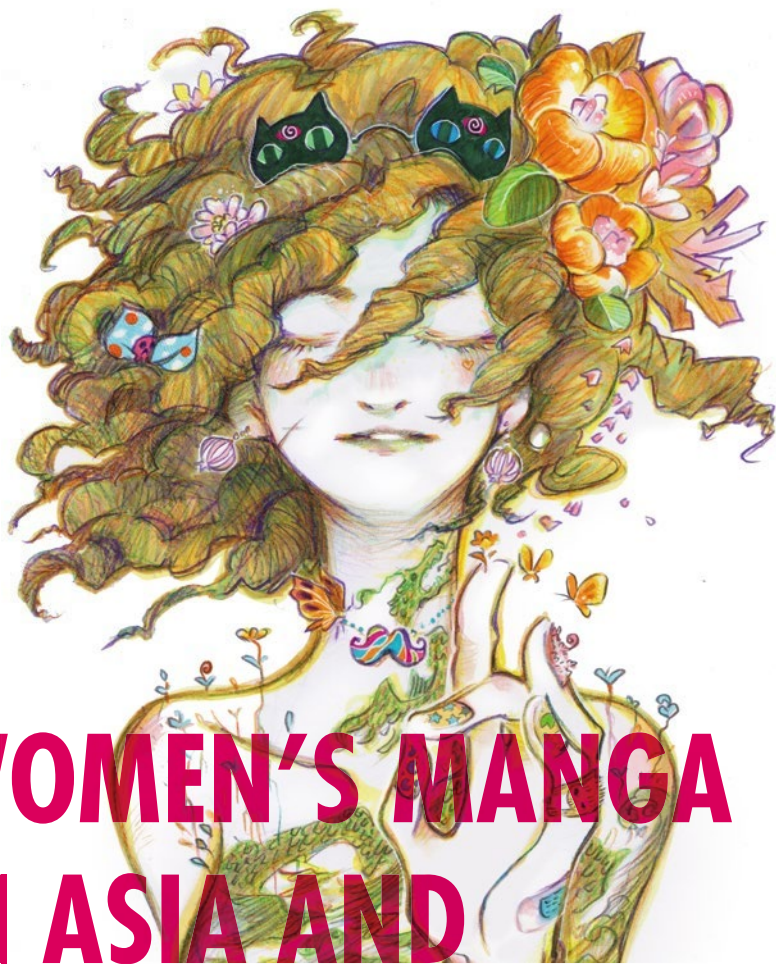


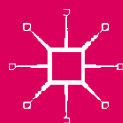
PALGRAVE STUDIES IN COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS



WOMEN'S MANGA IN ASIA AND BEYOND

UNITING DIFFERENT
CULTURES AND IDENTITIES

Edited by Fusami Ogi, Rebecca Suter,
Kazumi Nagaike, John A. Lent



Palgrave Studies in Comics and Graphic Novels

Series Editor
Roger Sabin
University of the Arts London
London, UK

This series concerns Comics Studies—with a capital “c” and a capital “s.” It feels good to write it that way. From emerging as a fringe interest within Literature and Media/Cultural Studies departments, to becoming a minor field, to maturing into the fastest growing field in the Humanities, to becoming a nascent *discipline*, the journey has been a hard but spectacular one. Those capital letters have been earned.

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Series Editor Roger Sabin is Professor of Popular Culture at the University of the Arts London, UK. His books include *Adult Comics: An Introduction* and *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels*, and he is part of the team that put together the Marie Duval Archive. He serves on the boards of the main academic journals in the field and reviews graphic novels for the international media.

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Uniting Different Cultures and Identities

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PREFACE

In most cultures, comics have targeted younger male readers. In the case of Japanese manga, however, there are works for almost every generation and lifestyle and certainly for a female audience. In fact, manga represents one of the largest culture industries worldwide for women authors and readers.

Since the turn of the century, a global manga boom has taken place, and as a result manga are no longer aimed at a Japanese readership, nor do they necessarily have to be a Japanese product. The manga boom also helped ease the challenges confronting female artists, and more girls and women have begun creating and reading comics/manga worldwide. The aim of this volume is to explore the relationship between women and comics/manga from a broad transnational perspective, globally as well as locally.

Women's Manga in Asia and Beyond: Uniting Different Cultures and Identities is a collection based on the activities of the Women's MANGA Research Project in Asia (WMRPA) between 2009 and 2016. The research elucidated on these pages addresses the nature, scope, and significance of the "glocalization" of women's manga and the social and historical aspects of the Asian wave of this form of visual-verbal expression.

When I started my research in the mid-1990s, few studies on women and comics could be found. As a non-United States student in the programs of Comparative Studies and Women's Studies, I was much encouraged by transnational feminist scholarship such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty's essay, "Under Western Eyes," which subverted male-dominant and Eurocentric perspectives. Simultaneously, I met comics artist Trina Robbins, who was developing what she called the *herstory* of the then-male-centered history of American comics. I was also impressed by the

theories of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who foregrounded the multiplicity of Asian experiences and used the term “Asias,” in the plural.

These and other studies and contacts inspired me to build this collection, to unite different cultures and identities by the shared label “woman,” and analyzing manga as a global medium whose importance has newly become an object of academic and media attention in the past two decades. This renewed interest has given rise to a number of valuable publications: *Manga’s Cultural Crossroads* (Jaqueline Berndt and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer 2013), *Global Manga* (Casey Brienza 2015), *International Perspectives on Shojo and Shojo Manga* (Masami Toku 2015), *Boys’ Love Manga and Beyond* (Mark McLelland et al. 2015), and so on.

While some of these important contributions to manga criticism address the connection between women and manga, our focus in this collection is quite different. Our intent is not just to concentrate on a girl or female culture, but to unveil the potential of what the previous male-dominated comics culture has not paid attention to, particularly texts that hybridize and question genre and gender conventions. In this context, a regional approach has been particularly productive. This was necessary because the increase in female participants was most notable in areas where the culture of comics had previously been dominated by Euro-American, masculine-dominated superhero comics. Finally, the WMRPA project has focused on a transnational perspective. It has not been confined to women, Asia, manga, or Japan, but has aimed to transcend these terms and arenas and develop broader interests and concerns and not be limited by any specific identity.

Thus in the chapters in this book, the term “women” does not just mean biological women but includes other non-masculine subjects as well. Furthermore, the activities of these new participants in the world of comics are not limited by manga or comics. Finally, the meaning of “Japan” and “Asia” are questioned by both authors and scholars in the collection. The international conferences organized by the WMRPA featured female artists of the Asia-Pacific region, as well as scholars and artists from different cultures worldwide. The resulting chapters suggested the potentiality of a cross-media arena derived from manga culture, demonstrating that manga has contributed to the development of a new female perspective and a different form of communication for each locality’s culture. Last but not least, since in our view one of the core features of “manga” is the perspective of its creators, this collection includes the voices of authors and creators as well as theoretical analyses and scholarly views.

Though an Asian regional approach is very important for this project, so is the study of non-Asian cultures which have felt manga's impact. We added the word "beyond" to the title in order to destabilize the very concepts we use and reconsider them: manga/comics, Asia, and the women's genres with which we deal. In addition to women and manga in Asia, parts of the book also deal with cosplay, anime, and comics, and the focus extends beyond Japan to other Asian and also non-Asian nations, because manga is a global expression of graphic narratives. We hope this collection will continue raising questions concerning the labels of women, manga/comics, and the specific arena of "Asia." The chapters look at Australia, China, France/Belgium, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States, indicating that in this book, manga is regarded as a global medium, developing, uniting, and involving increasing numbers of participants worldwide.

While unveiling the diversity of Asian identities and showing ways to unite them, the WMRPA project and the resultant book, however, do not attempt to homogenize them, but instead, recognize their unique qualities and differences. By re-examining the sociohistorical nature of women's comics/manga, this project analyzes the formation of manga's unique spread of expressive identities through Asia's different cultures. In summary, the focus of this collection is not just a specific Japanese medium, but a social phenomenon emerging outside of Japan, that is, women authors and readers of manga experiencing globalization and glocalization. The overarching aim of the volume is to offer a broader or broadened perspective that considers how the new relationship of manga and women can or will unite different cultures and identities beyond nationalities.

Women's Manga in Asia and Beyond: Uniting Different Cultures and Identities contains three sections, each dealing with a genre for female readers: BL (boys' love), shōjo manga, and women's manga. Historically, BL and women's manga branched out from Japanese shōjo manga. In this respect, these three sections should be united and read as one book.

Section I, "Rethinking Women, Queering Asia focuses on BL," deals with boys' love manga, one the most popular genres outside Japan. Questioning the label "woman" itself by employing non-female bodies, BL plays a significant role in the exploration of gender and sexuality for women and manga, including, but not limited to, heterosexual femininity.

Section II, "Transnationalization/Glocalization in Women and Shōjo Manga," focuses on the genre's transnational expansion and considers the role of shōjo manga as a source of inspiration for women all over the world

to become authors and readers of comics. Like a Trojan horse into the male-dominant culture of comics, shōjo manga attracted female participants and did so regardless of nationalities. In this section, the focus is on the label of “shōjo manga” and its dynamic performance in the production and consumption of Asian texts and concepts which unite historically and socially different cultures.

Section III, “Asian Women Comics Artists and Their Careers,” provides scholarly analyses of the careers of Asian women comics artists (individually and collectively) and how they emerge in, and influence, the plots of their comics. It also explores how these authors respond to and interact with sociopolitical situations, such as natural and man-made disasters, consumerism, or economic recession, and their possible impact on society.

Throughout the book, wherever appropriate, figures by the female comics artists (two each from Australia, Hong Kong, and Philippines, and one from Singapore) who discuss their lives and careers are inserted. Section I has drawings by Scott WuMing (Philippines); Section II by FSc (Singapore), Ace Vitangcol (Philippines), and Madeleine Rosca (Australia); Section III features Theresa Wai-chun Lee (interviewed by Connie Lam of Hong Kong Arts Centre), Queenie Chan (Australia), and Stella So (Hong Kong).

Especially for female participants in the production and consumption of comics/manga who began their activities after the manga boom, there is often a tendency to regard manga as a new cultural form through which they can create their own identities and ideas. Considering that more local female authors are expressing themselves through comics/manga, there may be greater potential and more possible features for comics/manga to be explored and examined in relation to women who have not thus far been regarded as the main participants in the world of comics.

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We also appreciate co-organizers and participants who gave their time and kind support in our efforts to hold six international conferences worldwide, which resulted in developing a global network of women's manga studies: Kyoto 2009, Singapore 2011, Hanoi 2012, Sydney 2013, Hong Kong 2014, Manila 2015, and Kitakyushu 2016. We especially thank Jaqueline Berndt and Kotaro Nakagaki as our core members of the project who devoted much effort to organize these conferences.

Most of the chapters of *Women's Manga in Asia and Beyond* came from our fourth and fifth conferences held in Sydney and Hong Kong: "Women's Manga in Asia: Globalizing Different Cultures and Identities" in Sydney, hosted by the Department of Japanese Studies at the University of Sydney, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Japan Foundation Sydney and WMRPA, and "Modern Women and Their Comics: Changing Local Identities from the 1960s to the 2000s" at Comix Home Base in Hong Kong, 22–24, March 2014, which was part of the Women's MANGA Research Project and Hong Kong Arts Centre Joint International Symposium.

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Fusami Ogi
Rebecca Suter
Kazumi Nagaike
John A. Lent

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NOTE ON NAMES

As noted, this is a collection based on our international conferences with artists and researchers of different cultures and languages. Uses of name orders and terminology in Asia are varied and we wish to show our respect to each author's preference in dealing with different cultures and identities.

In the preliminary part of this book, names are generally written in the order of forename and then family name. In the later chapters, however, each chapter will explain each author's own way of naming in a note, when it differs from this general practice. Please check the index which shows names alphabetically in the order of family name, forename.

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Theresa Wai-chun Lee has been an important Hong Kong comics creator since the 1960s, known for her signature work, *13 Dots*, first published in 1966. Lee's Miss 13 Dots character is an independent, fashionable, and righteous young woman who attracted a huge following for her endless collection of stylish clothes and modernistic lifestyle. In the 1990s and 2000s, *13 Dots* reappeared in print and in exhibitions in Asia, Europe, and North America, animation films, an outdoor installation art project in Hong Kong, a number of displayed, life-size sculptures, and in a promotion for Paris's inbound tourism. Lee has collaborated with many fashion brands, including Adidas and Just Gold of late.

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SECTION I

Rethinking Women, Queering Asia

Kazumi Nagaike

Through a close examination of manga-oriented texts and cultural practices, this section establishes significant premises on the basis of which the formation of queer desires and sexualities may be explored. The term “women” in the title of this book, *Women’s Manga in Asia*, does not just refer to biological women but includes other non-masculine subjects, as well. Moreover, the activities of these new participants in the world of manga are not limited to reading manga. That is why we begin with a section that attempts to destabilize such key concepts as Women, Manga, Asia, and Japan.

The queer subjects presented in this section may primarily be characterized in terms of a BL (boys’ love) discourse that transcends the cliché that BL merely represents the fantasies of heterosexual female producers and consumers. In this regard, Fran Martin analyzes BL in Taiwan as a means to enhance female-female homoeroticism, while Kazumi Nagaike, in introducing male participants in BL subcultures in Japan and other Asian countries, raises questions similar to Martin’s in relation to the heterosexualization of BL. As well, the salient issues regarding BL political strategies are vividly presented in Katrien Jacobs’s discussion of the relationship between Hong Kong’s BL activities and students’ political resistance.

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Martin demonstrates that BL and GL (girls' love) manga and associated subcultures have become an indigenous cultural resource in Taiwan, arguing that these narratives enable women to engage in a collective project of "utopian imagination" regarding same-sex love, and that this may at times perform a critical function. On the basis of interviews conducted with Taiwanese BL and GL consumers, Martin shows how the representations of same-sex love in BL and GL narratives enabled her respondents to imaginatively affirm their individual authenticity, in opposition both to a conformist educational system and to familial pressures. Martin's respondents also felt themselves empowered by these narratives' depiction of pure love, represented as in conflict with conventional cross-sex marriage, as well as by their portrayal of the plasticity of selfhood, in contrast with the rigidity of adult social roles.

Nagaike explores how and why (self-identified) heterosexual men dream of the homosexual characters represented in the (seemingly) female-dominated popular BL genre. Nagaike delineates the characteristics of *fudanshi* (male BL fans) in Japan and other Asian countries (e.g. mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Korea). This comparative cultural study of *fudanshi* enables us to reconsider diverse ideas of masculinity within the Asian context, as well as to explore the ways in which *fujoshi* (female BL fans) in various Asian countries respond to the desire of *fudanshi* to access (and appropriate) the space within a specifically female-oriented cultural sphere.

Jacobs's discussion of attempts by the Hong Kong BL community to initiate a political movement analyzes the actual political conflict between Hong Kong and mainland China. As part of this movement for universal suffrage and autonomy from mainland China, some women in Hong Kong started a Facebook campaign called "Alexter" that encouraged web users to post political updates alongside soft-erotic BL fantasies about the male student leaders, Alex Chow and Lester Chum. This campaign became highly popular and was also attacked by left-wing activists. Nonetheless, it signified Hong Kong women's desire for a form of political change that would include gender emancipation, sexual diversity, identity politics, and media platforms for exuberant eroticism.

In this section, Monica Chu's analysis of the very particular manga drawing styles employed in female homoerotic narratives demonstrates the ways in which manga queers such visual elements. Chu argues that Kiriko Nananan's manga *Blue* invites an Althusserian reading: as a stylistic device to transcend the visual clichés of hetero-normative reproduction,