

# Dōjinshi research as a site of opportunity for Manga Studies

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Fanworks are creative works that explicitly make use of characters and/or settings found in a copyrighted work. They are created by fans all over the world and range from fan-made manga (*dōjinshi*) to pieces of fanfic (*shōsetsu*), narrative texts from a few dozen words to novel-length, fan art (*ichimai irasuto*), individual pictorial depictions, musical pieces (*dōjin ongaku*), for instance, songs based on characters, and many other media. In this paper, I focus on fan-made manga such as those most often published in *dōjinshi* fanzines.<sup>1</sup> I have two purposes: to examine the current position of *dōjinshi* within Manga Studies in general, and to describe several key areas in which more extensive *dōjinshi* research might offer distinctive contributions to Manga Studies.

## 1. The current status of *dōjinshi* research within Manga Studies

Comiket (Comic Market), the largest of the many *dōjinshi* sales conventions (*sokubaikai*) held in Japan every year, attracted 35,000 groups of *dōjinshi* creators<sup>2</sup> and

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1 Amateur literary magazines containing texts that are not fannish remixes of existing copyrighted works are also referred to as “*dōjinshi*”. A *dōjinshi* containing fannish remixes may contain a variety of media, from texts to single illustrations to manga. For the sake of brevity, I use the word “*dōjinshi*” in this paper to mean “fan-made manga”.

2 These groups are called *sākuru*, from the English “circle”. A *sākuru* may also consist of a single creator (*kojin sākuru*).

over half a million visitors in December 2007.<sup>3</sup> The dōjinshi market in that same year was estimated to be worth up to 50 billion yen (Yano Research Institute Ltd. 2008), with the total value of manga sales (*tankōbon* and magazines, dōjinshi excluded) being estimated at about 450 billion yen.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, amateur publications are an economically very significant segment of the manga market and an important part of manga culture in general. The many dōjinshi that are distributed for free either in print or online are of course not visible in these market estimates.

Both in Japanese and non-Japanese-language research, however, content analysis of dōjinshi (as opposed to that of commercially published manga) is extremely rare.<sup>5</sup> Dōjinshi do feature in English-language research on occasion, but they are almost always discussed because of their legal significance, not as objects of literary study.<sup>6</sup> Also, the academic works which discuss the legal ramifications of dōjinshi are often published within the fields of law or economics, outside of the usual scope of Manga Studies.

There is more dōjinshi research in Japanese than in non-Japanese languages, which may be explained in part by issues of accessibility of the source material that I will describe later in this paper. Manga scholars in Japan seem to display more awareness of dōjinshi-related issues, such as problematic areas of copyright legislation (*chosakukenhō*) and the rights of fans to remix and to a certain extent lay claim to their creations (Yonezawa 2001: 6, 9). References to dōjinshi are also quite

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<sup>3</sup> I use the attendance data of the December 2007 event, “Comic Market 73”, as reported by Comiket (COMIKET 2008, 4), because the latest available data on the size of the amateur manga market, also referenced in this paragraph, are for the year 2007.

<sup>4</sup> *Komikku hanbaigaku* [Value of the comics market] (The Research Institute for Publications 2009). Another report, *2008 Otaku sangyō hakusho* [2008 White Paper on Otaku Production] (Media Create 2007), is said to contain a lower estimate of around 27 billion yen (Nozu 2007), but I have not been able to verify this.

<sup>5</sup> One aspect of dōjinshi narratives that has recently been discussed in some English-language pieces of scholarship is the importance of characters relative to the story (Galbraith 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Of the sixteen English-language scholarly works I have identified that devote at least several paragraphs to dōjinshi, five do so solely in the context of copyright-related discussions. Discussion of dōjinshi contents in the remaining ten remains mostly limited to explanations of *yaoi*, with only a few attempting to go into detail (Noppe 2010). Because this list is still regularly updated, the numbers stated above may change over time. As the purpose of this exercise was to identify published academic sources on dōjinshi authored in English, I have not included translations into English of originally Japanese-language scholarship on dōjinshi.

common in discussions of manga readers' experiences, particularly in works about boys' love manga, who have strong roots in and ties with *dōjinshi*. Japan has also seen considerable critique of areas of manga scholarship that seem out of touch with the experiences of "ordinary" manga fans that make up *dōjinshi* culture, with manga critic Itō Gō's *Tezuka is Dead* (2005) being a prime example.

Even in Japan, however, no comprehensive scholarly works about *dōjinshi* have been published, and the number of scholarly articles remains limited.<sup>7</sup> A large proportion of the existing research focuses on the *sokubaikai* such as Comiket that form the primary distribution site of *dōjinshi*. Research on *otaku* (used to designate fans in general, but often only male fans) and *fujoshi* (female fans of boys' love/*yaoi*, Galbraith 2009), psychology, communities, and economic systems<sup>8</sup> is gaining traction. However, the actual contents of the works these fans produce remain largely unexamined except in the broadest of terms. There seem to be similarities with research into non-Japanese-language fandom here: while a fairly large volume of Fan Studies research has been devoted to non-Japanese-language fan communities, analysis of the actual content of non-Japanese-language fan-created media is still comparatively new (Hellekson en Busse 2006: 27).

As a consequence of this lack of research into *dōjinshi* content, little is known about *dōjinshi* among most non-Japanese-speaking manga researchers beyond the fact that *dōjinshi* exist and have a precarious legal status. This lack of knowledge makes it easy for manga scholars to assume that *dōjinshi* are somehow different from and of limited relevance to commercially published manga (referred to as *shōgyōshi* when contrasted with *dōjinshi*), because little research exists that suggests otherwise. For now, research into *dōjinshi* both inside and outside Japan appears scattered and not proportionate to the importance of *dōjinshi* in the manga market.

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<sup>7</sup> A search in the CiNii scholarly database (CiNii 2010) turned up 983 items mentioning "dōjinshi" in Japanese. However, the vast majority of these appear to concern amateur original texts rather than manga *dōjinshi* based on existing media narratives. Cultural policy scholar Kawashima suggests that this lack of scholarly attention towards amateur creativity is not limited to *dōjinshi* or Manga Studies, but is characteristic of academic research on the creative industries in general (Kawashima 2010: 6).

<sup>8</sup> A significant number of non-academic volumes on economic issues related to fans, for instance on how to market products to *otaku*, have been published in Japan.

In this paper, I will examine two related concepts that influence academic attitudes about *dōjinshi* and also hinder *dōjinshi* research in practical ways: copyright legislation, and the concept of the original, single author as the only possible creator of truly valuable literary works. While these are certainly not the only factors responsible for the seeming lack of *dōjinshi* research, I will attempt to show that concepts of copyright and authorship offer very useful clues at the very least, and indicate key areas in which *dōjinshi* research could be of great benefit to Manga Studies in general.

While discussing concepts of copyright and authorship, I will make heavy use of research conducted in connection with English-language fanwork. Fan Studies is a rapidly evolving discipline in the English-language academic world and offers an interesting and useful framework within which to discuss *dōjinshi* research. Also, because most English-language Fan Studies material concentrates on non-Japanese fans, insights offered by Fan Studies are often very relevant to the situation of *dōjinshi* in non-Japanese scholarship.

## **2. Legal status of *dōjinshi*: the disconnection between law and an evolving cultural landscape**

The legal standing of *dōjinshi* is the most researched aspect of these amateur manga. Questions of legality and illegality also have the most significant practical impact on *dōjinshi* research and are the most obvious distinction between “regular” manga and *dōjinshi*, and strongly influence attitudes towards *dōjinshi* in general. Any exploration of the reasons for the lack of *dōjinshi* research should probably begin with *dōjinshi*’s legal status.

A very brief overview of the history of copyright will help clarify the role it plays today in the positioning of *dōjinshi* as literary works. The English Statute of Anne was enacted in 1710 and is considered to be the first true piece of copyright legislation. The Statute of Anne was instituted at the request of printing and distribution companies (not individual book authors), who felt that copying of works first printed by them by other printers harmed their business model. The purpose of copyright legislation was to mediate between producers of cultural goods trying to make a living, and the public’s

need to make use of these cultural goods so a creative, vibrant culture could develop.<sup>9</sup>

Copyright legislation was introduced in Japan after the Meiji restoration. Since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gradual changes in Japanese copyright legislation have drastically expanded the kinds of media whose use is governed by copyright legislation, and for how long use of these media is regulated by copyright until they pass into the public domain and anybody can use them to create new cultural goods. Copyright law in Japan currently protects virtually all media on which *dōjinshi* are generally based (manga, books, games and so on) for fifty years after the death of the author. Films are an exception and are protected for seventy years. The aim of contemporary Japanese copyright legislation is described as “(to) contribute to the development of culture” (Copyright Research and Information Center, the CRIC, n.d.), in line with the age-old stated purpose of copyright legislation in many parts of the world.

Today, new technological developments make it very difficult for media companies to control the distribution of the copyrighted cultural goods that are their prime source of income (Bardzell 2006: 12; Lessig 2004). Increasingly sophisticated software and the internet make it easy for anyone to digitize any medium, be it a manga, film, book, or anything else (Hughes et al 2007: 4). This is not a new phenomenon; newly-developed technologies have challenged copyright legislation multiple times throughout its history, for instance when copy machines or video recorders came into general use. In all these instances, copyright legislation was eventually adapted so it could continue to fulfill its stated function of encouraging cultural development within new technological realities.

However, many legal scholars such as Lawrence Lessig and Rebecca Tushnet claim that today, copyright legislation is not evolving to adapt to the potential unlocked by new technologies (Lessig 2004; Tushnet 1996). It is growing more reactionary instead, as media companies try to counter the effects of new technologies by strengthening their legal control over the ways consumers can distribute, remix, and

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<sup>9</sup> The motivations of various parties involved in the creation of copyright legislation were more complex than I can describe here. For an extensive discussion, see Rose 2003.

engage creatively with copyrighted content.<sup>10</sup> The net result of this is that copyright legislation ends up as a tool for media companies to protect their profits, instead of a tool to mediate between the rights of companies and consumers with the end goal of promoting creative culture.

Free remixing of existing cultural goods by amateur creators is increasingly being proscribed both in Japan and worldwide. Paradoxically, this development is taking place in tandem with the emergence of amateur communal remix culture as an important mode of cultural production (Hughes e.a. 2007; Azuma 2009; Jenkins 2008), as shown by the way the economic value of the *dōjinshi* market continues to rise while that of the commercial manga market drops.<sup>11</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that fanworks of legally questionable status are so common in the cultural landscape today. The law and the technological reality experienced by those whose activities it regulates are simply pulling in opposite directions (Tushnet 1996: 651; Kawashima 2010: 1).

### **3. Legal status of *dōjinshi*: obstructions to *dōjinshi* research stemming from copyright issues**

Fanworks such as *dōjinshi* do constitute copyright infringement, even though they are generally tolerated by Japanese rights holders (Noda 2008: 15; Yonezawa 2001: 5). *Dōjinshi* creators are keenly aware that their actions may not be legal (see below), and the committees that organize *sokubaikai* review materials offered for sale to ensure that none contain blatantly copied material, because such copies could provoke a reaction from rights holders that might negatively impact the great majority of *dōjinshi*. According to Lessig, the vast majority of *dōjinshi* are clearly not mere copies but rather “derivative works”, a category of cultural goods that is recognized and regulated by

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10 This is exemplified, for instance, by negotiations about the proposed Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) treaty, of which Japan is a major sponsor (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry—METI, n.d.). While the exact positions of negotiating countries are hard to pin at the moment of writing due to lack of public transparency of the negotiations, leaked documents indicate that Japan supports several measures that would drastically tighten intellectual property law (Tōen 2010).

11 The report *Otaku shijō ni kansuru chōsa kekka 2008* [Results of the otaku market 2008] claims that the total value of the *dōjinshi* market in 2007 was 13.5% larger than that in 2006 (Yano Research Institute Ltd. 2008).

Japanese copyright law.<sup>12</sup>

The strong influence of copyright legislation on perceptions of *dōjinshi* hinders research into these amateur manga in several very practical ways.<sup>13</sup> For one, non-Japanese-speaking researchers will find it almost impossible to study *dōjinshi*. Official translations of *dōjinshi* cannot be published for legal reasons, and while scanlations exist online, these are scattered and do not form a large and reliable body of primary sources.

Researchers fluent in Japanese face difficulties in obtaining primary research materials. *Dōjinshi* creators fear endangering themselves and by extension the whole *dōjinshi* community by “inviting” legal problems; although Japanese companies are generally tolerant of *dōjinshi* production, there have been several incidents of varying severity in which *dōjinshi* creators clashed with rights holders.<sup>14</sup> Creators go to great lengths in order not to draw attention from people who are not involved in *dōjinshi* culture and might not be understanding of its activities.<sup>15</sup> One consequence of this is that distribution of *dōjinshi* is quite carefully controlled, and a researcher may have trouble even laying hands on a print *dōjinshi* outside of *sokubaikai* or specialized *dōjinshi* resale shops (*dōjin shoppu*) inside Japan.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> A “derivative work” (*nijisōsakubutsu*) is “a work created by translating, arranging musically, transforming, or dramatizing, cinematizing or otherwise adapting a pre-existing work” (Copyright Law of Japan, Chapter 1, Section 1, Article 2). Regulations regarding derivative work are contained mainly in Chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted here that some hurdles caused by copyright legislation cause problems for research into commercially published manga as well, and are merely magnified in the case of *dōjinshi* research; problems in obtaining rights to use images from manga in scholarly publications, for instance, are common (Noda 2008: 15, Yonezawa 2001: 5).

<sup>14</sup> Examples include the “Pokemon *dōjinshi* case” (Noda 2008: 16; Yonezawa 2001: 8), the “Doraemon *dōjinshi* incident” (ComiPress 2007), and several minor incidents (Tsukasa n.d.) including the “Harry Potter copyright problem” (Tsukasa n.d.). The latter refers to an online rumour started in December 2001 that the overseas and Japanese copyright holders of the *Harry Potter* franchise were about to crack down on *Harry Potter*-based *dōjinshi*, prompting *dōjinshika* (*dōjinshi* creators) to lock down websites and cancel *ibento* [events] for several months afterwards. (The crackdown did not materialize.)

<sup>15</sup> For instance, *sākuru* attempt to prevent search engines from indexing their websites, so that only those who have found the URL in a *dōjinshi* can find the sites (*kakushi*). Many also admonish readers not to offer the *dōjinshi* for sale on general-purpose auction sites, or even show them to anyone who is not a *dōjinshi* reader or creator.

<sup>16</sup> It must be noted that a few *dōjin shoppu* that also sell *dōjinshi* through their websites, such as Mandarake and K-BOOKS, offer shipping outside of Japan. Purchasing *dōjinshi* through this channel does not eliminate problems regarding a *dōjinshi*'s legal status or potentially illegal con-

The obstacles for a researcher do not end after printed *dōjinshi* have finally been obtained. Most countries forbid the moving of copyright-infringing goods across their borders in accordance with international copyright treaties, making it illegal for a *dōjinshi* researcher to remove materials from Japan and bring them into another country.<sup>17</sup> If a translation of the source work of a *dōjinshi* exists in a country outside Japan, the sale of *dōjinshi* based on that source work is probably even more explicitly illegal in that country, because the companies that published the translation tend to retain rights to the work. Given the large amount of manga translations available today, a large proportion of source works is most likely in this category.

Copyright legislation may also be putting a damper on amateur manga research through the influence of the idea of copyright on researchers who lack understanding of the problems inherent in the concept. Contemporary copyright legislation alone is not an appropriate scholarly argument to distinguish “regular” manga from *dōjinshi*, certainly not while conducting content research on the medium manga. It is a purely legal argument, and not a very convincing one; as I discussed above, the purposes to which copyright legislation is put today suggest that it is outdated, often misdirected, and too far-reaching (Lessig 2004).

The way copyright legislation hinders *dōjinshi* research is only a very concrete expression of broader trends that seriously endanger scholars’ access to and right to use various kinds of primary sources (Jaszi and Woodmansee 1995: 775). More extensive awareness of and resistance against these trends is not only beneficial to academics,<sup>18</sup>

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tent that may arise as packages are inspected by customs.

17 Regardless of whether or not *dōjinshi* legally constitute copyright infringement in a country, their often sexual contents make it forbidden to take them across national borders in many cases. Particularly the transport across borders of works depicting characters that might be interpreted to be minors may lead to criminal investigations in several countries that include depictions of virtual children in anti-child pornography laws. For instance, in February 2010, U.S. Citizen Christopher Handley was sentenced to six months in prison for possession of child pornography (io9 2009) under the PROTECT Act of 2003, which criminalizes possession of, among others, drawings or cartoons that depict “a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct” (US CODE n.d.).

18 While the practical hurdles mentioned harm free scholarship, challenging them directly poses genuine legal dangers. Individual researchers may be able to make headway without putting themselves on the wrong side of the law by remaining informed about copyright-related issues in academia and publishing, being supportive of attempts to legalize fan activities, and adopting open research methodologies and tools that also offer many practical advantages (examples of this are open access publishing and use of open source research tools).



it may also be an ethical obligation. Law scholars Martha Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi point out the complicity of academia in the over-development of copyright legislation, claiming that it was academia which helped create a concept of “proprietary ownership (which) shapes the law governing our textual practices as scholars, teachers, and students” (Jaszi and Woodmansee 1995: 772, 782), and so it is the responsibility of academia to resist further problematic developments in copyright law.

I will now turn our attention to the genesis and implications for *dōjinshi* research of this concept of “proprietary ownership” of literary works by their authors.

#### **4. Authorship of *dōjinshi*: the single author concept and ideas about women’s writing**

*Dōjinshi* are problematized not only on the basis of their legal status, but also through arguments that target their creators and their modes of creation. Many scholars will instinctively make a sharp distinction between professional authors and amateur (fan) authors. This distinction relies on a stereotypical image of an “author” that has long been discredited in literary theory, but continues to influence other disciplines. A professional author operates mostly alone to create original work, for the sake of art, that is validated by legal standing. In contrast, an amateur crafts derivative work of questionable legal position, mostly for private consumption and often in conjunction with other amateurs.<sup>19</sup> The reputation of a creator influences the reputation of the work. Blatant *ad hominem* attacks on fans as a community, such as the pathologization of otaku as disturbed, socially maladjusted or even dangerous individuals, are easily countered. The division between “amateur” and “professional” authors is more ingrained and subtle, and deserves more extensive consideration here.

According to Martha Woodmansee, who specializes in the history of copyright

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<sup>19</sup> The words “original” and “derivative” are regularly used in scholarship and legislation (Japanese copyright law, for example) and have significant connotations that express a value judgement about the works designated. Original works are thought to be “new” and of a certain quality (because the creator was judged talented enough to warrant publication). Derivative works are considered glorified copies by creators clearly not talented enough to create something “original”. It should be noted here that while “derivative” is a convenient term to indicate that a work is explicitly based on another, the word “derivative” is not very useful as a means of categorization. All creative work is derivative. Some forms of derivativity are legally sanctioned, while others are not.

in relation to literature, the concept of the individual author as a generator of “original ideas” to which he can claim ownership began being developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Writers seeking to establish a livelihood by selling books to a newly enlarged reading public redefined writing as the original creation of one author solely responsible and “exclusively deserving of credit” for the work (Woodmansee 1984: 426). This new Romantic author ideal contrasted rather sharply with earlier ideas of the writer as a craftsman who did not “own” his words in any literal sense, as one might own a table or a chair, and who was not considered a “genius” capable of generating entirely “original” ideas.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was also the time when copyright legislation began to take shape, starting with the Statute of Anne in 1710. This period saw literary theory and legal theory cooperating to create the sort of copyright legislation that fitted well with the new author concept. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, on the other hand, there is a clear disconnect between the evolution of concepts of authorship in modern literary theory (away from the ideal of the all-powerful single original author) and the evolution of copyright legislation.<sup>20</sup>

An important consequence is that regardless of changes in the way literary theorists tend to construct authorship today, in practice, the Romantic author concept is still accepted as the most valid in many parts of academia. Scholars with no connections to literary theory take their cues about authorship from the copyright legislation that regulates how they may consume and distribute academic content. Contemporary copyright legislation makes heavy use of the single author concept, disregarding other forms of authorship such as participatory creation which are growing more and more important (discussed in detail later). Japanese copyright law, for instance, accords various levels of “moral” (*jinkakuteki*) and “economic” (*zaisanteki*) rights to individual authors (*chosakusha*) immediately upon creation of “creative expressions of original thoughts or sentiments of the creator which are not copies of

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20 Jaszi and Woodmansee claim that “After the divergence of literary and legal theory it was possible to overlook the substantial contribution of Romantic aesthetics to our law of texts, with the result that while legal theory participated in the construction of the modern “author”, it has yet to be affected by the structuralist and post-structuralist critique of authorship that I have been witnessing in literary and composition studies for two decades now.” (1995: 771).

others” (Copyright Research and Information Center (CRIC) n.d.).

The single-author concept influences views on the authorship of *dōjinshi*, and thereby *dōjinshi* research, in multiple areas. I will briefly describe two of these areas: the fact that a majority of *dōjinshi* creators are female, and the collective nature of the process of *dōjinshi* creation.

The development of the author concept in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was distinctly gendered. Fan studies scholar Kristina Busse states that at the time when authorial genius began to be foregrounded,

(...) the way women created art was wrong on several counts: they didn’t do it for money or to share in the public space and the emphasis was on craft and amateur status rather than any sense of original genius. Their work effectively had to be ignored because the ideological context in which it was created spoke directly against the aesthetic models men needed to create, in order to justify owning and selling their words (Busse 2010).

In *Translation and Gender*, literary theorist and gender scholar Mizuta Noriko asserts that in Japan as well, “original creation” and “authorship” were constructed as “a masculine occupation” based on the idea of authorial genius developed by Romantic writers (Mizuta 2006: 162). The gendered nature of this authorship concept is relevant because a majority of today’s *dōjinshi* creators and readers are women (Orbaugh 2009: 175). Women’s writing has a long history of being considered non-normative, lacking in universality, and concerned with trivialities, and still carries these associations today inside and outside Japan (Saito 2006: 181). Recent research into modes of reading of female readers in Japan appears to confirm the continuing marginalization of women’s literature (Aoyama and Hartley 2009: 2, 25), in spite of the fact that Japan’s literary canon appears to include a relatively large number of female authors. One specific example of this in Manga Studies may be the pathologization of *fujoshi* readers of boys’ love manga (which, incidentally, are closely tied with their *dōjinshi* counterpart, *yaoi*).

As noted above, the concept of single authorship, one of the concepts underlying

present-day dismissal of fanworks, is an arbitrary construct that was created in order to facilitate monetary gain. Still, the arguments used to build this construct became “common sense” knowledge in many academic fields. Today *dōjinshi*, a medium created primarily by women, is problematized on the basis of its “amateurish” authorship. I could conclude that there is a very real possibility that gender still plays a role in the dismissal of *dōjinshi* as of little relevance to the broader category of manga.

### **5. Authorship of *dōjinshi*: the rise of communal creation**

The issue of gender points to another aspect of the single-author concept that influences views on *dōjinshi* today. Women’s interactions with reading material have often been described as communal rather than solitary. Japanese literature scholars Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley argue that their book, *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*,

(...) demonstrates the tendency of many girls in Japan to read in groups. Collective reading practices, as contributors to this collection repeatedly demonstrate, greatly enhance the pleasure of the text while also providing girls with the opportunity to consider more pragmatic issues of everyday life (Aoyama and Hartley 2009: 5).

The concept of original authorial genius relies on the generation of supposedly new ideas by a single, inspired mind, whose function is to limit the possible meanings of texts and point readers towards a single appropriate interpretation or limited set of possible interpretations (Bardzell 2006: 16). Yet it seems that communal, participatory production and consumption of cultural goods is currently gaining ground over solitary production and consumption, in Japan and elsewhere. The technological advances that enable fan remix culture greatly encourage, indeed rely upon, community-based creation (Hughes et al 2007: 25). Additionally, this remix culture takes place largely in online hypertext, a medium whose characteristic interconnectivity does not encourage traditional linear narratives controlled by one single author (Hayles 2001: 21).

In his analysis of the postmodernist aspects of otaku culture, cultural critic Azuma Hiroki points out that “traditional authorship plays an extremely small role” in the way fans consume and interpret cultural goods (Azuma 2009: 88). Otaku

culture scholar Patrick Galbraith adds that Azuma's description of the motivations of male otaku is applicable to female fujoshi as well (Galbraith 2009). Nowhere is the rise of participatory culture more evident than in fan communities, where communal production and reading are characterized as normative by researchers focusing on Japanese fandoms as well as English-language Fan Studies scholars. *Dōjinshi*, for instance, are often created by a group consisting of two or more persons. They are distributed online or at *sokubaikai*, where direct interaction between readers and creators is easy. They are read by a community of readers who, even if they read on their own, are united by common fascination for a particular source work and common understanding of the particular codes expressed in fanworks based on that work. The communal nature of fanwork production is expressed by the very term that is attached to various media to denote them as fanworks: “*dōjin*”, meaning “same person”, in the sense of “person with similar interests”. A “*dōjin-shi*” is a magazine created by and for like-minded individuals.

The example of *dōjinshi* suggests that participatory and communal modes of production deserve more attention within Manga Studies. I could probably characterize not only the creation of fanworks, but almost any form of participation in manga fandom as “communal”: meta-discussion on online message boards, blogs, LiveJournal communities and mailing lists, creation of scanlations and fansubs, participation in conventions, and so forth.

Fannish activities are not the only part of manga culture that is distinctly communal. While commercially published manga are usually identified as the work of a single author, many mangaka [manga artists] work with a team of assistants in order to keep up with stressful publication schedules. Editors play a large role in the shaping of manga stories. Interaction with readers through reader suggestions to manga magazines and artist's notes in manga are a regular part of manga creation. Perhaps the value that is still being accorded to single authorship within Manga Studies on an academic level is disproportionate to the importance of that concept within manga culture itself (Jaszi and Woodmansee 1995: 769).

### **In conclusion: towards continuing relevance of Manga Studies**

The legal framework in which “original” authors’ rights are heavily favored over those of readers, and in which copyright is assumed to constitute holy writ, seems eminently unsuited to contemporary and developing cultural realities. Technological developments are causing drastic changes in modes of cultural production. In the case of *dōjinshi*, technology—both print technology and more recent software and hardware innovation—is having a tremendous influence on *dōjinshi* development. In the seventies, the proliferation of various technologies for copying enabled a boom in *dōjinshi* production (Nishimura 2002: 25), and *dōjinshi* creation is continually made easier and transformed through technology today. Indeed, many *dōjinshi* are now published online, and an increasing number of those published in print format are produced by *sākuru* who interact almost exclusively over the internet (Aoyama and Hartley 2009: 175).

In this paper, I have touched only briefly upon the particularities of *dōjinshi* creators as members of a fan culture with a distinct function within postmodern society. As suggested by Umberto Eco as early as 1960 (Eco 1989: 13) and maintained by Azuma in the context of contemporary Japanese fan cultures, scientific and technological changes have extremely far-reaching consequences as to the ways consumers interpret media. *Fujoshi* and *otaku* are said to be forerunners in this evolution of consumers (Azuma 2009: 25), and for this reason, the advantages of more intensive study of the media they produce in the process of consuming manga and other source media are not to be underestimated.

There may be other, socially problematic consequences to academic neglect in Manga Studies of works published outside legally acceptable channels that were created to fit the single authorial genius mold. Works by creators belonging to a minority or traditionally unprivileged social group are often branded as non-normative and therefore not of interest to a very wide audience, greatly diminishing the likelihood that a publishing company with commercial goals will invest in the work, and increasing the chance that the creators will turn to non-standard modes of publication. I have briefly touched upon the potential influence of gender on views of *dōjinshi*; inquiries into other factors such as race or sexuality of creators might yield similar results. Avoiding these issues in Manga Studies would be socially irresponsible, and

dōjinshi may be an excellent starting point for productive discussion.

Contemporary copyright legislation and aesthetic ideals such as the concept of the original author are still assumed by authorities to be modern and advanced; the Japanese Copyright Research and Information Center states that “The protection and people’s awareness of copyright are said to reflect the degree of cultural development of the country” (Copyright Research and Information Center (CRIC) n.d.). In direct opposition to this kind of rigid adherence to existing copyright conventions, many scholars in law, economics, and new media studies now argue that contemporary copyright legislation is in fact outdated, because it is totally unsuited to contemporary modes of cultural production as determined by scientific and technological advances, and harmful to scholarship and the development of creative culture. Lessig and other legal scholars argue that further tightening of copyright legislation runs counter to principles of freedom of expression (Lessig 2004). From an information theory perspective, scholars Jerald Hughes, Karl Reiner Lang, Eric Clemons and Robert J. Kauffman contend that in an economy where a majority of cultural goods are either digital or easily digitized, perceptions of what is harmful copyright infringement are not only passé but actively detrimental to economic development (Hughes et al 2007: 21). Cultural policy scholar Kawashima Nobuko agrees that legal changes to accommodate amateur cultural production are a must in order for governments to encourage cultural development (Kawashima 2010: 4). Many English-language Fan Studies scholars have also argued that fan activities should enjoy some form of legal protection (Noda 2008: 20; Kawashima 2010: 19; Organisation for Transformative Works n.d.), with some even proposing that it would be appropriate for fan creators to receive some form of monetary compensation for their fannish labour (De Kosnik 2009: 124).

Continuing to do research within a framework created largely out of the economic concerns of a certain group of creators is not only bad scholarship. Uncritical acceptance of outdated ideas on copyright and authorship may also perpetuate the idea of a growing “irrelevance” of the humanities, of which Manga Studies is a part, and make manga scholars appear increasingly out of touch with the way their research subject is being experienced by consumers. Manga Studies focus on a medium with a large proportion of young and tech-savvy readers, a considerable number of whom

are involved in some form of online fannish interaction and directly experience the disconnect between legal restrictions and technological realities. A stronger focus on fans and their media could help manga scholars avoid dismissing dōjinshi with the same arguments that were employed for decades to keep manga and comics marginalized as academic subjects, and assure the continuing relevance of Manga Studies. Examining dōjinshi and other fannish media brings into stark focus several important aspects of new economic and technological realities that greatly influence the consumption of manga inside and outside Japan.

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