

Abstract for Cultural Flows in and with Asia.

The global flow of manga and anime: the past, present and future.

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The history of the development of manga (Japanese comics books) and anime (Japanese animation) is one of unique difference and ubiquitous sameness. The ubiquity of manga and anime in Japan and the ease of their global flow (such as Pokemon, Dragon Ball Z and Astro Boy) suggest a form that is highly adaptable and modifiable. However, at the same time scholars and critics consolidate manga and anime as an innovative and unique style, reinscribing it as an essentially different from western entertainment like Hollywood or Disney.

In this paper I look at how manga and anime cross boundaries and flow into many communities and audiences, whilst at the same time being secured to Japan's rarified history and culture. I argue that the portrayal of manga and anime as both nomadic and Japanese, commonplace and different, is a significant paradox that has resulted in a journey of discovery and exploration for many scholars, fans and businesses from dubbed global anime to 'raw' Japanese manga. This is a journey that takes us from the past to the present and into the future. From the selective framing of a native tradition of Japanese comic art and visual culture, to its present ubiquity in Japan and the success of 'borderless' (Iwabuchi, 1998) children's anime, to its international fan audience pushing and consolidating manga and anime into a globally-recognised site of imaginary and phantasm. The journey from raw manga to dubbed anime is one that takes us from the past, haunted, orientalist vision of a 'lost Japan' of doubles, ghosts, death and memory to an international Otaku (fan) culture extending from Shibuya to Melbourne that invests in new styles, technologies, and identities, with their gaze fixed firmly on the future.

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