THE COOL JAPAN PROJECT AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF ANIME AND MANGA IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract: This research paper will primarily discuss the impact that Japanese animation and manga have had on American popular culture and the subsequent cult following they developed. It will discuss what distinguishes Japanese animation from Western animation, how Japanese animation initially gained popularity among American audiences, and how it has subsequently impacted American popular culture. This paper will also focus on the subculture of *otaku*, a group of people known for their devoted following to Japanese animation and comic books. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the relative popularity of Japanese animation and manga amongst American audiences as an example of globalization impacting the United States from another country.

Keywords: anime, manga, soft power, Cool Japan, globalization

Introduction

During the 1980s and 1990s, Japanese animation and comic books began coming overseas to the United States, where it soon gained popularity amongst a sizeable number of young Americans. Recognizing the economic potential of Japanese popular culture, in 2002, Douglas McGray, writing for *Foreign Policy*, wrote an article titled "Japan's Gross National Cool", highlighting Japan's potential to be a global "soft power", or a country that promotes itself through its cultural influence rather than by economic and military force. McGray points out that globalization has typically been dominated by the United States, but Japanese popular culture, particularly Japanese animation (anime) and comic books (manga) have also made significant inroads into the United States. On June 12, 2013, the upper house of Japan's parliament (similar to U.S. Congress) approved a $500 million, twenty-year fund to promote all things Japanese, such as anime, manga, Japanese fashion, Japanese food, and so on. This project is known as "Cool Japan", and is intended to promote Japan as a "soft power", or a country that uses its idealogical and cultural power to promote itself in international relations.

This recent push for promoting Japanese culture has been inspired by the government of South Korea's efforts to promote itself as a soft power during the late 1990s.[1] The goal of this campaign is to increasingly promote its cultural products to get more domestic and international tourists.[2] In addition, Japan has been hoping to improve its image with the globalization of anime in an attempt to show other countries around the

[1] Roland Kelts, "Japan Spends Millions in Order to Be Cool", *Time*, last modified July 1, 2013, http://world.time.com/2013/07/01/japan-spends-millions-in-order-to-be-cool/
[2] Kazuaki Nagata, "Exporting culture via 'Cool Japan'." *The Japan Times*, last modified May 15, 2012, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2012/05/15/reference/exporting-culture-via-cool-japan/#.VQ-zbVz-ung

world (but especially in Asia) that Japan was now "humane" and "liberated." There is a certain kind of pride that the Japanese take in this promotion of Japanese popular culture. Japanese commenters took pleasure in observing the globalization and consumption of anime (as well as Japanese video games), and that it showed the "cultural superiority" of Japan.[3] Japanese animation, in particular, has gained a significant following amongst a number of Americans over the last three decades. This study will show how the "Cool Japan" project has evolved over the 20th and 21st centuries. The globalization of Japanese animation has led to the emergence of its devoted following amongst a significant number of Americans, which has subsequently made an impact on American popular culture. Anime's globalization has been a long and complex process, but this globalization has raised interesting debates about whether or not anime has to be "Japanese" and how anime has been seen in American popular culture.

"Japan's Gross National Cool"

After spending three months in 2001 traveling through Japan and interviewing artists, directors, scientists, designers, and other such people, Douglas McGray wrote an article for *Foreign Policy* indicating the economic potential of Japanese culture during a time in which Japan's economy was in a downturn. He noted that many of the Japanese people he had interviewed were surprised to think that Japanese culture would have such an impact in other countries, and if anything, they were inspired by foreign influences. One professor even admitted, "I can't always distinguish elements of traditional Japanese culture from Japanese culture invented for tourists." McGray considers this lack of

[3] Koichi Iwabuchi, "'Soft' Nationalism and Narcissism: Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global." *Asian Studies Review* vol. 22, no. 4 (December 2002): 447-448.

"Japaneseness" as key to spreading what he calls "Japanese cool".[4] He also notes that the recession in Japan helped to "discredit Japan's rigid social hierarchy" and allow for greater freedom for young entrepreneurs to experiment with art, music, or some other "risky endeavor."[5] McGray concludes that Japan has a "vast reserve of potential soft power", that is, its popular culture could be used to demonstrate Japan's economic and cultural influence throughout the world.[6]

The idea of Japan's "gross national cool" slowly started to become more and more popular amongst Japanese government officials and business leaders, who wanted to use Japan's cultural products such as anime, geisha, and sushi to promote itself on the world stage as a soft power.[7] By 2005, the Japanese government began talking of "Cool Japan", and the slogan even had an accompanying television show of the same name that showed foreigners being impressed with almost any aspect of Japanese culture.[8] However, the implementation of "Cool Japan" has not gone smoothly, and attempts to promote Japanese culture abroad have generally not gone well. For example, whilst the Japanese tried to promote local music stars, other musicians such as Kyary Pamyu Pamyu and Babymetal found success without the government's help. In fact, the Japanese government department in charge of "Cool Japan" even interviewed Babymetal to try and find out how Babymetal was able to find success without the assistance of the Japanese

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[4] Douglas McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool," *Foreign Policy* no. 130 (May 1, 2002), 48.
[5] McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool," 51.
[6] Ibid, 54.
[7] "Japan counts on cool culture," *BBC*, last modified December 13, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4092461.stm
[8] Patrick St. Michel, "Japan's Ministry of Cool," The Atlantic, last modified March 19, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/03/japan-and-the-power-of-coolness/387664/

government.[9] It seems that the government's attempt to make Japan "cool" have not quite gone according to plan. The Japanese government tried to promote their nation to the world, but only Japanese people have taken to this "Cool Japan" project.

Cool Japan's Rivals

The Cool Japan Project has also had to contend with other East Asian countries trying to promote their culture. South Korea in particular has been a major rival to Japan as a soft power. Since the 1990s, the South Korean government has been spending money and collaborating with major conglomerates like Samsung and Daewoo to promote Korean popular culture, much like how Japan has been promoting its popular culture. In the early 2000s, Korean cultural exports were worth around $500 million; by 2011, these cultural exports were worth $4 billion. As of 2014, the South Korean government has a cultural investment fund of $1 billion.[10] The Japanese saw a potential model of promoting their popular culture in Korea, and have tried to emulate that model. Even though Japanese popular culture (especially anime and manga) has been popular throughout the world, there had been no real attempt by the Japanese government to promote their popular culture until the 2010s, and the companies that create such popular culture tend to be smaller companies with limited resources to truly gain global presence.[11]

Both Japan and South Korea have been focusing their efforts to promote themselves in Southeast Asia, but South Korea has been far more successful in that regard. Even China has been promoting its culture through "Confucius Institutes", but

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[9] St. Michel, "Japan's Ministry of Cool."
[10] Melissa Leong, "How Korea became the world's coolest brand," *Financial Post*, last modified August 2, 2014, http://business.financialpost.com/news/retail-marketing/how-korea-became-the-worlds-coolest-brand#__federated=1
[11] Kelts, "Japan Spends Millions in Order to Be Cool."

China is still far behind Japan and South Korea as far as soft power is concerned.[12] A major advantage to South Korea's popular culture rise is that South Korea itself is seen as "non-offensive" when compared to other countries such as China, Russia, and the United States, which draw polarized opinions.[13] Japan, on the other hand, has had a difficult relationship with many other countries from East Asian due to its past actions against these countries during the Second World War. The image of a "cool Japan" coexists with the negative image of Japan that still persists in many countries. According to Peng Er Lam, Japan has been trying to reach out to other countries by promoting itself through its anime and manga, but Japan has been unable to do so because it cannot overcome the "burden of history."[14] The South Korean approach is more top-down, centralized, and efficient, with the government and major companies like Samsung and Daewoo working together. The rise of Japanese popular culture, on the other hand, seems to be more from the ground up, with smaller corporations and dedicated fans helping to bring Japanese popular culture away. The most visible of imported Japanese popular culture is, without a doubt, anime.

What is Anime?

Before one delves into how Japanese animation became globalized, it is important to understand what sets it apart from traditional Western styles of animation. Anime is a typically Japanese form of animated feature. In fact, the word "anime" comes from the

[12] St. Michel, "Japan's Ministry of Cool."
[13] Leong, "How Korea became the world's coolest brand."
[14] Peng Er Lam, "Japan's Quest For 'Soft Power': Attraction and Limitation," *East Asia: An International Quarterly* 24 no. 4 (December 1, 2007), 349-350. *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCO*host* (accessed April 27, 2015).

English word "animation".[15] Anime typically has a distinctive visual style from Western animation, with the characters often having wide, expressive eyes.[16] A large number of anime feature a powerful protagonist facing off against a devious villain. Themes such as family, death, and friendship are also commonplace in many anime.[17] Japanese animation, when compared to Western animation, is not necessarily aimed at a younger audience. In fact, a number of anime typically feature complex stories that have a more mature audience in mind.[18] Many of the genres in anime include science fiction, romance, and comedy, genres that are more commonly see in live-action films in the West. As Susan J. Napier put it in her book *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, anime's viewers in Japan range from young children watching anime geared towards younger audiences to teenagers watching anime such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion* which are geared towards older audiences. She adds, "Sometimes, as was the case with *Princess Mononoke* and other films by its director Miyazaki Hayao, anime cuts across generational lines to be embraced by everyone from children to grandparents."[19] This multigenerational aspect makes anime particularly useful for Japan's attempts to promote itself through "Cool Japan".

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[15] Héctor García, *A Geek in Japan: Discovering the Land of Manga, Anime, Zen, and the Tea Ceremony* (Singapore: Tuttle, 2010), 106.
[16] Amy Chozick, "Animation Gives an Edge to Streaming Services", *New York Times*, last modified October 28, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/29/business/media/hulu-and-netflix-gain-an-advantage-with-anime.html?_r=0
[17] Chris O'Brien, "Can Americans Make Anime?," *The Escapist*, last modified July 30, 2012, http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/features/9829-Can-Americans-Make-Anime
[18] Susan J. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 17.
[19] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, 6-7.

It is important to note that the majority of anime are based on Japanese comic books, also known as *manga*. Many of the anime based on manga are typically different from their source material, even if the original author of the manga directed the anime (i.e. Katsuhiro Otomo and *Akira*), due to the limitations of film and television when compared to long running manga series.[20] Japanese woodblock painter Hokusai Katsuhika, best known for his work *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*, coined the term *manga*, which originally meant "random sketches" but has since been used as a general term for Japanese comics.[21]

A Quick Biography of Anime and Manga Legend Osamu Tezuka

No discussion on the history of anime and manga would be complete without discussing Osamu Tezuka. After seeing the film *Momotaro: Umi no Shinpei* in 1945, he was so moved by this film that he began drawing comic books, also known by their Japanese name *manga*, to try and recreate the feelings he felt when watching *Momotarō*.[22] Tezuka was a fan of Walt Disney, and after World War II, once Japan ended the ban on foreign films, he watched *Bambi* over eighty times and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* over fifty times.[23] Inspired by French and German movies he had seen as a child, Tezuka experimented with cinematic techniques such as close-ups and different angles, and conveyed scenes such as changing facial expressions over multiple panels instead of just one panel as had been done in the past. While Japanese comic authors had used film techniques in the past, Tezuka stated in an interview that because he made a big

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[20] Robin E. Brenner, *Understanding Manga and Anime* (Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007), 6.
[21] Brenner, *Understanding Manga and Anime*, 3.
[22] García, *A Geek in Japan*, 102.
[23] Frederik L. Schodt, *The Astro Boy Essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, and the Manga/Anime Revolution* (Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press, 2007), 59.

impact with his use because he consciously used film techniques.[24] One of his most notable works was *Astro Boy*, known in Japan as *Tetsuwan Atomu*, which he made into an animated television series beginning in 1963. *Astro Boy* is about a highly advanced robot boy created by a mad scientist to replace his deceased son. The robot boy in question fought for peace (especially important in post-war Japan), and he fought monsters, criminals, and evil robots.[25] The manga and anime based on *Astro Boy* was a major success in Japan. Tezuka would later follow *Astro Boy* up with *Kimba the White Lion*, which was also popular in Japan. Thanks to the many innovations made by Osamu Tezuka, anime and manga became highly popular in Japan.[26]

As a result of the success of Tezuka's manga such as *Tetsuwan Atomu*/*Astro Boy*, many aspiring Japanese comic book artists began to emulate his style, and soon enough, manga became hugely popular in Japan. In 1996, the magazine *Shonen Jump*, a weekly magazine that publishes manga aimed towards a young male audience, sold six million copies in just a week.[27] Japanese people tend to read manga in manga magazines and compilations, which can be found in many places (such as convenience stores, bookstores, and libraries). Manga sales have since declined in Japan, but the manga market has become hugely successful in countries such as the United States, where it makes hundreds of millions of dollars a year.[28]

Early History of Anime in Japan

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[24] Natsu Onada Power, *God of Comics: Osamu Tezuka and the Creation of Post-World War II Manga*, (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 42-43.
[25] Schodt, *The Astro Boy Essays*, 4.
[26] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, 16.
[27] García, *A Geek in Japan,* 100-103.
[28] Ibid, 104-105.

The phenomenon of anime's popularity in the United States is an example of globalization affecting America. However, anime's start in Japan was inspired by Western animation. As early as 1914, animations from the United States and Europe were introduced to Japan. In this early period, directors such as Junichi Kouchi, Seitaro Kitayama, and Oten Shimokawa created short, silent, and simple films. Shimokawa's film *Imokawa Mukuzo* was the first anime film to be made available commercially in 1917. Kouchi's 1917 film "Nakamura Katana" is a two-minute long film about a samurai (traditional Japanese warrior) getting scammed into buying a dull sword; Kitayama's 1918 film *Urashima Taro* was inspired by a Japanese folk tale about a fisherman who gets "transported to a fantastic underwater world on the back of a turtle." According to National Film Center researcher Yoshiro Irie, these films surprised Japanese audiences of the late 1910s because they were moving pictures. Kouchi, Kitayama, and Shimokawa are considered to be the "fathers of anime".[29]

During the Second World War, the Japanese government banned Western animation, and a number of animated propaganda films were made. Two such propaganda films were *Momotarō no Umiwashi* (Momotaro's Sea Eagles) and its sequel *Momotarō: Umi no Shinpei* (Momotaro: Divine Sea Warriors). These two films are considered the first theatrical feature-length anime films in Japan. The plot *Momotarō no Umiwashi* involves a young boy named Momotaro leading a group of animals on an attack on an island fortress, much like the real life bombing of Pearl Harbor, whilst *Momotarō: Umi no Shinpei* is about this same Momotaro leading another group of

[29] Linda Sieg, "Japan finds films by early 'anime' pioneers," *Reuters.com*, last modified March 27, 2008, http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/03/27/us-japan-anime-pioneers-idUST23069120080327

animals to free an Asian country from its white colonial government. Released in 1945 near the end of World War II in a heavily bombed Japan, *Momotarō: Umi no Shinpei* is regarded as a "classic of early Japanese animation".[30] As mentioned before, it was the film *Momotarō: Umi no Shinpei* that deeply inspired Osamu Tezuka to create anime and manga. After watching *Momotarō: Umi no Shinpei*, he was moved by its "technical excellence" and for the fact that it was released during a very difficult time for Japan (the end of World War II).[31] After Tezuka's success with *Astro Boy* in his native Japan, he decided to bring *Astro Boy* to America.

Anime Comes To America

The history of anime in the United States is much longer than expected. While some may say it started in the mid-1980s, anime has seen success in America since the 1960s. In 1963, Osamu Tezuka went to New York City to meet with executives from NBC to have his popular anime series *Tetsuwan Atomu* broadcast in the United States. The meetings went smoothly, and in 1963, Tezuka's show was broadcast to the United States under the new name *Astro Boy*.[32] *Astro Boy* was, apart from the language spoken and some editing tweaks, largely unchanged from the original Japanese version. However, Fred Ladd, the producer of the English-language version of *Astro Boy*, did have to make some changes to the show to make it "less Japanese", and changed the names of the characters and censored some of the more violent and questionable moments of the original Japanese cartoon so that it would be more successful in America (at this time, the United States had little cultural interaction with Japan). In fact, a large

[30] Schodt, *The Astro Boy Essays,* 58.
[31] Ibid, 58-59.
[32] Ibid*,* 76-79.

part of the changes to *Astro Boy* were explained as "cultural differences." Nevertheless, Tezuka enjoyed *Astro Boy* and was glad that Ladd did what he could to preserve the original story and integrity of *Tetsuwan Atomu*. There were 104 episodes produced for American televisions, and the popularity of the show is credited with starting early interest into anime.[33]

However, anime's popularity in the United States was quickly curtailed during the 1970s and 1980s. A group called Action for Children's Television censored any cartoon that contained cartoon violence, homoeroticism, gender ambiguity, and anything that shows the protagonist in a less-than-positive light; Japanese animation often contained such content. The protagonists in anime were often flawed, which made them more relatable to audiences, and topics such as the deaths of characters were considered acceptable to show in children's anime since death was acknowledged to be a part of life by the Japanese. By the end of the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan "dismantled agencies created to protect the public, and signaled to broadcasters that the FCC, which had bowed to the demands of ACT, would no longer be so stringent in its oversight". In effect, the informal ban on anime that had been going on since the 1970s was over.[34]

It was not until the late 1980s and 1990s that Japanese animation really began to become popular in the United States. Initially, many scholars predicted that anime would not succeed in the United States because of the "cultural and social disparities between Western and Eastern animation." One of the reasons that these scholars thought anime could not succeed in America is that in anime, there are Japanese cultural references that

[33] Ibid, 82-84.
[34] Samantha Chambers, "Anime: From Cult Following to Pop Culture Phenomenon", *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications* 3, no. 2 (2012): 95.

may not be understood by most American viewers, such as the reference to the *hokora* in the Miyazaki film *Spirited Away* (discussed later).[35] Looking back at those scholars' opinions, it is clear that they did not predict the rise in anime's popularity in the United States. During the late 1980s, anime films such as *Akira* had a positive reception.[36] *Akira*, a film that is adopted from a manga of the same name, takes place in the year 2019 in a politically unstable Neo-Tokyo, where motorcycle gangs, terrorists, and the military clash. In the film's climax, cosmic forces mutate one of the bikers into a giant, grotesque being.[37] In the 1990s, television shows like *Pokémon*, *Sailor Moon*, and *Dragon Ball Z* were among the most popular anime to reach American audiences.[38] Many of anime's American fans enjoyed Japanese anime because they believed the stories and artwork were much better than those of Western animation. Video game company owner Jay Minn, after moving to San Francisco from South Korea, was disappointed in the seemingly poor quality of Western cartoons as he was used to watching anime in South Korea, and said, "Anime is about giant robots destroying stuff or normal people doing super, not normal things. Batman and Aquaman seem lame by comparison; like, come on!"[39] Perhaps anime's appeal to Americans is best described by Holly Kolodziejczak, former content editor for the *Anime Fringe* magazine. When she was watching *Sailor Moon* as a college student, she realized what made anime so appealing:

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[35] Chambers, "Anime: From Cult Following to Pop Culture Phenomenon", 95-96.
[36] Iwabuchi, "'Soft' Nationalism and Narcissism,"451.
[37] Andrew Osmond, "Akira: The Story Behind The Film," *Empire Magazine*, accessed April 11, 2015, http://www.empireonline.com/features/the-story-behind-the-film-akira
[38] Brenda Velasquez, "The 'Japanese Invasion': Anime's Explosive Popularity in the U.S.", *Asian Avenue Magazine*, last modified September 15, 2013, http://asianavenuemagazine.com/2013/anime/
[39] Debbi Gardner, "Anime in America," *Japan Inc.*, last modified January 2003, http://www.japaninc.com/article.php?articleID=972

> "And as I watched the storyline unfold, I started to realize how much different this was than the cartoons I'd watched in the past. This was no mere cartoon. This was something more. The characters had real personalities, their own feelings and motivations for their actions, strengths and flaws that enhanced their characters. They were more like real people, and thus people could much more readily identify with them. The character depth along with the way the storyline grew and evolved began to really intrigue me. After a short while, I was hooked." [40]

The appealing visual style and surprisingly deep storylines would help anime get a large American audience and bring anime into the mainstream during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

During this time period, anime fan clubs began appearing in locations such as college campuses and high schools throughout the United States. These fans were willing to help translate the original Japanese anime into their native languages in a process called "fansubbing" in which unofficial subtitles were added to Japanese anime by devoted fans. Anime fans in Japan would record anime shows and then upload them to the Internet. American anime fans would download these recorded shows and then begin translating them.[41] Many of the anime that had been "fansubbed" had been purchased by anime fans, who translated them and distributed the translated copies for free. This "fansubbing" helped to create the massive market for anime in the United States. However, many of these fans noticed, to their disappointment, that these anime had been

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[40] Holly Kolodziejczak, "So, this is Point B? - Looking Back, Going Forward," *Anime Fringe*, December 2005, http://www.animefringe.com/magazine/2005/12/special/04.php
[41] John Ledford, "It's… Profitmón!" *Fortune* 152 no. 12 (December 12, 2005), 100-110.

tweaked for easier viewing among American audiences. Cartoon Network's Toonami segment allowed for anime to be shown on television, and Americans even began producing cartoon shows aimed at a mature audience, such as *Family Guy* and *Futurama*.[42] By 2003, sales of anime movies, DVDs, and other anime merchandise in the United States reached $4.84 billion.[43]

Hayao Miyazaki: The "Walt Disney of Japan"

Perhaps one of the best-known directors of anime is Hayao Miyazaki, one of the founders of Studio Ghibli. Hayao Miyazaki is known for a variety of anime films such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, and *Spirited Away*.[44] *Spirited Away* was so successful that in 2002 it won the top award at the Berlin Film Festival (becoming the first animated film to do so),[45] and in 2003 it won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature.[46] Miyazaki usually draws his characters instead of digitally animating them, although he has used computer animation for his backgrounds.[47] In a 1993 interview with *Animerica*, a magazine devoted to anime and manga, Miyazaki explained that he was not interested in computer graphics and that it was not useful in saving labor. When asked about how he felt about his fans from other countries, Miyazaki appreciated

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[42] Chambers, "Anime: From Cult Following to Pop Culture Phenomenon", 96.
[43] Chozick, "Animation Gives an Edge to Streaming Services."
[44] Dave Kehr, "Anime, Japanese Cinema's Second Golden Age", *New York Times*, last modified January 20, 2002, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/20/movies/film-anime-japanese-cinema-s-second-golden-age.html
[45] McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool," 46.
[46] Anthony Carew, "The Wind Rises, A Genius Departs", *Screen Education* no. 74 (2014): 10.
[47] Kehr, "Anime, Japanese Cinema's Second Golden Age".

the support, but felt that his home country Japan would remain the foundation of his work.[48]

Miyazaki has been praised for his beautifully animated, fantastical visions like the underwater sea world of his 2008 film *Ponyo* or the "spirit world" of *Spirited Away*.[49] In addition, many of his protagonists, who are often women and girls, have been praised for their independence and courage; for example, the titular Kiki, from *Kiki's Delivery Service*, moves from her parents to a city whilst only accompanied only by her cat, and establishes a business in a community mostly run by women. While she does have a romantic interest in a local boy, she is able to solve her problems by herself and without the help of the local boy.[50]

Miyazaki's storytelling has also been praised: his film *Princess Mononoke* is a complex tale about environmental issues and clash of civilizations.[51] Set in medieval Japan, the story concerns a young man named Ashitaka who becomes cursed after killing a boar god. After journeying to faraway lands, he meets San, a woman raised by wolves who has been resisting Lady Eboshi, the leader of a village developing ironworking and gunpowder. The film features complex situations, such as Eboshi's village being invaded by a samurai enclave wanting to steal the village's technology, and when the wolves who

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[48] Takashi Oshiguchi, "Hayao Miyazaki," in *Anime Interviews: The First Five Years of* Animerica Anime & Manga Monthly *(1992-1997)*, ed. Trish Ledoux (San Francisco: Cadence Books, 1997), 31-32.
[49] Carew, "The Wind Rises, A Genius Departs", 10.
[50] Tom Gatti, "Animating principle: The last bow of Hayao Miyazaki, Japan's Walt Disney," *New Statesman* 143, no. 5709 (May 9, 2014), 53. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host* (accessed April 27, 2015).
[51] Kehr, "Anime, Japanese Cinema's Second Gold Age".

raised San bear their teeth, it is with the intent to kill.[52] In 2013, after releasing his last film *The Wind Rises*, Miyazaki retired so that he could try other projects that were not necessarily related to anime.[53] Miyazaki has been recognized as an auteur, or a director whose films contain "recurring characteristics" in style and themes. His films often have environmental and/or anti-war themes, and, as mentioned above, he prefers to draw his films by hand.[54] In 2014, in recognition of his work in animation, Hayao Miyazaki was awarded an Honorary Oscar.[55] He continues to be regarded as one of the best animators in Japan.

Current Trends in Anime

By 2009, anime movies, DVDs, and other anime-related merchandise sales in the United States had declined to $2.74 billion.[56] Nevertheless, the anime industry is still going strong today, with digital streaming services becoming an increasingly popular way to view anime. While manga sales in America declined sharply in 2007 due to the rise of sites showing pirated manga and the decline and closure of bookstores like Borders, attendance at anime conventions had been getting larger and larger.[57] Many anime fans would normally watch pirated anime when it initially became popular in the United States. The popularity of the pirated anime made it difficult for the anime industry in

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[52] Roger Ebert, "Princess Mononoke," *RogerEbert.com*, last modified October 29, 1999, http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/princess-mononoke-1999
[53] Carew, "The Wind Rises, A Genius Departs", 10.
[54] Kim, "Can *Cowboy Bebop*'s Creator Make More People Take Anime Seriously?".
[55] Mike Hale, "A Master of Childhood Dreams", *New York Times*, last modified January 2, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/movies/awardsseason/miyazaki-wins-again-after-11-animated-features.html
[56] Ibid.
[57] Brigid Alverson, "Manga Makes a Comeback", *School Library Journal*, last modified October 31, 2014, http://www.slj.com/2014/10/books-media/graphic-novels/manga-makes-a-comeback/#_

Japan to make profits off their titles. In addition, if anime was shown on television, it had to abide by American television decency standards (i.e. no tobacco or alcohol could be shown). However, streaming services such as Hulu and Netflix have been able to show anime television series, often uncensored and subtitled. In October 2011, four of the top 40 titles shown on Hulu and its related sites were anime. One show, *Naruto: Shippuden* was the sixth most popular show on Hulu Plus. Hulu has 9,500 anime titles and Netflix has 4,000 anime episodes available to stream as of October 2011.[58] On October 4, 2013, Nielsen reported that five of *Attack on Titan*'s manga volumes took five of the top twenty graphic novel sales, beating out American graphic novels such as *The Walking Dead*. After many years of declining anime and manga sales, *Attack on Titan* helped to improve anime-related products sales for the first time in many years. Such sales had been in decline due to shows that were aimed at anime's devoted fans that had driven more casual fans away; it eventually became so formulaic that even these devoted fans were started to complain about the lack of change. The success of *Attack on Titan* in its appeal to a much wider audience has helped to improve the sale of anime-related products.[59]The role of online streaming has also revived manga sales in the United States. For example, when the anime *Attack on Titan* began streaming on the anime website Crunchyroll, the manga version of *Attack on Titan* became, as of October 31, 2014, America's current bestselling manga.[60] These recent successes have brought more people into joining anime's devoted fanbase, known as *otaku*.

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[58] Chozick, "Animation Gives an Edge to Streaming Services".
[59] Mike Ferreira, "What Attack on Titan's Sales Mean For the Anime Market," *Anime Herald*, last modified October 8, 2013, http://www.animeherald.com/2013/10/08/attack-titans-sales-mean-anime-market/
[60] Alverson, "Manga Makes a Comeback".

Otaku: Anime's Devoted Fans

One major aspect of anime's popularity in the United States is the devoted fanbase that has developed around it. These people are referred to as "otaku". Generally speaking, the word "otaku" in Japan refers to someone who is obsessed with video games, anime, manga, science fiction, et cetera. It is typically seen as a "youth culture" (more appealing to people under the age of 35), but people who are fully-fledged members of society can also be otaku as well.[61] Otaku are generally perceived as social outcasts throughout the world, including Japan.[62] In fact, within Japan, there is a divide between those who perceive otaku negatively and those who do not. The negative image of the otaku was established in Japan when in 1988 and 1989 an otaku named Tsutomu Miyazaki kidnapped, sexually assaulted, and murdered four young girls. After that otaku was arrested, otaku were seen in a negative light throughout Japan. However, many otaku became conscious of their identity after the otaku's murder case, and otaku culture became more widely discussed after the release of the anime *Neon Genesis Evangelion* in 1995.[63] Additionally, Japanese magazines have seen the rise of otaku culture in the Western world as proof that the West is being "Japanized".[64] Nevertheless, the negative stereotype of the asocial otaku continues, especially in Japan. The term *hikikomori*, referring to someone who shut him or herself off from the world and never leave their

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[61] Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 3.
[62] Monica Kim, "Can *Cowboy Bebop*'s Creator Make More People Take Anime Seriously?", *The Atlantic*, last modified January 3, 2014, www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/01/can-em-cowboy-bebop-em-s-creator-make-more-people-take-anime-seriously/282806
[63] Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, 4-5.
[64] Iwabuchi, "Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global", 454.

homes, was coined in reference to such otaku.[65] Even in 2015, it is considered somewhat derogatory to be called a "Japanophile" or "weeaboo" (both synonyms for otaku).[66]

While this negative stereotype still persists, attitudes towards otaku have become more positive as time went on due to more scholarly research and greater availability of anime in the United States.[67] In her essay on anime and otaku culture in the United States, Susan Chambers notes, "American Otaku culture is a perfect example of how soft power can greatly influence a group of people in a different country." She points out that over half of the 107 otaku she interviewed purchased anime related merchandise, a strong indicator of anime's economic power within the American market. Chambers concludes, "Anime's journey to America through legal television broadcasts as well as illegal modes of fansubbing and piracy has given anime a strong economic foothold in American culture."[68] The success of American otaku culture can be seen as "Cool Japan" in action, although the American otaku were most likely fans before the Japanese government began the "Cool Japan" Project.

The number of female otaku has been on the rise in both Japan and the United States. When *Sailor Moon* was broadcast in the United States, its primary demographic was girls, and when the show was successful, anime distributors in the United States began bringing more anime titles aimed at young women.[69] In recent years, female otaku have become more visible in Japan, where they are referring to as *otome* or "maidens". Ikebukuro, a district of Tokyo, has seen a rise in the number of anime and manga aimed

[65] García, *A Geek in Japan*, 86-87.
[66] St. Michel, "Japan's Ministry of Cool."
[67] Chambers, "Anime: From Cult Following to Pop Culture Phenomenon", 98.
[68] Ibid, 99-100.
[69] Gardner, "Anime in America."

at a female demographic, and is considered the female's equivalent to the Akihabara neighborhood (also in Tokyo), which sells anime-related goods to a primarily male demographic. With anime's rising popularity amongst girls and young women, more and more women have begun identifying themselves as otaku or *otome*. The rise of the *otome* subculture has been noticed by public officials, and in October 2014, Yukio Takano, the mayor of Tokyo's Toshima Ward, even joined a Halloween parade in Ikebukuro in which 80 percent of the 50,000 attendants were women.[70] It is clear that women are becoming an increasingly important part of the otaku culture.

Over the past decade, it has been made clear that anime and manga (along with other forms of Japanese popular culture) have gotten people more interested in Japan. In 2006, Natsuki Fukunaga wrote an article detailing how anime and manga have inspired many of its fans to learn Japanese. Originally, Japanese was a popular choice for students who wished to do business with Japan; by 2004, students of the Japanese language were more likely to be more interested in anime, manga, and street fashion.[71] While he was perhaps a little nationalistic about Japanese popular culture's success in the West, Japanese cultural critic Toshio Okada does note that many American otaku want to visit Japan and/or want to be Japanese because of their fascination with anime.[72] Even in 2014, anime and manga, along with J-pop (Japanese popular music) and Japanese television dramas, were still cited as reasons as to why Japanese is a popular language to learn.

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[70] Motohiro Onishi, "Female otaku stake new 'holy ground' in Tokyo's Ikebukuro," *Asahi Shimbun*, last modified January 27, 2015, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/cool_japan/fun_spots/AJ201501270003

[71] Natsuki Fukunaga, "'Those Anime Students': Foreign language literacy development through Japanese popular culture," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 50, no. 3 (November 1, 2006), 206.

[72] Iwabuchi, "Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global," 455.

Other reasons cited for why people study Japanese are that Japan has a large economy, that Japanese is an interesting language to learn, and that it helps in finding a Japanese spouse.[73] In many cases, anime and manga have inspired people to learn more about Japan and its culture. Anime and manga have also inspired many American animators to create their own anime-inspired animation.

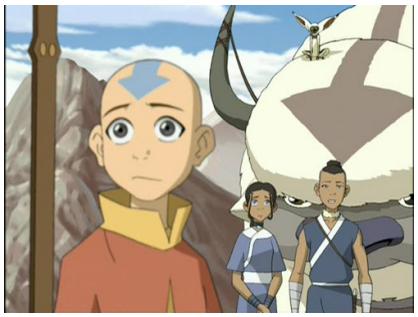
Does Anime Have To Be Japanese?

In recent years, many Western animations have drawn inspiration from Japanese anime. A major debate within the anime community is whether or not an animated feature can be "anime" if it does not come directly from Japan. One of the most notable shows that is involved in this controversy is the television series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and its sequel series *The Legend of Korra*. While these series both have visual and audio styles that are heavily inspired by anime, since they were made in the United States, some anime fans do not see them as "real anime". In their minds, "real" anime only comes from Japan. Other fans believe that these shows should be considered anime in spite of its country of origin.[74] Monty Oum, the creator of *RWBY*, was one of these fans. In an interview with Amanda Rush from the anime website *Crunchyroll*, he said the following on whether or not anime has to be Japanese:

[73] Yumi Nakata, "5 Reasons Why Learning Japanese is So Popular," *GaijinPot*, last modified April 24, 2014, http://blog.gaijinpot.com/5-reasons-learning-japanese-popular/
[74] O'Brien, "Can Americans Make Anime?".

"Some believe just like Scotch needs to be made in Scotland, an American company can't make anime. I think that's a narrow way of seeing it. Anime is an art form, and to say only one country can make this art is wrong."[75]

While it is certainly true that Americans can make anime (such as *RWBY*), most of the Americans creating anime-inspired cartoons like *Avatar: The Last Airbender* may not necessarily be trying to make "anime" in the traditional sense, but rather a fusion of sorts between Japanese and Western animation. However, it cannot be denied that anime's popularity in the United States has led to Americans becoming inspired to make their own animation.



Picture from Avatar: The Last Airbender.[76]

From several Japanese commenters' perspectives, anime does not have a nationality at nationality at nationality at all. These commenters believe that anime is *mukokuseki*, or "stateless" and have no national identity. What they mean by this is that anime is a world unto itself that does not coincide with real-life Japan. The most visible aspect of this *mukokuseki* element is the fact that characters in anime look more "Western" than "Japanese". Napier argues in her book *Anime From Akira to Princess*

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[75] Amanda Rush, "Inside Rooster Teeth's 'RWBY'", *Crunchyroll*, last updated July 12, 2013, http://www.crunchyroll.com/anime-news/2013/07/12/feature-inside-rooster-teeths-rwby

[76] Gabriel Powers, "Avatar: The Last Airbender Book 2, Volume 1," *DVDActive*, http://www.dvdactive.com/reviews/dvd/avatar-the-last-airbender-book-2-vl-1.html

Mononoke that the characters are actually drawn in an "anime" style, where the characters are drawn in highly exaggerated styles and have strange hair colorings such as pink, green, or blue. During a discussion between a Japanese critic named Toshiya Ueno and animators Mamoru Oshii and Kazunori Ito, many aspects of this *mukokuseki* element to anime is that anime characters are often drawn in a non-Japanese appearance, with characters often having blonde hair (or any hair color that is not black or brown) and other physical features atypical to Japanese people. In Oshii's opinion, the "de-Japanizing" of anime characters is deliberate on the part of the Japanese because they want to "evade the fact that they are Japanese". Oshii also notes that both Japanese creators and audiences look "on the other side of the mirror", especially at the United States, and "drawing from that world" to create a world different from that of present-day Japan.[77]

On the other hand, many anime do contain references to Japanese history and culture. For example, Hayao Miyazaki's celebrated 2002 film *Spirited Away* contains a number of Japanese cultural references. The film is about a young girl named Chihiro whose family, whilst moving to a new house, ends up in a fantasy world where her parents are turned into pigs. In order to get her parents back to human form, Chihiro has to work at a bathhouse for gods and spirits. An article from the *Translation Journal* focusing on the differences between the Japanese and Italian versions of *Spirited Away* notes that the film's cultural references can be difficult to translate to other languages. For example, when Chihiro and her parents are driving to their new house, she sees some stones that look like houses; in the original Japanese version, Chihiro's mother

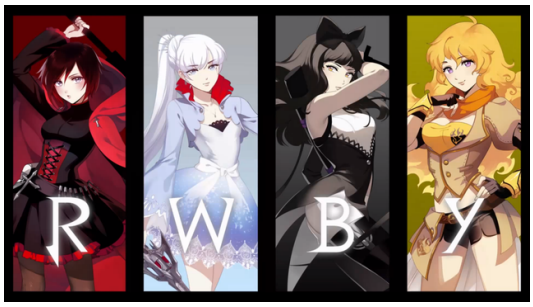
[77] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, 25-26.

affirmatively identifies the stones as *hokora*, the houses of the gods. In the Italian version, on the other hand, the mother answers somewhat hesitantly that some people think the stones might be the houses of gods. The article notes that while Japan has traditionally been polytheistic, Italy (like the United States) has traditionally been monotheistic.[78] Overall, the point about anime's "statelessness" is that it is a world of its own. The way that anime allows for flexibility and creativity in spite of Japan's rigid and conforming society is considered a key element in its "statelessness", and may explain why anime has become so popular outside Japan.[79]

One of the most significant examples of an American cartoon that has been inspired by anime is the show *RWBY*. With visuals heavily inspired by anime (to the point where the show has been called *anime*), *RWBY*, a series about four young women named Ruby, Weiss, Blake, and Yang (hence the title *RWBY)*, who are students at an academy where they learn how to fight monsters. The show was created by animator Monty Oum, and was produced by Rooster Teeth, a digital production studio based in Austin, Texas. While the show does feature anime features such as "adorable girls, killer fight sequences, impossible hair and weapons," the show also makes references to fairy tales and Western stories such as *Harry Potter* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Monty Oum stated that while the characters resembled familiar characters such as Red Riding Hood and Snow White, but that the physical resemblance is as far that familiarity goes, stating that "We will do something original with these characters."[80] In 2014, it was announced that the show would be dubbed in Japanese and distributed in Japan on DVD and Blu-Ray in

[78] Mariko Hanada, "The Cultural Transfer in Anime Translation," *Translation Journal* 13, no. 13 (April 2009), http://translationjournal.net/journal/48anime.htm
[79] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, 25-26.
[80] Rush, "Inside Rooster Teeth's 'RWBY'".

2015. This means that *RWBY* is the first "American anime" to be made available in Japan, where anime originated.[81] It is here that anime has come full circle from animation coming to Japan to it developing its own anime to having anime come to the United States and finally to the United States making its own anime.



Promotional artwork for RWBY*, featuring the main characters*.[82]

When Anime Influences American Popular Culture

Japanese animation has influenced many well-known movies and television shows produced in the United States. According to Frederik Schodt, Osamu Tezuka's translator and friend, a large number of anime fans believe that Tezuka's television show *Kimba the White Lion* had "heavily influenced (if not been outright plagiarized by)" Disney's successful film *The Lion King*.[83] A 1994 article from the Los Angeles Times elaborates on this, noting that some of the *Lion King*'s characters, such as the protagonist Simba (whose name sounds similar to Kimba), the wise baboon who gives advice to Simba, and the villainous Scar were visually inspired by *Kimba the White Lion*'s characters. In addition, there are several scenes in *The Lion King* that were similar to scenes in *Kimba*. For example, the scene in which Simba sees his dead father Mufasa in

[81] Bree Brouwer, "Rooster Teeth's 'RWBY' Will Be First American Anime Exported to Japan," *Tubefilter*, last modified August 18, 2014, http://www.tubefilter.com/2014/08/18/rooster-teeth-rwby-japan/
[82] Rush, "Inside Rooster Teeth's 'RWBY'".
[83] Schodt, *The Astro Boy Essays*, 155.

the clouds looks like the scene in which Kimba sees his dead father in the clouds. However, the article notes that the stories of both *The Lion King* and *Kimba the White Lion* differ significantly, with Kimba actually interacting with human beings and visiting cities whilst no humans or cities are found in *The Lion King*.[84]

(*Picture on previous page: Comparison between* Kimba the White Lion *and* The Lion King)[85]

An anime film that was inspirational to a number of films was Mamoru Oshii's 1995 film *Ghost in the Shell*. Adapted from the manga of the same name by Masamune Shirow, the film is a cyberpunk tale of a female cyborg detective going after a hacker. In the film, the cyborg detective questions whether or not she has a soul or if she is merely a cyborg. The movie made such an impact on the Wachowskis that they were inspired to make their film *The Matrix*. Steven Spielberg and James Cameron are also known to have enjoyed *Ghost in the Shell*, and their respective films *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* and *Avatar* have both been influenced by it. Spielberg's film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*

[84] Robert W. Welkos, "A 'Kimba' Surprise for Disney: Movies: 'The Lion King' is a hit, but reported similarities to the Japanese-created American cartoon of the '60s are raising questions," *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1994, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-07-13/entertainment/ca-15117_1_lion-king.
[85] Bill Bradley, "Was 'The Lion King' Copied From A Japanese Cartoon? Here's The Real Story," *Huffington Post*, last modified January 27, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/27/lion-king-kimba_n_6272316.html

"ponders the philosophical implications of the human-automaton (robot) interface", while Cameron's film *Avatar* features humans who are able to transfer their conscience into the bodies of alien species, similar to the idea of a robot having a "soul".[86] Another director who liked *Ghost in the Shell* is Quentin Tarantino, who actually collaborated with Studio Production I.G., the makers of *Ghost in the Shell*, in order to create anime scenes in his film *Kill Bill*.[87]

Miyazaki has also been listed as an influence by a number of American animators. In an interview with Peter Docter, the director of the Pixar film *Up*, he specifically named the Miyazaki film *Howl's Moving Castle* as an influence. It was also noted that the protagonist of *Up* is an old man, much like how *Howl's Moving Castle*'s protagonist is a young woman who had been turned into an old lady. Docter specifically mentions how there are moments in anime where the focus is on "beautifully observed little moments of truth" such as the rippling of water or the behavior of a child, and Docter wanted to incorporate that into his film.[88]

Most recently, the Disney film *Big Hero 6* has also incorporated a number of influences from Japanese culture, including anime. The film is set in "San Fransokyo", a mixture of San Francisco and Tokyo where the Golden Gate Bridge has been changed to closely resemble *torii*, or traditional Japanese gateways. Again, Hayao Miyazaki was listed as an influence, with his film *My Neighbor Totoro* being listed as a major influence on the film. In particular, the silhouettes of *Big Hero 6*'s main protagonists Hiro (a

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[86] Steve Rose, "Hollywood is haunted by Ghost in the Shell", *The Guardian*, last modified October 19, 2009, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/oct/19/hollywood-ghost-in-the-shell

[87] García, *A Geek in Japan*, 106.

[88] Beth Accomando, "Interview With Up Director Peter Docter," *KPBS.org*, last modified May 29, 2009, http://www.kpbs.org/news/2009/may/29/interview-director-peter-docter/

teenage inventor) and Baymax (Hiro's rather rotund robot companion) share a resemblance to the young girl Satsuki and the gigantic forest spirit Totoro from *My Neighbor Totoro*.[89] In an interview with one of *Big Hero 6*'s directors Chris Williams, he looked to anime as an inspiration. He said, "In anime films… the action scenes are really pushed and dynamic, and on the other hand, they have scenes that are so quiet and still and sweet. So we try to capture that spirit, those two opposing forces." Williams and fellow director Don Hall even travelled to Japan twice to observe the environment, noting for example that people in Tokyo place recyclables in crates.[90] When Ryan Potter, the voice actor for main protagonist Hiro Hamada, auditioned for his role, Don Hall asked him questions such as "How many anime shows have you seen?" and "What action figures did you collect?" Potter later stated that he was surprised that his knowledge of anime and manga such as *Dragon Ball Z* would help him get a voice-acting role in a movie.[91] It is clear that anime has been influencing many well-known films for over ten years, and anime's influence is likely to continue even further.

Concerns And Reservations over Anime's Success and the Cool Japan Project

The fact that anime and manga has been a major success in the United States and around the world has not been lost on Japan. In fact, since 2002, Japan has been promoting its culture to the world after Douglas McGray's 2002 article about the

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[89] Tim Walker, "Big Hero 6: Disney's Japanese superheroes," *Independent*, last modified November 18, 2014, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/big-hero-6-disneys-japanese-superheroes-9866371.html.
[90] Gregory E. Miller, "How anime inspired Disney's 'Big Hero 6'," *New York Post*, last modified November 1, 2014, http://nypost.com/2014/11/01/will-disneys-japanese-anime-big-hero-6-get-lost-in-translation/.
[91] Roland Kelts, "Japan and America Meet in 'Big Hero 6'," *New Yorker*, last modified November 14, 2014, http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/japan-america-meet-big-hero-6.

economic potential of contemporary Japanese culture was translated to Japanese and shown to the Japanese government.[92] The goal of "Cool Japan" was to promote Japan through its cultural exports like anime and manga. However, some observers say that anime and manga fans in North America are not particularly interested in learning more about Japanese culture. In a 2013 article for the *Journal of Asian Pacific Studies*, Antonia Levi noted that current North American fans of anime and manga do not seem to care that anime and manga came from Japan.[93] Many of the characters depicted in anime and manga do not have typical Japanese physical characteristics such as dark hair and brown eyes. In addition, she points out that many of the anime and manga brought to North America are often changed to remove their "Japanese odor". For example, when the popular anime *Sailor Moon* was brought to the United States, the characters, who originally had Japanese names, were given more "American" names (i.e. the protagonist Tsukino Usagi was renamed "Serena"). In addition, two villains who were a gay couple in the original Japanese anime were made into a heterosexual couple. The aforementioned villains Zoicite and Malachite were originally both men, but in the American dubbed version, Zoicite, the more feminine looking of the two, was dubbed with a female voice and was referred to by feminine pronouns (she, her, etc.).[94] Many Japanese commenters agree with Levi, and believe that anime has no distinct "Japaneseness" once exported to the United States.[95]

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[92] Kelts, "Japan Spends Millions in Order to Be Cool".
[93] Antonia Levi, "The Sweet Smell of Japan: Anime, Manga, and Japan in North America", *Journal Of Asian Pacific Communication (John Benjamins Publishing Co.)* 23, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 3.
[94] Levi, "The Sweet Smell of Japan", 7.
[95] Iwabuchi, "Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global", 456.

Other problems involving the 'Cool Japan' project involve how the government should be involved. According to a *Japan Times* article, experts believe the government should act as an intermediary to help "facilitate collaboration in different fields", citing South Korea as an example of how businesses work together to promote cultural products. These experts also said that the Japanese government should negotiate with other countries to make overseas markets more willing to consume Japanese popular culture. Many of Japan's best known artists, such as Takashi Murakami, do not want to be involved with the 'Cool Japan' project; Murakami even went as far as to tell the Japanese government to not invite him to their events. The Japanese government was critical of a manga named *Oishinbo* ("The Gourmet" in Japanese) that showed a journalist getting nosebleeds when visiting Fukushima's damaged nuclear power plant. Indeed, the government's involvement in promoting 'Cool Japan' may not actually be 'cool'.[96] Finally, it is noted that the actual number of Western anime fans is actually relatively low, which means that any sense that the "Japanization" of the world is false.[97] Ironically enough, in spite of "Cool Japan's" focus on global markets, the one place where "Cool Japan" has been successful in has been Japan itself. Following the March 2011 earthquake that struck northeastern Japan, there has been a boom in media products showing the greatness of Japan. For example, television shows such as *Rediscover Japan* and *Sugoi Desu Ne! Shisatsudan* (Isn't That Cool? Observation Group) feature foreigners being interviewed about how "cool" Japan is.[98]

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[96] "Squaring the cool," *The Economist*, last modified June 16, 2014, http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2014/06/japans-soft-power
[97] Iwabuchi, "Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global," 455.
[98] St. Michel, "Japan's Ministry of Cool."

In spite of, or perhaps because of its own success, anime has been criticized by a number of people for a number of reasons. One article from the *Atlantic* is particularly critical of anime. The author of that article, Monica Kim, makes a distinction between anime *films* (such as the works of Hayao Miyazaki) and anime *television series* (such as *Pokémon* and *Sailor Moon*). While anime draws in $2 billion a year, anime directors typically either adapt manga into anime or use the same story lines used in many anime.[99] In a 1995 interview with Shoji Kawamori, the creator of *Macross*, he said the following about the anime market, "In the current animation market, it's getting harder and harder for an original project to be approved. A project has to be based on an already-popular story to stand a chance."[100] While there have been anime that have delved into serious themes, these anime have been mostly limited to Japan. The otaku image that has also been associated with anime has also been listed as a reason why anime has not reached mainstream acceptance.[101] Hayao Miyazaki himself has been critical of the anime industry, saying that the anime industry is full of "otaku", who he says are "humans who can't stand looking at other humans". The anime produced by the current anime industry is perceived by him to be lesser than anime from the past. As was mentioned earlier, before the success of *Attack on Titan*, much of the anime produced was aimed at these otaku, so it is easy to understand why Miyazaki had expressed disappointment with the modern anime industry. However, since anime is starting to rebound with titles like

[99] Kim, "Can *Cowboy Bebop*'s Creator Make More People Take Anime Seriously?".
[100] Takashi Oshiguchi, "Shoji Kawamori", in *Anime Interviews: The First Five Years of* Animerica Anime & Manga Monthly *(1992-1997)*, ed. Trish Ledoux (San Francisco: Cadence Books, 1997), 112.
[101] Kim, "Can *Cowboy Bebop*'s Creator Make More People Take Anime Seriously?".

Attack on Titan, Miyazaki's concerns with the anime industry may become increasingly misplaced.

Miyazaki went on to say that people in the anime industry "don't spend time watching people". Miyazaki explains that since he observes people in real life, he is able to create art. He continues, "Whether you can draw like this or not, being able to think up this design, depends on whether or not you can say to yourself, 'Oh, yeah, girls like this exist in real life.'"[102] It can be argued that escapism, not realism is the main goal of anime. In spite of these criticisms, anime continues to survive and thrive among its devoted fanbases throughout the world.

Conclusion

The globalization of Japanese animation has led to the emergence of its devoted following amongst a significant number of Americans, which has subsequently made an impact on American popular culture. As this paper has shown, anime started off as a Japanese take on Western animation that quickly became popular amongst many Americans. Anime's popularity amongst Americans (as well as other nationalities) was noticed by Japan, and the Japanese government began actively promoting their country through their popular culture like anime and manga. This became known as "Cool Japan" and was inspired by the success of South Korea's popular culture in overseas markets. Despite Japan's attempts at promoting itself through its popular culture, the plan seems to have not worked as planned. It seems that the Japanese government only wants to

[102] Carly Smith, "Hayao Miyazaki: Anime Suffers Because the Industry is Full of "Otaku"", *The Escapist*, last modified January 31, 2014, www.escapistmagazine.com/news/view/131872-Hayao-Miyazaki-Anime-Suffers-Because-the-Industry-is-Full-of-Otaku

promote certain anime and manga, and many prominent Japanese artists such as Takashi Murakami refused to get involved.

It is disputed whether or not American fans of anime and manga care about Japanese culture: some American fans do not seem to care much about Japanese culture in general but will still consider anime to be better than "Western" cartoons. Other fans enjoy Japanese animation and manga so much that they are inspired to learn the language. Works such as *Ghost in the Shell* and animators such as Hayao Miyazaki have inspired many fans of anime to create their own movies and television shows. Many recent Disney films, such as *Up* and *Big Hero 6*, have been particularly influenced by Miyazaki, whilst television shows such as *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and webseries such as *RWBY* have been inspired by anime and have proved popular amongst American audiences. Anime's globalization has been a long, complex process, but this globalization has raised some interesting questions about whether or not anime has to be "Japanese" and how anime in general can be seen in popular culture. The influence of anime and manga may be limited to a single global subculture, but that subculture has gone on to make significant impacts in popular culture in Japan, the United States, and throughout the rest of the world, and it continues to inspire fans from around the world to create their own works. In this case, imported Japanese culture has now become a part of American popular culture.

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