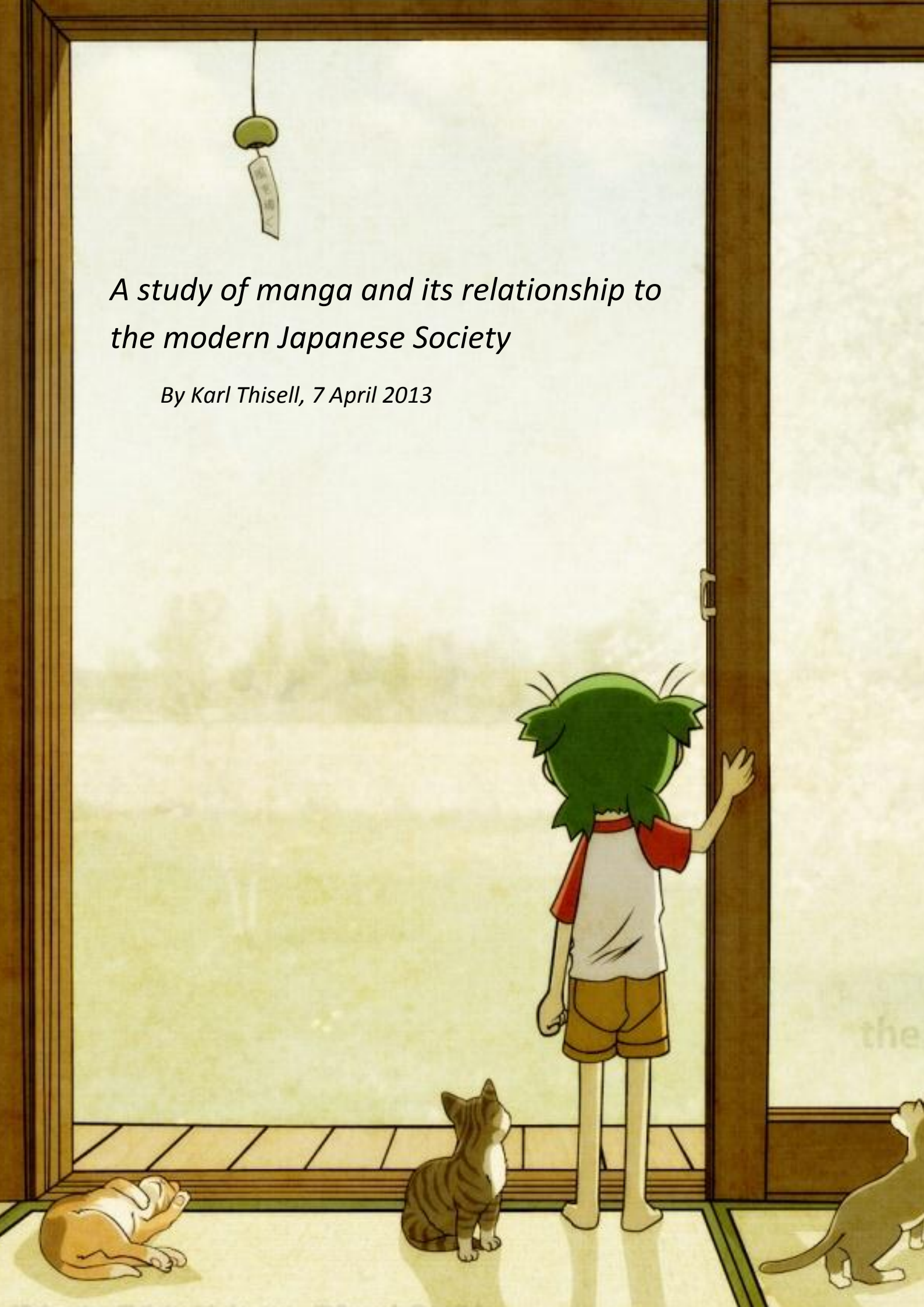


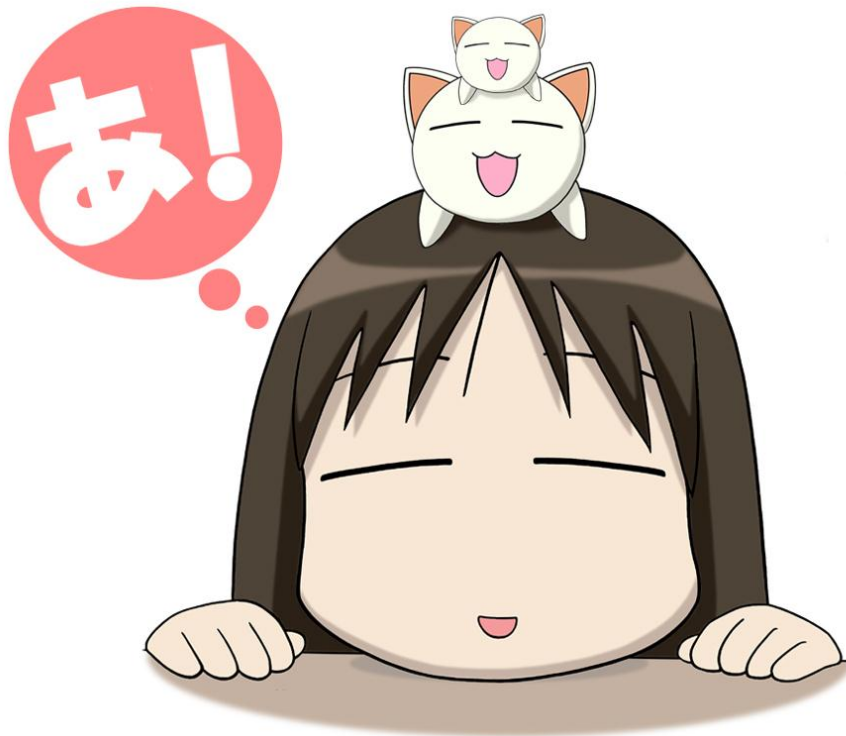
*A study of manga and its relationship to  
the modern Japanese Society*

*By Karl Thisell, 7 April 2013*



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## Introduction

Manga today is part of, not only Japan's, but also our own western society. In influencing everything from American cartoons, to Kamratposten and even the Swedish governmental site studera.nu; it has become such a part in our daily life that we may not even notice its presence.

What I will primarily focus on in this text are the genres of manga and its animated part, anime. I will research and explain the origin and development of these genres, and their influence from and upon the International ideas and the Japanese society. For while many parts may feel similar to our own art, there are also parts of manga that many find odd and alien.

Thus it's also very necessary to explain just what manga is. I will begin by doing this and then move on to give a quick overview of the historical roots of manga and go into deeper details about the largest genres. In the chapters detailing the genre I will also present theories of these genres development and why they attract people.

An important word to know while reading this is archetype. Archetype is defined as *"the original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies"*<sup>1</sup>. Archetypes are found in any form of art. As characters they enable us to quickly grasp a person's role in a series. A known archetype is the Tomboy, a girl who acts very boyishly.

I will also mention the word escapism a lot. Escapism, defined as *"an inclination to or habit of retreating from unpleasant reality, as through diversion or fantasy"*<sup>2</sup>, is a thing that this medium thrives upon to a large extent. Escapism is widely considered a negative thing, described as something one does to avoid facing one's real situation or stalling the need to deal with ones problems. It is often said that escapism is a downwards spiral, with the habit of forgoing to deal with problems making them worse, thus making the urge to flee them even stronger.

This phenomenon will be further discussed deeper into this paper, and why it's so important in the understanding of manga's and Japans relation to each other. But for now we will return to the explanation of manga.

Manga, in its common form, means comics. In Japan all forms of graphic books, western serials and their own comics fall under this name. It's in the west that it's come to only include Japanese series. Korean and Chinese series of similar art style are generally known as Manhwa and Manhua respectively, with these words having the same meaning as their Japanese equivalent in their home countries. A manga artist is commonly known as a mangaka.

Most think of manga as large eyes, small noses and sharp and defined line. While these are indeed the vast norm, one should remember that manga, being as large as it is, has produced several artists who have their own variants, sometimes looking nothing like the traditional style. Moreover, just like art in the west has changed over the last century, so has manga, for reasons such as an increasing amount of proficient artists, the access to better technology and what is considered fashionable at the time.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/archetype>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/escapism>, Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003

Another important part is the fact that unlike the most famous western comics like Superman or Batman, a manga series is the work of a single author, and rarely lasts for more than a few years, often shorter. That means manga remains very consistent during its entire run, and since it has a clear beginning and end it's very easy for someone new to the series to get into it, just start at chapter 1. Batman, on the other hand, has been running consistent since the 40s; it might be a little harder to know where one is supposed to start reading there, or to know about the myriad of side characters that has gathered over the years.

Pictured below are several art styles by different artists.<sup>3</sup>

Manga is read right to left in Japanese fashion, which might confuse beginning readers, this is implemented as the Japanese writing system is similarly read right to left. Manga is commonly published in either monthly or weekly magazines and collected chapters are sold in volumes known as tankabon. Less known mangaka often produce their stories in doujinshi, a tankabon which contain only one or two short stories.



A large difference between Japanese and western animation is also the studios that produce them. In the west large studios like Disney produce their series, and have more than enough funds to experiment or fail. In Japan however, the animation studios are many and small producing only one or two shows a season. They don't have the resources to experiment too much, they need to have a show they'll know sells every season or they might go bankrupt. This means that many animating studios are inclined to just go with flow and produce series from the most popular genre at the moment.

**History of Manga**

Manga can be traced as far back as the 1800s, the result of western art and caricatures influencing contemporary Japanese artists. While these caricatures have little in common with the modern definition

3	1	1
		2
4	3	2
7	6	
	8	5

<sup>3</sup>From left: Bleach by Tite Kubo, Wooser's Hand-to-Mouth life by Tomiko Fujinoki, Hellsing by Kouta Hirano.  
<sup>2</sup>nd Row: Code Geass by Clamp, Kaiji by Nobuyuki Fukumoto, Metropolis by Osamu Tezuka.  
<sup>3</sup>rd Row: Puella Magi Madoka Magica by Ume Aoki, Sayonara Zetsubou-Sensei by Koji Kumeta, Goodnight Punpun by Inio Asano.

of manga, its importance to manga can't be denied. It was during this period that Japan's first serials were created, which would provide the groundwork for manga. The first Japanese animators appeared in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; these animators often worked through government sponsors and animated classic fables of Japan.

As Japan entered an era of fascism and jingoistic<sup>4</sup> expansion during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, lots of Japanese artists suffered. Dissident art was destroyed and some of its most famous artists fled to the west. However, the Japanese government saw the gain in cartoon propaganda, and large sums were invested in the animation and cartooning industry, owing to a great deal of art being produced during this time, for example the original work *Kumo-to-Churippu*. This short story features a ladybug being hunted by a spider but the spider is blown away by a storm (video can be found on YouTube in the link below).<sup>5</sup>

The spider in this animation is drawn in a style that quickly brings one's thoughts to the stereotypical African-American caricatures, while the ladybug is drawn in a much more traditional Japanese style. We are here seeing more proof that Japan's art was becoming more and more westernized, but it wasn't until the end of the Second World War that the medium we today know as manga truly blossomed.<sup>6</sup>



Two pioneers are considered as the first true mangaka, Osamu Tezuka and Machiko Hasegawa. While these two artists weren't alone, they would be the most influential in the new art.

Machiko Hasegawa is influential both as one of the first female mangaka and as the creator of the longest running manga yet, *Sazae-san*. A very liberal woman, Machiko would not only influence generations of female artists but her manga would aid the early Japanese feminist movement.



Osamu Tezuka is the founder of the shounen and shojo genre, and created several popular series such as the science-fiction *Astro Boy*, the medical-drama *Black Jack* and the historical *Buddha*. The multitude of manga he produced and their influence on coming artists earned him nicknames such as the "the God of manga", *Manga-no-kami sama*.

It was Osamu's style of infantile characters with large eyes and small noses that would become the mainstream style of drawing. An art style he took from Disney, whose cutesy characters were very popular in Japan.

The 60s was the time when most of the genres was established, and

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<sup>4</sup> Jingoism: A patriotic and aggressive foreign policy. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/jingoistic>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EH1v4vkUBt8>

<sup>6</sup> *Manga, Manga: The World of Japanese Comics*, Fredrik L. Schodt (author) Osamu Tezuka (introduction), ISBN 0-87011-752-1. 1986.

also started the trend towards slimmer body types in comparison to Tezuka's childish proportions. The series *Space Invader Lum*, which detailed the story of a young boy forced to marry the gorgeous alien girl Lum, would be the basis of the harem genre, and would also introduce the concept of fanservice to the medium. Fanservice was the name given to risqué scenes such as close-ups of underwear or shower scenes, since they serviced the (male) fans' interest.

Manga has since then benefited greatly from the development of youth culture. But its ability to gain ground outside Japan was the country's economic success during the 70s and 80s, and thus the export of its culture. It's also during this period we can see manga becoming translated and gaining a following outside Japan.

## Shounen



Eyeshield 21, an American Football manga

Shounen which means “*young boy*” is targeted foremost to those in their early teens. It's a genre we could compare to the superhero or sports comics popular among western kids of the same age, and like them an important theme is friendship. However, while western cartoons often have a strong romantic sub-plot (sometimes known as “*the girl next door*”); this is much rarer in shounen. What shounen instead adds is hard work and determination, very traditional Japanese ideals.

Now it is not so that these ideals are unique to East Asia, but there is a definitive Japanese touch to the way these ideals are presented. In comparison to the Anglo-sphere and Europe, where these virtues are presented as to aid the individual, in Japan you do it for the betterment of the group. This is a clear show of Japan's, and all of Asia's, emphasis on the collective before the individual.

This, however, isn't enough by far to make shounen values odd to the western audience, in fact, Shounen is the bestselling genre outside of Japan. Almost all big international manga belong to this genre, the most popular are those that involve superpowers famous under names such as *Dragonball* or *Naruto*. One of the biggest shounen magazines, *Shounen Jump*, had their shipments sold out in days when they decided to expand to the American market.

Indeed, superpower shounen has a streak of individuality that caters very well to both the western and Japanese audience. For while traditional values dictate that “*The nail that sticks out is hammered down*”<sup>7</sup> (follow the norm or face sanctions), it is every person's dream to be someone special, important, unique.

An important part in superpower shounen is that the main character is always chosen, fated. Similar to western comics, the main character of shounen lives a normal life until his extra-ordinary powers are revealed. But unlike the western hero the Superman of Japan is a product of fate, the very world around him pleads for him to save the world.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/The\\_nail\\_that\\_sticks\\_out\\_gets\\_hammered\\_down](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/The_nail_that_sticks_out_gets_hammered_down)



Goku, from the best-selling Dragonball series, an iconic shounen

In fantasy he's the prophesied hero, in science fiction he is the son of the genius scientist who enabled FTL (Faster than Light travel), the hero have many faces but they all serve one purpose: that entire world moves around this single person.

This nearly solipsist thinking serves one purpose, escapism. It serves to allow the reader to escapes his/hers daily hardships, and as the main audience of manga is rarely someone with high social status, these are often many. It allows the reader to seclude oneself in a setting of omnipotence and invincibility. Sure the hero might get knocked down a few times, but he always takes revenge, and guided by fate his victory is always inevitable.

Once again we see escapism in action.

Shounen in Japan has a large audience, and while the series cater to young teens, it would seem that every age group reads shounen. From seniors to businessmen, shounen has at least some market in every age group.<sup>8</sup>

The reason why shounen has such a large following in so many age groups in Japan is likely the same reason for why it has such a following international. The simple chemistry of shounen touches our very core desires. There is no reason for a businessman in the extremely hectic world of Japan having any less of a desire to flee to a world where there are no bosses he needs to bow his head for, than an European student's need to escape his classmates' bullying.<sup>9</sup>

## Harem

Harem makes romance one of the focus points of the shounen story; however it is not an actual romance, since in harem the most important rule is: There can only be romance between the main character and other girls. Harem often aimed at the older audience as they make a point of including large amounts of risqué scenes, known as fanservice.

Harem is a sub-genre that has become entrenched in a "if it sells, don't fix it" mentality. Because many of the shounen series that sells well fall into this category, and thus are often adapted for animation, many modern fans are complaining that the series are causing a decline in the average quality of series and that new ideas are being shoot down in favor of commercial interest.



Space Invader Lum

However, its lack of variety in story makes it easy to explain the underlying archetypes and elements. The protagonist is commonly a high school student (as this is the target audience), and is thrown into circumstances where he becomes the target of affection of several girls. The series attempts to focus solely on the protagonist, his adventure and relationship to

<sup>8</sup> Manga, Manga: The World of Japanese Comics, Fredrik L. Schodt (author) Ozamu Tezuka (introduction), ISBN 0-87011-752-1. 1986.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.japancrush.com/2013/stories/salaryman-lifestyle-blamed-for-failing-japanese-companies.html>

From: J-cast.com, reposted by [Mika](#) on Wednesday, February 6, 2013.

the girl. Thus it's common that the main character lives alone (the parents are working overseas is a common explanation), to leave out any complex family situations (although in some the humor comes from just these situations).

The most common archetypes in harem are often the girls, several types exist but there are a few that are more common than others, each pandering to different tastes.

The one most commonly presented as the prime interested is the "princess in distress". She is a very feminine and ditzy girl who's saved by the main character at the beginning of the series; leaving her indebted to and smitten by the main character.

Serving as a counterpart to the sweeter princess is the "tsundere": tsun which means disgusted, and dere which loosely translates a lovely dovey (to be affectionate). The classic archetype was a girl that started off disliking the main character but grew to love him, but the modern archetype is a girl who's unable to show her affection properly and instead responds with comedic violence.

Other common archetypes is the *oujou*, who hides her lack of friends and self-esteem behind extravagance and wealth, the *otenba*, tomboy, who's into sports but has a sweet feminine side and *dandere*, who has problems displaying emotions and thus comes of a cold. The main character is often the first one to become aware of this hidden personality, and thus gains the girls' affection.



The mecha series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* focuses on the mental ills of the unit, and was based on the directors own experience with depression.

## Mecha

Mecha is maybe Japan's most iconic subgenre; it features either robots or futuristic suits with great emphasis on fighting and (if often meat-fisted) the horrors of war. While these robots (known like the genre's name as mecha) may be of every size, they are always able to compete in graphic and fast-paced battles in either space or ground. The story in these cases often features a high school boy being drafted into the mecha unit, either because of lack of manpower or because he's exceptionally gifted. The

story then follows the main characters team.

As mecha sells primarily because of the action, it has become a medium that allows for a great deal of experimenting. Since as long as you have action the show sells, it has resulted in mecha series taking on topics of relative morality, social psychology and the environment. Mecha has thus become a genre that manages to cater to a very large audience, even if they read it for very different things.

## Shojo

Shojo is girls' manga, and like shounen it has very much in common with western girls comics. Shojo is probably the genre that has been received most positively in the west, and has helped create a very large female manga-fanbase in the west. The feminine style of manga as a whole aren't questioned in comparison to other female interests such as Barbie, on the other hand the differences between Pokémon and Action Man are obvious.

Shojo like shounen is profitable, thus it has become commercial-driven. Shojo has thus produced several series with very similar plots and characters, and the interest of escapism is very noteworthy. As I will detail later in the genre moe, romance is hard in Japan and this has become the focus for shojo, who now serves to allow the reader to fulfill her romantic dreams.



Revolutionary Girl Utena has its heroine take up the blade to defend her friends from the villains of Ohtori Academy

Furthermore, shojo is also a medium that has changed its form drastically over the years. The shojo that is connected with Osamu Tezuka, who I mentioned in the history of manga, is very different from its modern visage. The series written by Osamu and his contemporaries had very androgenic female characters, tomboyish women who dared stand up against norms. The best example of this kind of manga was the Rose of Versailles or Princess Tutu, both features a princess which rather than just wait for a prince to save her from her ills, takes up the fight herself, and saves the prince.

It is no wonder that these series were produced during the female empowerment movement. These series has the same spirit, an equalization of the sexes.

However, as the shojo genre gained a larger and larger following, with people continuing to read the stories into adulthood, it also became more interesting for market powers. With feminist movement losing speed, these powers stepped in and classic shojo became secondary to the new, less political shojo.

It's hardly so that classic shojo has disappeared from the face of the earth, far from it, it's still a very productive genre and one of the largest (through the sub-genre Mahou Shojo). A recent one was Twelve Kingdoms, where our heroine is cast into another world to defeat an ancient evil. However, it has been overtaken by the modern shojo.

The modern shojo can easily be explained as reverse harem; since the males are only attracted to the female protagonist (however it still often has romantic sub-plots between other characters). The primary heroine here is instead thrown into romance due to misunderstandings, gaining the attraction of several handsome boys due to clumsiness or being at wrong place at the wrong time.

The archetypical shojo heroine is not as daydreaming or starved for adventure as the shounen male. Instead, she is immersed in her studies and shy, leading her to be excluded from the social circles.

There are two prime archetypes for the males found in shojo. They are far from limited to shojo however, in any literature aimed at women (from classics to Twilight) are these archetypes found.

They are essential each other's opposites, the first archetype is the School king; he is rich, has tons of friends, excellent grades and is kind. He is the crush of every girl in school. Somehow the heroine gets his attention, and he obsesses himself in her, and wants to tend her every need. The other archetype is a delinquent, feared by all. Commonly he comes to heroines rescue, and she becomes aware of a hidden softer side of him.



The Pretty Cure franchise has become extremely popular in Japan, and has produced over 400 episodes

While there are often some other men in the mix, such as one duty bound and stoic or playful and adventurous, the delinquent and popular guy is always there.

## Mahou Shojo

Mahou Shojo means “magical girl”, and has become as iconic for manga as mecha. It’s a sub-genre that can trace its roots to the 50s, featuring girls who fight for good by transforming into magical users. It’s a genre that commonly caters to a younger audience, and thus its characters are younger and stories center on much more mundane things such as

making friends.

While often appearing overly feminine or conservative with frilly dresses and bright colors, mahou shojo is often quite daring in its undertones. The mahou shojo most well known in the west, Sailor Moon (which aired in the 90s) featured a lesbian couple, something that was changed to sisters when it was translated for the American kids’ channels.

Mahou shojo is also the sub-genre that has remained most faithful to the original values of shojo, the girls are determined and dare to stand up for their beliefs, and it continues to aid the feminist movement in Japan today.

## Seinen

Seinen means adult manga, and here fall everything that is not aimed for kids or young teenagers. Either because it’s too violent, graphic or deals with more mature topics. Seinen is by far the broadest genre, as here fall everything from horror to drama. Seinen is often characterized by either realistic or artistic styles and that they are much more prone to question the Japanese society than the other genres around it. Comedy manga is also sometimes seen as a part of this genre, if they do not have the action or cutesy focus seen in shounen and moe respectively.

Seinen is a genre with very loose borders; because it encompasses so many subjects it’s hard to know what exactly makes a series a seinen. As mentioned before, shounen is increasingly stepping up its violence and sexuality. Harem often has graphic nudity, although it’s generally still considered shounen, the same goes with many shojo series today. Shojo especially has flirted with very adult topics like rape in the last decade, a subject utterly taboo in any young girls’ series in the west.



Junji Ito has produced several horror manga, but he might be more famous for surrealism



**Masturbation Master Kurosawa deals with the more adult issues of youth**

Even the genre moe sometimes steps into seinen boundaries, joking about BDSM<sup>10</sup> or featuring undressed characters in erotic poses. These things have been a part of the genre since the beginning and might be the easiest way to tell shojo and moe apart.

Barring those series which gains attention and readers from graphic sex and violence, seinen is cursed with a flaw in its contemporary time. It's a genre that deals with adult and social questions and criticism in a medium that is too many, even in Japan, considered a hobby for children and teens. So just like more adult comics in the west, it often struggles with financial issues.

The fact that it isn't profitable might actually be a reason for its greatest virtue. Since much of seinen is rarely brought up in popular media or the news, seinen has become the medium through which artists are able to voice opinions otherwise taboo in the strict Japanese society. Seinen has published series dealing with topics we wouldn't see in the profit-driven American magazines. Series that questions even our most basic moral principles, or with so surrealistic or artistic form that it would seem unreadable to the majority.

The pandering to escapism isn't as apparent in seinen either, the characters here have established personalities with flaws and goals, they can be sympathized with rather than becoming insertions of the reader. This, coupled with its diversity, results in an almost utter lack of definitive archetypes.

But because it lacks the profit drive of western magazines or shounen, seinen magazines often come and go in quick

progression. Few magazines are able to produce enough interests to keep publishing a manga with long plots, and as they disappear the artist often has to find a new magazine to continue his story in.

Seinen is much rarer in anime. Seinen anime is often original productions from a studio, those seinen that do sell well enough to get adapted are often, as said before, those who gain the seinen tag because of the ever-selling points of sex and violence.

## Moe

The genre moe is maybe the most interesting aspect of manga, as it closely grounded in the Japanese ideal of kawaii, which has no western equivalent. Therefore it's necessary to first explain kawaii



**Douman Seiman has no problem breaking the taboo, featuring necrophilia, pedophilia and mutilation in his manga The Voynich Hotel**

<sup>10</sup> Bondage Domination Sadism Machochism <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BDSM>

In simple terms, kawaii is often translated as cute. But this is a far too narrow explanation, for a woman in Japan kawaii is everything. Being kawaii is being desirable; it's being good-looking, polite, funny and youthful. It's everything the Japanese man desires in a single word.



**K-On** has become the icon of both Moe and SoL

Kawaii is a new word in the Japanese vocabulary, but it's hardly a new vision of beauty. Being reserved and polite has been the traditional ideal in Japan for centuries, it's truly only the new idea of emotionality that different kawaii from the old perception of beauty.

Moe bases itself on kawaii, since all its characters are given personalities that fall in line with this expanded idea of beauty. They are presented as extremely

desirable to the traditional males. While harem series often has at least one character presented as sexually aware, sexy or tomboyish (often all three), women in moe has a childish, naïve view of sex and romance. Tomboyish or mature behavior is brushed off by presenting it as a mask; the audience is constantly given glimpses of a more fragile, feminine inner self.

I will return to this, but for now I will present what could almost be considered an enigma to western viewers, the story of moe, commonly known as Slice of Life.

Slice of Life (SoL) is exactly what it says in the title, scenes from the average life of these girls. While SoL often has some form of plot that moves it and gives direction, for example in the best-selling manga K-On the main girls set out to form a music club. However this plot is only partly relevant, only serving as basis for episodic problems or development.

The lack of an overarching plot has married moe to the comedy medium, giving the show some more attraction beyond its girls, although these are still the central focus.

This genre is of course quite incompressible to the western audience, and to discover how this medium came to be we must again go back to the escapism felt by many Japanese in the modern era.



**Tantei Opera Milky Holmes** features a Japanese take on Sherlock Holmes. He's the pink-haired little girl by the way



Not even WW2 flying ace Erich Hartmann was saved from the moe genre, here shown in full uniform from the anime *Strike Witches*

As said before, romance is a lacking feature for many males, while studying they don't have the time, while working they don't have time. The strict purity that women are expected to adhere to (a part where kawaii and traditional values meet)<sup>11</sup>, results in that sexual relations during high school is too many families and friends considered taboo. Adult women face similar problems caused by traditional values, but also by the traditional economic life. A woman who marries is expected, and economically forced (since there is little of childcare or elderly care), to quit her job and become a housewife.<sup>12</sup>

While we can indeed spend several pages discussing the inequality women face in Japan, this is not vastly relevant to the development of moe. Instead we must ask, how are those men who, in a strictly conservative society, seen? While exclusion from the family is rare, a man who fails to be masculine and start a family is often seen with scorn by his elders.

Many Japanese men are thus in desperate need of love and appreciation. Moe gives this in plenty, as these idealized girls serves both as objects of attraction and fantasy, but they are also pure, thus they would in the recipients mind, love him unconditionally and without ulterior motive. This is further supported by the girls helplessness, instead being targets of an evil organization (as in harem) these girls is unrealistically

clumsy, whimsical or otherwise in need of someone to care for them. Thus the viewer can feel the same sense of masculine pride as one watching harem.

However this not true for all moe: moe with a mahou shojo plot (and thus very self-reliant girls) have been increasing. As these series actually has an older male target audience, these series are filled with fanservice, but belonging to a genre that abhors violence, its battles are just as bloodless.

The meta-comic (a comic describing comics) below is the result of an online discussion of the origins of moe through the harem sub-genre. And it details the conclusion the artists and others drew from it. That moe did not develop from an interest in cutesy characters but that readers felt jealousy for the harem protagonist rather than inserting themselves as him. This is not an idea to just wave away, if a person can feel love or hate for a fictional character, envy seems close behind. It's not uncommon that harem protagonists are hated by parts of the series' fandom.



<sup>11</sup> <http://www.koreabang.com/2012/stories/horny-bus-couple-shamed-for-public-display-of-affection.html>

From: Daum, popular site, Reposted by [Noori](#) on Thursday, May 17, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.japancrush.com/2012/stories/quit-work-mummy-dilemma-of-a-japanese-working-mother.html>

From: Area, Reposted by [Beth](#) on Wednesday, November 14, 2012.

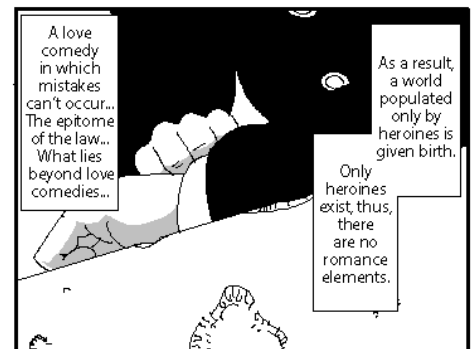
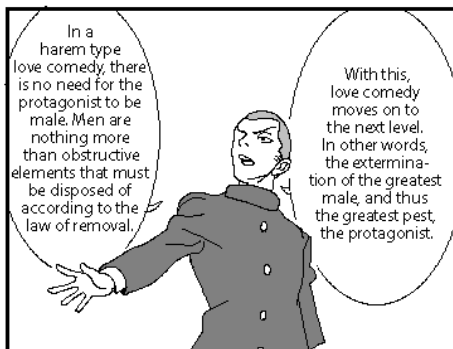
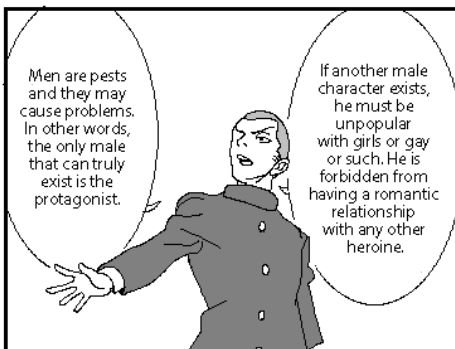
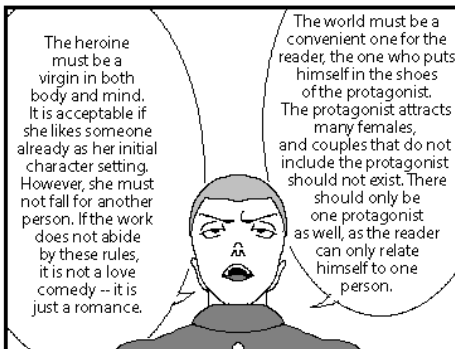
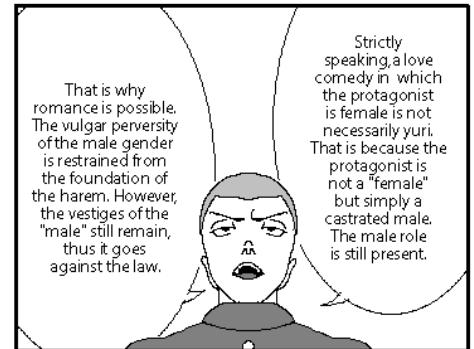
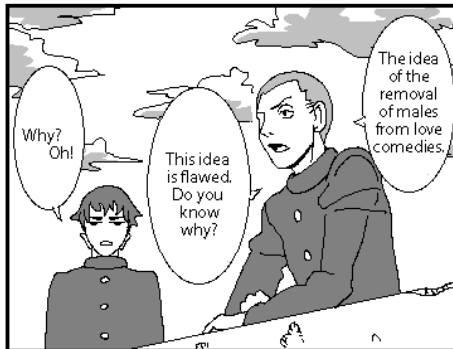
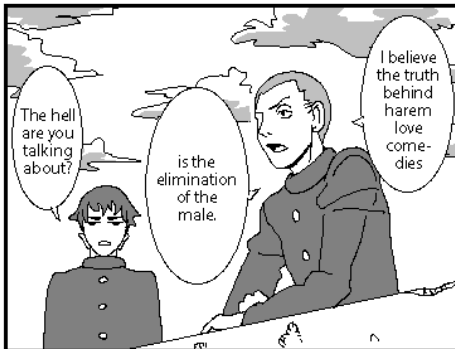
Thus it was necessary to remove the male from the equation.

Note that it's drawn by a western artist, and thus reads like a regular comic, left to right. However it is the Japanese *yonkoma* form, thus it's read downwards as shown earlier.

### Rambling

### Okay I'll listen to you ramble

### Copypaste Hell



## Conclusion

The conclusion I've come to, researching and pondering my own experiences, is that anime and manga has had a very strong effect on the Japanese society (and still has), and that it also has become an essential part of it. The immense pressure put on the everyday Japanese today means that when they leave work they must experience all the stimulation they are deprived of at work, either from overworking or, as recent studies show, from a lack of work.<sup>13</sup> Power, a sense of desirability and intimate relationships, all these things are provided by the different genres, and it's no wonder that it has attracted the outcasts of western society, who too can find they lack these things.<sup>14 15</sup>



Rock, from Black Lagoon, got tired of his salaryman life and became a Thai pirate

Escapism is in the long run harmful, it distances the human from the world around him, but as long as the society of Japan remains as it is, manga will continue to pander to this interest. Manga itself is also hurt by this, for profit and commercial interest results in my view a decline of overall quality. If new thinking and liberal ideas want to spread beyond the seinen genre, it's the society that needs to change. If manga attempts to change on its own people

will only seek new ways of escapism, in my opinion.

Escapism has become such an integrated part of modern Japan that it would likely not survive its disappearance, the people need it to be able to stand the hardships of their daily lives. However, escapism is borrowed time, and a large part of Japans populace has grown autistic; only interested in a private world. While the need to abide by the collective norms still applies, there is no engagement. We can see this behavior in their lack of interest in sex, depression and inability to form intimate relationships, and all these three fuel each other as long as the deeper problem remains.<sup>16 17</sup>

The question of course arises; does manga prosper simply because the current state of Japan? I'd say no, it caters to such basic drives that even if Japans society would change to one without need for escapism, manga would continue to prosper.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.japancrush.com/2012/stories/workers-with-no-work-rise-of-the-corporate-neet-in-japan.html>

From WebR25, a Japanese yahoo news site, Reposted by [Saki Noguchi](#) on Tuesday, November 20, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.koreabang.com/2012/stories/horny-bus-couple-shamed-for-public-display-of-affection.html>

From: Daum, popular site, Reposted by [Noori](#) on Thursday, May 17, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.japancrush.com/2013/stories/salaryman-lifestyle-blamed-for-failing-japanese-companies.html>

From: J-cast.com, reposted by [Mika](#) on Wednesday, February 6, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.japancrush.com/2012/stories/japanese-youth-increasing-losing-interest-in-sex-netizen-reactions.html> From: CNN.co.jp, reposted by [Saki Noguchi](#) on Wednesday, October 24, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.japancrush.com/2013/stories/students-eat-in-toilets-and-rent-friends-due-to-loneliness.html>

From: Yomiuri Shimbun, Japans largest newspaper, reposted by [Beth](#) on Tuesday, January 8, 2013.

As you've noticed, there is a distinct lack of variety of sources in this text (most seems to have very little to do with manga). This is not out of any lack of material, rather it's due to the fact that the knowledge I possess come from my own experience and interest in this culture. I've myself seen the development of the genres as I've read series both old and new. I've kept myself up to date with countless websites and listened to interviews with voice actors, directors and animators. This work is a product, not of the collected knowledge of other studies, but a study truly done by me alone.

This is not the result of one year of spending an hour a week studying in the library or interviews. This is over two and a half years of utter dedication and obsession, with over 200 finished series, a four-part novel of internet comments and discussions and this, a few pages of collecting, presenting and analyzing.



## Sources

Several of these sources are from the connected sites of KoreaBang and JapanCrush (along with several more). The sites translate articles and topics which are hot on the respective nations' internet forums, some things not seen in usual media. These sites, among more, have given me great insight into the society of East Asian nations, how it's different from west and from fiction. The articles from the site are either from trusted newspapers or in the case of the bus couple, an article where the comments are more interesting than the actual text.

Fredrik L. Schodt was the first to professionally translate manga, and worked side by side with Ozamu Tezuka. Manga Manga is an informative book that he made intending to introduce the art from to the west. It's been republished several times; the one that I borrowed from the Swedish City Library was published in 1986, and contained a foreword by Ozamu Tezuka and Schodt.

<http://www.koreabang.com/2012/stories/horny-bus-couple-shamed-for-public-display-of-affection.html> From: Daum, popular site, Reposted by [Noori](#) on Thursday, May 17, 2012.

<http://www.japancrush.com/2013/stories/students-eat-in-toilets-and-rent-friends-due-to-loneliness.html> From: Yomiuri Shimbun, Japans largest newspaper, reposted by [Beth](#) on Tuesday, January 8, 2013.

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Manga, Manga: The World of Japanese Comics, Fredrik L. Schodt (author) Ozamu Tezuka (introduction), ISBN 0-87011-752-1. Library copy published in 1986.

All images were shamelessly stolen from various sites<sup>18</sup>, with no regard to copyright or otherwise legal standing.

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<sup>18</sup> Google