AFFECTIVE OTAKU LABOR:

THE CIRCULATION AND MODULATION OF AFFECT IN THE ANIME INDUSTRY

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigates the devoted anime fans – otaku, in Taiwan and in the U.S., focusing particularly on their fandom activities and relationships with the anime industry. Data sources include archival research, ethnographic observations, and in-depth interviews. Beginning with tracing the traditions of Marxist cultural criticism, I based my theoretical framework on the theory of affect, focusing on the affective labor of otaku and their affective responses to anime images. Drawing from theorists Tiziana Terranova, Maurizio Lazzarato, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Nigel Thrift, Brian Massumi, and Patricia T. Clough, I argue that the transformation of the forms of labor into immeasurable, voluntary, communicative, and affective labor is significantly reflected in the labor of otaku. Assisted by digital technologies, otaku are not simply passive consumers – they are able to interact with commodities, play with cultural contents, and easily become producers or distributors by using digital devices and the Internet.

According to my ethnographic observations and interviews, the fandom activities of otaku – including surfing the Internet, networking, cosplaying, making doujinshi and other multi-media artwork – demonstrate that otaku labor is emotionally involved, voluntary and affective, and has potential monetary value in the market.

Moreover, I discuss the concept of "moe" which is commonly used among anime fans to describe their "bursting" or "burning" affections toward certain anime characters. By analyzing otaku's feelings of moe, I argue that moe are affective responses in the body that precede feelings and emotions. In the era of digital technology, otaku's reception of images is turning more and more visual, sensational, and affective – without deep thoughts and without consciousness. The digital technologies allow the modulation of the moe/affective responses upon otaku's reception of images. Moe responses are bodily movements without consciousness – but with the potentiality and capacity to become emotions and provide new meanings. It is such affective responses – "powers to act" – that motivate otaku to do something voluntarily.

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Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

I. Anime fans around the world

Japanese anime, manga, video games, and other popular cultural products are recognized all over the world. ***Anime***, pronounced as *ah-ni-mei*, is the abbreviation of animation in Japanese. In Japan, anime refers to any kind of animation. However, outside Japan, anime only refers to animation originated from Japan. In this research, I use the term anime to refer to Japanese animation, differentiating it from animation from other countries. The stories of anime usually come from ***manga***, Japanese comics or graphic novels. Manga magazines (weeklies or monthlies) are mass-produced, widely-distributed, and cheap, and most important of all, manga touch on all kinds of genres: in general, there are categories for boys, girls, and adults. More detailed subgenres include: combat, war, sports, school romances, fantasies, adventures, science fictions, Western historical stories (in the medieval or Victorian periods, for instance), professional careers (cooks, dancers, actresses, or detectives), as well as erotic stories. Sometimes many subgenres converge, such as a time-crossing romance between an American girl and a pharaoh in ancient Egypt,[1] or a story about orphan girls being implanted with cybernetic parts as military weapons against terrorism in Italy.[2] Other materials related to anime and manga

[1] See manga *Ōke no Monshō* (王家の紋章, *Crest of the Royal Family)* by Hosokawa Chieko, first released in 1976 and still ongoing now.
[2] See *Gunslinger Girl*, by Yu Aida, first premiered in boy's manga weekly, *Dengeki Daioh*, in November 2002.

include video games, light novels,[3] anime soundtrack CDs, DVDs, miniatures, toys, and so forth, which are all allied with each other and have developed into a huge entertainment industry and become an important cultural export in modern Japan. This dissertation takes up what I call the anime industry, focusing especially on its most devoted fans, and their everyday practices.

Anime and manga can have significant influences on economy, culture, as well as people's everyday life. For example: Manga *Hikaru's Go* is a story of a boy's encounter with the spirit of an ancient master of "Go." "Go" is a board game invented in China 4,000 years ago, which has spread to Japan and Korea. The Go professional society had experienced a very bad decline in recent decades in Japan, until the popularity of this manga. After the manga and anime of *Hikaru's Go* were released, "tens of thousands of children started signing up for go classes."[4] The culture of Go has been dramatically influenced by this manga. Another example of how anime influence on culture is classical music. Classical music was considered very formal and serious and not very popular by the masses in Japan and many other Asian countries. But it started to gain tremendous popularity among young people due to an anime/manga *Nodame Cantabile*, a love story between a talented pianist Nodame and a genius musician/conductor Chiaki. The background of this story ranged from both characters studying in Japan's music school and then going to study abroad in Europe. Due to this story, in Japan, as well as in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, young people who seldom listened to classical music

[3] Light novels are novels that target teenage readers. The writing style of light novels is more informal than fiction and literature. They have many manga-style illustrations inserted into them, and can be read very fast. It can be said that light novels are similar to manga – only light novels are written in text, not pictures.

[4] Scanlon, Charles. August 1, 2002. "Young Japanese go for Go". BBC News. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2164532.stm (Accessed 8/4/2010).

have suddenly picked up this manga and attended concerts by symphony orchestra very often. It is commonly known as the "Nodame phenomenon" in many East Asian countries.[5] Moreover, manga and anime can influence commodity sales in the market, too. Manga *Drops of God* (神の雫/*Kami no Shizuku*, or *Les Gouttes de Dieu*) is written by a sister-brother duo of wine enthusiasts. This manga is a story about the art of drinking wine, which introduces mostly European wines. Many Asian people were not familiar with wine but desired to learn about it – especially through an accessible medium like reading manga is very convenient and easy for them. *Drops of God* has boosted European wine sales significantly in countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. The Chateau Mont Perat 2001 Bordeaux appears in the beginning of the manga series, and according to the Despagne family, who own the vineyards in France,[6] orders from these countries increased dramatically right after the manga was released.

In addition to people who become interested in foods, sports, cultures, and wines through manga and anime, there are also people who take the works of anime and manga very seriously. These anime fans are called otaku.

"***Otaku***" is a term that refers to passionate anime fans.[7] However the term otaku has been seriously stigmatized in Japanese society since the late 1980s. It was not until the late 1990s when Japanese animation began to gain international attention and anime exports to other parts of the world increased significantly, that the Japanese government

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[5] "The classical music is booming due to 'Nodame'" (「のだめ」に沸く音楽業界), Asahi.com–Book. 12/07/2006. http://book.asahi.com/clip/TKY200612070191.html (Accessed 8/4/2010).

[6] Hardach, Sophie. "Taste of heaven: Manga spreads '*Drops of God*' in Asia." Reuters – Feature. 6/4/2007. http://www.reuters.com/article/idUST29578320070606 (Accessed 8/4/2010).

[7] The term "otaku" has various meanings in different contexts. In this research, I will use my own definition, that is, extremely passionate anime fans. More detailed explanation will be discussed in Chapter 3.

learned that anime was a good tool to promote Japanese culture and help revive Japan's economy. A former Prime Minister of Japan, Taro Aso, has been widely known as a manga fan. When he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2007 to 2008, he announced the annual "International Manga Award" and began the "Anime Ambassador" project, aiming to increase global interests in Japan through anime and manga. Because manga and anime have grown increasingly popular in recent years, the Japanese government now uses manga and anime, as well as other popular culture, as tools of cultural diplomacy. Aso claims that Japan can use anime and manga to package and brand a specific image of Japan as "cool" or "cute" – to attract young people worldwide. Aso believes that within 10 or 20 years when these young people grow up, their affection for Japanese culture will influence their decisions and help Japan in a good way.[8] Although the term otaku still has negative connotations in the Japanese public, it is also acquiring meaning of "coolness" or "connoisseur," particularly among anime fans around the world.

With the worldwide distribution of anime and manga, their fans, otaku, are all over the world. In addition to consuming cultural products imported from Japan, these fans attend all kinds of anime-related conventions held in many countries around the world, especially during the summer, the busiest season for anime fans.

In France, the annual four-day Japan Expo opened in Paris on July 1, 2010. It is estimated that there were up to 180,000 people attending to celebrate Japanese culture together – from anime, manga and video games, to traditional Japanese culture.

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[8] "A new look at cultural diplomacy: a call to Japan's cultural practitioners." Speech by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Taro Aso at Digital Hollywood University. April 28, 2006. Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan: http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0604-2.html (Accessed 7/28/2010).

Passionate anime fans came to this festival to gather around with other fans and do fandom activities such as **cosplay**[9], video game tournaments, and watching shows and concerts together. Seeing numerous cosplayers walking around the venue, it is difficult to ignore the power of anime and manga on these European young people.[10]

Also in July, outside the Taipei World Trade Center in Taiwan, there was a line of about one kilometer long of people waiting to enter the Comic Exhibition on its opening day, July 28, 2010. These people were hoping to get in the exhibition hall as early as possible in order to buy the limited editions of anime-related commodities. For example, people who got in line outside the venue four days before opening were determined to get the limited editions of a newly released light novel series *Idiots, Tests, and Summoned Beasts*. Other limited edition items included 150 big hugging pillows[11] printed with images of the female characters in manga *One Piece*, the ebook edition and the final episode of a famous Taiwanese comic *Young Guns*, and autographed editions of various famous manga (Japanese comics or graphic novels). There were over 95,000 visitors crowded in on the first of a six-day annual event – the 11th Comic Exhibition in Taipei[12].

Meanwhile, Otakon, the biggest anime convention in the North American east coast, was taking place at the Baltimore Convention Center in Maryland from July 30 to August 1, 2010. According to the unofficial released information by Otakon organizers, there were more than 29,000 attendees to Otakon this year – a new record for this annual event,

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[9] *Cosplay*: The behavior of wearing costumes from anime or game characters is called "cosplay," short for "costume role-play." It is a type of performance art in which participants dress themselves as specific characters from anime, manga or games. See Wikipedia, s.v. "Cosplay," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosplay (Accessed April 3, 2010).

[10] Reference source: "Japan Expo 2010" by Christopher Macdonald. *Anime News Network*. August 3, 2010. http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/convention/2010/japan-expo (Accessed 8/4/2010).

[11] Hugging pillows, *dakimakura* in Japanese.

[12] "Comics exhibition draws huge crowds" *Taiwan Today*. July 29, 2010. http://www.taiwantoday.tw/ct.asp?xitem=112499&CtNode=416 (Accessed 8/4/2010).

which aims to celebrate Japanese popular culture, such as anime, manga, and video games. There is also an anime convention in New York City – The New York Anime Festival, which has seen attendance increase annually. In 2009 it had more than 21,000 attendees.

At anime conventions like those mentioned above, retailers, publishers, animators, and licensors often have their commercial booths in the exhibition hall. Art by fans is displayed in the artist alley. Moreover, activities such as panels and workshops, performances, concerts, game tournaments, cosplay contests, and so on are also happening at the same time at the conventions. Besides the arranged activities by organizers, there are a lot of anime fans wearing costumes and walking around the venue being photographed by other attendees. (For more fans at anime conventions, see Figures 1 to 5)

(Figure 1) Anime convention attendees not only cosplay but also dance with anime songs in the convention hallway. (New York Anime Festival 2007)

(Figure 2) At the convention, retailers, publishers, and licensors will advertise their products, for example with a big poster to attract people's attention. (NYAF 2007)

(Figure 3) Attendees of anime conventions cosplay fictional characters from their favorite anime, manga, video games, or American animation. (NYAF 2008)

(Figure 4) In anime conventions, cosplayers often enjoy posturing in front of cameras. (Petit Fancy 8, 2008)

(Figure 5) Artist Alley, where fans' art work related to anime or manga are displayed. (NYAF 2007)

Anime conventions are like carnivals for anime and manga fans. They come to celebrate, to network, and to have fun together. Through participation in many anime conventions, I found that the fandom activities are always full of all kinds of feelings, emotions, excitements and affects. These very passionate anime otaku are the subjects of this research. They are the extreme consumers of the anime products and, at the same time, they are also creative producers. They establish a close relationship with the anime industry, and reproduce images, contents, sounds, and other materials of anime, manga, video games, light novels and so on.

Unfettered creativities and a wide range of genres are the main reasons why Japanese manga and anime can develop so strongly. Also, the development of technologies (especially the Internet) helps anime-related products to be widely distributed throughout the entire world. Communication, product exchange, creating and producing materials, as well as distribution, are now almost all done via the Internet with extremely high speed. For example, fans in the United States used to find anime videos available only at comic conventions. Now they can simply stay at home and download them from the Internet. And because most American audiences do not understand Japanese, some fans voluntarily translate it into English subtitles (which is called ***fansubs***) with the advantages of video editing software. In addition, creating ***doujinshi***[13] (fanzines) is a fandom activity that is particularly popular in Japan and Taiwan. These doujinshi are the resources of finding potential creative manga or anime artists. In sum, I found that the

[13] Doujin is the Japanese term for a group of people who share a common interest. "Shi" means magazine. Thus, a magazine published by "doujin" is "doujin-shi. Among anime fans, doujinshi refers to self-produced publications made by an individual or a group of fans, who want(s) to show their love of certain anime works or characters, or to express their own ideas. Doujinshi are important objects of anime fans, and I will address this special format of fan-made art further in Chapter 4.

worldwide otaku are part of the anime industry, and due to the global development of digital technologies, they distribute the images of anime, which are very affective. In order to study anime otaku and the anime industry, I begin by tracing the theories of culture from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, British Cultural Studies, and American media studies.

II. Theoretical Frameworks

In the sociological tradition of cultural studies on media fans have been closely linked to the traditions of Marxist cultural criticism, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, debating the degradation of high art, and the Birmingham school of cultural studies, focusing on the relationships between cultural productions and particular subcultural groups.

The critical theory of the Frankfurt School regards mass media as tools to repress the critical thinking of the masses. Media is a kind of technical apparatus of production and distribution that tends to erase people's critical thinking by creating false needs in the individual (Marcuse 1964). Using the term "cultural industry," Horkheimer and Adorno regarded the production of culture as operated as a mass-production factory, producing standardized commodities and providing people easy satisfactions through consumption (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972). In particular, through the triumph of advertising, consumers are falsely convinced that their needs can be met and they can be different from others by their consuming choices. Therefore, according to critical theory, mass

culture is a threat to the autonomy of the individual because it makes negative thinking integrated into the process of rationalization in the advanced industrial society.

While on the one hand, Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse were worried about the crisis of high art being reproduced by the systematic, mechanical production process, Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, offered a different point of view in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), which argues that the democratization of art was influenced by the development of reproduction technologies such as lithography, the printing press, and the photograph (Aronowitz 1993, 79-80). Benjamin claims that reproduction technologies destroy the aura, the authority, and the uniqueness of a work of high art. Therefore, art is no longer controlled by a small group of cultural elite. Reproduction technologies make high culture accessible for more people, especially the middle-class, and further allow them to become producers, to "remake" objects for their own political demands.

Studies and theories about popular culture were further developed at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University (British Cultural Studies). Following Marxist tradition, the theorists of British Cultural Studies prioritized class, especially the working class (Hoggart 1957; Thompson 1963; Willis 1977). For them, it was no longer the question of how popular culture threatened high culture, but rather how popular culture stands as a culture or subculture made by the people, particularly the working class or minorities, allowing them to produce a political agenda. They refuted the Frankfurt School's claim that culture is singularly determined by the dominant class, where the masses are simply passive consumers. Instead, cultural studies theorists attempted to discover the subjectivity of the people. Using ethnographic

methods, they tried to seek out how people use popular culture as subculture (such as rock music, youth culture, or hippie culture) as a way to resist the hegemonic, dominant ideology. In *Encoding and Decoding*, Stuart Hall turned to an emphasis on "audience" studies. He claims that the audience, taking different reading positions from different backgrounds, is actively involved in the decoding process and even become encoding producers themselves. Hall looks into the relations between the text and the audience to see how the audience receive, interpret, and reproduce the text (Hall 1980).

Hall's approach became an important model for many studies on media audience, subcultures, and minority groups, and turned cultural studies into audience reception studies. Such influence was particularly noticeable when cultural studies expanded to the U.S. where some scholars were doing media studies on romance novel readers, or television fandom (Radway 1984; Jenkins 1992; Bacon-Smith 1992). American media studies are often linked to other contemporary thought or social movements such as feminism. For example, Radway argues that the female readers of romance novels are active readers, who are not only constantly aware of the patriarchal formula in the novels but also able to read the texts with their own interpretations. Moreover, with the act of reading novels, they both try to protest and to escape the socially defined role assigned to them by patriarchal society.

Henry Jenkin's study on "Trekkers," a term referring to obsessive and passionate *Star Trek* fans, provides an early example of the study of media fans, their cultural production, and their relationship with the television industry (Jenkins 1992). Jenkin's ethnographic research on Trekkers examines their complex cultural and social conditions in relation to their consumption of popular culture: their ways of receiving, interpreting,

and reproducing the show. His analysis is not only influenced by cultural studies, but is also indebted to theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau. Drawing on Bourdieu, Jenkins claims that subculture fans are always challenging bourgeois "tastes" (Bourdieu 1987). Borrowing from de Certeau, Jenkins argues that fan culture is doing textual "poaching" (Certeau 1984). Fans construct their cultural and social identities through borrowing and reproducing mass cultural images, and in so doing they make their own meanings out of these popular images on their own (Jenkins 1992). The way fans create meanings is what de Certeau meant by the "poaching" process of resistance. Jenkins' description of *Star Trek* fans demonstrates how fans closely engage with the popular text by repeatedly consuming, rereading, or remaking the meanings of the texts.

Subjectivity is a main theme within the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, British Cultural Studies, and American media reception and fandom studies. For critical theorists, human subjectivity has been undermined by the controls of mass media and standardized processes of mechanical reproduction. In order to bring back the human subject and human agency, British Cultural Studies and later American media studies, focus on people's ability to resist the dominant culture. More recently, drawing from de Certeau, Lev Manovich finds it less relevant for resistance, because the distinction between institutional strategies and individual tactics is getting blurred today (Manovich 2009). For Manovich, the debates about structure or agency have gone to somewhere indefinable because the line between structure and individual agency is getting confusing and vague because technologies have changed the ways that people consume and produce.

According to de Certeau, strategies are about the manipulation of the powerful structures while tactics are various ways in which individuals negotiate strategies that

were set upon them. Strategies are usually fixed and not easily changed. However, Manovich indicates that strategies can be flexible and remixable while tactics can be turned into strategies in the age of Web2.0. Individual tactics such as bricolage, assembly, and remixing can be adopted by companies, like Google letting users customize their homepages and Facebook encouraging users to use its codes to write applications. These new strategies-as-tactics enable online companies to turn many elements of subcultures into commercial products, and subcultural users then consume these products, especially because the speed of such interactions is so fast that no one can be really against the trend, of cultural commercialization. Therefore, there is doubt whether individuals are able to use "tactics" to oppose the mainstream culture anymore. With the blurring distinction between strategies and tactics, the notion of "resistance" is no longer relevant (Manovich 2009).

Monavich's comment on the changing relations between tactics and strategies is very much like the relations between anime fans and anime industry. Anime fans, or otaku, consume anime-related products, and then enjoy re-reading, re-mixing, and re-producing the products, and even go further to challenge the anime industry by **scanlation**[14], peer-to-peer sharing, and pushing the industry to change their rules. Anime or manga companies, on the other hand, have to integrate these fandom activities into their policies and sometimes need to allow certain copyright infringements[15] because they help promote their commodities.

[14] Scanlation means to scan and translate manga and anime into languages other than Japanese. Overseas anime fans usually do that and share the files online with others, because they lack the translated versions of manga or anime in their countries.

[15] Here I refer to doujinshi. Some derivative doujinshi obviously infringe the copyrights of the original manga or anime. But the copyright owners in Japan usually tolerate these infringements when they are

Therefore, it is necessary to further question the problem of subjectivity in the age of Web2.0, or the era of digital technology. Our consuming behaviors have significantly changed due to digital technologies. As extreme users of digital technologies, otaku are usually the earliest group affected by the technology. Otaku watch anime, read manga, and play video games in unique ways. Now they can interact with the materials, downloading and easily editing, deconstructing, and reassembling the materials, appropriating them as their own possessions or productions. They are not just consumers. Actually, everyone can easily become a producer or distributor by using the digital devices and the Internet. Moreover, when they watch anime or read manga, they are no longer focusing on the narratives, which require them to be able to make sense of the stories, to be conscious of what the creators want to deliver, and decide upon their own interpretation. Now the watching and reading via digital devices is more visual, more sensational, more "affective" – without thinking too much or too deep, but just feeling, laughing or crying, being emotionally touched simply by the act of being exposed to the images. It is less about subjectivity but more related to affects, the bodily responses and capacities. It is prior to consciousness, intention, or subjectivity. Thus, the turn to affect is the theoretical framework that I am going to use to frame my research.

Based on the perspective of affect theory, I focus on the affective labor of otaku, who spend their time and energy on their favorite anime works with a lot of passion. My thoughts on affective labor is indebted to Tiziana Terranova, Maurizio Lazzarato, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri – theorists who have noticed the changing forms of

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involved in doujinshi creations, because these doujinshi are often promoting their original anime or manga at the same time.

labor, which are immeasurable, unpredictable, and more and more invested in capital (Terranova 2004; Lazzarato 1996; Hardt and Negri 2004).

Moreover, when I look at how the anime fans receive the images on anime-related media, I am interested in how the bodies and the images are linked to each other, and fans' reception of images with or without consciousness. I have drawn from Brian Massumi, as well as Nigel Thrift's and Negri's articles on feelings, value, and affect (Massumi 2002; Thrift 2004; Negri 1999), which also have been influenced by Spinoza's affect as "a power to act." Furthermore, Patricia T. Clough's work on the affective turn (Clough 2008) and on the relationships of technology, cultural studies, bodies, and images has also largely influenced my argument on otaku and images, particularly on my analysis of the idea of "***moe***," the affective responses of the anime fans toward certain anime characters and elements.

III. Moe and Moe Economy

The Japanese word moe [萌え], literally "bursting into bud," has been used as an otaku slang word referring to special affection toward characters in anime, manga, and video games. There are a lot of different descriptions and explanations of moe. The following one is quoted from a Japanese contemporary artist Takashi Murakami's gallery book *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*:

> The term moe originated in a computerized transcription error, when the character meaning 'to burst into bud' (moeru/萌える) was substituted for the homonym meaning 'to catch fire' (moeru/燃える). Moe in otaku jargon denotes

> a rarefied pseudo-love for certain fictional characters (in anime, manga, and the like) and their related embodiments. (Murakami 2005, 182)

The pronunciation of the verb 萌える [*mo-e-ru*] (to bud) is the same as 燃える[*mo-e-ru*], which means "to burn, to get fired up." Anime fans may say: "Oh, I got fire in my heart!" It is similar to the hot-blooded feelings for certain scenes in anime, or fervent desire of liking an anime character. And it is said that because of a Japanese keyboard typo as 萌える, that is "to burst into bud" or "to sprout," which coincidentally can also describe the special affections or feelings bursting inside the hearts of the otaku. Plus, otaku like the idea of the intentionally incorrect kanji typo and enjoy playing with words. Gradually, "budding-moe" gained huge popularity and became the common usage in the otaku community. It can be interpreted as someone having certain feelings burst into bud inside of his/her body. More specifically, when an otaku watched their favorite character on screen, it may be because of what the character wore, or the personalities that caused the otaku having an "unspeakable" feeling stirring up inside the body. It is sometimes related to sexual drive that stimulates someone feeling erotic. However, it is not equal to sex. Moe images cannot be pornography because pornography would ruin the ambiguous affections and imaginations (Shuffle Alliance 2007).[16] The sexual arousal of *moe* is instead more like "virtual" sexual fantasy (Okada, from *Little Boy*, 2005).

[16] Shuffle Alliance is a group of Taiwanese veteran otaku who have published several books to introduce anime and its culture, including moe. They invented the term "ACG" for the abbreviation of Anime, Comic, and Games, which has been widely used in Taiwan and Hong Kong. According to Shuffle Alliance, the feeling of moe is about fantasy and imagination. It has to be ambiguous. An example of the feeling of moe is excitement in anticipation of an event, which may be more exciting than the actual event. Another example of moe is the ambiguous feelings of platonic romance, which are sometimes sweeter than a formal love relationship. The emerging source of moe is from imagination or delusion (Shuffle Alliance 2007).

The feeling of moe is subjective – each otaku has a different taste for what they like and how they will feel moe. Some might be attracted by the young girl who wears a Victorian maid's dress and others might be sexually stimulated by a girl with "cat ears." Any trait of anime characters that can stimulate or arouse the viewers to feel moe is called a "moe element" (Azuma 2009). There are some typical moe elements that have been used repetitively, including clothing such as ribbons, knee socks, glasses, maid costumes, school uniforms, school swimsuits, bunny girl costumes; physical appearances such as various hair styles and hair colors, big or tiny busts, big eyes; particular age such as ***Lolita***[17] young girl, or mature woman; occupations such as waitress, maid, nurse, or teacher; and personality characteristics such as naïve, clumsy, proud, or shy. Not only male otaku can feel moe, female otaku can also have their own moe elements, such as cute little boys, mature men, sportsmen, men who wear glasses, butlers, etc. Even when the moe objects are not human characters, they can be humanized, for instance, a robot, a doll, or a wolf can be humanized into a girl (or a boy) who can talk.

Recently, Japan's anime industry trend is turning toward more and more "**moe anime**" – anime which are focused on moe characters. Moe anime are usually anime about a group of moe characters who each contain particular moe elements, and the stories are always very simple: slices of the everyday lives of sisters or classmates, or organizations such as school clubs, or bands. In addition, harem style anime is a special sub-genre among moe anime: a guy living with a group of moe female characters, or a girl surrounded by a group of handsome guys. Harem style stories are also used in video

[17] Lolita is another subculture originated from Japan. The clothing of the lolita is basically influenced by French Rococo Period, when elegant and small is the main concepts in aesthetics. Therefore, lolita-style fashion is mostly involved dressing knee length dress, big bowtie headdress, petticoat and platform shoes, making the person looks as cute and innocent as a child. What they wear is not costume. It has to be separated from cosplay. Lolita is about a "lifestyle."

games – ***bishoujo*** (literally, beautiful girl) games, dating simulation games, or romance-erotic games.

The phenomenon of otaku focusing on consuming certain characters has been noticed since the 1990s when anime *Neon Genesis Evangelion* introduced female characters: Rei, Asuka and Misato – each stands for different types of female characters and each has their own fans. However, the idea of moe characters began to become more popular in the 2000s, especially because of certain anime programs that are particularly popular among fans in Japan as well as overseas, such as *Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*, *Lucky Star*, *Toradora!*, and *K-On*. Due to the increasing popularity of anime, the images of the characters in these anime are distributed all over the world in the form of figurines, magazine covers, character CD albums, video games, as well as toys, bags, stationery, keychains, cellphone accessories, and so on. These characters are displayed in otaku's spaces: private or public, for example, in their rooms, on their computers, or in the district of Akihabara in Tokyo, the sacred place of otaku. Furthermore, cosplay and **maid café**[18] cultures beginning in Akihabara are also ways to circulate the images of moe characters in a 3-dimensional way (that is, in reality, not in 2D pictures). In sum, the anime industry has gradually developed a large amount of moe-related products and services that account for a great proportion of the economy, which I call "**moe economy**."

Moe economy is developed out of the changing consumption patterns of otaku (Azuma 2009). Some scholars also claim that it is due to the economic difficulty and

[18] Maid café is a café where waitresses all dress up as maids from the Victorian period in Europe. They serve the customers as "masters" and welcome them home when the customers come to the café. There are also various activities or services that involve the interactions between waitresses and customers.

demographic imbalances in Japan. However, the most important factor of the development of moe economy is digital technologies. Digital technologies accelerate the circulation of images of moe characters or moe elements (i.e. pink hair, a maid costume, school uniform, etc), separated from the characters. These moe elements are able to modulate the consumers' bodily responses without consciousness – prior to consciousness. Capital investments in the digital technologies and in the anime industry produce products such as video games with many moe characters and simple storylines, which make consumers feel happy, make them laugh or cry, affected without thought or even consciousness – this is what I refer to as **affect** in the moe economy. In the discussion of otaku consumption and moe elements, I have taken from Japanese cultural critic Hiroki Azuma's argument on the database consumption transformation, as a turn to affective responses of otaku. However, when encountering the issue of gender, I have turned from Azuma's "database consumption" to Thomas Lamarre's "distributive field" (Lamarre 2009), which contributes insight to the sexual asymmetries or sexual differences in the receptions and reactions between male and female otaku.

IV. Research Methods

This is a study of a fandom phenomenon that relates to the history of the development and economic condition of the anime industry, especially as regards fans' consumption and production practices. Therefore, this research involves multiple research methods including archival research, participatory observation and participation, as well as in-depth interviews.

Taiwan and the United States are the countries that I mainly focus on, with additional observations in Tokyo, Japan. I have chosen Taiwan not just because it is my native country and I am very familiar with its anime fandom culture, but because Taiwan, as a former colony of Japan, has both geographic and cultural proximity to Japan. Taiwanese fans can understand and access anime or manga, and travel to Japan very easily. Compared with fans in the United States, a western country where young people are just beginning to embrace Japanese popular culture passionately over the past 10 years, I was trying to find differences in fandom activities between Taiwan and the United States. However, beside the preferences of anime genres, cosplay styles, and the making of doujinshi, I found that both fans' activities – their consumption and production practices – are very much the same and have the same tendency toward the affective responses to anime images, especially in recent years when digital technologies have allowed fans in both Taiwan and the United States to access the latest anime and manga information from Japan easily.

In order to learn the development and history of the anime industry, as well as the recent happenings and current situation of the industry and the anime fans, I kept track of news and articles from related publications, newspapers, journals, and think tank reports. The sources covered three countries: Japan, Taiwan and the U.S. Data was gathered from reports by The Nomura Research Institute, The Japan External Trade Organization, and The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as online websites Akiba Blog[19] and Nico Nico

[19] Akiba Blog is a Japanese website that reports what is happening in Akihabara, including new product releases, consumer activities, and shopping information. http://blog.livedoor.jp/geek/

Douga[20] in Japanese; Yahoo News Taiwan, *Taipei Times*, convention booklets, and doujinshi artists' blogs in Chinese; The *New York Times*, *Wired Magazine,* Publishers Weekly, Anime News Network,[21] Anime Nation,[22] and CNN in English.

My personal interest in the anime industry can be traced back to my childhood, when children's entertainment in Taiwan was very influenced by the pirated manga and television-broadcast anime, and later, video games. There were (and still are) many stores that rent manga, novels, and videos, located in each city and county of Taiwan. Therefore, anime and manga are cultural products that many Taiwanese people are very familiar with. When I moved to the United States to pursue my Ph.D. degree in Sociology at the City University of New York, Graduate Center, I also found out that there are a lot of anime fans in New York City. Discovering the fandom activities in New York City motivated me to study this topic furthermore.

The participatory observation in New York City began in 2006, which was the first year of the New York Comic Con (NYCC) at Javits Convention Center. After 2007, the anime events were separated from the NYCC, as the New York Anime Festival (NYAF), warranting separate conventions at different times of the year. Both the NYCC and the NYAF are organized by Reed Exhibitions, a division of Reed Business. I have attended these conventions annually since 2006, making connections with many anime fans. I have also done cosplaying – wearing anime character costumes. If I were to wear regular clothing to an anime convention I would have been considered an outsider. Therefore, I

[20] Nico Nico Douga is the biggest fan video website in Japan. It is similar to YouTube, but with an exception – Nico Nico Douga allows users to type texts into the video so that it runs across the screen while the video is playing. http://www.nicovideo.jp/
[21] Anime News Network: http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/
[22] Particularly the "Ask John" section from The Anime Nation blog. http://www.animenation.net/blog/

believe it is necessary to do cosplaying, like most of the attendees, in order to experience the affective feelings of being an anime fan.

Other than the commercial anime conventions in New York City, there are also annual conventions, AnimeNEXT and MangaNEXT, in New Jersey, held by a group of fans, now Universal Animation, Inc., for non-profit purposes. There are also smaller anime events held by several organizations or companies around the New York Metropolitan Area. Metro Anime is one of the oldest anime clubs in New York City – it has been active since 1995. Metro Anime has anime screening events monthly. Additionally, The Japan Society is an organization located on 47th Street, on the east side of Manhattan. Its task are to promote Japanese culture, and have frequently held or coordinated events, exhibitions, and activities about anime and manga in the past few years, including hosting Takashi Murakami's *Little Boy* exhibition in 2005. Kinokuniya Bookstore, a Japanese chain bookstore, frequently held one-day events for anime fans and promoted their manga and anime products since they moved to the current location next to Bryant Park in 2007.

Metro Anime has their own website and online mailing list for members to communicate and share information with each other. Another online resource about anime in New York City is the website NYC-Anime[23] which was established and is maintained by one person, Clyde. Clyde collects anime and manga information from many sources, including other fans, and puts the information on the website as an information portal for New York anime fans. In addition, a popular social networking website, meetup.com, was a source for me to find more anime fans and to network with

[23] http://nyc-anime.com/

them. There are several anime-related meetup groups around New York City, including New York City Anime Meetup Group and New York City Manga & Comics Meetup Group. Both groups are now coordinated by Al, who voluntarily pays the small organizing fee for maintaining the meetup groups. I occasionally attended their events and became friends with many anime fans through the meetup and Metro Anime groups. Clyde and Al are among my informants, with whom I have done interviews.

In Taiwan, the most important observation sites on anime and its fans are the Billboard Bulletin Systems (BBS), because BBS is the most immediate online forums that anime fans go to when there is new information to share. BBS is an Internet program that was developed prior to the World Wide Web. BBS in Taiwan was established based on the Taiwan Academic Network (TANet), initiated by the Ministry of Education and national universities in the early 1990s. The first BBS in TANet was experimentally established by National Sun Yet-san University in 1991. Since then, BBS has rapidly become popular in colleges. Some BBS servers are set up by university computer centers and others are set up by students who live in the dormitories and therefore have unlimited network access. BBS allows users to chat with others one-by-one, in a group chat-room, or in discussion forums under various categories. Each forum has voluntary person(s) who manage the numerous posts each day. BBS is the place people visit to find fast information and immediate help. Anime fans use BBS to discuss the latest anime programs, news, products, as well as to share pirated files. Therefore, in order to investigate the new trends in anime and the activities of the fans, I frequently looked at

the discussions among Taiwanese anime fans on the anime-related forums of PTT[24], the biggest BBS in Taiwan (and the rest of the world), particularly the forum "C-Chat" (short for Comic-Chat). There are usually more than one hundred messages posted on the C-Chat forum per day. I did not read them all, but did read through the titles to keep track of the special events. For example, when there are conventions in Taiwan, fans will write messages to share their experiences at the conventions.

There are two major doujinshi conventions in Taiwan: Fancy Frontier (and Petit Fancy) and Comic World Taiwan. Both conventions are "doujinshi" conventions where fans can sell their doujinshi (fanzines) in the assigned booths. It is necessary to distinguish the doujinshi conventions from the conventions in the U.S. The main purpose of doujinshi conventions is to allow fans/artists to sell their fan-made publications to others; therefore, doujinshi conventions usually do not let too many retailers, manga publishers, or anime companies sell their commercial products there. However, American anime conventions are mostly consist of retailers, publishers, and companies for the purpose of exhibiting and promoting their products.

In Taiwan, there are also activities such as Comic Exhibitions or Taipei International Book Exhibitions, which are commercial events that promote manga and anime publications and other products. However, these commercial activities were not my main research target. My target was fans' voluntary activities. Therefore, I attended conventions such as Fancy Frontier and the doujinshi convention held by the manga club of the National Cheng Kung University. Additionally, I visited several places that anime

[24] "PTT is arguably the largest BBS in the world with more than 1.5 million registered users. During peak hours, there are over 150,000 users online. It has over 200,000 boards with a multitude of topics, and more than 40,000 articles and 1 million comments are posted every day." – Quoted from Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PTT_Bulletin_Board_System (Accessed 7/31/2010).

fans often gather: a maid café, a doujinshi café, and anime shops around Taipei Train Station and Hsimenting[25] areas.

I have also done field observations in Japan, the original country of the otaku culture. I visited Akihabara, Nakano, and Ikebukuro, which are famous for certain anime shops and doujinshi bookstores. Akihabara is the most famous place for anime fans. It is occupied by a lot of computer shops, anime and manga stores, doujinshi stores, as well as maid cafés. The shopping mall in Nakano is another anime center because Mandarake[26] is located there. In addition, there is a street called "*Otome Road*" (literally, Maiden Road) in Ikebukuro, because most anime and manga shops located in Otome Road are mostly targeting female otaku customers. These shops are selling mostly "***Boys' Love***" (BL)[27] doujinshi. Female otaku who enjoy BL doujinshi are called "***fujoshi***" (literally, rotten girls). I have visited these places, and observed the people around these areas, trying to get the feel of living as an otaku in Japan.

Furthermore, I interviewed anime fans, doujinshi artists, cosplayers, photographers, and others who are involved in various fandom activities in Taiwan and in New York City. From summer, 2008 to spring, 2010, I interviewed 15 informants in Taiwan, 13 in New York City, and 2 in California.

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[25] Hsimenting is a district and shopping area in Taipei, Taiwan. It is famous for fashion shops, youth subculture, and Japanese culture.

[26] Mandarake is one of the biggest stores in Japan for used anime or manga-related products, as well as doujinshi. http://www.mandarake.co.jp/ (links to individual websites in English, Japanese, Korean, French and Spanish).

[27] Boys' Love (BL) genre is also called "**Yaoi**" in a lot of English-speaking countries. Although both terms refer to stories of boy-boy homoerotic romances, there are various explanations about the differences between BL and Yaoi, for example, one informant told me that Yaoi is simply homosexual and erotic stories and BL is subtler. I find these differences are not significant and will continue to use the term "BL" to indicate this genre of male homoerotic romance enjoyed by female readers.

In Taiwan, I recruited informants from doujinshi conventions and later was introduced to more interviewees by the informants. Five of them are cosplayers: Sherry has devoted herself to cosplaying for about 10 years and has played more than 60 characters. She decided to study animation in graduate school after she graduated from college with a degree in computer engineering and had worked as an engineer for some time. Purple, a college student majoring in industrial design, is friends with Sherry because of their common interest in cosplay and manga. Three additional informants are cosplayers who are members of an online cosplay group. They are Angel, Ewing, and Issac. They usually cosplay as a team, playing characters from the online game. Issac is the organizer of this group and Ewing is still a newcomer who had only been cosplaying for about one year at the time of the interview. Angel is a man who likes to cosplay female characters. According to his experience, the cross-gender-cosplay is always favored by female cosplayers, because male characters played by girls are usually considered to be "beautiful boys" who are very much welcome and popular among female fans. Therefore, in Taiwan, cosplayers are mostly female, and they cosplay male characters very often, while on the other hand, male cosplayers seldom cosplay female characters.

I interviewed doujinshi artist Ted in a famous maid café in Taipei. Ted and I talked about how he decided to work as a professional doujinshi artist and the doujinshi "business" that he was doing in order to make a profit. During the interview, the waitresses dressed in Victorian-style maid costumes served us drinks and meals. Other than Ted, my informants who make doujinshi are Sue – a doujinshi café owner, Bai – a new doujinshi artist, and Tifa, who has a lot of experience making doujinshi and has

encouraged Bai to make his own doujinshi. I also interviewed university manga or anime club members Jack and Tony, cosplay photographer Kwei, as well as editors of a doujinshi publisher Huiwen and Steve.

There are a lot of doujinshi artists in Taiwan; however, it is almost impossible to find one in the U.S. I found one doujinshi publication in English at the 2009 New York Anime Festival and later contacted its authors, Tenchi and Barlee, who live in Orange County, California. In New York City, Vincent, Mark and KD are learning to draw manga and comic in art schools or by themselves, and they are interested in publishing their work in the future. They never heard about doujinshi (self-printed publications) and they never considered printing their artwork as a doujinshi because "doujinshi" is not widely known on the east coast of the U.S.

I recruited many of my informants from two major anime fandom groups in New York: Metro Anime and NYC Anime Meetup – some members overlapped in both groups. Al is the organizer of the Anime Meetup and the Manga Meetup. He works as a computer consultant and voluntarily coordinates New York's anime meetup because he feels very attached to it. Clyde is a member of Metro Anime, as well as the webmaster of the anime information portal website NYC-Anime. Mike, a Puerto Rican; Frank, a Filipino; and Amy, a Filipino-American, are all members of Metro Anime or NYC Anime Meetup. I also interviewed an anime critic Brian and his daughter. Brian is also a co-author of a book on anime (Camp and Davis 2007) and had taught anime in the City College of CUNY in 2009. In addition, Chris is an anime fan who studies in college and is very determined to study Law – especially the intellectual property law on anime

piracy and censorship issues. Many of my informants are now my good friends, too. We share anime information and talk about anime and manga very often.

There are some differences between Taiwanese and American anime fans. For example, when I describe the otaku labor of making doujinshi, I mainly quoted from cases in Taiwan, because American fans rarely make doujinshi. Moreover, attending conventions wearing costumes are more casual in the U.S. than in Taiwan. Other than these differences, the rest of the descriptions of fans in both countries are mostly mixed together in the following chapters, because the situations in both countries are very similar and I am describing the common phenomenon of anime fandom culture.

I learned a lot from interacting with, observing, and being together with my informants, but not only in the interviews. In this research, I use the interviews as basic background material. I quote them throughout the chapters, alongside the observation notes and archival information. Sometimes the informants' responses and their emotional expressions are not able to be articulated in words. Especially when describing things like affects and moods, the informants' responses were always short. Therefore, it was necessary to be involved in the participation and observation and to feel the affective feelings among these anime fans.

In order to trace the history of the anime industry, with an emphasis on how the industry is related to the development of technology, in the next chapter I will detail the history of anime, the economic and social contexts, and the technical changes in the anime industry. I also look at the development of capital investment in affective images and affective labor in relation to the consumption and production of the anime industry.

The anime industry is an “affective economy” that circulates cultural objects, images, and affects through the development of information technology.

In Chapter 3, I begin with the definitions of “otaku.” I found that for anime fans, identity as an otaku is contradictory, uncertain, and unstable. Being an otaku, or an anime fan, is no longer about otaku identity, but more about the affinity or attachment, a feeling of belongingness, while they are having a new relationship with digital technologies. Therefore, in Chapter 4, I further discuss otaku’s relationships with digital technologies, bodies, and cultural objects, in terms of their affective labor. Using data from my interviews and observations, I describe many anime fandom activities, such as networking, making doujinshi and fan-made videos, and cosplaying. I regard these fandom activities as affective labor, extracted out of their passion and their love for anime. Otaku use their affective labor turning their passion and love into creative productions.

In Chapter 5, I make the connection between the idea of moe with the theory of affect, and discuss further how otaku receive anime images, especially the images of moe characters, or with moe elements. New digital devices such as video games have changed how otaku experience and consume the anime images. Otaku’s viewing of anime images, with the advent of digital technologies, is now less narrative and more affective, and therefore the impacts of moe images – images that modulate bodily responses directly – become much more significant. I also touch on the issue of otaku sexuality, and argue that the idea of moe should not be directly linked to fetishism, because the otaku’s responses to moe are not narrative, nor do they have a set of oedipal complex structures

behind them, but rather, their responses constitute pre-conscious bodily responses with indeterminate orientations.

I will conclude this research with thinking forward about the potential and the possibilities of the anime industry and otaku, in the new digital era. Doujinshi as potential cultural objects made by otaku now are becoming more and more commercialized and therefore, it is important to think of the affective labor of otaku as being both invested in and exploited. In addition, seeing the myriad possibilities in otaku sexuality in doujinshi also contributes revolutionary thought in the social theories of bodies, affect, and gender.

Chapter 2

Anime Industry

> Japan is reinventing superpower—again. Instead of collapsing beneath its widely reported political and economic misfortunes, Japan's global cultural influence has quietly grown. From pop music to consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, and animation to cuisine, Japan looks more like a cultural superpower today than it did in the 1980s, when it was an economic one. But can Japan build on its mastery of medium to project an equally powerful national message? (McGray 2002)

I. Japanese Cultural Influence

As journalist Douglas McGray pointed out in 2002, Japanese popular culture has been gaining strength and recognition around the world, while at the same time Japan has been suffering from an economic recession and domestic political troubles since the 1990s. It is different from the era during the 1980s, when Japanese economic power was influential in the world by its production of electronic appliances and personal devices (McGray 2002). McGray indicates that the success of the American cultural influence in the world is because it provides the "western/liberal" ideology and lifestyle in contrast to the communist counterpart. Different from the American culture, Japanese cultural

success since the 1990s is because of the branding of “Japaneseness”: coolness, fashion, creativity, and technology. It inspires the world to follow its trends in popular culture voluntarily, not by force (McGray 2002).

The idea of cultural influences as “soft power,” brought up by Joseph S. Nye, can be traced back to the late 1980s. Later, Nye defines soft power as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies” (Nye 2004). It is not only about how attractive the culture is, but also how the cultural values, ideologies, or policies influence others. It is soft power that influences the lifestyles and wins the hearts of people, not by force but by ideology. Nye argues that the U.S. is not only the strongest country in military and economic power, but also in its soft power. Having Hollywood films, radio and television programs aired and broadcast all over the world, the United States obviously holds significant soft power besides its economic and military power. The power of cultural attraction is the ability to influence in foreign policies, to improve its public diplomacy and maintain a better image of a country in an indirect way. Nye notes that Japan is a country with more potential soft power than any other Asian countries. Even though Japan has suffered from economic recession in the 1990s, the influence of Japanese culture did not slow down but became greater than it was in the 1980s when it was an economic superpower. However, Nye did not recognize that Japan has the soft power to influence and obtain the international political status as it desires by using its cultural attractiveness. Nye used some out-of-date statistical numbers to indicate that Japanese popular culture is not popular even in its Asian neighbors (Nye 2004, 86-87) – which can be easily proved differently by more recent surveys, especially

considering that there has been enormous growth of Japanese cultural exports, more and more tourism in Japan, and an increase in people learning Japanese and appreciating Japanese life-style and cultural values. In 2002, there were approximately 286,000 people taking Japanese language proficiency tests, a 5-times increase since 1991. And, it is estimated that there were nearly three million people studying the Japanese language overseas, according to Mr. Tsutomu Sugiura, the Director of Marubeni Research Institute in 2004 (Sugiura 2003). In the latest opinion poll in Spring 2010, the U.S. Image of Japan indicates that Japanese "traditions and culture" and "strong economy and high technology" are the most impressive attributes of Japan considered by Americans.[28]

Discussing how cultural flows are processed in the European television networks, David Morley and Kevin Robins also mentioned the European relationships with Others – non-Westerners – especially in the countries from the East with a powerful potential for technological development, like Japan. In the chapter "Techno-Orientalism," Morley and Robins argue that modernized Japan becomes an unconscious threat to the Western identity, while at the same time Westerners envy Japan's techno-power (Morley and Robins 1995, 147-173). Morley and Robins continue to claim that due to such psychological conditions, some western scholars have explained Japanese culture as conservative, conformist, disciplined, self-controlling and emotionless in order to argue that Japanese culture can never successfully invade in the Western world or American culture. Ironically, the rapid growth of manga and anime imports in the U.S. and its increasing influence on American youth as well as the public opinion on Japanese culture

[28] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan commissioned the Gallup Organization to conduct an opinion poll on the image of Japan in the U.S. from February to March 2010. The survey has 1201 interviews as "general public" group, and 202 people as "opinion leaders" group. Source: "MOFA: Opinion Poll: 2010 U.S Image of Japan," http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2010/6/0601_01.html (Accessed 8/4/2010).

proves that those scholars who think that Japan has no cultural influence are not very accurate.

Japanese cultural commodities such as fashion magazines, karaoke, Nintendo, Sony PlayStation, *Hello Kitty*, and *Pokémon*, are well received and considered as "cool" or "***kawaii*** (cute)." Not to mention the success of Japanese anime and manga in the global market. When talking with a group of American teenagers or young adults, it is easy to find out that most of them are watching Japanese anime either constantly or once in a while, and they might be very familiar with Japanese culture, food, and entertainment. With the globalization of anime industry, people around the world have found that Japanese anime and manga are interesting and want to learn more about Japan's culture and language. It is important to note that Japanese cultural power – "soft power" to use Nye's term – is getting more and more ubiquitous and influential around the world, especially Japanese anime and manga – although we may find out that Japanese anime and manga were significantly influenced by Western animation and comics in the early stages of its development.

Indeed, Japanese popular culture, particularly anime and manga, is a culture blended from Western influences and traditional Japanese aesthetics, and the development of this culture has unfolded alongside processes of modernization, globalization, as well as the advent of technology. Japan has turned into a cultural center among its Asian neighbors and is a leading model in technology, fashion, and arts around the world, which is also related to Japan's anime and manga. For example, science fiction manga and robotic anime are the inspirations for the robotic engineering scientists; cosplay and lolita clothing styles are part of anime subcultures with their influence on fashion design.

Moreover, Japanese artist Takashi Murakami integrates otaku culture in his artwork and treats it as the essence of Japanese culture and the mentality of Japanese people after World War II (Murakami 2005).

In this dissertation, my main research subjects are otaku – devoted anime fans. Before looking at anime fans, it is necessarily to lay out the historical contexts of the anime industry and the relationship between the industry and the fans. As I am going to point out, the anime industry is part of an affective economy that circulates affective labor, images, affections and affects among its creators, publishers, consumers and fans. Digital technology especially influences the increasing affective labor in cultural production. The development of mass media and mass communication enables the industry to do much better and faster in marketing, promoting, advertising, circulating and recruiting, especially because the industry can distribute images globally and in so doing can earn a huge number of fans around the world. The anime industry relates not only to its producers and workers in the industry: creators, artists, filmmakers, producers, editors, but also to its fans – those who enjoy voluntarily creating and producing.

The history of the anime industry is unavoidably linked to the development of Japanese consumer society. When I use the term anime industry, I usually include the other related formats such as manga and video games, because in Japan, anime and manga, and sometimes video games, and others, are highly related with each other, forming a kind of alliance. Manga and anime are so highly connected with each other that one cannot be mentioned without reference to the other, because anime usually starts from the manga that has proven popular in the market. Furthermore, anime and manga are always produced into other commodities, including soundtrack CDs, concerts, live-

action dramas, movies, and video games. The popularity in each sector of commodities can stimulate further sales of others. Such a phenomenon is registered as the term "**image alliance**," used by Saya S. Shiraishi who uses manga/anime *Doraemon* as an example to show how Japan's "soft power" is transmitted overseas. Shiraishi points out that, among these products, image is the "essential component of this multi-industry alliance" (Shiraishi 1997). This alliance circulates images from producing, consuming, marketing, and licensing, and through this process, profits are generated and shared by the artists, publishers, and television network.

The popular manga *One Piece* is an example of how the image alliance works. *One Piece*, a story about sailing and pirating adventure, has been serialized in the magazine weekly *Shonen Jump* since 1997. It was adapted into television anime programs by Toei Animation and broadcast on Fuji Television in Japan since 1999. It was also adapted into several feature films by Toei released every year since 2000. In addition, there are a number of *One Piece* video games released on different video game consoles such as PlayStation, Game Boy, and Wii. Besides these media, it also comes with music soundtrack CDs, miniatures, stationeries, character plushies, etc. Every time certain products of *One Piece* have been released, the sales of other *One Piece* products will increase too. Especially when the 10th *One Piece: Strong World* theatrical film premiered on December 12, 2009, sales of its manga and promotions of other related commodities also reached a high record during that period: all 56 volumes of this manga series "ranked on Oricon's chart of the top 200 manga books for the week of December 7-13 in

Japan."[29] Later in 2010, Volumes 57 and 58 of *One Piece* were reported as reaching the highest number of first-printing publishing and sale records in Japan's book publication history.[30]

II. Development of Anime and Technology

The Japanese anime industry developed rapidly and strongly after World War II, so that today Japan is able to turn into a superpower of cultural influence in the world. During the early postwar period, Japan's economic revival resulted in the rise of consumer society, when Japanese people began to have the ability to consume entertainment products. Since the 1960s, gradually, cheap manga magazines and television programs became part of people's everyday life, in addition to film, video games, novels, CDs, toys, and other entertainment commodities. In its early stages, the Japanese anime industry grew rapidly due to the development of mass media and technologies, including mass-printing techniques, the availability and attainability of television sets, organized manga making processes, and systematized low-cost methods of anime production. Plus, the revolutionary style of storytelling innovated by Osamu Tezuka, the god of manga, made anime and manga even more special and attractive.

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[29] "All 56 *One Piece* Books on Japan's Weekly Top 200 Manga." *Anime News Network*. December 16, 2009. http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2009-12-16/all-56-one-piece-books-on-japan-weekly-top-200-manga (Accessed 8/5/2010).

[30] "*One Piece* #57 is Fastest Manga to Sell 2 Million." March 13, 2010. "*One Piece* #59 Manga Gets Record 3.2 Million Print Run." August 6, 2010. *Anime News Network*. http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2010-03-17/one-piece-no.57-is-fastest-manga-to-sell-2-million, http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2010-08-06/one-piece-no.59-manga-gets-record-3.2-million-print-run (Accessed 8/5/2010).

1. Early manga and mass production in printing

Anime has a close relationship with *manga* (漫画), the Japanese word for comics and graphic novels. The history of manga in Japan can be traced back to approximately the 12th and 13th centuries. Some believe that the earliest Japanese manga is the *Animal-person Caricatures*[31] from an ancient temple in Kyoto, Japan, created during the 12th or 13th centuries. Such a narrative picture scroll is an art form that was introduced by China. *Animal-person Caricatures* are read and rolled out from right to left and is therefore credited for the origin of the reading direction of Japanese manga and books (Schodt 1986, 28-29).

Later, during the 17th to 19th centuries, art forms such as *Ukiyo-e*[32] or *Kibyoshi*[33] are also related to the long tradition of narrative art inherited by manga (Schodt 1986; Ito 2005). With the help of the technology of woodblock printing, ukiyo-e were affordable to the masses because they could be mass produced. Ukiyo-e were usually about the depictions of everyday lives of the masses, and therefore attracted many people to buy them. Like the ukiyo-e of the 17th-19th centuries, present-day manga are also publications that can be mass produced so that they are affordable and accessible to the masses.

Although these cultural formats such as Ukiyo-e and Kibyoshi in ancient Japan resemble manga in certain levels, they are still very different from the manga in the modern era. Contemporary manga were originally largely influenced by Western comics.

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[31] See Wikipedia, s.v. "鳥獣人物戯画" or "*Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga.*" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C5%8Dj%C5%AB-jinbutsu-giga (Accessed 8/16/2010)

[32] *Ukiyo-e* (浮世絵), meaning "pictures of the floating world," are paintings developed in the Edo period (1603 to 1867). Many of them became widespread as woodblock prints in the late Edo period.

[33] *Kibyoshi* (黄表紙) means "yellow-cover books," produced during the middle of the Edo period. Kibyoshi was typically printed in 10 page volumes, many spanning two to three volumes in length.

Before World War II, there had been some American or Western comic strips and political caricatures that became popular in Japan. However, during the war, these western comics were prohibited and the development of manga had temporarily ceased due to the war. However, soon after the war, under the American military occupation, from 1945 to 1952, American soldiers brought many American popular cultural products to Japan such as music, films, and comics. Thus, American comics and cartoons were imported into Japan such as *Blondie*, *Popeye*, and *Mickey Mouse*, and became popular at that time. Even after the end of the American occupation, Japanese people were still highly influenced by Western culture, values, and lifestyles. During the postwar period, a manga genius emerged and began a revolution in Japanese manga and anime. His name is Osamu Tezuka.

2. Osamu Tezuka: Revolutionary methods of storytelling

Osamu Tezuka (手塚治虫 1928-1989), best known as the "god of manga," grew up during the post-World War II period, when Japan was traumatized from the atomic bombing and recovering from the war. He experienced the war bombing aftermath personally and that made him later decide to teach "peace and respect for all life" through his anime and manga (Gravett 2004, 24). His best known works include *Astro Boy*, *Kimba the White Lion*, and *Phoenix*. Tezuka created hundreds of manga and anime and constantly touched the issues of technology versus humanity (such as *Astro Boy*), or life and death (such as *Buddha* and *Phoenix*), or war and peace. He also applied his medical doctoral knowledge to his manga (such as *Black Jack*, a manga on the medical practices

of a talented doctor). Tezuka loved watching Disney's cartoons and Hollywood movies – which, of course, had a great influence on Tezuka's making of manga and anime.

What is special about Tezuka is his enormous creativity and energy in the making of manga and anime. He wanted to tell stories and had a strong desire to express what he wanted to say through the medium of manga. Tezuka was highly educated and gave up his profession as a doctor to devote himself to storytelling. However, unsatisfied with the comic strip or four-column style of Western comics at that time, he invented a freer way to express his stories in manga. For example, he developed a lot of space in manga pages and panels that allows artists to develop the emotions and movements of characters profoundly. He extended hundreds or thousands of pages in manga in order to tell a story. Thus, manga artists were no longer restrained by limited columns/panels/pages. Manga artists can even draw a picture combining two pages, or break the column horizontally or vertically. Also, Tezuka used a lot of techniques learning from cinema, such as the close-up, applying different shots and angles, or montages, mimicking the movements of a camera to develop some kind of emotion or action. Because of Tezuka's innovations, manga artists are given more control and flexibility to narrate stories (Gravett 2004, 30; Shiraishi 1997, 240; Schodt 1986, 18-22).

Many Japanese artists in the postwar period – having experienced the war, defeat, and trauma, like Tezuka – desired to express their feelings and began to create. As artists, they had the urges to express their feelings or transform them into something else like humor or sarcasm. Especially during the post-war period, Japanese society was not satisfied with the political and social conditions and was uncertain about the future, therefore, people looked for light entertainment and sarcastic humor – they found it in

manga (Ito 2005). Therefore, along with Tezuka's innovations, manga gradually developed their own genres and styles, distinct from Western comics or cartoons.

At that time, the technologies of mass cultural production started to improve. At first, most Japanese could not afford the copies of expensive hardcopy children books, and publishers felt that it was too risky to publish manga with many high quality pages. Therefore, manga started to be printed in the format of "*akabon*" (red-books), which used red ink and were printed cheaply (Gravett 2004, 28). This was the early format of manga, and with its success, Japanese publishers began to mass produce manga magazines in such manner (cheaply printed and with single color ink only). Manga were cheap enough that people could buy it regularly. Different manga magazines were published every week or every month and consumers purchased them, read them, and then disposed of them. If the stories were attractive enough, they would buy the manga magazines routinely. Manga magazines were thrown away or recycled once they had been read. With a large amount of circulation, manga gradually became a major part of the publishing industry in Japan.

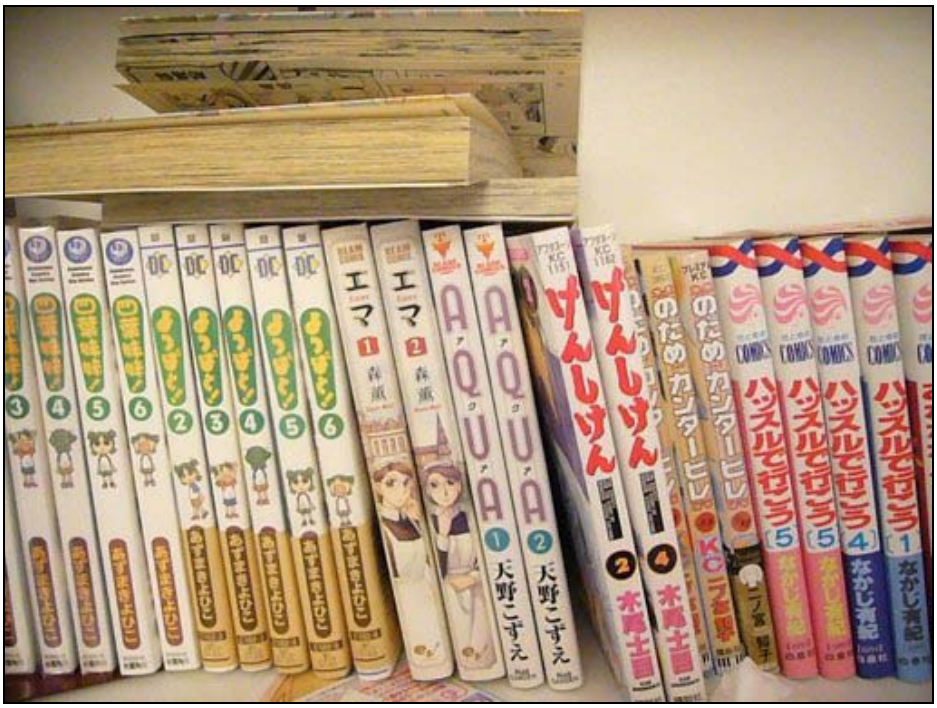
Manga production, thus, developed intensively after the 1960s, and continued to grow throughout the following decades. In 2007, even though the sales of manga were shown to have declined, manga publication still comprised 22 percent of all printed materials in Japan (Pink 2007). Most of these manga magazines are weeklies. Some are bi-weeklies or monthlies. Each volume includes about a dozen individual titles[34] by multiple authors. They are printed black-and-white except for the cover pages, and are mass produced**.** Manga magazines are cheap and thick, and usually piled up in the

[34] "Title" means the title of individual story or serial by an individual or a team of artists/authors. It means one manga story. There are several manga stories combined in one manga magazine.

newsstands, bookstores, or convenient stores – they are almost everywhere, in every corner of Japan (Figure 6). Consumers can just grab one with approximately 200 yen (around $2). However, these manga magazines are not what most people will collect in their rooms. People usually collect volumes of single-title – *tankoubon*,[35] the compact and paperback books of manga that combine episodes of a particular series, shrunk down and printed more sharply in black and white on thicker paper for around 200 to 300 pages (Gravett 2004, 14) (Figure 7 and Figure8). Some popular manga tankoubon have even become the bestsellers in the Japanese book publishing market, like the example of *One Piece* mentioned earlier.

(Figure 6) Manga magazines are sold in every corner of Japan.

[35] *Tankoubon* (単行本), single-title volumes; bound collections from previous published weekly or monthly. Tankoubon are the equivalent of graphic novels, only that U.S. graphic novels are commonly printed in color, unlike tankoubon which are typically printed in black-and-white.



(Figure 7) **Collection of manga tankoubon.**

(Figure 8) **Tankoubon: covers and contents.**

3. Mangaka, Assistant, and Editor

Manga production is labor-intensive work. In order to make the production more efficient and fast, Tezuka also had his new invention in the work system. Like Taylorism or Fordism, he brought assistants into the manga studio to share the division of labor of making manga. Also, publishers will send editors to administer manga making.

The system of Japanese manga production is very different from the American comic industry. In the United States, the copyrights of characters and stories in comic books are owned by publishers and are able to be assigned to different artists to draw the comic series. For example, Marvel Comics owns the copyright of the *X-Men* and can assign various artists or creative teams to draw the story of the *X-Men*. This is why most popular American comic heroes never die – they live as long as the publishers consider them profitable. However, on the contrary, in Japan, the stories and characters have been owned by their creators: the artists, i.e., ***mangaka*** (漫画家), the professional manga creators. Occasionally their manga are co-owned with publishers. Manga are usually considered the works of one individual person, and sometimes a team. The mangaka's name(s) are always connected with the title of the manga. People know about Akira Toriyama's *Dragon Ball*, Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece*, or Shirow Masamune's *Ghost in the Shell*. Therefore, mangaka are responsible for the success or failure of the work. Ideas, storylines, character designs, etc – are all considered mangaka's own creation. In many cases, young artists spend a long time creating their first works, and sometimes have to publish by themselves (as doujinshi). Publishers find the talented artists and recruit them to work for their companies. Once these mangaka have signed contracts with the publishers, they often commit to serialize their works in manga weeklies or monthlies –

which puts pressure on them to create certain pages within a limited time range. It is often heard that a lot of mangaka have stress problems dealing with the deadlines, and sometimes get ill due to stress.

Behind mangaka, assistants and editors also play important roles in the production of manga. Famous mangaka usually have a studio and work with a group of assistants. In order to make manga production much more efficient and fast, Tezuka also created the manga "production system," which consists of a team of assistants who help the principal mangaka (Shiraishi 1997, 237). The production system also provides opportunities for jobs and on-site apprenticeship training. Mangaka's assistants are usually interns who want to learn drawing manga from these famous mangaka they work for.[36] Their jobs are usually to help mangaka draw the background, inking,[37] or are assigned to draw particular objects (such as equipment or weapons) – most of their jobs are routine and trivial, and they seldom help mangaka with plotting the stories.

On the other hand, editors are assigned by the publishers to work with particular mangaka. Their main responsibility is to make sure the mangaka will submit their work by the deadline. However, in many cases editors also perform as assistants of mangaka, and do a wide range of possible tasks – again, in order to make sure the work will be finished by the deadline. Their work includes providing caretaking, friendship, emotional consultation, as well as watching the readers' responses, promoting the manga, and/or giving advice or critiques. They sometimes have to do simple drawing tasks such as

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[36] Many of Tezuka's assistants became famous mangaka afterward, such as Fujiko F. Fujio and Fujiko A. Fujio, the authors of manga *Doraemon*.

[37] Inking means refining outlines drawn with pencils. Inking is a necessary procedure after pencil drafting and before coloring in comics or manga. It is about tracing the pencil lines, "interpreting the pencils, giving proper weight to the lines, correcting mistakes, and making other creative choices." (Wikipedia, s.v. "Inker." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inking (Accessed 8/13/2010).

inking. Responsible to both publishers and mangaka, a good editor should communicate with mangaka about readers' feedback, concerning the selling of the manga, but also considering mangaka's feelings. In addition, they have to be aware of the trends in the manga market.

Eventually, the publishers have to decide which titles can be continued and which should be cut off. Bestseller stories could endure for more than a decade, which would contain more than 500 episodes/chapters. For example, *Dragon Ball* was published in weekly manga *Shonen Jump* from 1984 to 1995, contained 519 episodes in total, and was collected into 42 tankoubon (volumes), which makes mangaka Akira Toriyama one of Japan's highest earners. Another famous mangaka Rumiko Takahashi[38] is also ranked among the top ten wealthiest people in Japan (Gravett 2004:16).

4. *"Full animation" and "limited animation"*

Tezuka was not only involved in the making of manga, but also in the production of television anime, such as the first television anime series in Japan – *Astro Boy*, adapted from his popular manga. It became one of the most famous anime in the world. The anime series *Astro Boy* was first broadcast in 1963 in Japan, and was remade in 1980 and 2003. It was the first Japanese anime syndicated by the United States television channel NBC from 1963 to 1965. The 1980 series was also extremely popular in Australia, Canada, South Korea, and many other parts of Asia. Besides high television audience rating, the toys, mini-figures, and stationery of its main character Astro Boy, were

[38] Rumiko Takahashi, the mangaka of *Ranma 1/2*, *Urusei Yatsura*, and *InuYasha*, which is also very popular in the United States and Europe.

popular among kids. In 2009, a computer-animated 3D film adaptation of *Astro Boy* was released, while at the same time there were a lot of Tezuka Osamu tribute events around the world.

Just like the example of *Astro Boy*, television anime programs are mostly adapted from popular manga series. After World War II, manga started to be mass produced, and soon anime followed in the 1960s, in the early years of the television age in Japan. It was the period when Japan's consumer society started to emerge. The Japanese economy had recovered from the war, and people began to have more leisure time and more money to spend on entertainment. Television sets became more common in households, and commercial television networks started to broadcast programs regularly beginning in the late 1950s or the early 1960s. Because program demands increased, animators who once made animation films changed their focus from film to television anime.

Traditionally, in order to portray the seamless movement of characters in films, animators have to make twenty-four drawings for each second of animation. It is called "full animation." In some works, animators also use techniques such as rotoscoping[39] to capture live-action movements and then redraw them into animated films. To produce animation requires intensive labor and is very time-consuming, and unfortunately, there is usually not a large enough budget for making television animation programs. Therefore, even though full animation or rotoscoping techniques can bring a sense of realism to animation, most television programs use the lower-cost method of "limited animation," using only eight drawings for each second of animation. Limited animation was begun by

39 Rotoscoping is capturing the movement of a moving object into a sequence of frames. It "is an animation technique in which animators trace over live-action film movement, frame by frame, for use in animated films." (Wikipedia, s.v. "Rotoscoping" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotoscoping (Accessed 8/13/2010).

Tezuka who invented an anime production system and used a much smaller proportion of the budget to produce a 30-minute anime. Nowadays, Japanese television anime producers still use limited animation to reduce the energy and time-consuming processes of making TV anime. Because it is possible to make anime on a smaller budget, it has an advantage in the international animation market (Masuda 2007, 144-150).

Tezuka founded his animation studio Mushi Production in 1961. In order to reduce the cost of anime production, Tezuka invented many methods for anime making. For Tezuka, a good story is more important than fluent movements or very realistic pictures. Thus, he not only reduced the number of frames per second considerably, but also created a "bank system": preparing several kinds of images or symbols (such as different shapes of eyes, mouths, and torsos) in the database in advance, and using one frame many times, only replacing certain elements of the pictures when necessary. Therefore, it is common to see a talking character on the screen with only his month changing and moving, but the rest of the picture is still. He also used fewer colors for anime, compared with other animation such as Disney. Tezuka's methods in anime production have been greatly influential in Japan's anime industry. As a result of these methods the cost of anime production is greatly reduced, which not only makes anime profitable commercially, but also means that Japanese anime has an advantage in the global animation market.

Like manga, anime production is also very labor-intensive work. Also, animators are usually paid very little. Therefore, Japan anime production has been outsourced to contracted technicians overseas, such as in Taiwan, South Korea, and now mostly in China, where the price of labor is usually cheaper. The introduction of computerized graphic technology also helps a little bit, but most Japanese animators still prefer hand-

drawing instead of computerized graphics. Some think that the images of anime should not be too realistic or resemble reality too much, because they would detract from individual imaginations and the fun of audiences. Therefore, instead of full animation, most Japanese television anime are still limited animation, and probably will not change even though alternative techniques are available.

5. The rise of character anime and digital technology

According to Hiromichi Masuda, former anime studio Madhouse[40] executive director, the development of the Japanese anime industry can be separated into three boom periods (Masuda 2007, 119~). The development reflects with the historical, cultural and technical contexts of Japan and the rest of the world.

The first boom began in the 1960s, the very early period of the television era in Japan. During that time, very influenced by the child-oriented Disney cartoons, anime works in Japan were mostly targeted to children, such as Tetsuka's *Astro Boy*. However, the stories of Tetsuka's anime are very different from the western cartoons. For example, the stories are continuous, unlike the western cartoons which usually have individual story episodes. Anime and manga can depict a lot of different aspects within characters and backgrounds. A character in a story can grow up, fall in love, get married and have children, or he/she can fail in something but succeed after trying it many times, or he/she can die. This narrative style of anime/manga was established by Osamu Tetsuka. Themes of growing-up, dreams, hope, ideals, friendships, endeavors, successes, and victories are very common contents in manga and anime works since the 1960s (Masuda 2007, 143).

[40] Madhouse, a Japanese anime studio found in 1972.

The second anime boom period is from 1977 when the *Spaceship Yamato* was released and *Galaxy Express 999* and *Mobile Suit Gundam* followed within two or three years. These anime were more like science fiction stories and attracted many adolescents and young adults, which helped to extend the age range of anime audiences. This boom is highly related to the *Star Trek* mania from the U.S. and the magnificent development of science and technology, including a series of space missions, in the late 1960s. Particularly, the historical event of the first human setting foot on the moon in 1969 inspired a lot of Japanese people, including mangaka and animators putting their hopes and imaginations into their work.

The biggest growth of anime industry is actually the third boom, from 1995 when the masterpiece *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, shortened as *EVA*, was broadcast on TV Tokyo Network, which became an "overnight sensation, triggering a tsunami of Web shrines, fans clubs and commentary across the entire planet" (Redmond 2007). *EVA* was directed by Hideaki Anno, and produced by Gainax studio, an anime studio consisting of the first generation of otaku. The TV broadcast of *EVA* drew a lot of public attention in Japan, because this anime not only targeted kids or adolescents, but is a science fiction story that contains a lot of mystical, religious and theological contents, ranging from "Shintoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and several varieties of mysticism"(Redmond 2007), and concepts involving philosophy and psychoanalysis. The significant influence of *EVA* is that anime is no longer considered as kids' or teenagers' hobbies but as an art form of storytelling and a way of thinking. The main female characters in *EVA* also become the original models of "moe characters" and "cosplaying" – which I will discuss in the later chapters.

Since the broadcast of *EVA*, more and more Japanese people came to notice Japanese anime and manga, not only kids and adolescents, but also college students, cultural critics, and the general public. At the same time, information and media communication technologies helped these cultural products to be distributed worldwide. Overseas audiences came to be interested in anime. It is during the same period that Hayao Miyazaki's animated films gained international attention, including *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and the 2002 Oscar Best Animated Feature *Spirited Away* (2001). The biggest global phenomenon was *Pokémon*, a media franchise originally released as a video game during the late 1990s and early 2000s. *Pokémon* anime was released in 45 countries and regions around the world and its gross global earnings, including related products, are estimated at three trillion yen (about 35 billion dollars) by June 2005 (JETRO 2005).

Japanese animators are very talented and have enough technologies and equipment; however, they do not like to use the computer-generated images or 3D images. In 1995, the first complete computer-animated film *Toy Story* was released by Pixar Animation Studio. This is the technical innovation in animation making, and due to its overwhelming success, many animated productions thereafter started to use computer-generated imagery (CGI) technology to produce animation. Such digital technologies do not only reduce the cost of anime production, but also highly improves the efficiency and accuracy of making animation. The CGI technology help animators create images which are more controllable and more resembling the movement of human bodies. In addition, 3D computer graphic software allows more and more people to produce their own videos at home. It is not only applied in animation making, but also used in video games.

However, most Japanese animators still consider traditional hand-drawn anime to be better for artistic expression. Therefore, in Japan, most television anime producers still follow the traditional animation techniques, but sometimes they will use CGI technology as an additional assist.

In fact, the most influential digital technology is the Internet – particularly Web 2.0 sites such as YouTube, discussion forums, blogs, and peer-to-peer file sharing software – these Web technologies allows more and more individuals to be able to participate, create, reproduce, and distribute their own artwork. With these technologies, anime fans not only become more passionate consumers, but also easily become amateur producers. Moreover, the Internet helps the worldwide anime fandom grow rapidly. Becoming a part of global economy, anime and manga transcend genders, races, and nationalities, cross national boundaries, and become the obsessive objects for fans from all over the world.

So far, I have pointed out how anime and manga developed with technology: manga magazines were able to be widely distributed due to mass printing technology; the invention and common use of television sets increased the demand for anime television programs, and therefore changed the anime production process and division of labor; cinema influenced the artistic expressions of manga; and the improvement on the labor-intensive work of manga and anime making. Moreover, I pointed out how the digital technologies influenced the anime industry. In the following section, I am going to examine how anime and manga are received and consumed in other countries with cultural globalization and digital technologies.

III. Anime and manga abroad

> Japanese anime broke into the world market beginning in the 1980s, after which it steadily established a leading position. TV cartoons such as *Astro Boy*, broadcast in the U.S. from 1963, and *A Dog of Flanders* broadcast in Europe have long been accepted by viewers outside Japan without any conscious recognition that these works were made in Japan. *Doraemon* has been a popular anime in Asia and *Sailor Moon*, *Dragoon Ball* and other TV anime features that were popular in Japan have also gained popularity in Europe. In the U.S., *Akira* and *Gundam* and Studio Ghibli[41] titles have enjoyed success. *Ghost in the Shell* made news in 1998 when it topped Billboard's video sales chart in the U.S.A. (JETRO 2005)

Japanese anime, especially television anime, have been the biggest supply sources of animation programs in the world. Low budget and mass production put Japanese anime in an advantageous position in the global animation market. However, in the earlier period, most overseas audiences did not realize that the cartoon programs they watched were actually from Japan. It was not until later in the 1990s, when Japanese animation films gained more and more attention in the form of international film awards, that more and

[41] Studio Ghibli is a Japanese animation film studio headed by the world renowned director Hayao Miyazaki. The animation films created by the studio include *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoko*, *Spirited Away*, and others.

more people abroad began to look more closely at this particular medium from Japan. In addition, anime fandom groups that used to be on their own, have started to share their anime interests with more and more audiences – here mass communication benefits them.

In Asia, anime and manga had been popular since the 1960s and 1970s. For years, manga had been published illegally in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and elsewhere in Asia. There were pirated or redrawn copies before the copyright became an issue in recent years. Anime have been broadcast in these Asian countries too, and usually have the local language dubbed and subtitles translated. In Europe, manga and anime are also very popular and available widely in countries such as Italy, Spain and France. In the U.S., anime broadcasting started in the late 1960s, and there were fandom groups then – although they were still a minority. Since the 2000s, American fandom groups in high schools and colleges increased rapidly, as well as conventions for fans to meet each other and network.

Technologies in digital and communication media are credited with the wide-reaching and international distribution and popularity of anime and manga. Due to the improvement of communication and information technologies, worldwide anime fans are able to access more anime from Japan. Some hardcore fans even participate as middle-men to distribute anime programs and information to other fans via peer-to-peer software or online discussion forums. Digital technologies allow producers, artists, consumers, and fans to easily exchange and circulate anime images and data around the world. Particularly, the fandom activities around the world are more and more active and creative since the advent of the Internet. Therefore, I regard otaku fandom activities as part of the Internet culture, or “network culture” in Terranova’s terms (Terranova 2004),

and some of their activities are so unique and special and therefore required taking a further look.

When comparing fans from two different countries, the U.S. and Taiwan, I discovered that the patterns of their fandom activities and their receptions of anime and manga are not totally the same due to their different historical and cultural contexts. Even though they are consuming the same cultural products, some cultural implications might be lost in translation or interpreted differently. Especially in Taiwan, the conflicts and dilemmas regarding its political and historical situations related to Japan result in different reactions. Moreover, in the U.S., the global political and economic tension with Japan and the cultural distance are factors of the development of anime in the States. Therefore, it is important to understand both countries' historical, economic, and political backgrounds in relation to anime fans' consumption and reproduction of anime and manga.

1. Anime and manga in the U.S.

One of the biggest differences between Japanese anime and American cartoons is that most Americans consider animation to be for children only. Therefore, the censorship standards are set very high so that when anime came to the U.S., a lot of the material could not fit in the child-only category. Moreover, in Japan, anime and manga are always linked to each other, while in the U.S., it seems that the markets of comics and animation are usually separate and seldom considered in alliance, with the exception of the superhero films in Hollywood adopted from comic books (Lopes 2009, 153).

Therefore, even though anime entered the U.S. television networks for many decades, manga were still having difficulties entering the U.S. publishing market, until 2000.

a. Censorship

As mentioned earlier, *Astro Boy* was the first television anime series broadcast in the U.S. It was syndicated by NBC from 1963 to 1965 for the first time. After its success, more Japanese anime were exported and broadcast, such as *Gigantor (Tetsujin 28-go)* and *Speed Racer (Mach Go Go Go)* in the late 1960s. Later, more robot and spaceship anime were introduced to American audiences, like *Space Battleship Yamato* and *Robotech* – in accordance to the second boom period of anime in Japan. Anime were dubbed in English and some of the contents that are not culturally familiar to American audiences have to be edited out. But the biggest problem is that it has to pass the television censorship rules for children's programs.

American cartoon studios typically create TV cartoons that are tailored for American kids and TV censorship for children's programs is very strict, especially against violence. However, in Japan the making of anime or manga is not only for kids, so it often includes violence or other adult content. This results in anime encountering a lot of trouble in terms of adult content or moral issues in the U.S. Devoted anime fans in the US always complain about the strict censorship on anime, because they think the public does not understand the essence of anime – which is the diversity of dramas and themes. Anime are not simply made for children but also target a larger audience. Even in recent years when numerous anime programs were broadcast in the United States, anime still had to be edited a lot by American TV stations in order to follow the standards of the TV broadcasting code. It has made a lot of hardcore anime fans unhappy. They do not think

anime should be treated the same as child-oriented cartoons, and it is also not fair to simply blame TV violence for children's misbehaviors.

In 2001, feeling the pressure from anime fans, Cartoon Network launched a new channel [adult swim], to provide more adult-oriented and cutting-edge animation. It is for 18+ audiences and therefore is able to provide more varieties of anime programs in the U.S. Meanwhile, more and more American anime licensing companies such as ADV films and FUNimation Entertainment, have begun to license more adult-oriented anime DVDs and received good success in the American anime market. Anime distribution companies have to gain licenses from the Japanese companies in order to legally release, distribute, as well as dub in local languages or to add subtitles. Sometimes, anime licenses can be extremely expensive: the cost can reach $20,000 per episode. There are also companies founded directly by Japanese parent companies, such as Bandai Entertainment. These licensers and distributors in the U.S. usually have different types of niche market strategies, and sometimes buy or sell anime licenses with each other. The anime industry is very competitive in the United States now. The anime industry had reached its high in the early 2000s, but the economic recession in recent years has resulted in a decline in sales. The anime piracy videos online have also become a big issue for anime companies. Therefore, these anime or manga companies have had to develop new strategies in order to cope with the development of new technology.

b. Manga and the Rise of Comic Books

One of the main obstacles for manga entering the American market is its limited distribution system. The existing pattern of production, consumption, and distribution of comic books was very different from that of manga in Japan. The comic market in the U.S. used to be closed and only a small number of consumers read particular genres of comic books. American kids watched cartoons and certain teenagers or young adults collected comic books and graphic novels – unlike in Japan, where all generations are reading different genres of manga. Because American publishers and licensers were conservative about manga in the American market, they were reluctant to publish manga. Plus, the technical difficulties such as re-printing, re-editing, translating, and censorship issues all became obstacles for manga to enter the U.S. market.

In the 1940s and 1950s, American comic books were one of the most popular cultural forms. However, after the 1950s, the sales of American comic books declined. The old system of distribution had collapsed and comic books could only be found in the special comic shops (Lopes 2009). The "direct market" system of distribution – publishers printing out only copies that were pre-ordered and selling them to comic book shops with no returns policies – made it difficult for comic books to reach multiple audiences and gradually declined over the years. Plus, publication censorship for comic books is as strict as television cartoon censorship. The American public considered comic books to be lowbrow and violent, and one of the causes of juvenile delinquency. It was once thought that comic books were going to vanish due to declining business. However, the re-introduction of manga in the 1990s actually helped the revival of comic books and graphic novels in the U.S.

Of course, as mentioned earlier, due to the existing printing style and distribution in the U.S., manga did not enter the American market easily in the beginning. The American-style comic book usually refers to a magazine of thirty or so color pages (and many are advertisements). Unlike comic books, manga are printed in one-color black-and-white inner pages and are usually very thick or come with many volumes. The existing distribution channels for comic books were already very limited, in a closed market, and publishers tended to hold very conservative attitudes. Therefore, they did not want to print this foreign, thick, black-and-white manga (Shiraishi 1997, 266). In addition, manga texts should be read from right to left, while American reading is from left to right. It causes a lot of trouble for American readers to get used to it. Manga needed to be rearranged, reprinted, and translated in order to be sold in the U.S. Publishers used the "flopping" technique (as if in a mirror) to reverse the reading direction, but it resulted in problems – for example, most characters became left-handed. Therefore, the publishers were very reluctant to import manga because the manga licenses and re-editing cost a lot and the market did not seem profitable (Gravett 2004).

But, why did manga experience such dramatic growth in the early 2000s? The sudden growth of manga in the U.S. is not a coincidence, but resulted from several factors: the international recognition and popularity of anime, support from the anime fandom community, and online websites focusing on anime and manga.

In the U.S., anime fans very much overlapped with science fiction fans in the 1980s. For example, it was common for an anime fan to attend the *Star Trek* convention in the 1980s or the early 1990s. Anime fans gradually discovered more and more genres of anime and they also discovered that most anime originated from manga. These fans

would organize fandom groups and share or exchange video tapes if they were able to obtain particular anime videos from Japan. However, at that time, American anime fandom groups were relatively small compared to now. It was not until Japanese animation films such as *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*, received international recognition with film awards that anime began to have more audiences appreciating the anime medium as a form of art. Thereafter, the number of fandom groups grew rapidly and fandom activities began to thrive more and more, especially with the acceleration of the Internet and digital information technologies.

Luckily for manga, the prospering of anime and its fandom helped publishers rethink the profits of publishing manga. In addition, even though manga's entry into the U.S. seemed difficult in the beginning, those diehard fans' push was really helpful. These fans were very enthusiastic about sharing information or material, and they translated manga into English and scanned and shared it online before manga got licenses to be published in the U.S. These fandom activities eventually convinced some American publishers to get licenses from Japanese manga publishers. Tokyopop (formerly known as Mixx) and Viz Media are two well-known manga distributors, licensors, and publishers in the U.S. They started to publish 100% authentic, unflopped manga because American fans preferred the original version. In 2003, the popular Japanese manga weekly, *Shonen Jump*, was finally released in English by Viz Media and it was printed to be read from right to left.

Manga's rapid growth in the U.S. had a great influence on the American comic book market. According to ICv2,[42] manga sales in the United States and Canada tripled from $60 million in 2002 to $180 million in 2005 and reached $200 million in 2006. Manga became the fastest growing publishing market in the U.S. and, because of the fast development of manga, comic books began to be considered more seriously in the U.S. (Schodt 1986; Lopes 2009). The American graphic novel market (including both comic books and manga) brought in $395 million in sales in 2008 – a dramatic growth compared with the $75 million in sales in 2001. Even though the sale of manga has declined in the U.S since 2005, manga still accounts for the largest market, selling about $175 million in 2008 – about 44% of the whole graphic novel market.[43]

Anime and manga in Japan have more genres than American viewers can imagine. There are many different types of stories to be found. The storylines of anime and manga are basically deeper and darker and that is why American viewers are so interested in them. Therefore, after manga were introduced to the United States, readers of comic books or manga increased, especially among female readers. At the same time, American graphic novels were getting more and more attention. Graphic novels are more like manga than comic books, with much more freedom and pages to depict dramatic storylines. There are actually some graphic novels that address serious issues such as sexuality or the Holocaust.[44] Librarians and teachers started to promote graphic novels as educational tools. However, for most Americans, comic books they have known are

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[42] ICv2 is an online news and information provider for popular culture businesses in the U.S. The website, ICv2.com was launched in 2001.

[43] The "White Paper" by the pop culture research firm ICv2. 2008.

[44] Graphic novels such as *Fun Home*, an autobiographic story about the author's relationship with her father, her family, and gender identity; Pulitzer Prize Special Award winner *Maus*: *A survivor's tale*, which is a biography of the author's father, a Jew, who survived the Holocaust; or, *Persepolis*, an autobiographical comic by Marjane Satrapi depicting her experience of Islamic Revolution in Iran.

almost always stories about superheroes, such as *Spider-Man*, *Superman*, or *Wonder Woman*. Different from American comic books, manga came with complete storylines, imagination, originality, and diversity. Manga attracted American viewers to indulge into their fandom activities. Therefore, there are bookstores selling manga everywhere, including chain bookstore Barnes and Nobles, and local public libraries. The commercial television networks have broadcast more anime programs for general audiences, and the alliance between anime programs and manga publishing started to work in the U.S. Now, anime fans clubs can be found in almost every city and country in the U.S., and anime fans no longer feel alone or lonely because they can find other fans easily.

2. Anime and manga in Taiwan

Anime and manga are not unfamiliar to Japan's Asian neighbors, especially Taiwan, because of its 50-year colonization by Japan, and because Taiwan shares part of the Chinese ancient culture of manga-style artwork. The obstacles for the distribution of anime and manga in Taiwan are actually more about political and economic factors.

Besides anime and manga, Japanese contemporary popular culture such as trendy dramas,[45] fashion styles, movies, karaoke, and popular music have long been distributed in Taiwan beginning as early as the late 1970s. Being the earliest modernized country in Asia after World War II, Japan was positioned as a model of capitalist society for other Asian countries, for modernization and urbanization. Therefore, when Taiwanese young

[45] Trendy dramas: Japanese television dramas. There are various genres of drama series, including romance, comedy, detective stories, office stories, horror and mystery, and many others. It is called "trendy" because the sets of these dramas are usually in contemporary Japanese cities, with modern style of screenwriting, reflecting the urban lives of young people in the city.

people gained access to Japanese popular culture (which often depicts the urban living experience or new types of social relationships emergent in modern societies), Taiwanese young people felt resonated with Japanese popular culture and attempted to find meaning in Japanese cultural products.[46]

The relationship between Taiwan and Japan is very complicated. First, Taiwan was Japan's colony for fifty years from 1895 to 1945. There is the dominant and the dominated relationship, while it is not the same as it is in Western colonialism. Without much too obvious economic exploitation like Western colonialism, the Japanese imperial government tried to assimilate Taiwanese through education and language. This process is called *Kōminka* (皇民化) and described as "becoming Japanese" by scholar Leo Ching (Ching 2001). The older generation of Taiwanese who were born before 1940 were under Japanese education in their early years. Some of them can speak fluent Japanese and do not speak Mandarin. After World War II, the KMT[47] government from Mainland China took over Taiwan from Japan. However, the KMT regime treated Taiwanese people even worse than the Japanese colonial government in the beginning. Therefore, because of the hatred and disgust toward the KMT regime, older Taiwanese people often have nostalgia for Japanese culture at the same time. In his manga *On Taiwan*, Japanese right-wing mangaka Yoshinori Kobayashi (小林善紀) claims that the "Japanese spirit" – which has almost disappeared in Japan – can be found within the respectful Taiwanese senior, Taiwan's former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝).

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[46] There was a phenomenon called "Hari" (哈日) in Taiwan, which peaked in the late 1990s. Hari means Japan-mania or Japanophilia. During the late 1990s, evoked by Japanese trendy dramas, many Taiwanese young people were obsessed with Japanese popular culture: its commodities, living styles, as well as the ways of thinking, which are mostly learned from watching Japanese trendy dramas or anime.

[47] KMT is short for Koumingtang (國民黨), a political party of Taiwan. It had been Taiwan's ruling party from 1949 to 2000.

Since 1945, the KMT government in Taiwan has taken a negative stance toward Japanese culture, which is understandable given Japan's earlier colonialism of Taiwan and military invasion of China. Despite the negative attitude by the KMT government, Japanese cultural products still gradually gained more influence anyhow, especially though pirated anime and manga. Taiwanese television has broadcast Japanese anime since the 1960s (re-edited, dubbed, and subtitled). Japanese anime programs and American cartoons were already a kind of common entertainment in children's everyday life.

Moreover, the satellite TV networks helped to distribute Japanese popular culture in Taiwan, as well as in other Asian countries. Taiwan had strict governmental restrictions regarding foreign TV programs on the terrestrial television channels. But when illegal satellite and cable TV networks launched since the 1970s, unfettered by governmental restrictions, Japanese programs started to gain a regular audience in Taiwan. Cable TV networks prospered in the 1980s, and finally got legalized in 1993. Cable TV penetration into households in Taiwan exceeded 70% in 1996 – only three years after the legalization of commercial Cable TV in 1993 (Ishii, Su, and Watanabe 1999). Cable TV and satellite channels require a lot of programs to cover so many channels 24 hours and 7 days a week. Therefore, foreign programs have been broadcast a lot on channels such as HBO, CNN, ESPN, and Discovery from the West, StarTV and TVBS from Hong Kong, as well as Japanese NHK and anime or drama channels. Among these, NHK broadcast Japanese programs without Chinese subtitles, but the most influential channel is StarTV, the first commercial pan-Asia television network that provides Japanese anime and TV dramas with Chinese subtitles or dubs.

Not only Japanese anime were generally watched since the 1970s, Japanese manga were also found everywhere in bookstores, grocery stores, and rental stores. Japanese manga shared more than 90% of the comic book market in Taiwan, and others such as American, Hong Kong or Taiwan's comic books shared less than 10% of the market (Xiao 2002).

Even though "cultural proximity" makes Japanese anime and manga easily accepted in Taiwan, the historical and political conflicts between Taiwan and Japan create obstacles. But it seems that these historical or political obstacles do not influence Taiwanese young generations. In the eyes of Taiwanese young people, Japanese popular culture seems more familiar and similar to their own culture, compared with Western culture. Not only the cultural and historical connections, but also the similar rapid modernization process pattern makes them identify better with their modernized model: Japan. Political issues such as nationalism are not a problem for them – even though it might be an issue for older generations or the Taiwanese government.

3. Beyond Nationalism

Some scholars researching the Japanese media cultural distribution in Asian countries have argued that Japan evoked the ideology of "Asian values," "Asian identity" or "Asian modernity" and the advantages of "cultural proximity" to facilitate its expansion of capitalism (Ching 2000a; Iwabuchi 2002; Shiraishi 1997). Asian studies scholar Leo Ching indicates that there are two different desires for "Japan" in the postcolonial Taiwan. On the one hand, there is a nostalgic desire for the old colonial Japan period, in the formation of an oppositional political identity against the KMT

regime. On the other hand, the youth desire modernized Japanese mass cultural products in the current Taiwan society. According to Ching, the current condition in Taiwan does not directly result from past colonial desire, even though the influences of colonization are inevitably inscribed in the cultures and shape people's cultural identities to various degrees (Ching 2000b, 765-766). Another scholar, Koichi Iwabuchi challenges the "western" globalization model by showing the circulation of Japanese popular culture as another model of capitalist globalization, other than the Western-centered one. Both Ching and Iwabuchi attempt to show the problem of binaries in the discussions of "global-local," "center-periphery," "homogeneity-heterogeneity," or "West-East" by breaking the model of globalization or modernization from the Western-centered perspective.

From the political perspective, nationalism is usually an obstacle for cultural globalization. Individual governments are always concerned that their local cultures and values will be destroyed because globalization will result in a homogenous culture. Therefore, state governments usually have conservative protectionist cultural policies against the cultural super powers such as the U.S. or Japan in the cases of Asia. However, with the development of information and communicative media, the speed of cultural flows is too rapid to be contained or controlled. Such cultural flows are affective, because they are not objects or commodities that are distributed or transmitted, but images, information, or immaterial ideas that modulate people's feeling. In the Taiwanese young people's case, what they want and get is the feeling of being modernized via depictions of everyday life, relationships, fashion, consumption, etc. Such feelings are linked to affect. Under the circulation of affect, information, and bodies, the reception of the media

impacts consumers in ways that are without consciousness. This impact materializes as bodily response – affective, pre-conscious, and pre-individual. Affect allows discussions on cultural globalization or colonialism to transcend narratives of nationalism, racism, as well as sexuality or gendered stereotypes. One case of the circulation of affect is through the popularity of anime and manga – which transcend nationalism and racism and cross national boundaries.

Explaining how Japanese popular culture was able to become so popular globally, Iwabuchi uses the term "odorlessness"[48] to describe the "non-Japanese" characteristics of its cultural products. Normally, cultural products carry some kind of "odor" related to the culture in which they were produced. But in Japanese popular cultural products, ethnic characteristics are usually removed (Iwabuchi 2002). However, it is doubted that Japanese anime and manga are globally popular is due to their "odorlessness." It is obvious that many popular anime are not totally "odorless" – taking the popular "ninja and folk tale" anime *Naruto* for example. Actually, sometimes it is precisely because it is "made in Japan" that products become "cool" or "cute" and popular overseas (Allison 2006, 20; McGray 2002). Symbols of "coolness" or "cuteness" are all about branding and feeling, which is linked to the affective economy that modulates feelings, moods, and emotions by providing emotional impact, visual effects, and other stimulations that result in the movements of affect – bodily responses without consciousness. In the anime industry, the turn to affect is more significant with the images of "moe" – especially via digital technologies such as video games or Internet communication that intensify the consumption and production of anime.

[48] Here, "odor" means a kind of flavor for cultural products, embedded within the original countries' specific cultural objects, ethnic characteristics, or values.

In this chapter, I detailed the history of the anime industry in Japan and overseas, I argued that it is an affective economy that circulates cultural objects, images, and symbols through the process of globalization and the advancement of technology. The anime images and characters are objects of affection, produced by animators, mangaka, and other individuals in the industry, whose affective labor is involved in the economy. Meanwhile, these cultural objects are consumed by fans passionately and actively all over the world. Therefore, in the following chapter, I am going to further explain these devoted anime fans: otaku.

Chapter 3

Otaku: Deviants or Connoisseurs?

For many outsiders, otaku (devoted anime fans) are generally regarded as geeks, nerds, or weird people who cannot communicate with others normally. But, they are sometimes considered to be experts in computer technologies and connoisseurs of certain subcultures such as anime and manga. Many otaku or anime fans that I have interviewed have complicated feelings toward the term "otaku" and they all have strong opinions about the definition(s) of otaku.

In this chapter, I will explain further who otaku are, as well as how and why they have contradictory feelings about the otaku identity. Their confused identity as otaku indicates uncertainty with the idea of "identity" in the age of digital technology. Moreover, the changing definition of otaku also illustrates that being an otaku is more and more about being affective – about bodily responses without consciousness. It is shown in the transformation from otaku as experts, connoisseurs, newtype[49] human, to otaku with "da-me" orientation (otaku that are no good or hopeless). The changes of the meanings, and of the traits of otaku in different generations also illustrate that the turn to affect is not only in the anime industry, but also in its fans.

[49] The term "newtype" originated in the anime *Gundum* series, referring to a new stage of human evolution. As I will mention later, Toshio Okada borrowed the term "newtype" to describe Japanese otaku as a new generation of human with a revolutionary sense of vision and a highly efficient reference ability.

I. The Origins of Otaku

The use of otaku can be traced back to the early 1980s. Originally, the Japanese term *taku* [宅] literally means house or home. *O-taku* [御宅] is the honorific version of *taku*, used as an honorific second-person pronoun; that is, a polite form of "you" or "your family." After the 1980s, the hiragana (one of Japanese syllabaries) "o-ta-ku" [おたく] was used frequently among groups of science fiction or anime fans to address each other, and then gradually became a common slang expression referring to passionate and obsessive mania of anime, manga, or games.

In the 20th Japan Science Fiction Convention (also called DAICON III) in 1981, science fiction fans called each other "otaku" because it was convenient to recognize that they have the same interests. In addition, a group of amateur animators revealed their otaku interests by creating the Opening Animation short film of the 20th and 22nd Japan SF Convention (DAICON III and DAICON IV) in 1981 and 1983. Both DAICON opening short films can be referred to as a significant beginning of otaku culture. The first opening short film in 1981 was a little girl given a task to water a plant called "*daicon*" ("radish" in Japanese). During her mission, the little girl fights with a bunch of monsters from well-known science fiction and anime shows such as *Gundam, Space Battleship Yamato, Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and *Godzilla*.[50] The 1983 film showed even better animation techniques, and the little girl in the 1981 opening has turned into a bunny girl.[51] The group of amateur animators who made DAICON films demonstrated outstanding technical abilities through their quality films – even better than the

[50] Daicon 3 Opening Video. Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xLAVWf-N3c
[51] Daicon 4 Opening Video. Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzy1RNJBUo4

"professionals." In addition, they showed extreme enthusiasm for what they love. The components such as cute/sexy girls, monsters, spaceships, bombs, explosions, and other kinds of fantasies are the most important elements of otaku culture (Murakami 2005, 10).

The members of the "DAICON film" group included Toshio Okada, Yosuhiro Takeda, Hideaki Anno, Takami Aki, Yoshiyuki Sadamoto, and Shinji Higuchi. They were college students at that time. They changed the name of studio to "Gainax" in 1985. Gainax is the anime company producing *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, one of the most important TV anime series in Japan.[52] And these original members of Gainax turned out to be very important animators in Japanese anime industry nowadays. Organized by a group of anime fans who have become famous anime artists, Gainax has always had a close relationship to the otaku community.[53]

Meanwhile, the term "otaku" was used on TV anime, too: main characters occasionally called each other otaku in TV anime *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross* in 1982. The rapid spreading of the term "otaku" was influenced by this popular anime. Moreover, otaku first appeared in the newspapers, *Manga Burikko* magazine, by columnist Akio Nakamori (中森明夫) in his column "*A Research of Otaku*" (「おたく」の研究) in 1983 (Okada 1996, 10; Nomura Sogo Kenkyujo 2005, 9).

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[52] *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (usually referred to as *EVA*, or *Evangelion*) was a TV anime series that ran from 1995 to 1996 in the beginning, and was further extended to manga, games, films, and many other products. The anime serial was created by Gainax and written and directed by Hideaki Anno (庵野秀明). With intense reference to biological, religious, psychoanalytic, and philosophical concepts, the anime was well recognized among the Japanese public and considered one of the greatest anime in Japan.

[53] Besides Hideaki Anno, the director of *Evangelion*, Gainax members also includes Sadamoto Yoshiyuki (貞本義行,), a famous character designer and manga author; Shinji Higuchi (樋口真嗣), an expert on anime special effect; and, Toshio Okada (岡田斗司夫), an anime producer, lecturer, and writer, who invented the idea of "otakuology" (the study of otaku).

Thereafter, there have been a lot of Japanese scholars who pay attention to otaku, put them in the categories of subculture, and show how otaku are against the mainstream society and resist the hegemonic culture: such as artist Takashi Murakami, animator and author Toshio Okada, architect and cultural critic Kaichiro Morikawa, who have their own ways to define otaku. They all consider otaku as a community or a subculture which share similar characteristics in behaviors, experiences, psychological conditions, and/or aesthetics (Murakami 2005; Okada 1996; Morikawa 2003).

Following the tradition of British Cultural Studies, Dick Hebdige defines subcultures as groups of people with certain common interests, who resist hegemonic culture and dominant ideology by developing different styles to distinguish themselves from the mainstream culture, in order to develop a sense of identity (Hebdige 1981). Japanese contemporary artist Takashi Murakami finds this subculture definition fits the culture of otaku. According to Murakami, otaku culture has risen from Japan's complicated background: rapid economic growth, the rise of nationalism, and the restraint by American military and at the same time, admiration of American popular culture. Otaku culture has risen from the postwar conditions and otaku has reclaimed imagery in their own way via anime and manga. "Otaku subcultures are dealing with issues at the core of the 'post-postwar' Japanese psyche," expressing an "apocalyptic tragic paradise" through their works (Murakami 2005, 256-7). Since the end of World War II, Japan has been under the Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution,[54] which prohibits

[54] The official English translation of the article reads: "ARTICLE 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes (2). To accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Article_9_of_the_Japanese_Constitution (Accessed 9/13/2010)

an act of war by the Japanese government. Murakami argues that this restrained situation of Japan is reflected constantly in otaku's fascination with war and military weaponry and machine robot creations. This fascination with war is reflective of otaku's resistance to Article 9:

> [Otaku's] criticism of Article 9 have come to define otaku subculture and mark their political and ideological stance as diametrically opposed to the leftist discourse that radicalized the 1960s avant-garde – the last period marked by political protest and cultural revolution in Japan. Today's subculture chooses videogame wars over street-riot opposition, deviance over activism, solipsistic erotic fantasy over sexual freedom, and hollow identity over existential angst. This subculture has long abandoned the ideals of modern humanism, embracing instead what Yumiko Iida calls a postmodern "nihilistic nationalism" linked to a "highly media-permeated and technologically driven socio-cultural environment," which is "devoid of meaning, historical depth, and empirically grounded subjectivity (Murakami 2005, 256-7).

Murakami describes otaku culture from the resistance perspective and how they reflect the Japanese public psyche after the war. However, this psyche reflection argument may only apply to the early generation of otaku in Japan. When looking at the new generation of otaku in Japan, or otaku overseas, outside the context of Japanese society, there are different stories that these otaku want to tell. Moreover, with the emergence of anime fans abroad, the term otaku is applied differently in different countries. Therefore, when I use the term otaku, I understand otaku themselves are widely varied and heterogeneous transnationally, and I am reluctant to use the term "subculture" to describe them because they are not a group of homogenous people or community that are consciously resisting the hegemonic culture together.

In order to tell the difference between definitions of otaku, I began by looking into the online descriptions on multi-language Wikipedia websites:

From Japanese Wikipedia, s.v. “おたく”:

> おたくとは、社会的認知度が高くない趣味に傾倒する人の一つの類型またはその個人を示す言葉である。[55]
> [Translation: Otaku are a type of people who tend to be interested in the hobbies that are highly socially unaccepted.]

From English Wikipedia, s.v. “Otaku”:

> Otaku is a Japanese term used to refer to people with obsessive interests, particularly anime, manga, and video games.[56]

From Chinese Wikipedia, s.v. “御宅族”:

> 御宅族原指熱衷及博精於動畫、漫畫及電腦遊戲（ACG）的人，而現在一般泛指熱衷於次文化，並對該文化有極深入的了解的人… PS: 關於此條目並非「宅男」、「宅女」。[57]
> [Translation: Otaku originally refers to people who are passionate and knowledgeable about anime, manga and video games. However, now it refers to subculture in general, and people who have deep understanding with that subculture. … PS: This entry is not the same as “zhai” (male zhai or female zhai).]

From the comparison of three definitions in different language Wikipedia, some differences among them can be noticed already. Originally, the Japanese otaku means

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[55] Wikipedia (Japanese) s.v. “おたく.” http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E3%81%8A%E3%81%9F%E3%81%8F (Accessed 10/9/2009)
[56] Wikipedia (English) s.v. “Otaku.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otaku (Accessed 10/9/2009)
[57] Wikipedia (Chinese) s.v. “御宅族.” http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%BE%A1%E5%AE%85%E6%97%8F. (Accessed 10/9/2009)

someone interested in certain hobbies that are socially unaccepted. It carries the burden of stigma in Japanese society. While in the English speaking world, otaku refers to people who are particularly interested in anime, manga, and games. They are not stigmatized, but they are aware of some kind of stereotypes similar to geeks or nerds. In Taiwan, there is a lot of confusion about the term otaku. Some understand the original meanings of otaku in Japan, but some people influenced by the Taiwanese media, think otaku is "*zhai*," another stigmatized term by Taiwanese media. According to my observations and interviews, most Taiwanese anime fans maybe consider themselves as otaku, but then they are annoyed by the misinterpretation as zhai by the media, which results in very complicated and contradictory feelings for them.

II. Stigmatized Otaku and Zhai/Hikikomori/NEET

"Otaku" is a sensitive term not only in Japan, but also in Taiwan. For Taiwanese anime fans, whether or not the term otaku is negative depends on how they interpret it. First of all, they are aware of the stigma of Japanese otaku. Jack, a member of a college manga club in Taiwan, stated:

> In Japan, the term *otaku* is very sensitive. Sometimes they could get offended, enraged and furious if you called them otaku in Japan. There are some extremely violent examples in Japan such as Tsutomu Miyazaki and Sakakibara Seito incident. (TW14 Jack)

Taiwanese anime fans are familiar with the fact that the term otaku became seriously negative after the "Tsutomu Miyazaki incident" in Japan in 1989. Serial killer Tsutomu Miyazaki was arrested of murdering four little girls (ages 4 to 7). The police discovered

huge collection of pornographic anime videos in his room. Therefore, he was known as "Otaku Murderer" and since then, otaku was considered "sick" in Japanese society. By now, even though the popularity of anime and manga in the global market is remarkable and attracts numerous worldwide fans willing to identify themselves as otaku, otaku are still generally regarded as sick, weird, and socially inept in Japan. Whenever there were horrible social incidents happening, many people would blame those erotic or violent anime, and regard otaku communities for being weird and sick. For example, in 1997, "Kobe school killer" (also called Sakakibara Seito), a 14-year-old boy who brutally beheaded an 11-year-old boy, and put the head on a junior high school gate, with a defiant message stuffed in the mouth.[58] This young killer has been compared with the Otaku Murderer Tsutomu Miyazaki, because he has an early history of violent behavior like Miyazaki and he also had a lot of pornographic manga and anime collection at home. Therefore, such incidents had deeply shaken Japanese society and some critics and educators started to criticize pornographic manga and violent anime produced largely in Japan every year.

Unfortunately, media and the masses in Japan always mix up otaku with "***hikikomori***" (引き籠もり), individuals who have withdrawn from social life and confined themselves in their own rooms. Generally speaking, the phenomenon of hikikomori results from the social pressures which make young people choose to stay at home, instead of going out to interact with others – especially when it comes to competing with peers at school or at work. Because these "hikikomori" people whose

[58] "14-year-old Arrested in Japan for the brutal slaying of a child." *New York Times*, June 29, 1997. http://www.nytimes.com/1997/06/29/world/14-year-old-arrested-in-japan-for-the-brutal-slaying-of-a-child.html?scp=4&sq=kobe%20school%20killer&st=cse (Accessed 8/10/2010).

activities are limited at home and are usually involved in reading manga, watching anime, and surfing websites online, they are easily misunderstood as otaku. Usually, hikikomori start with refusing to go to school, mostly due to school bullying or educational difficulties. However, unlike hikikomori who refuse to go out, otaku do not necessarily confine themselves in their own rooms.

Another term "NEET" (originated in the UK) is also similar to hikikomori: Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET). But NEET seem to be more voluntary than hikikomori. NEET do not go to work for various reasons (for instances, refusing to work for other people, or feeling no necessity to work), and they end up with staying at home and in most cases they are financially supported by their parents. Hikikomori and NEET spend most of their time in their rooms – mostly surfing the Internet, and probably watching anime, reading manga and playing games. Therefore, they are easily overlapped with otaku, but the definitions are still different on many levels.

There are some cases related to hikikomori phenomenon in recent years in Japan. One of the most well-known cases is the "Akihabara Stabbing Spree" in June 8, 2008: A man drove a truck into the busiest street in Akihabara, stabbing seven people dead and injuring ten more. Akihabara is Tokyo's top electronics district, and also famous as "Otaku Paradise." The suspect, Kato, a temporary worker in an auto parts factory, claimed that he had no friends, no future and felt hopeless. Many reports referred to this incident as another case of hikikomori phenomenon. Effected by this incident, the Sunday-pedestrian-zoned streets in Akihabara, where many anime fans and cosplayers used to hang around, have been cancelled. The suspect of this incident is not an otaku and Japanese media has been careful not to link him to otaku. Unfortunately, because of the

location where the crime took place, it has still resulted in significant negative images for otaku activities in Akihabara (Figure 9).

(Figure 9) In front of the Akihabara Sofmap building, where the "Akihabara Stabbing Spree" incident took place. The photo was taken three days after the incident, and the police had established a tent for people to mourn the victims.

It is such incidents mentioned above that stigmatize the term otaku from simply referring to "people who are into anime, manga and games" to "people who are nerdy, weird, and socially inept, and even deviant or criminal." However, because anime and manga are gaining more and more popularity internationally, the Japanese government begins to take advantages of the cultural power of otaku and their products. The term otaku seems to be under the trend of globalization and becomes de-stigmatized. Even though the Japanese public still has negative impressions toward otaku, they start to learn that anime and manga are popular all over the world and started to re-estimate the influences of their popular culture and otaku. Many Japanese friends I have met in New

York City did not realize how anime and manga are popular overseas until they talked to their American friends.

Anime fans outside Japan have different feelings or interpretations of the term otaku. It is not without stigmatization, but it is not all about negative implications either. For overseas fans, the term otaku does not have the taboo or stigma as it does in Japan. However, there are still a lot of stereotypes and misunderstandings of otaku in countries outside Japan.

For example, because of the misinterpretation by Taiwanese media, the term otaku has a negative connotation in Taiwan. Taiwanese media regard otaku as people who do not go out, because they only take the literally meaning of otaku as "zhai" (宅, home, house). Taiwanese doujinshi artist Tifa, who works in entertainment-related business and makes doujinshi as her hobby, expressed her annoyance at how "regular people" misunderstand what otaku really means:

> They (the press) said otaku are people who don't go out. No, it is not the truth. Otaku do go out. Idiot!! However, I won't waste my energy to argue with regular people. What they want to think is their own business. You will know it's meaningless to argue with them. I only give them a smile, that's all. After all, everyone knows Taiwanese media is stupid. (TW12 Tifa)

The most notorious event about how Taiwanese media distorted the image of otaku is the "Guess Guess Guess" variety show in 1997. The show had a special section on otaku in one episode. They invited several otaku guys on TV, first showing their "geeky sloppy" appearance and then comparing their post-makeover images – clean, fashionable

and shiny – which images are implied as the opposite of otaku, reinforcing the stereotypes of otaku. Moreover, several female guests made terrible comments on these otaku in the program, said: "this kind of people shouldn't live in the world," and "otaku are those perverts on the subway." The program host even described the famous light novel series *The Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi* (*The Melancholy*, for short)[59] as pornography. After the broadcast of this program, anime fans in Taiwan were furious and the publisher Kadokawa Taiwan (a branch of Japan's Kadokawa Soten Publishing Co./角川書店) of *The Melancholy* demanded the host to apologize and rectify his previous mistakes. However, the harm had been done. After the show, Taiwanese otaku became victims chased by the media, and a lot of incorrect reports were made. The Taiwanese public learned of the existence of otaku, but they did not really understand them, except by those stereotypes on TV.

Steve works for a publishing company that publishes fantasy and BL novels in Taiwan. He is concerned about the public's impression of otaku's derivative works (i.e. doujinshi), because they are always reported by the media as pornographic and erotic.

> Taiwanese media is terrible. Because of the media, now everyone has learned what otaku means – it is very negative. In the media report, it sounded like there were full of violence and sex in the doujinshi conventions. Come on. There were probably four or five hundred booths in the doujinshi convention, and they (the press) happened to report and emphasize the adult-only section only. (TW02 Steve)

[59] *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* started as a light novel series written by Nagaru Tanigawa since 2003. It was soon adapted as a TV anime series by Kyoto Animation. The story of *The Melancholy* is about an energetic and eccentric high school girl Haruhi Suzumiya who felt bored with regular high school life, and wanted to find something special, such as aliens, time travelers, and Espers. The story of *The Melancholy* is simply about slices of everyday life in high school with a little bit of mystery and adventure.

Because of the misinterpretation by the media, the term otaku in Taiwan has developed into other meanings. The word "taku" (宅) refers to the same character in Japanese and in Chinese and has similar literal meaning of "house or residence." It is pronounced "***zhai***" in Mandarin Chinese, the language most people use in Taiwan. Therefore, when the term otaku (御宅/おたく) became well-known in Taiwan, most people use the literal meaning and regard otaku/zhai as people who stay at home. Therefore, the term zhai has gradually become a common slang referring to people who simply stay at home in Taiwan. This interpretation makes a lot of Taiwanese anime fans unhappy. They are hesitant to be called, or called themselves, otaku, because they do not want to be mistaken as zhai. Although many otaku do not care about how the public see them, it is still annoying for them to be treated as people who stay at home. Therefore, there are debates and compromises among Taiwanese anime fans. In short, they want to set a clear line between otaku and zhai. Sherry, who is an anime fan and devotes herself to cosplaying for many years, told me:

> I know the original meaning of otaku in Japan. When I mentioned otaku in Japanese, I referred to **connoisseur or expert.** But when it's in Chinese, "zhai"(宅) refers to people who stay at home. I use both meanings. For me, "zhai" is more negative, while "otaku" means more professional, probably because it's Japanese or English. So, I feel like that "otaku" is professional-oriented. … The term "zhai" is a kind of denial of a person. Why denial? Because people will think: Because this guy is "zhai" that they can't communicate with him, for he lives inside his own ACG[60] imaginary world. Therefore, outsiders do not want to understand you, nor want to find out why you like this anime or manga, because

[60] ACG is short for Anime, Comics (manga), and Games. It is an abbreviation commonly used by Taiwanese people. The term ACG is created by Shuffle Alliance (See Note 16).

> you are labeled as “otaku.” I don’t like people say that about otaku. (TW07 Sherry)

Like Sherry and Tifa, most anime fans in Taiwan are aware that *otaku* in Japan and *zhai* in Taiwan have different implications. They think otaku means someone who is an expert with something. “Otaku are people who are specialized with a certain thing” (TW12 Tifa). However, due to Taiwanese media’s misinterpretations, the public commonly think otaku is the same as zhai, referring to people who stay at home all the time. Taiwanese anime fans are also familiar with the origin of the term otaku in Japan, as well as the stigma after the “Miyazaki series killer incident.” They know the term otaku in Japan is still sensitive and negative. They do not like the stigmatized Japanese implication of otaku, but they do not like to be mixed up as zhai, either. They insist that otaku should refer to someone who is mastering something. Therefore, when it comes to defining otaku, most of Taiwanese anime fans tended to avoid the negative meanings and emphasized the “expert” definition of otaku. They want to embrace the positive meanings of otaku, the professional implications to differentiate from zhai, but they sometimes concern with the stigma of otaku from Japan. In short, their ambiguous and complex feelings make their identities of otaku contradictory and indeterminate.

III. Connoisseur Otaku

The idea of “otaku as **connoisseurs**” came from Toshio Okada, who wrote and lectured a lot to rectify the reputation of otaku since the Tsutomu Miyazaki incident. As mentioned earlier, Okada is one of the producers and animators of DAICON Opening

videos and also the original member of Gainax Studio. As an otaku himself, and having a successful career as an animator, producer, writer and lecturer, Okada speaks and represents for otaku. He has written several books on otaku, and established the idea of "Otakuology (Study of Otaku)" (Okada 1996).

According to Toshio Okada, otaku are people who possess several elements: First, otaku have a revolutionary sense of vision: "**otaku perception**." They are human beings with progressive sensibility of vision. With watching anime repetitively, otaku learn to distinguish different styles of anime works – from technical or artistic perspectives. This requires high standards and being able to criticize anime or manga works. Thomas Lamarre, in his *Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, further explains: "In other words, otaku perception entails a form of connoisseurship, which demands a new kind of literacy or competency in reading images" (Lamarre 2009, 144-145). Otaku not only can analyze storylines, but also have the ability to distinguish multiple layers of anime production, such as to tell the different styles of producers, directors, animators, or character designers, especially with repeated viewing.

Secondly, otaku are people who have a highly efficient reference ability. Different from anime fans or mania, otaku have the ability to make a lot of cross-references with anime and other genres. People who watch only anime are simply anime fans. A real otaku pursues not only anime itself, but also cares about all kinds of knowledge. They should have a lot of knowledge and information about everything to which they can relate anime, that is, many social values or issues. Therefore, otaku should care about the social world, instead of staying in their own imaginative world. For example, from watching the classic giant robot anime series *Mobile Suit Gundam* (*Gundam*, for short), otaku do not

just enjoy these giant robots fighting or obsess with the assembling model kits, they would also discuss different *Gundam* series in terms of weaponry designs, worldviews or philosophies. They will also think further about the meaning of wars and relate it to reality and concern about the wars which are taking place in the real world. For another example, passionate readers of manga *Drops of God* do not just read the story of how the characters describe the tastes of wine and learn wine knowledge from the manga, real otaku will be eager to learn much more about wines mentioned in the manga. They will do research, read more books on wine, and drink a lot of wines.

The last element of otaku, according to Toshio Okada, is that otaku are people who have persistent ambition and self-expression. Otaku will start from collecting all the items of their favorite anime, including DVDs, soundtracks, magazines, and special edition publications. Then, because they will discuss anime with their otaku friends, they find out they need more understandings and criticisms, and they are eager to learn more about it. Eventually, otaku will want to express their affection or insights about their favorite anime, and make doujinshi (fanzines) to share with other otaku friends. This represents a shift from affection to production, where otaku's affection of anime transfers into the motivation of creating more images, producing more objects with their affective labor, and via these objects, more affective flows and feelings circulate among other fans.

The circulation of affects among anime fans may involve their working on transferring images or information to one another. Here is an example from a college student, Chris, mentioning how another anime fan of his friends spent a lot of work helping him out with English translation and therefore gave him more access to the world of anime and manga:

> I will go out and buy manga at Kinokuniya Bookstore (New York). They came out in Japanese. I cannot read Japanese. But I have friends who can translate for me. I will give him the manga, and he will translate the "speech bubbles." It's a lot of work, yes. He will read it and typed the translation and printed it out for me. He does it for other people as well. (NY05 Chris)

Like Okada mentioned, an otaku has to invest a lot of time and energy to learn anything about everything: to understand the works of anime, to be able to compare anime with other artwork or genres, to analyze the production details and artist groups, to collect relevant information as much as possible, to discuss their own opinions and interpretations, and finally, to express and share their own ideas with others online or in their self-produced publications (i.e. doujinshi). Because it takes more efforts than averaged people will do, it is considered out of norms.

> Basically, being an otaku is like an obsessive interest in something considered strange or out of the norms. I'm an American, right. But I happen to like Japanese language. So I study it obsessively for two years. I consider I'm out of ordinary, but since learning language is considered a good thing, it's not considered as strange. But if you are interested in anime, you are considered strange. (NY04 KD)

KD is an anime fan who really wants to become an artist. He devotes himself to learning everything about Japan, the language, the culture, and about professional painting. For him, anime and manga are the sources of his devotion. It leads him to enjoy the art of drawing pictures, to learn Japanese, and eventually, his interests in manga has extended his overall interest in Japan. He has voluntarily learned much more about this particular culture from the East and even visited Japan for two weeks a few years ago. In

addition, KD has strict criticisms of the anime and manga works, instead of passively receiving these cultural products after watching a lot of anime shows. He especially has opinions against moe anime:

> Because I watch a lot, draw enough and study a lot, I know some of these (moe anime) are about marketing. And I don't want to be assaulted with these, so I don't want to focus on these (moe anime). … I think it's not good for guys to watch this, because it reinforces stereotypes. Sometimes it's funny, but sometimes it's sexist. (NY04 KD)

KD has his own strong opinions against moe anime, while most fans embrace it. No matter they like moe anime or not, the common thing among otaku is that they can devote themselves to something they love – anime. Some spend time making costumes, some making videos, and others making doujinshi. Also, it takes an otaku a lot of devotion to perfect his knowledge about anime and everything related to it. It is correspondent to Okada's definition of otaku.

However, Toshio Okada makes the standard for being an otaku so high that a lot of anime fans are unqualified as hardcore otaku anymore (Okada 1996, 35). Many fans in Taiwan are very familiar with Okada's definition of otaku, and often quote him to show how professional an otaku should be. As mentioned earlier, some fans use "experts" or "connoisseurs" as synonyms of otaku and most of them feel they do not feel that they are expert enough to be called otaku. For example:

> Otaku is about being very professional at a hobby, to a very high level of degree. There's a Japanese guy called Otaking (Okada), he defined otaku as "regarding any information or data, being able to absorb it completely, analyze it

> completely, and accept it completely." Well, I don't care if people call me an otaku. But I won't call myself an otaku, because I don't think I've achieved to that level yet. (TW13 Kwei)

> I think I am an anime fan, but not an otaku, because I am not that expert. Sometimes the thoughts and comments of otaku are unbearable. For example, when talking with a military otaku, if you disagreed with them in certain points, or correct their thoughts, they will keep arguing with you. But I don't want to know so much information. I am not interested in that. I don't like to argue with people about these things professionally. For me, anime and manga is entertainment. I feel happy watching them. It is meaningless for me to know in which year certain event happened in a particular anime. (TW03 Sue)

"Not professional or not expert enough to be an otaku" is always the excuse from Taiwanese anime fans to avoid being labeled as otaku. They are too aware of their limitations and too humble to call themselves otaku. In addition, as mentioned above, there is another reason of why they do not like to be called otaku – they refuse to be labeled as "zhai," as someone who does not go outside and socialize with people. For Taiwanese anime fans, what they want to insist upon is the "connoisseurship" perspective of otaku.

IV. "Da-me" Orientation: the rise of moe

Okada's definition of connoisseur otaku can be regarded as an "ideal" model of otaku. He wants to rectify the name of otaku by bringing a positive and ideal image of otaku back into the discussion, because they have been misunderstood as some kind of stereotyped nerd or geek, or even sick or deviant since the Miyazaki incident in 1989 in

Japan. However, more recently Toshio Okada claims that there is no more "100-proof" otaku anymore after 2000. He claims that he has quit "Otakuology," because there were no longer any "100-proof" otaku to speak of, especially among the younger generation.

> Back then [during the 1980s and early 1990s], there were a hundred thousand, or even one million people who were pure otaku – 100-proof otaku, if you will. Now, we have close to ten million otaku, but they are no more than 10- or 20-proof otaku. Of course, some otaku are still very otaku, perhaps 80 or 90 proof. Still, we can't call the rest of them faux otaku. The otaku mentality and otaku tastes are so widespread and diverse today that otaku no longer form what you might call a "tribe." (Okada, from *Little Boy* 2005, 165)

And part of the reason is because the otaku culture has changed, the otaku of Okada's generation has gotten older, and a new, younger generation grew up in different conditions, especially in a highly informational communicative society. But otaku's essential spirit does not change too much – just as the first element of otaku that Okada has brought up – that otaku have revolutionary senses of vision – "otaku perception." Therefore, otaku perception changes because the digital technology has changed the way we perceive the world. All sorts of online information, websites, and social networking now come so fast and are so easily accessed that people do not need deep thoughts but only bodily responses. For the younger generation of otaku, they are more interested in bishoujo (beautiful young girl) games, bishoujo figures, and moe anime – which are all associated with the responses of "moe" – the affective responses toward certain anime characters. For the older generation of otaku who have nostalgia for the "ideal" knowledgeable and professional otaku, they enjoy the stories being told in a narrative,

analog way. Thus, the transformation toward digital and affect is unfamiliar and uncomfortable for the older generation of otaku.

This digital, affective turn toward something with less "meaning" or less "narrative" is captured by another Japanese cultural critic Kaichiro Morikawa, who has a different viewpoint from Okada. He attempts to analyze the younger generation of otaku in the current Japan, while Okada still has nostalgia for the past. Morikawa claims that otaku are people who have dispositions toward being "no good" or "hopeless," that is "da-me (だめ)[61] orientation." He argues that otaku are interested in anime simply "because it is no good" (Morikawa from *Little Boy* 2005, 170). For him, otaku choose to like certain anime or manga while being aware that it is socially unacceptable. That means, once it is socially accepted by the mainstream, otaku might want to go for something more "da-me," something more "hopeless" or "useless," or even create by themselves – this is why since the 1980s otaku shifted from science fiction to anime and currently to bishoujo games or moe anime, because these things are considered to be more useless for the time being. In addition, Morikawa explains that he means nothing negative in terms of "da-me." He argues that it is similar to Japanese traditional aesthetics or philosophy such as "wabi" and "sabi,"[62] appreciating the beauty of the "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete." Similar to "wabi-sabi" (but not the same), "da-me" orientation is saying that

[61] Da-me (だめ) can be translated as "useless," "no good," or "hopeless."

[62] "Wabi-sabi" (わび・さび) represents a comprehensive Japanese world view or aesthetic centered on the acceptance of transience. It is about the beauty and elegance of modest simplicity. (Wikipedia, s.v. "Wabi-sabi") The philosophy of wabi and sabi is influenced by the Eastern cultural traditions such as Taoism and Buddhism. It is about a way of life of being spiritual and mindful, without asking from the outside world for appearance or wealth. It is asking people to accept the nature and the original humanity, which may be imperfect or asymmetric. This is very different from Western aesthetics, which is always about pursuing control, power, sublime, perfection, and symmetry. The philosophy of wabi-sabi is not to distinguish the dominant and the dominated, but to accept what it is and to look for the inner peace and harmony in oneself.

otaku do not care for the “ideal” or “good” but looking for something opposite: no good, or hopeless.

Okada is also different from Morikawa in the way otaku turn their interests in anime and manga. Okada argues that otaku like anime and manga is not because these things are useless but because they are good and high quality. When otaku watch anime, they actually look for high quality and have high standards, and they strongly criticize anime when the work is not good enough. For Morikawa, otaku actively lean toward these “useless” things; while Okada argues that otaku like these things from the beginning but they happened to be labeled as “useless” and become socially unacceptable afterward (Okada, Morikawa, and Murakami 2005).

Okada’s claim of “otaku is dead” and Morikawa’s “da-me orientation” are both referring to moe, an idea that proliferates in Akihabara in recent years. Okada is disappointed in the current development of anime, and claims that “otaku is dead.” It is mainly because of those moe anime, which only focus on sexual desire:

> I believe otaku culture has already lost its power. What you find in Akihabara today is only sexual desire. They all go to Akihabara, which is overflowing with things offer convenient gratification of sexual desire, made possible by the power of technology and the media. (Okada, Morikawa, and Murakami 2005, 170-171)

Okada calls this young otaku generation the “moe generation” who are mostly 35 or younger. They are different from the older otaku generation described in Okada’s book *Introduction to Otakuology* (1996). Morikawa argues that this younger “moe generation” love moe anime exactly because moe anime are worthless. This is the “da-me

orientation" of otaku, according to Morikawa. However, if Okada wants to hold on his definition of otaku in the *Otakuology* statement, then, the moe generation otaku are no longer 100 percent pure otaku. "I quit otaku studies, because I thought that there were no more otaku," said Okada (Okada from *Little Boy* 2005). It looks like age and generation become variables that influence the ways otaku act.

V. Examples of Different Generations of Otaku

More recently, Okada further explained the gap between different fan generations. He thinks that younger fans do not take anime or manga as a topic for further discussion. It is as though these anime or manga fail to move the younger people – unlike the older generation of otaku who would really "dive into the series," discuss feverishly and compete who "read it more properly" (Okada 2008). This is why Okada expresses his disappointment and claims that "otaku is dead," because younger otaku do not do these anymore.

From my interviews with anime fans from different generations and different countries, I also noticed that there are generational gaps in otaku, in both Taiwan and the United States. For those who are younger or who are more familiar with digital technologies, they are indeed taking a more affective response instead of a narrative reading. And senior anime fans are taking anime more seriously. For example, there are some informants I interviewed in New York City whose ages are around 40 or 50. When I asked their favorite anime, their answers are often carefully put, with detailed description of contents, characters, and storylines:

> *Gundam* is my favorite anime. I'm a big *Gundam* fan. But I like that it's not just action, there's political entries, sometimes very confusing, and there're love stories. I like that. If it were just action, I wouldn't like it. I like that the characters are complex… (NY02 Al)

> I like a lot of Miyaziki's. *Princess Mononoke*, which I think is a real masterpiece. You know, *Princess Mononoke* is directed by Akira Kurosawa, the famous director of Japan… And I like *Street Fighter 2-V*, based on video game *Street Fighter 2*. And it's 29 episode series… I love the action in it, and the fact the story moved to different parts of the world. They went to many countries. It's exploring epic story that follow these two martial artists to all these different adventures. I like the way it was done. … But I just don't watch any new anime. I don't know those new titles of anime. (NY11 Brian)

> I like the sci-fiction fantasy a lot. I like shows and movies that have dark sides. I like *Jin-Roh: the Wolf Brigade*, Oshii produced it, he didn't direct it, but just produced it. The story is very dark and controversial. (NY06 Clyde)

Note that when Brian and Clyde mentioned their favorite anime, they had to say who are the directors or producers of the work. They know these famous directors or producers, because they did research on animation and learned who made good animation. Brian watched a lot of anime for more than 20 years, as did Clyde, and even though their work is not in an anime-related profession, their second careers are related to anime. Brian is the co-author of a book on anime classics (Camp and Davis 2007) and he writes anime reviews occasionally in English anime magazines. Clyde set up a website that organized all information about anime in New York City, and he is also a core-member of the anime group Metro Anime in New York City. They both have devoted themselves to anime for many years and seek to perfect their knowledge of anime as a form of art.

What they do or what they did corresponds with the "ideal" otaku that Okada mentioned. In Taiwan, some fans have similar ideals, such as "I like to watch anime which have more discussion on humanity" (TW01 Huiwen), or "storyline is very important" (TW03 Sue). And therefore, they are positioned as the older generation of otaku (or anime fans, because some do not think themselves as otaku).

Meanwhile, many younger fans I interviewed seemed to care less about the animation production, references, or the storylines of anime. They care more about characters, cuteness, and visual or emotional impacts. For example, when talking about several anime series, cosplayer Sherry usually analyzed these anime in terms of characters, or the emotional moments in the stories. Also in Tifa's case, her interest in Hatsune Miku, a character of the music vocal application software Vocaloid, is more obvious that the storylines are less important:

> I like Hatsune, so I draw a lot of pictures of Hatsune. When I first watched the videos of Hatsune on Nico Nico Video, I totally felt "moe" from her (Hatsune). I said "wow! She is so cute!" Then I just fell for her. But there's no further deeper reason why I fell for her. (TW12 Tifa)

Hatsune Miku is not even a character in anime or manga. Vocaloid is singing, synthesizing software allowing users to play any music and making the virtual singer Hatsune Miku sing. There are many videos online made by fans with songs created by this software. Fans create not only music but also 2D or 3D animated images of Hatsune singing. This software with Hatsune's image became a hit on the Internet, especially because many videos were uploaded on YouTube or Nico Nico Video websites. This virtual singer gained popularity almost overnight and continued to enchant fans

internationally. For Tifa and many other younger anime fans, anime with complicated storylines are no longer necessary. They enjoy not only anime or manga, but also video games or software with virtual singers that look cute.

In the U.S., fans also mentioned that they prefer anime that have nice visual effects or emotional impacts:

> *Gankutsuou: the Count of Monte Cristo* is my favorite anime. Favorite manga is *Blade of the immortal*. This is very heavy on action – very graphic, very modernized, computer-generated. I like anime and manga which are very heavy on style, action, and story. (NY01 Mike)

> I like *Love Hina*. I just find it funny. It is basically a Japanese romance comedy manga that is about a guy who is not able to get a girlfriend, somehow falling into a situation where he's surrounded by a harem. And there is always something very funny in this kind of genre. I just like about that, because, hey, that isn't happening in real life. It is sort of shallow, but it is funny. (NY05 Chris)

> My favorite anime is *Urusei Yatsura*. … It's the first time I actually see something that visually imaginative and original. And my favorite manga is *Ranma ½,* because it's just so funny. (NY13 Mark)

These American anime fans use terms such as "heavy action, graphic, modernized, and computer-generated," "very funny" or "visually imaginative." It is very different from the older generation who usually brought up famous producers, animators, or thoughtful storylines, not to mention issues of philosophy and religion.

To be more accurate, even though these younger fans would emphasize more about personality, character design, and visual or emotional impact, they would also say that

storylines and contents are important to them also. Some would even criticize current moe anime or anime that only focuses on visual effects without profound storylines.

> I think there's always some kind of formula within these anime nowadays. Characters are all pretty but the story is not that important. I think this is a big problem with recent anime. For example, the latest *Gundam* series, *Gundam Seed D*, I feel like there are only pretty characters. I watched this anime very seriously to the end, and found out the storyline sucks. The ending sucks, too. Everyone died in a big explosion, and only one man survived. That's it. It is very different from the anime we used to watch before. (TW08 Purple)

Some fans with more critical opinions would say this is a problem with current anime, while at the same time they probably enjoy the characters in a less narrative way. This is not contradictory because we all get accustomed to certain kinds of information: currently, the digital. Digital technology around us makes these anime images and characters deeply embedded in fans' everyday lives. As for the highly obsessed fans, they get used to feeling its impact – the affect that is stimulated by these images of characters and the ideas of moe. Such digitalized affective objects modulate their feelings and emotions, so they can easily pick up what makes them happy and leave behind that which does not. Fans can be easily satisfied (i.e. fulfilling their sexual desires) by these affective objects – moe products. It can be like an instant happy dose. However, it does not mean that otaku or anime fans give up on finding a good story or asking for good quality anime works.

VI. Is Otaku Dead?

For Okada, otaku in his generation has no longer continued, because the younger generation of otaku has changed. Okada thinks that is bad, because people are more interested in moe, in characters, sexual satisfaction, and visual effects, while on the other hand, the deeper thinking, discussion, and analysis of the stories or the art of animation has been ignored. Okada takes this change as negative and condemns those fans who no longer take the production of anime seriously.

Unlike Okada's negative criticism, I take this transformation more positive. Indeed, the turn to "moe" in the anime industry is noticeable, and the preferences of the young otaku generation have become different. However, it is not necessarily negative. On the contrary, because of the change, otaku are more diverse today. Due to the advancement of digital technology, anime fans have more possibilities to get involved in their obsession: they can easily make videos, edit voices and music, and even make computer-generated graphic design – a skill that used to be reserved for "the professionals" in anime production. Moreover, fans have more channels for participating in fandom activities, socializing with other fans, interacting with producers, etc. Not only have their relationships between cultural products, producers, and other fans changed, but also their relationships with technology, and the way they consume the products. Now there are new products such as interactive video games, online games, and software that allow users to interact inside the game itself and to create something totally new and different. Such technologies have reduced the limitations and boundaries of the producer-consumer relationship, or media-versus-passive-viewer relationship. Digital technology allows the new generation of otaku to explore their diverse interests and broad imaginations, and to

play with all kinds of materials and create all kinds of possibilities. They do not read the stories in the same way as the older generation of otaku do, but they have a new way of perceiving and feeling the world of anime, where creativity is still, if not more, present.

Being an otaku means to master information and knowledge about what they love. They devote themselves to this and build lifetime careers as otaku. Some fans turn into anime critics, animators, mangaka, or illustrators. Others actively participate in fandom groups. There is not one qualification for being otaku, for them otaku is no longer a stable identity, but is subjective and multi-determined. Otaku can mean to be an expert at anything, or otaku can refer to a person who is a geek who stays at home staring at the computer or the television all the time. Or otaku can refer to a newtype human who has new relationships with technologies, creating new forms of cultural products that influence otaku's bodies, feelings, and emotions. In the next chapter, I will further examine otaku's relationships with digital technologies, bodies, and products, in terms of their affective labor and what they have created and produced.

Chapter 4

Otaku Labor

I. Free, Immaterial, and Affective Labor

"Otaku labor" refers to the labor of anime fans, which involves fandom activities that generate value through participation, communication, consumption and production. Otaku are addicted to certain anime programs and/or characters and because of their affection for these programs and characters, they are motivated to chat with other fans, research certain topics, promote and share their affection with others, create artwork, and/or cosplay to show their love. I use "otaku labor" to include all these activities in order to theorize them within the framework of the theory of affect.

Being an otaku is not just consuming anime-related products obsessively. An otaku produces, too. When otaku practice their fandom activities, they create something new at the same time. Plus, new technology enriches the presentation and circulation of anime images, which exist everywhere and repeat all the time in otaku's everyday life. The new technology attracts and modulates the affective/bodily engagements of otaku. Anime images are produced to catch eye of viewers, requiring their attention and stimulating their excitement and passion. Otaku are motivated to exchange, trade, create and reproduce anime images in the form of video, doujinshi, photo, and other cultural items as well. In this discussion I relate otaku labor to affective labor (which is both voluntary and immaterial) in the age of digital technology.

Donna Haraway, in her article, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” has described the increasingly complex relationship between labor, capital, and technology, blurring the oppositional binaries between nature and culture, human and machine, object and subject (Haraway 1991). The figure of the cyborg is intended to inspire a rethinking of all kinds of relationships between bodies and machines, labor and capital, culture and technology. In the 21st century, these relationships have become even more complex. The ubiquity of digital technology has changed the forms of labor, the investments of capital, and the emergence of all kinds of services in categories that were not previously recognized by the economic system. Therefore, many theorists have brought attention to these unrecognized forms of labor, which are free, immaterial, intellectual and/or affective.

Tiziana Terranova’s discussion of “free labor” highlights the extent to which cultural and technical labor in the digital economy is, “simultaneously voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited” (Terranova 2004, 74). Free labor includes activities on the Internet such as building and moderating websites, inventing software, reading and participating in online discussion forums or mailing lists, and so on. According to Terranova, “free labor” on the Net is constantly creating value that is “completely immanent to the flows of the network society at large” (Terranova 2004).

Net users are increasingly involved in the production of culture through technology (for example, innovations in fashion or cultural trends, inventing new software, etc). Terranova indicates that free labor is a form of labor that is not produced directly in the interest of capital, but still creates monetary value out of knowledge, culture, and affect. In the digital economy, the relation between bodily affect, technology, and production becomes more complex (Terranova 2004, 79-80). Free labor emerges at the same time as

digital technology and the Internet. It is a kind of cultural and technical labor that continuously produces value in the flows of network culture – corresponding with the activities that otaku are passionately involved in. Otaku spend a lot of time surfing the Internet, chatting about what they love, sharing information, and discussing their knowledge of anime with other fans. Thus, otaku labor is free labor that is voluntary, particular within the field of the World Wide Web.

Science fiction writer William Gibson puts it like this:

> The otaku, the passionate obsessive, the information age's embodiment of the connoisseur, more concerned with the accumulation of data than of objects… Understanding otaku-hood, I think, is one of the keys to understanding the culture of the web. There is something profoundly post-national about it, extra-geographic (Gibson 2001).

As Gibson states, otaku culture represents the culture of the Internet. All around the world, otaku have been highly active and involved in fandom activities because of the advantages of the Internet. Otaku are always the innovators or forerunners of digital technologies. Willing to provide their knowledge of computers freely, some fans write software programs and design websites for the benefits of other fans. Some fans write articles, critiques, or introductory manuals on online forums, sharing their ideas or knowledge with others. The Internet allows the otaku culture to grow rapidly and globally, and mostly through otaku's voluntary free labor.

Like Terranova's "free labor," Lazzarato's "immaterial labor" also contributes to a discussion on digital (informational) technology. Immaterial labor is "defined as the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (Lazzarato 1996,

132). It is important to note here that there are two different types of content: "informational content," which is directly related to skill sets that change with cybernetics and computer technologies; and "cultural content" which involves the production of art, fashion, tastes, and norms that were not traditionally recognized as "work" before. For Lazzarato, it is not only highly skilled, knowledge workers that perform immaterial labor, but any and every productive subject, including the "precarious" worker and unemployed youth. Their virtual activities are undetermined but the virtuality of their capacities are neither empty nor ahistoric (Lazzarato 1996, 135). Therefore, their undetermined potential productivity should be taken into account when considering postindustrial society.

> The role of immaterial labor is to promote continual innovation in the forms and conditions of communication (and thus in work and consumption). It gives form to and materializes need, the imaginary, consumer tastes, and so forth, and these products in turn become powerful producers of needs, images, and tastes. The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labor (its essential use value being given by its value as informational and cultural content) consists in the fact that it is not destroyed in the act of consumption, but rather it enlarges, transforms, and creates the "ideological" and cultural environment of the consumer. This commodity does not produce the physical capacity of labor power; instead, it transforms the person who uses it. Immaterial labor produces first and foremost a "social relationship" (a relationship of innovation, production, and consumption) (Lazzarato 1996, 138).

In addition, immaterial labor refers to the productivity that is produced directly from social communication. The processes of social communication and social networking, where consumers put their opinions together, create production. Therefore, the social

relation itself produces both production and subjectivity. Within this process, the figure of the individual author is no longer maintained, because knowledge requires the collaboration of collective intelligence. Fashion, music, styles, and trends are now produced collectively. Pierre Levy calls this production of creative subjectivities "collective intelligence." Through use of the Internet, such collective knowledge transcends territorial boundaries, enabling participation from any place as long as you have access to a computer. Henry Jenkins use Levy's framework on online fan community to call attention to both the transformational role of media fans and also how computers changed the forms of knowledge as well as human communication and communities (Levy 1999; Jenkins 2002).

Otaku labor is also a kind of affective labor. Hardt and Negri use "affective labor" to describe service, knowledge, cultural production, and communication. In other words, affective labor is one face of immaterial labor. "This [affective] labor is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible, a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion" (Hardt and Negri 2001, 292-293). Affective labor is about human contact and interaction. It is labor from the production and manipulation of our bodily capacities – affect. The value that affective labor produces is, in Negri's terms, value "from below." For example, the domestic labor of women such as caretaking and offering comfort and ease, which was ignored in the discussions of classic political economists, is one example of affective labor. Another example is the economy of attention, such as advertising, which employs the interactivity or communication of "audience." Therefore, value-affect is also about the attention economy, such as advertising, because value is produced simply by the existence of an

"audience" or the interaction or communication of consumers. In addition, affect can also be considered as a "power to act" (Spinoza) because affect regards the modulation of our bodily capacities and human potential. Desire, feeling, or undetermined affect create a motivation (Spinoza's "power") to act (Negri 1999, 79). This motivation is very important in the otaku culture because it leads anime fans to feel and to become motivated, and technology enables them to act further.

The concepts of "free labor," "immaterial labor," and "affective labor," overlap on some levels. They are all about new forms of the relationships between production and labor that have emerged with digital technology. The information and communication technologies have changed the process of production, which is no longer simply related to manufacturing or service industries. The production of culture, fashion, and value is also produced through social contact, networking, and interaction. This is why otaku labor, which involves online communicating, networking, creating and performing, has to be taken into consideration. In the following section, drawing on my ethnographic observations and interviews with anime fans about their fandom activities, I will illustrate how otaku labor is an incidence of free labor, immaterial labor, and affective labor.

II. Getting Online

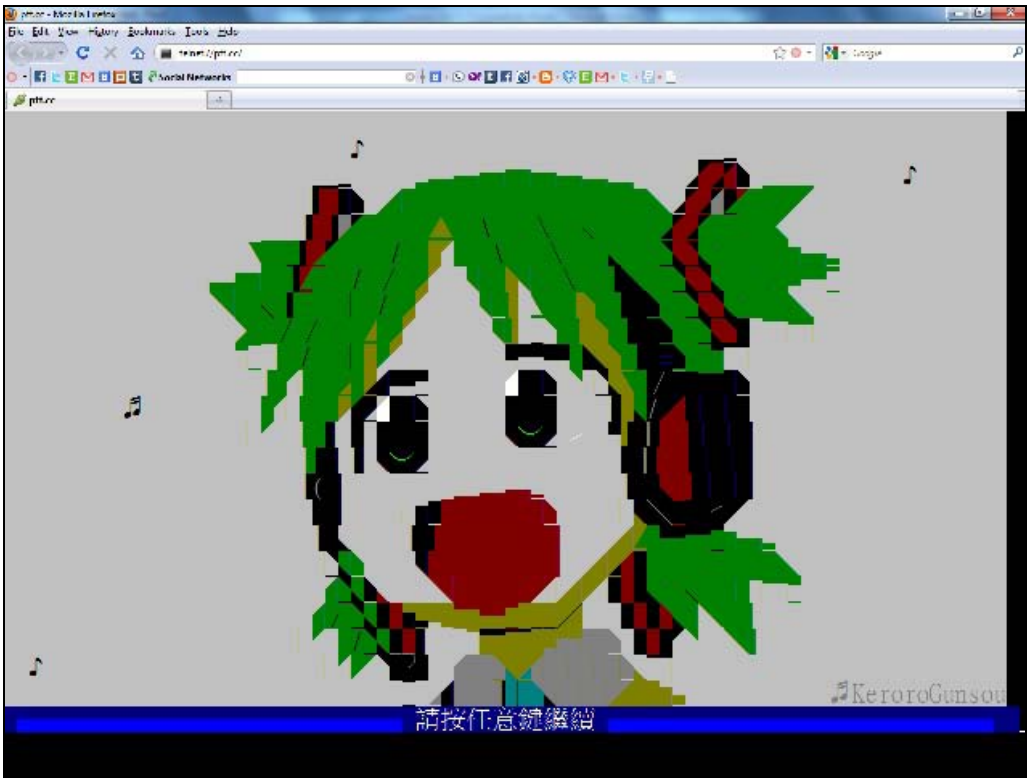
In the era of digital technology, the first step of becoming an anime fan is to go online. If someone really loves anime, he or she will want to learn everything about it. Anime fans can find information about particular anime and interact with other fans through the Internet. They often want to know more about the characters, the production

backgrounds, and/or the voice-actors or actresses. To find the information, they survey the Internet via Google or the Yahoo search engine, or they join particular online discussion forums.

1. Online Resource: BBS in Taiwan

The Bulletin Board System (BBS) is a precursor to the World Wide Web (WWW), where users download, read data, post news, exchange messages with other users, and interact with others in the chat rooms. The BBS could not show graphic images or videos but only text or ASCII character art (Figure 10). In Taiwan, the BBS became popular in the mid-1990s, mainly used for information searching or online chatting, especially among students. It is still popular now in Taiwan even after the emergence of the WWW. The BBS in Taiwan are mainly established based on academic units. Some BBS servers are set up by university computer centers. Others might be set up by students who live in the school dormitories, where students have unlimited network and can remain online 24 hours every day. The PTT is one of the BBS sites based at the National Taiwan University, which was founded in 1995. It is arguably the largest BBS in the world with more than 1.5 million registered users. There can be over 150,000 users online at the same time during peak hours.[63]

[63] Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PTT_Bulletin_Board_System



(Figure 10) **The ASCII character art on the PTT BBS board, Azumanga Board.**

(Figure 11) **A list of threads posted in one of the PTT board: One Piece Board.**

Inside the BBS sites, there are forums called “boards” on various topics. Each board has voluntary boardmaster(s) to check and to delete junk threads. The categories of the board topics can range from computers, social issues, entertainment, culture, to sport (such as Cookclub, Wine, Fitness, Broadway, Japan Travel, New York, Tennis, and Marxism). In PTT BBS, there are over 20,000 boards, and more than 40,000 threads, and 1 million comments are posted every day[64] (Figure 11). Anime-related boards in PTT are among the main categories. There are hundreds or thousands of boards about individual anime series, games, manga, artists, music, etc. “C_Chat” is the most popular board among them, with approximately 200 to 300 threads posted every day.

What do anime fans do on the BBS? Most of them are simply “lurking” and searching for information, others write threads to share their thoughts or information and post them on the board. BBS was one of the earliest computerized tools for instant online interaction with others. Because of the BBS, anime fans have used it to chat with others and established their own social networks more easily and more widely than before. Even though now the WWW is more popular and more graphic than the BBS, Taiwanese young people are surprisingly attached to the BBS, especially for the purpose of updating current news trends. For example, as soon as a new manga was released, anime fans that have read it would immediately share their thoughts on the board for that particular manga and received dozens or hundreds of responses in one day (or one hour).

The text-only BBS can only provide information with words, but users will add html webpage links in the threads where users can link to and get graphic images or videos on the WWW. This early computerized communication tool is particularly popular in

[64] Ibid.

Taiwan, while in other countries, information exchanging or networking is still mainly done on the WWW. For example, there are a lot of WWW discussion forums in China, where copyrights regulation is not taken into serious account. In these Chinese discussion forums, members directly post pirated anime or manga contents, such as scanned copies of the newest manga episodes, with fans adding translation. Some discussion forum websites are huge, with collections containing hundreds or thousands of online anime or manga. Such websites can profit from enormous online traffic with commercial ads. In that respect, online fandom is no longer a non-profit activity that anime fans do voluntarily. Commercialization of fandom activities is another issue that should be further investigated. But here, I want to focus on the voluntary fandom activities only.

2. Collective Intelligence: the Case of *Densha Otoko*

The BBS and other kinds of online discussion forums are important sources of information and knowledge about anime. Fans' online activities are part of the immaterial labor that produces value through creativity, productivity, and social communication. They contribute their thoughts and knowledge online, and together they produce something collectively ("collective intelligence"), such as trends, fashion, cultural tastes, slang, etc. The most noticeable case is the story of *Densha Otoko* (電車男, literally, *The Train Man*). It started from an anonymous post in the Japanese biggest BBS site, 2channel (2ch),[65] stating how this anonymous user (nicknamed Densha Otoko afterward) met a young lady on the subway when a drunken man started harassing her and other

[65] 2channel (2 ちゃんねる, 2ch for short) is the biggest Japanese WWW-based discussion forum. It is similar to the BBS. There are about 2.7 million posts made every day. The posts are usually anonymous. Reference: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2channel (Accessed 8/12/2010).

passengers. Densha Otoko stood up to fight the drunken man and afterwards the young lady asked for his address, telling him that she wanted to appreciate his behavior. Densha Otoko posted this story on 2ch as soon as he got home, because he had never done such a brave thing in his entire life, and felt good to be receiving attention from a young lady who would probably never have noticed an otaku like him in other circumstances. A few days later, Densha Otoko received a luxury tea cup set made by Hermès from the young lady. Densha Otoko asked other users on 2ch for advice and decided to ask the lady out. There were a lot of responses from the 2ch users about how he should change his appearance, how he should ask the woman out, or how he should or should not reveal his otaku identity to the lady. The whole story ended two months later when Densha Otoko had started having a relationship with the lady. This story soon became a hit in the 2ch community and fans collected the conversation threads together for those who wanted to read the story. It was later adapted into a live-action film, TV drama, and manga. Additionally, the conversations are collected and published as a novel. This story not only became the bestseller in books or movies, but also significantly changed the public impression of otaku from “nerdy, socially inept persons” to the “brave good guy on the subway.”

However, the story of *Densha Otoko* has never been proven to be true. There is a lot of speculation that it is a fictional story by one person, or by a group of people who made up the story. Furthermore, there were concerns about the intellectual property rights when the publisher Shinchosha released the novel. Did the copyright belong to Densha Otoko, to the 2ch website, or to everyone who posted responses there?

The case of *Densha Otoko* not only illustrates how online communication can produce social impacts and cultural trends, but also shows the traits of collective intelligence, including its problems with copyrights. It illustrates how the Internet and computerized communication have changed the forms of intelligence and knowledge, as well as the idea of community or identity.

III. Networking and Attending Conventions

The essence of networking is giving and receiving. This is not only true of online information sharing, but is also true in real life. For example, cosplayers can exchange tools, costumes, or DIY techniques with each other and doujinshi artists can share the experiences of drawing, editing, printing, and promoting. People contribute their own strengths and specialties and everyone helps each other out. In addition, they also receive something immeasurable in return, such as feelings of happiness, enjoyment, achievement, connection, and attention.

Anime fans in New York City also involve a lot of networking. There are several anime groups which gather fans together in New York City. There are also groups in Taiwan, but they are mostly school clubs, or task-oriented clubs (such as groups aiming at making doujinshi or doing cosplay). In Taiwan, anime information and products are easy to obtain, and no one really needs to find a group to share their love for anime – they can find people with common interests easily among friends. But in New York City, it is probably still not common to discuss anime with friends around so that there are groups

organized in New York City in order to gather those anime fans who want to share their passion and do activities together.

1. Metro Anime

As for anime fans in the United States, in the early period of Internet development, Usenet was a very convenient system that allowed users to discuss certain topics. Usenet is similar to BBS, however, its use has considerably declined in recent years and is no longer a mainstream communication tools among American fans. However, something similar may be found in Metro Anime,[66] one of the oldest anime fandom groups in the New York area. Metro Anime is an anime club that was founded in 1995. Since then, the members have communicated with each other via mailing list. Metro Anime holds anime screenings on the third Sunday of every month. Their anime screening events are currently held at Maui Tacos restaurant, located on Fifth Avenue next to the Empire State Building in Manhattan.

> In the basement of the restaurant, separated from regular customers, is a dark room with people watching videos on a big screen projected on a wall. They are watching *Ouran High School Host Club*, a Japanese school-comedy-romance anime, which was just broadcast in Japan a couple of weeks ago. The anime is in Japanese and subtitled in English by fans, which is called *fansub.*[67] There are about 20 to 25 people in attendance at this screening, each paying $2 for the space rental. (Field Notes: New York City, 2007)

[66] Metro Anime website: http://metroanime.org/

[67] Fansub, short for "fan-subtitled," is a version of a foreign video which has been translated by fans and subtitled into a language other than that of the original. See Wikipedia, s.v. "Fansub," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fansub (accessed April 3, 2010).

These members of Metro Anime come from all over the New York area. They have different nationalities, races, genders and ages.

> Usually the monthly meeting is about screening new anime from Japan, and some people will bring videos to introduce something new to others. That's the normal way. It's about 6 hours long, and we show regular shows, two episodes for each one. And then there's a "bring your own" which people bring their own videos and we vote on which one we want to see. So, that goes up the 6 hours. It's the normal meeting. We've got irregular meetings, too. In a long month, we probably have irregular meeting, a bunch anime on a particular theme, like science fiction, drama, or supernatural... (NY06 Clyde)

Clyde, a veteran anime fan for almost 20 years, is the current Metro Anime website maintainer. He also has his own long-existing and active website about anime-related information in New York City: NYC-Anime.com. He moved to New York City in 1998 and decided to found the website to provide the most updated information about anime-related resources in New York City. Both Metro Anime and NYC-Anime websites are the most important online portals that anime fans can find in a general online search.

> In 1998, I joined Metro Anime club here in New York. Most of their activities are screenings. It's over ten years. … They got a mailing list, where they can talk to each other, plans, events, like getting together or going to a movie. Things like that. They plan events with other clubs, such as joint event with the Polytech Anime Society in Brooklyn. (NY06 Clyde)

According to Clyde, the Metro Anime mailing list has about 250 to 300 subscriptions. In general, about 30 to 35 people will show up to their monthly anime screening events.

> The group runs anarchically. In the beginning, we had a president and then a couple years later he left. Then we don't have a president, and then after that, we didn't really have officers. Persons who volunteer to organize things. (NY06 Clyde)

According to Clyde, Metro Anime runs events based on the discussion on the mailing list. Sometimes a member will mention a new movie (which may or may not be related to anime or animation), and ask the group to go to the movie and hang out together. When there are anime events such as conventions or anime screenings in the city, the group will get members together to attend the events. This is how they socialize with each other. They also network with other organizations. For example, besides holding joint events with the Polytech Anime Society, they also hold panels in the New York Anime Festival at the Javits Convention Center annually since 2007. They have collaborated with the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art and the Kinokuniya Bookstore in New York City to give speeches on several anime topics.

2. Anime Meetup Groups

In addition to Metro Anime, which is organized online and has been active for almost 15 years, there are many other anime-related groups in New York City, such as anime clubs in high schools or colleges, as well as other online groups accessible via Meetup.com. Meetup.com is an online social networking website focused on local groups. Anyone can start organizing a local group, or find other local members and get together face-to-face. For example, the New York City Anime Meetup Group was founded in 2002 at Meetup.com and held monthly meetings at a restaurant in midtown Manhattan.

Al, the current organizer of the NYC Anime Meetup Group, was a member of the group in the beginning and then became the organizer in 2006 or 2007.

> The organizer has to pay. Members don't have to pay but organizer does. It's about 20 dollars a month to run three meetups. … It's not very expensive, and I had already got a lot out of it [the group], so I think it's a way to feedback the community. Other people [who like anime] don't have the time or resources, and I have time and money to do it. So, I've been doing it for about 2 years now, or almost 3 years? I cannot remember. And since that time, there are more and more activities. I have been doing a little more promotions and our memberships grow. (NY02 Al)

Besides the NYC Anime Meetup Group, Al also organizes the Manga & Comic Meetup Group and the Toy & Model Kit Meetup Group on Meetup.com. Al not only organizes these anime-related events voluntarily, but also has to pay for them with his own money.[68] Al is happy to do so because he can afford the fee and he enjoys socializing with friends in the group.

These local communities that host face-to-face events are mostly organized through Internet communication. There are also the bigger events – the anime-related conventions that are must-attend events for anime fans.

3. Attending Conventions

There are two major anime conventions held annually around the New York Metropolitan Area: AnimeNEXT and New York Anime Festival (NYAF). AnimeNEXT

[68] Although some meetup groups will ask members to contribute money to share the organizing fee, members of the anime-related meetup groups that Al organizes have not been asked to do so.

was founded by a non-profit organization.[69] It is a fan-run anime convention, and its venue has been located in New Jersey, instead of in New York City, for the past few years. The convention has been held annually each summer since 2002. Like most anime conventions in the 2000s, the number of attendees has increased rapidly from 1,071 in the first year to 7,900 in 2008.[70]

> AnimeNEXT 2007 is held at the Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, New Jersey. The event was dispersed throughout different buildings and hotels at the Center. The main Expo Center was the place for major events, such as performances, art galleries, autographs, commercial booths, workshops, and panels. The space in Expo Center is huge, because there are sometimes long lines for autographs or performances. To enter the **Dealers Room**, attendees had to wait for approximately half an hour in line because Dealers Room are too crowded to have everyone go inside at the same time.
>
> Inside the Dealers Room retailers exhibit and sell many kinds of anime-related products in their booths, such as manga publications, anime DVDs, painting tools, costumes, video games, character goods, and toys. This was the place where fans bought a lot of souvenirs to bring home.
>
> In the **Artist Alley** area, there were American fan artists who draw anime/manga characters with their own styles. Most of the art was in the form of posters, pins, magnets, accessories, or decorations. Unfortunately, there were no doujinshi (fanzines) found in the Artist Alley.
>
> Next to the Expo Center is the Embassy Suites hotel, where mostly **cosplay and karaoke** competition have taken place. There was also a **game room** for attendees to play some video games, including the newly released Nintendo game console: Wii.

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[69] Universal Animation, Inc., founded in 2002, is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the appreciation of anime and manga in the U.S. They are responsible for planning conventions such as AnimeNEXT and MangaNEXT. http://www.universalanimation.org/

[70] Statistics source: http://www.animecons.com/events/

> Another venue, the Holiday Inn Hotel was further from other venues – about a 5 minute walk from the main Expo Center. The primary activity at the Holiday Inn was **video screening**: there were four rooms available for 24 hours of anime screening. Most attendees stay in the hotels so that they are able to attend all of the program events over a three day period. There were some erotic "hentai" (adult-only) anime screenings at midnight. In addition, there were rooms for a **Manga Library** and table games. (Field Notes: AnimeNEXT, New Jersey, June 2007)

Five months later, in December of 2007, I attended the first NYAF at Javits Convention Center. NYAF was organized by a commercial company – Reed Exhibitions, which also organizes the New York Comic Con (NYCC), a bigger event related to animation and comics. The first NYCC, held in 2006, featured American comic books and graphic novels as well as Japanese anime and manga. That year there were more attendees than were expected so the next year the anime and manga event was separated from NYCC. Although NYAF's number of attendees was less than NYCC, it was still surprising to know that there were so many anime fans in the New York area. NYAF has been held annually from 2007 to 2009. The attendance was 15,000 in 2007, 18,399 in 2008, and 21,388 in 2009.[71] In October 2010, NYAF and NYCC will re-join together to have conventions on the same days at the Javits Convention Center, but with separate programs.

In addition to anime conventions, there are many other anime-related events in the New York area, such as events or speeches on anime and manga at the Museum of Comic

[71] Statistics source: http://www.animecons.com/events/

and Cartoon Art, the New York Public Library branches, the Japan Society, and the New York branch of the Kinokuniya Bookstore.

In 2005, the Japan Society presented Takashi Murakami and other Japanese artists' artwork on otaku culture – *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture,*[72] which attracted anime fans as well as the general public to attend the exhibition and panels (Figure 12). More recently, the Japan Society also presented *KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Manga + Video Games* (organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery) in March of 2009, bringing more popular artwork from the world of anime and manga and providing visitors with a close experience of these forms of cultural production.[73] (Figure 13)

(Figure 12) ***Little Boy*** **exhibition at the Japan Society, 2005.**

[72] Exhibition *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*. Japan Society, New York. April 8 to July 24, 2005. http://www.japansociety.org/little_boy_the_arts_of_japans_exploding_subculture (Accessed 8/12/2010).

[73] *KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Manga + Video Games*, Japan Society, New York. March 13 to June 14, 2009. http://www.japansociety.org/event_detail?eid=6ee001d9 (Accessed 8/12/2010).

(Figure 13) **Cosplay party as part of the exhibition *KRAZY!* at Japan Society, 2009.**

(Figure 14) **Anime Day event at Kinokuniya Bookstore.**

(Figure 15) Anime fans who attended the event at Kinokuniya Bookstore.

Kinokuniya Bookstore, the biggest Japanese chain bookstore, opened a New York branch in 1981 and has played an important role in promoting Japanese culture in New York City. Since the New York branch of the Kinokuniya Bookstore moved from the Rockefeller Center location to a new location in Bryant Park in 2007, the store has begun to hold a series of anime- and manga-related events to attract young customers. These events have been very successful. Once in a while anime fans visit the bookstore for special events such as Anime Day, Pokémon Tournament, Osamu Tetsuka Day, and Lolita Fashion Day at Kinokuniya. These events usually attract many anime fans to visit. They often stay at the café on the second floor for an afternoon. (Figure 14, Figure 15)

Besides New York City, the biggest anime convention in Northeastern America is Otakon, in Baltimore, Maryland. There are a lot of anime-related conventions around the world. The biggest anime convention in the world is Comiket,[74] which is held in Japan. However, the nature of Comiket is different from most anime conventions in the States. Anime conventions in the U.S. mainly consist of retail booths that promote commercial products, speakers, performers, voice actors/actresses, or activities of fans: cosplaying, gaming, or screening. In Japan, as well as in Taiwan, anime conventions mainly consist of doujinshi circles[75] (fanzine artist groups). These doujinshi circles are allowed to exhibit and sell their artwork/doujinshi in the conventions. To highlight the difference, I will use "doujinshi conventions" to refer to the conventions that focus mainly on trading doujinshi. People who attend doujinshi conventions such as Comiket are looking for doujinshi. These doujinshi are probably not available elsewhere except in the conventions and some special shops in Akihabara or Ikebukuro districts of Tokyo (Figure 16, Figure 17(Figure 17). In addition to the 550,000 attendees of Comiket in 2008, currently Comiket provides 35,000 spaces for doujinshi circles, which means that there are 35,000 booths of doujinshi artist circles at the convention where doujinshi artists sell their artwork. In recent years, there have been many more applications for doujinshi circle booths than Comiket can provide and so the event committee have to use a lottery method to decide which doujinshi groups can present their work at booths. These

[74] "Comiket" is short for "Comic Market." It occurs twice per year since 1975 and the current venue is the Tokyo Big Sight (Tokyo International Exhibition Center). The number of attendees grew dramatically from 700 in 1975 to 560,000 in 2009. It has become one of the biggest indoor public gatherings in Japan. Sources: "What is the Comic Market?" by Comic Market Preparation Committee. http://www.comiket.co.jp/info-a/WhatIsEng080528.pdf (Accessed 7/28/2010) and English Wikipedia s.v. Comiket. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comiket (Accessed 7/28/2010).

[75] A doujinshi circle refers to a person or a group of people who create(s) doujinshi. A doujinshi circle can consist of only one person or a group of people in order to create one doujinshi. It is a special term in the doujinshi lexicon.

doujinshi are very essential products that link otaku's voluntarily, affective labor to their passion for anime and manga.

(Figure 16) The buildings of the anime-related shops, Animate and Toranoana, in Akihabara, Tokyo.

(Figure 17) Radio Kaikan at Akihabara, Tokyo.

IV. Doujinshi: expressing oneself

(Figure 18) Doujinshi collection

> Doujinshi are defined in Japanese dictionaries as "magazines published as a cooperative effort by a group of individuals who share a common ideology or goals with the aim of establishing a medium through which their works can be presented." Originated from the world of literature, fine arts, and academia, doujinshi experienced unprecedented growth in Japan as a medium of self-expression for various subcultures centered around manga (Comiket 2008).

In Taiwan, doujinshi have been widely known and have circulated among anime fans since the 1990s. In recent years, because of the easy access to computerized-graphic tools, economic printing resources, and convenient promotion and distribution particularly via the Internet, anime fans in Taiwan are greatly motivated to make doujinshi, including drawing manga, writing novels, or making music, video, toys, etc. Therefore, there are many doujinshi conventions in Taiwan.

Sue is a veteran doujinshi artist in Taipei. She wrote a book on making doujinshi (Ju Chuan Ye/駒川野 2007). She runs a doujishi-themed café, gives speeches in several manga clubs in schools, and teaches people how to draw manga and publish doujinshi. She said:

> I entered the world of doujinshi in 1995. I think there were already some doujinshi circles in Taiwan before that time. They would hold small gathering events to trade their doujinshi with each other. In October 1996, "Autumn Party" was the first large-scale fandom event in Taiwan. (TW03 Sue)

Now Comic World Taiwan (CWT) and Fancy Frontier (FF) are the two major doujinshi conventions in Taiwan. Their programs and activities are similar to the Comiket in Japan, consisting mostly of doujinshi circles selling their artwork. They also invite Japanese anime producers, directors, and voice actors/actresses to present in the programs. These two major conventions are currently held in the Sports Center of the National Taiwan University during different times of the year. The following is part of the description of Petit Fancy, part of the annual events of FF, held by Frontier Magazine, and the Taiwan Animation and Comic Promoting Association (TACPA/台灣動漫畫推廣協會):

> In the exhibition hall, there were approximately three hundred booths displayed with lots of doujinshi, toys, stationery, posters, bags, and all kinds of anime-related goods. These products were made by doujinshi circles. The booths were registered by the doujinshi circles, and the booths were separated into three sections: female-oriented, male-oriented, and general-oriented. Female-oriented means that the doujinshi were made for female readers and the contents of these works are Boys' Love (BL) romance, erotic stories between two boys. It

> was obviously that there were more female customers lingering around this section. While on the other side, in the male-oriented section, there were more male customers. Male-oriented means they are made for male readers: erotic or moe young girl characters are always popular in this category. Both female- and male-oriented doujinshi can be very erotic and have to be labeled "adult-only", "18+ only", or "24+ only." General-oriented means they are good for everyone – they are "healthy" publications that are good for kids.
> During the two-day Petit Fancy convention, doujinshi artists traded and exchanged their work with each other, cosplayers came to show off their anime character costumes, and photographers taking photos of cosplayers (Figure 19). The general public might also attend the event and some parents bring their children to visit the event. (Field Note: Petit Fancy 8, Taipei, April 2008)

Other than CWT and FF, there are also smaller doujinshi events held by school clubs or spontaneous fandom groups. The Cheng-Da Doujin Festival[76] is a famous event held annually by the Cheng-Da Comic Club. Sometimes they also cooperate with other school clubs in southern Taiwan (Figure 20). Harry is one of the founding members of the Cheng-Da Doujin Festival. At the time of the interview he worked at Fancy Frontier. According to his observations,

[76] Cheng-Da Doujin Festival (成大同人活動).Cheng-Da (成大) is short for National Cheng-Kung University (國立成功大學) in Tainan, Taiwan. Its Comic Club held doujinshi-market festival twice a year from 2000 to 2008. After May 2008, it stopped for two years and will be resumed in May 2010. Other than FF or CWT conventions, Cheng-Da Doujin Festival is for non-profit doujin artist groups only. No commercial retailers are invited for exhibition.

(Figure 19) Outside the venue of Petit Fancy, where people gathered to take photos of cosplayers (April, 2008).

(Figure 20) Cheng-Da Doujin Festival, where people shop for doujinshi (May, 2008).

> There are thousands of doujinshi groups in Taiwan currently, at least two or three thousands. But it is difficult to estimate, because they would probably combine, separate, and organize a new one temporarily for all kinds of reasons. And they can come from school clubs, but not all of them are. The only thing in common is these groups are all having common interests in particular anime or manga, and making doujinshi by themselves. (TW04 Harry)

There are a lot of anime and doujinshi conventions in Taiwan throughout the year – once or twice a month at least. Doujinshi artists bump into each other at the same conventions once in a while. It is very easy to form a sense of community for these regular participants. Through the community they acquire a sense of belonging. For some doujinshi artists the purpose of attending doujinshi festivals is not only for promoting and selling their own work, but also to socialize and have fun with friends.

1. The Affective Labor of Doujinshi Artists

When I interviewed anime fans who make doujinshi, in most cases the artists claimed that whether their art was profitable or not, they would produce doujinshi simply because they love anime. “It is because you have love and passion, and then you will want to do it,” said Tifa, a female artist who draws male-oriented doujinshi in Taiwan.

> In the beginning, you won’t make any money. Actually, so far, I’m not gaining profits yet. The costs and expenses of this is higher than you can imagine. Taking printing for example, we usually print very few copies, three hundred to five hundred. I didn’t do too big. To put it simple, I didn’t make money from these doujinshi. I have my own job. I have my own economic sources, which is separate from doujinshi making. Therefore, it is simply a hobby for me. I just like

> to do it. And, very strangely, if you do it for the first time, you will come for the second time and more. I attended approximately eight conventions in one year. (TW12 Tifa)

Tifa understands very well that she will not earn her living simply by selling doujinshi, and she is not planning to do so, either. She has a full-time job in the entertainment business and her job sometimes requires her to work overtime. However, she still tries to find extra time to draw her doujinshi. Even though it is a hobby, she is still devoted to it.

2. Doujinshi artists networking

In the doujinshi artist community, networking is important in order to gain experience, exchange information, and support each other's work, especially because making doujinshi can be difficult in the beginning. As such, they are willing to share experiences to help each other, especially the newcomers. Mentioned earlier, Sue wrote a book on how to make a first doujinshi. In the book she explains the procedures of making a doujinshi: from the beginning stage of having creative ideas, to drawing, editing, publishing, as well as how to sell doujinshi (Ju Chuan Ye/駒川野 2007). Eight years ago, she quit her job and started drawing doujinshi as a profession. She also draws illustrations for books or lectures at school manga clubs. Sometimes she would work as a middleman to help other doujinshi artists make their own products and contact publishers for them. She runs a doujinshi café, *Cha-Li-Mao* in order to provide a friendly space for doujinshi lovers. Indeed, her customers are mostly doujinshi lovers, or at least fans of anime, manga, and video games. The café is decorated with many posters of anime or manga.

Wall-mounted bookshelves are filled with all kinds of manga and doujinshi and customers are allowed to grab and read them. Sue said that she visits Japan very often, and every time she carries home huge amounts of doujinshi purchased from doujinshi bookshops in Tokyo. Sometimes she asks friends who visit Japan to help her carry them back.

> On a weekday afternoon, a young man Bai walks into *Cha-Li-Mao*, a café located near the Taipei Train Station. He wears a blue blazer with a red necktie, which seems too formal for a student. Later I find out that his dress is a costume from a Japanese video game *ef - a tale of memories.*[77] He is a big fan of this game and is listening to its soundtrack on a headset as he walks in. Two members of the café staff and several customers say hello to him. He seems know them very well and walks toward his usual corner immediately, sits down, and makes himself at home. Then he starts chatting with another young man – their topics of discussion range from video games and weaponry designs, to fighting *bishoujo* (beautiful young girls who carry weapons). He loves to draw bishoujo and weapons. He shows me the pictures that he draws, including a girl wearing a school uniform top and panties (Figure 21), and several girls wearing military suits and carrying guns or other kinds of weapons. He has published doujinshi and has attended several anime conventions to sell his own work. He hopes to become a professional illustrator in the future. (Field Note: Cha-Li-Mao café, Taipei, April 2008)

[77] *ef-a tale of memories* is the title of a Japanese video game series, which was later adapted into TV anime programs.

(Figure 21) A draft of Bai's artwork.

Like Bai, many other doujinshi artists come to Cha-Li-Mao café and make friends in the doujinshi community. They hang out in the café, talk about manga, anime, play games together, and discuss whether or not to attend upcoming conventions. This social networking helps newcomers to understand the community and to enjoy the company of other people with common interests.

> I met Tifa in a doujinshi convention when I was in the third grade of high school. Then she called me if I could help her to watch her booth in the convention. That's how I met her. She taught me a lot and encouraged me to create. So, here I am. I started publishing doujinshi for a year so far. I think, read more pictures, learned from more people, and then you will get stronger. (TW05 Bai)

Because he met Tifa, who has encouraged him and has taught him how to make doujinshi, Bai was inspired to draw his own doujinshi. Young doujinshi artists usually begin as anime fans who browse doujinshi conventions and as they acquire friends in the

doujinshi community, they will probably be invited to make doujinshi. Bai did not work with other artists as a team, but in many cases doujinshi artists work as a group. A doujinshi group (circle) will work on the same topic in order to make one doujinshi publication.

In Taiwan, almost every doujinshi artist has their own blog. On the blogs they will promote their art, accept online orders, advertise their attendance to upcoming conventions, and put links to other doujinshi artists in order to support them. Some websites focus on certain anime or manga topics and when they propose a doujinshi project they usually welcome other viewers to contribute their own work to the project.

3. Graphics turning digital

In recent years, making doujinshi has become possible for a lot of fans that had never thought of doing it before. Computer graphics software makes the drawing process much easier and more convenient.

According to Sue, one important change in her work since she began her doujinshi career is the use of computer for drawing. Drawing with a computer is faster and publishers prefer for artists to submit their work as digital files.

> When I went to an illustrator job interview for the first time years ago, they asked me to give them computer files of my works. I was than a poor student. I didn't even have a computer to work on that. (TW03 Sue)

It was about eight years ago that Sue quit her job and decided to begin a doujinshi career. Now she not only uses a computer to draw pictures, but she also teaches classes on how to make doujinshi with a computer.

> I'm using computer to draw pictures now. It is very convenient. You can start all over quickly if you don't like it. There is some special equipment that makes it very easy to draw. Plus, there is software providing various special effects to realize what you want with ease. (TW03 Sue)

Digital technologies are both convenient and necessary tools for artists. Sue admits that she still likes to hand-draw, but that she has had to adapt to changes in technology. Another doujinshi artist said:

> Now I use computer to draft. It is very much convenient, more than you can imagine. But actually, it still feels better to draw in a traditional way. Well, things cannot be perfect. (TW06 Ted)

Now many doujinshi artists use computers to draw pictures from the beginning of the process, including drafting and sketching. They use graphic tablets to sketch directly into the computer, and then add color and special effects. Some artists do not feel comfortable with sketching directly on graphics tablets, so they use pencils to draft on paper and then they scan it and convert it into a digital file, to color it and add special effects. The printing companies ask artists to submit high definition digital photo files.

> The finished works by computer are less valuable, because everyone can easily get your pictures: no difference from the original, and, easy to duplicate. … If you paint a picture by hands, it becomes the only original. No matter how many do you copy, there is only one original. However, if your painting is drawn by

> computer, it is a file that can be repetitively transferred and copied, and the copies are exactly the same as the original.
>
> Or say, if you know some techniques of computer graphics, you can become a master easily. There is no need to have professional training in painting anymore. For example, I used to learn how to paint by reading a lot of books on fine arts and practice how to paint with watercolor pens or sketch pencils. However, these techniques are no longer necessary now. You can add these effects by computer very easily. Besides, now the publisher will reject you if you don't have computer files. Moreover, if you try to make your hand-drawn paintings digitalized by scanning, it still won't work. Because scanning would lose the fidelity and make the pictures distorted and unclear. (TW03 Sue)

Computer graphics software has accelerated the speed of applying special effects to pictures. It can be very convenient, but some artists still have to spend a lot of hours on painting, especially because the software cannot speed up the process of drafting and sketching.

> I studied fine arts in school. No matter what I draw, I demand good qualities in the shapes, shadows and textures of the pictures. Sketching is all about these three factors. And drawing manga is all about sketching. I began to draw manga from using digital technology. I usually draw several layers of pictures, starting from a very rough draft and then carefully detailed. So I usually spend 10 hours to draw one picture. Sometimes for just 4 hours. Some people can finish many pictures in one hour, but I am very much slower. (TW06 Ted)

Computer graphics software is more economic than traditional manga painting because it is capable of special effects and saves the artists a lot of effort and money. Screentone is commonly used in the making of manga. Traditionally, manga artists used

"screentone stickers" – stickers printed with black-and-white screentone patterns in order to apply texture and shading to pictures. Screentone stickers are not cheap, they usually cost about 5 dollars per sheet. For manga artists who paint many pages, it is a considerable expense. As such, it saves a lot of money when computer software can do the screentone effects.

In sum, computer graphics software allows more and more people to enter the world of doujinshi because it makes creation much easier. Although it has its limitations, doujinshi artists still try to use the digital technologies as much as possible. And at the same time, the technology is always changing and improving. For example, now there are digitalized graphics pens and touch tablets that very much resemble using pencil on paper. The device can be quite sensitive and accurate, showing what users draw on the screen. It has changed how people feel about the hand-drawn pencil on paper to in a digital way. Digitalization not only blurs the boundary between consumption and production, but also changes how we perceive and feel the material of the world.

4. Doujinshi Commercialization

Originally, the primary goal of doujinshi was to express one's own ideas with their work. The definition of doujinshi is that it is self-published and thus not included in the commercial publishing distribution system. Simply stated, it is not for making profits. However, due to the rapidly increasing population of anime fans and doujinshi lovers, the market for doujinshi has become bigger and bigger. Therefore, some best-selling doujinshi artists have made their work profitable in the doujinshi market.

> With this community getting bigger and bigger, the motivations [of making doujinshi) are getting more complicated. Some people want to make money besides creating. Therefore, you will notice some people make more and more peripheral goods [such as t-shirts, bags, toys, stationeries, or posters]. That is because they're profitable. However, the essence of doujinshi shouldn't be profitable. Well, but the patterns are usually like this: doujinshi artists gain popularity from the conventions, and then publishers will recruit these popular artists to publish commercial books, to represent games or to do illustrations. (TW04 Harry)

Doujinshi artist Ted admitted that selling his doujinshi was his main source of income:

> Honestly, I earn my living by selling these doujinshi products. This *Lucky Star* t-shirt that I am wearing now is made by me. I sold this at conventions. I drew this picture and printed it on t-shirts. I sold *Gundam* t-shirts at conventions, too, and mugs, bags, and so on. It is no good to sell too many. You have to sell different stuff every time, otherwise customers will think they can come back next time. I also sell these items online, on my own website. (TW06 Ted)

Ted has his own personal business selling doujinshi products. Actually, what is most profitable is not selling the doujinshi publications, but selling other items such as t-shirts, mugs, bags, etc. For many doujinshi artists, making profits is not the goal. Their goal is to earn enough fame to get discovered by manga publishers so that they can continue their professional development and begin legitimate careers as mangaka. It is very common for doujinshi artists to become commercialized in Japan. At Comiket, some popular doujinshi circles can sell as many of their publications as commercial books. Manga publishers attend Comiket to observe the new trends in the market and to discover

new talented mangaka. Many famous mangaka in the manga business were actually discovered at Comiket, such as Clamp, Rumiko Takahashi, and Masamune Shirow. Once doujinshi artists become commercial, they have to sign contracts with publishers and they have to publish certain amounts of work within specified time periods. There is also a lot of pressure to sell – they often can no longer express themselves fully because they have to be primarily concerned with the market.

In Taiwan, the manga publication business is not big – most are licensers printing manga from Japan. But because doujinshi began to attract more and more readers, publishers started to get involved in the doujinshi market. Many commercial publishers who publish romance and adventure novels started to get involved in the BL doujinshi market.

Huiwen is an editor at the publishing company, FreshNet. FreshNet is a company that started as an online fiction site, where amateur or doujinshi authors could put their own novels online. Popular online novels could be published as printed publications. FreshNet focused on fantasy novels in the beginning, but then tried to target BL doujinshi fans. When Huiwen was a student she joined the manga club in her school and wrote BL novels with friends occasionally. When FreshNet was hiring an editor for their new doujinshi section, Huiwen happened to be between jobs and applied for the position.

Huiwen mentioned one of the main concerns about doujinshi publications is the copyright issues. Most doujinshi are derivative works drawing from commercial anime or manga in Japan. It is already at the edge of copyright infringement. Thus, it is impossible to publish those derivative doujinshi through a commercial publisher. Therefore, FreshNet only publishes “original doujinshi.”

> Because secondary doujinshi (derivative works) would have copyright problems, our company only publish original doujinshi to avoid the problems. Because of copyright issue is too troublesome, no publishers want to get involved with doujinshi other than our company. As for doujinshi artists turn their works commercial, we [editors] still don't get involved with how they write the stories. In Japan, of course, the first thing editors will think of is the market. But in our company, we don't run this way. The truth is, we don't have enough editors to take care of how authors write their works. When authors sent us their new doujinshi, we decided to publish if it's good. If there is no publishing value for us, we just don't print it. We will not instruct authors what they should write. In fact, in Japan, one editor might be responsible for only one artist. But now, I am in charge with 70 to 80 authors. (TW01 Huiwen)

In addition to commercial publication, the doujinshi market in Taiwan has been increasingly prosperous in recent years. It has encouraged and helped to develop more and more talented Taiwanese mangaka. Some Taiwanese artists have gone to Japan and have joined the Japanese doujinshi and manga market successfully. Hopefully, this doujinshi phenomenon in Taiwan can help to develop Taiwan's own manga culture to be an influential cultural power.

5. Doujinshi in the U.S.

In the U.S., doujinshi are not well-known, even among anime and manga fans. Most American anime fans think doujinshi is equal to pornography. "People associate sex with doujinshi" (NY13 Marcus). "A large amount of it is pornography" (NY04 KD). Among the 13 informants in New York City, only one claimed that he owns doujinshi, some had

heard of it but did not really know what it is; and three people had never heard the term doujinshi before, even though they watch anime and read manga frequently.

> I have some doujinshi. I got them from my friends at the AnimeExpo (in CA). One of my friends rented a booth there and sold nothing but doujinshi. They are imported from Japan, in Japanese only. You'll be surprised the amounts of people come there and said, "WOW" and they're all men. It [doujinshi] is all about sex. It is illegal, erotic and pornography. Well, I know not all of them are porn. There is a the good thing about doujinshi: a lot of people can do it, and they can do it in different styles. (NY07 Frank)

As Frank said, many anime fans in the U.S. think doujinshi is mostly pornography. In fact, doujinshi consist of many kinds of genres. Unfortunately, not many American fans know that. Besides, there are many American anime fans who love to draw manga, but they usually do not consider self-publishing. They can only think of getting a paid job in drawing comics or illustration. Al, the anime meetup organizer, mentioned:

> No. I don't know anyone who does "doujinshi." There are some people in this meetup group do illustration professionally. But I'm not sure if they make doujinshi. I also know someone who studies hard to do illustration and draw manga. But these people are not doing doujinshi. And, usually they try to get paid for the job. (NY02 Al)

At the anime conventions in New York, doujinshi are rarely found. Artist Alley is where artists present and sell their artwork in the form of posters, individual paintings, pins, stickers, etc., but there are no doujinshi in the form of printed publications such as magazines, manga, or novels. There were only one or two booths selling imported doujinshi from Japan in the Dealers Room, as commercial products. These doujinshi were

piled up inside boxes and sealed inside transparent plastic bags, and the prices were much higher than the original prices in Japan.[78] There were not a lot of customers browsing the doujinshi, and most of them picked up one or two and put them down right away after realizing what it was – probably either images of two men hugging intimately, or young girls posing erotically. However, over the past year or two, the population of doujinshi fans has expanded. At NYAF 2009, I found a booth selling non-pornographic doujinshi made by several Chinese artists. I also found an American-fan-made doujinshi at the Artist Alley. This particular American doujinshi circle, Fresh Baked, consists of two artists, Barlee and Tanchi, from Orange County, California. After the convention, I contacted them with questions about doujinshi in America. According to their responses, they are both optimistic about the growing popularity of doujinshi in the U.S.

> Doujinshi is slowly but surely becoming more popular in the U.S. Enough people know what it is, but there just aren't enough quality American-made doujinshi in the market yet. (US14 Barlee)

> It seems that every year more and more artists are slef-publishing their works and selling them online and at conventions. This is great because when people see more artists selling doujinshi, they see it as something that they, too, can do. (US15 Tanchi)

Barlee and Tanchi are not aware of any doujinshi artist in New York City, but suggested that there might be some artists that can be found on the website Deviantart.com, the largest online social network for artists to exhibit and promote their art work.

[78] In Japan, doujinshi is usually sold at 200 yen (2 dollars); but in the U.S., the prices can go up to 10 to 20 dollars.

With regard to why doujinshi-making is still not popular in the U.S., Barlee said that the obstacles to self-publishing are first, the fact that making doujinshi requires a lot of effort, and many people are intimidated by the demanding work. Second, most American fans are afraid of the copyright issue. And finally, even if they make the effort and do not care about the copyright infringement, the cost of printing may still stop them from continuing to make doujinshi. “The printing cost upfront is very expensive in the U.S. It is also difficult to find printing stores that will offer a small run” (US14 Barlee). Therefore, if the artists do not have a strong fan base, it might be impossible for them to print out a small number of copies and earn back the amount that they spent to produce the doujinshi. This is why many doujinshi artists only accept pre-orders and promote their work online because online advertising is cost effective.

6. Fan-made Multi-Media: The Combination of Technology and Innovation

Doujinshi come in many forms: pictures, manga/comics, as well as novels. In addition, at the doujinshi convention Comiket, fan-made products are not limited to doujinshi in terms of fanzines, but also include music or drama CDs, PC games, and videos. For example, *Sound Horizon* is a doujin musical group lead by composer Revo, who had his own website where he has been releasing his music since the late 1990s. The activities of *Sound Horizon* mainly remained online until 2001 when the “fantasy band” started attending Comiket to sell their self-made CDs. They released several “story CDs” (music with stories, songs, background sound effects, and narrations) as “doujin music” from 2001 to 2004 and the numbers of their fans increased rapidly. Finally, they decided to transfer from an independent doujin musical band to a commercial one in 2004. Their

CD/DVD albums and concert tours have attracted many anime and game lovers, and their sales always surpass those of other commercial musical albums in Japan.

Creating fan-made videos is another way that fan-artists express their passions and thoughts. AMV (anime music videos) or MAD (fan-made videos) can be found easily on YouTube or on other online video websites. AMV are videoclips from anime that fans extract, remix, re-edit and add new music to. MAD videos are similar, but are not necessarily music videos. These videos are made by anime fans who want to show their love of anime, or to express particular personal opinions. With the development of digital technologies, such as the YouTube website, audio/video converters, and movie-maker software, making videos is much easier than it was before, and therefore there are more and more fans participating in creating fan-made videos and sharing their work via the Internet.

Caramelldansen (caramel dance) is an example of a fan-made video phenomenon.[79] It was an Internet phenomenon around 2007 when a lot of anime fans uploaded their self-made videos of Caramelldanse on YouTube or Japan's Nico Nico Douga website.[80] These fans copied the song by the Swedish band Caramell, and created self-drawn anime character images that looped and repeated the caramel dance.

Fansub video is another fan-made video form. "Fansub" is short for fan-subtitled – anime videos that have translated language subtitles. Because most anime fans overseas do not know the Japanese language, fans who understand Japanese take the translation task upon themselves voluntarily. Many of them complete the task right after the anime

[79] The Caramelldanse on YouTube. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJFhoLVVwyM (Accessed 8/9/2010)

[80] An example of fanmade video mimics the Caramelldanse on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXK9ShllebQ (Accessed 8/9/2010)

has just been broadcast in Japan. The qualities of the translations vary. But for these fans who make fansubs, they are not just contributing their otaku labor by translating, but in so doing, they offer their immaterial labor – their knowledge of Japanese language and culture, and gain appreciation and feedback from other fans. They contribute their otaku labor in return for a sense of satisfaction, attention, and achievement, even though there no monetary value. These fansubs are sometimes as good as, or better than, the official subtitles on the commercial anime videos.

V. Cosplay: getting attention

Doujinshi in the U.S. is not popular yet, but cosplay definitely is. It is surprisingly common for American fans to attend anime conventions dressed in costumes. It is like dressing up for Halloween. Interestingly, you can even find people “cosplaying” as anime characters in the Halloween parade in New York City in recent years. Cosplaying was more popular than I expected at the convention in the U.S. Approximately half of the participants did cosplay, styles ranging from an entire costume to simply a bunny ear hair band. They were often stopped and asked to pose for photographs taken by other participants, who might also cosplay. When fans saw their favorite anime characters being played, they would approach the cosplayers and exchange compliments or chat with each other with excitements. Cosplaying is like the dress code for attending anime conventions in the U.S. – either you dress up, or you will get ignored (Figure 22).

(Figure 22) Convention attendees. In the line waiting to enter the Dealers' Room. Many people wore costumes (AnimeNEXT, June 2007).

It is very interesting to observe how participants perform cosplay at anime conventions. First, you can see which anime is popular by noticing which characters are cosplayed the most. Second, there are different ways to get costumes: purchasing them online or offline, making them yourself, or borrowing them. Fans can now purchase and customize costumes easily online. There are online cosplay forums providing manuals for beginners. Fans use these forums to exchange all sorts of information about cosplay. Some cosplayers prefer making costumes by themselves – it is probably cheaper, more satisfactory, and provides them with a sense of accomplishment. Most important of all, cosplay has to be creative and innovative enough to catch people's attention. For example, I saw two people dressed as Wii Controllers, wearing white paper boxes with some drawings and designs. The costume was not difficult to make, but the creativity made them successful at catching people's eye at the convention. (Figure 23)

(Figure 23) Two cosplayers as "Wii Controllers."They were dancing in the Holiday Inn Hotel lobby during the AnimeNEXT period (June 2007).

In the U.S., cosplaying can be very causal. Some convention attendees will put their costumes on at home and then walk or take public transportation to the convention venue. Therefore, when the anime convention is being held at the Javits Center on 34th Street, it is very common to spot people wearing costumes, walking around midtown Manhattan. Inside the convention, isles of booths and alleys are surrounded by individuals or groups of cosplayers photographed by with other participants. What cosplayers wear in the conventions is so fancy and trendy that even mainstream newspapers have reported on how they lead a new trend in the fashion industry.[81]

[81] "On the Street with Bill Cunningham: Animated." New York Times, Style. Bill Cunningham reports on thousands of teenagers dressed in the style of their favorite Japanese animated cartoon characters for the New York Anime Festival at the Jacob Javits Center. http://video.nytimes.com/video/2009/10/03/style/1247464976097/on-the-street-animated.html (Accessed 8/13/2010)

While cosplaying is considered trendy and fashionable by the public in the U.S., the situation in Taiwan is different. Cosplayers in Taiwan are called "cosers" for short.[82] Attendees of conventions usually do not wear costumes casually. They are either well-prepared or they do not participate in cosplaying at all. In Taiwan, cosers have to follow certain unwritten rules: for example, they do not wear costumes inside the exhibition hall where everyone is browsing and shopping for doujinshi because they will block the way by being photographed. Cosers can only display their costumes and be photographed in the assigned area outside the convention venue. They cannot wear costumes in public spaces either, especially while taking public transportation. Moreover, they are asked to refrain from occupying public restrooms in the convention venue.

In addition to having many restrictions, cosers in Taiwan are usually not accepted by the general public, especially older people. Cosers do not openly admit that they do cosplay to their families or friends outside cosplay community because their parents and the media have negative opinions about cosplay.

> I started doing cosplay since my senior year in high school. But I didn't let my parents know until my senior year in college. I hid my costumes in friends' houses. My parents do not like me reading and collecting manga already. However, in my college senior year, my cosplay photo was printed on newspaper, so I let my mom read the report. They still don't like me to play it now. So, I lied to them that I didn't make any new costume and I only cosplay when I am stressful. (TW07 Sherry)

[82] There is another cosplay group in Taiwan who cosplay "Taiwanese puppet show characters." The puppet cosplayers are exclusive from anime cosplayers and have more detailed-oriented costumes.

In Taiwan, cosers are facing social pressure and are labeled as "wasting money" or "wasting time" on their hobby – which is regarded as meaningless and useless.

> Now, Taiwanese press likes to do reports on cosers. But their focus is always on how much money cosers have spent. And because most cosers are students, the press only cares how much they spend their parents' money. And how much time they wasted instead of studying hard at school. They don't care a bit what cosers really want to say. (TW01 Huiwen)

Unlike American cosplayers who usually attend conventions in their costumes and are happy to be on stage winning the cosplay contests, Taiwanese cosers usually keep it low-key and do not want to be in public contests. The anime conventions in Taiwan usually do not have cosplay in their official program, nevermind cosplay contests.[83]

1. Taking cosplay seriously

Both Taiwanese and American fans do cosplay mainly for fun and for making friends. Sometimes they do cosplay just to get attention. If convention-attendees are not dressed up, they will not get attention from others at the conventions. Anime fans can find costumes online or in stores easily. However, there are some cosplayers that take cosplay very seriously. They make every piece of their costumes by themselves and hope for perfection – to look exactly the same as the characters. This takes a lot of money, energy, and time. As a veteran anime fan and former cosplayer who had followed her father to many anime conventions during her childhood, Alice mentioned how she used

[83] Except there are some commercial events that use cosplay as a kind of advertising to attract people's attention. Moreover, the Taipei International Book Exhibition had a cosplay contest for the first time in 2007.

to do cosplay seriously but then lost interest and did not have the time or energy to do it anymore:

> The first time I cosplayed was when I was 16. But my costume was so bad, there's no picture for that. And then, a few years later, I kept going to San Diego Comic Con and then in 2002 I went to AnimeExpo in California. That was when I started going there a lot and cosplayed a lot. … But after a while, I realized it was a waste of time, money and energy. You know, you drive yourself crazy before the convention, trying to finish costumes, then work things out with people, go with masquerade, and do all those stuff. And there's a lot of money to spend, basically just for the art project or to see friends. A lot of people who cosplay take it very seriously. And you realize if you are not doing it anymore, you stop being friends with them, because they're so involved in that, and it's so hard to keep up with them. If you are not coming out with new costume and stuff, they don't really make time for you later. So, I stop doing cosplay. I went to the AnimeNEXT just a couple weeks ago… It was actually very fun. I didn't cosplay. I had two costumes with me, but I didn't put on either of them, because I realized I like going to the con as myself. I didn't want to go as somebody else. In addition, you get tired of people taking you picture, they'll stop you while you're eating… (NY12 Alice)

As Alice pointed out, doing cosplay takes a lot of effort, money, and has an emotional impact. Once cosplayers decide to make a costume of a particular character, they have to collect images of that character in the same clothing design from different angles. Then if they decide to make the costume themselves, they have to go shopping for fabric, make patterns, cut, sew, and so forth. If they decide to customize the costume at a tailor's shop, they have to negotiate with the tailor about particular textiles or visual

effects that they want to have. These cosplayers regard costume-making as an art project, and many of them learn about design and sewing for the purpose of making costumes.

> The costume of Hijikara (character from *Gin Tama*) was borrowed from others, because it was a sudden decision. Therefore, it looked a little bit bigger. Next character, Hibari (character from *Reborn!*), I found a tailor to make it for me. I went to the shop and discussed with the tailor about what I want. …oh, but I forgot to tell them I want red lining on the coat. So, my coat came with no red lining… I'm so upset... In addition, I used my own hair as the character Hibari. However, my hair is not fluffy enough. It didn't have the result I want. I should have used a wig. (TW08 Purple)

In Taiwan, cosers share information online about how to make costumes by themselves, where to find good tailors to customize clothes, as well as where to find cheap wigs, tools, or accessories. A few years ago, cosers still did not have a lot of resources, nor did tailors want to customize clothes for them. But now, cosplay has become more and more popular, and the market for making costumes has become profitable. Therefore, there are more and more shops that specialized in making costumes for cosers now.

> There is a studio I know who makes costumes very well. I feel like the costumes they made had my own style. So, now I customize costumes from this studio regularly. It costs more than 4000 NTD (approximately 125 dollars) each. Sometimes it can be much more expensive. How often do I cosplay a new character and make a new outfit depends on my financial condition. I use my own salary from part-time jobs to make costumes. (TW11 Issac)

In addition to dress, cosplaying usually requires props and wigs (Figure 24). Coser Purple said she sometimes helps others make props because she studies at an industrial design program where there is equipment and recycled material available. “I can contribute my own strength: I know about the texture and quality of materials, because this is what I’m learning at school. So I can help others making cosplay accessories or props,” said Purple. Like props, wigs are also very important to cosplayers. Finding wigs requires effort and information-searching, because most of the fictional characters from anime or manga usually have ridiculous and impossible hairstyles (Figure 25).

(Figure 24) Cosplayers usually have to bring particular props to accurately play a certain character.

(Figure 25) Wigs are very important for cosplayers.

2. Emotional impact

After the preparation of costumes, expecting the upcoming cosplay events can be emotionally disturbing, too. Cosers Purple and Sherry met each other at the Cha-Li-Mao café and they became good friends. They often attend conventions to do cosplay together. Sherry has cosplayed for nine years and has played at least 60 characters.

> Some cosers stop cosplaying when they began to work. I am the opposite. I cosplay even more after getting a job, because with sources of income, I can use my own money freely. I was an engineering programmer before. The job was so stressful that I needed to cosplay more. Then, I made a lot of friends at the conventions. Friends will ask me to cosplay as a group. Therefore, my time was occupied with more and more appointments with these cosplay groups. (TW07 Sherry)

Because she really loves anime and manga, Sherry quit her job as a programmer and decided to study animation. She mentioned that each time that she prepares for a cosplay event, she always gets emotional – she can feel stressed, excited, or like she is getting too much into the character that she is playing.

Cosers usually like to play characters as a group (Figure 26). If they could have played characters from the same anime, they could further interact with each other and perform the anime repetitively. Therefore, cosplayer like to team up as of an anime series, and fans join together to play their favorite characters in the same anime. Sometimes, they will need to "call for character" to complete a whole group. Therefore, members of cosplay groups often changed. They will organize a team for one event, then dismiss and organize a new one and play different characters in the next event.

(Figure 26) Cosplaying characters from an anime series, *Gin tama*, as a team.

For Sherry, doing cosplay is a way to release stress from work and to make friends with other people who have the same interests as her. When she is planning to attend a

convention, she will get very hyper before the event. “It is like kids always looking forward to the upcoming school trip” (TW07 Sherry). The closer to the day of event, the more excited she will get.

> Cosplay is very tiring. On the day of event, you have to do makeup, set your hairstyle or put on a wig, and pose for cameras. Sometimes you have to wear very heavy clothes under a sunny and hot day. Or, you may have to wear high-heels that you are not used to wear. … Well, I don’t really ask for the quality of the photos too much. Of course, I care about how I looked in the photos, but it is not so important. I just love the feelings of it, at the moment of cosplaying with other friends. Even though if I don’t meet a lot of friends, it still makes me very excited when the character I play has been recognized by others. (TW07 Sherry)

Cosplayers are not just convention participants. They are performers who dress up, walk around, and pose for cameras. To put it more accurately, they are affective performers. Good cosplayers are required not only to look like, but also to act like the character. They study particular characters and practice how to pose like them or talk like them. Most anime characters are designed with distinct personalities, so it is usually easy to imitate the characters. However, someone who is serious about cosplay will try to become the character and may almost forget about him- or herself. In short, cosplayers have to put a lot of “emotions” into the character performance. Furthermore, they live like the characters and sometimes they act as the characters “without consciousness.”

> When I started to cosplay Edward (character from *Fullmetal Alchemist*), my personality would change into this character. At that time I was still not good at imitating characters quickly, so I needed a month to imitate the character. Therefore, for a month before the cosplay event, I would become as irritated as

> Edward, especially when someone mentioned “short” or “small beans” [which is a taboo for Edward]. And then, when I played Megaira (character from *The Five Star Stories*), I became very gentle and soft. (TW07 Sherry)

Purple has similar experience:

> The character Hibari has a very dark and selfish personality. Therefore, about one week before cosplay event, I started to turn hot-tempered and aggressive. I became intolerant of any noise. As soon as my roommates’ making a little noise, I would throw things in the room. Now, my roommates are probably getting used to it. They will be very careful one week before my cosplay event. (TW08 Purple)

This is probably a little bit exaggerated, but it is to show that some cosplayers in Taiwan take cosplaying very seriously. They want to play the characters perfectly and to make a good performance in front of photographers because the photos are the results of their work. Photos are the end-products of their labor. Therefore, they not only want to perform the characters perfectly, but also require their photographers to capture the right feelings in their shots.

> At conventions, there are always people around, always people in the background when you take photos. In order to take better photos with beautiful background, we sometimes go to the outdoors like in the mountains. When we decide to go outdoors to take cosplay photos instead of attending conventions, we will ask photographers who know the anime and the characters we play. They have to understand the works so that they’ll know what kinds of “fu” (feelings) needed to catch in the photos. This is far more important than photographic technique. Maybe some people just want to take beautiful pictures. But I personally prefer to catch the “fu” of the character. (TW07 Sherry)

"Fu" is a slang for "feelings" in Taiwan. When cosplayers talk about their cosplay photos presented on other people's websites, they comment on whether or not the photographer caught the right "fu" of the characters they played. Cosplayers need to play the characters well, so the photographers can catch the right "fu." However, when I asked cosers what it means to "catch the right fu," the answers were always vague and unclear. This is because "fu" refers to a kind of affect that is both subjective and indeterminant.

Some cosplayers in the U.S. take cosplay seriously, too. However, American cosplayers cannot find specialized tailors easily to customize the costumes they want. There are a lot of cosplay products on eBay, where the costumes are already designed. Thus, they can only pick the characters among the existing costumes. Therefore, serious cosplayers make costumes by themselves. Some of them are either working in the design professions or are students of fashion. Those who make costumes by themselves want to be recognized for their work. One cosplayer who had won a cosplay contest was a student from the Fashion Institute of Technology. She mentioned that when she has spent a lot of effort on her costume and has made it very special, she would feel very upset if people ask her where she "bought" the costume.

Many cosplayers make costumes for a sense of achievement or satisfaction, while most of them do it for fun. However, no matter what, cosplay is always about getting attention.

> I think a lot of it is attention. It's a way of getting attention. Maybe for the people who don't feel like they get it in their normal lives. That's a way for them to be somebody else, to act in a different way. If you go to the convention and you look around… that's a safe place for them, where they can feel like they can

> act like anything. They can put on a pair of cat ears and costumes, and act like anything, talk to strangers, run up to people they don't know and hug them. Those people are not acting like that at school, at work, or in their parents' houses. You know, it's outlet for them, I think. (NY12 Alice)

Alice's analysis may be true for people who regarded cosplaying as a way to get rid of stress in their everyday lives, as mentioned by Sherry, too. However, there are also people who like to do cosplay simply because it is fun and it is a way to show their talent and creativity, especially for those interested in fashion and design. It can also be put another way – cosplayers are looking for attention – attention from other fans, admirers, photographers, and the media, so that they can feel satisfied, recognized, achieving, and rewarded.

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In this chapter, I described otaku labor as affective labor from several perspectives. First, otaku put their passionate love of anime into communication, words, and images via the Internet. They innovate or take advantage of digital technologies for the purpose of sharing and exchanging information about anime (for example, the PTT Bulletin Board System, in which anime fans not only share and exchange information, but also create a new form of online interaction and consequently create a special cultural phenomenon in Taiwan). In the PTT many users maintain and manage boards in sub-forums, using their free labor voluntarily, and contributing information, news, and knowledge via the BBS technology.

Secondly, otaku labor is not only skilled labor with regard to knowledge and technology, but is also labor of every user who uses it or consumes it, for upon their

consumption or action there is potential productivity – "immaterial labor" in Lazzarato's terms – labor through communication, interaction, and social networking. With users' participation there is a kind of "collective intelligence" (Levy 1999; Jenkins 2002) regarding culture, fashion, and/or trends. The case of the *Densha Otoko* story mentioned above is a material example of collective intelligence, part of the immaterial labor.

Moreover, the otaku labor of doujinshi and cosplay involves more than free or immaterial labor. They participate in anime conventions, and by using their creativity, innovations, or knowledge, they produce their own art work. This art originates in affective feelings that motivate them to act. Furthermore, their work is among the affective flow of anime images and characters circulating within the entire anime economy and making the economy wider and more affective.

My observations and interviews in Taiwan and the U.S. illustrate that no matter where they are, anime fans engage in all kinds of affective fandom consumption and production practices. And because of the advance of digital technologies, the relationships between technology, production, bodies, and labor are changing. Digital technologies help to evoke and increase creativity, imagination, and innovation, allowing otaku to produce cultural products and values with their labor.

In the next chapter, I will further discuss the essence of affective labor, where affect refers to bodily capacity – the power to affect or be affected. I will argue that the concept of "MOE" plays an important role in this discussion because moe is both immersed within and surrounds the anime industry via images, characters, figures, and language.

Chapter 5

Affect and Moe Economy

In November 2009, a video of a man (Sal9000) marrying a fictional character (Nene) was streaming live on the Japanese video website, Nico Nico Douga.[84] Dressed in a white tuxedo, Sal9000 married Nene, witnessed by the otaku community via the streaming online video. Sal9000 was later interviewed by a number of news media, including CNN, and he became famous all over the world.

The character Nene is from the video game *Love Plus*, a Nintendo DS game (handheld video console), released by Konami game company. *Love Plus* is a dating simulation game – players play as a high school student who transferred to a new school and encounters three girls: Manaka, Rinko, and Nene. Players can interact with these girls and can have a romantic relationship with them. The story does not end when the player earns the girl's heart, but continues as the player maintains a relationship with her. The game is about building and maintaining a romantic relationship. Players can interact with the girls with the touchscreen or the microphone, and there are thousands of independent events embedded in the game. The game time runs simultaneously with the actual clock – seasonal or daily events will happen accordingly.

[84] "Video game wedding: a letter and photos from the bride and groom" By Lisa Katayama. November 25, 2009. BoingBoing.net http://www.boingboing.net/2009/11/25/video-game-wedding-a.html (Accessed 8/13/2010). Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsikPswAYUM

"She doesn't get angry if I'm late in replaying to her. Well, she gets angry, but she forgives me quickly," said Sal9000. Sal9000 told the CNN reporter, "I love this character, not a machine… I understand 100 percent that this is a game. I understand very well that I cannot marry her physically or legally." But for Sal9000, Nene is his dream woman. Sal9000 carried Nene (the Nintendo DS console) around the streets of Tokyo, bringing her to a restaurant, taking her to Disneyland, and to beach resort in Guam.[85]

Nene is one of the characters that is considered "moe." Sal9000 particularly likes the character Nene, because "Nene Anegasaki is a witty, doe-eyed beauty. She looks perfectly perky in sexy skirts, doesn't pick fights and is always at one Tokyo man's beck and call – that is why the 27-year-old decided to marry her," quoted from the report on CNN.[86]

Besides Nene, there are two other female characters that players are able to have relationships with in the game *Love Plus*. Manaka is a girl from a rich family and is good at both sports and studies. Rinko is a quiet girl who likes to stay alone, listening to music or reading books. The three female characters in this game have different personalities (actually the game allows players to change their personalities), appearances, and traits. There are various elements such as "doe-eyed beauty," "pride rich sweetie," "quiet girl," "sexy skirts," "mole on the face," "short hair," "long hair," "ponytail," etc. These elements evoke different players to feel moe, therefore I call them "moe elements," a term I borrow from Hiroki Azuma (Azuma 2001) and used frequently in this dissertation.

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[85] "Tokyo man marries video game character." By Kyung Lah, December 17, 2009. CNN.com http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/12/16/japan.virtual.wedding/index.html (Accessed 8/13/2010).

[86] Ibid.

Video games, especially bishoujo (beautiful girl) video games, dating simulation games, or visual novel games, particularly focus on character design and usually provide various characters with different combinations of moe elements. Players can choose among them to interact with depending on their preferences, like in the game *Love Plus*.

Sal9000 is one of many otaku who falls in love with fictional characters. Earlier in 2009, there was a CNN report of a different guy falling in love with a hugging pillow with a printed image of a game character on it.[87] The hugging pillow phenomenon was later further revealed to the American public when the mainstream NBC TV show *30 Rock* aired one episode where James Franco carries a hugging pillow as his girlfriend and explains the idea of a "moe relationship": "Do you know what moe relationship are? They are when dysfunctional Japanese men fall in love innocently with fictional characters."[88]

According to Japanese economic analyst, Takurou Morinaga, the emergence of moe economy is related to the demand for 2D characters as romance objects for single people who cannot find girlfriends/boyfriends in real life. Upon demand, the supply comes from the anime industry. The situation is particular difficult for men with low-incomes or low social status. The economic structure of Japan has changed and life-time guaranteed positions in big companies are no longer secured. Therefore, Japanese women are now more particular when choosing their husbands or partners. Low-income and low social status males have few chances to get married. These "*motenai otoko*" (持てない男, man

[87] "Love in 2D" by Lisa Katayama. New York Times, July 12, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/26/magazine/26FOB-2DLove-t.html (Accessed 8/13/2010).

[88] "Anime Culture Mentioned on 4 U.S. TV Shows This Week." January 17, 2010. Anime News Network. http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2010-01-17/anime-culture-mentioned-on-3-u.s-tv-shows-this-week (Accessed 8/14/2010).

holds nothing) are in a bad position in the romance or marriage market. These people have difficulty finding a romantic relationship in real life and find it is easier and more comfortable to establish one with 2D fictional characters (Morinaga 2007). Therefore, there are many men like Sal9000 or the guy who fell in love with a hugging pillow. Thus, the moe economy prospers partly because of these people.

Other than characters on the video game console, or characters printed on the hugging pillows, there are also bishoujo figurines (figures/miniatures figuring pretty young girls) (Figure 27). There are usually collections of bishoujo figurines in otaku's rooms, as decorations. Many figurines are made from anime characters with vivid facial expressions and postures, particularly on female figurines wearing school uniforms, kimonos, swimsuits, or sport suits. These figurines, like hugging pillows, are the extension of the characters' images, carrying moe elements.

(Figure 27) Bishoujo Figurines

Moe elements or moe characters are not limited to only female or feminine traits. Female otaku can feel moe toward male characters, and they have their moe elements, too. Some female otaku who are particularly interested in the Boys' Love (BL) genre of doujinshi are called "fujoshi" (rotten girls). They feel moe from matching two male characters as a couple. BL genre now comprises the majority of the doujinshi market. Besides BL doujinshi, there are "butler café" (the masculine equivalent of the feminine "maid café"), where waiters dressed as Victorian England-style butlers serve (mostly female) customers.

Moe elements exist in 2D images, as well as in the 3D world (the real world), in the form of figurines and hugging pillows that people can touch. Moreover, there are real people who play fictional characters and circulate the images with their presentation and interaction, such as cosplayers, or the maids/butlers working in the maid/butler café (Figure 28).

(Figure 28) (Left) Maid Cafe billboard at Akihabara, Tokyo. (Right) Fatimaid Café in Taipei. Maid Café is special café originating in Akihabara, where waitresses wear maid outfits and interact with customers, maintaining the master-maid relationship. For example, when customers walk into the store, waitresses greet them with "Welcome home, my master."

In addition to bishoujo figurines, maid/butler cafés, and hugging pillows, there are many other moe-related products, such as keychains, cellphone accessories, voice recording CDs, bags, posters, t-shirts, etc. These characters exist in the fictional world of anime, manga, and games, and their images are printed, mimicked, copied, and cosplayed as physical objects, products, or services. However, the essence of these tangible, physical objects still originate from 2-D images – images of the characters that possess "moe elements."

I. Characters and Moe Elements

It is generally said that the beginning of "*chara-moe*" (character-moe)[89] anime is *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (*EVA*) in 1995. Anime *EVA* not only changed how the Japanese public feel about anime, but it also changed the way that anime fans consume anime products. Because of its tremendous influence of the main characters, *EVA* has become classified as the first chara-moe anime. Many anime after *EVA* have been influenced by the types of moe elements embodied in *EVA*'s characters including Rei, Asuka, and Misato. These three characters have become the prototypes in the development of moe characters. Fifteen years after anime *EVA* was first broadcast, its main characters are still popular among anime fans. The character products of *EVA* are released every year and fans simply consume these characters without paying attention to the storyline.

[89] *Chara-moe* is short for character-moe, a term meant to emphasize that moe is linked to anime characters. Chara-moe anime always focus on characters' designs, settings, traits, or personalities (which are all moe elements), instead of focusing on storylines.

1. Rei and Yuki: the "time-image characters"

(Figure 29) Rei Ayanami

Rei Ayanami (Figure 29), the female character from *EVA*, is one of the most popular anime characters in history. Her eye was wrapped with bandages when she first appeared in *EVA*. Later, the audience finds out that Rei is a mystery high school student, who is also the first pilot of the Evangelion, a cyborg-robot machine. She has blue hair, pale skin, a quiet and introverted personality, and often gets hurt in fights and so is sometimes bandaged. After *EVA*, there were a lot of character designs similar to Rei: i.e. blue hair, a quiet and introverted personality, etc., such as Yuki (from *The Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi*):

> I like Yuki (from *The Melancholy*), the quiet one. She looks cool, silent and very calm. (NY03 Vincent)

Among all anime characters, such a quiet, almost inactive type of moe character seems to be the most popular among otaku. The inaction and quietness is regarded as a kind of "time-image" by Thomas Lamarre:

> Ayanami Rei may be the ultimate instance of the inactive character of time-image, the quintessentially soulful body. Like so many of Sadamoto's (the character designer of *EVA*) characters, she tends to be all soul to the point of losing the body and dropping out of action altogether, but only to turn everywhere, her soul stretched across innumerable platform and fields. (Lamarre 2009, 205-6)

Here, Lamarre links inactive character with limited animation and to Deleuze's notion of the time-image[90] to argue that limited animation (like Japanese anime) has been to favor character design over animation. Full animation (like Disney's cartoons) depicts movement naturally in a way that is very similar to the actual movement of real persons or animals. Limited animation reduces the number of frames per second and results in a gap or lack in the animation. However, in limited animation, "movement does not merely stop or disappear." Instead, it is transformed into potentiality on the surface of the image, in a "distributive field" (Lamarre 2009, 192). (I will discuss this further later in this chapter) Thus, inactive characters in anime such as Rei and Yuki, who are mysterious and without any clear background or narrative have given more imaginary space for otaku audiences. For otaku, the characters' impacts on them are indeterminant, open with potentiality, and affective.

[90] Lamarre's use of "time-image" is from Deleuze's distinction between "movement-image" and "time-image." Deleuze regards modern cinema as time-image cinema because the cuts between series of images are irrational, determining the non-commensurable relations between images, while in classical cinema (movement-image), cinema's cuts are rational and systematic. Limited animation means that there are virtual, imaginary spaces between the anime frames/images and these spaces (cuts) are not rational or systematic.

2. Tsundere

(Figure 30) Tsundere moe characters: Asuka (Left), and Suzumiya Haruhi (Right).

Another moe character, Asuka (Figure 30, left) from *EVA* has a hot temper, is easily irritated by others, and is arrogant and intrusive. She is self-centered, and often verbally abusive (especially to Shinji, the main male character in *EVA*). The sentence she likes to say is "You are an idiot." (「あんたバカ？」) This type of attitude and personality has a special slang in the anime fan dictionary: "***Tsuntere***," combining two terms: "*tsun tsun*," meaning irritable or morose, and "*dere dere*," meaning loving, sweet, and shy. Two almost opposite personalities combined together in one person, making that person contradictory and unpredictable – such a personality became one of the popular moe elements among fans. Successful "tsundere" characters include Haruhi Suzumiya (from *The Melancholy*, (Figure 30, right), and Kagami (from *Lucky Star*).

Here are some examples of how fans described their affection for tsundere characters:

> I remember watching an anime series called *Maria Holic* and a female character is saying "I hate you. I hate you. I don't want to be your friend anymore," and then she wants to open the door, but she can't open it. And all her friends think she's very MOE! (NY05 Chris)

> I feel "tsundere" characters are moe. I once told my girlfriend that if we are going to have a daughter in the future, I want to raise her as a "tsundere" type of girl. I can even give her the character Suigintou's costume that I have made for cosplay. And my girlfriend said I must have been crazy… (laughing). (TW 11, Issac)

> We are too sensitive to accept a real girl who is tsundere, because we cannot tell whether or not she likes or dislikes. In the real world, I hope she is not my girlfriend or friend. It is better just existed in the 2-D world. (TW15, Tony)

3. Mature versus Cute

The third female moe character from *EVA* is Misato. She is older than Rei and Asuka, probably in her late 20s or 30s. She became Shinji's guardian in the first episode of *EVA* and welcomed this 16-year-old boy to live with her. Misato is an "elderly sister" or "mature woman" type of moe.[91] Several American fans who are older (middle-aged), brought up Misato as their favorite character among all, because she is "confident, strong, skilled, and there's a kind of darkness in her life" (NY11 Brian).

> She is strong and funny, and she's got problems but she's able to do her work. And, she's not silly, you know. She is supposed to be very strong and mature…

[91] Among my informants, there are some who do not agree that elderly sister or mature woman is moe. For these informants, moe has to be cute. But according to my own definition, any element that affects anime fans' bodily responses are moe elements.

> Well, I know in some shows, there are characters like more one-dimensional. (NY02 Al)

Mature women or elder sister are considered as types of moe characters. People who like this type of moe character are not just older fans, younger fans like them too. Such mature type characters provide fans with the feeling of being cared for. While on the other hand, some fans prefer moe characters whom are in need of being taken care of. And these moe characters are usually young, cute and naïve – the "younger sister" type.

Most anime fans connect moe with the idea of ***kawaii*** (cuteness in Japanese). It is the most common adjective that is linked to moe:

> Moe means something overly cute. Such as character Chiyo-chan (from *Azumanga Daioh,* 10 years old girl who skipped five grades to enroll in high school) is a small tiny smart kid… and she is always getting herself inside the situation like she's overly cute. Like in the first episode, she's singing the cooking song: "Cooking is so fun! Cooking is so fun" (Chris is singing and imitating the character!!). And that's moe. That's something overly cute. Konata (from *Lucky Star*) can be considered moe as well, 'cause her facial expression. In one episode, she cosplayed as character Haruhi (from *The Melancholy*), and she does a little Haruhi dance. That was pretty moe. (NY05 Chris)

As Chris pointed out, being cute is not just about appearances, but also behaviors, facial expressions, or voices. As an example, Chris sang the "cooking" song by Chiyo-chan. As he sang, he tried to elevate the pitch of his voice, as voice actors do when they are playing a cute or young character in anime. In addition, Chris added diminutive suffix "-chan" after the name of Chiyo, an indication of "cuteness." In Japan, speakers will put

the suffix “-chan” after a name to express that the person is endearing. It is usually used for babies, young kids, young girls, and especially among groups of young female friends.

Kawaii (cuteness) is a very common term among young Japanese girls. *Hello Kitty* – the mouthless cat that invaded many countries in the world – is an example of a Japanese kawaii product with its smiling face, round eyes, round body and torso, and pink bowtie and skirt. “It makes people want to pet her or hug her” (NY05 Chris). The concept of “kawaii” evokes people the feelings of wanting to hug or pet the cute objects and therefore represents moe, as well as affect.

Defining kawaii or cuteness as moe elements indicates that moe are not necessarily connected to sexual/erotic responses. The bodily responses stimulated by kawaii characters are more about “warmth.” Such affective feelings may bring emotions such as comfort, happiness, or joy to the viewer (Figure 31). Sometimes, cuteness can be used in a situation of embarrassment, in order to relieve tension. In many anime, cuteness covers flaws or failures in a person.

(Figure 31) Yotsuba and Totoro, represent cute moe characters.

> I feel moe is something similar to cuteness. Because when seeing something cute, you will feel warm inside and "Ah~~~" that sort of feeling. I had that feeling more often before, but not now. Now, there are just too many stimulators. (TW15 Tony)

Like Tony, many other fans also pointed out that recently there are too many moe characters in anime, or too many anime in the market that are focused too much on specific character settings.

> Before, characters' charms would not be a selling point in anime. We would discover a character is charming or cute from reading the anime story. For example, we might have said: "Ah, there is a cute girl wearing glasses in the anime *Macross*." However, now, there are too many cute girls wearing glasses in many anime series. We might recall that Lum is the cute girl in anime *Urusei Yatsura*. But now there are too many cute girls came with various types, some are all wearing glasses or some are all *tsundere*. Too many!! (TW15 Tony)

Indeed, there are now too many anime in the market that sell characters with moe elements. Before moe became so popular, otaku liked a character because the role is attractive according to the storyline. Now otaku are more focused on moe elements in a character, such as "glasses" or "tsundere." Interest in a character is no longer inspired by the storyline. Moe elements are what is desired by viewers and these elements are independent of individual characters. Moe elements have become the material that otaku consume. What they are consuming is affect, which works independently of characters, stories, and/or narratives. Moe elements are a result of the media and digital technologies that allow for the speedy, repetitive presentation of elements and images that modulate otaku's feelings of moe.

II. Moe: Affective Movements of Bodies

Responses to moe originated with the reception of moe images and moe characters – characters with combinations of moe elements in anime, manga, video games, and/or light novels. In this dissertation, I define moe as the affective movements or responses of bodies stimulated by the images of characters modulated by media such as anime, manga, and games. Otaku have bodily, affective responses upon seeing moe images or upon thinking of moe characters or elements. These affective responses are without consciousness. They occur before the realization of moe, joy, happiness, or warmth. The sequence is like this:

Images → (stimulate) affective response → feelings of moe, joy, happiness, comfort, warmth, etc. → consciousness (The affective responses may or may not result in feelings of moe because affect is indeterminate.)

As I mentioned in the Introduction, feelings of moe are difficult to define because experiences of moe vary among different persons. Common among all feelings of moe are that there are movements in their bodies, affective responses, such as "bursting into bud" or "catching fire or burning." For example, otaku may say: "The uniform that this character is wearing makes my body warm." Or they may say, "This character is so funny and cute. I feel joy and happiness when seeing this character." "Mini-skirts make me feel hot." "My heartbeats were suddenly speeding when I thought of this character." And so on. Moe is about affections or feelings bursting inside the hearts of otaku. Sometimes, it is related to sexual drives and stimulates erotic feelings. However, moe is not equal to sex.

When moe is erotic, it is not about physical sex, but imagination (Shuffle Alliance 2007, 45) and expectation. The anime industry modulates consumers' affect through the use of digital technologies. This affective modulation becomes motivation for otaku to further consume and produce. I regard the bodily movement and excitement that is provoked by moe in otaku as affect, motivating otaku labor.

1. Affect: a power to act

In Chapter 4: Otaku Labor, I call the labor of otaku, affective labor. Affective labor regards the labor of feelings, emotions, knowledge, collective intelligence, imaginations, innovative ideas, or simply indeterminate bodily responses that represent potential productivity and value. And digital technologies play an important role in affective labor. Cybernetic and communicative technologies allow people to change their patterns of consumption and production, and with repetitive images and ubiquitous portable nano devices, the relationships between human and machine are changed. As Negri put it, in postmodern society, cybernetic and communication technologies change the process of production. There is more and more investment in immaterial labor subsumed "from below," the base of life – it is affect, also as a power to act (Negri 1999).

The idea of affect as the power to act is drawn from Spinoza and further interpreted by Deleuze as the process of constantly becoming, by adding capacities through interaction (Thrift 2004, 59). For Spinoza, affect is defined as "the property of the active outcome of an encounter, takes the form of an increase or decrease in the ability of the body and mind alike to act" (Thrift 2004, 60). Because affect is considered a power to act – not a measure but a power – "it does not run into limits but only obstacles to its

expansion" (Negri 1999, 85). Therefore, as Negri points out, affect is an expansive power that turns out to be the force or power of action beyond measurement. Affect is a motivation, as well as a potential.

Massumi explains the difference between affect and emotion: Affect is an autonomic bodily response to an event. According to Massumi (drawing from Spinoza and Deleuze), intensity (strength or duration) and qualification (narrative continuity) occur upon an event, and affect is more about intensity than qualification. Affect is bodily intensity that takes place without consciousness. The difference between affect and emotion is as follows:

> An emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized (Massumi 2002, 28).

In short, affect precedes emotion. Affect is "unqualified" intensity, undefined and unrecognizable, while an emotion is qualified intensity that has been defined and recognized with subjective content and narrative meaning. Affect is not emotion. It is not determinant or predictable but has the tendency or potential to become emotion.

Affect is bodily capacities or bodily potential, that is, a power to act.

> Affect refers generally to bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, to engage, and to

> connect, such that autoaffection is linked to the self-feeling of being alive – that is, aliveness or vitality (Clough et al. 2007, 2).

Affect, as an autonomic bodily response prior to consciousness, can be stimulated or modulated by technologies. The theory of affect is not only about bodily response without consciousness but is also related to "the technologies that are allowing us both to 'see' affect and to produce affective bodily capacities beyond the body's organic physiological constraints" (Clough 2007, 2). With recognition of affect's relation to cybernetic and informational digital technologies, Clough points out that new technologies have already changed our perception and configuration of human/non-human bodies. The blurring boundaries between organism/non-organism, bodies/machines, and production/consumption remind social theorists to rethink the social sciences, cultural studies and critical theory, and labor and capitalism. These blurring boundaries also remind us to reconsider the changing relations between technology, information, and bodies, and also remind us to consider how technologies modulate affect and influence our life, including work, consumption, and entertainment.

Digital technologies, the Internet, and computer software have changed otaku's fandom activities – they have become more active due to high speed Internet and they are freer to interact with machines, characters, and images. Otaku even build relationships with the digital – they are able to establish relationships with the characters in video games and they have hugging pillows as their companions – and these relationships are gradually replacing human-to-human relationships. In addition, there are stories about cyborg characters or robotic designs in anime turning out to be not impossible in the real

world. The fantasy or science fiction stories in anime often become actual events in the world.[92]

2. Affects and Images

Using the framework of affective labor and the theory of affect, Elizabeth Wissinger argues that modeling in the fashion industry is a form of affective labor, arousing affective flows via producing, distributing, and controlling models' images, photos, and bodies, with the help of technologies. She claims that the work of models no longer aims at the "narrative construction of subjective identity; instead, it is oriented toward "affecting bodies directly" (Wissinger 2007, 232-233). Drawing from Massumi's theory of affect and images, Wissinger indicates how the appearance of models' images can have an effect on viewers that activate affective responses without consciousness. Models or people who work with them usually cannot speak in a narrative, meaningful way to explain why a model is successful or not. They say that models "sparked their interest," or "caught their eye," or have "a face that isn't boring" to explain vaguely whether or not the model is good. In an affect economy like the fashion modeling industry, the images' effect on viewers is immeasurable and indefinable. Models are not trying to give or construct some kind of subjective or interpretable cultural meaning. Instead, their work is focused more on managing their bodies, impressions, and personalities, to modulate the affective flows activated by the images of them (Wissinger 2007).

[92] "What's Behind Japan's Love Affair with Robots?" By Lisa Thomas. *Time*. August 3, 2009. http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1913913,00.html#ixzz0j5ZxitJX (Accessed 8/14/2010).

From my observations of and interviews with otaku, I found that the otaku responses to moe images are affective, too. First, the feelings aroused by the images of moe characters are less narrative and more affective. The images are not about narrative, but are about fragmented elements (such as personality, hair color, costumes, etc). Secondly, otaku's moe responses are indescribable – they find themselves unable to describe their exact feelings. Many Taiwanese fans can say when the first moment was that they felt moe, but when I asked them to define moe, their first reaction is: "it is difficult to say" or "it is very subjective." Interestingly, many of them mysteriously use "this thing" to indicate the feeling of moe.

> Moe… this thing is very difficult to explain. It has individual definition. Basically, it is a kind of feelings, which will make you joyful, happy, or devoted… that kind of feelings. (TW04 Harry)

> This thing is very typical. I am not asked often, but when people asked me, I could never tell that "fu" (feeling). Never. It is unexplainable, because everyone has different recognitions and preferences of moe. (TW13 Kwei)

Third, the response to moe is unpredictable and indeterminate. Usually, otaku can tell which characters stimulate moe responses in them, or which moe elements activate affective feelings inside their bodies (that is, they know their favorite types of moe elements). They are able to list the elements or standards that moe characters should possess (such as glasses, uniforms, maid outfits and etc). However, it is not always true that when a character fits these elements or standards, that the otaku will feel moe. Or, one fan may have moe reactions to a character, while other fans may not.

> Moe is like you have feelings or affections, very obsessed with something. It is related to cuteness, but not exactly the same. Sometimes cute is not moe. Some people like mature woman or woman has big boobs. But, big boobs are not cute. Some people might think small boobs are moe. Therefore, moe does not have limited elements or exact meanings. I think it is very subjective and individual. (TW03 Sue)

Accordingly, responses to moe are affective. The images create bodily responses in otaku before they are aware of it. During my observations and interviews, many of my informants described their favorite characters with certain characteristics, personalities, or traits – moe elements. Among these descriptions, there are some obvious examples of otaku objectifying moe elements, such as the "absolute field" or "cloak."

> "Absolute field" is referring to a girl's thighs area between knee highs and mini-skirts. I will definitely feel moe when I see the "absolute field" of an anime girl. I will feel very satisfied if I saw the piece of skin in that "absolute field" between her knee highs and mini-skirts. (TW13 Kwei)

In many cases, school uniforms, maid outfits, or accessories such as bow ties will make otaku feel moe:

> My ideal moe characters should be bishoujo wearing school uniforms. Hmm… cat-ears or tails are also great. (TW05 Bai)

Bai is a doujinshi artist. Therefore, it is very normal for him to put his passion for moe into his own doujinshi art work. Most of the drawings in Bai's doujinshi, are of bishoujo wearing school uniforms (Figure 21). Besides doujinshi artists who can

incorporate their moe elements into their work, it is also very common to see cosplayers put their favorite moe elements into their costumes, such as cloaks:

> I like an occupation type in games: female crusader. It's similar to knight. I like the cloak she's wearing. It's kind of fetishism I guess. "Cloak" is my moe element. (TW09 Angel)

Sometimes anime fans receive all of these moe images without deciding which elements are their favorite because there are so many moe characters out there.

> I am basically genre-wise (means everything can be moe). Tsukasa is the "slow" "quiet" moe in *Lucky Star.* Mikuru is the "girl from the future" in *The Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi*. And the entire case of *K-On*… For me, they are all moe. (NY07 Frank)

In sum, moe elements are not about what the characters do in the stories, nor are they about narrative. Sometimes moe elements are related to sexual objects (such as breasts, other body parts, or sexy costumes), but most of the time, they are not related to sexuality (for example, personalities, cyborgs, fairies, and/or animals). What makes otaku obsessed with moe is not all about sexual desire, but more like attachments to something without narrative or consciousness. Otaku fandom is not exactly equal to fetishism, either. Fetishism usually regards physical objects (body parts as the objects of desire), but for otaku, their obsessions originate in the 2-D world, from images of anime, manga, video games and light novels. From these, otaku may turn to physical objects such as figurines or hugging pillows. But, it is the images of these moe characters that compel responses from otaku. Here, a kind of affection, obsession, or attachment to certain moe elements is

emergent. Thus, it is necessary to look closer at the relations between images and viewers and the issues of sexuality and fetishism, beginning with the psychoanalytic perspective.

III. Affective images

There have been a lot of discussions about how the images of female characters in the mass media have a way of reinforcing the stereotypes or fetishism of women. For example, feminist film theorists argue that passive female characters in the mainstream cinema reproduce the patriarchal values of society. This argument is particularly based in psychoanalysis (Mulvey 1975).

1. Psychoanalysis and the image

According to Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of the mirror stage, the infant-child develops a sense of ego from the image he/she sees in the mirror, between the ages of 6 and 18 months. The infant-child sees the image of him/herself through the eyes of the mother, and realizes that he/she is different and separate from the mother. During the mirror stage, the infant-child learns that he/she is separate from others. When the infant-child sees the image of him/herself in the mirror, he/she comes to form the ego – the idealist image of the self. During this period, the infant-child's body still lacks coordination and cannot control its fragmented body. However, the infant sees its image as a whole in the mirror and misrecognizes the image as the complete ideal self – the narcissistic ego. According to Lacan, the infant-child forms the narcissistic and idealist ego at this pre-linguistic and pre-oedipal stage. "It is Lacan's treatment of the notion of

misrecognition which is deployed in Althusser's treatment of ideology and which becomes central to feminist film theorists' earliest treatments of the viewer's unconscious identification with film images, thought to promote the society's ideology." (Clough 2000, 48)

Lacan's theory about desire is surrounded by the idea of lack. For Lacan, ever since birth, the infant experiences lack initiated by separation from the mother. The infant has begun to desire what it lacks without realizing it; throughout our entire lives, we have always desired something that we lack, which originates from the lack that we experience when we are separated from the mother at birth. Lack is referred to as "*objet a*" (*objet petit a*). The *objet-a* can only be replaced – it can never be fulfilled because we lost it at birth. Therefore, *objet a* is the object of desire (lack) that we are always seeking in the other. During the mirror stage, the image of the other (the mother) has become the replacement of the *objet a*. When the infant-child grows up, the replacement will become something else: a blanket, a toy, a voice, or a gaze. These replacements can be mediated by technologies, such as cinema or television.

In her treatment of fetishism, feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey re-examines Freud and Lacan's psychoanalytic theory about the image of the other and unconscious desire. She argues that the "cinematic gaze" reinforces the viewers' unconscious identification with the "male gaze," which reinforces patriarchal gender stereotypes and arrangements. Mulvey relates the cinematic gaze to the moment during the mirror stage when the infant-child misrecognizes the image of the self as the complete and ideal ego, bringing pleasure from the gaze. The cinema viewer unconsciously identifies with the main male protagonist as the ideal ego, and the ideology of the patriarchal structure embedded in

these films is reinforced. Female characters in the films are presented as fetishistic representations of the object of the viewer's desire (Mulvey 1975). Mulvey notes that the viewer's identification with the oedipal narrative in the cinema is actually a fantasmatic construction that is linked to the unconscious misrecognition of the ego ideal. Such fantasmatic structures require the ideological support of technologies, such as cinema, to reproduce the Oedipal narrative. This is how feminist film theorists use psychoanalysis to show that, through the gaze, cinematic images are embedded with the Oedipal narrative structure, and are integrated into the unconscious identification of the subject.

In the late 1980s, Kaja Silverman began to rethink the historical specificity of cinema and questioned differences based not only on sexuality, but also class, race, and nationality. Silverman argues that the viewer does not always unconsciously identify with the Oedipal narrative as the dominant one (Silverman 1993). The gaze is not possessed by the subject; instead, the gaze puts the subject in the field of vision. Therefore the subject can identify with different positions of class, race, sexuality, age and nationality, given the unconscious historical and cultural specificity due to changes in technologies (such as cinema and television) (Clough 2000, 54-56).

When the gaze shifts from cinema to television, the viewing of images changes. The images in television and other new digital technologies are very different from cinematic images, where relations between narrative and gaze are close. Television presents itself as a machinic apparatus, (to borrow from Deleuze and Guattari's, "machinic assemblage"), where the movement of the image is non-subjective, without Oedipal narrative. Delezue and Guattari argue that the unconscious (of nonsubjective and televisual/digital images) should not be thought in terms of narrative (Clough 2000, 60).

In the case of anime watching, the gaze towards moe images is not quite the "cinematic gaze" (which implies patriarchal structure and reinforces sexual difference within narrative). With otaku's affective responses to moe images, it is much more like "television glance" where there is less narrative reading in the anime watching. Image reception in anime, manga, or video games, particularly in the digital age of, is more about affective bodily responses.

2. Otaku Sexuality

In discussions on otaku's sexuality and the reception of moe images, there are debates among several scholars that focus on the issue of asymmetries and differences in otaku desires.

Japanese psychologist Tamaki Saito uses psychoanalytic theory to frame his analysis of the sexuality of otaku. He shows that there are the asymmetries of sexual difference between male and female otaku (Saito 2007). Disagreeing with Saito's claim, Japanese cultural critic Hiroki Azuma believes that otaku's reception or consumption of moe images is not about the asymmetries of sexual difference. Otaku's consumption of anime images does not have narrative embedded in it. What they consume is simply databased-elements – moe elements in anime characters. Otaku's consumption patterns have shifted from narrative to database (i.e. moe elements) (Azuma 2001). But according to Thomas Lamarre, the asymmetries of difference remain unexplained. Lamarre believes that these asymmetries still emerge within anime consumption, but are different from Saito's sexual difference. Lamarre introduces the idea of the "distributive field" in order to emphasize

the flattened, de-hierarchized flow of images in anime and to imply the emergence of certain asymmetries in an affective (not a subjective) sense (Lamarre 2009).

Using psychoanalytic theory, psychologist Tamaki Saito examines otaku's sexuality and attempts to rectify the prejudices against otaku among the Japanese public. Saito believes that otaku are actually very sensitive to fictionality. Otaku are commonly known to escape reality and to mix up reality with the imaginary. Otaku show their love by holding onto the fictional in order to possess the object that they love. Otaku collect objects such as moe character figures and hold onto these as their "transitional objects."[93] Therefore, according to Saito, the obsession for moe character products is like an infantile attachment to transitional objects.

Saito further argues that making doujinshi is a very particular way of expressing love by taking the anime that otaku love and "make them their own through the act of parody" (Saito 2007, 228). One of the reasons that the public dislike otaku is because of the pornographic doujinshi that make otaku's sexuality a special issue. Perverted behavior and affection toward certain fictional female objects are stigmatized, especially after the Miyazaki Otaku Murderer incident in 1989. Instead of condemning the perverted

[93] D. W. Winnicott's theory of the "transitional object" as the first not-me possession is related to the idea of objet-a (Winnicott 1953). Winnicott noted that in an infant's early life, there will be one thing that it is attached to, such as its own thumb, teddy bear, or a piece of blanket. The infant brings this object everywhere and caresses it. The object is important for the kids as they grow up. According to Winnicott, the transitional object "belong[s] to the realm of illusion which is at the basis of initiation of experience." The period of the "transitional phenomenon" is at around 4 to 12 months old (Winnicott 1953, 97), partly overlapping with the period of Lacan's mirror stage. The playing, affection, and obsession with the transitional object is related to the development of artistic creativity and appreciation, religious feeling, the loss of affectionate feeling, drug addiction, and fetishism. From the perspective of transitional object theory, fetishism is described as "a persistence of a specific object or type of object dating from infantile experience in the transitional field, linked with the delusion of a maternal phallus" (Winnicott 1953, 97).

behavior of otaku, Saito tries to analyze their sexuality from a psychoanalytic perspective and he also argues that otaku actually can tell clearly that the anime world is fictional and imaginary from the real world. Saito mentions that female otaku are interested in Boys' Love (BL) doujinshi. According to Saito, these "fujoshi" (rotten women) who like BL doujinshi are heterosexual but get excited by the male homoerotic scenes in the doujinshi, and this explains a difference in male and female otaku sexuality.

Drawing on Freud and Lacan, Saito argues that moe characters are the object of male otaku's desire to replace the lack with a fictional desired object. For male otaku, moe is fictional, imaginary, sexual, fetishist, and objectified. The sexuality of female otaku is different. Female otaku occupy a more passive position and identify themselves as lack, instead of identifying as the active one – the agents of desire. Saito concludes that moe for male otaku is mainly a fetishistic desire "to have," while moe for female otaku is a desire "to become" (the object, the lack) (Saito 2007, 235).

However, as I mentioned earlier, due to the ubiquitousness of digital media, the reception of anime images are not necessarily conscious or narrative. Images come from not only cinema and television, but also from personal computers, DVD players, digital commercial screens inside shopping malls, airport wallscreens, as well as iPods, iPads, and many other portable digital devices. The relationship between images and eyes is no longer of a "gaze" but is constituted by more affective looking, and often exposure to images via these new media is without consciousness. The impact of images on viewers is less meaningful and narrative and more about bodily pre-conscious affective response.

Noticing the turn from a narrative to an affective reception of anime, Japanese cultural critic Hiroki Azuma (東浩紀) argues that there is a transformation in

consumption patterns; in how anime fans consume anime products – from narrative consumption to database consumption (Azuma 2001). Instead of analyzing otaku desire and sexuality as Saito does, Azuma disregards the psychoanalytic perspective on sexual asymmetries and claims that otaku are postmodern humans.

3. Database Consumption

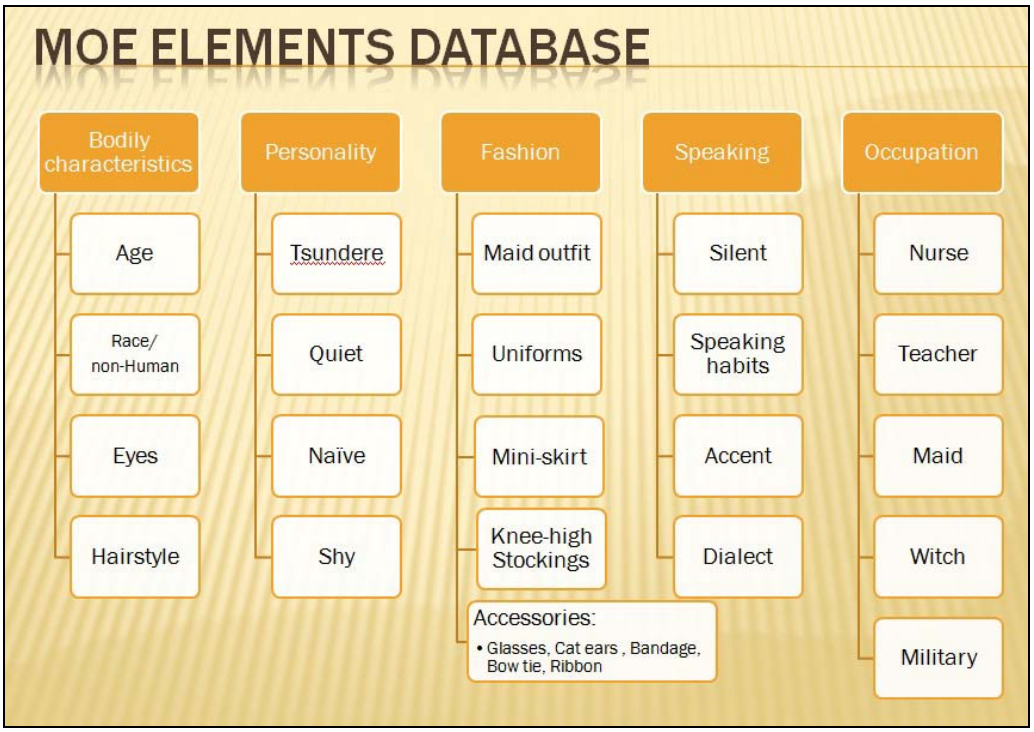
In contrast to Japanese cultural critic Eiji Otsuka's argument of "narrative consumption," Azuma offers the concept of "database consumption" to highlight the extent to which the "grand narrative" has disappeared in postmodern Japanese society.

Japanese cultural critic Eiji Otsuka (大塚英志) introduced the concept of "narrative consumption" in 1989 (Otsuka 1989). He argues that Japanese otaku are searching for the "grand narrative," a kind of "world-view" or "cosmos" in anime and related products. Otsuka uses the example of the popular products *Bikkuriman*. *Bkkuriman* are a series of character stickers that came with chocolate snacks. With stories embedded in these character stickers, consumers collect stickers in order to approach a "grand narrative." These *Bikkuriman* character stickers are not just consumed as stickers, but each sticker stands for part of a narrative, and to collect them all means to complete the story. This is the early phenomenon of "narrative consumption" that Otsuka describes. It can also be illustrated by products such as the card game *Pokémon* or *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, which are both very popular in the U.S. For Otsuka, the mode of consumption in the anime market (including amateur production) is a kind of circulation of narrative, where consumers

appropriate the means for seeking a grand narrative to subsequently produce their own products.

Later, Japanese cultural critic Hiroki Azuma noticed that otaku consumption patterns were changing. Azuma argues that the search for a "grand narrative" is no longer as influential on otaku consumers. It was in the era of modernity that a grand narrative still functioned, but the arrival of the postmodern changed the pattern. Azuma uses Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the "rhizome" to describe the multiple and non-hierarchical conditions that permeate the consumption patterns of postmodern otaku (Azuma 2001).

Today, otaku consume a database of certain "affective elements." Azuma describes this phenomenon as "database consumption" to differentiate it from the previous era of "narrative consumption." Otaku no longer pursue meaning through a grand narrative by consuming and collecting many small narrative pieces in the form of anime-related products. Instead, their consumption behaviors circulate around characters – characters with various combinations of "moe elements" extracted from the database (Figure 32). By "database," Azuma means that in the postmodern society, "animalized" otaku are consuming classified anime characters according to their moe elements (traits, personalities, settings, etc.) – the database consists of these elements, storing and cataloging moe elements for otaku to search for. It is also a metaphor of a notion of the "rhizome" in contrast to "grand narrative."



(Figure 32) Moe Element Database

Lamarre criticizes Azuma's database theory by arguing that it is an erasure of asymmetry (Lamarre 2009). For Azuma, there are multiple narratives and no singular grand narrative exists or is pursued by otaku. Rather, otaku simply choose what they like from the fictional anime or games that satisfy their needs directly – "They no longer bother themselves with the troublesome relationship wherein 'the desire of the other is itself desired' [about the necessity of sociality of human]; they simply demand works in which their favorite moe elements are presented in their favorite narratives" (Azuma 2009, 92). In addition, for Azuma, otaku activity can be regarded as an "animalistic" behavioral response – an affective response toward certain character traits and moe elements, in the products of anime, manga and games.

This transformation to database consumption is of course related to the Internet and other informational technologies. Azuma take the bishoujo video games as an example to

illustrate how digital technologies have facilitated the formation of a moe-element database (such as by interacting with multiple moe bishoujo characters in games). Digitalization (i.e. video games, the Internet, blogs, search engines, imaging software, digital screening devices, etc.) makes this transformation in consumption practices possible.

4. The Distributive Field

Thomas Lamarre points out that Azuma finds in moe an "automatic behavioral response that makes otaku prey to technologies of statistical control, which he likens to brainwashing and drugging" (Lamarre 2009, 259). Azuma does not presume that otaku are subjects who desire or fetishize moe characters as objects. Instead, Azuma embraces technological determinism, where the world is digitalized into bytes of information, especially in the otaku's fictional reality. Otaku activities and their responses to moe are automatic behavioral responses that can be programmed digitally.

Lamarre points out that Saito tends to focus on the sexual asymmetry of otaku and ignore the changing technological conditions of anime, while Azuma puts digital technology at the center of his analysis and is unable to explain the issue of sexual difference as regard otaku and their relation to narrative structures or moe elements. In the age of digital technology, or the postmodern era, the relations of moe characters, elements, and the act of watching or exposure to the images does not necessarily involve subjectivity, that is, there exists the possibility that the narrative of the Oedipal structure does not have an influence on the viewers. Unfortunately, Saito does not address the issue of technology and therefore his argument is weak when it encounters a discussion on the

influences of digitalization. Lamarre also disagrees with Azuma, who puts otaku consumption as instinctual response, drawing from the digitalized database that is totally without the possibility of the emergence of asymmetry.

Here Lamarre offers the concept of the "distributive field." The distributive field, is rhizomatic and contains image elements (flattening layers, without the sense of center and periphery), implying the emergence of sexual asymmetry, given the dynamic interaction between the attractor (moe elements) and cooperator (otaku). Unlike database consumption, which denies all forms of asymmetry, the distributive field acknowledges the dynamics between images and otaku, and the possibility of the emergence of asymmetry (Lamarre 2009, 273), which suggests the emergence of affective asymmetry – new forms of asymmetry that emerge from the distributive field via the digital images without sense of center and periphery.

Drawing on Guattari's idea of "machine" in contrast to "structure," Lamarre argues that the "distributive field implies a machine, affective asymmetries, and heteropoiesis, which are not in opposition to, but ontologically prior to, structure, subjective asymmetries, and autopoiesis" (Lamarre 2009, 275). This means that in the distributive field, the sexual asymmetries that Azuma wishes to erase will possibly emerge through the dynamic interactions between moe elements and otaku. For Lamarre, otaku are not regarded as subjects with fixed viewing positions toward anime images in the distributive field. Lamarre wants to highlight a complex pattern, as opposed to a stable viewing position or subject. In the world of the distributive field, there is no sense of center and periphery (as in Murakami's description of "superflat" or Azuma's "database"), the grand narrative is replaced by small narratives, moe elements that are scattered in the flattened

layers of anime images. Different from Azuma, who ignores all asymmetry, Lamarre argues that certain asymmetries of differences are still reproduced in the distributive field, on the affective and digital levels, because this is how otaku perceive and experience the world.

The problem of Azuma's database theory is that it gives us a less dynamic reading of the interactions between images and otaku. For Azuma, there are only otaku consumers taking the role to initiate and act in his database system, while the structures, asymmetries, and/or dominant ideologies are all erased. Therefore, Lamarre's distributive field allows us to think that although there is no fixed subject position, the gendered, cultural, and historical specificities or structures can still exist or emerge in different ways, on an affective level. The notion of the distributive field allows for a more dynamic understanding of interactions and how technologies impact the ways that images affect otaku.

The relationship between moe images and otaku has necessitated a discussion of how otaku view moe characters in anime, manga, and games, and how the images effect otaku. Using the framework of affect, I have tried to argue that anime images are able to evoke preconscious and presocial affective responses in otaku's bodies. New digital technologies have changed how otaku experience and consume moe images. Otaku consumption of anime has shifted from narrative consumption to database consumption, as Azuma claims. Through this transformation, the anime industry has developed a large focus on moe anime, moe character goods, and moe elements because otaku no longer focus on anime storylines but more on the traits of the characters. Contemporary otaku

are much more interested in moe characters than ever before and are obsessed with possessing and collecting moe products.

I have been concerned with the sexuality, perversion, and fetishism of otaku, because otaku's consumption patterns usually target parts of bodies, clothes, or accessories that objectify and fetishize women. I have also been interested in issues of gender and sexuality because pornographic doujinshi have become an issue for many religious, moralist, or conservative people. Even though many moe products do not involve sexual depictions, some people still condemn moe anime because they claim that the hollow and shallow characters make audiences only care about the appearance of the characters instead of the content or the depth of the story.

I have found that most anime fans oscillate between affective response and a search for narrative. Importantly, the research informants have demonstrated that narrative and affect are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as is often implied in previous literature and theory. According to my observations and interviews, anime fans will try to make sense of the anime stories after watching them. But, because of the advent of digital technologies, they are having much more direct affective responses at the moment of watching.[94] When otaku are watching anime, playing games, or reading manga, the images of moe come from multiple directions, and contain multiple layers within one screen or page. There is not necessarily a center or hierarchy in terms of a narrative structure within the images. This corresponds to what Lamarre calls the "distributive field."

[94] This reflects a digital or technological shift rather than a generational one. Some senior otaku tended to be more interested in analyzing the stories and meanings of anime or characters. These fans admitted that they do not watch the recent moe anime and that they think these moe anime are stupid.

Otaku's obsession with moe characters should not be called fetishism. Fetishism in a psychoanalytic sense is about disavowal. The fetish objects are regarded as the subject's desired object, which fulfill the lack, while at the same time the subject disavows the lack. However, otaku responses to moe are actually more affective, without an underlying Oedipal narrative. Azuma's "database consumption" tries to put the Oedipal narrative aside, allowing for a discussion of responses to moe that are preconscious and prior to narrative. It is not necessary to impose an Oedipal narrative (i.e. an explanation that says that if an otaku is obsessed with "nurse" moe, it is because there is a psychoanalytically discoverable story behind this person's desire, which is inevitably rooted in the traumatic drama of early childhood development). Moe itself exemplifies indeterminant, preconscious, affective resonance. This is not to say that moe elements necessitate moe responses. Moe responses are never predictable, explainable, or reasonable.

Inspired by Lamarre's idea of the distributive field, I am thinking of more possibilities, affective asymmetries, and new relationships of otaku to anime images. It is not necessary to impose or presume subjectivity or subject positionality. Moe elements scatter from all directions in the field of anime images. This does not mean that there are no gendered or sexual asymmetries or cultural or social norms. These structures exist. Certainly, gendered things are imposed in the whole distributive field. Digitalization and new technologies have given more space, more potentialities, and more possibilities for sexuality through modulating human responses on the affective level.

Conclusion

I. The Circulation and Modulation of Affect

After examining and analyzing the passionate activities and creations that otaku are involved in, including their reception and reproduction of moe images, this dissertation argues that the image reception of otaku is an instance of affective bodily response, which is differentiated from a narrative reading of the images. Moreover, I consider their voluntary labor to be free, immaterial, and affective, while at the same time, their productions are valuable, which illustrates an alternative relationship with capital investment and the economy. The anime industry, including anime fandom activities, has gone through a transformation toward the moe economy, which modulates affective flows via moe images that are dispersed through digital technologies.

As I illustrated in Chapter 2, the development of the anime industry and the successful worldwide distribution of anime is linked to recent technological innovations. The low budget and mass production system allow anime to be situated in an advantageous position in the global market. The advent of informational and communicative technologies speeds up the distribution and consumption of anime all over the world. Later on, I further examined the devoted anime fans, otaku. Drawing from my interviews and observations, in Chapters 3 and 4, I illustrated that anime fans, or otaku, are a group of people that enjoy anime-related products, and I showed how they express their love for their favorite anime through practicing fandom activities. Otaku are actors, consumers, and producers in the moe economy. They participate in the circulation

of moe images not only through consumption but also via their activities such as cosplaying, making doujinshi, remixing video clips, etc. In addition, they exchange information, build networks with others, discuss contents, write blogs and reviews, and translate videos or manga for the purpose of sharing them with people from many language backgrounds and proficiencies. Otaku activities are inspired by their affection and their love of anime, but simultaneously their actions do generate monetary value in the market. Fandom activities are the source of innovation and creation in the anime industry. Thus, I argue that the creative and innovative power of otaku is related to the essence of their labor, which is immaterial, voluntary, and affective. I define affect as a power to act, based on the theoretical frameworks of Spinoza, Massumi, Thrift, and Negri (Massumi 2002; Thrift 2004; Negri 1999). I define otaku labor as affective labor, motivated and modulated by the reception and production of stimulations in anime. These stimulators are moe elements.

Moe elements are embodied by characters, but are conceptually distinct from them. For example, an otaku who likes the character Haruhi in the anime *The Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi* may feel moe toward other "tsundere" characters in other anime. Otaku are attracted to particular moe elements rather than particular characters or stories. That is why I argue that otaku consumption is no longer the consumption of narrative, but of a database, as Azuma argues, because these moe elements can stand alone in a database that otaku can choose from. I also argue that the otaku obsession with moe elements is not equal to fetishism. Moe elements are not only about gendered body parts. Moe elements are also the personalities, machines, animals, etc. These elements are not necessary sexual, nor do they provide cultural or social narratives. Moe elements should

be read as affective because they are received at an affective level, which is pre-individual, pre-conscious, and prior to the formation of the ego, the social, or the cultural.

II. The Commercialization of the Doujinshi Market

Otaku labor involves lot of fandom activities such as communicating, consuming, cosplaying, making videos or doujinshi, etc. The otaku practice of making doujinshi is a fandom activity that involves the consumption, circulation, reproduction, and distribution of moe images via many kinds of media and technologies (drawings, music, games, and digital software). Doujinshi, which was initially self-produced and not-for-profit is now becoming commercialized, as the doujinshi market grows in Japan Taiwan, and other Asian countries. Sometimes doujinshi of the "big-hand"[95] artists can sell better than commercial manga publications at doujinshi conventions such as at Comiket. There are also specialized shops such as Mandarake or K-Books[96] that provide these doujinshi artists channels to sell doujinshi. In Taiwan, there are also commercial publishers that specialize in doujinshi publication.[97]

Publishers come to discover potentially hireable doujinshi artists and the artists themselves have begun to think of their artwork production as a business. There are personal websites or blogs by doujinshi artists that promote their work. There are also some websites that collect artist's website links together and serve as a portal for

[95] "Big-hand" in Chinese character is equal to "大手" in Japanese, referring to major companies. In doujinshi world, it refers to major doujinshi circles (teams) or artists.
[96] K-Books website: http://www.k-books.co.jp/ (Japanese only)
[97] My Fresh Net is a company that publishes novels focusing on fantasy, adventure and BL stories. Sometimes they recruit authors from the doujinshi market, particularly via the Internet. They have a website encouraging users to create and write online novels. And good work will be published by the publisher.

doujinshi fans.[98] As a result, doujinshi artists have gained visibility. The doujinshi market has become very competitive. Doujinshi artists learn how to run a business, starting with promoting their artwork online and attending conventions and events to get more chances to sell their work. Some artists also sell doujinshi online, accepting online transitions and pre-orders (so that they do not print more copies than will sell. They also use other strategies to boost their sales, such as limited editions, free giveaways with purchases, etc. Some popular doujinshi circles or artists are getting more and more organized. They have familiar channels and divisions of labor in terms of printing materials, advertising, and distribution, and they even have the ability to mass produce.

The boundaries between amateur and professional have become more and more ambiguous. The phenomenon can best be seen at the biggest doujinshi convention, Comiket. A lot of amateur doujinshi artists have turned professional after their debuts in Comiket, such as CLAMP, Fumi Saimon (柴門文), and Rumiko Takahashi (高橋留美子). In addition to amateurs, sometimes professional mangaka will publish doujinshi separate from their commercial artwork, to express something that they cannot express in their commercial publications. Often fame and popularity in the doujinshi market translates into an analogous increase in the sales of their commercial products. Furthermore, the phrase "professional doujinshi artists" has emerged, which is contradictory because doujinshi artists should be amateur, not professional. "Professional doujinshi artists" refers to artists who make doujinshi as a living. According to a study, there are about 8,000 Japanese professional doujinshi artists.[99] In big events like Comiket,

[98] Website portal such as http://www.comic.com.tw/ or the blog of Greenwood doujinshi bookstore.
[99] Quoted from a research by Gunnar Hempel, mentioned in "Doujinshi and Law." By Patrick W. Galbraith. Otaku2.com. http://www.otaku2.com/articleView.php?item=243 (Accessed 8/16/2010).

which are aim for amateur event only, there are still a lot of commercial activities involved. In short, the boundaries between amateur and professional are blurring, particularly because digital technology makes almost everyone capable of becoming an artist and mass publishing.

Since the doujinshi market is becoming commercialized, the issues of capitalist investment (the involvement of publishers) or exploitation will soon become significant. For instance, these doujinshi artists who have been voluntarily making doujinshi without being paid may begin to form expectations for making a fortune or becoming professionals. They have begun to believe that they are practicing their techniques and that one day they may become professional mangaka or comic artists. In this sense, otaku labor is not completely free and voluntary, but could be considered as a kind of "self-investment," especially in the cultural industries (Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005). The doujinshi market may not be very structured or organized like the commercial manga and anime industry, but it should be further discussed in terms of its relation to capital, labor, technology, and bodies.

There are concerns that once the doujinshi market becomes fully commercialized, the spirit as well as the creativity of doujinshi will disappear. The spirit of doujinshi was originally "non-commercial." This is why doujinshi, without market-oriented considerations, was able to become the media of personal opinion and experimental, groundbreaking, innovative ideas. Indeed, maybe there are more and more doujinshi artists who have turned commercial because the market is certainly growing. Yet the idea of doujinshi as a way for fans to create and publish their own work autonomously still provides otaku with a lot of space for creation and innovation.

The unfettered space for artistic creation that the doujinshi tradition provides is the reason why Japanese manga and anime will always be able to maintain their originality and imagination and continue to develop such a strong presence in the global anime market. Japanese-American journalist Roland Kelts argues that part of the reason that Japanese anime and manga is so creative and popular is because the authors and artists are not constrained by market pressures and have more autonomy to express whatever they want to. This is why issues of violence, sexuality, and race are often directly confronted in manga and anime that has been less regulated in Japan: "Japanese pop culture [anime and manga in particular] is cheap to make and distribute, and is marginal in character and by nature – more like anarchic punk than corporate products such as Disney films" (Kelts 2010). Therefore, when in early 2010, as the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly was trying to make the censorship of manga publication stricter, many people including artists, publishers, animators, and cultural critics opposed the proposed amended law.[100]

III. An Industry Never Stops Changing and Emerging

This dissertation treats anime, manga, and games as art forms and considers fans of these media to be potential producers in the cultural industry because fan-made materials and fandom activities spur innovative creations out of otaku passion. I began the

[100] In February 2010, an amended law proposal to ban sexual depictions of minors in publications was brought up by the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly. This Youth Protection Ordinance Reform Bill intended to prohibit materials involving sexually provocative depictions of "nonexistent minors" – fictional characters that look to be younger than 18 years old in anime, manga, video games and all other media. Source: "Tokyo nonexistent youth bill voted down in committee." 6/14/2010. *Anime News Network.* http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2010-06-14/tokyo-nonexistent-youth-bill-voted-down-in-committee (Accessed 7/27/2010)

dissertation with the historical development of the anime industry in Japan and how anime-related products became popular globally, in relation to the influences of technologies. Postmodern everyday life is significantly influenced by digital technologies. Fans' consumption behaviors and productive activities have shifted from narrative to database. Digitalized images of anime, manga, and games interact with viewers in an affective way, on the bodily level, and modulate moods and emotions. The movement of bodily affect stimulates fans to act, to create, and to innovate. I refer this potential capacity to "otaku labor," which is always already immaterial and affective.

Indeed, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter on "moe," moe images or moe elements are often sexualized and stereotyped in anime, manga, and games. The underlying messages or ideologies of moe often reinforce gendered stereotypes common to patriarchal society. Women's bodies are displayed as the sexual objects of male desire. However, as I have argued, thinking the object of desire through the control or modulation of affect is a more presently relevant thought than the critiques of patriarchy. Sexual difference and sexual asymmetries in gender relations may or may not remain, but my focus has been on digitalization, affect, and revisions to psychoanalytic Oedipal narrative assumptions. This is not unrelated to a critique of sex/gender/sexuality in anime and manga. But, at the level of affect, as new digital technologies modulate our bodies, what I attempted to bright up is the new relationships and new possibility for sexualities having the space to emerge.

For example, there was a trend of "gender-reversed fan work" among the otaku population in 2008. On Japanese online video website Nico Nico Douga, videos made by

fans about *The Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi* turned popular.[101] These videos made major revisions to the genders of main characters – female characters such as Haruhi, Yuki, and Mikuru became male – which was illustrated by the previously female characters wearing male school uniforms, with changed bodies (they become taller than before, but not exactly "masculine" as it is traditionally conceived). Male characters Kyon and Itsuki were depicted as shorter, with longer hair, and female school uniforms (Figure 33). These "gender-reversed" characters and videos became very popular among fans, and many of them used this theme as inspiration for making doujinshi or other videos. Feedback on the videos demonstrated that viewers regarded these "gender-reversed" characters very moe: particularly Kyon-ko, the original male character Kyon turned female, and Mikuru, the original moe female character transferred into a cute moe boy. This case shows that otaku are not only playing with moe elements, but also with sex, gender, and sexualities. They play around with the gendered codes, embodying revisions in various characters, which results in confusion for the viewer. Gender stereotypes still exist, but they also undergo revision through the diversity of otaku and their fantasies/imaginations.

[101] Sample video on Nico Nico Douga: http://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm2416947

(Figure 33) "Gender reversed" comparison of the characters in the *Melancholy of Suzumiya Haruhi*.

The binary of male and female desires or sexualities have changed/transformed in the world of otaku, exemplified by the case of the gender-reversed characters, or the interest in *shota* (young boys) and otokonoko (男の娘, female-dressing men), bishounen (美少年, beautiful young boy) cosplayed by female cosplayers, or other gender nonconforming or androgynous characters (Figure 34 and Figure 35). This is an area for further research on the roles of gender and sexuality in anime and manga, and among otaku fans.

(Figure 34) Crossplay – male cosplayer playing a female character in the online video game *RO*.

(Figure 35) Crossplay – three female cosplayers playing three male characters in the anime *Black Butler* (including one male character cross-dressing in the anime – the left one).

In addition to the “gender reversed” playful fan-made videos, cosplay or doujinshi, there are many other types of imaginations and fantasies that materialize within various genres of doujinshi. Also, incidents like the young man that fell in love with a video game character (described in Chapter 5) are making people consider more seriously whether or not virtual relationships or virtual companionship can replace human ones. Another question is: what is the virtual and what is the real human relationship? The line between the virtual and the real is already blurring due to the advent of digital technologies.

Because there has been an increasing demand for moe anime, many anime studios have increased their production of moe anime. More recently, there are also demands for bishoujo video games, which run as visual novels that make the gameplay much more like reading novels, with minimal game controls. These visual novel games are usually telling the story of the protagonist (the player) encountering beautiful young girls and having a romance with one of them (the player usually has to decide on one girl as the main character). In the beginning of the game, the interaction between the players and the moe characters affect the players to have moe responses. Later, the story will begin to have sad events – tragedies, disasters, diseases, or accidents – in order to make the players cry. Such visual novel games are obviously attempting to modulate players’ moods with certain storylines, which usually follow a predictable formula, such as a dying girl, a traumatizing childhood, a car accident, memory lost, etc. The storylines focus on the formula, while at the same time, the visual and sound effects have been designed to build sad atmospheres into the background. The players of visual novel games are not really interested in the “grand narrative” (i.e. meaning, structure) but in the

moe characters and the moments of mood-modulation. This kind of affective modulation by video games through moe characters and certain visual and sound effects are cases of how the anime industry has turned to moe, which evidences the turn to an affective economy.

In her book *Millennial Monsters* (2006), Anne Allison links Japanese toys such as *Pokémon* or *Yu-Gi-Oh!* card games with the idea of fantasy in the framework of global economy. She argues that there are two key concepts that make Japanese cultural products successful: techno-animism and polymorphous perversity. "Techno-animism" is a mixture of virtual and spiritual elements that generate intimate relationships with consumers. The animist sensibility (or spirituality) can be traced back to Japanese folk traditions and religions which blur the boundaries between human and non-human beings. This spirituality is embedded in toys as "enchanted commodities," facilitating access to imaginary worlds where new forms of intimacy and friendship are possible. Like *Pokémon*, the "animal-like" monster, or *Gundam* robot model kits, these products originated as anime characters and are examples of what Allison called "techno-animism." Also, drawing from Freud's conceptualization of "polymorphous perversity," images of these toys can be transferred and spread across various surfaces, portals, and avenues for marketing. Images can be in 2D platforms like manga, anime, or computer graphics, or they can be 3D physical objects like toys, figurines, key chains, cosplay maid café, hugging pillows, etc. According to Allison, consumers are able to gain pleasure from these products, which provide different forms and varieties for creating and

recreating their imaginary worlds (Allison 2006). These products are part of the affective economy, which circulates and modulates consumers' affects, moods, and emotions.

In this dissertation, my discussion of moe economy represents just a part of the affective economy. The economic turn to affect has permeated many aspects of our lives and world. These "enchanted commodities," to use Allison's term, are for the purpose of providing fun, pleasure, joy, warmth, soothing, comfort, or giving/replacing friendship or companionship (Allison 2006, 13-14). Another example of enchanted commodities can be seen in the trend towards "ambient literature" in contemporary Japanese fiction, which further evidences a culture of affective appeal and mood-regulation (Roquet 2009). This dissertation is meant to be not only an academic reading of otaku consumption and communication but also to exemplify a perspective about affect and its role in the global economy, which has changed the ways that humans behave and think due to the proliferation of digital technologies.

Appendix A

Respondent Table

ID#	Nickname	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnic	Occupation and fandom activities
TW01	Huiwen	F	31	Taiwanese	Editor
TW02	Steve	M	32	Taiwanese	Editor
TW03	Sue	F	33	Taiwanese	Doujinshi artist, lecturer and café owner
TW04	Harry	M		Taiwanese	Project planner
TW05	Bai	M	21	Taiwanese	College student
TW06	Ted	M		Taiwanese	Doujinshi artist
TW07	Sherry	F	28	Taiwanese	Graduate student in Animation, cosplayer
TW08	Purple	F	21	Taiwanese	College student in industrial product design, cosplayer
TW09	Angel	M	29	Taiwanese	Computer programmer, cosplayer
TW10	Ewing	M		Taiwanese	Cosplayer
TW11	Issac	M		Taiwanese	Part-timer. Cosplayer
TW12	Tifa	F	30	Taiwanese	Entertainment industry. Doujinshi artist
TW13	Kwei	M	29	Taiwanese	Service section. Amateur photographer of cosplay.
TW14	Jack	M	21	Taiwanese	College student in Civil Engineering, manga club member
TW15	Tony	M	22	Taiwanese	College student in Urban Design., anime club member
NY01	Mike	M	29	Puerto Rican	Computer-related administrative job
NY02	Al	M	47	American/White	Computer programming and computer consulting, anime meetup coordinator
NY03	Vincent	M	24	American/White	Art school graduate
NY04	KD	M	22	American/black	Illustrator, part-timer
NY05	Chris	M	20	American/Chinese+white	College student in law
NY06	Clyde	M	50+	American/white	Web designer, anime reviewer, administrative work at non-profit
NY07	Frank	M	27	Filipino	Work at a medical center

NY08	Nancy	F	25	American/white	Fashion design student
NY09	Amy	F	24	Filipino American	College student in Speech, theater and communication, performer
NY10	Liz	F	28	American/Chinese	Teacher
NY11	Brian	M	50+	American/white	Television station scheduling, anime critic
NY12	Alice	F	26	American/white	College student major in Graphic Design and Animation. Former cosplayer
NY13	Mark	M	27	Puerto Rican	Amateur artist. 3D graphic designer wanna-be.
US14	Tanchi	F			Doujinshi artist
US15	Barlee	F			Doujinshi artist

TW: Interview in Taiwan

NY: Interview in New York

US: Email interview. Both US14 and US15 live in Orange County, California.

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