

An analysis of Contemporary Manga Culture in
Japan and Sweden
with a study of the works of Naoki Urasawa

A Master's Thesis for the Degree "Master of Arts (Two Years)
in Visual Culture

By
Erika Fujiwara
Master thesis: May, 2010

Grader: Anders Michelsen

Author: Erika Fujiwara

Supervisor: Måns Holst-Ekström

Page: 50

Illustrations: 7

This thesis is an analysis of contemporary Manga Culture in Japan and Sweden. The objective of the study was to identify the potential and problems for Manga culture and its future in the international market. Also I try to examine the potential of Manga to establish its academic status. This research will be based on the analysis of the transition and features of Manga related with Japanese culture, and a case study of Urasawa Naoki's works from a feminist and postmodernist points of view. The research method is basically the analysis of literatures, interviews with Manga artists and my own observation. The first chapter starts with the analysis of comic book features from visual cultural point of view, a historical overview of Manga and Japanese cultural introduction in a relation to Manga. The second chapter will analyze Naoki Urasawa who is said to be one of the best contemporary Manga artists in Japan, or the reincarnation of Osamu Tezuka, well-known as the father of Manga. The third chapter focuses on the comparative study of Manga in Japan and Sweden in order to evaluate Manga's potential and to identify the problems using the interviews of those who work in Manga industry, and finally the last chapter contains the feminist perspectives on Manga. After the systematic comparative research, I try to identify the dominant features of Manga and Urasawa Manga as well as reactions and expectations from international market and consumers of Manga culture.

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INTRODUCTION

0.1 SUBJECT

The research subject is the question if Manga, this important part of Japanese Visual Culture has the potential of expanding its global market despite the cultural difference and the different historical backgrounds between Japan and the rest of the world. Also, I examine the potential for Manga to establish its academic status for Manga studies. While the sale of Manga is around 40% of all publishing works in Japan, its sales in Europe and the United States are still less than 10% in overall printed sales¹. This thesis is dedicated to analyzing how Manga culture developed in Japan and how it can be adapted to the rest of the world based on the case study of Naoki Urasawa and his works, the comparative study of Japan and Sweden. I would also like to identify the problems and solutions, if any, which Manga holds to globalize its market from the feminist point of view. This thesis is the result of Visual Culture interdisciplinary studies such as film studies, photographic studies, semiotics studies and psycho analytical theory, which can be placed in between art history and comparative visual cultures.

0.2 PROBLEM DIAGNOSIS

The current status of Manga study has not reached academic level yet in Japan while there are certain numbers of published works which foreign authors tried to identify Manga culture with objective perspectives mainly from sociological or anthropological point of view. Also a small

¹ P Gravett, *Manga: Sixty years of Japanese Comic books*, London, Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2004, p13

number of visual and artistic analyses of Manga exist abroad, together with Anime and other items of Japanese popular culture.

Over the years, though there were movements to categorize Manga as Art, less than 50 academic works have been achieved by scholars, and there seems to be a scarce number of attempts to analyze Manga from the academic point of view at the moment. Only the Seika University in Kyoto has a Manga department, yet the department is not focusing on Manga study, but rather on teaching the technique and narrative skills of Manga production for future Manga artists. As a result, almost all Manga theories are presented by the journalists or the editors of Manga magazines, and they are less academic, but rather personal, subjective and commercial. The main problem diagnosis is that I basically need to depend on my own analysis and observation of the pictures and interviews rather than the comparison and analysis of former academic works.

0.3 RELEVANCE OF THE WORK

There are neither many academic researches nor comparative studies on Manga from the visual cultural point of view. Manga is taken as sub-culture; however, like film studies, it can forge a path as a form of academic studies once it establishes the identity as not irresponsible art, but responsible art to inspire further creative works. (The literal meaning of *Man* is irresponsible and *ga* means picture in Japanese since Fredrik Schodt' "Manga! Manga!" explained the definition that way in 1983² Perhaps it is time for the scholars of Manga studies to give a new definition of Manga study, too. Naoki Urasawa is an interesting object for the study since many academic scholars have not analyzed his works yet. I expect that this eventually may

² P Gravett, *Manga: Sixty years of Japanese Comic books*, London, Laurence King Publishing Ltd, p9

be able to cultivate the Japanese Manga/ visual cultural studies as a whole.

0.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

I have two main research objectives in this thesis. One is to identify the features and transition of female characters of Urasawa Naoki's works such as *Pineapple Army*, *YAWARA!*, *Monster*, *20th Century Boys* and *Pluto* published since the 1980 to the present time in Japan. His depiction of weapons, architecture and heroes are also important factors to make his works stylistically recognizable and global and therefore I will focus on some of these aspects as well. Another research objective is to provide a comparative study of Manga in Japan and Sweden with the respect to feminist perspectives using the illustrations by two Swedish female Manga artists.

0.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The thesis has three principal research questions:

- Does Manga have the potential to be more widely accepted abroad?
- What is special about Naoki Urasawa concerning with the popularity of his works?
- How different are the responses between Japan and Sweden considering feminism in a relation to Manga?

These three questions will be answered with the following additional questions:

- How has Manga developed?
- How did Manga studies emerge and what is the reaction from abroad?
- What are the dominant features of Urasawa Manga's characters?
- How is the depiction of female characters transitioned in Urasawa Manga?
- How is feminism in Manga related to the feminism movement in Japan?
- What was and is the difference between Japanese and Western feminism?

- What are the features of Swedish Manga inspired by Japanese Manga?

0.6 HYPOTHESIS

As contemporary popular culture for the masses takes the borders away from the world, Manga may break through the boundary between cultures. Especially the violence and sexual depiction was said to be an obstacle in its entrance to the Western sphere. However as a reflection of globalization, Japanese society faced the new feminist movement, which more women needed to work independently outside of the gender role that already existed like in western societies. The reason why new Manga artists like Naoki Urasawa get more popular may be because the globalization is naturally adopted within Manga, and there may have less of a gender barrier. Compared with real society, the virtual Manga society can easily introduce and represent the ‘ideal’ society for both men and women. Whether Japanese people like it or not, so called Japanese-ness does not remain as it was before due to an ethnic structural change³, loss of religious models and less loyalties of *Bushido* (Samurai spirit). Across the border, the new generations may, to a greater extent, share the identity of global capitalism and mass consumerism.

0.7 METHOD&THEORY

0.7-1 Method

While analyzing Manga theories written by Japanese scholars, journalists, international sociologists and feminist scholars, and focusing on the pictures of Naoki Urasawa, I also refer literature written by foreign scholars of Visual Cultural study and other studies. Qualitative interviews with those who work in Manga

³ B Willis, and S Murphy-Shigemitsu, *Transcultural Japan; At the borderlands of race, gender, and identity*, Oxon, Routledge, 2008, p11

industries in Sweden and art works done by Swedish artists also become the object for principle method of comparative study.

0.7-2 Theory

Postmodernist theory and feminist theory are utilized in order to discuss the discourse of Urasawa Manga and the cultural difference between popular culture of Japan and Sweden.

0.7-3 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis takes place in the combination of narratives and illustrations. In order to discuss the concept of Manga, there should be two different approaches in both Manga languages and pictures to identify how these discourses related to each other. Western comic books have a different discourse to Manga, and Urasawa Manga has unique discourses which differ from other Manga. By understanding the difference and conflicts of discourses, I believe that each genre crosses over or merges at some points. Existing discourses of visual culture, literature and films could prove the existence of cultural differences and various ways of its development. I expect to use the discourse analysis to generate a new discourse in light of globalization on the subject.

0.7-4 Interviews

In order to have a better comprehension of the Swedish Manga 'scene', I carried out four interviews with the members of the comic books industry. The questions are concerned with the development of the recent decades and the changes towards Manga culture and future perspectives. Two interviews are transcribed into written documents. Two interviews were done via email.

0.8 EARLIER RESEARCH

Manga study has not yet been established on an academic level in the Visual Cultural field in Japan while certain numbers of sociologists and anthropologists study Manga from sociological aspects. They take an interest in Manga not as visual culture but as political, cultural, historical and economic phenomena, part of Japanese popular culture together with animation, music, fashion and films. Some foreign scholars studying comic books approach the subject from a visual cultural perspective and use the semiotics for analysis, sometimes taking a psychoanalytical approach like in film studies. As a single study object, there is only one published book⁴ on Urasawa Naoki although Urasawa's comic book sales records are more than 70million in Japan⁵. Therefore, this research is quite challenging in terms of approaching Urasawa case study and in investigating Manga as Visual Culture.

0.9 SOURCE & LITERATURE

0.9-1 Empirical Material and Primary Source

The empirical data consists of the interviews with Swedish people who deal with the Manga industry. The primary sources of illustrations are Manga works of Naoki Urasawa which are published in Japan.

0.9-2 Secondary Source

The secondary sources consist of literature and articles dealing with earlier research on the subjects of comic books, comic languages, Visual Culture and feminism in Japan in a relation to popular culture. For theoretical and methodological

⁴ H Ohyama, *Urasawa Naoki no Nazo; The Mystery of Naoki Urasawa (浦沢直樹の謎)*, Tokyo, KOALA BOOKS, 2000

⁵ H Ohyama, *Urasawa Naoki no Nazo; The Mystery of Naoki Urasawa (浦沢直樹の謎)*, Tokyo, KOALA BOOKS, 2000,p17

perspectives and for a deeper analysis on the Manga illustrations, I refer most of the texts. I myself am responsible for the translation from Japanese texts to English. Also for the comparative study, I use both books published in Japan by Japanese scholars and journalists with the subjective perspectives and books in English published outside of Japan with the objective perspectives on Japanese pop culture in particular.

0.10 OUTLINE OF STUDY

Unlike in Japan where most people are familiar with Manga culture; many readers of my thesis may not have appropriate comprehension of Manga culture itself, so the analysis of visual images and feminist analysis are followed by the general historical and comparative overview of Manga and comic books as one of items of Visual Culture.

Following Chapter 1, the overall comic books and Manga theory, history and features, Chapter 2 is dedicated to a case study of Naoki Urasawa and his works in the relevant visual field. Chapter 3 focuses on the comparative study between Japan and Sweden based on the works of two Swedish Manga artists and the interviews. The chapter 4 is revolves around feminist theory in a relationship with Manga culture and depiction. As for the conclusion, I would like to verify if my hypothesis can be proved.

Chapter 1 General Theory of Manga

Before the analysis of the works of Naoki Urasawa, I would like to introduce the main features of comic books and Manga (Japanese comic books) to readers from Visual Culture perspectives. The first part of this chapter, contains general features of comic books and their visual power. The second part, contains the specific features of Manga and its development. The third part is about Japanese culture in relation to

Manga. The aim of this chapter is to examine the value which comic books and Manga present and to give readers of this study appropriate knowledge about Manga and its background.

1.1 VISUAL CULTURAL ASPECT OF COMIC BOOKS

1.1-1 *The Features of Comic Books*

Comic Books are all about the combination of narratives and pictures; in other words the balance of language and images on the two-dimensional surface determines the message which the artist intends to deliver. Unlike novels, texts in comic books are organized into sequential units, and they are graphically separated from each other. A reader must fill the gap between each panel/box as he/she forms a whole out of all pieces of information from both texts and pictures which are laid out in every page. Although, throughout the history, it is not unique to employ both words and pictures on the same panel/space, the way linguistics and pictorial elements interact with each other in comic books certainly is incomparable with any other style of Visual Culture.

The author of *The Language of Comic books*, Mario Saraceni mentioned that “The word ‘comic books’ can be very misleading about the nature of many of the publications that carry the label”, and “the 1970s new expression, ‘graphic novel’, was coined to replace the term: ‘comic book.’”⁶ Though it never happened, comic books tried to identify themselves as sophisticated and high graphic culture, unlike the children’s book for those who cannot read and understand the literature due to lack of literacy. To read Adult comic books, according to Saraceni, one needs the special literacy and skill to infer the meaning in missing bits between gutter which

⁶ M Saraceni, *The Language of Comic books*, London, Routledge, 2003, p4

can represent a gap in time, space or both.⁷ The special literacy to read comic books can be acquired through the continuous experiences and the enjoyment of the comic book world.

According to Pilcher, historically, so-called modern comic books which as we know them now were created in the late 19th century in England, and later developed in United States mainly on newspaper strips.⁸ Together with British and American Comic Books development, France, Germany, Switzerland, Spain and other European countries developed their own comic culture and industry corresponding to the economic growth of the industrial revolution. Still, in the 21st century as high quality technology entertains us with high quality sound, moving images and even 3D pictures, the comic market seems to stay comparably large as printed media mainly targeting youth all over the world. *The essential guide to World Comic books* analyzed the power of comic books;

Comics are an exceptional form of story-telling completely separate from film, prose, animation or any of other media they've pointlessly compared to. Because we think visually, sequential art speaks directly to us without the need for translation, and most people can get the gist of a comic story no matter what its language.⁹

1.1-2 The Study of Comic Books

Like art history and film studies, comic books can be the object of studies with the element of philosophy, feminism as well as economical and social aspects. Even in the United States, however, with its pioneer work of contemporary studies, many

⁷ M Saraceni, *The Language of Comic books*, London, Routledge, 2003, p52

⁸ T Pilcher and B Brooks, *The essential Guide To WORLD COMIC BOOKS*, Collins & Brown, 2005, p20

⁹ T Pilcher and B Brooks, *The essential Guide To WORLD COMIC BOOKS*, Collins & Brown, 2005, p14

academic books on comic books have not been published. Though the departments of art history, literature, communications and media, cultural studies and film studies (animation) deal with the topic of a multidisciplinary body of word and image, they do not focus on comic books particular. When semiotics theorists such as Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco found semiotics useful to explain the relationship between signifier and signified, text and image relation in comic books seemed to be appropriate for discussion in the frame of semiotics.

According to Varnum, in the 20th century, on one hand, “It has become common place in Europe to look at comics through the lens of semiotics theory” and on the other hand “in the United States, only a few academic journals have carried articles on text/image relation in the comic books.”¹⁰ To conclude, although there is no specific discipline of comic books studies, comic books have been taken as a subject; the departure of literature into art history from the perspective of structural linguistics, discourse analysis, speech act theory, rhetoric, narrative theory and semiotics.

According to Inuhiko Yomoda, a Manga scholar, part of reasons why comic books are not welcomed by art history is because everything including text and images in comic books are taken as merely symbols or signs structured on the paper and mainly dependent on text to supplement the meaning, unlike other art works which solely can aim to evoke sensation and emotion aesthetically.¹¹ There should be a careful examination of this issue, and examine if the illustrations in Manga are mere symbols/signs or developed as art works. Pilcher writes that “One of us believes that comic books should be elevated to a fine art status with the respect and attention the medium justly deserves. The other is more prosaic and believes that

¹⁰ R Varnum, and T Gibbons, *The Language of Comic books; Word and Image*, Mississippi, University Press of Mississippi, 2001, P xiii

¹¹ I Yomoda, *Manga Genron*, Tokyo, Chikuma Shobo, 1999, p275

comics can be just big, dumb fun that allows you to escape reality for a little while.”¹² Among Manga fans and industry, various opinions exist toward how Manga should be treated.

1.2 HISTORICAL PREVIEW OF MANGA

1.2-1 *Development of Manga*

There exist two theories of the origin of Manga. One is that the roots of Manga could be traced back to *Choju-jinbutshu-giga* (ink painting picture scrolls) of the 12th or the 13th century. Unlike other picture scrolls of that time, *Choju-jinbutsu-giga* has the feature of more focus on visual images rather than text narratives. Readers read the story and pictures from right to left, this remains the Manga structure today. Another theory of the Manga development insisted that the modern and post-modern Manga has less than 100 years of history since Japanese Manga artists learned the concept of comic books after their birth in the UK and U.S.A at the end of the 19th century.¹³ Sharon Kinsella, the author of *Adult Manga; Culture & Power in Contemporary Japanese society* and Paul Gravett, the author of *Sixty years of Japanese Comic books* mention that the history of what we call Manga should have started after 1945¹⁴.

Kinsella claims that the post-modern Manga expansion was accelerated after the 1960s as the result of the political opposition and social opening, she insisted on the impact of war experience and Manga usage during the war affected the Manga writers and readers of later times.¹⁵ During the war period, people suffered strict

¹² T Pilcher and B Brooks, *The essential Guide To WORLD COMIC BOOKS*, Collins & Brown, 2005, p16

¹³ E Otsuka, and N Ohsawa, *Japanimation ha Naze Yabureru noka* (「ジヤパニメーション」はなぜ敗れるのか), Tokyo, Kadokawa Shoten, 2005, p22

¹⁴ P Gravett, *Manga: Sixty years of Japanese Comic books*, London, Laurence King Publishing Ltd, p12

¹⁵ Kinsella, Sharon, *Adult Manga; Culture & Power in contemporary Japanese society*, p19

and centralized media regulations and social control of the entertainment as well as poverty and other war experiences. “In the immediate post-war years a destitute new audience for cheap instant entertainment crawled out of the ruins, agitating a rapid revival of previously declining local cultural activities.”¹⁶ After the defeat, Japanese society seemed to share two main goals; catching up with the West and establishing a ‘made in Japan’ brand. Firstly, the Japanese comic books industry just imitated the way American publishers did, and imported colored American comic books. Secondly, after a certain economic stabilization, Japan began to produce its own Manga with less cost featuring black and white on lower quality paper over more pages due to economic and limited resource reasons. Besides, Paul Gravett pointed out the Japanese nature was the key for enhancing the development of Manga:

Much of Japanese person’s home, school and work life is governed by strict notions of respect and hierarchy. The solitary activity of reading manga allows him or her to leave behind daily formalities and experience, if only vicariously, for the more liberated realms of the mind and the senses. In many societies where repression rules, extraordinary and provocative creativity results.¹⁷

Compared with the liberated West, Japanese society retained a group mentality and strict regulations considerably more. Manga can be the way to escape from the regulated society not only for children but also for adults. In the fantasy of the imaginary world, one creates their own images of heroes, scientific fiction, fantasy, sports, romance and sex. I strongly believe that commuting on the train and bus for long hours also accelerated the boom of Adult Manga in Japan. According to

¹⁶ Kinsella, Sharon, *Adult Manga; Culture & Power in contemporary Japanese society*, p24

¹⁷ Gravett, Paul, *Manga: Sixty years of Japanese Comic books*, p13

Japanese national statistics of 2003, the average commuting time in Tokyo was 89.8 minutes¹⁸, and mostly people had to keep standing up in the crowded train during commuting. In the packed trains and buses where people have no space and cannot read a large newspaper, compact and portable entertainment seems to be the way to tolerate commuting and to indulge oneself into virtual world even temporarily.

Fusanosuke Natsume, one of the most famous Manga scholars in Japan denied the aspect of nationalism of Manga in its developmental history although he admits Manga contains unique characteristics which reflect Japanese culture to a certain extent. He strongly believes in the hybrid nature of popular culture. It is true that Japan had offered certain conditions for growing the Manga market, yet Manga itself is highly universal and mixed as a result of other cultures especially American culture, after the war. Eiji Otsuka, a Manga story producer and critic gives the explanation of the globalization of Manga rooted in character culture of Disney in pre-war time. “Disney successfully exported the characters as a ‘sign’. It is far from realist art but can be a universal sign, thus in order to understand the world of character, there is no need for readers/audience to share the common acknowledgement of cultural background.”¹⁹

Both Otsuka and Natsume insisted that Manga is not solely Japanese unique culture, but the mixture of indigenous and global culture. Natsume accounts for the trend to consider Manga as Japanese unique culture, and claims that “the theory of Manga as Japanese unique culture was brought as a reflection of the long-term Japanese desire to establish cultural identity, and it is rooted in the complex feeling

¹⁸ Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Statistics Bureau, <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/jyutaku/2003/pdf/15-4.pdf> consulted on 2010-03-13

¹⁹ E Otsuka, and N Ohsawa, *Japanimation ha Naze Yabureru noka* (「ジヤパニメーション」はなぜ敗れるのか), Tokyo, Kadokawa Shoten, 2005, p177

of Japanese people in a relationship with foreign countries through history.”²⁰

1.2-2 Categories and Genre of Manga

Though these two categories of Manga have provoked the feminist issues over history, there emerge two big categories in the beginning; *Syonen* (Boys) and *Shyojyo* (Girls), which clearly separate one another. *Yaoi* (Boys Love) Manga usually belongs to *Shojo* category (Lesbian Manga is rare, but if any, categorized in *Shyojo*). Following after Boys and Girls, new categories of *Seinen* (Men) and *Jyosei* (Women) developed in post-modern Japanese society for the previous readers of boys and girls comic books.

Contrary to the general global images of Manga as merely violent or erotic, Manga has more than 30 genres and sub-genres determined by art style and content. Among *Syonen* (Boys) and *Seinen* (Men) Manga, history, sports, war, *Furyo* (young gang), criminal, scientific fiction, robot, adventure, working(professional) and erotic Manga are popular genres, and among *Shyojyo* Manga, romance, sports, history, working, magic and ghost are main genres. Since animated Manga such as *Dragon Ball*, *NARUTO* and *Ruroni Kenshin* which were broadcasted abroad share common characteristics like repetitive fighting, pure heroism, and friendship, people outside of Japan may be misled about Manga and conclude most stories are similar and childish. It is noteworthy, however, that animated and translated Manga are less than 25% of overall Manga published in Japan. Therefore the global understanding of Manga can be quite different from the one in Japan.²¹

²⁰ F Natsume, *Manga gaku he no Chosen(漫画学への挑戦)*, Tokyo, NTT Syuttupan, 2004, p207

²¹ JETRO USA, Manga Market Report 2008, http://www.jetro.org/trends/market_info_manga.pdf consulted on 2010-04-29

1.2-3 Techniques and Visual Aspect of Manga

It is universally accepted that Osamu Tezuka is ‘God of Japanese comic books and Japanese animation’²². Until his death in 1989, he brought revolutionary changes into the Manga world. According to Natsume who researched on Tezuka, the most notable revolution he achieved was to change the concept of panels and layout and humanization of characters. Before Tezuka, whether four panels manga category or a longer story telling manga category, the way of reading Manga was unified. The first panel you should see is always on the top right, and you go down along the column, and then move to the next left column in the way Japanese books are read. (Japanese books are designed to be read from the right to left from top to bottom vertically unlike Western books which are read from left to right horizontally.) Sometimes numbers are inserted in each panel to indicate readers the right direction and order.²³ It was considered too well structured, thus there was no space remaining for the imagination and creativity for readers. Or in other words, at the beginning Manga manipulated readers to think in a certain way at the certain timing.

Tezuka realized that the nature of Manga was closer to the one of film rather than literature concerning the visual impact, so he invented the horizontal drawing technique. Natsume mentions the contribution of Tezuka, “it starts from the right top panel, and surprisingly go on to the left panel horizontally. To teach how to read it in a right way, firstly, Tezuka put the arrows to show the right direction.”²⁴ As the idea was permeated, Tezuka changed the panel size to emphasize certain scenes, and

²² T Pilcher and B Brooks, *The essential Guide To WORLD COMIC BOOKS*, Collins & Brown, 2005, p119

²³ F Natsume, *Tezuka Osamu no Boken(手塚治虫の冒険)*, Tokyo, Syogakukan, 1998, p59

²⁴ F Natsume, *Tezuka Osamu no Boken(手塚治虫の冒険)*, Tokyo, Syogakukan, 1998, p61, also Appendix #1, #2

acted as a pioneer to give Manga accurate perspectives and three-dimensional body shapes. Before his time, childish and cute graphic styles influenced by American comic books, especially Disney, representing clean and healthy children's entertainment was the mainstream. Today, typical Japanese characters with innocent looks and huge eyes still exist. From then on, however, the mainstream diminished, and instead, the freedom of expression in Manga emerged.

Together with Tezuka's innovations within the Manga world, humanization of characters created a new style of Manga called *Gekiga*²⁵. In the 1960s, those children who had enjoyed post-war Manga became adults, and demanded adult Manga with humanistic characteristics and more realistic stories. *Geki* means theater, and *ga* means picture, so *Gekiga* stands for theatrical Manga with a stronger and realistic drawing, while children-oriented Manga depicts the characters as soft and curvy as possible.²⁶ Contrary to the previous notion of Manga characters, post-war Manga characters were not always immortal, but had limited life like real human beings; therefore, they began to contain death in the stories as well as life, war, love and sex. According to Sharon Kinsella, "During the 1960s realism in manga was associated with overcoming obstacles to personal progress, passionate attitude towards society, and left-wing politics."²⁷

1.3 CULTURAL ASPECT OF JAPAN

Globalization and Multiculturalism in Japan

After nearly 300 years of national isolation in the Edo period, Japan opened the country in 1853. Since then, with the slogan of "Catch up with West", Japanese governments and people were eager to adopt Western culture rapidly. During the

²⁵ Appendix #3, #4

²⁶ F Natsume, *Manga ha Naze Omoshiroi no ka (マンガはなぜ面白いのか)*, Tokyo, Nippon Hoso Syuttpan Kyokai, 1997, p45

²⁷ S Kinsella, *Adult Manga; Culture & Power in contemporary Japanese society*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2000, p37

Pacific War, it closed the door again, but the fast consumption of foreign culture began again in 1945. Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu, the editors of *Transcultural Japan*, point out in relation to Japanese culture, that: “From the beginning of Japanese history, when mass migrations from the south and west brought new and different people to these islands, through medieval and colonial times when large numbers of laborers either came or brought to the archipelago, Japanese society has been multicultural.”²⁸ Though compared with multinational countries, Japan is still a racially homogeneous nation. Joy Hendry also discusses that Japanese culture was imported originally from abroad throughout the history.²⁹ The Japanese people may be good at integration of other culture with their own while keeping the original local values which they qualify due to the unique demographic and historical reasons.

Chapter 2 Manga of Naoki Urasawa

This chapter consists of the case study of Naoki Urasawa. Following the short description of Urasawa, I analyzed 5 works from visual cultural perspectives basically focusing on the female characters. In the end, I try to give the features of Urasawa works to examine their popularity.

2.1 INTRODUCTION OF NAOKI URASAWA

Short description of Naoki Urasawa

Naoki Urasawa was born in 1960, and he called his time “the luckiest generation”.³⁰ It was after the world war, and it was the beginning of prosperity and new exciting experiences. Urasawa appreciated the high economic development, 60s

²⁸ B Willis, and S Murphy-Shigemitsu, *Transcultural Japan; at the borderlands of race, gender, and identity*, Oxon, Routledge, 2008, pp9

²⁹ J Hendry, *Understanding Japanese Society (Third Edition)*, London, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, p194

³⁰ *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa's Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, p21

Beatles sensation, the Tokyo Olympic, the Osaka World Expo, and maturity of culture until the economic bubble burst in the 1990s. Urasawa mentioned after the 1990s it is difficult to create something new, and what we have seen is the repetitive copy of the past creation and invention. The new generation have been obliged to destroy the existing ideas of any culture, and just like Elvis Presley's sensational performance, Beatles' sudden appearance on TV, people are expecting the cultural shock once again.³¹

Urasawa has been good at drawing and story-making since he was a small child, and improved his drawing skill by imitating other artists such as Katsuhiro Ohtomo, the Manga artist of *AKIRA* and Osamu Tezuka. In 1983, he professionally debuted with *Odoru Keikan*. Following this first work, he successfully worked on *Pineapple Army*, *Master Keaton*, *YAWARA!*, *Happy!*, *MONSTER*, *20th Century Boys* and *PLUTO*. Except *Pineapple Army* and *Master Keaton*, the stories are his original. He explained the process of producing Manga;

“In my mind, there are millions of stories, motions and images to output. I wish I could share the greatest work in my mind, but since my technique of drawing is not good enough, it is far from the original scenes in my head. When I draw Manga, I am like both film director and script writer. In front of me, there is small screen, I contrive the narrative, speeches, composition the angle of camera, and I am also a cameraman to move the camera to shoot the scenes.”³²

YAWARA! and *MONSTER* were animated, *Happy!* became a TV drama, and *20th Century Boys* became a movie due to Manga popularity. The total of his Manga sales was more than 67.5million in June 1999 and now it is over 1 billion in sum.³³

³¹ *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa's Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, 2009, p21

³² *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa's Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, 2009, p55

³³ H Ohyama, *Urasawa Naoki no Nazo; The Mystery of Naoki Urasawa (浦沢直樹の謎)*, Tokyo, KOALA BOOKS, 2000, p17

2.2 VISUAL DISCRIPTION OF URAWASA MANGA

2.2-1 Pineapple Army

Based on the original story by Kazuya Kudo who offers the narrative to Manga artists, *Pineapple Army* was published on Manga magazine, *Big Comic Original* from 1985 to 1988. The main character, Jed Goshi used to be a mercenary and has war fighting experiences in various wars in the past. After the retirement as mercenary, he works for the military in the U.S.A. as a fighting and war strategy instructor giving survival lessons to the clients who needs to learn them. Each episode is independent, and the story is located in Europe, America and Africa wherever there are wars or clients who need to learn how to fight or protect themselves. Ohyama who wrote the book on Urasawa introduced the story, “as it is seen on the front cover pages and the title, the main theme is wars, weapons and the world military industry and political situations. The sub-theme can be the human drama between Goshi, clients and his coworkers.”³⁴



Fig.1, *Pineapple Army*, Urasawa

Though the theme is “war” and the story thus can be violent, Urasawa’s drawing lines shows the warmth and humor. His drawing technique is far from *Gekiga* (realistic theatrical drawing), but simple and loyal to his world which one can tell that is Urasawa Manga at one glance. It is noteworthy that in his Manga, the actual grotesque or violent scenes are hardly drawn. He is good at utilizing the semantic field which lets readers

³⁴ H Ohyama, *Urasawa Naoki no Nazo; The Mystery of Naoki Urasawa (浦沢直樹の謎)*, Tokyo, KOALA BOOKS, 2000, p39

connect the words and pictures with particular sequences and imaginations.

Goshi has a girlfriend, Janet who also used to be a mercenary. Her existence seems to give a humanistic aspect to Goshi. The typical battle Manga or TV show usually has one Goddess type of female character in a team to highlight male characters. Unlike most typical battle genre Manga, where a female characters make wrong decisions, and causes the trouble, Janet is an independent and strong soldier who once saved Goshi's life. However, Janet is still just the sub-character, with no other female characters contribute to the main plot of the story. Besides, the facial expression of the female characters is one patterned or less expressive than the male characters in Urasawa's early works. Also, the body shape is not realistic for a soldier woman. Janet is drawn as a comparably skinny and typical beautiful blond haired "girl". She is supposed to be in her late 20s, but she looks like a teenager, and dresses up in sexy costumes outside of the battle field. We can assume Urasawa was targeting male readers at the beginning, so focused more on establishing male character's characteristics while providing some sexy elements for male gaze.

Figure 1 is the scene that Goshi was shot and incapable to keep fighting. He asked Janet to kill him since he could be an encumbrance to the team. Though she loves him, she is supposed to be a professional mercenary and thus has to shoot him. Five out of eight panels show the facial repetition of Janet which holds the sequence together in a relation based on the common semantic field. Wounded soldier, team mates, combat leader (Janet) and the battle belong to the same semantic field. Saraceni who analyzed the techniques of comic books says: "it is important to remember that semantic fields are mental representations, not classes of words that share some objective common characteristics [...] The fact that different people will associate words in different ways show that semantic fields are subjective rather than

objective.”³⁵Urasawa is trying to maintain the space for the readers to infer the feeling between Goshi and Janet which is based on trust and love, at the same time show the quick and decent decision within the face of Janet. The texts reinforce her feelings saying: ‘mercy has no worth’ in the fourth black color panel. Though each reader has different knowledge of the world, the important skill of the Manga artist is depiction of the particular world in the work, describing each characteristic and offering a common semantic field as one reads. Judging by the personalities of characters, the facial expression and short texts, readers can speculate whether she will shoot him or not.

2.2-2 YAWARA!

From 1986 to 1993, *YAWARA!* was printed on *Big Comic Sprints*, a *Seinen* (male) Magazine. Urasawa started drawing a new Manga which is categorized in sport-drama. *YAWARA!* is the story of one girl(Yawara) who wants to be just a

normal high-school girl, however her extraordinary Judo talents does not let her leave the Judo world. The meaning of *yawara* is soft or flexible, and it is also read as *Ju* (flexibility) which is the goal that Judo is trying to achieve. Urasawa admitted in a magazine interview that *YAWARA!* was a test attempt for him to discover what kind of Manga could be popular as mass culture. Compared with his former works, *YAWARA!* was designated for



Fig.2, *YAWARA!* by Naoki Urasawa

³⁵ M Saraceni, *The Language of Comic books*, London, Routledge, 2003, p48

“everyone”, just as most Japanese from children to adults naturally are attracted by the national sport, Judo. It is the first Urasawa Manga whose main character is female and it was rare to put a female character as the main one on *Seinen Magazine* in the 1980s.³⁶

In the story, Yawara’s Grandfather is the national Judo champion and has a dream to train his Granddaughter to an Olympic, gold medal standard. Yawara has an obedient, nice and charming personality, a typical image of Japanese women of pre war times. Corresponding to the actual Judo champion, Ryoko Tamura who became the gold medalist twice in the Olympics and upcoming the Barcelona Olympic, both the Manga and animation of *YAWARA!* brought the boom to Japanese society.

As the genre of sport Manga, the motions and onomatopoeia are crucial elements. Urasawa is concerned with the animation when he draws the original Manga. Using techniques of close ups, long shot, flashback, point of view shot and a lot of other cinematic techniques, he enhances the interactivity with readers.

In Fig. 2, Yawara is free-style sparring with her grandfather. First panel shows the offence and defense battle for the dominant position, in the second, with onomatopoeia sound, readers see the grandpa is off-balanced, and the third and fourth in close up shots, we see the moment of victory or defeat. Consequently, we already know that was the *Ippon* (win) of Yawara by the perfect posture and the speed of finishing motion which we can tell from the efficient use of onomatopoeia. Urasawa is good at employing the onomatopoeia, controlling the time span and speed. Onomatopoeia is usually expressed with handwriting or typing graphic texts. Font and shape of onomatopoeia create the sense of time. In the Manga theory of Fusanosuke Natsume, “basically in the world of Manga, hearing is expressed visually

³⁶ H Ohyama, *Urasawa Naoki no Nazo; The Mystery of Naoki Urasawa* (浦沢直樹の謎) ,p154

and time is expressed spaciouly.”³⁷ In the animated version of *YAWARA!*, sound effects were certainly utilized, but since Urasawa’s original onomatopoeia is so natural and well matched with the scenes, many viewers notice no gaps between the original Manga drawing and the animation, while many other works fail when it becomes animation. *YAWARA!* is loved by everybody from children to adults as Urasawa intended to, however it is also noticeable that in his early works, the sexy depictions of shorts or swimsuit of female characters are standing out more than in his present works.

2.2-3 MONSTER

MONSTER is the Manga of which Urasawa created both stories and illustrations. It lasted for 7 years on *Big Comic Original* from 1994 to 2001. This Manga covers the theme of rampant crime, medical ethics, adult children, trauma, brain washing, psychological experiment, humanistic love, Nazi Germany and the Cold War. The main character, Kenzo Tenma is the neurosurgeon who needs to chase after the young psychopath (Monster) named Johan whose life Tenma once saved as a doctor. Though Tenma has Japanese origins, he married a German woman, worked in Düsseldorf, Germany, and the main characters are all European. Often, Urasawa applies the English and German languages to make the story more authentic. It is a well contemplated mysterious series with story cohesiveness to guide and trick readers to discover the fictional twisted and complex murder cases.

Along with the expressive character-design with stunning artistic techniques of human depiction, Urasawa sticks to the re-creation of scenery of European cities and architectures of the 80s and the 90s. Using various shadowy techniques using

³⁷ F Natsume, *Manga ha Naze Omoshiroi no ka (マンガはなぜ面白いのか)*, Tokyo, Nippon Hoso Syuttpan Kyokai, 1997, p116

screen tones and hand drawing, Urasawa depicts the cities dimly and suspends each moment of anger, horror, discomfort and disturbance, while drawing on the lighter colors to render the affections or human-dramas elaborately. The website, anime-planet evaluates *Monster* as “excellent graphic novel” for the accomplished balance of well structured mystery narratives and high artistic skills.³⁸

Johan’s twin sister, Anna plays an important role to prove Johan’s psychopathic character is not genetic but acquired or brainwashed. The appearance of both Johan and Anna are neutral and alike, so without hair and fashion differentiation, it is hard to tell who is who, and only when Urasawa intends to differentiate natures of good (Anna) and evil (Johan), readers can obviously distinguish the difference in their facial expressions. Compared with previous works of Urasawa, the female character, Anna has more independent personality and strong mind based on steady will and affection towards her friends and family. This trend of female characters continues to



Fig. 3 *Monster* by Naoki Urasawa

his later works. Eyes and eyebrows are important indicator of the changes. Before *Monster*, the female characters have comparably sharply dropping eyebrows and eyes to inspire softness and cuteness in the Japanese context, but Anna has sharp squinty eyes which reveal her strength.

Figure 3 is the scene where Dr. Tenma has to leave his young friend Ditter although he is longing to stay. Ditter just came out from the building to look for Tenma and found that he is

gone. This confirms that Ditter is alright after all. The close-up technique allows

³⁸ anime-planet, <http://www.anime-planet.com/reviews/a320.html>, consulted on 2010-3-21

details of facial expression to be shown, and for that, readers could hold the sympathy with his mixed feeling of sadness and trust. In a way, it is as if we access into the character's mind. Urasawa is creating various emotions like: distance, closeness, loneliness, threat, anger, objectivity and subjectivity just by drawings. The combination of the visual and the verbal leads us to view the scene as it is supposed to be. His drawings define the positions of the characters within the complicated story, as it suspends the moment in each chapter, bestowing the identity of main characters, and presenting the access to the emotions of characters and sharing their vision, feelings, dreams and even imaginary thoughts.

2.2-4 20th Century Boys

When readers were captivated by *Monster* toward the climax, Urasawa started another work, *20th Century Boys* in 1999, and it ended in 2006. It was translated into more than 20 languages, and already Urasawa acquired the large numbers of fans abroad beside Japan. According to Urasawa, *20th Century Boys* reflects himself the most.³⁹ The story begins with his favorite rock song, "20th Century Boys" by T. Rex. The song is depicted in vital scenes many times, and in one way or another, exhibits the strength of music by drawing. With Urasawa drawing, readers can even feel they listen to the music. Or his drawing makes readers want to hear the songs in his Manga.

There exist two time zones in the story. Kenji as boy in the 1960s when Japan saw the high economic growth and people were fanatic about the World Expo in Osaka, and the 1990s as the present day when Kenji, a regular adult who lost his dream to be a famous guitarist or the hero who saves the world as in his childhood dreams. When he was a little kid in the 1960s, he and his friends often talked about

³⁹ *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa's Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, 2009, p27

and drew illustrations of the future dreams and the image of *fin de siècle* of the 20th century. They made up the story of a gigantic robot armed with a bacteriological weapon, multiple terrorism all over the world, cult religion takes over the country, and the world is coming to an end, then they as heroes, get together to fight against the terrorists and save the world. In the 1990s, when they grow up and forget about their childhood, a cult religion gains popularity in the nation and abroad. Readers must figure out the mystery of how each scene and the clue are associated with one another, and who will cause all the trouble and why. Also readers are watching and hooked up whether they can save the world or not and how.

In Urasawa Manga, it is rare to see sexy men and women, but each character is strongly connected with pure and primitive human feeling such as love, family care, friendship, envy and hate. Detailed character setting and drawing skills stimulate readers to keep close feelings to the characters. The French *bande dessinée* artist,



Fig.4, *20th Century Boys*, Urasawa

Jean Giraud mentioned that “Urasawa’s simple, soft and unique touch of arts lets readers synchronize themselves into stories easily and always remain elegant and buoyant which demands us to focus and follow.”⁴⁰

He also evaluated Urasawa’s ability to observe human life with the will to create a fiction that is more entertaining and more fun based on the reality. One British advertisement creator appreciated *20th*

Century Boys that reminded him of the 60s nostalgia, and he thought Kenji could be

⁴⁰ *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa’s Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, 2009, p105

one of his friends who can be everywhere and anywhere.⁴¹The main female character, Kanna, the niece of Kenji may be the reflection of a postmodern girl like Anna from *Monster*. She is not just passive and pessimistic to cry or complain about the problems, but more proactive and brave to protect something which is important to her and her companions. His drawing technique is getting better while he remains his recognizable character of simple lines and varieties of facial expression. As readers follow the gaze of the character, they can easily see the things from the point of view of the character in Urasawa Manga.

Another identifiable feature of Urasawa is less physical violence, but more psychological fear. For example, in the figure 4, the best friend of main character, Ocho needed to rescue his friend in Bangkok. We could infer his strength and action from the motion depicted with heavy line and sweeping stroke of geometric shape, not counting on the grotesque description of victims. Rather, the face of victim contains comical expression, and we could deem the damage is not lethal.

Urasawa Manga is appealing to a wide range of readers including young children, so that he never exaggerates the fear in the virtual world, but make readers ‘think’ and ‘imagine’ what could happen and what can be the consequence of the act. Compared with his former works such as *Pineapple Army* and *YAWARA!* and any other Manga, his recent works comprise considerably fewer bloody, sexual and grotesque scenes. We can assume that people are tired of exaggeration or emphasis of grotesqueness, and covet the simple art with humanistic characters nowadays. Urasawa tries to pursuit to draw the human reality in moralistic sense, thus it seems more scary and considerable.

⁴¹ *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa's Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, 2009, p107

2.2-5 PLUTO

PLUTO is a sort of a remake work of *Astro Boy* by Osamu Tezuka which was published from 2003 to 2009 in *Big Comic Original*. It was highly challenging to remake Tezuka's most famous work, however Urasawa had been longing to visualize his idea since the time he read the episode of "The greatest robot on the earth" in *Astro Boy*.⁴² The main character in *PLUTO* is not Atom, but is the robot named Gesicht who works for Europol in the time of symbiosis of robots and mankind. Though the original story by Tezuka was for children, thus the picture touch is considerably cute, Urasawa highlights moral issues related with robot technology, and reinterprets the story of suspenseful mystery with a serious drawing touch yet retaining his originality and simple lines as well as detailed background drawing.

Tezuka faced the high technological development in both good and bad ways through the war. Gravett stated: "During the 1950s, there was a mushroom cloud of fear surrounding nuclear energy, particularly in Japan; Tezuka's robotic friends offered a more hopeful vision of its uses."⁴³ It is easy to hate the technology which can destroy all civilization and kill, but Tezuka as one of Japanese boys who also have seen the positive miracle of technology, could not help dreaming of the harmony between humans and robots like Fujiko Fujio, the author of TV animation, *Doraemon* (cat robot) and Yoshiyuki Tomino, the director of another popular TV animation, *Mobile Suit Gundam*. It was the contribution by those previous robotic mangas, for modern people, that robots can bring a new dream of a new era, and in reality, a number of countries and companies strive to invent Artificial Intelligence and human-like robots. Urasawa as the later generations of those great masters, actually have seen the potential of the emergence of A.I. and a real Astro boy, and

⁴² *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa's Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, 2009, p96

⁴³ P Gravett, *Manga: Sixty years of Japanese Comic books*, London, Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2004, p33

attempts to present the question of whether we can really live together with robots if robots can acquire emotions like us while they gain exceeding power.

The son of Tezuka, Makoto Osamu analyzed the talent of Urasawa stating: “not only limited within Manga industry, the postmodern expression is all about editing. It is difficult to create from scratch nowadays, but they can transform the shape, change the orders and recreate the work with sense of affinity and modern wording and techniques. Urasawa’s strength and talent are his high skilled editing techniques and consistent completeness. He takes in and digests all elements of former Manga artists as he analyzes their works.”⁴⁴ Urasawa’s composition and edition add the mystery elements to the original stories and keep suspending readers tension to the next episode as usual.

Due to the famousness and popularity of the original *Astro Boy*, Urasawa may

need to consider the consistency of the characters. Especially, Atom and Ulan carried a unique hair (head) and body which are obviously different from those of humans in Tezuka’s *Astro Boy*. The target market of Tezuka was children, so he seems to stick to the golden rule of a round shaped face, and a baby like figure. Urasawa’s version depicts Atom just like a human boy with human senses. In the scene when the detective robot Gesicht visits Atom in Japan, Atom says he tries to understand what it



Fig.5, *PLUTO*, Naoki Urasawa

⁴⁴ *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa’s Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, 2009, p98

means to be flavorful or sad to humans as he copies them. Tezuka himself admitted that he had plenty of ideas, but not drawing skills, so it is difficult for him to show the subtle emotional instability of the robot which is trying to imitate the human feelings.⁴⁵ In figure 5, Urasawa shows Atom is the robot with a heart and emotion, and that is why he cries and sympathizes with Gesicht's tragic past. Tezuka makes sense of the caption and the narratives, but Urasawa does so with his drawings of tears dropping. In other words, Urasawa can relish the pictorial tricks and visual manipulations by handling the gaps preceding the cognition of written words.

2.3 FEATURES OF URASAWA MANGA

- 1) It is the excitement of Urasawa Manga's suspense, virtual big screen sensations and emotions which have addicted to many Japanese adults to his works. People in the West may expect vicarious experiences from the movies while the readers of Urasawa satisfy their desires for solid visual story telling by his Manga. Like the TV dramas, his story has suspense in the end of each episode, and imaginary and detective works are put to the reader's hand. Urasawa Manga is a visual mystery requiring astute observation, forensic skill and deductive reasoning to comprehend the plot. Visual images are the hints to solve the mystery of the narratives. In his Manga, we can often see the theme of the psychopath, and Urasawa confessed that he was influenced by Hitchcock and Steven King.⁴⁶
- 2) The variety of facial expression is also the feature of Urasawa Manga which his fans qualify. "Each face has reality, and the reader can easily project him/herself into the story, and the facial expression matches the episode correspondingly. Each face in each panel asserts not only simple joy, anger, sadness and laughter,

⁴⁵ F Natsume, *Manga ha Naze Omoshiroi no ka* (マンガはなぜ面白いのか), Tokyo, Nippon Hoso Syuttpan Kyokai, 1997, p44

⁴⁶ H Ohyama, *Urasawa Naoki no Nazo; The Mystery of Naoki Urasawa* (浦沢直樹の謎) ,p184

but also complex contempt, jealous, envy and fear.”⁴⁷ *Casa*, the magazine of analysis of Urasawa says that before Urasawa, editors and readers understood the face of Manga characters as sign or symbol. Urasawa is challenging readers to let the characters speak for themselves with: “face angle, gaze, as if they act in the cinema screen.”⁴⁸

- 3) Universality is the third feature of Urasawa Manga. In *Pineapple Army*, the main character, Jed Goshi’s nationality is hard to identify. Though from the name Goshi, readers can infer he is of Japanese origins or relations, he fought in the Vietnam War, and speaks several languages and does not have a particular base to settle down. *YAWARA!* and *Happy!* are sport human drama. Although both main characters are Japanese, since they play sports professionally, the location is not confined only to Japan, and characters have various different backgrounds. In all his other works, the settings are unknown or remain unidentified. Urasawa is a good researcher and studies other cultures well, from other Manga, films and languages and architectures, and he sublimates all his knowledge and images into his works. To pursue the reality, Urasawa and his assistants always investigate the different culture through guide books, history texts, architecture magazines, photo books and any kind of visual materials.⁴⁹
- 4) Urasawa Manga is a highly effective and appealing vehicle for carrying specialized information. Instead of any being and flavorless, his Manga takes a humorous and dramatic approach to equip readers with the knowledge of wars, survival, religion, sports, robot technology and history.
- 5) Skillful use of Onomatopoeia creates the sense of time effectively. In Urasawa’s work, the story rarely goes in chronological order. The temporal axis is shifting

⁴⁷ H Ohyama, *Urasawa Naoki no Nazo; The Mystery of Naoki Urasawa* (浦沢直樹の謎) ,p176

⁴⁸ *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa’s Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, 2009, p70

⁴⁹ *Casa Brutus extra issue; Naoki Urasawa’s Mega Creation*, Tokyo, Magazine House, 2009, p65

with the suitable onomatopoeia, therefore readers do not get lost. Despite the fact it is Urasawa's trick to travel from one time to another, readers experience the twisted panorama world without noticing it.

2.4 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF URASAWA MANGA

Postmodernism

If Tezuka is the famous figure for modern Manga, I assume Urasawa can be one of the representative postmodern Manga artists with the popularity and the results of sales. The demand of postmodernist came, according to Jean- Francois Lyotard, "from every direction we are being urged to put an end to experimentation, in the arts and elsewhere. [...] post modernity imposes the thought of the Enlightenment, on the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject."⁵⁰ Postmodernism can be considered chaotic and the counterattack of modernism. That was the time, capitalism was expanding in Japan as well as in the West, and industrialization had accelerated since Urasawa was born in the 1960s. Realism was no longer simplified as object of reality and subjective expressions, but rather as Lyotard mentions:

"capitalism inherently possesses the power to derealize familiar objects, social roles, and institutions to such a degree that the so-called realistic representations can no longer evoke reality except as nostalgia or mockery, as an occasion for suffering rather than for satisfaction. Classicism seems to be ruled out in a world in which reality is so destabilized that it offers no occasion for experience but one for ratings and experimentation."⁵¹

To achieve the reality of postmodernism, the artist and writers are supposed to express this complex and often contradictory phenomenon as experimentation.

⁵⁰ J Lyotard, "Note on the Meaning of the Word 'Post' and Answering the Question 'What is Postmodernism?'" Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, 2001, p364

⁵¹ J Lyotard, "Note on the Meaning of the Word 'Post' and Answering the Question 'What is Postmodernism?'" Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, 2001, p366

Compared with previous times, the nature of art was forced to be varied in drastic ways at the same time some arts seem to maintain the same elements of the past.

Walter Benjamin discusses on the emancipation from the ritual by means of mass reproduction of art⁵². Like photography and films, Manga owes its popularity and productivity on the mechanical reproduction. Under Postmodernism, art is separated from the traditional fabric and ongoing happenings of the original work. Benjamin mentioned aura is now shared with infinite audience and consumers due to the transformation of reactions of the masses. Capitalist society is paralleled with being reproduced, and under the circumstance Manga industry has to: “spur the interest of the masses through illusion promoting spectacles and dubious speculations” just like film industry as Benjamin says.⁵³

Along with the transition of mass reaction and expectation, Manga artists have to apply the strategy corresponding with new media such as TV and films, and meet the demand for direct emotional and visual enjoyment and satisfaction. Urasawa seems to be a talented observer who appreciates and comprehends collective experiences of architecture, spectacle surrealism of films, traditional painting experience, and perceives how Manga can combine them together based on the characteristics of Manga media which is printed and published weekly or monthly, and also it has the potential to be animated and filmed. It is interesting to study that the reasons why he and other Manga artists still choose Manga as a tool for a work of art though the mode of human perception has been changed dramatically by the modern technology and historical circumstances and affluent experiences.

⁵² W Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, from *Continental Aesthetics; romanticism to postmodernism: an anthology*, Malden Wiley-Blackwell, 2001, p169

⁵³ W Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, from *Continental Aesthetics; romanticism to postmodernism: an anthology*, Malden Wiley-Blackwell, 2001, p173

Chapter 3 COMPARISONS: JAPAN AND SWEDEN ON MANGA

In this chapter, firstly, I examine Swedish culture and Comic Books industry based on the interviews and references. Secondly, I compare the illustrations of Swedish artists with Japanese Manga. The aim is to identify the similarities and differences of two markets and seek for the possibility for Manga to expand its global market.

3.1 SWEDISH POPULAR CULTURE

Music, Fashion, Design and art field, in spite of the nation size, Sweden is famous for the place of origin of international popular culture. Due to the educational structure, and English literacy, Swedish people seem to have a global vision from early age in general. They realize the small size of the country, therefore always tend to be conscious with need of competitiveness, cross cultural interaction and interchange for survival and prosperity. ABBA, H&M, IKEA, Volvo, SAAB, are global and famous figures of Swedish popular or industrial culture. Only about 9 million populated country with severe climate without much geographical merit must have some clues to produce world-wide popular culture, which might be well- organized and efficient welfare and education as well as media strategy showing English program with subtitle, never voice dubbed.

Fredrik Strömberg, Swedish journalist explains the key to rich Swedish pop culture as a result of Sweden's 19th century industrial revolution, the 20th century economic development and 21st century internet diffusion intact by any wars for long time. Also, I observe higher education eagerly applies the international environment inviting international students with various backgrounds from all over the world with the free tuition system even to the international students outside of EU unlike other countries where usually even domestic students pay high amount of tuition fee.

Considering the social benefit, comparably long vacation of Swedes also could contribute to the people's globalization. Since they are young, quite large numbers of Swedish people get accustomed to traveling around the world with their family who is granted for at least 4 weeks of vacation every year, and experience other culture in person. They at first contact other culture through media or school, and in reality, they seem to have a chance to see and hear it by themselves, and it must be cultivating their global sense in various ways. Contributing factor also could be that Sweden accepted considerably large number of immigrants for labor purposes, and they also bring the society internationalization and develop a cross cultural environment since the latter half of the 20th century.⁵⁴

3.2 MANGA IN SWEDEN

3.2-1 Overview

The concept of Manga in Japan is equal to cheap, portable and available everywhere, so it is easy for children to access and buy them anywhere. For adult fans, it is popular to collect the collector's luxurious and complete version with additional appendix. Availability is the substantial key for the Japanese Manga market, and the result of an excellent cooperation between publisher and Manga artists (industrial structure), Manga market has prospered in Japan.⁵⁵ As a contrast, when Manga is exported outside of Japan, translation and distribution issues occur. Through my study, I noticed that there are a certain number of Manga fans or at least the people who are interested in Manga in Sweden, and organize Manga conventions, attend the Manga exhibitions and forums. For Swedish people, I observe there basically are four ways to access Japanese Manga.

⁵⁴ Migration News, http://migration.ucdavis.edu/MN/more.php?id=2227_0_5_0, consulted in 2010-05-10

⁵⁵ S Kinsella, *Adult Manga; Culture & Power in contemporary Japanese society*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2000, p50

3.2-2 How to access Manga in Sweden

Firstly, those translated to Swedish Manga such as: *One Piece*, *Naruto*, *Death Note*, and *Dragon Balls* are imported and sold at book stores or are available at libraries. However the numbers and kinds are limited and it is all depending on the publisher and distributor's choice which to be translated and imported. If they judge that it cannot be profitable just like any business, other Manga hardly ever comes into the market officially. In fact, the publication of Manga had decreased between 2008 and 2009 probably owing the economic crisis and saturated market situation.⁵⁶ According to Fredrik Strömberg, Manga sales are getting lower, thus the market has downsized. In other words, mostly those *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* types of popular works were chosen and judged to make profits and translated into local languages, however if the industry only focuses on those kinds, adult Manga market never seems to grow up. Secondly, English translated Manga are available on the market, and of course the numbers of English versions are higher, thus more varieties not only children but also adults mangas are imported, yet these are still limited compared with the Japanese. Thirdly, the pirate versions translated by random fans online are getting more popular. "Mangahelper.com", "Mangafox.com" and "Onemanga.com" are well-known websites to access translated Manga and their speed of uploading is almost simultaneous with Japanese market. Fourthly, some people study Japanese to understand the original version without any quantitative and qualitative limits.

3.2-3 Visual Feature of current Swedish Manga and the artist; Åsa Ekström

Though there are industrial structural and economic difficulties to import all genres of Manga, these new generations who grow up with Japanese cartoons and

⁵⁶ F Strömberg, <http://www.sekventiellt.se/2010/02/news-swedish-comic-books-2009.html> consulted on 2010-04-15

children Manga now create their own styles of Manga. Åsa Ekström is famous for her Manga inspired drawing adapted by IKEA products. Her newly published work has a Japanese word in its title, *Sayonara September*.⁵⁷ Though big eyed girls and the usage of screen tones might be inspired by Manga, facial structures, background, fashions and motifs are definitely different from those of the Japanese. The size of hands, bone structures, hair and other body features are something she naturally mimics from her daily life yet she takes some elements from Japanese Manga which she has grown up with as visual and entertainment experiences.

Another dominant feature of Swedish Manga is that readers read from left to right just like regular books unlike Japanese Manga, therefore for those who do not feel comfortable to read opposite order have no resistance feeling toward it. What they do is to localize the international culture, at the same time, they create new value or optimize it based on what they feel more comfortable with. As we can see it on figure 6, from the work, *Campaign for Stable of the Northern lights* by Åsa

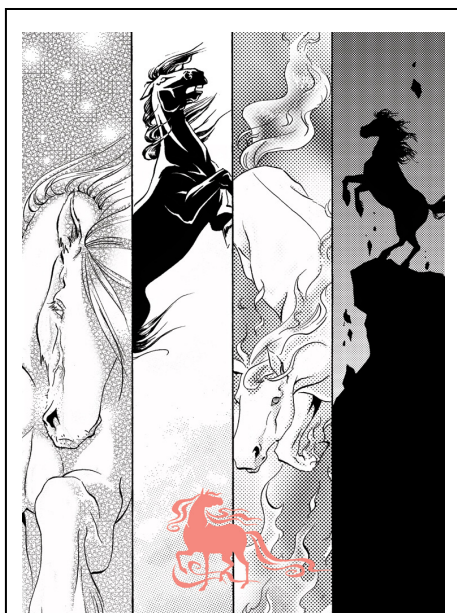


Fig. 6, Campaign for Stable of the Northern lights, Åsa Ekström

Ekström, her illustration reminds readers of Swedish design not only Japanese Manga. The balance of narratives and pictures is also unique that many pages consist of either many texts or many pictures. In figure 6, there is no text, but four rectangular panels lined up, and the horse's motions are depicted beautifully with screen tones, shadows and emphasizing a pink colored horse in the center. The pages successfully show the aesthetic and design

⁵⁷ See the appendix #5

values in Manga by the Swedish Manga artist. On an IKEA fan website, *Charotta Teckning Fabric* by Ekström is introduced as new Manga-inspired IKEA textiles.⁵⁸ She expresses the theme ‘Japan meet Scandinavia’ by these works; Scandinavian style of Tokyo city design, Japanese traditional art, *Ukiyo-e* inspired motif, a girl in Swedish folk costume with Viking mask in *Noh* (Japanese Traditional Theater) style and Japanese paper craft, *Origami* style of Scandinavian animals just as she expresses the well-balanced mixture of two cultures on her Manga works⁵⁹.

3.2-4 Feature of current Swedish Manga and the artist; Natalia Batista

Another Swedish Manga Artist, Natalia Batista has also recently published *Mjau*, the cat girls story comic book. Batista graduated from Malmo Comic Book School like Ekström did. *Mjau* is targeted to younger readers around 10 years old. For cat lovers, it is a dream to listen to the cat’s conversations and to communicate with

them using human language. In her work, two cats living with the main character turn to be cat girls and talk to each other as if they are humans. The nameless main character girl finds the wet tiny wild cat in the rain, and decides to take her back home. Rain coats, rain boots and buildings remind me of Japanese scenery when it is raining rather than Sweden. In figure 7: the use of onomatopoeia is Manga like, too. Though perspective drawing, facial expression and fashion left some spaces to be improved, the concept of cuteness and living in

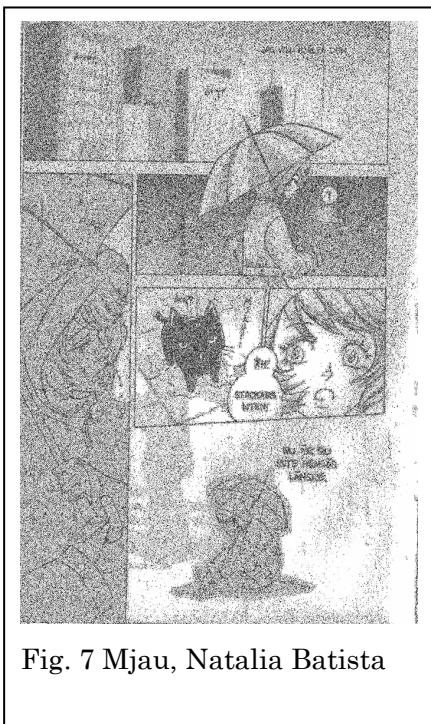


Fig. 7 *Mjau*, Natalia Batista

⁵⁸ IKEAFANS, <http://www.ikeafans.com/home/manga-fabric-ikea/> consulted on 2010-04-16

⁵⁹ See the appendix #6, #7. #8

Manga world are completely contains and share *Shojo* Manga sense. As Swedish children are entertained by Japanese Manga, her work may be able to entertain Japanese children. Her cat girl characters may be able to suit the character business in Japan as well as the rest of the world.

3.3 INTERVIEWS AND SWEDISH MANGA MARKET

3.3-1 General Structure

During the research, I interviewed four Swedish people who work and associate with comic books industry. According to the sales clerk of a comic bookstore in Malmö, the sales of Manga have been stabilized and remain the same for the past five years. Mostly, those who buy Manga at their store are children. They sell Swedish translated Manga series such as *One Piece*, *Yugio*, *Death Note*, *Dragon Balls* and *Love Hina* whose target are kids in Japan as well. For Japanese kids and adults, their first contact with those works is via weekly or monthly Manga magazines such as *Young Jump*, *Magazine* and *Ribbon* with the price between \$2 US and \$4 US (approximately 15 SEK and 30 SEK) containing about 20 different Manga stories. On one hand in Japan, publishers can execute marketing on the magazines, and if it does not gain enough popularity, it will not be published for any long period. As a result, when they can publish comic books, they have reliable estimation of sales, and thus less risk. The price of a comic book is from \$4 US to \$7 US (approximately 30 SEK to 55 SEK) depending on the target range. On the other hand, when it is published as a comic book in Sweden, it is all up to the publisher's decision not to the marketing sales data from of weekly magazines. Considering the size of market, publisher do not want to take a big risk, therefore they just determine to publish the 'safest' work which got popularity through the animated TV series or in other markets in U.S.A. and other parts of Europe already. Besides, the

price is comparatively more expensive (about \$10 US/ approximately 80 SEK), so that for kids, collecting Manga is not an easy hobby in Sweden.

3.3-2 *Manga Influences*

Two female Manga artists, Ekström and Batista mentioned they have quite many favorite Manga books which might inspire them for both drawing and narratives. Aggregation of great art works, universal narratives and some exotic cultural differences are the key elements which attracts young generations who seek for their own identity at the same time have strong an interest in ‘others’. Since Manga provides its own ‘world’, and most of time the theme is simple; love, anger, hope, coming of age, family, friendship, achievement, it is not difficult to share the common feelings for readers universally. Though Ekström states that at some points, she feels annoyed with the typical Japanese role structures of girls(cute and weak) and boys (protagonist, strong), Batista admits that despite attempts, still many societies have gender equality problems, and the fact is that there still exists inequality between men and women, because they are not entirely the same.

Japanese traditional Manga might be able to question ‘too excessive feminist movement’ against the nature and the difference of men and women while current Manga tends to westernize and draws gender role more equal compared with the past. As a result of the interviews to the two female Manga artists, I discovered that the descriptions of Japanese typical gender role can be offensive or at least can look unconventional, however it did not become the complete obstacle for the readers to stop reading Manga. In fact, according to Ekström, it can inspire her to make up her own narratives from the Swedish perspectives. She said she tried to make her female characters more independent intentionally just like real Swedish women.

As for the Swedish Manga market itself, both Ekström and Batista are skeptical

to the expansion in the future due to the publication system, market size and language matter. At the same time they contribute to the Swedish comic books market bringing new value which is a mixture of the Japanese and the Swedish, they aim to target English speaking countries or European countries for their career. At Malmö Comic School, they attained some business knowledge, networks within the industry locally and globally. In Sweden, municipalities and the government provide the opportunities to learn and connect with others through school education. According to Fredrik Strömberg, 22 students enter Malmö Comic School every year, and 50% of the students are female and the 50% are male without any intentional selection. At first, when they started the school in 1999, most comic artists are male, however in 10 years, more female artists join the industry, and among their graduates, the most successful artists are female so far. It can be assumed that Manga industry is considerably easy to enter compared with film industry or art industry, and the lack of their favorite Manga story or the language barrier may accelerate the Manga artists to produce their own works/ contents.

3.3-3 Manga Discourse in Sweden

Fredrik Strömberg researched the reason why Swedish youth got involved with Manga culture in his thesis, and his conclusions were, 1) Because of spontaneous reaction to appealing images with baby-look features. Like Disney cartoons, many Characters such as Pokemon, Hello Kitty and Doraemon are consisted of a big head, large eyes, curvy, fluffy, and a considerably small body, 2) Because of emotional story-telling, it matches with consuming involvement. Kids are comparably easier to be a target for commercial marketing with simple stories featuring friendship, treasure hunting, heroism etc, 3) Finally because of the impression of Manga that one believes it is easy to copy and imitate. In Sweden, Donald Duck (Kalle Anka) keeps

its dominant status for long, and sells 50,000 pocket-comics every month, however the design of Donald Duck seems to be difficult to mimic for kids. Perhaps these conclusions can be appropriate to the Manga expansion phenomena in the other parts of the world, too. Japanese Manga industry firstly targeted kids armed with strategic marketing technique; drawing simple and cute characters as well as simple story telling, and later expanded the market for adults with comic reading experiences, on the contrary to Disney started its marketing with the movies, not character business first. According to Strömberg, this phenomenon of the expansion of Japanese characters can be seen in the Swedish market, too. Though the size is small and the speed is slow, certainly small publishers attempt to publish more adults comic to meet the demands of those who grow up with Manga characters and Manga in Sweden.

Chapter 4 FEMINISM IN JAPAN AND IN MANGA

In this chapter, I focus on Japanese feminist perspectives and changes as well as feminist representation in Manga to examine if Manga will offend the Western people from feminist point of view. I believe feminist theory can help to answer the thesis question, because in contemporary Visual Culture study, the weight of feminist perspective is significant, and also because I myself as a woman, am curious about the transition of feminist aspects in Manga.

4.1 TRANSITION OF JAPANESE FEMINISM

In Japanese, the term, 'feminist' "connoted a man who was kind to women"⁶⁰,

⁶⁰ L Dales, "Feminist Features in Japan", McLelland, Mark, & Dasgupta Romit Ed, *Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan*, Oxon, Routledge, 2005,p 184

and it is rare to hear the term of 'feminism' at school, at work or elsewhere in Japan. Though the feminist movement has appeared now and then both politically and socially, still compared with the West, Japanese society is hard to label as a gender equal one. Dales, the author of the article, "Feminism features in Japan" mentions that the meaning of feminism should have changed accompanied by women's right activities; however there still is anti-feminism feeling by men and interestingly by women, too based on my daily observation. In reality however, no matter whether people are indifferent or not, the pressure of globalization certainly changed the attitude toward feminism. Former ethno racially homogeneous Japan now reveals itself as a multicultural society especially in urban areas, and to be qualified as 'cosmopolitan', municipalities, international companies collaborating with the government, aggressively harvests internationally competitive products, culture and thoughts especially from America and Europe. Human rights and feminist movement are the starting points of these organizations for westernization.

Transcultural Japan states:

"Gender is gradually receiving more visibility in Japan, too. Some of this attention comes from the outside, through women from Other communities who bring new approaches to gender to Japanese society. There are also influences from within, by Japanese women who themselves become Other by striking out on new paths and by having new lifestyles."⁶¹

Once women themselves experience how other women in the world won and appreciated their rights, it did not take long time for Japanese women to take a proactive turn for emancipation and internationalization. At the same time, men gradually start imitating the way Western men do in this matter. Nonetheless, there

⁶¹ D Willis, & S Murphy-Shigemitsu, *Transcultural Japan; At the borderlands of race, gender, and identity*, Oxon, Routledge, 2008, pp21

were arguments on Euro-centralism against the Japanese tradition as the subject of judged, rejected and reformed, however the desire of westernization and the American dream exceeded the anxiety of losing the traditional culture. As a result, some active feminists like Yoko Haruka published the book with her theory that “the hybrid woman should take up the best of stereotypes and expectations, without compromising her integrity or sense of self-worth. In fashion, this translates as both ‘mannish and feminine...Having no fixed notion of your sex’ and incorporating the possibility of both hard and soft.”⁶² Japanese feminism can be identical with this remaining femininity trend, not aiming at ‘equal’, but a more strategic reformation of women’s rights.

Karen Kelsky focuses on the way Japanese women has enhanced their status by contributing essays to newspapers, through literatures and poems, and translating them into English to spread the idea into international societies and borrowing their power to reform the domestic structure. According to Kelsky, “Japanese women, it is claimed, can instinctively negotiate the demands of global society because they are not hemmed in by the rules of Japanese male society, and haven’t been subjected to the same social discipline based on the traditional Japanese social environment.”⁶³

At Japanese schools, there are neither public speaking classes nor debating opportunities, and therefore Japanese people are not good at making speeches in general. Probably with this background, for self-expression reasons, Japanese people tend to write and draw to compensate shyness and lack of experiences. It is assumed that Manga also becomes a tool for women to express themselves and desires. As Walter Benjamin stated, the uniqueness of work of art may be inseparable from the

⁶² L Dales, “Feminist Features in Japan”, McLelland, Mark, and Dasgupta Romit Ed, *Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan*, Oxon, Routledge, 2005, p 189

⁶³ K Kelsky, “Gender, modernity, and eroticized internationalism in Japan”, *Transcultural Japan; At the borderlands of race, gender, and identity*, Oxon, Routledge, 2006, p89

tradition and the culture where the art works proper⁶⁴.

4.2 FEMINIST REPRESENTATION IN MANGA

First of all, to start drawing Manga, one needs only a pen and papers (technically, professional Manga needs a ruler, screen tones and other tools to produce a certain amount in a short period). Secondly, there is neither a high hurdle nor a stiff manner for Manga, so that anybody can join the market without going to school or acquiring particular skills. The method of learning is largely on repetitive imitation and copying, and the learning is based on one's own experiences and observation. Besides, those who were born after the Tezuka time are accustomed to the life surrounded by Manga, and it is a popular way of killing time for kids drawing Manga in general. Both girls and boys learn how to enjoy Manga in daily life, so there is no wonder if women when they grow up, use Manga to express themselves and claim their desires. Before the 1960s, almost all commercial Manga artists were male, even for *Shojo* (girls) Manga, and Gravett suggests that "their contents were based on what men thought preteen girls wanted to read, or ought to read."⁶⁵ They could not do more than imagination or observation, because men never experience the 'girl's world' and the sentimentalism of women. It was those female readers who were not satisfied with the contents produced by male artists and led the emergence of real girl's Manga into the market.

The 1970s was the raise of *Shyojo* Manga contributed by the female artists born after 1949. Compared with the previous *Shyojo* Manga, newly emerged Manga were featured by; an "illusionary, Cinderella type of stories, a pure literature type,

⁶⁴ W Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", from *Continental Aesthetics; romanticism to postmodernism: an anthology*, Malden Wiley-Blackwell, 2001, p169

⁶⁵ P Gravett, *Manga: Sixty years of Japanese Comic books*, London, Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2004, p74

spectacular composition, realism in sex expression, boys love”⁶⁶ according to Tomofusa Kure who wrote Manga analysis, *Gendai Manga no Zentaizo*. These new waves attracted mature female readers as well as male readers who looked down on *Shojo* Manga before. The mingling of girls and boys Manga started not only among readers, but some female artists started contributing to boys Manga magazines. The critic, Kure, analyzed the early *Shojo* Manga trend:

“the drawing was far from realism and a modern philosophy of ego, but rather focused on formalism and populism. Characters have extremely small faces, big eyes and long arms and legs against the biological reality, the main characters always end up falling in a love with typical handsome boy friend, and the story line is constantly the same and a reflection of producer’s and reader’s desire and ideal endings. Readers know it is nonsense, however once one starts reading it, he or she cannot easily stop the hands to turn pages over because of the power of overwhelmingly amusement.”⁶⁷

He connected the phenomena as the expression of a ‘new mythology’ of *Shojo* Manga. As a myth gives the common knowledge and background of conceptualization and makes stories, *Shojo* Manga offers readers consistent universality of its own world.

Otsuka explained the role of six female artists born in 1949, revealing the gender issue and sex which pre-war Manga artists and Disney hid. Otsuka stated that: “Within post war Manga history, sex is no longer a metaphor but the one of most significant subjective elements. When the human body accepts death, we cannot ignore the birth and sex as a whole of biology and law of nature.”⁶⁸The female

⁶⁶ T Kure, *Gendai Manga no Zentaizo* (現代漫画の全体像), Tokyo, Kabushikigaisya Soyosya, 1997, p191

⁶⁷ T Kure, *Gendai Manga no Zentaizo* (現代漫画の全体像), Tokyo, Kabushikigaisya Soyosya, 1997, p192

⁶⁸ E Otsuka, & N Ohsawa, *Japanimation ha Naze Yabureru noka* (「ジヤパニメーション」はなぜ敗れるのか), Tokyo, Kadokawa Shoten, 2005, p165

Manga artists tackled the gender issues, the difference of men and women, virginity and sex utilizing their Manga works.

Shojo-Shonen Manga hybridity was accelerated over the 1980s and the 1990s.

According to Sharalyn Orbaugh;

“the late 1990s culmination of this trend has brought a range of cultural products that feature female protagonists in narratives that include male-associated elements such as battle, adventure, and high technology. It is clear that many of these narrative products are consumed by both males and females (if not always equally); some continue to debut in venues associated with one gender or the other but then move on to more generalized venues”⁶⁹,

He suggested that now both men and women work together to produce both *Shojo* and *Shonen* Manga without any boundary just like other entertainment products. More female protagonist characters appeared in the 1990s with the features of slim, short haired, gender neutral names, power and confidence at the same time there appeared feminine male characters. In comparison to Japanese films, Orbaugh pointed out that Manga and Anime has a wider range of female protagonist characters. It is the fact that in film industries, there are only limited numbers of female directors, while it seems a half of Manga artists and a half readers are female. Male Manga artists also target female readers, thus the obvious description of discrimination and inequality tend to decrease.

⁶⁹ S Orbaugh, “Busty Battling’ Babe: The Evolution of the Shojo in 1990s Visual Culture”, Mostow, Joshua S., Bryson, Norman, & Graybill, Maribeth Ed, *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 2003, p216

CONCLUSION

Manga criticism might be started from the mere 'images' of childish, unsophisticated and non-academic, and Left propaganda also have affected the counter movement on establishing Manga status as academic study. Unlike film criticism based on actual viewing and reviewing, anti- Manga groups tend to determine Manga should be labeled as sub-culture and should not be categorized as art works based on the prejudice. It is also true that many Manga artists and fans are indifferent to Manga internationalization and the need of Manga studies or archives, and purely surprised with Manga booming out of Japan if any. Manga industry tries to develop global markets, however they seem to be concerned more with profits than with establishing an academic status of Manga. In this thesis, I tried to examine if Manga can expand its market overcoming the cultural and historical difference as it establishes an academic status.

As stated in Chapter1, comic books and Manga certainly holds longer history than films owing its simplicity and accessibility for production, however it was difficult to find the enough numbers of academic books about Manga and also almost impossible to find the central institutions or organization for the integral Manga theory and the archive of Manga. The time when Film Studies grapples with theorizing and interpreting semiotics was the time for people to be enthusiastic with 'new' technology. Compared with cinematic activities with emerging new technology such as computer graphics and special effects, Manga and comic books look restrained and old-fashioned. However still in the 21st century in Japan where Manga market has flourished in a unique way that comic books are published and sold more than DVD sales or books. Manga is specialized in its flexible length,

portability, less manipulation by authors, time consuming art works by hand drawing, unique speed and language. The main task for Manga seems is to eradicate the prejudice and to found Manga studies in global level like film studies.

The case study in Chapter 2 was bearing the instance of Manga internationalization and transition of female characters in a popular Manga artist's works. Naoki Urasawa is from a generations that grew up with Manga, and draws Manga for its own generations (adults). His Manga is significantly influenced by modern Manga and international films. As in the chapter, Urasawa's Manga has dominant features, and we can assume what the market is expecting for. It is also intriguing that his Manga stimulates numberless film makers as other Manga become films, too. Manga can be ideal script for movies even provided with storyboards. Interestingly, most of fanatic Manga fans dislike the idea of making Manga into films since films may destroy their images and stories for lack of skills or time. Comparison between Film and Manga can be a newsworthy subject for visual cultural studies with the focal point of artistic and entertainment experiences since almost all Japanese literature I refer in this thesis mention the influence of films as well as Manga influence on films and show the relationship between them.

Chapter 3 focused on the comparison of Japan and Sweden. My hypothesis was come by personal observation that Manga could expand its market without many efforts. However the research showed that without solid intention and appropriate way, Manga popularity and image can remain the same as the current one even though it holds capability to become one of new entertainments or hobbies for anybody including adults in the world. The global collaboration of shifting industrial structure (translation and availability) and again, Manga studies could be a breakthrough since there are affluent materials to study and compare already. Although there are industrial structural difference, language problems as well as

historical differences, certain generations in Sweden surely has grown up with Manga culture, and now try to establish their own Manga culture. The feminist aspects in Chapter 4 also support the universal movement to the same direction on pop culture including Manga. The feminist point of view allows me to analyze not only Manga development but also the social development of Japan as depicted in Manga.

In conclusion, Manga is capable of expanding its market more than now on certain conditions. Manga studies in the field of Visual culture should take a role in theorizing Manga in an academic sense and answer every possible question that people might have about Manga. We can borrow the various film theories as for the starting point at varying levels of generality and abstract at the same time establishing Manga theory focusing on the uniqueness of Manga; a simple combination of images and narratives without sound, light and computer graphics effects. Noel Carroll claims that: “Let us call hypotheses about the operation of international markets on corporate decision making film theory, so long as the hypothesis involve general conjectures about patterns or regularities in the practice of filmmaking, which practices include distribution and its influences as well as cinematic construction and reception.”⁷⁰ We can replace the word cinematic and film just with Manga, and instead of ‘reconstructing’ Manga studies, we can now gather all global archives of each region in the world and construct the first universal Manga studies and theory within the visual cultural frame for further entertainment opportunities for all and for the inspiration of the visual cultural industry.

⁷⁰ N Carroll, “Prospects for Film Theory: A Personal Assessment”, *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, p39

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Fig. 6, Ekström, Åsa, *Campaign for Stable of the Northern lights*,
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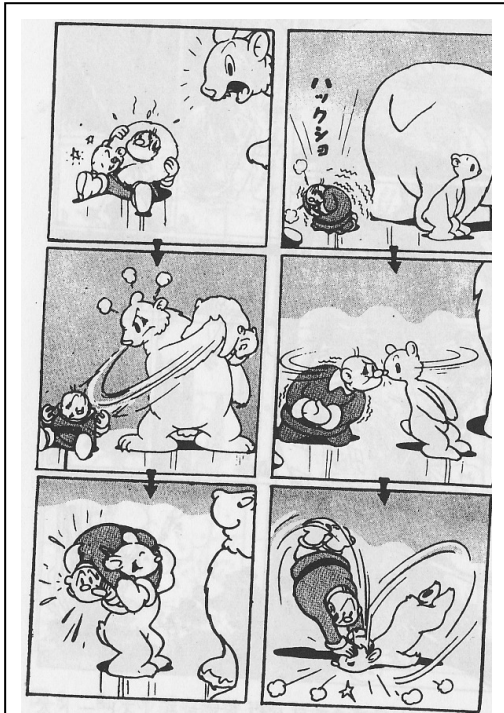
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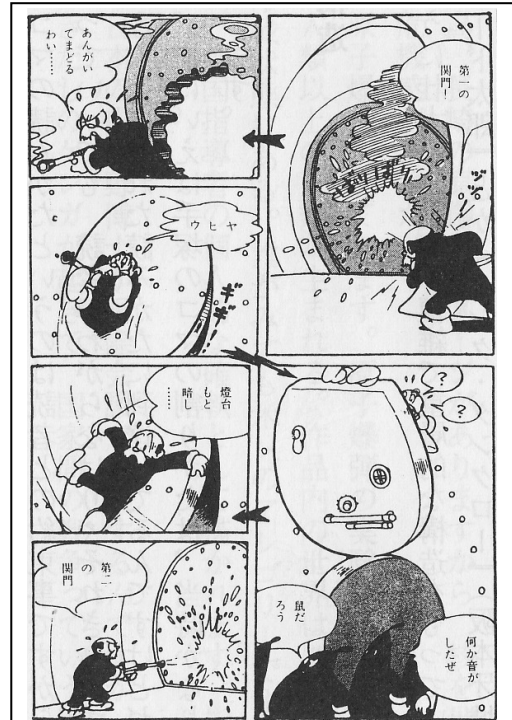
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APPENDIX



#1 Arrow use of Tezuka, Natsume, Fusanosuke, *Osamu Tezuka no Boken*, P59



#2 Arrow use of Tezuka, Natsume, Fusanosuke, *Osamu Tezuka no Boken*, P61



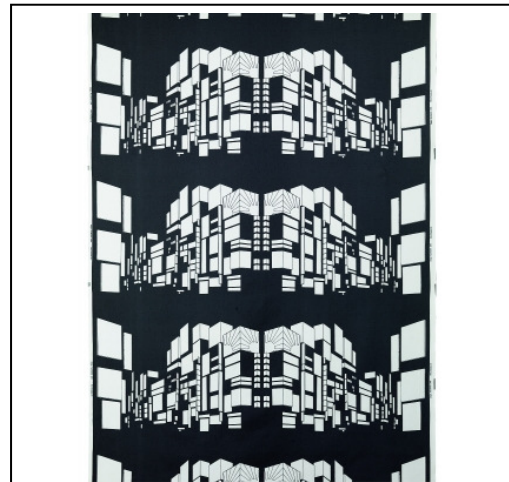
#3, Regular Manga style of *Sazae-san*, (<http://livedoor.2.blogimg.jp/eggm2005/imgs/2/c/2c186684.JPG>) consulted on 2010-05-15



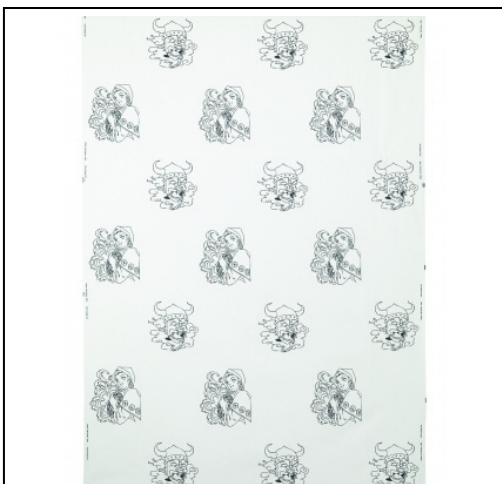
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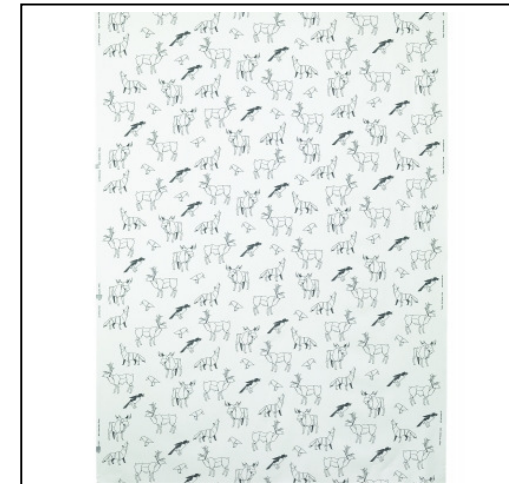
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