

Creating "Amateur" Manga in the US : Pedagogy, Professionalism, and Authenticity

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The last twenty years have seen a boom in *manga* (Japanese comics) published in English. When Frederik L. Schodt wrote his pioneering study *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* in 1983, he stated, "The only Japanese story comics published in America using the original artwork are the autobiographical A-bomb stories of Keiji Nakazawa" (Schodt 1983: 154). Manga publishing in the United States now looks radically different from that of the early 1980s. Although it used to be that one needed to go to comic book stores and other specialty shops in order to find manga, now there are racks of English-language Japanese comics in most national bookstore chains. According to data released in the fifth issue of the *ICv2 Retailers Guide to Anime/Manga*, "the manga market was the fastest growing area of pop culture last year [2003], with 75-100% growth to an estimated market size of around \$100 million at retail" ("Manga Market Skyrockets in 03" 2004). An article in the trade periodical *Publishers Weekly* says manga's increasing popularity is due to the medium's wider demographic pull, stating that manga is "the only type of comic book that's more popular with girls and women than boys and men" (Reid 2003: S6) and that the audience for American manga is sixty percent female (Reid 2003: S8). The dramatic increase in manga's popularity has taken place mostly since 2001, when manga publisher Tokyopop "launched a major beachhead in American bookstores" (Dean 2004: 6), targeting consumers who buy books rather than those who purchase comics at specialty shops. This move increased the visibility of manga to American consumers and made them aware of manga as a distinct cultural product.

Manga is an artistic mode of communication that is currently being re-assessed because of the global attention it has been receiving. In order to historicize the manga phenomenon, it may first be helpful to make a brief comparison with Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints and *kyōgen* theatre. Such forms of Japanese culture make for interesting comparisons because, like manga, they were at one time viewed as "low" forms of entertainment. It was not until the French Impressionists "found" *ukiyo-e* that such prints began to be viewed in their place of origin as a possible representative of "high" Japanese culture (Kinsella 2000: 93). Similarly, up until the end of World War II, *kyōgen* was looked down upon by Japanese and Western critics alike, and it was only when Japan sought to "propose a prototype of a Japanese comical theatre comparable to its western counterpart" did *kyōgen* begin to receive serious scholarly and critical attention (Ortolani 1990: 151). A similar process has been

occurring with manga; since the mid- to late-1980s, manga has been increasing in esteem due to the influence of more conservative and controlling manga editors (Kinsella 2001). Manga even received a mention in the Japanese government's Education White Paper for the year 2000, saying that the medium "is becoming recognized as an important form of modern expression" (MEXT 2004). No longer just a degraded product of a disposable popular culture, manga now serves as Japan's cultural ambassador abroad.

Some writers on the subject of *anime* (Japanese animation) and manga have traced comic art in Japan from the twelfth century scrolls of Bishop Toba through *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints to the form that is currently known as manga (Schodt 1983, Takahata 2001). Others (Kinsella 2000, Gravett 2004) have questioned this approach, saying that manga is a thoroughly modern phenomenon even though the etymology of the word "manga" comes from *ukiyo-e* artist Hokusai. Much of what is now the manga style is often traced back to the visionary manga author Osamu Tezuka and his love of Disney and Fleischer Brothers cartoons (although more recent manga scholarship in Japan has questioned how revolutionary Tezuka's cinematic techniques really were.) What is now perceived as a distinctly Japanese style of artwork is actually an amalgam of Japanese, American, and European comic sensibilities. Such a mixed cultural heritage certainly problematizes any clear-cut notions of a national "authenticity" for manga. The current American interest in manga is yet another connection in a circuit of cultural influence that has been going on between the US and Japan for over fifty years.

Concurrent with the rise in popularity of manga and anime has been an increased popularity of the creative aspects of anime/manga culture. This trend can be evidenced most noticeably in the proliferation of instruction books purporting to tell aspiring artists how to create their own manga. Attesting to the popularity of instructional manga texts, an article in the trade magazine *Publishers Weekly* said that Christopher Hart's book *Manga Mania* was at the top of Bookscan's art book sales list for "about six months, and has been on that list for about 150 weeks" (Wolk 2004: 32). The publisher, Watson-Guptill, has since gone on to publish more related manga instructional books by Hart, which "have collectively sold several hundred thousand copies" (Wolk 2004: 32). The article also mentions that the text *How to Draw Manga: Getting Started* had sold over sixty thousand copies and, at the time the article was written, was in its eighth printing (Wolk 2004: 32). This emphasis on instruction should not be surprising, as it is the task of fan cultures to educate its members to have a certain level of cultural competency. Writes Brent Allison, who studies anime and manga as an informal educational practice, "Like any other culture, the task of anime [and manga] fan subculture is inherently a pedagogical one. Meanings, norms, frames and the experiences that contain them are forged, transmitted, shared, and interpreted in ways that build an educational basis for a culture's continual perpetuation and change" (Allison

forthcoming). It should be mentioned that manga in Japan is also used to teach and inform. Very few examples of these educational manga have been translated into English in the United States, although there are a few examples from the world of business (Takahashi and Enami 1996) and economics (Ishinomori 1988).

In the first sentence of this article, I implied that the terms “manga” and “Japanese comics” were interchangeable. In common parlance the word “manga” has come to refer to any comic from Japan. However, the use of this word is slightly more problematic than that simple definition would indicate. Manga and anime participate in Appadurai’s idea of the “five dimensions of global cultural flows” (Appadurai 1996: 33); most obvious is manga’s role in the *mediascape* (as a consumable audio/visual product), but it can also be seen in the *finanscape* (the translation, production, and publication deals of Japanese anime and manga in the US), the *ethnoscape* (the flow of industry professionals and fans to and from Japan), the *technoscape* (the increasingly trans-national production of “Japanese” animation and comics), and the *ideoscape* (the overt cultural representations and covert cultural assumptions inherent in making anime and manga a Japanese product). Through the global flows of production and information, the stability of the term “manga” as designating a uniquely Japanese form of visual communication is called into question.

One of the best texts to analyze how comics communicate meaning is Scott McCloud’s groundbreaking book *Understanding Comics*. Although the book is about cartooning in general, McCloud makes a number of important points to keep in mind when discussing manga. In a chapter titled “The Vocabulary of Comics,” McCloud investigates the comic technique of masking, which is the use of visually simple characters that interact with detailed backgrounds, a practice that “allows readers to mask themselves in a character and safely enter a sensually stimulating world” (McCloud 1993: 43). This is a very common technique for comic artists in Japan, where, according to McCloud, “the masking effect was, for a time, virtually a national style!” (McCloud 1993: 43). Many Japanese artists used this making technique in order to emphasize differences between the simply-designed characters intended “to assist in reader identification” and more detailed characters and objects that “were drawn more realistically in order to objectify them, emphasizing their ‘otherness’ from the reader” (McCloud 1993: 44). McCloud concludes this section on masking and Japanese comic art by stating “I hope the Japanese perspective on cartooning helps demonstrate that one’s choice of styles can have consequences far beyond the mere ‘look’ of a story” (McCloud 1993: 45).

In the next chapter, McCloud analyzes transitions from panel to panel in a number of different comics. McCloud identifies six main types of panel-to-panel transitions and then proceeds to chart how the incidences of the different

types in various comic works. McCloud samples both American and European comic artists to discover that they use many of the same transitions with similar frequency. However, when McCloud charts the work of many Japanese comic artists, he reveals that there is an increase in the number of aspect-to-aspect panel transitions, which he describes as a transition that “bypasses time for the most part and sets a wandering eye on different aspects of a place, idea or mood” (McCloud 1993: 72). McCloud calls this aspect-to-aspect transition “a type rarely seen in the West” (McCloud 1993: 78) and goes on to try to explain its prevalence in Japanese comics, citing that the publication format of many manga titles allows the artist to devote many panels to “portraying slow cinematic movement or to setting a mood” (McCloud 1993: 80) as well as a general artistic culture that allows the artist to “emphasize being there over getting there” (McCloud 1993: 81).

From McCloud’s analysis we can begin to extract a functional definition of manga – comics that employ the masking effect coupled with panels that allow for the development of a mood through a higher incidence (than many American or European comics, at least) of aspect-to-aspect transitions. It should be noted that such a definition says nothing about content, language, or country of origin. And yet common conceptions of manga are highly invested in such ideas, reflected in media reports emphasizing the stylized eyes and occasionally questionable content found in some manga as a reflection of a Japanese sense of identity. This emphasis can be seen in a recent BBC story on manga that quotes the founder of a Japanese manga specialty store as saying the sex and violence found in some manga “helps people release the stress and pressure of everyday life. Japan has great freedom of expression, which is why our manga is so varied. Manga artists in other countries cannot draw in the same way” (Head 2004). In this definition of manga, there is something unique to the Japanese art form that cannot be recreated by artists from other countries because their artwork would not be responding to the same societal pressures.

The booming popularity of manga in the United States helps to highlight how ideas of authenticity and nationalism are playing out on the global entertainment scene. The fans’ identification with characters in Japanese comics or animation, enhanced by the masking effect, prompts them to want to create their own stories using similar methods. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary that the budding artist learn both how to draw and what to draw. Once the fan creates a work employing such techniques, the question then becomes how to define the finished work. Is it Japanese (as it might be termed if one judged by the style) or foreign (as it was not created in Japan by a Japanese person)? Is it manga or simply just a comic?

This can be a tricky issue because in the popular media the terms anime and manga are sometimes used interchangeably and to indicate a product that merely fits a preconceived stereotype. An example of this occurred in the UK

magazine *Computer Arts*, which ran a cover story called “Animé Magic” for its July 2004 issue. The cover was an example of what was called an “animé illustration” by a group of French artists going by the moniker 123Klan. The majority of the article was dedicated to instructing the reader how to reproduce the image using Adobe Illustrator (“Animé Magic” 2004). The text in the article references anime’s simple design and colors and mentions its similarities to graffiti art. The most interesting thing about the article, though, is a complete lack of reference to Japan or Japanese artists. Nowhere in the article does it say that anime (or manga, which was not even mentioned) is a style of animation that originated in Japan, nor does it discuss how the magazine chose a group of French artists to represent this style. This example illustrates the inexact image many people may have of “anime” and “manga” and problematizes the idea of calling such art forms necessarily Japanese.

The necessarily sketchy definition of manga offered above provides a good grounding for further exploration into the creation of comics in the Japanese style. First, I analyze fan-to-fan pedagogy in Japanese anime/manga culture as represented in the film *Otaku no Video* and the anime/manga series *Comic Party* in order to see examples of how manga form and technique are transmitted. I go on to perform a close reading of various English-language texts that purport to instruct the reader in how to create his or her own manga and characters, analyzing the differences between books written for an English-speaking audience and translations of Japanese books. Finally, I examine the fan-produced manga published in four volumes of *The Rising Stars of Manga*. (These books are the result of a contest sponsored by Tokyopop, a US-based translator and publisher of Japanese manga, in which American fans were encouraged to create their own original works.) In breaking my analysis down into these three parts, my aim is to examine the impetus for and background of creating new works in the manga subculture, the ways in which methods of manga creation are currently promulgated in the US, and the results of this amateur production.

Pedagogy in Fandom

In order to draw a better picture of how fans interact with each other, it will first be helpful to examine two fictional depictions of this interaction. The first, an OVA (Original Video Animation, or an animated program released straight to video) called *Otaku no Video*, follows the transition of a young man named Kubo from a tennis-playing “normal” member of Japanese society to an *otaku*, a hardcore fan obsessed with animation and comics. The second, a series called *Comic Party*, follows a Japanese high school senior named Kazuki as he is introduced to amateur comics and begins to produce them himself.

It might be asked what relationships between fans and production could be drawn from such texts as they are both fictionalized stories. It is precisely because of this format, however, that the texts become interesting because they are very professional products created by former fans about fans. *Otaku no Video* (1992, dir. Takeshi Mori) was created by Gainax, a company formed by a small group of Japanese anime/manga fans in the early 1980s. The film is a satirized and fictionalized account of the founding of Gainax. *Comic Party* (2001, dir. Norihiko Sudo) was originally a video game that was turned into a manga and an animated series. The event “Comic Party,” featured prominently in the series, is a fictionalized version of Comiket, a real-life exhibition of *dōjinshi* (amateur comics) that takes place twice a year in Tokyo. The series maintains its roots in the amateur production culture because Sekihiko Inui, the author of the manga version of the story, is a *dōjinshi* creator himself.

In the story of *Otaku no Video*, the main protagonist Kubo is hanging out with some friends who go to his college when runs into Tanaka, an old friend from high school. Through their re-acquaintance, Tanaka gradually introduces him into the world of fandom. Tanaka says he’ll take Kubo to “a place where every day is like a school festival” and brings him to the house where all of the friends work; Tanaka calls it their *furusato*, a word that is translated in the English subtitles as “homeland” (but which carries strong connotations in Japanese culture of a kind of spiritual home). After introducing the members of his group and demonstrating that they are not only fans but producers of anime and manga culture, Tanaka goes on to exclaim “Ten years from now, the industry will be ours!” Later, the film shows Tanaka explaining anime special effects to Kubo, to which the neophyte exclaims “Wow! Now that I look at them [anime programs] this way I see that different artists have different styles.” Thus, the first step in Kubo’s becoming an otaku is inculcating in him a sense of connoisseurship. The emerging fan must be trained to see and value certain aspects of production as well as to develop a sense of taste. Other members of the circle take turns in instructing Kubo in their respective fields of expertise. Kubo is also shown painting animation cels and getting involved in *cosplay* (short for “costume play,” or dressing up as characters at anime and manga events) at Comiket. At the same time, though, Kubo is shown as slipping further away from a “normal” life through his interactions with his would-be girlfriend. After she dumps him, Kubo and Tanaka pour their hearts into their fan activities. They begin to manufacture of plastic models of anime characters and form a small business marketing their products for other fans. From there, the narrative of *Otaku no Video* takes a more obviously fictional turn, with their company growing ever larger and making national headlines. However, even this hyperbolized account of Japanese fandom helps us to see how fan production and techniques circulate.

In general terms, *Otaku no Video* follows the introduction of an individual into an already established larger group, the members of which proceed to

instruct him or her on both the proper ways of behaving in a fan environment and how to use his or her newfound fandom in a creative manner. From the very beginning, not only do we see Kubo learning about the various shows and manga that make up the canon of Tanaka's particular circle, but we also see him painting an animation cel, an act of creating something new. Even the act of creation is coupled with pedagogy – when Kubo paints outside the lines, Sato tells him that rather than trying to wipe the wet paint, he should let it dry and then just scrape it off. This is one example of how one can receive direct and immediate feedback and assistance in a supportive fan environment.

In a similar vein, the television series *Comic Party* begins with “normal” high school students Kazuki and Mizuki being dragged by Taishi, a mutual friend, to a comic convention in the outskirts of Tokyo. There the pair are overwhelmed by the masses of people flooding the convention hall and lose each other in the throng. Kazuki runs into a young comic artist named Yuu Imagawa, who shows him some of her work. When he says he likes it, Yuu says to Kazuki that she will “teach [him] what a fan comic convention is all really about” and puts him to work at her table to help her sell her self-produced comics. Later that evening, after the convention, Kazuki speaks with Taishi, who begins to expound upon his idea of fan comics. Taishi says that while the twentieth century belonged to the brainwashing Hollywood entertainment culture, the twenty-first century would see the spread of Japanese fan comics, and “a new cultural standard will be sent forth from Japan to conquer the entire world.” The first episode of *Comic Party* ends with Taishi trying to convince Kazuki that they should join together to create fan comics. Future episodes chronicle Kazuki's adventures in fandom, such as his efforts to create his own manga and his experiences when he tries to sell his work at a comic exhibition.

In many ways, *Comic Party* is a rescripting of the earlier *Otaku no Video*, a title that would have been familiar to the creators of *Comic Party*. Both programs follow the introduction of a seemingly normal everyman character into the world of fandom, using him as a stand-in for the viewer, who learns about the fan subculture alongside the protagonist. The two programs stress not only the need to learn about the specific practices of the culture, but also the need to create as an essential part of knowing the culture. It is not enough to passively consume; the true fan must use his or her knowledge to create. Also worth noting are the similarities between a proclamation given by Tanaka toward the beginning of *Otaku no Video* (“Ten years from now, the industry will be ours!”) and one given by Taishi at the end of the first *Comic Party* episode (in which he describes fan comics as “a new cultural standard [that] will be sent forth from Japan to conquer the entire world”). Both shows conceptualize fan production not only as a goal in its own right but as a method of Japanese cultural expansion and a potential avenue for professional development. Although the two monologues are over the top and not to be taken at face value, they present a certain kind of skewed truth that can only

be presented in such a farcical fashion.

As portrayed in the two shows, the amateur production of manga is not an “innocent” pastime that grows out of the love of the art form. Rather it is a calculated cultural move that positions the manga creators to make the most use of their popular interests. This positioning of the amateur creator would seem to support Sara Gwenllian Jones’s (2002) assertion that many fan productions are geared toward gaining legitimacy within the larger milieu of official cultural production. Speaking specifically about filmmakers but in terms that could apply to any fan production, Jones says “the films and other cultural texts they [the fans] produce are not creative *responses* to any official text but appropriations of its imaginary as inspiration and raw material for projects intended to catapult the fan producer into a Hollywood career” (Jones 2002: 170). However, Jones draws too large a distinction between the worlds of amateur and professional production and seems to believe that the desire on the part of the fan to produce legitimate work somehow compromises him or her. As might be expected, many professional comic artists in Japan get their start by creating and selling their own comics at events like Comiket. However, the move from amateur to professional artist is not as unidirectional as one might suppose. One example of this is artist Kenichi Sonoda and his long-running dōjinshi publication *Chousen Ame* (since renamed *Megaton Punch*). Although Sonoda is a professional manga artist, he still produces amateur comics, often with contributions from some of his other professional artist friends. These comics give Sonoda the freedom to create whatever he wants without the fear of having to cater to the needs of the commercial manga market. Another example of this crossover between fan and professional production is manga artist Yoshitoshi ABe, whose self-published dōjinshi *Haibane Renmei* was later turned into an animated series.

Although accounts of fan activity in *Otaku no Video* and *Comic Party* illustrate in a light-hearted way how information and production techniques are (ideally) transmitted within the fan community, they are also indicative of the complex and sometimes shifting relationships between amateurs and professionals in the manga world. Some amateur writers use fan comics as a stepping stone to becoming professional manga artists while some professional writers create their own self-published works as mode of expression in which they are not beholden to the demands of a publishing company. The books that are designed to teach manga techniques to fan creators only serve to complicate this dividing line between amateur and professional.

Manga Instruction Texts

Although the events portrayed in *Otaku no Video* and *Comic Party* are

exaggerated, they present an ideal of how fans teach each other how to create new forms of fan culture. The best way to learn, the texts seem to be saying, is to participate in the creative process within a group of similarly committed fans. However, not everyone is able to learn in this way, whether for reasons of time, economics, or geography. In order to fill the need to communicate creative fan practices (as well as to take advantage of a growing market) instructional books began to be published that try to take the place of the pedagogy found in a fan group. The books are usually more methodical than face-to-face fan instruction and the feedback to one's work and the answers to one's questions are not as immediate. Yet if the creation of new works based on a source text by fans can be considered to be "poaching," to use Henry Jenkins's (1992) term, then it might be helpful to view such how-to books as instructional manuals telling fans how to poach source material in order to create their own stories.

As indicated in the introduction, books on how to draw manga have been increasingly popular as manga itself has grown in popularity. While there are many such books currently on the market in the United States, in particular I would like to examine Christopher Hart's *Manga Mania: How to Draw Japanese Comics* because it is one of the more popular texts in the US in terms of sales figures. In the introduction of the book, Hart stresses the greater ability of the reader to identify with manga characters than the superhero typical of American comics. Hart writes that the book's "primary purpose is to give you the step-by-step visual instruction you need to draw and invent your own cool comic book characters in all the popular manga genres" (Hart 2001: 7), examples which "include *shōnen* (boys') comics; *shōjo* (girls') comics; school comics; teen comics; fantasy, sci-fi, and robot comics; samurai comics, and many others, which are all included in this book" (Hart 2001: 7). The introduction concludes by saying "I very much look forward to your future success and to your, quite possibly, becoming a professional *manga-ka* (manga artist) with your drawings published around the world" (Hart 2001: 7).

This introduction ties into two important issues mentioned previously: Japanese specificity and amateur production as a way to break into professional creation. Hart uses words like *shōnen*, *shōjo*, and *manga-ka* to set the creation of manga apart from other types of comic art. From the outset, the newcomer to manga creation is not only forced to cope with a new set of jargon related to artistic production (such as different types of pens, inks, and screentones) but must also negotiate a new set of vocabulary in Japanese. The use of the Japanese language is intentional—it distinguishes manga creation as separate from the creation of other types of comic art and serves as a marker of authenticity. Additionally, Hart's concluding message formulates manga as both specifically Japanese (by using the term *manga-ka*) and international (with the ability to have one's art seen "around the world"). This

internationalization of manga is also related to the professionalization of the art form – few amateur and self-published comics have worldwide reach, while the professional can negotiate with publishing companies to have his or her works reprinted in many languages in different countries.

The issues of Japan specificity and professionalism are again emphasized in two chapters at the end of the book. The first, “Common Japanese Terms,” details the vocabulary one would need in order to be able to communicate in Japan. This is because Hart writes “as a manga artist, you’d be well advised to consider, at some point in your career, visiting Japan,” because “a visit to the Mecca of the manga world would give you firsthand exposure to the culture represented in the comics you love to draw” (Hart 2001: 127). This quick language lesson consists of a handful of words and phrases across only three pages that mostly contain large illustrations of specific situations. Some of the words, such as *hai* (yes), *sayonara* (good-bye), and *denwa bango* (phone number) are standard introductory Japanese while others like *henshu-sha* (editor) and *toko* (submission) are specifically related to manga creation. Since the basics of Japanese grammar are not mentioned, nor is a guide to pronunciation provided, nobody without previous language experience would be able to make practical use of the information. (Some of the stock phrases are even culturally misleading. One of the sentences is a translation of “How much should I tip?,” a phrase nearly meaningless in Japan as tipping in restaurants is not generally practiced.) Thus, the language lessons in the book are not designed to be instructional as much as they highlight the foreignness of manga.

The second chapter under discussion, “So You Want to Be a Cartoonist?,” details some of the professional positions available in the comics industry. Although not mentioned explicitly, all of the positions in the chapter are skewed toward the US comic industry. The chapter does not go into the details of professional manga production in Japan, which is usually carried out by a crew of trained (yet seldom credited) assistants supporting the manga artist. In spite of the encouragement given in the introduction, this is probably more realistic advice for aspiring manga artists, as very few US artists are ever able to work in Japan – a foreign author breaking into the Japanese manga industry is almost unheard of. This chapter reigns in some of the fantasy expressed in the previous chapter of being able to live and work in Japan as a manga artist. However, this chapter continues to reinforce the idea that amateur comic production is just one step on a longer road that will lead to future professional employment in the comic industry.

The bulk of Hart’s *Manga Mania* illustrates different types of characters and styles typically found in manga. Although the book says it provides “step-by-step visual instruction,” the details of how to draw are treated very perfunctorily. Each character is shown being drawn in three separate steps: as a series of circles in a basic shape, a light pencil sketch, and the end product

of a detailed, fully colored character. (The prevalence of colored characters and scenes in the book is somewhat puzzling, as almost all manga is printed in black and white.) No indication is given how the artist proceeded from one creation phase to the next, leaving out crucial details that would be essential for anyone trying to recreate the drawings. Other sections of the book do not even bother with trying to show how the finished product grew from initial conceptualization and sketching, only showing the end result, presumably letting the reader try to fill in the “step-by-step” details for him or herself.

Manga Mania focuses on content Hart sees as specific to manga. The book contains many illustrations of samurai, ninja, martial arts poses, as well as characters clothed in contemporary Japanese school uniforms. For a book that is supposed to instruct the reader how to draw manga, however, it is interesting that there are no examples from Japanese artists used. Ironically, of all the artists in the book, it is Christopher Hart’s work that looks the least like the Japanese style he is trying to emulate. The closest *Manga Mania* comes to a “genuine” manga style is the use of examples from skilled American manga artists like Lea Hernandez. The book also plays to some of the stereotypical images of manga, with chapters on giant robots and “Drop-Dead-Gorgeous Manga Babes.” This is not to say that the book would not be useful to the aspiring non-Japanese manga artist, however. There is a chapter called “Designing Dynamic Scenes” that illustrates the topic of panel creation and transitions. Of all the chapters in the book, this one is the most instructional, as it illustrates some of the differences between Western panel layouts and manga layouts, the use of special effects in manga, and the different types and angles of shots at an artist’s disposal.

In addition to *Manga Mania*, Hart has written a series of books to instruct the budding manga artist in the tricks of the trade. Some of the books focus on how to draw specific types of characters (*Manga Mania Villains*, 2003), different themes and settings (*Manga Mania Fantasy Worlds*, 2003), or even characters for animation (*Anime Mania*, 2002). In spite of his sales and large output of books, Hart’s manga pedagogy remains unconvincing. While the books depict manga- and anime-influenced artwork from a non-Japanese perspective, their ability to instruct the newcomer to manga creation falters due to the books’ lack of details.

Another line of instructional books is the series *How to Draw Anime & Game Characters* by Tadashi Ozawa (2000). In contrast to Christopher Hart’s books, Ozawa’s books were originally published in Japan and have been translated into English. The approach taken to instruction is a very different one as well. Rather than showing how a few quick sketches could evolve into a finished character, Ozawa’s books go into the details of how to design a professional-looking anime/manga/video game character. Although the bulk of the books are written by Ozawa, the books introduce a level of multivocality by having small sections in which other working artists give advice to the

reader. These small asides are an attempt to replicate the conditions of creative production within a fan group or circle by giving the beginning artist many different points of view of the industry. At the same time, these asides reinforce the idea that such amateur production can be used as a stepping stone to a professional job in the industry.

There are many other texts that have been published in English in designed to give non-Japanese artists a start on drawing their own manga. While some of them are better than others, most involve character and scene design rather than the panel transitions and evocation of mood that is so critical to manga. Although these books are for amateurs, most of them speak to the artist as a budding professional, rather than as a fan artist. In response to the proliferation of such books has been the development of parodic instruction books, the most prominent of which is *Even a Monkey Can Draw Manga*. Originally published in Japan as *Saru demo Kakeru Manga Kyoushitsu*, this book, written by Koji Aihara and Kentaro Takekuma and starring themselves as the main characters, promises to give the reader tips on how to become a successful manga artist. Says Takekuma's character on the first page of the story, "You will learn everything there is to know about manga! The basics of drawing! Career opportunities! How to come up with a mega-hit manga! Even tax plans! All will be revealed! Even a monkey can draw manga after reading this! You will draw yourself crazy until the day you die!" (Aihara and Takekuma 2002: 3). In the first volume, Aihara and Takekuma analyze and make fun of manga drawing techniques, story creation, and various manga genres like ladies' comics, salaryman manga, mahjong manga, and gag manga. Although many of the book's Japan-specific references undoubtedly go over the heads of most American readers, Aihara and Takekuma playfully make light of the desires of the amateur manga fan to become a professional while (more pointedly) making fun of Japanese manga's sometimes-stifling generic structures.

In addition to the professionalization of manga creation in the US, such activities are increasingly being sanctioned and even encouraged by commercial interests. For example, in a recent press release US-based manga publisher VIZ announced that it was teaming up with soft drink company Dr Pepper in order to promote manga to a wider audience. In a contest aimed at the readers of *Shonen Jump*, a monthly magazine containing manga by Japanese artists published by VIZ, "readers will be encouraged to draw themselves as an original manga-style character enjoying the great taste of Dr Pepper" ("VIZ Teams with Dr Pepper to Promote Manga" 2004). In the contest, manga creation by fans is being actively promoted as a marketing tool. Thus in one sense, my initial assessment of the how-to-draw-manga books as instructing fans how to poach the source texts does not hold up; being told what and how to draw is not "poaching" by any stretch of Jenkins's term. However, the motivation for creating such manga, especially in the United States, is generally rooted in fandom. In Japan, where manga is so prevalent that it has been likened to air

(Kinsella 2000: 4), comics are simply another method of communication. The overt use of manga for commercial purposes does not mean that there are not sharply parodic and cutting-edge fan comics being published. In another sense then, these pedagogical books *do* give instructions to the anime/manga fan for how to appropriate certain elements from the Japanese sources in order to create something new. The fact that manga creation has become commercialized in the US does not necessarily detract from the ability of fans to poach and recontextualize elements of Japanese manga.

Fan-Produced American Manga

The production of manga-influenced work by comic artists in the United States is not a recent phenomenon. American artists such as Lea Hernandez, Ben Dunn, Fred Perry, Robert DeJesus, Adam Warren, and Chynna Clugston-Major have been creating manga-influenced comics professionally for many years. While an analysis of the work of these artists would certainly be fruitful, they are all professional artists who have adapted Japanese visual or storytelling elements. For an analysis of fan production it would be more telling to concentrate on amateur artists or those whose professional careers are just beginning. In particular, I will focus on a competition called the Rising Stars of Manga, sponsored by Tokyopop, a major publisher of Japanese manga. Like the Dr Pepper contest mentioned above, the Rising Stars of Manga raises the spectre of commercial sponsorship of what is ostensibly a fan activity, but unlike the Dr Pepper contest the content of the manga in Rising Stars is left to the discretion of the creators.

Tokyopop presents an interesting case study of the manga market in America because the company has changed the way consumers read and purchase manga. As Japanese books and comics are generally read from right to left, the common wisdom in the American comic industry used to be that artwork from the Japanese original would always have to be flipped and retouched in order to sell the manga to an English-speaking audience. In the early 2000s, Tokyopop began publishing manga in the Japanese format, translating the dialogue but keeping the original artwork the same and calling their products “100% Authentic Manga.” One of the explanations Tokyopop gave for the move is that it allows them to publish the manga more quickly and cheaply (Wolk 2002: 36). However, what went unsaid were the implications inherent in calling their products “authentic” in a move to wring a degree of cultural capital from what was ostensibly a cost-saving measure. Thus, from the beginning Tokyopop tried to set itself apart from its competitors by presenting its brand as closer in feel and spirit to the Japanese original. It is very interesting, then, that a company that built its market share on an idea of authenticity would sponsor a competition like the Rising Stars of Manga, in

which American fans were encouraged to create their own manga for a chance to be published in a Tokyopop book, prize money, and the option to pitch story ideas to Tokyopop editors. As of this writing, three Rising Stars of Manga competitions have been conducted. For each competition, the editors at Tokyopop chose a grand prize winner, a first place winner, and eight runners up to be published in a special graphic novel. At this writing, two volumes of *The Rising Stars of Manga* have been published by Tokyopop, with the winners of the third contest to be announced shortly.

In responding to a question about what is characteristic about manga, Jeremy Ross, Tokyopop's Editorial Director, reiterated many of points Scott McCloud had made in *Understanding Comics*, noting the iconic characters, detailed backgrounds, story pacing, and panel transitions ("Ordering Rising Stars of Manga" 2003). Ross said he does not see an incongruity in having American artists drawing genuine manga, saying "the essence of manga, while derived from Eastern culture, is not restrictive and can accommodate Western characters, storylines and concepts" ("Ordering Rising Stars of Manga" 2003). Although the context of Ross's statements must be taken into consideration (they were made on a trade website in an interview designed to promote the first *Rising Stars of Manga* volume), they support the idea that manga is not an exclusively Japanese domain. Thus, although Tokyopop heavily promotes their notions of "authentic" Japanese manga, the company is also invested in the notion that manga can come from other cultures.

However, the way in which the winning entries are structured in the two *Rising Stars of Manga* volumes emphasizes that there is much the reader can learn from these manga stories. On one page before each of the stories there is a short biography of the author followed by comments on the entry from the judges. These comments are usually structured to first say why the story was chosen and what the judges liked about it, followed by a critique of what the artist could have done better. The main purpose of such public critiques of material that is deemed good enough to be published seems to make the entries into an educational tool for the readers. The judges usually discuss both story pacing and artwork, as can be seen in the comments on the grand prize-winning "Peach Fuzz" by Lindsay Cibos, a story about a young girl and her pet ferret: "The comedic timing was interrupted (but not terribly hurt) by the sudden appearance of the admittedly cute singing ferret, Pavaratty. I think introducing him earlier and having him appear at key moments might have helped, as I felt he came and went too quickly and randomly. As far as the art goes, I think better line weight would have catapulted this to near perfection" (Panaccia 2003: 8). The stories presented in *The Rising Stars of Manga* volumes thus serve dual roles of showing a wide audience that it is possible to create interesting non-Japanese manga-style stories while at the same time educating fans and other potential manga creators about how they can perfect their craft.

The Rising Stars of Manga competition also promoted the idea that amateur manga creation can lead to a professional career. As mentioned previously, in addition to cash prizes and being published in an anthology, the contest also touted the chance to pitch ideas for a manga series to the Tokyopop editors as one of the advantages of winning. A number of the winners took advantage of this opportunity. In advance of the start of Tokyopop's third Rising Stars competition, the company announced that Lindsay Cibos, grand prize winner of the second competition, had signed a deal to turn her "Peach Fuzz" into "a full-fledged manga series" ("Tokyopop Kicks Off Third Rising Stars of Manga Competition January 1st" 2003). Later, the company announced that they had signed a deal to turn "Van Von Hunter" (first place winner in the first competition) into a full series ("Tokyopop Signs Series Deal with Manga Competition Winners" 2004), as well as announcing that they had agreed to publish a series called "Bizenghast" created by Marty LeGrow, whose story "Nikolai" was one of the eight runners up in the second competition ("Rising Stars Winner to Have Series Published" 2004). This use of the contest by the entrants makes sense when one examines the demographics of the winners. Many of them are young (ranging from 16 to 40, with a median age of 23 and an average age between 24 and 25) and are already working in a field related to comic creation. Of the forty-two people involved in the creation of the forty published stories, twenty-six were already working in the field of art, including freelance artists, graphic designers, those already publishing their own comics, those in a related field such as costuming, and students studying art. Most of the other authors were students whose field of study was either unspecified or not art (ten), although there was one entrant who worked in computer technical support, one whose employment was as a "karaoke box employee," an "office temp," and three whose occupations were not given. For many of the winners of the three Rising Stars of Manga contests, their "amateur" artwork is an extension of their related professional or semi-professional work. In other words, even though the artists were not full-fledged *manga-ka* (promotional materials for Tokyopop's contests use this same Japanese word for manga creator that Hart does in his *Manga Mania* introduction), many had been trained in the visual arts and thus existed in the manga world in the liminal state between amateur and professional.

It is interesting to note that "Peach Fuzz" creator Lindsay Cibos and her artistic partner Jared Hodges sell on their website a CD-ROM they authored called "Anime CG Tutorial CD." According to the artists, the software is designed to be "an instructional guide that teaches how to color anime style artwork on the computer" (Hodges and Cibos 2004). This CD-ROM brings the discussion of amateur manga in the US full circle. It collapses the three categories I have been discussing—fan-to-fan pedagogy, instructional texts, and amateur creation—in on themselves. The CD-ROM is a way for a pair of fans to communicate their creative knowledge and experience to other fans

who are also looking to create anime- and manga-influenced original works. But it is also an original text created by a pair of amateur fans. At the same time, the value of the advice contained on the CD-ROM has certainly increased in esteem since Cibos won Tokyopop's second Rising Stars of Manga competition, validating her status as someone suited to give advice on creating manga.

Conclusion

Although anime conventions are nothing new in the United States, in January 2004 Anime Expo Tokyo was the first American-style anime convention to be held in Japan. The convention provided a unique opportunity to show the Japanese fans of anime and manga how the American fans interpret and interact with what was originally a Japanese cultural product. Among the American guests at the convention was Fred Gallagher, whose comic *MegaTokyo* is illustrative of the remediation going on between Japanese and American popular culture. *MegaTokyo* originally began (and still continues) as an online webcomic, drawn in a manga style and updated three times a week. Although at first it was just a creative outlet for Gallagher's ideas on anime, manga, and gaming, the comic generated enough interest that Gallagher could become a professional comic writer and have volumes of the comic issued by a comic publisher in print form. While at the Anime Expo Tokyo, Gallagher says he "answer[ed] questions about american fans and american cons to the Japanese press [*sic*]" and that he "told them that i think that American fans really want to contribute to anime culture, and that i felt honored to be there, and that i felt much humbled to be here where manga artist types actually had talent, unlike myself [*sic*]" (Gallagher 2004). Although Gallagher said that he felt the convention was successful in general, he also wished that there could have been more cross-cultural dialogue: "I think a future addition to this type of show would be a venue where non japanese guests ... could show examples or describe what we do. ... It's almost like there needs to be the kinds of things that facilitate american fans to show japanese fans what we are doing [*sic*]" (Gallagher 2004). Gallagher was an amateur fan creator who became professional, and is now, through his appearance at Anime Expo Tokyo, beginning a dialogue between manga fan cultures and exporting ideas about Japanese popular culture back to Japan.

Manga can also serve as a medium to communicate uniquely American experiences. A recent article in the newspaper *Indian Country Today* profiled young Navajo artist Jessica Moffett who has created a science-fiction manga called "Tobias." Said Moffett about her comic, "Some parts of the story resemble Native American history – genocide, burning of their crops, destruction of livestock, racism, concentration camps, separation of families

and the government forcing young children to attend boarding schools” (quoted in Arthur 2001: D4). Through the medium of manga, Moffett has found a way to communicate her cultural history to a larger audience, using an artistic style derived from Japanese comics in order to portray aspects of a uniquely American history.

Manga is not free from the politics of representation, social status, or economics. Writing in the journal *Foreign Policy*, Douglas McGray (2002) has theorized that Japanese cultural exports such as animation, music, and video games constitute a new form of *soft power* (as opposed to more traditional conceptions of economic or military might, which would be *hard powers*) on the world market. The manifestations of this power are already making themselves known. A recent front-page article in *The Wall Street Journal* discusses the demographic shift in people taking Japanese language classes in college; through the eighties and mid-nineties, many of the language students were business majors while now many of them take the language because of their interest in Japanese popular culture (Parker 2004). Manga fans, and fans of Japanese popular culture in general, may have an impact beyond that of domestic social relations and economics – they may in fact hold the keys to future international relations between the United States and Japan.

Manga is more of a general style of communication than a strict aesthetic or cultural dividing line. Members of manga fandom engage in an informal pedagogy in order to communicate ideals of cultural production. This desire for instruction is an important part of manga fandom as critical consumers become critical producers. (This is not limited to the creation of manga alone; even this essay can be seen as participating in the creative element of anime and manga fandom.) Because of this, there is often a fluid relationship between amateur and professional artists, with ideas and personnel moving back and forth between the two realms. Amateur manga creation is neither the idealized textual poaching promoted by Jenkins, nor is it always a way of jockeying for a job in professional industry as suggested by Sara Gwenllian Jones. As manga gains in popularity in the United States, these once-clear lines of demarcation between amateurs and professionals and between fans and creators will become further complicated and blurred.

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