and Some Observations

#1

 After the Grimmjow battle, Ichigo looks at Orihime and asks her if she's alright. The expression judged the least tender of the lot by my non-Bleach friends.

#2

After the Grimmjow battle, Ichigo looks at Nell. Ichigo's face is drawn in shadow as often is the case when Kubo wants to call attention to the emotion there (the expressive picture of Renji I discussed earlier was also drawn in shadow). I find it interesting that Ichigo gives Nell, an *Arrancar,* sweet looks in the Hueco Mundo. Clearly we're meant to sympathize with the Hollow entities that were the monsters in the previous arc.

#3

Arguably the most expressive face of the bunch. Is it angry? Tired? Sad? Heavy with concern? Here's where Ichigo grabbed Grimmjow's arm to break the Espada's fall at the end of the battle. Ichigo is frowning, but the sympathy in his eyes for the enemy who tried to kill his friends and who seemed hell-bent on killing *him* in unmistakable. First sympathy for Nell and now sympathy for Grimmjow? . The Arrancar themselves, the presupposed villains of Hueco Mundo, may not be who they appear to be--how very Kubo of you, Kubo.

#4

The face that launched a fandom wank. I was there. Last year. I started the topic on at soul_society about what this chapter could mean for a romantic subplot in Bleach and in no time, the ships were gunning at one another. Ichigo looks with tender concern at an injured Rukia while Orihime responds to Ichigo's expression with a pained look. Some fans claimed Ichigo was not looking at Rukia but staring into space in this panel. Even if one were to accept that preposterous interpretation, there's no denying that Ichigo's really upset about *something* here.

#5

Ichigo looks sweet and happy. He's just heard Orihime thank him for protecting her. It's a romantic moment *out of context,* but as I'll show later, Ichigo's subsequent behaviors nullify romance and are in keeping with his previous attitude of asexuality towards Orihime. I like the very fact that Kubo used these panels to tease his audience with romance.

#6

Ichigo looks tenderly at Nell and pats her on her little Arrancar head following Ichigo's first encounter with Ulquiorra. If you ask me, Ichigo expresses more emotion towards Nell and Grimmjow in the Hueco Mundo arc than he does towards Orihime.

#7

Soul Society arc, after the battle with Byakuya. Orihime breaks down in front of Ichigo and says she was worried about him. I find it very interesting that Kubo only shows us Ichigo's eyes in this crucial scene. Ichigo's "thank you" to Orihime is then a lone speech bubble with no accompanying picture. I'm still not sure if the usually clueless Ichigo didn't get a clue here about Orihime's feelings for him; if he did, he didn't return the intensity of her emotions. First we're shown a startled face when Orihime says she's sorry for not having protected him. Then, when Orihime cries, we get these soft, sympathetic eyes. No tension. Tension, as I'll argue later, is the first requisite for romance.

Figure 4.3 A page taken from a fan essay written by *debbiechan,* discussing the facial expressions of Kurosaki Ichigo

As we continue, we have to add one more important element of the JVL, which is also a key point for understanding the story as a whole: iconism and symbolism.

Though those two do not work on their own, they play an important role within the general visual narrative. There are simple and widely used symbolisms like sweat drops on the side of the head to imply frustration or characters going chibi[52] all of a sudden in order to emphasize the strong emotion that the character is going through. Cohn (2007) points that "non-conventional visual symbols and metaphors can take many forms. Shōjo manga often make emotional use of non-narrative signs in the back ground of their panels, using pastiches of flowers or sparkling lights to set the mood or hint at underlying symbolic meaning." (p. 7). But there are also symbols that come from the mythology and culture of Japanese which are used to indicate more important things in a more subtle way. They are a part of the mysticism that the artist reserves for his or her readers. In most of the serial manga, symbolism work as step-by-step cues for the main authorial intent. It gives cues about the character's future, a location's importance in the plot, or foretells a series of upcoming events.

In *Bleach*, for example, the biggest symbolism, which is also the theme of the story, comes from an Eastern concept of destiny (Figure 4.4). The story revolves around dichotomies like life and death, the savior and the saved, heaven and earth, ying and yang, soul and body; and these are told throughout the story with symbols like the sun and the moon, black and white, the sand and the rotator etc. Also these symbols are attributed to people like Rukia being the dead and the moon, cold but still meaningful

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[52]Chibi (ちび?, can also be written 禿び[1]) is a Japanese word meaning "short person" or "small child". The word has gained currency amongst fans of manga and anime. Its meaning is of someone or some animal that is small. In English-speaking anime and manga fandom (otaku), the term chibi has mostly been conflated with the term super deformed or it can be used to describe child versions of characters. **Chibi.** (2010). In *Wikipeida*. Retrieved in June 24, 2010, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chibi_(term)

and continuous in itself, she represents the destined opposite of Ichigo who is the sun, who is alive and vibrant. Throughout the story they complete each other as the mentor and mentee, as savior and saved, as life and death and as ying and yang.
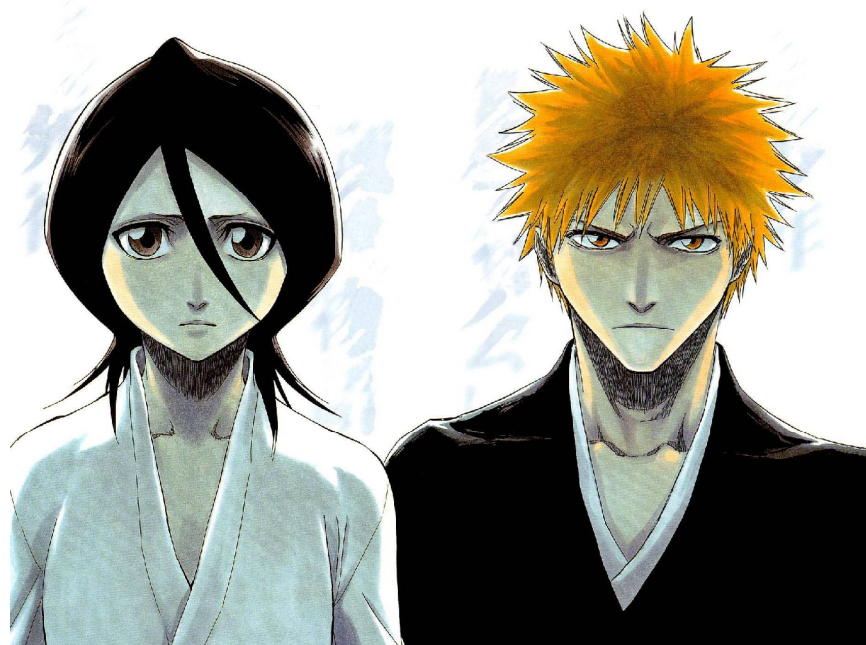
Figure 4.4 Color spread for Bleach by Kubo Tite   The caption: One Shinigami.The story of destiny begins.The accidental encounter.One Boy"

Figure 4.5 The cover of Bleach 2008 Calendar-Kuchiki Rukia's Sword Sode no Shirayuki(left) and Ichigo's Sword Zangetsu(right)

Fandom is very sensitive and perceptive over the symbols of Bleach. They read and re-read, for it's a story that has been going for over eight years, and take notice of every little detail for further use. The end of the story is yet to come, but on the way, all of those helped the fans to find their own ways through the plot, some successful, some not.

However we have to keep in mind that the individual symbols does not work on their own, they are only meaningful within the theme of the story with the visual narrative. As I have said before, what fans are searching for is the authorial intent, so that the guessing game can continue until the real end reveals. In the end, revealing that authorial intent depends on three interrelated and interdependent factors coming together: one, deciphering the symbolism and putting together the 'pieces of the puzzle' throughout the story; two, understanding them within the cultural context and manga content since none of these symbols will have a meaning out of the story's context and narratives; three, understanding the stylistic form and genre, like if it's a shōnen manga, it will have archetype characters and a set of stylistic rules as a form, where the visual narrative and everything becomes meaningful.

4.2 Manga, Cultural Content and Uncanny

As we have discusses previously Japanese manga adopts drawing its characters with Western looks as a style, presenting those characters within a modernist approach.. This stage of modern representation and Western aesthetics with the traditional Japanese cultural subtext creates a problematic for the non-Japanese audience of manga and anime. When reading manga or watching anime, the non-Japanese reader and audience

is first confronted with the Caucasian looking characters. Also as they continue to watch or read, they come across concepts like love, religion, violence, humor, relationships etc within the familiar genres of romance, sci-fi, horror or comedy. However the difference is in the Japanese content and context of the stories in which these subjects are expressed and discussed. This is where the uncanniness of manga and anime begins for the non-Japanese readers and audience.

As this begins, West's perception of Japan gains importance. As we have discussed back in Chapter 2, after meeting with West, Japan adopted Western imperialism and practiced it on the rest of the Asia, while doing that Japan used its popular culture effectively in order to represent a modern, western yet traditional and contemporary image towards West. As Iwabuchi Koichi points,

> …the growing Japanese interest in its cultural export tends to be informed predominantly by the (unrealizable) impulse of containing intensified transnational flows within a nationalist framework; that is, to articulate a distinct 'Japaneseness' in popular cultural forms, to raise Japan's position in Asia, and to (re)assert Japan's cultural superiority. Here, the transnationalization of Japanese popular culture has not simply offered an emergent sense of nationalistic pride; it is strongly overdetermined by Japan's imperialist history and thus intertwined with its postcolonial desire for 'Asia'. (Allen & Sakamato, 2006, p. 19).

Since the beginning, when Japan met West for the first time, this desire of Japanese for exporting the Japaneseness in popular culture led Japan to present itself as the Oriental other. In this process, Japan self-orientalized and positioned itself as an object of fantasy for the West. Susan J. Napier states that,

> It must also be acknowledge that the Japanese themselves have done much help to export Japanese culture to the world, sometimes in a fashion so eager and so self-conscious as to be labeled "self-orientalizing". This process has been going on since the nineteenth-century when the Japanese chose with immense care the kind of products and architecture that would exhibited at the many popular World Expositions that were themselves and early form of fantasyscape. (Napier, 2007, p. 17)

Japan comes to represent itself as a fantasy in the minds of West. They became the creators of the apocalyptic stories, other worlds, space adventures and tragedies with such fineness that it appeared almost real. In the research that Susan Napier conducted, she found out that even though the audiences find Japan as fundamentally alien, they are still fascinated with the aspect of fantasy that it offers. "This attitude," Napier (2007) points, "encompasses the notion that the culture, or at least its products, is both familiar and different." (p. 172).

4.2.1 Characters and the Uncanny

Freud (1919) starts to discuss uncanny from the definition of the word *Unheimlich*. Though the word should be the opposite of the term *Heimlich*, it actually appears to be directly implied by *Heimlich*, the word that means homely, familiar, cozy, intimate, "arousing a sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of his house" (p. 222). However he also points that what is familiar and securely tucked away is also "concealed, kept from sight, so that other do not get to know of or about it, withheld from others" (p.223). So what is kept secret and hidden comes to be "uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy" (p.225) and thus *Heimlich* becomes *unheimlich*, uncanny. Also it is in the nature of the uncanny to remain strange (Strachey (ed.), 1955). Freud also considers the *unheimliche* as a domain and that 'domain' remains indefinite. *Unheimliche* presents itself only on the fringe of something else and Freud relates it with concepts like fright, anguish and fear, which bear a resemblance. *Unheimliche* is a unit of the 'family' which it is actually not a member of (Freud, Strachey, Cixous & Dennome, 1976).

Starting from here we return back to our previous discussion of character drawings, since this is where the uncanny starts to appear for the manga reader. As we stated before, upon first look Japanese characters look Caucasian for the non-Japanese readers. So a reader faces with a familiar image, an image that resembles what s/he looks like, what s/he sees every day. The *Heimlich* starts to appear in this image of what looks familiar. This characters appear to be the homely images in a foreign text, where they appear with a text in a foreign language (Figure 4.6, 4.7).

Figure 4.6 Weekly Shōnen Jump cover for Chapter 107. Characters(from front to back): Kurosaki Ichigo, Abarai Renji, Kuchiki Rukia, Ishida Uryuu and Sado Yasutoro.

Figure 4.7 From left to right: Kurosaki Ichigo, Kuchiki Rukia, Ishida Uryuu, Inoue Orihime, Sado Yasutoro

After meeting with the foreign text, the familiar starts to become unfamiliar because of not being able to give a meaning to the accompanying text. With translation this problem seems to be solved for the readers as the text become readable. However as they read the uncanny starts to reappear due to the cultural content and visual language of the text. The uncanny continues to remain strange as the content and visual language become unfamiliar once again. Once again manga becomes familiar and strange at the same time.

In order to resolve the uncanny feeling behind a familiar looking image, reader turns towards the text. As the search continues, reader discovers the 'hidden content' which

causes that uncomfortable, uneasy and unfamiliar feeling. Soon reader finds out that there are depictions and discussions that are different than the ones that s/he experienced before. The content, even in name it's the same, does not appear to be something that is familiar, thus the familiar look of the characters become strange. As readers cannot find an immediate context to relate that topic, they provide their own forms of readings. The more the western reader tries to read it with western concepts, the more manga becomes uncanny. If they decide to devote time and energy, they try to search for the Japanese concepts that they could use while giving meaning. They learn the culture, tradition and broaden their knowledge for further use. And while doing that they also give meanings to the characters and attribute boundaries for their relationships and define expectations, again referring back to their experience, either in the Western culture or Japanese culture.

4.2.2 Manga Content and the Uncanny

As we have discussed previously manga has a wide range of topics discussed under various genres. Even if those topics look familiar upon first sight, upon starting to read, the reader realizes the differences in the content. As Brenner (2007) points, "in matters of humor, romance, nudity, and gender roles, manga diverges sharply from Western norms and thus befuddles and even shocks Western readers". (p.77)

The first obstacle on the way of the non-Japanese reader is the distinction between fantasy and reality. It's a known fact that there are very few limits on the content of Japanese fiction because for them fiction is fantasy and it doesn't have to reflect real-life behavior and values. For Japanese readers and writers, reality and fantasy are two separate things that will never meet; fantasy is fantasy and reality is reality, the gap

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between them is enormous, which may cause the readers of manga to make a distinction between the two better than readers from other nations. Thus Japanese audience does not seek strict realism even when the story is set in a realist environment; because for them fiction has its own realm (Brenner, 2007; Drazen, 2003; Schodt, 1996).

As Robin E. Brenner also points,

> When manga takes on disturbing subjects, readers run smack into the fantasy-versus-reality divide in a very different way. Manga can and does portray feelings and behaviors that are forbidden or controversial while ignoring society's actual perception of those taboos. Depending on their story's needs and their desired level of realism, manga authors may depict incest, pedophilia, sado masochism, or homosexuality as normal or accepted. They may acknowledge society's disapproval, but they are more concerned with the emotional world of the story. If it's a good story, it's a good story—taboo or not. (Brenner, 2007, p. 78)

Bleach has many example moments for most of these cases, one example is where the character called Szayel Aporro Granz, an Arrancar in Aizen Souske's army, ate one of his subordinates in order to power up and heal his battle injuries (Figure 4.8,4.8a, 4.8b, 4.8c). This moment in manga was censored while it was being animated, because *Bleach* anime was a more global by-product of *Bleach,* and because anime would be watched by more people on a global scale (Figure 4.). In the manga while he literally "eats" his Fracción[53] to heal his injuries, the anime portrayal displays this scene as Szayel turns the Fracción into a glowing purple energy orb before he consumes it.

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[53] The Fracción (従属官 (フラシオン), Furashion; Spanish for "Fraction", Japanese for "Subordinate Officers") (Fracciónes in the English dub; Spanish for "Fractions") are a subsection of the Números that directly serve a specific Espada. The number of fracción for any given Espada varies: Jiruga would seem to have just one, while Granz has at least a dozen. **Fraccion.** (2010). In *BleachWiki.* Retrieved in June 24, 2010, from BleachWiki: http://bleach.wikia.com/wiki/Fracción

Figure 4.8 *Bleach* manga by Kubo Tite, Chapter 276 "Blookin' Beast", pages 08, Scanlation Ju-Ni

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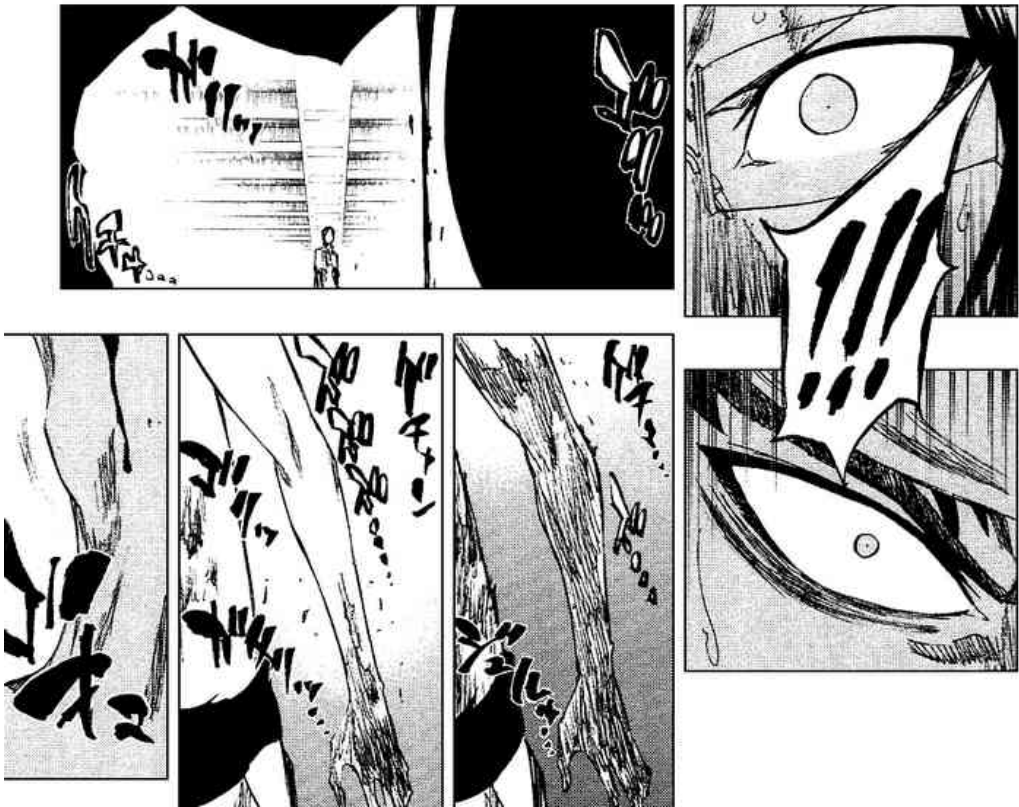
Figure 4.8a *Bleach* manga by Kubo Tite, Chapter 276 "Blookin' Beast", pages 09, Scanlation Ju-Ni

Figure 4.8b *Bleach* manga by Kubo Tite, Chapter 276 "Blookin' Beast", pages 10, Scanlation Ju-Ni

Figure 4.8c *Bleach* manga by Kubo Tite, Chapter 276 "Blookin' Beast", pages 11, Scanlation Ju-Ni

Figure 4.9 Szayel eating his subordinate in the *Bleach* anime series

In addition, how Szayel uses his technique Gabriel[54] in the manga has been seriously altered for the anime. In manga Szayel resurrects himself with Nemu's body, as he plants himself in her, using his Gabriel technique, but in episode 199, it was completely redone so that it could be toned down. So instead laying his egg inside of her and emerging head first from her mouth, he is resurrected from an embryo that emerges from Nemu's mouth and develops into him. Also, Nemu does not end up looking as dried up or decrepit as she does in the manga. Chapters related with this character and his powers were discussed a lot and during the animation they went through serious

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[54] Gabriel (受胎告知 (ガブリエール), gaburieru; Japanese for "Notice of Conception"): His final ability allows him to be reborn if he is injured beyond repair by "impregnating" an enemy. When he has physical contact with the victim he can implant a portion of himself inside their body. He then "devours" his way out of their body, by way of absorbing all the fluids and chemicals of the victim killing them in the process, like an insect leaving a cocoon or husk when he matures and develops his body back in a matter of seconds from a liquid-like casing coming from the victim's mouth. **Gabriel.** (2010).). In *BleachWiki.* Retrieved in June 24, 2010, from BleachWiki: http://bleach.wikia.com/wiki/Szayel_Aporro_Granz

censors. It seems to be manga and anime industry's negotiation with its consumers, changing the original rather than risking a market share in global arena. The censor is done to "tone down" the level of violence and 'offensive images' for a broader range of audience.

It is not that Western audience cannot distinguish fantasy from reality, because there are many examples from books, films and T.V shows. However the West looks at them in a different way, fearing violent videogames or T.V programs will lead to violent acts in real life; while Japanese dismiss this as a part of the fantasy. The violence rate in Japan is extremely low compared with U.S. And as a Japanese psychiatrist and writer, Fukushime Akira discusses teens' exposure to harmful content in manga and anime, and he argues that such exposure leads Japanese teens to be less violent and sexually precocious than teens in other countries. This also gives an insight on the Japanese point of view (Schodt, 1996).

Aside from the views on and distinction between the Japanese and Western norms of reality and fantasy, before this problem is solved the audience faces with the content, which creates a confusion on the basis of previous Western experiences of literature and animations, as well as what they expect to see from a western looking character. There is also the fact that Western audience likes to create their fantasy over the text that Japanese have provided. This has been a long tradition of West, referring back to the times of Japan starting to present itself as the object of fantasy.

> …what we see in the nineteenth-century conception of Japan is a complex fantasy, a living, breathing *tabula rasa* onto which Europeans and Americans projected a variety of desires, fears, dreams, and schemes. Ultimately, as we shall see, the *tabula rasa* became closer to something like and interactive video game where participants take Japanese material to construct their own playful yet complicated fantasies. (Napier, 2007, p. 9)

Thus in the context of manga, as they start to read, readers do not expect to discover a cultural subtext, while facing with a familiar looking character, and taking this tabula rasa fantasy, they try to build their expectations from their prior experiences of either comic books or animations of the Western culture. However Japanese manga and anime differs greatly and have deep influences of Japanese culture and tradition in its content. These contents can be grouped under general topics like Romance, Nudity and Sex, Gender Relations and Violence.

If we start with the first one, Romance, we come to a topic which is discussed widely and passionately, so to speak, within the non-Japanese fandom of manga and anime. Considering the facts, fans can always chose who to 'ship' but justifying that ship becomes a major point for the shipper fans. As Brenner also states,

> Western readers are used to clearly defined relationships. People fall into major relationship categories: friends, lovers, and family. Each of these labels indicates a level of intimacy and appropriate ways to demonstrate affection. Japanese tales allow for a bit more fluidity. Manga creators do not make every relationship clear—readers draw their own conclusions from facial expressions, body language, and sparse dialogue. (Brenner, 2007, p. 83)

So as the more ambiguous the line that defines the type of the relationship becomes, the more fans speculate over it. Non-Japanese readers seem to search for that line strictly. One of the biggest discussions in the Bleach fandom turns around who, in the end, Kurosaki Ichigo will end up romantically involved with; with a sweet, kind-hearted Orihime Inoue who has a crush on him and swears to love him five life times, or with the short, tomboyish shinigami, Kuchiki Rukia, who risked her life to save his family and has been his mentor and friend since then. And because Bleach is a shōnen manga, and in its origin it does not contain any romance, the more the discussions about

romance become important and passionate. As the discussions continue, for the past 8 years, non-Japanese shippers are divided strictly and has been trying to justify their own theories.

The ones who ship Rukia and Ichigo defends the Japanese understanding of destined lovers to support their theory while presenting that in Japanese culture 'unrequited love', which is Orihime's case, plays an important and wide role so the counter ship is unlikely to happen. On the other hand the ones who ship Ichigo and Orihime believes to be that she is the princess and nobody will love Ichigo more than her; that she has to end up with Ichigo because she is kind-hearted and helpful. However the counter arguments they put are the age difference between Ichigo and Rukia, their mentor-mentee relationship and the fact that Rukia is Ichigo's close friend, which has been pointed a lot of times in the plot. Both sides have their reasons but the fact is that the way they try to read differs and how they interpret, in the end also changes. In here it is not important who is right or wrong, but the thing is the non-Japanese readers try to create clear-cut boundaries between the relationships of the characters. As they try to give meaning to the relationships, they assign clear roles: Orihime is supposed to become a romantic interest because she has been in love with Ichigo since the beginning. And Rukia cannot become one because she is the savior, the mentor and the friend.

This ambiguity, for the Western reader, creates an unfamiliar territory in which the reader tries to set boundaries. The fantasy factor becomes a play-ground for the readers where they can put their own meanings into mix for turning that text into something more understandable, something closer. Thus, in order to trying to make familiar what is already unfamiliar, they assign the roles and draw boundaries referring back to their

previous experiences with similar, or familiar Western texts, like novels, T.V shows or

movies(Figure 4.10).

Surface Impressions about the Princess and the Hero
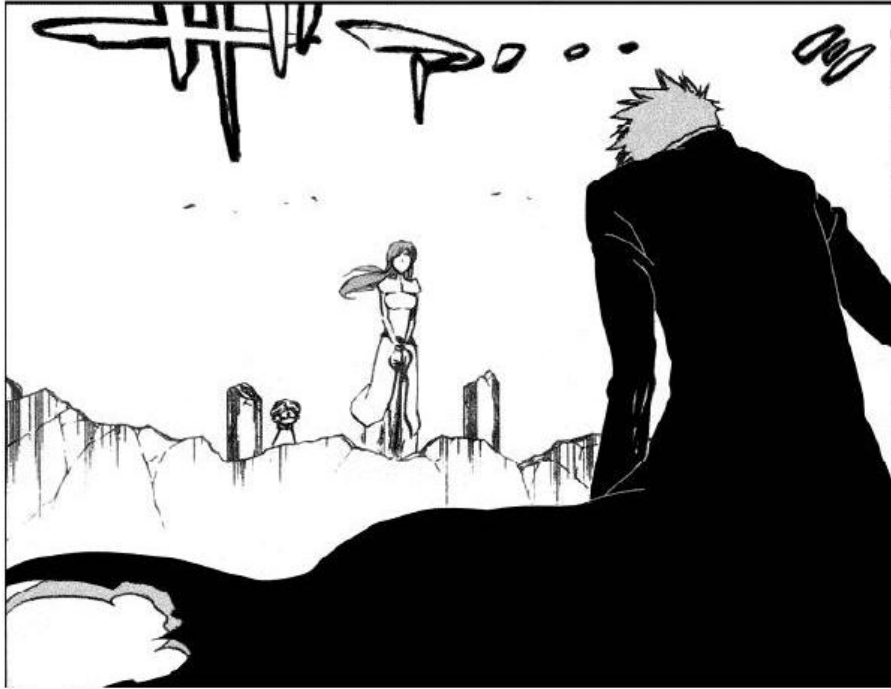
Behold the romantic scene. The girl wears what the garment industry calls "princess sleeves," slightly puffed at the top and reminiscent of medieval courts. She is standing on a high place--it could be the tower or the top of the staircase seen in so many fairy tale illustrations. The hero's dress is less Gothic era than Victorian era, but no matter, his tattered long black coat is romantic and he is looking from below towards the princess in white.

If you're a Westerner, whether your ideas of princesses and heroes come from video games, Disney, or the Brothers Grimm, you expect a happy ending. There may be a quest, a riddle, or some symbols that represent a young girl losing her virginity, but the worthy male usually gets the worthy female.

I have no doubt that Kubo Tite knew the allusions he was making to Western folklore when he drew Orihime and Ichigo in these scenes. Other fairy tale pictures in Bleach are inescapable: When Ichigo meets Rukia on the bridge in the SS arc, he lands before her feet in a knightly pose as if before a princess. Is Ishida, with shield-like bow and glinting Excalibur-like Seele Schneider, the true hero for Orihime? (His princely white tunic is at least era-compatible with Orihime's dress). Or is the story of a princess, in Japanese lore, one that carries a different weight than the Western fairy tale?
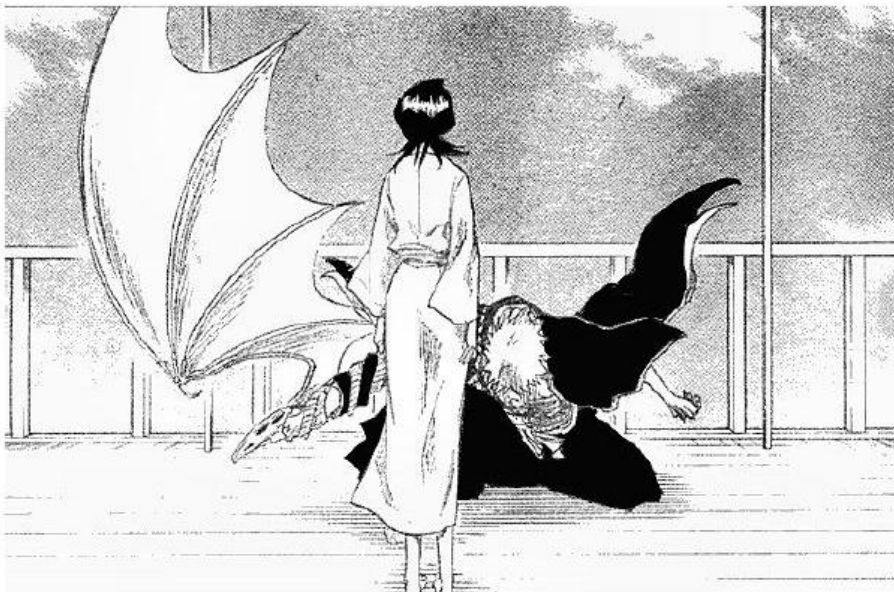
Figure 4.10 Screenshot from a fanessay by *debbiechan* discussing parallels between hero's approach to the different female characters of the story.

As the fan writer puts, the westerner faces with a historically or literary familiar scene where the night knees before a princess or where a romantic hero/prince stands before the high and pure, whitely dressed princess. And accordingly, they relate with their Western concepts as they draw conclusions and build expectations; like the happy ending. However, even though the scenes are depicted in that way, within Japanese context and understanding the story may not end how westerns predict. The more the predictions fail, the more the reader falls further from understanding, and the more he fails to resolve the uncanny.

Another topic to be discussed and widely criticized is Nudity. Though Japan as a nation and a culture is familiar with the concept of being naked due to its traditional public baths, West is not, it is still considered to be a taboo in some sense, something intimate and sexual. Thus in manga, nudity appears almost in most of the series especially for the teens and adults. Even though most of them are incidental and are not sexually, the ones who are sexual are there for either humor or for fan service. 'Fan service' are the scenes that are drawn in order to meet fans' wishes. Especially in shōnen manga, like Bleach, fan service is very common and famous. Many female characters of Bleach appeared naked during the series, a cover where Rukia and Orihime were naked and hand in hand (Figure 4.11), or a color spread, also known as 'Bikini Spread' among the fandom (Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.11 *Bleach* manga, Chapter 228 cover page, by Kubo Tite
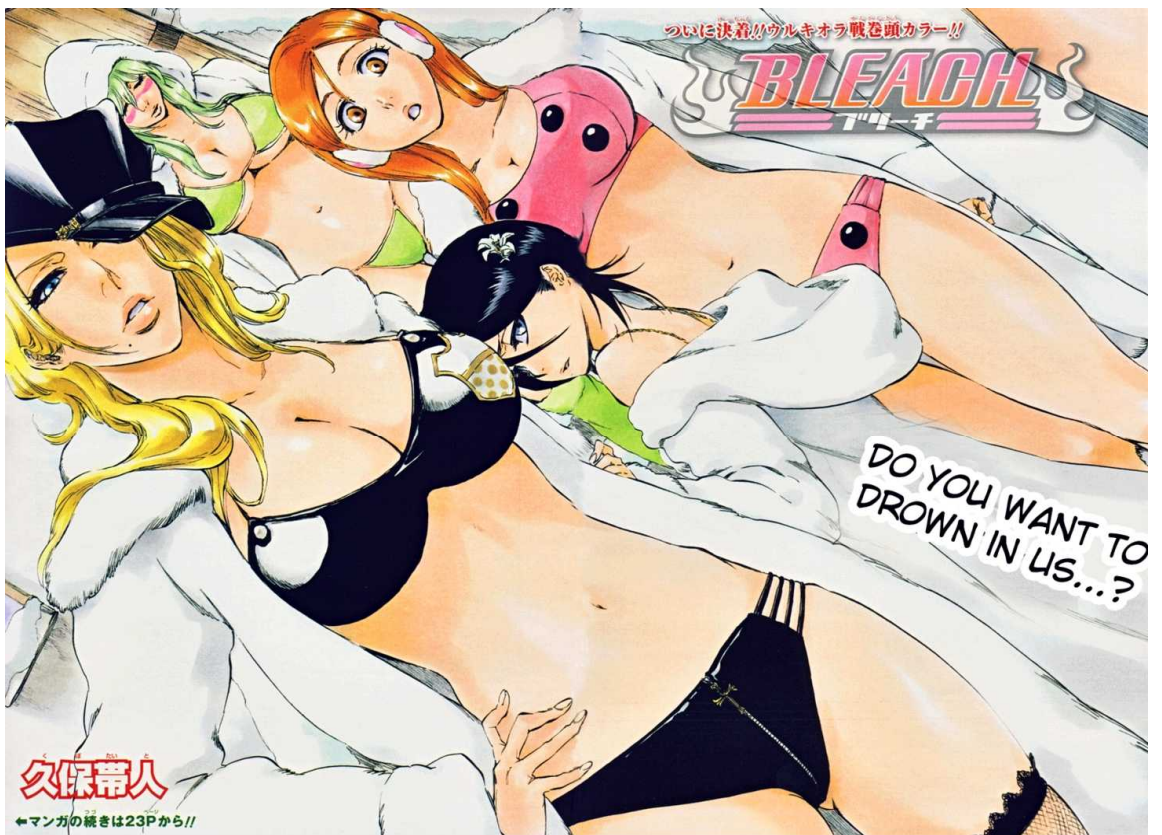
Figure 4.12 *Bleach* manga, color spread for the chapter 353, by Kubo Tite. Characters(from front to back): Matsumoto Rangiku, Kuchiki Rukia, Inoue Orihime and Neliel Tu.

Western view on nudity is almost enough to label most of the manga as borderline pornographic, because of how they view 'explicit nudity' differs from Japanese understanding of explicit. So within the context, no matter if it's for humor or fan service, manga appears to be 'lewd' for the Western eye. Though the Western readers don't seem to be complaining, they still treat nudity outside of its Japanese context. If two naked girls are holding hands than that's is labeled as homoerotic and sexually charged. For example there was much fuss over the 'naked bath scene' (Figure 4.13, 4.13a) with Orihime and Rangiku, a character that the manga-ka admits creating for fan service. Threads were opened, like the 'Naked Rangiku FC' on Naruto Forums, to share

a collection of Rangiku's all pictures etc. Also Orihime and Rangiku is labeled as a yuri[55]

couple and started to have a fan base as a ship.

Figure 4.13

[55] Yuri, also known by the wasei-eigo construction Girls Love, is a Japanese jargon term for content and a genre involving love between women in manga, anime, and related Japanese media. Yuri can focus either on the sexual, the spiritual, or the emotional aspects of the relationship, the latter two sometimes being called shōjo-ai by western fans.

Figure 4.13a

As the discussion follows, we come to an important point for the Western readers, which they find disorienting; the concept of Gender Roles in Manga. Although Japan seems to have traditional roles for men and women, where the women are treated as second-class citizens; when it comes to the manga characterizations, they cross those barriers maybe even more then its Euro-American counterparts. In Japan's case, gender roles weren't always rigid and with opening to west they aligned their gender roles to modern western roles by combining western concept of gender with their old,

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traditional Confucian concepts. Japan has a clear distinction between the gender roles in public and private life. While it may seem as that Japanese women seem inferior, in truth they are the ones who rule the house hold. Men play the role bread winner, but at the end of the day he gives all the money to his wife, who gives an allowance to him. The economic power that women hold in the private sphere provides them a different sort of power and as Brenner states, "as with any culture where men remain in control legally and economically, women use their power behind the scenes" (Brenner, 2007, p. 93)

To give an example of how this reflected in manga we can, again, use *Bleach*. As we have stated before, it is a shōnen manga that is telling the coming of age story of the fifteen year old Kurosaki Ichigo. However the destiny begins with an unexpected encounter with a shinigami girl. The journey starts with the woman. Through the story Ichigo refers to her as the one who 'stopped the rain' which is something that he associated with all the miseries and loss in his life. Eventually she becomes the one who started his destiny. She has an important role, she is the mentor, she is the one who changed his life and she is the one that fights beside him, always believing in his instincts and abilities. Normally it is hard to see such a strong female character in a shōnen manga, but in structure, females in Bleach are strategically play important roles in the lives of the male characters. They are the supporters and as characters, though some of them aesthetically represent male ideal and serve as 'fan service', they are strong. Orihime Inoue is another example, the kind-hearted, beautiful heroine who develops powers that challenges God. Such a construction reflects Japan's changing view on gender roles. If we consider the fact that manga is a reflection of Japanese culture to some extent, then we can also consider it as a mirror for the gender roles.

However this comes to an opposition when the manga artists' tendencies to leave relationships open ended, to readers' imagination. This is where Japanese gender play becomes complicated for the Western audience. For Western mind the relationships have clear cut boundaries between same and opposite sexes. If a boy holds a girl's hand, that is expected to lead to a romantic meaning. Though in manga, this logic does not work. For starters the concept 'bishōnen' which refers to boys who are as beautiful as girls, falls into a foreign territory for West has different understandings of masculinity (Figure 4.14, 4.15).

> Japanese history and legend have produced several examples of men who challenge Western notions of manliness. Effeminate men in Japanese stories are not automatically weak-willed wimps. In fact, they are most often the opposite. As Japanese legends and mythology idealize beauty and youth, so do they admire beautiful young men. (Brenner, 2007, p. 98)

Figure 4.14 Kuchiki Byakuya from Bleach manga, by Kubo Tite

Figure 4.15 Kakyou from series X/1999, by CLAMP.

Aside from the female-looking character designs, in manga and anime the appropriate behavior between the members of the same sex is defined less rigidly. As they have the tradition of gender separation in their culture, Japan highly values the bonds between the members of the same sex. It is expected from people of the same sex to form strong friendships and display their love and affection openly. However in the West, though women are allowed to express their affection more openly and in more ways, it is much more circumspect for men. It is rare to see an American man while hugging another man, sitting close to each other etc, and if it's like that then its followed by an explanation of the other man's status as the 'heterosexual male friend'. On the other hand, in Japan, a man does not need any explanations to show affection to another man. If you love your best friend, you can tell him that you love him and nobody will consider this gay.

> In manga and anime, both genders show unrestrained love and affection, especially to close friends and siblings. Young male characters are much more likely to express their feelings, and to touch their friends in an affectionate manner, than we are used to seeing in the West. In the same way, young women are exuberant in their affection to the point of seeming to have romantic crushes on their best friends. (Brenner, 2007, p. 99)

Though *Bleach* does not have an example of such gender display, there is a group called CLAMP, made up of four female manga artists, who are highly criticized for their seemingly 'gay' references in their stories. They usually have male leads that are childhood friends or best friends in their stories. They are depicted in ways that the western readers interpret as a gay relationship. For example the arc nemesis but also childhood friends, in CLAMP's highly criticized and cancelled series X/1999, Kamui and Fuma are speculated to be more than friends, by fans, where CLAMP pointed that they did not intent them to be read as romantically involved. The same thing goes with

another CLAMP series, which is highly valued as a shōjo manga and anime in the global arena, Magic Knight Rayearth, where the characters Lantis and Eagle are interpreted to be romantically involved, back in the story time line. Again CLAMP explained that they should not be read in a romantic context.

What reader faces with is a relationship that is defined outside its Western realm for them. We have said before that the Western audience tries to define clear cut relationships for the characters and as the character fits into one role, it's hard for him/her to change roles, like in Kuchiki Rukia's case, becoming a romantic interest while at the same time being a mentor is almost impossible. However as Patrick Drazen points, Japanese manga frequently uses signals like holding hands, embraces and even saying 'I love you', which westerns understand as romantic, for nonromantic relationships. For them the intensity of the relationship matters more than its nature. Stories highly value strong friendship and loyalty (Drazen, 2003). Thus the gender play, and depiction of most of the male characters in both shōnen and shōjo manga creates an unfamiliar feeling for the reader as they want to name what's going on, and stuck in between where to put that beautiful effeminate guy.

Violence in manga and anime is a very touchy subject for the Western audience for West has a different depiction of violence in sense of art than East. Since the time when ukiyo-e, which we mentioned in Chapter 1, was a form of entertainment, Japanese has been using splatters of blood and violent action. Though manga aimed for children have minimal blood, the tradition starts to show itself starting with manga and anime for teens. Shōnen stories usually have violence that is not explicit in terms of blood and the depiction of violence. Sometimes it shows a struggle, a hand to hand combat or a moment with a comical relief behind. However *Bleach* have what West might consider

explicit violence, even though they are not explicit in terms of Japanese culture, and

manga and anime world has seen many more examples like Hellsing, or Basilisk which

are more violent and explicit. Although Bleach has had the elements like 'soul eating' or

bloody fights between shinigamis and hollows since the beginning, western followers of

the series started to talk about the increasing violence level throughout the story.

As one follower, with screen name *subjective*, puts on tvtroped.org,

> Bleach was never what you'd exactly call a "kids' show", but it's definitely getting increasingly Darker And Edgier, so much so, that certain stuff needed to be censored in the anime. However, it should be noted that the anime has occasionally made things even creepier than they were in the manga. While this was always present since the first arc, it got more frequent in the Soul Society arc, finally reaching its peak in the Hueco Mundo and Fake Karakura arcs. Hell, some images look straight out of a hentai, for cryin' out loud! One has to wonder how all these would've turned out if Bleach was a Seinen...The previous post gave me nightmares of a giant ball of arms and legs scrambling around with no torso, sprouting teeth and eyes from random areas while ripping people apart, then getting cut in half and now having two such balls roaming the area. Thank you so much.[56]

As of lately Bleach is being criticized mostly because of the increasing number of 'flying

arms and legs' in the story line (Figure 4.16, 4.17, 4.18, 4.19). Though most of the

fanbase accepts this as a part of the story, something they read in Japanese context of

violence, some, like the example above, find the situation a bit disturbing.

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[56] In *tvtropes*. Retrieved on June 28, 2010, from tvtropes: http://
tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/HighOctaneNightmareFuel/Bleach

Figure 4.16 Grimmjaw Jaggerjack's arm is cut off by Tousen Bleach manga, Chapter 213, by Kubo Tite

Figure 4.17 Matsumoto Rangiku is torn into pieces by Allon, Bleach manga, Chapter 336, by Kubo Tite

Figure 4.18 Bleach manga, Rukia, the lead female of the series, being stabbed with a spear in the chest by an Arrancar, Chapter 267, by Kubo Tite
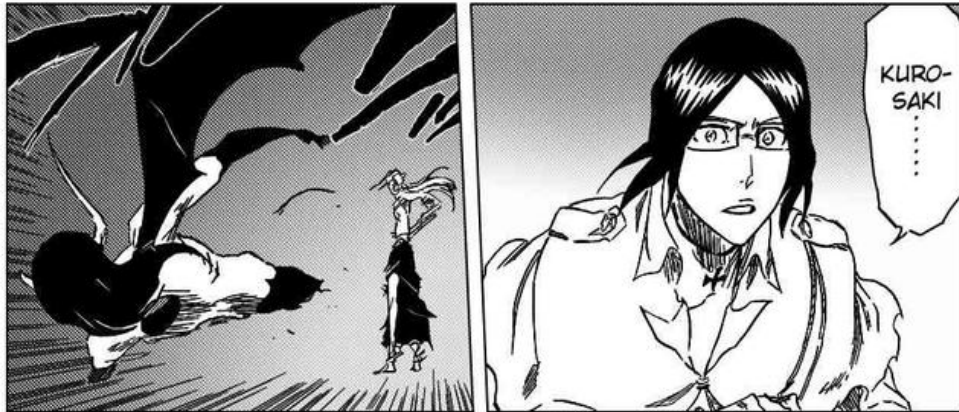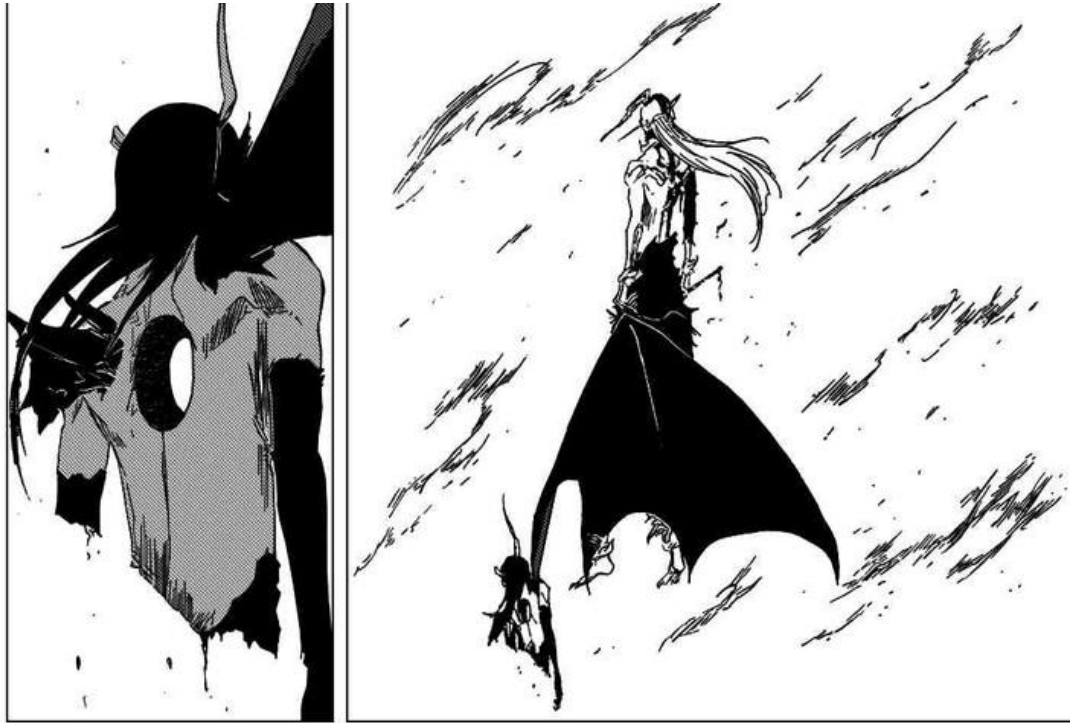
Figure 4.19 Uliquorra Shiffer being torn into two by Kurosaki Ichigo's inner-hollow, Chpater 352, by Kubo Tite

The reason that Japanese violence is touchy for westerns traces back to the World War II, where the Japan ended up being labeled as a violent and nationalist country with its invasion of China and Pearl Harbor bombings. Referring back to Chapter 2, we remember that the Western admiration for Japanese arts and crafts in the nineteenth century was combined with the respect for its impressive military victories and how they become an imperialist power within their own right. However this respect and admiration started to turn into a growing fear as the Japan became too good with following the steps of Western imperialism. As European countries began trying to freeze the country out of its powerful status, it only pushed Japan into a more aggressive stance which ended up with its defeat in World War II. In the end Japan was labeled has a brutal, nationalist, militaristic country and criticized for being a violent nation for a very long time. Thus violence is something that was already attributed to Japanese, and throughout a historical context it caused West to perceive Japan as violent, which created a biased approach towards manga and anime as a product of such a culture. And what is depicted seems to be supporting their view of Japan as they continue to draw in their traditional style, while giving the manga its unique way of creating fantasy, it also opens itself to Western criticism.

Because of the Western point of view about topics like romance, relationships, sex, violence, taboos and etc., manga and anime, is heavily criticized for how these topics are discussed and their content. Even though manga and anime seems to have a great success in the global market and global cultural arena, it still attracts negative attention. Manga is often criticized for being violent and pornographic, however while claiming that people leave out the fact that, like any other culture which has its own depiction of art, Japan has centuries old visual narrative traditions and depictions of sexuality and violence.

As Schodt points,

> Many non-Japanese who perceive manga to be pornographic and violent are often unaware of how biased their own perspective is. North Americans, for example, are often horrified by contents of manga because they unconsciously compare them with American comic books. Yet what most American visitors to Japan fail to realize is that manga today are no longer a medium for children alone and that manga have become a mass medium of entertainment as common as novels or film. They also overlook the fact that until recently most American comic books were heavily censored. (Schodt, 1996, p. 52)

What West is looking for is to see what the image represents in manga, something Western, something modern, and something that is close to them. How they perceive Japan as an artistically talented and aesthetically creative but an oriental culture in its roots seems to not meet with how Japan wants to present itself. A modern, technologically developed, traditional in a self-orientalist way, economically powerful and culturally rich nation clashes with West's understanding of Japan.

This point, in relation with content and what West searches for, brings us to another definition of Uncanny. We have said that Freud derives the word from *Heimlich,* which is familiar, cozy and homely. However this familiar had also something concealed, hidden in it. Thus what is concealed reminds us something in ourselves, that we don't want to face, and that creates a fear towards the uncanny. So what the Uncanny unconsciously reminds us is our own Id, which represents our forbidden and thus repressed impulses. Our oedipal guilt ridden super-ego perceives those impulses as a threatening force for it fears symbolic castration by punishment for deviating from societal norms. In the end what becomes the most uncanny threat to us are the items and individuals which we project our own repressed impulses upon (Freud, 1919).

This uncanniness have roots in the history of West's relationship with Japan. Throughout the colonial era, simply, West played the role of the super-ego, bringing modernization and civilization to uncivilized, subjecting new social, economic and ideological thoughts on how things should be. However West couldn't do that with Japan, because Japan adapted itself to West and applied modern and western on its own terms. In manga, what West encounters with is Japanese adaptation of West, not what West have imposed on them. While taking ideologies, political and economic practices from west, they keep the Japaneseness of their popular culture by continuing to refer to their traditional roots, their unchanged cores. So as the West reads violence, sex, gender displays and emotional approaches in Japanese content, they come face to face with something that they couldn't repress, Japan's traditional inner-self. Although in look manga is Western, under the surface it's the reflection of Id in the Western eye.

West finds the violence too much and sexual content too explicit; things that should be eliminated from society, things that they come face to face every day; because it is what Westerners fear the most, something they think that they have repressed with civilization. Such explicit depictions, like flying body parts or constant blood baths, projects them what they also have inside them, something that they repressed and do not want it to come out, what they were once and what they have been trying to escape. As the Western approaches the manga, with the intent of seeing the modern, civilized culture with deep roots, they are confronted with something that they have suppressed and something that they 'thought' Japan has long suppressed. Thus the Western reader faces with what they fear, something that is uncanny, and something that reminds them their own Id.

In the end Japan ends up having a wide range of perceptions of its culture, some negotiating, some rejecting and some developing their own ways to get closer. On one hand, non-readers reject manga and anime as the gap between their understanding and manga story-telling gets bigger. The more they try to read and look in Western way, the more uncanny it becomes. The 'comic book' that their son is reading has cannibals and arms flying around, with villains that play God. They buy an anime DVD where the characters seem to be in a gay relationship when the description tells them that they are best friends. Their expectations are not met by the original text so they choose to leave it there and take a stand against.

In the middle, we have ordinary readers, as we have previously mentioned, who consumes manga and anime, like any other comic book or animation. They are the ones who negotiate with the text, reading the licensed translation, accepting their adaptations. They make their own meanings out of it, read it in more of a Western context than its original Japanese one. Their feeling of uncanny is tried to be resolved by the market as the translators adapt the text and bits and pieces of the content. However it does not lose its strangeness for the westerns, but it only become something that they can consume as a form of comic book of another culture, a strange and enjoying to some extent.

On the other hand there are fans that develop ways to overcome this uncanny, they try to understand the text as it is. As we have pointed before, on their way, they do research about the Japanese culture, they learn the visual language and most of them even start to learn the Japanese language. As they try to give a meaning, they try to take manga as it is, a Japanese cultural product that carries Japan's tradition and history. They also try to understand the content and context by using various online resources and collective

knowledge within their fandom, as they decipher the symbolic, cultural and traditional subtexts. As fans read they do cross-cultural readings, comparisons on their way to turn that text into a more understandable one for themselves and for their fandom.

As we can see, from the fan essay example too, fandom is also aware of the difference between the Western readers and the Japanese ones. Western readers are expected to relate the foreign text with their Western understandings, experiences and readings. And that is actually something fans criticize, for that is seen as a trial to get familiar with the text without understanding it in its own context and culture. Fans try to overcome this uncanny as they try to give meaning within its original context. Either it is doing a research over the Japanese understanding of 'unrequited love' or writing an essay over the parallels between the Eastern understanding of Destiny and how Destiny is used in Bleach.

In the end, fan trial of overcoming the uncanny gets lost on its way of Western perception Japanese, a culturally oriental but aesthetically fascinating fantasy. As manga continues to represent a Western image with Japanese content, it will continue to stay uncanny; as uncanny always remains strange. Giving a meaning will not reduce the unfamiliar feeling as the characters continue to do and look like what is unexpected them to do. Guys who are as beautiful as girls, girls disguised as guys, characters on the cross will remain for non-Japanese not matter how she or her tries to understand.

Portraying Japanese characters in a Western style will not reduce the foreignness of the text as it stays only in the image. It represents a modern, Western Japan with a traditional soul. It is a double edged sword, because some readers like what they are represented with and some do not. However for the readers who continue and become

fans, the fascination continues to exist, because the endless cycle of guessing prevents manga to exhaust the desire for the hidden meanings and content, the desire to look for the familiar, and being able to play with the text. Also for the non-readers, for they are not familiar with the Japanese culture, visual language and history, manga will continue to represent a form of threat for its content will always remain uncomfortable, unfamiliar and strange. Western point of view and understanding will not overlap with the image and content presented in manga and anime, neither it will depict the Japan in the eyes of the West, the uncanny will continue to be indefinite, always a part of the whole but is never really included.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to explore the practices, influence and reception of manga and anime as a global product of Japanese Popular culture. To be more specific, this study concentrated on the emergence of manga as a popular culture product, how it became this wide spread in relation with the changing dynamics of internet and media relationship, and how it was perceived considering the relationship between Japan and West in a historical context.

We have seen that sequential are first emerged as a humorous form of entertainment back in the 12th century. It started as a critique and a parody of the religious life and hierarchy in Japan and soon became a culture of low classes. This continued for centuries as a form of traditional art, and gained a new momentum upon meeting with West. Another point that marked the history of sequential art in Japan is the World War II, where the manga re-appeared as a form of critique, again, but this time as something to be consumed by a wide range of social classes. Also during the post-war era, Japan rediscovered the term manga with Osamu Tezuka, the 'God of Comics', who applied cinematographic story-telling to comic books and created the stylistic of today's manga which was going to distinguish manga from other forms of comic books in the future.

As manga get reshaped, it became a medium and an industry. The culture of lower classes became the culture of masses. Different drawing styles created definitions for different forms of manga, which Japanese classified under target demographics. As Manga varied in style and genre, it became a medium that influenced the social subjects and became a source of socialization and communication.

Japan's opening to West played an important role in whole Japanese history, as we have pointed many times before. As Japan adopted Western concepts of politics, economy, technology etc., the nation became a world power and it started to practice Western imperialism on the rest of the Asia. The colonization of Asia came in the form of cultural dominance which marked Japanese popular culture as the key for the change and global influence. As Japan started to exercise its popular culture as a soft power, it distinguished itself from other forms of culture and self-orientalized the Japaneseness in contrast to other forms of Asian cultures. Soon Japan became a notion of both fear and respect, in the eyes of West. For Western mind, Japan was a nature-loving, artistically developed and militaristically powerful nation. But soon, as Japan became too powerful on its own, West started to fear the consequences of such a combination.

As the World War II dropped onto the scene, Japan lost the war and went into a cultural and economic recession, which it came out economically and culturally powerful again. Within the new global order Japan started to exercise soft power on the rest of the world, and its most valuable weapon was once again its popular culture.

Thus, manga gained a new level of importance as a product of Japanese popular culture. Manga became a cultural power on its own, especially after its invasion of United States.

Today it's one of Japan's biggest parts of culture industry with its production cycles, global consumption and diverse platforms of reproduction.

As I moved on to its consumption we have seen that Internet marked a change for the consumption and sharing of cultural products. Within this context fandom became an important place for the consumption and reproduction of manga and it's by products. We have seen that manga and anime fandom is an organized fandom, an institution of theory and criticism, a semi-structured space in which different and competing interpretations and evaluations of common texts are discussed and negotiated. We have also seen how transmedia story-telling of manga affected the global interaction of its fans. Fandom as a collective intelligence became important as manga belonged to another culture and language. The dependence on collective intelligence came to determine the hierarchies and fan status within the fandom. The production and consumption cycles are distinguished as new forms of fan artifacts emerged.

While continuing my discussion I moved on to the specific case of *Bleach* manga and tried to discuss Japanese visual language, its content and characters and how manga can be considered as uncanny for the western readers. For starters Japanese visual language distinguishes manga from its Euro-American counterparts. The fact that it has less text and offers a cinematographic narrative creates a different form of comic books experience for its readers. Though it is a different visual language, which leaves almost everything to reader interpretation, it gains its dynamics from the fact that it leaves space for interpretation. As the manga artists leave open to discussion traces of story behind them, fandom discovers new relationships with the text. In Barthesian terms, with its 'relying' characteristic, where the panels become meaningful in themselves and

in different sequences, not needing any textual linearity, manga provides its fans a space for their own readings, interpretations and reproductions.

However, with its drawing style and depiction of characters that Japan adopted upon its exposure to West, manga creates an uncanny feeling in Western readers. During the first encounter with manga, readers face with 'Caucasian' looking characters while they were expecting something 'Japanese'. After perceiving it as something western, they start to discover the Japaneseness, hidden under the Western aesthetics. As the content remain Japanese, the reader start to feel an anxiety towards the text. Designing manga characters in a Caucasian way also trace back to Japan's opening to West. As they become aware of the Western understanding of aesthetics they start to adopt it. During this exposure to West, Japan also starts to put West in a different place. As they try to adopt the modernization, they set West as their ideal-ego, the perfection that they want to reach; and they set Asia as their ego-ideal, where they never want to return.

Although Japan idealizes West, it seems to remain mostly in aesthetic level when it comes to manga. Japan still uses the Japaneseness as a cultural power, so they stay traditional in their depictions and content. As the Western reader faces a Western looking character, they do not expect to see that character out of western concepts. What familiar in the beginning becomes unfamiliar, uncanny, as the cultural subtext reveals. And with that revelation West faces comes face to face with what can be considered as its id, something that they have repressed and suppressed while becoming civilized. Thus, seeing what something that they also have but do not like to have, creates an anxiety and an uncanny feeling.

Japanese manga seems to be successful within the global arena, but that doesn't mean it is embraced and loved by whole. That feeling of uncanny, since the beginning of manga and anime's journey was something already out there. That's why upon its first arrival to U.S, everything from the music to character names were changed before it was presented to the audience. This might seem changed with the effect of globalization and how local products gained importance in global consumption, but very diverse opinions still exist. With the internet, manga and anime's spread gained momentum, and with the unlimited resources and access that Internet offers some readers, mostly fans, try to understand manga in its own context. Some still reject it, finding it too explicitly violent and sexual and some still chose to consume relatively adapted, which is less than it is used to be, manga and anime, simply enjoying it like any other comic book. In the end Japan ends up having a wide range of perceptions of its culture, some negotiating, some rejecting and some developing their own ways to get closer.

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