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Discovering Japan:
Anime and Learning Japanese Culture

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Introduction

      I recently took a course in anthropology called "Japanese Popular Culture". Knowing from my research that there are many students at USC interested in anime, Japanese film, video games and manga, I expected the class to be full of *otaku*[1]. I was surprised to find the class was comprised mostly of people who knew very little about Japan, but for some reason were attracted to some aspect of Japanese pop culture, whether it was fashion, music, or as was most often the case, anime. They were not there to learn more about something they already had a passion for, as the *otaku* I expected to see in the class, but rather to learn more about something they knew hardly anything about.

      Since the success of the animated series *Pokemon* in the late nineties, Japanese animation has been enjoying greater popularity and recognition in America. Known increasingly by the Japanese term "anime", Japanese animation is gaining recognition as a medium that appeals to children and young people. Anime has had an undeniable effect on American popular culture. For example, many children's cartoons, such as *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Kim Possible* have begun to use an anime copycat style, "anime looks [were] leaping from the screen" at last fall's fashion runways[2], and Hollywood blockbusters either use animated scenes directly (*Kill Bill Vol. 1*) or borrow imagery from anime (*The Matrix Trilogy*).

      Though the effect anime is having on the visual style of American entertainment and fashion is easy to see, the implication of anime's growing popularity for its country of origin, Japan, are much less clear. In the following discussion, I will report my findings on the basis of a poll, and take a closer look at the role anime plays in stimulating interest in Japan, and the ways in which interest in anime and Japanese popular culture are closely related to an interest in Japan. It is in fact difficult to tease the two apart from each other, since it is impossible to participate in anime fan culture, except at the very shallowest level, and not be exposed to other forms of Japanese popular culture and traditional Japanese culture, and thereby be encouraged to explore them further. Anime and its relationship to interest in Japan are useful to consider in the context of teaching and learning about Japan. At the very least, one would think that a medium as easy

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[1] According to Lawrence Eng, an expert on *otaku* and *otaku* culture both in the US and in Japan, an *otaku* is a "die-hard fan/enthusiast/expert of something (not just anime, but anything)". The term is most frequently used to refer to people interested in anime and anime-related media such as video games and manga, because they are the community responsible for coining the term when referring to themselves. "The Politics of Otaku" by Lawrence Eng (http://www.cjas.org/~leng/otaku-p.htm, 2001), 2.

[2] Nelson, Steffie. "Here Kitty, Kitty: The Influence of Japanese Animation on the Catwalk." <u>Los Angeles Times Magazine</u> September 2004 p 94.

to swallow as animation would lend itself well to teaching about foreign cultures. But anime remained obscure and marginalized for some time, and was hardly considered a worthwhile tool for teaching people about Japan. Ironically, according to scholars like Iwabuchi, that which makes animation easy to understand arguably strips it of any cultural value it may have. He argues that anime lacks an inherent cultural identity because it is commonly dubbed into English, edited to suit local tastes, and lacks distinct cultural markers such as racial features or foreign architecture[3], and often was not recognized as a legitimate form of Japanese culture.

But times have changed. Anime is not so obscure anymore, nor is there any question that Americans know that it is from Japan. In this paper, I will examine what has changed in the realm of anime that makes it as significant as it has become for encouraging interest in Japan, as well as the specific ways it stimulates that interest. First I explain the methods I used to survey and interview young people who are studying Japanese, and those involved with the anime fan community. Interviews suggest there is a good deal of overlap between the two, at least within my sample population of Japanese language students. I then elaborate on the structure of the anime fan community, and the ways in which it encourages people to explore their interest in Japan more fully. Like many fan communities, the anime community is enthusiastic, and I found that many people who may not take the trouble to attend formal classes about Japan will investigate Japanese culture on their own based on their interest in anime. I then consider, through the opinions and experiences of Japanese language students, to what extent anime is the introduction young people have to Japanese culture. I feel that though it cannot yet be said that the majority of people first become interested or aware of Japan through anime, those numbers are certainly growing. In conclusion, I will consider some of the outside factors that would affect anime's usefulness as a tool for learning and teaching about Japan, as well as some of the broader implications of the popularity of Japanese popular culture among young people.

Methodology

When I began my fieldwork, the original goals of my research were to gain an overview of what type of person is interested in anime, and to what extent and in what ways interest in anime is linked with an interest in Japanese culture. I chose to examine two groups of students, those who participate in anime-related classes or clubs, and those who take Japanese language courses. I first distributed surveys to the students, and based on the results of the survey chose several people to interview more closely. A portion of the surveying was done online. In all I distributed the survey to students at eight different institutions, collected two hundred and ninety-three surveys, and interviewed sixteen people. The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 25, and most of them were college students from the southern California area. A majority of respondents were either 19 or 20. I created the online survey in order to have access to students from other areas who are involved in anime clubs. I was able to distribute the surveys at anime clubs at USC and UCLA, an anime class at USC's Cinema and Television School, Japanese language classes at UCI, USC, and Occidental, and the online survey to Carleton College, the University of Chicago, and Yale University. I received 143 responses from Japanese classes, and 150 responses from anime clubs and classes.

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[3] Koichi Iwabuchi. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001) 27-32.

The first step of the research consisted of collecting survey data from college students who were either involved in anime clubs or anime-related classes, or beginner and intermediate Japanese language students. There were three surveys, which varied in length, one for language students, one for anime club members or students in an anime class, and one posted online for students from anime clubs outside the LA area. I included the same questions on all of them, only adding more anime-related to the anime fan survey and the online survey. The second stage of the data consisted of interviews with selected students interested in anime. By looking at two different sample sets, Japanese language students and anime fans, we could approach the relationship between anime and studying Japanese from two different angles. It would be possible to see the extent to which students already invested in studying Japanese are interested in anime and Japanese pop culture, and whether or not it is a factor in their deciding to study Japanese. In addition, by looking at students who express an interest in anime by attending club meetings or classes, which are not necessarily related to Japan, we could see the extent to which they were studying or were interested in studying Japan. I also hoped to be able to see what other forms of Japanese popular culture students were interested in, and how much they had learned about Japan from them. There is the possibility that I influenced the responses I would get by approaching the sample populations in this way, but that was not my intention. Also, there is some possibility that because my training is predominantly in history and literature, rather than anthropology or sociology, the formats of the surveys and the interview questions were awkward and less useful than they might have been otherwise. Despite the flaws in my approach, however, I believe that it is still possible to draw some interesting and meaningful conclusions.

There were many things to consider when creating the surveys and choosing sites to visit. Awareness and access to anime has exploded over the last five years, therefore, the age of the target population was important to consider. As it is, I was limited by practical and time considerations to students 18 and older, but this meant that I would not have access to young people who are acclimated to seeing anime on Saturday morning television. The amount of anime that can be seen on regular network television has drastically increased. For children who were watching television from the mid-nineties on, and who don't remember much from before that time, will think of anime as a normal part of everyday, regardless of the fact that it is Japanese. Most of my data comes from people who do not yet see anime as an established part of daily life, and instead as something new and flashy that came about recently.

There are, however, many advantages to targeting college age students. Colleges and universities often have well-organized anime clubs. They have a variety of resources available to the students who organize them, such as high-speed internet access, funding from the school itself, a consistent location and equipment for screenings, freedom to show whatever they want because it is assumed the age of viewers is over eighteen, and access to large numbers of people from whom to recruit. Therefore they tend to stay together longer than clubs that are organized outside of that context. Also, the opportunity to study about Japan is most available to college students, and colleges tend to be freer of the sort of social hierarchies that exist in high schools. I believe that it is more likely people who are interested in anime would be less shy about admitting their interest and finding people who share that interest in college.

I did not want to limit myself to southern California, and Los Angeles in particular, because I feel that as the entertainment capital of the world, Los Angeles has a lot more contact with the anime industry than do other places. College students in the area might be more

knowledgeable and aware of the anime industry here than in other places. In an effort to reach a less limited demographic, I set up a slightly different version on the survey online. It was a private link that was only available by invitation. I was able to send the link to anime clubs at Carleton, the University of Chicago, and Yale, which I chose because I had contacts there who knew members of the anime clubs, rather than based location.

I decided to target beginning and intermediate Japanese classes, and wrote a shorter survey to distribute there. I had heard from a friend who teaches intermediate Japanese at Carleton that his students react negatively when people assume that they are anime fans, and I did not want to alienate people I might want to interview in the future. As it was, I still received a handful of responses that were decidedly sarcastic and hostile. The shorter survey predominantly addressed their reasons for studying Japan, and had few questions relating specifically to anime. I did not want to seem as though I were assuming the students were anime fans, nor did I want those students that are fans to feel singled out.

Nonetheless, over the last few years that the type of student interested in Japan has been changing. Where in the past Japanese language programs attracted people interested in learning about Japanese economic growth and business practices, recently Japanese language students seemed more interested in Japanese culture. A recent article for the Wall Street Journal addressed the trend, saying that in the past nine years, the majority of Japanese language students at the Unversity of Georgia are no longer international business majors, but rather Japan-culture fanatics[4]. One way of approaching the link between interest in anime and interest in Japan would then be to go through Japanese classes, and ask students why they are studying Japanese. I chose to visit only beginning and/or intermediate classes because, in my experience, most people who study Japanese because they are interested in anime usually don't continue to study Japanese past the first couple of semesters. This is because it proves to be either more difficult or a greater time commitment than they expected. Only the most devoted fans, or fans who are interested in pursuing careers related to Japan continue to study Japanese through the advanced level.

I then interviewed sixteen people based on their answers to the survey questions and their willingness to participate. I contacted nearly twenty people, and found that though some people did not respond to my invitations, those that did were very eager to share their opinions and knowledge with me, and a few even thanked me for the opportunity to talk about anime, or mentioned that it was fun to be able to talk at length about the media that they love. I made an effort to choose equally from anime club students and Japanese language students, and occasionally found some overlap. I also tried to interview as many women as men, and I tried to choose people from diverse backgrounds, to try working against the fact that I was limited to Los Angeles.

I rounded out my research by investigating internet fan activities, and was fortunate enough to be able to attend several events related to anime. I saw a presentation by the founder of the anime and manga translation and distribution company TokyoPop, in which he spoke about the growing interest in anime, and the changing nature of fandom. Susan Napier, perhaps the foremost anime scholar in the United States, gave a lecture at USC about the Miyazaki Hayao film *Spirited Away*. The Egyptian Theater held a special screening of *Metropolis* directed by Rintarro (Hayashi Shigeyuki), hosted by the Japanese consulate in Los Angles and The Japan

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[4] Ginny Parker. "Interest in Japan is about Cool not Careers." *The Wall Street Journal Online* (October 11 2004) www.wallstreetjournal.com.

Foundation, after which there was a panel discussion with Japanese pop culture experts. The popular voice actress Wendee Lee visited USC and talked about the difficulties she's experienced dubbing anime into English, and meeting the demands of the fan community. Since 2000, the Tokyo Municipal government has hosted an anime trade fair. This year as a special acknowledgement of the success of anime internationally, the fair opened in Hollywood, with screenings and interviews with anime creators[5]. There were two anime conventions as well. One, Anime L.A., was very small and brand new, here in Los Angeles. The other, Fanime Con, is more established, and is the largest convention in the San Francisco Bay area[6]. The fact that in the roughly nine month period that I was dong my research, there were this many events pertaining to anime is just another indication that though it may not be wholly mainstream and established in American culture, anime is becoming more and more established.

Anime Fans and Learning Japanese Culture

Few people were able to choose just one answer to the question "What kinds of Japanese pop culture are you interested in?" More often than not they also read manga, or Japanese comic books, play video games, and perhaps listen to Japanese pop or rock music and watch Japanese dramas. Interest an anime is, at this point, is almost inextricably linked with interest in other forms of Japanese pop culture and interest in Japanese culture and language. It is hard to separate out an interest in anime specifically from all the other interests people seem to have. In replies to the question "Why do you want to learn Japanese?" which also allowed them to choose more than one answer, it was most common for people to choose "learn about Japanese culture" and "understand Japanese anime, music, etc" in combination with each other, and perhaps one or another of the other possible responses, which varied. Thus, learning about Japan and understanding anime are closely linked in many people's minds.

The anime fan community operates in such a way that it encourages newcomers and fans to investigate and learn, which inevitably leads them back to Japan. Fans are generally welcoming and supportive of each other, which feeds the inherent curiosity and intellect of the average person likely to become interested in anime. In the anime community, unless one is interested in anime only in passing, one does not remain a newcomer for very long. The world of Japanese animation, it serves as a facilitator, encouraging and providing people with a means to explore and discover Japanese culture.

The fact is that people who like anime, depending on their exposure to Japanese culture, tend to like many aspects of Japanese culture, from popular to traditional, as well, and develop at some point either the desire to learn Japanese or visit Japan. Most of the people I interviewed expressed at least a passing desire to learn Japanese. The things that usually kept them from actually doing it where time constraints, and well-founded rumors that Japanese is a difficult language to learn. I believe that the numbers of people who become interested in Japan through popular culture are growing. At least five of the people I interviewed, learned most of what they know about Japan from watching anime and participating in the fan community. A handful of

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[5] Ishihara Shintaro. "Greeting" *Tokyo International Anime Fair 2005*
(http://www.taf.metro.tokyo.jp/en/greeting/index.html, 2005)

[6] More information about these conventions is available at the following websites:
http://www.animelosangeles.org/anime-la/ and www.fanime.com.

them had gone to the extent of taking a course or two related to Japan, and I believe it is safe to say they would not have done so were it not for their interest in anime. However, the extent to which anime was their introduction to Japanese culture is not clear. Many mentioned that they already found Japanese things and Asian artwork or imagery cool, and anime appealed to that predilection that they already had.

Anime fandom can be understood along a scale of involvement defined by the consumption of anime, production of creative fan work[7], and participation in the existing anime community, both online and in real life. At one end of the scale there are newcomers and people who like anime but don't become deeply involved with the fan community. At the other end, there are the *otaku*, who as I mentioned above, are deeply involved with anime and Japanese pop culture. It is a fluid scale, and people will move back and forth between shallower involvement and investment and being more deeply incorporated in the world depending on what is going on in their lives. For example, one fan on the Yale anime club message board mentioned that she used to be much more involved with anime when she was in high school, but since coming to college hadn't had the time to consume as much anime as she did before, produce fan fiction or fan art, and participate in conventions or club activities. It bears reminding that these are distinctions that fans are only vaguely aware of among themselves, and I have made these distinctions only in order to more clearly articulate anime fan activity. It is also important to remember that these are generalizations, and considering the size of the fan community it is probably not too difficult to find individuals who will confound the descriptions I provide here.

On the newcomer end of the scale, there are the people who if asked consider themselves anime fans, but they are not deeply involved in the more intense activity that goes on with anime. Their level of involvement is mostly consumption of anime, rather than participation in the fan community and production of fan material, and they consume through predominantly mainstream channels, such as television and DVD. They are not likely to participate heavily in the online community, or attend conventions, and their knowledge of Japanese culture and other forms of Japanese pop cultural media is low. I spoke with a few people who can be considered at this level. One person remembered being obsessed with anime as a child, but, though he still owned a few DVD's, now thought of himself as having outgrown anime. He vaguely expressed an interest in learning Japanese one day, but he felt it seemed like too much trouble. He wasn't familiar with many Japanese terms, including the word *otaku*, nor was he interested in Japanese pop culture aside from anime and cinema. And yet, he took the trouble to take the anime class at USC, and thinks of himself as an anime supporter. Though he claimed not to be deeply interested in Japanese culture, he collected Godzilla and Kurosawa Akira movies as well as classic anime. Even at his light level of involvement, thanks to some of the anime we watched in the anime class, his interest was rekindled and he mentioned wanting to watch more adult oriented anime in the future.

At the middle of the scale, you would find someone who not only consumes anime, but also participates in fan activity online, and on some small scale may produce some kind of fan art or fan fiction. It is highly likely that their interests will have broadened to encompass

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[7] Fans of all sorts, not just anime fans, love to create things with appropriated images and ideas from their favorite series. They will write stories using their favorite characters, and these are called fan fiction. Fan art is artwork, drawing, paintings, or more recently computer graphics, created by fans. Anime fans also create web comics, anime music videos and fansubs, which are discussed more below.

consumption of manga and Japanese popular music. Some fans even prefer manga, because it is similar enough to anime, but easier to fit into their schedules, because it takes less time to read manga than to watch anime, its cheaper to buy, faster to download, and therefore easier to consume. They generally prefer subtitles to dubbing, though interestingly this depends what language in which they first viewed a given anime. Though they acknowledge that the acting quality of the Japanese tends to be better, the personalities of characters change sometimes when anime is dubbed. People who were not invested in seeing anime in it's purest Japanese form tended to become attached to characters as they first viewed them, whether in English or in Japanese, and were resistant to switching languages because of the way characters personalities could change. Though they will still watch some of the anime that appears on TV, most of what they watch is most likely fansubs downloaded from the internet. Fans at this degree of involvement are probably either downloading some anime themselves, but they are also get copies from friends who they describe as being more devoted than they are themselves.   They have either been to an anime convention, or are planning and want to go, but don't plan on wearing a costume.

I came across several people who could be considered at the middle of the scale. One girl, for example, preferred dubbing to subtitling and hadn't seen a wide variety of anime, didn't participate much in producing anime-related fan material, but was planning to attend a convention later that year in costume. She had recently made friends with some people who were deeply involved with making and wearing costumes at conventions, and as she likes that sort of thing anyhow, seemed poised to get more involved with the anime world that way. Another also consumed most of her anime through more mainstream sources, relying on friends to provide her with more obscure or recent anime to watch, but planned to go to her first convention that summer, and kept sketchbooks of fan art, though as of yet she is too shy to share with people in the internet. Her group of friends at college seemed very invested in anime. In fact she met them through the anime club, and she mentioned her boyfriend was trying to teach her how to download anime on her own. These girls were more invested than the young man described above, but were still at a rather moderate level, not heavily participating in online culture or production. It was also possible to see that their level of involvement stood to increase, thanks to friends they had and contact they had gained at school.

People who are at the *otaku* end of the scale have greater contact with and knowledge of Japan, and their activities encourage less involved fans to increase their involvement, thereby increasing their own knowledge of Japan. Fans at this level are the most productive. These are the people who volunteer at the conventions, make elaborate costumes of their favorite characters, or who go to the trouble to create fansubs or maintain websites where other fans can download Japanese media. They also spend a lot of time downloading anime, and often don't have time to watch it all. Their technical knowledge is the highest, and they are most likely to be constantly immersed in some kind of media. They prefer subtitled anime, and rarely view dubbed anime at all, though a few were able to begrudgingly mention one or two series they thought had been decently dubbed. They may have a strong interest in Japanese culture, and have probably at some point studied Japanese, if they are not still studying. Interestingly, many people who fall closer to this end of the scale are relatively unaware that they do, and will always cite someone, a close friend or relative usually, who is more devoted to anime than they are themselves.

I had the pleasure to interview several people who fall on this end of the scale. A couple of them were deeply involved in internet consumption; one young man told me he downloads anything and everything he finds that looks remotely interesting, though he'll still spend the money on officially released anime and manga if he likes a series enough. Another barely has room left in his hard drive thanks to the amount of space being occupied by downloaded anime, music, Asian movies and dramas, and laughingly described to me the chaotic piles of CDs and DVDs he has of material he's downloaded. Many of the more invested interviewees download or create anime music videos, which are music videos created by fans using scenes from anime that have been edited together. They also read each others fan fiction, download each others fan art, and follow web comics, which are comic strips or comic books that get published informally on the web.

Deeply invested fans participate in a variety of real-life activities as well as online ones. One of the former officers at the UCLA anime club, though she said she rarely watches anime anymore outside of the club setting, volunteered to work at Anime Expo, the biggest anime convention in California, for four years in a row. She also enjoyed dressing in costume for the costume competitions they have at conventions. In addition, the people I described above all possessed some familiarity with Japanese culture. I was able to use a few Japanese words and phrases with them, just joking around, and they understood me. They knew a thing or two about Japanese history, or Japanese society, which often they described to me with eager relish. A few even had the privilege of having Japanese friends or pen pals who taught them words and customs. One or two of the people I interviewed expressed a sense of awe (which rather embarrassed me) when they learned I had lived in Japan for a few years, and many interviewees were curious to know about my experiences with Japan. This served to highlight the interest and curiosity people have about Japan specifically.

The scale of fandom relates to interest in Japanese culture, because fans more deeply involved in the fan community unwittingly end up encouraging lower end fans to learn more. Fans are eager to find more people like themselves, which facilitates newcomers entry into the community. There is some impatience with newcomers as well however; many more seasoned fans express frustration in message boards with the basic questions about downloading or the content of a series or movie that many newcomers ask. While the hostility inherent in such impatience does turn some people away, I saw that many new fans loved anime enough to bear with the people who were occasionally rude to them, and for every person who complained, there was at least one other who was willing to take the time to answer their questions.

Newcomers are aware that they will be not be able to know all there is to know about anime if they don't learn some basics of Japanese culture. Fans often use Japanese terms when speaking to each other, and refer to different kinds of Japanese food, or cultural facts they learned about the Japanese school system or public transportation. Newcomers quickly find that they cannot fully participate without learning a thing or two about Japan. During the Fanime convention at the end of April, though I didn't personally notice anything out of the ordinary, being used to hearing Japanese terms from class, one newcomer confessed to being lost during some of the announcements because she hadn't understand the occasional Japanese words that they used. The convention was rife with references to Japanese culture and anime inside jokes, such as how far an *otaku* will go to get his or her hands on a Japanese snack cookie called Pocky. As the number of newcomers and casual fans grows, the disdain for people who haven't learned

anything about Japan yet is decreasing it seems. Most newcomers are eager to learn as much as they can, so that they can participate more fully on message boards, clubs and conventions.

It is however important to mention that there is pressure from outside of the anime fan community that leads to some newcomers to be reluctant to wholly engage themselves with anime culture. Along with many other media fans, for example Star Trek fans and comic book fans, anime fans suffer from the negative stereotype that they are too immersed in their imaginary worlds, and cannot participate properly in society[8]. Even when speaking with me, many fans were quick to defend themselves, or to try and make it sound like they were not as invested as their actual activities suggested. Of all the people I interviewed, only one person proudly and unashamedly declared to me his full involvement not only in anime but in several different aspect of what he called "nerd culture". Everyone else was hesitant or shy about admitting the extent of their fan involvement. Fans are uneasy about how they may look to people uninvolved with anime, which is an indication of the relatively marginal status anime and anime fandom hold in American society today. The desire avoid being looked at as poorly adjusted and anti-social works counter to fans learning within the fan community, but only slightly. I found that though they wanted to sound as though they didn't investigate anime and Japan on their own, most of the people I interviewed in fact did so. Some people who might have been more involved otherwise however resisted truly engaging their interest, at least in public, for fear of being marginalized.

Of the people interested in anime, only 21% of them indicated they were not interested in learning Japanese at all, and of those that did express a desire to learn Japanese, or had already begun to learn Japanese, two-thirds of them also chose "understand Japanese anime, music etc." among their reasons why. Even among the anime fans, "learn about Japanese culture" was the most commonly indicated reason for learning Japanese, more often than not in combination with the former answer, again showing the relationship the two have. I found however that the ages did not breakdown as clearly, and that particularly among the online responses, more people had spent time in Japan than the Japanese language students. More of them associated anime with Japan, but this may have been because it is where their interests lie in the first place. The most important thing to note from this group I believe is that so many of them were not only pursuing their interest in anime, they had also taken steps to formally learn more about Japan.

In addition to the anime boom that was begun with *Pokemon*, which I discuss in greater detail below, there have also been some very significant developments on the internet that have greatly influenced the anime fan community and the ways it consumes anime, as well as having profound affects on their interaction with Japanese culture. Fans have always found ways to work outside the formal industry channels which was not providing them with the amount of anime they would have like, and which continues to localize anime, a process that fans believes dilutes the quality and enjoyment of anime. Developments in peer-to-peer sharing software and technology, and advancements in digital editing technology have made it very easy for fans to translate anime and share it with each other via computers and the internet. According to Kenyatta Cheese, one of the administrators of the information website unmediated.org, anime fans have made some of the most sophisticated advances in file-sharing software, in order to

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[8] Joli Jenson. "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization." *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. (London: Routledge, 1992) p 10-13.

make it easier to search for and download anime online[9]. I found that downloading and friends were the most common sources of anime for people in anime clubs and classes, as roughly 68% of people indicated at least one of these as a source for anime, and many people chose both together. All other sources, such as cable and network television, video rental shops and services, anime clubs and conventions, and retail shops both real and online, did not come close to downloading. Even people who did not consider themselves hardcore anime fans, or who pointed out that they get anime from their friends marked that they still download anime, and also that the anime they borrow from their friends is largely downloaded. It is important to note that I did not ask this question of the Japanese students, because I did not want to assume that they were anime fans. I regret not including this question, for it would have been interesting to see whether they use different sources to get anime.

A fansub, as the name suggests, is some form of foreign language media, not necessarily anime that has been translated and subtitled by amateur fans[10]. In the past, before anime was available on TV, for rental, or for downloading, fansubs were made using VHS tapes. Someone with a contact in Japan, who could have been anyone from a relative to a fellow anime fan who was otherwise a stranger, would be able to get their hands on original untranslated material on videotape. The tape would them make its way into the hands of someone who spoke Japanese, who translated the dialogue, and then to someone with the necessary equipment to add subtitles directly to the tape. The tape would be copied and traded, usually in exchange for another video or comic or merchandise rather than money. Today, improvements in internet technology have made it much easier for fansubbing to be done digitally. The translated media is posted online where fans, using some sort of file-sharing software, can download it for free.

Fans from all over the world contribute to the creation of a single fansub, often without ever meeting face-to-face. For example, a typical fansub group will have someone in Japan uploading raw, the term used to refer to un-translated material, footage onto the net as it airs in Japan. There will also be a translator, who translates the content from Japanese to whatever language the fansub group uses, most commonly English and Chinese. Translations to other languages tend to be second-degree translations made from the English or Chinese scripts rather than the original Japanese. Sometimes the translator will not be a native speaker of either Japanese or English, and in that case a fansub group will have a proofreader to check the accuracy of the translations. Someone else will then take the translated script, and digitally add subtitles to the original footage. Considering that the fansub team can be scattered across the globe, with a single team having members who live in Tokyo, London, Singapore, Los Angeles, and Chicago, it can take some time for fansubs to become available. But recently, for the more popular series, a series will be translated and ready for download within hours of airing in Japan. Raws are online and available to download almost immediately.

Technically, fansubbing is illegal, because the Japanese companies have not given the fans permission to distribute their product. However, Japan has been notoriously lenient in the

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[9] Kenyatta Cheese. Lecture, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, March 17, 2005.

[10] The same language of "fansub" and "raw " is used for any foreign movies or TV shows that are translated and put on the internet by amateurs. Generally it refers to Asian media, since the majority of people making fansubs are interested in Asian media, such as kung-fu action flicks, samurai movies, Japanese and Korean dramas and music videos. Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, has a wonderful definition and description of fansubs. Wikipedia, "Fansub" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fansub (accessed June 28, 2005).

past regarding copyright laws, allowing pirated manga to flourish in Asia for years before taking any notice[11], and fans are confident that at least on that end their activity is unofficially accepted. Fans consider the standard for legality to be whether or not they are distributing anime that has been licensed by an American distributor, and once a series is picked up by a company in the States, most fans will stop translating it. This has begun to change recently however, because fans have not been satisfied with the quality of professionally translated anime. They are reacting to the localization process, which I talk about in greater detail in the next chapter, because they believe it degrades the quality of their anime. When people discover that the product they watched in America is different from that which aired in Japan, they seek out the original material. Even in the case of *Pokemon*, American fans were upset to find that two entire episodes never aired in America because their content was believed to be too inappropriate and difficult to localize. For example, one was about a beauty contest, in which a12-year-old character is pitted against an older man dressed in drag who continually made references to his coconut-sized fake breasts. The transvestitism and sexuality of an underage character were thought to be inappropriate for children's content in America, and impossible to translate and sanitize. Nonetheless, fans insisted on seeing the episode, and it was aired once though it was never released on DVD or video. It is however, available for download[12].

Through my interviews, I was able to ask more detailed questions about how people became interested in anime, and I found that most people were introduced to anime through discovering it on television. A few people had grown up somehow connected to Japanese culture, either through classes offered at school or neighborhood friends, and some people had been interested in anime for so long they could no longer clearly remember exactly how they became interested in it and whether or not they had been interested in Japan first. Regardless of how they got started, aside from one person, almost all of the interviewees told me that it didn't matter to them that anime was Japanese. I found this interesting considering the effort some of them were making to learn Japanese, or to arrange their schedules so that they could do abroad to Japan for a semester. This was consistent however with the survey data, in the sense that few people specifically mentioned anime in relation to Japanese culture when listing what they liked and dislike about anime. They did like that in Japan anime is not seen exclusively as children's media, and the maturity and complexity of much of the plots and character development appeal to them. Respondents also like the artwork of anime very much, more than that of American cartoons. Conversely, much of what they disliked was when anime is formulaic or banal, or overly cute.

One of the biggest points of contention between fans and the industry is the quality of dubbing. Very few fans prefer dubbing to subtitling. Only 9% of people I surveyed preferred dubbing, and only 2% said that it didn't matter either way. Of the people who preferred subtitling, a few made their opinions even clearer by circling subtitling several times when they circled all the other answers on the page only once, scratching out the word dubbing with bold pencil strokes or putting huge "x's" over it. None of the other questions on the survey, even

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[11]Shiraishi Saya. "Japan's Soft Power: Doraemon Goes Overseas." In Katzenstein, Peter J. and Takashi Shiraishi (eds.), *Network Power: Japan and Asia*. (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1997). 234-72.

[12] Hirofumi Katsuno and Jeffrey Maret. "Localizing the Pokemon TV series for the American Market" in Joseph Tobin ed.*Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokemon* (DurhamL Duke University Press, 2004) p81, 91-94.

those asking people to write what they like or dislike about anime, got that sort of a reaction. Alternatively, of those who said they preferred dubbing half of them qualified their answer by writing in the margin or under the question "only if it's good" or "only if it doesn't suck." Bad dubbing was a common response to "list one thing you dislike about anime". During her talk, the American voice actress Wendee Lee jokingly complained about how difficult her job is because fans demand that the English translations be as "close to the Japanese original as possible."

When fans seek subtitles rather than dubbing, they are not only seeking quality, they are looking for a purer form of Japanese culture. My results show that fans can feel that something is being lost when they watch anime in English. They often cannot quite articulate what is lost, but the majority of them find anime in English less satisfying. Often it is not something they notice before they are introduced to anime in Japanese; interviewees who watched most of their anime on Cartoon Network often didn't mind dubbing as much. Fansubbing as something fans do, and have always done, in order to be closer to the source of anime. This is certainly one place where interest in anime leads people to learn more about Japan. Were it not for their initial passion for anime, people would not put a lot of time and effort into creating, searching for and downloading fansubs. Finding people to translate, and to upload raw footage forces people to go back to the source of anime, and make contact with people who are Japanese, or who have more experience with Japan than they do. Their passion forces them to have inter-cultural communication. Through working with them their knowledge of Japan will grow. Fansubs are important not only because they sidestep localization, but also because they promote interaction on an everyday level between people who can teach each other.

While I was researching online fan interaction, I came across an interesting message board thread which dealt with a subject that is rather new to fansubbing, which is the quality of the translation[13]. In the past, people were not picky about how good the fansubs were; they were content to have access to anime they would not have had otherwise. But recently, since the technology had made it easier and easier to create fansubs, anime fans have become pickier about the quality. Since technical issues, such as timing, or how well the subtitles keep with the spoken dialogue, and clarity, how easy it is to read the subtitles, are no longer an issue thanks to the technology, instead people have come to notice the quality of the language of the subtitles, and more recently the quality of the translation. This is an indicator of how many more fans have taken the trouble to learn some Japanese, for even as late as 2000 I doubt that there would have been enough people proficient enough in Japanese to discuss the quality of translations. In the particular thread I was reading, the issue was the translation of the new series *Tsubasa Chronicle*, based on a popular manga by the all-female group CLAMP. Multiple fansub groups will often translate the same series, and one particularly nit-picky fan went through all three translations of *Tsubasa* that were available at the time (I think there are as many as five now, since it is a popular series) and critiqued their translations. His complaints were very specific, and really did not affect the overall meaning of the dialogue I though. While to a certain extent that person was merely showing off his or her command of the Japanese language, and it's likely most of the people who read the thread did not take him seriously, there were still enough people who were also on the message board who understood Japanese to respond to him or her, either

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[13] Animesuki.com forum>Anime>Fansub Groups>Tsubasa Chronicles Fansub Comparisons, http://forums.animesuki.com/showthread.php?t=32190 (thread begun April 15, 2005. Last accessed July 29, 2005).

agreeing or more often than not disagreeing with the critique. On some level, fansubbing encourages even those fans who are not actively translating to engage in discussions about Japanese language and culture.

Real life fan activity also encourages contact and learning about Japanese culture, which is part of the reason why it is so hard to separate learning about Japan from interest in anime. Conventions often include events that have nothing to do with anime, but are thought of as relevant because they are Japanese. For example, Anime Expo, California's largest convention, puts on a special event called "Matsuri" which means festival in Japanese. The object of the event is to allow people to experience a Japanese summer festival. There are often live-action screening rooms that marathon films from Hong Kong, Korea, China and Taiwan. One of the most popular events at most conventions is the special guest singer, and there are always Japanese voice actors, animators, and producers who come and give panel discussions. Anime clubs will sometimes offer special events, or in some small way bring more than just anime into the mix. The UCLA anime club, for example, usually has a selection of Japanese snacks, such as rice crackers or unfamiliar sugar candies, to offer the members who come to screenings. They also organize shopping trips to Japanese bookstores in the LA area, and cultural trips to Little Tokyo occasionally. The anime club at Occidental, though not as well organized and all but disbanded when I was doing my research, was more of a Japanese cultural club, and screened live action films as well as animated ones, I was told. To many people, without even thinking about it, anime is not a separate phenomenon, but is only one part of Japanese culture, and they become interested in learning about everything.

Japanese Language Students, Anime and Awareness of Japan

While it is clear that anime lends itself to inspiring people to learn more about Japanese culture, the progression that people's interests take are still jumbled and unclear. At this moment in time there is not really one predominant way that people get interested in anime. First, people become interested in anime due to some previous interest in graphic art or content of the fantasy or science fiction genre. Five of the interviewees mentioned that their parents are comic book fans, play fantasy games or are theater buffs, which they personally felt set the stage for their liking anime. For some, their passion for anime evolved out of a passion for children's cartoons when they were younger, and many of the people I interviewed realized they tend to enjoy animation in general, and that led them to anime.

On the other hand, some become interested in anime through having contact with Asian or specifically Japanese culture. One interviewee wasn't able to dissect his interest in anime from his interest in Asian culture; he felt that were he not interested in Asian culture he might not be interested in anime, but couldn't be sure either way. Three young women, all of Asian heritage, remembered being raised on Japanese children's cartoons, and to them, though still interesting, anime was less exotic. Another girl met her anime friends and watched her first anime in her high school Japanese class. I found that the group I interviewed split neatly in half, with 8 people becoming interested in anime through interests outside of Japan, and 8 becoming interested through more direct contact with Japanese culture. I believe that this is evidence of the fact that anime is slowly becoming more available to mainstream America, whereas even just a few years ago anime was a more obscure, specific subculture in which people were more likely to have already had contact with Japanese culture. Before the mid-nineties, it was not common

to come across anime by accident on television or at the video store. More likely than not, people would come across anime through friends who had been to Japan, or who were well-versed in Japanese culture. But this is no longer the case.

The anime scene has seen a lot of changes over the last five or six years, which would greatly affect the access to and awareness of anime to the mainstream. It is important to note that in order for people to become interested in learning about Japan from anime, they must first know that it is Japanese. Until recently, this was not the case, and the fact that anime was from Japan was not common knowledge. Anime's cultural origins were hidden as much as possible from the public through localization, the process by which foreign media is made accessible to local audiences[14]. In fact, anime still undergoes stiff localization, which prompts many people to go in search of un-localized material, one of the processes by which anime fandom encourages learning more about Japan. Many people grew up watching anime, aware that it was different from other cartoons, but not knowing it came from Japan. Fans were the first to realize this, and have therefore always been closer to Japanese culture, but it was not until after Japanese shows such as *Pokemon* and *The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* took off that the mainstream became aware of where these shows were coming from.

Since the success of *Pokemon*, American television networks and distribution companies have become less wary of buying and airing anime. *Pokemon* became proof that Japanese media could succeed in the American market. Before that, there was the success of *The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*, a children's show about a group of five teenagers who "morph" into superheroes to fight monsters from an alternate dimension. But this was a live-action show, and it was heavily localized to include footage with American actors. Nonetheless, *Power Rangers* did well enough that the animated shows *Sailor Moon*, based on a manga about teenaged girls who transform into superheroes, and *Dragonball*, about a young boy who becomes an ultimate fighter, were translated and aired on morning television. Both these shows did poorly in the ratings, and it was thought that they had been properly localized, and were "too Japanese"[15] for Americans to stomach. Allison found when she surveyed junior high school girls, the target audience for *Sailor Moon*, about why they liked or disliked the show, that Japaneseness actually had little to do with their opinion of the show. She was able to conclude that *Sailor Moon* failed because it was poorly marketed and given a difficult time slot.

Because of the relative failure of anime such as *Sailor Moon*, it didn't seem likely that anime was poised to become the next big thing when *Pokemon* came along. Unlike most anime, which begins as a manga series, or is original material, *Pokemon* actually began as a video game for the portable Nintendo Gameboy system. This meant that the Nintendo corporation had a stake in whether *Pokemon* succeeded or not. The game was popular in Japan, and spawned a manga, a card game, an animated series and several films. This sort of media mix is common in the Japanese anime industry. In fact anime, video games, manga and merchandise are so closely related, that they are collectively referred to as the content industry, because though they are all

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[14] Localization is "the process of adapting a global product for a specific market." A large portion of localization is translation, but in addition to that shows are edited to make cultural references more understandable, and to be sensitive to social issues such as race or religion. For example, Buddhist references are sometimes turned into Christian ones to make it easier for Americans to understand. Katsuno and Maret, *Localizing the Pokemon TV Series*, p. 82.

[15] Anne Allison, "A Challenge to Hollywood? Japanese Character Goods Hit the US." *Japanese Studies* vol. 20 no. 1 (2000): 67-88.

different media they center around the same content. When *Pokemon* came to the United States, Nintendo did do some marketing for the video game[16], but the success of the anime, which was picked up and localized by the then little known company 4Kids Entertainment, is still looked at as a fluke. The subsequent *Pokemon* craze is attributed to the brilliance of the slogan "Gotta Catch "Em All" and the media mix that provided kids with a variety of interrelated things to consume, like video games, cards and plush toys[17].

The amount of anime that was available in the US has drastically increased. Today, the majority of children's cartoons in Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons, the most traditional time-slots for animated children's programming, are translated anime. Cartoon Network has two very well-known and popular slots that over time have become more and more devoted to showing anime, the afternoon cartoon block Toonami, which sports a distinctly Japanized name, and the late night Adult Swim, where fans can see anime that has supposedly not been edited. Other cable networks, like Showtime, HBO, Tech TV and the SciFi Channel also regularly show anime films and TV series. Chains like Target and Best Buy offer enough different anime titles that they warrant their own section next to the other DVD genres, and anime is readily and widely available to rent at Blockbuster and through online services like Netflix, or Blockbuster Online These everyday places where anime has come to be available make it easier for people who ordinarily have little contact with Japanese culture in their daily lives to have access to anime. Because Saturday morning cartoons and Cartoon Network are the easiest places to come across anime, the younger someone is the more likely their interest in Japan will be related to anime and Japanese pop culture.

I was able to find a correlation between age and awareness of anime among Japanese language students. Overall, over half of the Japanese language students of all ages (60.8%) indicated "understanding Japanese anime, music, etc." as one of the reasons they are taking a Japanese class. The only reason that students indicated more often was "learn about Japanese culture". Only two students pointed out that their interest was specifically music, not anime. Out of the 56 language students who did not indicate that understanding anime was a motivation for them to learn Japanese, 36 indicated anime as one aspect of Japanese pop culture they are interested in. In all, 74.8% of language students indicated an interest in anime, with video games coming in second, manga third followed by cinema, pop music and dramas. We can see from these responses that although anime is not the predominant reason people study Japanese, it is certainly a significant presence in the minds of people studying Japanese, particularly as we shall see below, among younger students.

The least popular reason was "have a career in Japan", which is consistent with the finding of the Wall Street Journal article mentioned in a previous section. I also found that many of the student who did choose "have a career" as a motivation for why they are studying Japanese, also chose "learn about Japanese culture" and "understand Japanese anime, music, etc." and indicated an interest in anime, and/or video games and manga. This might mean that they are interested in finding careers in animation, cartooning or game design with Japanese companies. Certainly one or two of the students I interviewed mentioned a desire to work in the anime or video game industry in the future. The predominant image of Japan being the locus of

[16] Ellen Seiter. Lecture, University of Southern California, Los Angles, CA, January 22, 2005.

[17] Joseph Tobin. "Introduction." In Joseph Tobin, *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokemon*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) p 4-8.

salarymen and business tactics seems to have given way to the image of Japan as the place where anime and video games come from.

But since access to anime has been changing on a year to year basis over the last several years, I thought there might be some sign that younger people, even within the limited age range of 18-25 (I did have about four respondents who were over 25) I would see that it was more likely people on the younger end of the scale thought of Japan in terms of anime and pop culture, whereas older people would not. I found that 68% of 18-year-olds felt "understand Japanese anime, music etc." applied to them, and 65% of 19-year-olds thought so, but only 30% and 27% of 20- and 21-year olds thought so. There were so few people over 22 among the Japanese language students, it was difficult to find useful information. For example, there were only five 22-year-olds out of the 143 Japanese students I surveyed, and all of them felt understanding anime applied to them, but it is difficult to know what that means since there are so few of them. The majority of respondents were 19 (40/143) and 20 (60/143). In addition, 18- and 19-year-olds were more likely to choose anime as one of the three things they associate with Japan. I believe these results are a reflection of how anime has rapidly become more readily available, and may show how it is influencing people to become interested in Japan. Clearly several years ago the availability of anime increased, along with the exposure people had. People in their twenties missed the spike in anime availability, so the percentages of them who associate Japan with anime are smaller, where as people in the last years of their teens show a clear association between learning about Japan and wanting to know more about anime.

Another useful thing to consider is the amount of contact outside of anime students have with Japanese culture. This is important when trying to determine whether people were interested first in anime, or in Japanese culture. It stands to reason that one who has little contact with Japanese culture most likely was introduced to anime first, whereas someone who has had a lot of exposure to Japanese culture is more likely to have been introduced to anime through that previous interest. In order to gauge this, I asked if they had ever been to Japan, and what cultural events related to Japan they had ever been to. Most of the Japanese language students had not been to Japan, though I did notice that of those who had been, the majority came from Occidental College. 32% of them claimed not to have been to any events, while 64% mentioned that they had been to museum visits. Though for the Japanese student survey I did not include anime conventions as a cultural event related to Japan, four people chose other and added it themselves. Though that is not many, it struck me that those four did think of anime conventions as a way to engage with Japan. In addition, very few people mentioned an interest in Japanese dramas, which because they are still scarce in America and would only be available to people who were already very involved in Japan indicated that few people had reached that level.

I feel that the data above, when considered in relation with the developments in the anime industry indicates that as time continues to pass anime will more and more be the first step people take to discovering more about Japan. At the moment, we are immersed in something of a transition period, and it is hard to tell how much anime serves as an introduction to Japanese culture. We can be sure however, from the organization and nature of the anime community, as well as the opinions of Japanese language students, that anime, though it may not necessarily be the starting point for everyone, plays a large role in encouraging a deeper interest in Japanese culture and language.

Conclusion

In the above discussion, I showed how my research reflects that anime may in fact be a useful tool for stimulating interest in Japanese culture among young people. I found that the anime community is eager to learn about Japan, and that their enthusiasm for obtaining anime leads them to find ways to interact with Japanese culture. I also found that among Japanese language students, more and more of them, particularly younger ones, associate learning about Japan with understanding anime and Japanese popular culture, and that anime is a significant presence in the minds of students learning Japanese language today.

It is worthwhile however, I feel, to briefly consider the environment that is surrounding the budding popularity of anime, as it is equally important to the usefulness of anime as a tool for teaching about Japan. I mentioned only briefly above that anime, despite the undoubtedly growing popularity, anime still occupies relatively marginal status in America. Anime still suffers from the negative stereotypes that it is all either violent pornography or mindless entertainment for children, and thus has not been fully embraced by mainstream American society. Many of the interviewees mentioned that their friends and parents don't always understand their interest in anime. Because of this many young people are not encouraged to pursue their interest in anime, and it is still uncommon for anime to be used in formal classroom settings as a means to teach about Japan.

There is a certain discourse concerning Japan that seems unable to reconcile an image of Japan as traditional with the image of Japan as a modern economic power. Morley and Robins describe this idea as techno-orientalism, which arises from the impression that Japan has achieved a level of modernity that is at least equal if not greater than that of the West, and to a West that is used to defining its superior position in relation to Eastern inferiority, this is very threatening. There is on the one hand "exotic" Japan, characterized by "aestheticism, eroticism and idealization", and on the other "alien" Japan, which in the past was associated with "a dehumanized martial culture"[18], but now, thanks to the technological advances and economic strength Japan has gained in the last few decades, has come to be associated with technology and business. Some scholars, such as Alex Kerr[19] and Donald Richie[20], directly exhibit a techno-orientalist view of Japan, portraying the advent of modernity and/or technology as slowly destroying or replacing traditional Japan. This basic idea permeates the popular understanding of Japan to a certain extent, and it is interesting to see how it reflected in the mainstream acceptance (or non-acceptance) of Japanese animation.

Much of the press regarding anime is contradictory, claiming on the one hand that it flies in the face of American animation, and on the other that it is derived from American animation traditions. It is at the same time old-fashioned and technologically advanced, brilliant and insipid. I would suggest that the contradictory notions concerning anime in the mainstream press

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[18]David Morley and Kevin Robbins. "Techno-orientalism: Japan Panic." *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*. New York: Routledge (1995) P149, 162, 148 respectively.
[19] Alex Kerr. *Dogs and Demons: Tales from the Dark Side of Japan*. New York: Hill and Wang (2001)
[20]Donald Richie. *The Image Factory: Fads and Fashion in Japan*. London: Reaktion Books (2003) Richie is much less condemning than Kerr, but his book, which deals exclusively with contemporary Japan, seems to take pains to show a somewhat unpleasant underbelly rather than a more rounded view of contemporary culture. The book contains chapters on the sex industry for example, which a Western reader cannot help but read about with disapproval.

reflect the ongoing attempt by reviewers and critics to maintain and continually create an American identity in the context of animation. It is a reflection of what goes on in larger socio-political places. For the most part, Disney, and therefore America, still holds the most prestigious position in animation worldwide. The rise in popularity and acclaim of Japanese animation is a threat to this position. Articles that describe the existential brilliance and lyrical beauty of anime[21] would naturally create a sense of unease. Thus, there are attempts, both within the praise and the criticism, to render anime less threatening to a sense of American identity. It is either allied with traditional Japan or covered over with Western comparisons that downplay the Japaneseness of anime.

As a cultural product that emerges from Japan, it has become virtually impossible to divide anime from people's understanding of Japan. In her research about Japanese designers in the world of high fashion, Kondo came across this predicament. She found that people were unable to process these designers without the label of "Japanese". Again and again Kondo came across references to the unique tradition the designers supposedly descended from, and she found that no matter how unique the styles of the individual designers were, they were always lumped together as "Japanese."[22].

The need to bring cultural products into an unspoken sense of cultural hierarchy applies to anime as well. There is a subtle tendency among film critics and reviewers to praise anime for its traditional aspects, and criticize it when it strays from them. This is not to say that futuristic science fiction anime does not receive good reviews, and that every good review about anime refers to a Japanese aesthetic or Zen sensibility, just that the tendency is there. A New York Times review of Rintaro's *Metropolis*, sets up his praise for anime that is not "disposable…children's fodder"[23] describes anime as "a blending of the Japanese pictorial tradition represented by silk painting and woodblock prints with the American-style character design and genre of stories." Another New York Times article titled "A Wizard of Japanese Animation has Japan under his Spell" describes for American audiences how it is the traditional ambiance of *Spirited Away* that made it so popular in Japan[24]. The subtext is that that will be the charm for American audiences as well.   A popular children's series *Hikaru no Go* received a complementary review in Newsweek, because it was supposedly fueling a healthy interest in the ancient game of go, over the unhealthy interest in consuming cards and video games that shows

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[21] Many of the reviews of Princess Mononoke claim that Miyazaki has achieved a level Disney did not. The extensive list of articles quoted on nausicaa.net is full of reviews that call Mononoke an "anti-Disney" movie that is meant to make people think. A small number of reviews did criticize the film for being incomprehensible however. In another example, some reviews for Mamoru Oshii's sequel to Ghost in the Shell praised it for its intellectual content in contrast with the simplistic plots we've come to expect from animation thanks to Disney. Most anime, even anime that is ultimately portrayed in a poor light, is praised for its sunning visual quality. Also, articles like Douglas MacGray's "Japan's Gross National Cool" *Foreign Policy Magazine* (May/June 2002) www.foreignpolicy.com claim that Japanese popular culture, of which anime is a huge part, is poised to take over American culture.

[22]Dorinne Kondo. "orientalizing: fashioning 'japan'" *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater*. New York: Routledge (1997) p.63

[23] Dave Kehr. "Anime , Japanese Cinema's Second Golden Age" *The New York Times* (29 January 2002) p 2:1.

[24] James Brooke. "A Wizard of Japanese Animation has Japan under his Spell." *The New York Times* (3 January 2002) p A4

like *Pokemon* create[25]. On the other hand, in a negative review for Aramaki Shinji's futuristic, cyberpunk drama *Appleseed*, one critic wrote, "it's worth noting that even in a cartoon this technically astounding, most of the characters appear to have sprung from the DNA of Astro Boy[26]. At this point, there's something almost masochistic about the way animators in Japan use cheesy "Westernized" heroes to fuel their fantasies."[27] The large eyes and seemingly Western features of anime characters seem to unsettle many critics, as though if animation is coming from Japan it should at least "look" Japanese.

Aside from privileging the traditional, critics also frequently compare Japanese animators with Western animators, as if by bringing them into a context where the West is still clearly hegemonic, it is less likely that the Japanese animators will be considered "better" or "overcome" Western ones. A recent article in the LA times that compared the two directors Miyazaki Hayao and Oshii Mamoru, was full of such comparisons. Miyazaki was Japan's Walt Disney and animation's Steven Spielberg, while Oshii was animation's Quentin Tarantino and George Lucas. Oshii was also described as the "godfather of cyberpunk"[28], which more than being true is more of a means to make his popularity understandable to a Western audience. Satoshi Kon, the director of the off-beat, unpredictable films *Millennium Actress* and *Perfect Blue* is described as being heavily influenced by David Lynch. One article even claimed, "rather than Disney's Spirited Away, the movie could better be considered Mr. Miyazaki's 'Through the Looking Glass.'"[29] The most frequent and outstanding of these comparisons is of Miyazaki to Disney, possibly thanks in part to the distribution deal Studio Ghibli, the eminent animation studio responsible for classics such as *Spirited Away*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, and *Princess Mononoke*, signed with Disney several years ago. Though these are indeed a form of praise, it is a slightly condescending one that depends on bringing Japanese animators into a realm where the West is clearly hegemonic. The only way these masters can be considered good is if they live up to American standards. And, by reaffirming the dominant position of American standards, these types of comparisons render Japanese animation less threatening to an American sense of identity.

In 2003 *Spirited Away* received the ultimate form of Westernized legitimization in the entertainment world, the Academy Award. The national pride Japan seemed to exude thanks to this development speaks to the degree they still define themselves in relation to the West. In other words, it was as if anime had finally arrived; as if now that the West had recognized anime and given it such a high estimation it became something Japan could be proud of. On the other hand, according to anime fan and long-time scholar Fred Patten, *Spirited Away*'s Oscar was a terrible blow to the anime in America. He claims that the fact that *Spirited Away* only went into wide-release after its Oscar nomination teaches American consumers, distributors and theater

[25] Hideo Takayama. "Going Crazy for Go." *Newsweek* (22 July 2002) Atlantic Edition p 82.

[26] Astroboy was the first anime to come to the United States. He is a character from a manga by Tezuka Osamu, a superhero robot boy who will never grow up. He is drawn in classic Tezuka style, very reminiscent of Disney, with iconic features and very large eyes.

[27] Owen Gleiberman. "Appleseed" *Entertainment Weekly*. Issue 802 (28 January 2005) New York. p68.

[28] Bruce Wallace. "Anime: not just cartoon conflict; Japan's Hayao Miyazaki and Mamoru Ishii wage a stylistic battle U.S. studios can't understand or ignore." *The Los Angeles Times* (20 February 2005) p E1 Incidentally the name was misspelled in the original article. There was a correction, but I cited the misspelled one.

[29] Elvis Mitchell "Conjuring up atmosphere only Anime can deliver." *The New York Times* (20 September 2002) p E1:11

owners that anime is only worth seeing when it is up for a prize. There will still be a reluctance to release anime in the big screen for fear of financial losses[30]. This is perhaps true, but it is also true that times are changing. One positive review for *Appleseed*, one that neither sought out something traditionally Japanese in the film, nor looked for some Western equivalent for the film or its makers, pointed out that since a famous DJ was doing the music, and that this would encourage music fans to watch the anime. The article went on to say that this was a good thing, and that it would encourage music fans to become anime fans and vice versa[31].

Although young people and children are less likely to be effected by techno-orientalism, simply because they are still growing and have not yet learned the prejudices of older generations, it is nonetheless the environment in which they are immersed. Because of the ambivalence towards anime, teachers and parents rarely look at it as a beneficial tool, and are not likely to introduce children to anime, and may even dissuade them from watching it. The vague disapproval of anime that adults feel inevitably seeps into the children's world, even if they do not fully understand it, and it is one of the reasons anime fans are looked at as "nerd" or "geeks". They do not participate in an activity, such as sports or music lessons, that is looked at as healthy or educational, despite the fact that it does greatly encourage learning and intercultural communication. The disapproval teachers or parents might feel towards anime is something some children, particularly ones who are not as interested in anime, will notice, even if they do not fully understand. The attitude toward anime apparent in adult publications ultimately effects the usefulness of anime as a teaching tool because it means that adults will be less likely to make use of it, and that as children grow they will be taught that anime is not useful for them to learn with and may either hide their interest, or move on to other things.

However, it seems that as anime becomes an integrated part of American life, something that all people grow up watching and appreciating, the techno-orientalist prejudices described above will gradually fade. I believe that as the young generations, who grew up teaching themselves about Japan with and through anime, grow to adulthood, they will be more open to the use of anime as a fun and effective means to introduce young Americans to Japan.

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Appendix A: Survey and Interview Questions

I used three surveys that used the same or similar questions, which varied for the most part only in length. I included age, gender, ethnicity, school, and birthplace in all the surveys. The main questions I wanted answered were why people want to learn Japanese, and how familiar they are with Japan and Japanese pop culture. Some questions it was easy to ask directly, but others I felt needed to be more indirect. For example, I felt I could be straightforward with questions such as "Why do you want to learn Japanese?" and "What kinds of Japanese pop culture are you interested in?" because the answers wouldn't be affected by the questions, nor would people be uncomfortable answering them. In order to find out if people's image of Japan is changing to include popular culture more than in the past I asked them to list three things that come to mind when they come to Japan. I also wanted to see if I could see what the appeal of anime is for those who are interested in it, and whether that appeal is directly related to Japan. I therefore asked them to write one thing they liked about anime and one thing they disliked about anime. To find out the extent of people's contact with Japan, I asked if they had ever visited there, and if they participate in Japanese cultural events, even here in America. All of the multiple choice questions allowed them to choose multiple answers.

To the anime club surveys I was able to add more questions pertaining directly to anime than with the surveys I gave to Japanese students. I did not change any of the questions from Japanese student survey, but added a few more and removed the more Japanese studies related questions which were less relevant in this context. I think the ways and places a person obtains anime are important indications of how much contact a person has with Japan, and so I included a multiple choice question asking just that, and once again respondees were free to choose as many as applied. I also asked if they preferred dubbing or subtitling, since a preference for subtitling puts people closer to Japan. In addition, I asked them if there was anything they learned about Japan from anime, to supplement the first impressions of Japan question. To determine whether or not interest in anime stemmed from an interest in Asian culture or a general interest in the medium of animation, I asked if they were interested in animation other than anime and had them list their three favorite titles. Lastly, in order to see what types of shows are popular, whether it be the stereotypical, violent cyberpunk, or historical dramas that show a lot of traditional scenery, I asked them to list their three favorite anime.

The online survey was a little longer, because I thought someone sitting at home at their computer wouldn't mind taking fifteen minutes to fill out a survey instead of only five. Also, though all of the questions were the same, except for the ones that I asked only on this survey, some of the multiple choice answers were different. I was careful not to compare in that case. Because I knew the chances I could interview the out of state respondents were slim I added a free response optional section to survey, and a few extra background questions. In order to find out how long someone has been a fan I asked what the first anime they remember watching was. Because people rarely think about how long they have been fans, they might have a hard time answering if asked for a number of years or months they have been a fan. But they will always remember the TV show, film, or video that made them a fan, and I would be able to tell based on when the anime they mentioned was imported to the US rougly how long they had been a fan. The free response section consisted of questions pertaining to why anime is becoming popular in America, and what their parents and/or friends think of anime, and what, in their opinion, the image of anime is in the US..

In the interviews I asked informants about how they became interested in anime, and why and what their interest in Japan or East Asia was, if any at all. I asked about what kinds of fan activities they are involved in, in order to ascertain how invested they are as fans. I assumed that the more invested in anime fan culture a person is, the more likely it would be that their interests would have more to do with Japanese pop culture in general than in anime alone. Since in this day and age of internet it is possible for people to investigate their interests on their own, a fact that many anime club presidents lament, for membership suffers because people don't need the clubs to pursue anime as the did in the past, I wanted to know more about how involved people are in the fan community, and where that involvement takes place, whether in real or virtual spaces. I also wanted to see how that involvement either encouraged or discouraged an interest in things outside of anime, and how that encouraged an interest in Japanese culture. In an interview it was also easier to find out whether someone was interested in anime first, or interested in Japanese culture first, and to get more directly at why he or she is studying Japanese and why they prefer subtitling or dubbing and things like that. All in all, I found that fans use both the internet and real life communication to learn more about anime, and that many of them pursue other Asia related interests as well, though not always related to Japan and not always formally. For example, someone might never take a class about Japan, but will spend a lot of time reading the blogs of people on the Japan Exchange Teachers program, in essence learning about Japan.

Survey for Students of Japanese

Age:
Gender:
Ethnicity:
Birthplace:
Name of School:

Japanese Study

Why do you want to learn Japanese? Circle all that apply.

·to make Japanese friends
·to learn more about Japanese culture
·to have a career in Japan
·to be able to understand Japanese anime, music etc.
·to live in Japan
Other:

Have you ever been to Japan?   Y/N

If yes: How long?
        Where did you stay?
If no: Would you like to go?

Which cultural events related to Japan have you attended? Circle all that apply

·museum exhibits
·film festivals/screenings
·O-bon parade
·Other:

What are the first three things that come to mind when you think of Japan?

Anime and Japanese Pop Culture

What kinds of Japanese pop culture are you interested in? Circle all that apply

·anime
·video games
·manga
·cinema
·J-pop
·dramas

·None
·Other:

?

Please write at least one thing you like and one thing you dislike about anime. (If you can think of more than one thing please feel free to share)

<u>Media</u>

What are your favorite genres?
·romance
·comedy
·drama
·science-fiction
·horror
·action
·Other:

<u>Survey for Anime Club Members/Fans</u>

Age:
Gender:
Ethnicity:
Birthplace:
Name of School:

<u>Anime and Japanese Pop Culture</u>

What kinds of Japanese pop culture are you interested in? Circle all that apply .

·anime
·video games
·manga
·cinema
·J-pop
·dramas
·None
·Other:

What are you three favorite anime titles?

Do you prefer dubbed or subtitled anime?   dubbed   subtitled

Where do you get the anime you watch now? Circle all that apply

·network TV
·cable TV
·video rental stores
·online rental service
·large retail chain stores
·online stores
·downloads
·friends
·clubs
·conventions
·Other:

Please describe one thing you like and one thing you dislike about anime.

List two things you learned about Japan from anime.

<u>Japanese Study</u>

Why do you want to learn Japanese? Circle all that apply.

·to make Japanese friends
·to learn more about Japanese culture
·to have a career in Japan
·to be able to understand Japanese anime, music etc.
·to live in Japan
·Other:

Which cultural events related to Japan have you attended? Circle all that apply
·museum exhibits
·film festivals/screenings
·O-bon parade
·anime conventions
·festivals/matsuri
·Other:

Media

What are your favorite movie and television genres?

·romance
·comedy
·drama
·science-fiction
·horror
·action
·Other:

Are you interested in non-Japanese animation? Y/N   If yes list your three favorite titles.

<u>Online Survey</u>

How old are you?

18
19
20
21
22
over 22

What is your gender?

Male
Female

What is your ethnicity?

White/Caucasian
African American
Hispanic
Asian
Other

Where were you born?

Where do you currently work or go to school?

<u>Anime and Japanese Pop Culture</u>

What kinds of Japanese pop culture are you interested in? Check all that apply.

·anime
·video games
·manga
·cinema
·J-pop
·dramas
·Other:

What was the first anime you saw?

I prefer: subtitling/dubbing.

Please rate your interest in anime of a scale of 1-3

1-dislike
2-watch occasionally
3-love

What are your three favorite anime titles?
      1.
      2.
      3.

Where do you get the anime you watch? Check all that apply

·network TV
·cable TV
·video rental stores
·online stores
·downloads
·friends
·clubs
·conventions
·Other:

What are two things you like about anime?

What are two things you dislike about anime?

Breifly describe one or two things you feel you have learned about Japan from anime

Japanese Study

Why do you want to learn Japanese? Check all that apply.
·to make Japanese friends
·to learn more about Japanese culture
·to have a career in Japan
·to be able to understand Japanese anime, music etc.
·to live in Japan
·Other:

Which cultural events related to Japan have you attended? Check all that apply

·museum exhibits

·film festivals/screenings
·Japanese holiday celebrations, festivals, matsuri
·lectures
·restaurants
·karaoke
·O-bon parade
Other:

What are the first three things that come to mind when you think of Japan?

Media

What are your favorite genres? Check all that apply

·romance
·comedy
·drama
·science-fiction
·horror
·action
·independent
·classic
·Other:

Which of the following game systems to you own?

Sony Playstation 2
Nintendo Game Cube
Microsoft X-box
None

Optional

What are you three favorite non-Japanese animated works?

Who do you think watches anime most in America?

·children
·adults

·high school students
·college students
·science fiction fanboys
·girls
·Other

Why do you think anime is popular in America today?

What do you find most interesting or appealing about conventions?

What do your friends and family think about anime?

Which three magazines, newsletters or websites do you use the most to find information about anime?
       1.
       2.
       3.

Interview Questions

Can you remember the first anime you watched?

What first attracted you to anime or what about that series or film you first watched caught you attention?

What are you favorite anime now and why?

Where do you get most of your anime?

What is your involvement with the anime club?

Do you think people are attracted to anime because it is Japanese? Would it be as popular if it came from somewhere else?

Do you prefer dubbing or subtitling? Why?

What do you think of the word *otaku*?

Is there a stereotype of what an anime fan is? If so what do you think that stereotype is?

What do your friends and family think of anime?

Which characters do you identify with the most?

How much money and time do you spend on anime?

Aside from anime what else are you interested in?

Do you study Japanese?

What other aspects of Japanese pop culture are you interested in?

Do you attend conventions?

Do you wear costumes?

Do you like non-Japanese animation?

Have you been to Japan?

Do you have any questions for me?