Towards a Queer Perspective on Manga History: Sexy Stillness in the Gay Art of Yamakawa Jun'ichi

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Abstract

This paper aims to construct a theoretical and methodological approach for discussing, on a textual level, the intersections of queer and homosexual representations in gay manga produced by gay men and cisgender women. The main argument is that gay manga revolves around alternative takes on the representation of the mobility (animation) of characters, a phenomenon that will be framed through the notion of *sexy stillness*. The analysis of this new notion of sexy stillness is conducted through the comparison of the technical aspects of gay manga artist Yamakawa Jun'ichi's art with canonical girls' manga series. Great care will be given to the specific moments describing the inner motion of characters, as well as the place of these scenes within the visual composition of narratives. Analysis of some elements of the media and social context will also be incorporated in order to explore the meaning of sexy still techniques within manga history and LGBT movements in Japan. In doing so, the goal is to present similarities in terms of the visual expression of queerness as a basis for supporting future works on the different social or communal projects, media production systems, and political impact of gay manga genres.

Keywords

Yamakawa Jun'ichi, Manga, Media History, Queer

"Uho! Ii otoko"

Ooh! A hunk! (Michishita Masaki, main character of "Kusomiso tekunikku" by Yamakawa Jun'ichi, published in Barakomi *issue 2, 1987)*

Many people familiar with Japanese meme cultures (see Saito, 2017) and online platforms like 2Channel and Niconico video (see Li, 2017; Steinberg, 2017) must have said, heard, seen, or written this sentence a lot since the discovery of Yamakawa Jun'ichi's gay manga by mainstream audiences in the early 2000s. At the time I am writing this article, the online Niconicopedia page dedicated to Yamakawa Jun'ichi indicates a daily activity of 600 comments, tags and other "Uho" themed videos posted on Niconico.[1] While some of these videos have been replayed millions of times, feature hundreds of thousands of comments, and have created dozens of internet slang terms frequently used across Japanese social media, little to no academic work has been undertaken about their original content. In reality, gay manga, movies and even gay porn actors have been appropriated by non-LGBT audiences as "funny" memes and transformed into animated images disturbing the flows of compilation videos on Japanese streaming websites for more than a decade now. For these reasons, this paper goes back to the art of Yamakawa Jun'ichi (or Yamajun) to work towards the critical inclusion of gay media within Japanese media histories, starting here with manga.

Here, I also participate in the resurgence within Asian fan studies, including so-called "otaku studies", of the exploration of popular cultures as an intersectional space mediating a wide range of sociopolitical issues surrounding ethnic, gender, racial and sexual minorities. While works from Morimoto (2013), and edited collections like *BL ga hiraku tobira (BL opening doors)* (Welker, 2019) have illustrated how the transnational circulation of popular cultures may open the door to social change, we are still to address the legacy of the national history of gay subcultures in Japan. In recent decades, the historiography of manga expression has often highlighted the impact of *shōjo* manga (girls'

1 The article was developed in early 2020, during a period of decline in the popularity of so-called "Inmu" slang. Inmu refers to multiple titles in the gay porn film series Babylon. Since "Uho" is only one keyword inspired by gay pornography or Yamajun's manga in general, it is rather difficult to evaluate the exact online activity of Inmu slang that spread across multiple platforms, including Twitter. Videos on Niconico also tend to be erased when a certain limit on comments is reached, and although the Inmu train is losing steam, multiple references to Yamajun's work continue to circulate in niche subcultural online communities.

manga), and especially homoerotic genres like *shōnen ai* manga, on male productions like lolicon or "fighting girl" characters (Yonezawa, 2007; Saitō, 2006; Sasakibara, 2004). Following these perspectives, more recent works including those of Galbraith (2020) and Boyd (2016) also mobilized queer theory within their study of male otaku fandoms and Japanese animated media. Although I fully support the directions taken by these transversal and intersectional approaches towards fandoms and visual expressions, I am also alarmed by the lack of acknowledgement of LGBT arts and audiences within Japanese subcultures, and on a larger scale, Japanese media history.

From the 1970s, *shōjo* manga had very influential neighbors in the gay magazines *Barazoku* and *Sabu*, followed by *G-Men* and *Badi* (see Saito, 2018) in the mid-90s. If it is usually acknowledged that the feminine revolution of manga led by the Year 24 group used male homosexual imagery to reinvent gender and sexual representations in provocative pieces that exposed discrimination, the encounters between *shōjo* manga and gay subcultural magazines are too often limited to brief citations in primary texts, including famous female *mangaka* (manga artist) autobiographies (Takemiya, 2016). Scholars (Ishida, 2008) and practitioners (Tagame, 2019) alike have furthermore emphasized the close yet conflictual relationship of girls' manga and gay manga by separating their audiences and styles, opposing effeminate figures with "macho" masculine aesthetics (see also Armour, 2010). If distinguishing between grassroots gay media and *shōjo* manga is crucial to prevent the reduction of various representations of homosexuality into a heterogenous amalgam, it also continues to cultivate a certain isolation of gay manga from the broader historical developments of Japanese visual subcultures. As such, Baudinette's recent investigations (2017) of the interconnectedness of gay manga and *shōjo* manga audiences framed genres like boys' love as part of gay manga history. Despite this productive proposition, the constant distancing of the two genres within more popular discourses currently condemns gay manga's content, expressions and techniques to being framed as "not *shōjo* manga". What we have is a tautological definition of an undetermined object of study with a blurry history; "gay manga is made by gay men for gay men".

The social response towards *shōjo* manga, and therefore queer representations, as "a fantasy" (Mizoguchi, 2000; Hori, 2010), continued to isolate gay manga production even with the emergence in the 1990s of LBGT rights movements, as well as the exotic representation of homosexuality in women's magazines during the gay boom (McLelland, 2006). Both academic and popular discourses moreover participated in the erasure of queer authors through the sustained attention given to *yaoi* (slash manga written by women; see Welker, 2015). One infamous example is the *yaoi* controversy that involved questioning the objectification of male homosexuality by heterosexual women in the feminist *minikomi* CHOISIR (Lunsing, 2006; Satō, 1994, 1996). On a textual level, lesbian activist Mizoguchi Akiko addressed this erasure of "real" queerness into "a fantasy" as an expression of the limitations in the negotiation of gender stereotypes by heterosexual fan movements (2000). This situation is nevertheless changing and Mizoguchi's more recent work aims to find potential intersectional feminist practice in slash romance (2015). Manga's capacity to convey LGBT struggles to mainstream audiences has furthermore resurfaced with the fresh success of new manga series, including Tagame Gengoroh's *Otōto no otto* (2014-2017; see also Baudinette, 2018).

Although many female and queer scholars are currently trying to productively articulate these collaborations and oppositions within theoretical frameworks and methodologies to study Japanese visual subcultures, there is still a risk of limiting these vibrant social debates. The question of queerness in Japanese subcultures is frequently emptied of any actual LGBT subjectivities, artists, and expressions. While valid as a tool for textual analysis, the "queering of texts" has become a wall obstructing the real presence of queer actors in visual subcultures. In response to the apparent need to introduce more queer theory and practice at the intersection between Japanese subcultures, fan studies and manga studies, I therefore propose to compare *shōjo* manga and gay manga in terms of their composition techniques (*komawari*, see Itō, 2005) in order to discuss the visual representation of queerness.

The art of Yamajun (1983-1988) demonstrates an interesting transition in manga composition techniques. It presents similar interrogations as those raised by the evolution of *shōjo* manga expressions from *shōnen ai* in the 1970s to amateur *yaoi* and the fanzine *Aniparo* in the 1980s (see Nishimura, 2002) and industrial boys' love in the 1990s (see Mori, 2010, 2012). While reductive in its scale, this study of the main features of Yamajun's compositing invites us to identify potential technical specificities of gay manga, and position its participation in the long history of hybridization of moving image techniques from across cinema, animation, comics, and other visual media arts. The objective is not to get stuck on the issue of misrepresentation of queer lives in comics, but to contribute to the reconstitution of an inclusive moving image and media history. In doing so, my goal is to give some theoretical and practical flesh to subcultural queer[2] representations by mobilizing the insight of *tōjisha* LGBT artists. This comparison will also help to retrospectively integrate LGBT manga into the academic frameworks and methods of the historiography of manga expressions.

Sexy stillness: Yamajun as an Object of Study, Manga Composition as a Method of Analysis, and the History of Manga Expression as Context

Yamajun is the pen name allegedly given to an anonymous gay manga artist, whose work was published in the gay magazine *Barazoku* and its affiliated manga magazine *Barakomi* from 1983 to 1988. The mystery surrounding Yamajun has been only partly explained by his former publisher, Itō Bungaku. Itō nos-

2 The term *tōjisha* (lit. concerned person) was coined by feminist scholars to describe and validate the grassroots knowledge coming from underprivileged positions, including from a wide range of minorities. As such, *tōjisha* is often in opposition with academic knowledge or modes of knowledge production that collide with power structures.

talgically described numerous times the erratic visits of a young man bringing original manga to his office (that is, his house) in Shimokitazawa (a district in Tokyo; see Itō, 2010. Itō also claimed that even though *Barazoku* mostly relied on anonymous submissions received via the mail, Yamajun was one of the few artists he was able to meet in person and pay for his contributions (Itō, 2010). The artist nevertheless disappeared suddenly after 1988 and never claimed any royalties even after the viral outbreak of his manga on online social networks in the 2000s. Yamajun's works are now published by the NPO Fukkan publishing house, which specializes in out of print books, as one volume: *Uho ii otoko tachi* (*Ooh hunks!*), a title reminiscent of the text on the first page of his most famous piece, *Kusomiso tekunikku* (1988).

If it is difficult, if not impossible, to comment on the author's personal life, in terms of length, genres and themes, Yamajun's oeuvre includes over 40 short pieces of approximately 15 pages covering high school comedies, grotesque thrillers, historical drama and fictional diaries recollecting sexual encounters. This diversity of genres featuring a graphic interest in gay sexuality was nevertheless criticized by his peers. The harsh critiques of his manga by some of *Barazoku*'s editors and readers described Yamajun's distinctive art-style as "too feminized" with *shōjo* manga-esque features in the characters and plots (Itō, 2010). Manga by gay artists have indeed often expressed a certain degree of distancing from the narrative and aesthetic tropes of slash-manga and *shōjo* manga[3] during the exponential growth of the *yaoi* market in the 1980s. *Barazoku*'s manga was also questioned by later generations of gay manga artists who did not accept the discriminatory term of bara or *barakomi* (terms that can be roughly translated into "pansy" or "pansy manga"; see Ishii et al., 2015 and Fabrissou & Edo, 2013)[4]. While it is interesting to note how Yamajun was apparently not "in sync" with more common modes of the reinvention of homosexual masculinities through visual media in the Tokyoite community, the critiques he faced also open a discussion about the various strategies mobilized to represent male homosexuality and queerness in manga.

Yamajun's recurrent use of inner dives (introspective moments of personal reflection) points at a stylistic and technical proximity with diverse genres including (erotic) *gekiga* (realistic manga) and *shōjo* manga. Since similar techniques are also present in other gay comics published in the 1980s like Yamaguchi Masaji's *Futari no dōwa* (1985), we can speculate that gay manga stands in between these influences. That is, at least, before its next institutionalization in *G-men* (1995-2016) and *Badi* (1994-2019) in the mid-90s, two gay magazines mostly known for the more macho aesthetics featured in works by artists like Gengoroh Tagame, Ichikawa Kazuhide and Jiraya. For these reasons, I suggest we revisit Yamajun's art as a sign of a potential moment of intersectional manga history, when different gender and sexual minorities influenced (or rejected each other's influences on) the development of specific visual techniques addressing questions of discrimination, sexuality, gender expectations and societal pressure, here through the representation of the inner spaces of fictional characters. In what follows, I analyze the use of still image and inner monologue techniques in four of Yamajun's pieces to draw connections between his representation of intimate queer times and spaces and the establishment of queer characters and slow-motion techniques in canonical *shōjo* manga (and probably beyond manga as a medium) (Ernest dit Alban, 2020).

However before we dive into the comical yet tragic, campy yet genuine art of Yamajun, I need to summarize a key debate about the relation of gender and sexual representations to the composition of moving images. In the realm of Japanese visual subcultures, including manga and anime, the mobility of the images of characters' bodies is usually considered as the main technical, aesthetic, and narrative aspect of animated media (Lamarre, 2009; Tsugata, 2004). As such, the canonical lineage connected to Tezuka Osamu's twin careers in manga and anime set the grounds for the technical expression of anime and manga in terms of cinematism, or at least, a composition of visual motion inspired by cinema. In the case of manga, this composition is usually called *komawari*, literally "comic striping", or the construction of blank pages into an ensemble of coherent and readable comic strips. As an example, compositing streams of images in manga includes using techniques to express the order and connections between images: in the Tezuka style, each element is treated as a shot filmed by a camera that pages will organize into a film. Characters and their stories are developed by the composition of their corporeal movement inside and between shots. As such, characters are "moving images", that is to say, images that "come alive" through a diverse range formal, technical, media and even material mobility.

Scholars and practitioners have moreover noticed how manga and anime rapidly created their own "symbolic reality" that moved away from the "realistic" gaze usually affiliated with cinematism (Ōtsuka, 2007). While I do not intend to re-enter the slippery slope of "manga is just a fantasy" while discussing gay manga, I will note how manga as a media has been repeatedly used to invent representations of gender and sexuality through the animation of fictional bodies. The period between the 1970s and 1990s in particular embodies another key moment in the stabilization of the gendered genres of boy (*shōnen*) or girl (*shōjo*) amateur and industrial manga in technical terms. Precisely, the divide between "masculine" and "feminine" representations lies in different philosophies about animating bodies on corporeal or inner levels. As such, the animation of fictional bodies in "boy" and "girl" manga expressions tends to rely on different approaches to *komawari* (page compositing) and visual composition (Mori, 2012): within the Tezuka Osamu model usually affiliated with male expressions, characters' bodies are animated in a

3 This distance does not mean that the genres and audiences never interact. In fact, many authors undertake double careers in boys' love manga and gay fanzines. (See Fabrissou & Edo, 2014)

4 The term *bara(zoku)*, or rose tribes, was later criticized as an external stigma created by heterosexual nomenclature. Despite Itō Bungaku's role as an ally, some members of the community where allegedly uneasy with having him as an editor in chief. This dissension might also explain the later distancing of 1990s famous gay artists with the production model, expression and style of *Barazoku*.

"filmic" fashion. Characters come alive through corporeal mobility and speech that manga "as a film" compresses into a series of shots. Bodies exist mostly in a physical realm, and animation (the act of giving life to characters) focuses on keeping the character mobile to develop a story.

However, *shōjo* manga's literary use of poems and illustrations tends to evade this simple approach towards corporeality as physical mobility: we are shown a dynamic stasis revealing the deep thoughts of characters. The composition of movement in *shōjo* manga emerges out of emotions, not physical motions (or at least emotion becomes the motion driving the mobility of characters). Bodies therefore exist at the crossroads of physical and psychological realms and animation focuses on the convergence of these inner and corporeal motions. One technique originates from the "pure animation" of symbolic bodies, the other from a focus on animating sexualities, psychologies, and subjectivities from the inside. In sum, while boys' manga and its heroes focus more on the cinematographic capture of corporeal motions in fights or sports, women's expressions in *shōjo* manga are well known for mixing still images like illustrated poems alongside more cinematic composition (Hata, 2013; Ishida, 2008).

This dichotomy of movement in manga's gender and sexual representations is often suppressed by the overall focus of male academic works on so-called otaku cultures that followed Azuma Hiroki's (2009) database analysis in the early 2000s. As they focus mostly on the symbolic dimension of characters as fixed images (in order to dissect them into more images) and storylines, and not as moving images or a complex ensemble of images, it appears that the way individuals "animate" characters is the same.[5] Similar critiques were formulated by Azuma Sonoko (2015) when she noticed how theories in the field always presuppose that women's (and by extension any person within a minority) practices of image animation and consumption are "probably the same" as the usual object of study: straight male fandoms. In sum, gender and sexuality in manga is not limited to symbolic representations but also extends to animation techniques organizing the relation in between images.

How, then, can we frame representations of male homosexuality and queerness in terms of "a composition of image streams"? The circulation of gay magazines *Sabu* and *Barazoku* in famous book clubs held by *shōjo* manga artists Takemiya Keiko and Hagio Moto in the early 1970s might help us to grasp the stakes of reinventing visual composition in manga. These blurry boarders of homosocial (if not homosexual in this case) communities and their Tokyoite urban territories responded to a specific need of marginalized communities for a subcultural agency over gender and sexual representations. If academic works usually focus on women's "reinvention of themselves" in manga (see Fujimoto, 1992), Kinjō's (2013) groundbreaking examination of the reinvention of homosexual masculinity in the gay magazine *Badi* extended this analysis through his investigation of the vocabularies used to describe male genitalia in gay manga. Saito's (2019) pioneering exploration of romantic narratives in gay manga then adopted a similar approach when looking at shifting definitions of male homosexuality and relationship goals since the 1980s.

Despite these important contributions, one overlooked element of the subcultural representations of queerness and homosexuality common to women's and gay magazines in between the 70s and 90s is the visual techniques mobilized to introduce the representation of subjectivity within animated sexualized bodies. Mori Naoko's work (2010, 2012) demonstrated how *shōjo* manga's legacy of inner dives and still imagery has been appropriated in a wide range of erotic and pornographic manga art: the suppression of the gaps in between frames became a strategy to represent sexualized characters as subjects. This reduction of frames and cinematic composition makes the interiority of characters legible; in most cases *shōjo* and gay manga subvert the narrative focus emerging from the corporeal motion of characters in between shots to unify pages into a psychological space. In other words, their composition of visual motion reveals the inner motion of characters, from their agency over their own sexual drives, to their daily social struggles. Yamajun's manga utilizes similar strategies of sexy still imagery to sexualize yet subjectify his gay characters.

The academic consensus finds the most likely origin of this strategy of subjectification within 1970s *shōnen ai* homosexual romances (Ueno, 1998). Introducing "slow motion" techniques transforms the space around the sexualized bodies of young male characters into inner spaces, if not *queer spaces*, pausing the motion of bodies and the narrative flow of stories to reflect upon the situation. Ishida (2008) named this phenomenon the "overflow of subjectivity": a new composition logic organizing pages and shots into a single moment of personal introspection. While Tezuka-like "montage" focused on dividing pages into four to six cinematic shots, *shōjo* manga's literary poetry organized them as one image including written text directly inscribed (for example, outside of speech bubbles) as part of the visual ensemble. I propose to call this convergence of temporary stasis with the sensual introspection of characters *sexy stillness*, a form of expression noticeably employed in inner monologue techniques, fused comic strips and other interruptions of montage using full- or double-page illustrations.

My first hypothesis is that, in the context of 1970s and 1980s manga, sexy stillness is a *queer motion* both in terms of content and technique: inner dives introduce queer characters and disturb the Tezuka canon's inclination for cinematographic "montage" and gender representations based on the corporeal motion of characters. In other words, given that post-Tezuka

5 I am here repeating Lamarre's criticism of Azuma's lack of filmic analysis (2009). Characters are not just detachable parts of images created by a postmodern technologized condition, but emerge out of a complex media history of moving images. One element added to this critique by Azuma Sonoko (2015) is the lack of reflexivity from male practitioners/academics in the field who tend to create general theories and methodologies presupposing female consumers' habits (for example, Ōtsuka's "world" 1989). I would add that this assumption also re-emerges out of the way we frame techniques or technologies of moving images as a neutral basis used in a pseudo-generic way by "everyone". If intersectionality, and to an extent, a wider schematization of the otaku cultural phenomenon, is indeed important, the evaluation of the participation of minor and alternative modes of moving image production and consumption in the larger spectrum of animated media history in Japan is a key element that should not be overlooked.

manga expressions focused on animating bodies to explore their stories, the dynamic and temporary immobility of sexy stillness techniques opened up a queer time and space to invent new motions and representations criticizing gender and sexual stereotypes. As such, *shōjo* manga proposed a queer alternative, a "see through" technique revealing the hidden "real" subject invisible to the eye, which stops the mere corporeal motion of a gendered body otherwise reduced to its exteriority and "apparent' sex (see also Ueno, 1987). Although many scholars have rightfully tied Tezuka's legacy with *shōjo* manga (Iwashita, 2013), the emergence of sexy still techniques in the 1970s incorporates a new psychological, intimate and sexual dimension of moving images by playing with the unification of panels, pages or double pages into a single intimate space inspired by popular feminine literature (Ōtsuka, 2007).

My second hypothesis is that sexy still techniques are also reminiscent of a complex media history of visual techniques in and out of manga; it includes subcultural productions like erotic *gekiga*, *gurabia* from a variety of porno magazines, and *jojo-e* and *poemu* in women's magazines that featured pure literature, film analysis and photography (see Ishida, 2008; Hata, 2013. The so-called literary invention of *shōjo* manga was immersed in gay cultures, both "high" (in the sense of pure literature and the arts) and "low" (obscure magazines and pornographic materials). If in our current academic literature *shōjo* manga's composition of movement – as a set of visual techniques mostly used in manga allegedly produced by cisgender women for cisgender women – has no apparent relation to LGBT populations, Yamajun's famous art pieces nevertheless demonstrate very similar approaches to sexy still representations of inner dives, sexual drives, subjective space and surviving social discrimination. "Queering manga history" might ask us to have a wider look at the history of these trans-textual (if not transmedia) exchanges that have fostered strategies to represent alternative takes on gender and sexuality.

When asked about Tezuka Osamu's impact on his oeuvre, gay artist and activist Tagame Gengoroh responded that gay manga might have started with Tezuka's MW (1976; see Tagame, 2019). Far from another blanket statement on Tezuka's "godly" presence in the field, Tagame's comment asks a fair question: when does gay manga's history start? Since we do not have any official history yet, one hypothesis could be that, as grassroots expression, gay manga "starts" with the invention of techniques queering representations of the self, not with the mere illustration of homosexuality.

Sexy Still Motion and Inner Dives: Finding a Space for Queer Intimacy in Manga

The main technical aspect of Yamajun's expression of a *queer time and space* is the interruption of image streams by individual strips or full-page illustrations revealing the inner monologues of naked homosexual men. On a graphic level, Yamajun's erotic images usually feature written text in their top corners. This translates, on a narrative level, into a disruption of the sequencing of the action into multiple linear shots: written texts and full-page illustrations explore the inner monologue of homosexual characters to open a dimension that is not just driven by corporeal movements, social stigma, and external appearances. Yamajun's manga often mixes exterior and interior logics of image stream composition; the rhythm of his pieces tends to switch from a corporeal motion (using multiple shots) to a subjective organization of the page's compositing (on a full page). The openings of his works frequently mobilize a rather realistic, graphic and erotic *gekiga* style featuring a complex organization of multiple shots on the same page. Yamajun nevertheless counterbalances these moments of exposition with the progressive introduction of still imagery as an intimate rhythm taking over the narrative: the composition of his image streams invites us to dive beyond the corporeality of pornographic content and graphic sex scenes into the subjective, psychological and intimate space of the protagonists' queer lives.

Yamajun's strategy to reveal homosexual characters as subjects of (mostly carnal) desires moreover heavily resembles the techniques introduced with sexually ambiguous beautiful young boys (*bishōnen*) in *shōjo* manga in the 1970s (Ishida, 2008). Here, I want to build on the pioneering work of Mori (2010) on pornographic manga. Mori previously stated that after the 1990s, erotic and pornographic manga have internalized the inner dive techniques of *shōjo* manga to describe the agency of queer and feminine bodies over their experience of sexual pleasure. In this perspective, Yamajun's oeuvre would represent a moment in grassroots gay manga history contemporaneous with *shōnen ai* (1970s-1980s) and the reshaping of manga composition techniques around sexy still imagery. Following Yamajun's capacity to both sexualize and subjectify his characters, my analysis will focus on the comparison of his works with Takemiya Keiko and Hagio Moto's manga, including "Ki to kaze no uta" ("The poem of wind and trees", Takemiya, 1976-1984) and "Tōma no shinzō" ("The heart of Thomas", Hagio, 1974). In doing so, my goal is to continue Mori's dialogical inquiry of *shōjo* manga and gay manga. In sum, the common trait of Yamajun and *shōnen ai*'s sexy stillness is that their representation of sexuality does not reduce animated fictional bodies to sexual objects; it opens the door to the exploration of characters' agency over their own bodies and lives.

There are nevertheless differences in their aesthetic and technical interest in the representation of an invisible dimension of characters: as an example, despite the inclination of both genres to express social struggles, sexual desires and subjective agency invisible to the eye, Yamajun's art is not as decorated or ornamented as the pages of *shōjo* manga. His characters are also very different from the refined, literary, and bourgeois characters of *shōnen ai*. The following analysis therefore aims toward a first raw delimitation of gay manga's aesthetic, media and technical aspects, going beyond its non-definition as "not *shōjo* manga" to record its contribution in the history of manga expression.

On that note, the narrative goals and themes affiliated with the use of sexy stillness techniques in Yamajun's art are quite specific and tend to diverge from the 1970s *shōjo* manga literary aesthetics of works like "Sanrūmu ni te" ("In the Sunroom", Takemiya, 1970) or "Jūichigatsu no gimunazumu" ("The Gymnasium in November", Hagio, 1971). There is a clear genre division in his works, with historical drama, gore thriller and *shōjo* manga-esque juvenile comedy not using any kind of sexy still composition of image streams. Since all of Yamajun's graph-

ic descriptions of gay sex and homosexual characters do not necessarily mobilize sexy stillness, the question of when this technique is used becomes fundamental to understanding its significance. Sexy still monologues, full-page illustrations and subjective montage appears in sexual diaries, coming out stories and sexual fantasies. Despite the lack of information that we possess to discuss the evolution of Yamajun's art from 1983 to 1988, it is interesting to note that he apparently used sexy still motion montage on and off, depending on the themes of his manga. Thus full-page nudity might not represent an early stage of his art, just as written inner monologue may not indicate an incapacity to produce a "cinematic" composition of image streams.

My current research moreover argues that Yamajun's manga responded to a complex media ecology surrounding subcultural manga and pornographic magazines that featured multiple forms of illustration and moving image techniques, including *gurabia*, *jojo-e*, *poemu* and other illustrated novels. On the one hand, recognizing these minor modes of expression might help us to address the media history of manga composition; how did readers interact with the materiality of magazines? This diverse mix of various art forms conjointly using image and text in subcultural magazines not only challenges established ideas about the hybridization of manga montage techniques within certain printed media artifacts, it also reminds us of the rather crude and eluded issue of manga as a masturbatory media. The configuration of *komawari* techniques might be affected by this convergence of certain image formats and intimate usage. On the other hand, Mori's statement (2012) that slash manga evolved technically from the 1970s as a montage strategy in between the gendered "male" cinematic and "female" literary modes of manga expression could be relevant for historizing manga produced by gay authors. In a way similar to the reconfiguration of gender and sexuality proposed by boys' love in the creation of a middle ground in between mobility and immobility, corporeal motion and subjective motion, Yamajun's position in between *gekiga* and *shōjo* manga presents a certain queer hybridization of usually gendered approaches towards montage that flows on the borders of cinematism and illustration. Yamajun's art of sexy still motion nevertheless works in a rather different way than in other genres in the 1970s and 1980s, as it conjoins a need for visual pornography (a feature absent from *shōjo* manga) with the graphic representation of sexual minorities' struggles in the intimacy of their hidden thoughts (a feature absent from usual *gekiga* scenes).

This mix of influences strives to find the space within manga compositing to narrate the hidden truth of gay lives in Yamajun's coming out stories, sexual diaries and sexual fantasies. When navigating different montage legacies, Yamajun proposes a queer motion that reconsiders the relation between visible corporeality and invisible subjectivity: shots of homosexual lives do not stop on the surface of objectified muscular bodies, they capture characters as whole subjects. The flesh and minds of his typical, average male characters let readers know that there are people behind the images. Combined with the rather nonsensical and camp humor of the author, this intimate compositing of the visual field of the manga page could be one of the reasons why mainstream audiences got attached to Yamajun's openly homosexual characters in the early 2000s: as these men share their inner space with readers through inner monologues, full-page illustrations and limited montage, a compelling, intimate connection emerges out of their sexy still images.

Coming Out of Frames: Straight Faces, Gay Inner Monologue

The iconic first pages of "Sanrūmu ni te" ("In the Sunroom", Takemiya, 1970), constitute a typical example of inner monologue in *shōjo* manga: the story begins with an unknown narrator's recollection of memories inscribed on a mysterious landscape. As such, inner monologue becomes a dramatic tool for slowing the flow of cinematic montage and narrative for readers to understand the main characters' motives and personal backstories. If inner monologue existed in previous *shōjo* manga, it was mostly used as a narrative technique within speech bubbles to introduce characters and avoid more visual descriptions (and therefore sequencing the action into more shots) (Ishida, 2008). During the so-called *shōjo* manga revolution, the representation of inner monologue became more common in queer storylines as well as in stories about social or ethnic pariahs facing discrimination and oppression, as in "Ki to kaze no uta" ("The Poem of Wind and Trees", Takemiya, 1978) or "Tōma no shinzō" ("The Heart of Thomas", Hagio, 1974).

Technically speaking, the most distinguishable aspect of the technique of inner monologue is the way it transforms multiple images into a double-page or one-page illustration, inviting readers into a subjective composition of montage. If reducing the pace of image streams represents its most distinguishable technical aspect, one rarely considered aspect of inner monologue is that it also appears in individual strips mobilized by more cinematic compositions of the page. For these reasons, and as mentioned by Ōtsuka (2007), inner monologue embodies a hybrid mode of personal enunciation inspired by a miracle junction of literature and cinema within manga: as speech becomes freed from speech bubbles, it is directly written on the image and becomes one with it. This unification of written speech with visual elements transforms, on the expression level, into a literal nudity of the body and the soul: inner monologue exposes characters' subjective unity by allowing image flows to oscillate between corporeal and inner motions.

This sexy still yet dynamic dimension of the (im)mobility of manga characters is employed by Yamajun to explore the personal stories of closeted gay men who feel a disjunction between their social and inner selves. His manga solves this dichotomy by erasing the gap separating gay characters' bodies from their minds: Yamajun's use of inner monologue reveals the conjoined psychological and physical process of breaking free from heteronormative norms during a first homosexual sexual experience. As such, Yamajun's take on the "realism" affiliated with inner monologue is drastically different from canonical *shōjo* manga: for example, it is not a highly estheticized recollection of the personal thoughts emerging from a refined and literary character, inspired by French realist novels or German *bildungsroman*, and living in the fictional homosocial sanctuary of a school for

rich boys in a faraway European country.[6] Yamajun's character is usually a middle-class, when not working-class, homosexual man hiding his true self from society. His vocabulary is crude, sometimes vulgar, when not reminiscent of the lexicon of gay porn magazines. In many cases, his inner monologue narrates a moment of unspoken coming out, when he realizes how crushed he is by societal pressure and strives to become true to himself by explicitly embracing his sexuality. The sexy still techniques of inner monologue describing the transformation of the main characters of "Umi kara kita otoko" (lit. "The Man Who Came From the Sea", 1984) and "Sōe wo nugu hi" (lit. "The Day I Took Off My Robe", 1988) particularly embody these dynamics: Yamajun's montage of sexual encounters creates a time and space where sexual pleasure helps bodies to free minds from social policing.

At first glance, "Umi kara kita otoko" (lit. "The Man Who Came From the Sea", 1984) may look like a typical *gekiga* with a cinematic composition of the page: even the overall presence of inner monologue is mobilized as a voice-over explaining the filmic "montage" of the pages from within narration bubbles. The story follows a man who came to drown himself on a beach after reading about a similar recent suicide in the newspapers. His inner monologue explains his motivations through an exhaustive flashback: his family left their home because he was not "fulfilling his role" as a man by sleeping with his wife. As he enters the sea, he meets a younger surfer, also considering suicide, who abruptly invites him to have sex, right now, on the beach. Compositing techniques re-enact the extremely detailed preparation for the sexual act (with up to eight shots in one page) echoed by the protagonist's vivid inner monologue description of the scene. The narrative turning point of this story is however expressed through one full-page illustration recollecting various moments of the two men's intimacy. Three shots, one of them together, one of anal penetration and one of the young's man face, are brought together into a single intimate time and space where the protagonist's thoughts finally come to the realization of his homosexuality. This sexy still pause in the almost filmic montage of the sex scene acts on both formal and content levels as a coming out: his mind analyses what his body is experiencing while having sex with a man for the first time. The film-like compositing then resumes to end the sex scene as the protagonist is now assertive about his owns desires; he is no longer the person other people ask him to be, but his true self, freed from heteronormative alienation. The story has a happy ending as both men decide not to drown themselves and to start a new chapter in their life together.

"Sōe wo nugu hi" (lit. "The Day I Took Off My Robe", 1988) presents a similar narrative and technical structure with a long inner monologue detailing a first homosexual sexual experience within a coming out story. A monk with no wife nor apparent sexual drive (yet?) is on his way back from work. As he passes through a forest, he hears moans coming from behind a tree. He discovers two men having sex and flees as his heated body is showing an unexpected reaction. Unlike "Umi kara kita otoko", the overall composition is rather simple with only a few shots per page. Inner monologue is furthermore directly inscribed within images, reinforcing the control of the monk's intimate processes on storytelling. Followed by the two men and undressed, the monk then realizes that he feels a certain carnal attraction towards them. The sequencing of the sex scene is regularly hijacked by two full-page illustrations and one double-page illustration describing their sexual encounter from the monk's point of view. These sexy still shots gradually express his own realization of his alienated inner drives: as he is progressively stripped of his clothes and his duty towards society as a monk, his body and mind evolve at the same time towards the conclusion that he is imprisoned by certain norms and expectations. Although the discourse of his inner monologue focuses on the corporeal pleasure of sex, it is important to note that Yamajun's manga rarely objectifies sexualized bodies. Graphic sexual representations take the time to follow the psychological state of protagonists: sexy stillness slows the rapid carnal movements of sexual acts to incorporate the subjective transformation that occurs through sexual liberation from heteronormative values. The final full-page shot concludes the story with an illustration of the former monk dressed in a t-shirt and jeans, urinating in the forest while waiting for his two new lovers. His inner monologue written next to him now rejects Buddhism and social pressure for "his own nature".

In sum, Yamajun's first use of stillness balances the vivid description of gay sex with the expression of protagonists' struggles against heteronormative expectations. The slower tempo provided by the interruption of film-like montage by inner monologue brings an important queer time and space describing homosexual characters in their own intimate terms as fully developed subjects, mind and body now united through the discovery of homosexual sex. If full-page illustrations may be reminiscent of pornographic *gurabia* in gay magazines, Yamajun's sexy shots are not just sexual images: as landmarks for the representation of the conjoined physical and psychological process of coming out, they also enact a similar role as the illustrations in *shōjo* manga's literary approach to the composition of image streams in order to subjectify characters. As such, Yamajun's hybrid art potentially stands at the crossroads of a diverse range of aesthetic, media, and technical elements gathered from subcultural manga magazines.

Diving Into Yourself: Manga as a Masturbatory Media, Sex as an Autobiography

It might not sound ground-breaking, but rather tautological, to identify erotic representations as potential supports for masturbation. Framing manga as pornography, that is to say as masturbatory media, is nevertheless a rare claim made in the study of manga expression. The pioneering works of Nagayama (2014), Mori (2010) and Jones (2002) nevertheless tackled this question when looking at how pornography in women's manga used montage techniques to represent sexually liberated characters. Even when raped or succumbing to sexual pleasure, female characters in ladies' comics, and passive characters in hardcore slash romance, do not lose their agency over their bodies or selves because sexy still techniques continue to conjointly express their inner spaces. This strategy apparently evolved from the inner monologue illustrations of *shōnen ai* manga in the 1970s towards an internalized monologue in the 1980s and the representation of couples' mutual sexual pleasure in the 1990s

(Mori, 2010). Inner monologue and sexy still imagery are therefore often employed in the reconciliation of objectified sexualized bodies with their invisible agency over carnal pleasure. Canonical examples in *shōjo* manga include the case of Gilbert in "Ki to kaze no uta" ("The Poem of Wind and Trees", Takemiya, 1976-1984), a character struggling to reconcile the contradictions of his sexuality and desire for intimacy. Gilbert is often featured in sexy still "bed scenes" and inner dives exploring the complex traumas he suffers.

As mentioned with the two previous examples from Yamajun's oeuvre, gay manga also demonstrates a similar "safety net" preventing gay sexuality from being reduced to a mindless carnal impulses that decrease the agency of characters over their own sexuality and life choices. Indeed, if the creation of pornographic content is one goal of gay manga, another motivation is to support precarious populations in the imagination and representation of their own sexual experiences. Treating gay manga as pornography opens the door to interrogations about the personal construction of gay sexual pleasure through the[7] consumption of the moving images of subcultural magazines. Yamajun's "Ore no onanii time" (lit. "My Masturbation Time", 1985) and "Boku no seikatsuron" (lit. "My Sexual Life", 1988) engage with these questions during the AIDS crisis; as sexual intercourse becomes more dangerous, his manga tend to focus on masturbation as the last (self-)pleasuring act of preservation left for homosexual sexuality. Characters in sexual diaries imagine or remember having sex with other men. The overall composition oscillates between summary cinematic shots and sexy stillness, with a heavy preponderance of full-page illustrations narrated by inner monologues. This variation sustains the creation of an intimate safe space for these characters to explore their own pleasure. Sexual acts themselves are less about the objectification of the protagonists and more about the control they have over their own sexual practices. This *mise-en-abîme* of masturbation in fiction and the likely usage of this media by readers moreover reconfigures the construction of sexy still composition in gay manga: subcultural magazines are both the representation of queer intimate times and spaces, and the media allowing the creation of such moments in real life.

"Ore no onanii time" (lit. "My Masturbation Time", 1985) opens with the filmic presentation of a high schooler coming back to an empty home, and an opportunity to masturbate without being caught by his parents. The opening is expressed through cinematic composition narrated by the protagonist's inner monologue, where he presents himself as "a young homosexual (*chibi bara*), a bit sad because he has no lover". After this introduction, reminiscent of the meeting board section of gay magazines, the next page stops on a full-page illustration of the naked protagonist gazing at himself in the mirror. As he discusses his "narcissistic fetish," a limited montage of three shots is mobilized to represent his progressive erection, followed by a dream-like sex scene with an imaginary "masturbation pet" (a fantasy representation of himself when he is older). The compositing of pages repeats a few graphic focus shots progressively zooming in on the protagonist's anus and a dildo molded on his own penis a few years ago. Aside from the proclaimed narcissistic fetish, this masturbation scene mostly acts as a sexual autobiography, retracing the story of the protagonist's discovery of self-pleasuring acts: both narrative and image flows follow the conjoined expression of his memories in inner dialogue with the graphic, physical details of his routine. Inner monologue nevertheless progressively stops as he focuses on his own pleasure, as shown in a full-page illustration and a two-page illustration revealing the climax. The story ends on a twist as inner monologue techniques reveal the protagonist's motivation to have sex with a real man one day and end this fictional relationship with himself.

This gradual recovery of subjectivity through the reintroduction of inner monologue after the orgasm prevents the objectification of the main character, while also questioning the media specificity of Yamajun's images of male naked bodies. As a piece published in a pornographic gay magazine, the fact that "Ore no onanii time" (lit. "My Masturbation Time", 1985) focuses on large and graphic illustrations of men's physiology seems rather to be expected; naked *gurabia* and other illustrated novels often appeared in *Barazoku* (Itō, 2010). But this choice of a large image might also come from the *mise-en-abîme* of certain media usage: one hypothesis is that as a masturbatory support, gay manga probably needs to be held while performing. *Komawari*, montage, must therefore give audiences erotic moments to gaze into. This possibility also challenges the narcissistic stereotype presented through the main character: even though gay masturbation temporarily separates subjects from heteronormative settings (here mentioned as the school and missing family), it is also a form of isolation. As a young gay man with no lover, the protagonist only has his own reflection in the mirror (and a mold of his own penis) as media to represent sexual objects while masturbating. Yamajun's manga might also point to how readers are in a similar position, using the image of a character they identify with to realize their sexual needs. More than self-idolatry, Yamajun's sexual diaries tend to reveal the lived isolation and mediated sexuality of gay men in the 1980s through subcultural pornographic media production.

This commentary becomes more prominent in "Boku no seikatsuron" (lit. "My Sexual Life", 1988), a manga directly addressing the potential confinement of gay sexuality during the AIDS crisis. Although I have no intention to mix Yamajun's fiction with the reality of the disease in Japan, the representation of masturbation as an act of self-preservation appears in a few of his final manga in 1987 and 1988. Similar to other "narcissistic" characters choosing a life of mediated sexuality duplicating their own image for them to masturbate to, Michishita Takashi, the protagonist of "Boku no seikatsuron" (1988), is a young man scared by the AIDS crisis and left to remember his sulfurous past. The piece introduces Takashi wearing only underwear on his bed. He also presents himself in a style reminiscent of the advertisements placed at the end of gay magazines. Overall, the composition of the piece is limited to a few essential shots gazing upon his body and progressively retracing the stories of his former exciting sexual adventures. Within this intimate

7 I do not intend to claim that gay manga is always pornographic, neither that it necessarily revolves around sexy stillness. The examples that I examine here demonstrate however the important impact of pornography and still imagery.

montage, guided by Takashi's inner monologue, flashbacks are told through full-page or double-page illustrations. A preliminary twist nevertheless accentuates Takashi's isolation: the first shots of his erect penis are contrasted with his inner monologue regretting the confined loneliness keeping him safe from the disease. His personal recollection includes a foursome with students, casual sex on the beach with a fisherman, fisting an American in a sauna, and getting humiliated by a teacher. Each scene is introduced by a full-page illustration of his former lovers followed by a limited montage of their encounter. I want to highlight two consequences of Yamajun's choice to use montage in "Boku no seikatsuron" (1988): the emergence of autobiographical queer times and spaces retrieving subjective agency in sexual acts, and, the representation of the mediatization of gay sociality during the AIDS crisis.

On the one hand, most episodes of Takashi's former glory can be categorized as extreme from a heteronormative point of view; his activities involve multiple male partners, hardcore practices and scatology. The biographical and subjective montage of sexy still images in Yamajun's manga nevertheless subjectifies a graphic sexual representation that could be attacked as "deviant". The climax of Takashi's sustained love relationship with the character "Professor K" summarizes Yamajun's strategy to insert a psychological, intimate and agentive dynamic into crude and masochistic practices. Their abusive story ends with an introspective inner dive scene characterized by a full-page illustration: past Takashi is at the top of the page, oozing multiple fluids, and present Takashi at the bottom, finding in this past moment an explanation for his present acquired taste. If this page acts on a narrative level as a transition from Takashi's reverie to his current situation, it also intervenes on a technical level to unify the various queer times and spaces that have supported Takashi's personal growth over the years. By queer times and spaces, I am here referring to both moments of homosexual intimacy hidden from society and an "art of queer" failure (see Halberstam, 2011) enacted by the characters choosing to abandon their normative roles as teachers, students, or workers and concentrate on their sexual adventures. Takashi even describes himself as "a bad teacher" when leaving his students to meet a sexy fisherman, acknowledging his failure to perform as a teacher as a key queer recurrence in his personal construction.

On the other hand, "Boku no seikatsuron" (1988) ends on a historically contingent issue faced by Takashi's intimate journey: he can no longer be his true self. The AIDS crisis, and Takashi's distancing from gay social networks organized around sexual encounters, leaves him alone with a *Barazoku* magazine. "I feel like each of these encounters made me grow. But I am too scared by AIDS. It is a deadly weapon that steals interpersonal relationships. From now on, paranoid men like me will only have their own hands to satisfy their needs" (p. 281). The confrontation between the *mise-en-abîme* of mediated sex (featuring the actual magazine the manga was published in) with real sex (Takashi's past encounters) potentially highlights the position of gay manga as media working as a node inside gay communities. With the various sexy still portraits of Takashi's lovers, Yamajun fills the sexualized bodies of stereotypical male characters with a human connection, a "love" built through social networks relying on homosexual sex. Media like *Barazoku* therefore emerge as an alternative for homosexual sexual practices when the human network crumbles under the impact of disease. Although beyond the scope of this article, further analysis of the relation of gay media to AIDS in Japan would likely demonstrate that the expression and media form of gay manga aimed to build both real and fictional queer times and spaces from which individual as well as group subjectivities and identities could emerge.

Despite sharing common technical traits of inner monologue montage and sexy still imagery, Yamajun's strategy to build "my place" through manga expression (Fujimoto, 1998) is ultimately slightly different from the canonical *shōjo* manga expression taught in the classroom sections of the famous *shōnen ai* magazine *June* (Ishida, 2008). While inner monologues support *shōjo* manga protagonists like Yuri from "Tōma no shinzō" ("The Heart of Thomas", Hagio, 1974) or Gilbert from "Ki to kaze no uta" ("The Poem of Wind and Trees", Takemiya, 1978) in their struggles against the way others sexualize them, Yamajun's characters have already resolved this issue; inner monologue is a part of their sexual life and personal construction as queer subjectivities. Sexy stillness techniques, as well as their narrative use, might therefore vary depending on the agenda of the different grassroots communities using them to discuss their own positions in society. Yamajun's emphasis on masturbation or sex as an autobiographical practice moreover opens a *mise-en-abîme* of subcultural magazines as a key media production in the creation of communities, networks and territories affiliated with gay sex. In light of Ōshima's work, it is well known that gay magazines were also used after the 1990s as grounds for grassroots activism (2019). Although Yamajun's depreciated art might not have had the same activist role within *Barazoku*, we can still consider the impact of his subjectification of male homosexual intimacy and sexuality on the audiences of the magazine. The clear distancing of artists and readers from Yamajun's art after the 1990s might suggest a need for stronger practices of self-representation.

Conclusion: Sexy Stillness and Japanese Media History

This paper explored the close relation of gay manga homosexual romances produced either by female or queer authors, to certain "still" techniques of image flow composition. As such, this discussion contributed, across various fields, to the elaboration of the notion of *sexy stillness*, that is to say, a set of techniques negotiating through dynamic stasis the representation of queer subjectivities. My goal was to break from the systematized academic focus on *shōnen ai, yaoi* and boys' love texts. If we want to consolidate a scholarly account of the subcultural intersections of *shōjo* manga and *gei komi* (gay manga), we need to go back to the relatively unexplored history of gay manga artists, publishers and audiences. In this perspective, Yamajun's gay manga brings light to both the similarities and specificities of female and gay artists working in the genre of homosexual romances in the 1970s and 1980s. His technical proximity to *shōjo* manga pushes us to include the legacy of queer authors within the theoretical and methodological canons of manga history and historiography.

As a conclusion I would like to mobilize the key elements of

my analysis of Yamajun's work to quickly develop two potential perspectives for future research on gay manga as well as its inclusion in the fields of film and media studies, fan studies and media mix studies. One possibility is to continue to elaborate on the question of image flows inside of media: what counts as a "queer" expression in the realm of Japanese animated media? How has it evolved in more recent popular gay art? If integrated into the field of film and media studies, gay manga may participate in the rejuvenation of an old debate about characters, bodies, and the representation of life through animation. This falls inside of what Ōtsuka called the liberation of *shōjo* manga from the "symbolic curse" of post-war manga that struggled to address the depiction of subjectivity, notably because of its reliance on cartoonish characters and corporeal mobility (2007). Gay manga testifies to the existence of an alternative take on the equation of life = external motion (that is, life = the alternation of exterior and inner motions) and could therefore be part of a more inclusive analysis of popular animated media cultures including manga, anime and video games. In a similar stance, the literary field of boys' love studies in Japan usually discusses the gender and sexual performativity of manga through the question of the representation of subjectivity or inner spaces. Adding gay manga to the mix of already existing scholarship extends analyses by scholars like Mori Naoko on the changes in rhythms within image flows typical to the representation of homosexuality in Japanese animated media.

As such, Yamajun's art presents a strange dichotomy of image flows, one that treats a rapid, almost cinematographic flow as a heteronormative storytelling tool from which it is necessary break away. Alternating between corporeal and subjective rhythms of compositing ensures that characters are building their own narratives, not the one imposed on them. His pieces that avoid sexy still imagery usually illustrate the complete alienation of characters by these societal stereotypes. Yamajun's strategy is however not complete "pause" of the flow, but a moment when exterior actions and interiority become one in a personal experience. Gay manga aims at a personalized tempo, one that gives a time and space for queerness to exist. This style evolved in recent years into what online audiences called *bara*, a pornographic genre that is often reduced to its interest in muscular, hairy, macho corporeality. As an avid reader of *bara*, circle member, and author of an amateur book on the subject, I think that we might have overlooked the technical aspects the genre. If Yamajun and *bara* may look at first like total opposites, the focus on bodies inside of current gay fanzines and manga might testify to an evolution of sexy stillness. Bodies in *bara* rarely move. Or at least, they are in an energetic inertia overcompensated by multiple dynamic shots. Pages usually compress time and space into an intimate experience of sexy and still bodies. Future research may have a close look at how the representation of queer bodies and their lives have evolved, how they respond to certain sociocultural or historical contexts, and what relation they maintain with their media forms (is it a magazine? A webcomic? How is it read? Shared?). The global networks of so-called *bara* manga could also echo current works on Asian boys' love cultures and transnational fandoms, and future analysis might ask, how did the genre transform through transcultural exchanges?

A second possibility for future research is to investigate, in the field of fan studies, the history of otaku debates and their framing of sexual expressions from a queer point of view. How is queer animation used by different communities to discuss social pressure? How integrated are minorities within subcultures and their fandoms? Readers accustomed to otaku studies and North American anime studies will notice that my analysis of gay manga in this conclusion uses a vocabulary usually affiliated with "general" approaches toward the flexibility of otaku expressions and their gender/sexual representations (Lamarre, 2009; Galbraith, 2020). In many cases, previous literature has framed the personalization of image flows describing otaku, *fujoshi* and other subcultures as less important than the creation of a larger theoretical framework capable of supporting the analysis of *any kind* of personal arrangement. As a (maybe unfair) provocation, I suggest that, actually, personal compositing of image flows embodies important marks of the historical development of otaku subcultures. The so-called "general practices" related to moving images in Japanese subcultures might have in fact internalized, if not appropriated, queer perspectives since the 1970s.

The study of gay manga takes us back to an erased reality in the otaku-ologyfield: the dominance of sexy still techniques that emerged from the encounter of female and queer practices within subcultures. It is a known fact that otaku cultures emerged out of the meeting of male and female fans of science fiction and *shōjo* manga at fanzine conventions. If we do some supplementary media archeology of the media expressions of *shōjo* manga so central to the birth of institutions like Comic Market, the relation of *shōjo* manga to gay magazines becomes very clear. Although these "neighbors" might have sought different goals, and experienced different levels of discrimination and privilege, their discussions should be integrated into the story of the birth of male otaku eroticism and pornography.

Now, I have no intention to reclaim the whole history of otaku cultures as a "queer thing", but the study of their media expressions might shed fresh light on the inclusive past that has led to the current state of Japanese subcultures. The common trope that an interiority is hidden behind the image of moving characters forever changed after the introduction of female and queer composition techniques in the 1970s and 1980s. There have been alternatives to the beautiful young girls and cyborgs that we tend to systematically focus on as *the* most representative element of Japanese subcultures. I think that it is still too easy to erase the actual impact of the legacies of minorities in otaku cultures. For these reasons, we face an urgent need to revisit the foundational texts that have set the academic basis for the analysis of the emergence of otaku. This includes Lamarre's central contribution (2009) explaining otaku cultures from the merging of personal visual expressions with technologies mechanically animating images, this time with an emphasis on the intersectional context supporting the transformation of otaku expression techniques.

Eventually, this analysis may also be applied to media mix studies (Steinberg, 2012) and their focus on moving images as the center of the Japanese transmedia. As images animated across media, gay manga characters express gender and sexuality through their motion while supporting the constitution of homosocial communities emerging around gendered and sexual

expressions (Azuma, 2015). As moving images, gay manga characters may participate in the reimagination of life through the visual composition of motion (Levitt, 2018). As moving images, gay manga characters are also spread across multiple media in concrete urban spaces in everyday life (Steinberg & Ernest dit Alban, 2018). If there is something "queer" in manga, it might not be only the characters and their stories per se, but also the overlap of 1) techniques of animation negotiating non-normative representations of gender and sexuality in their composition of visual motion, 2) modes of manga production participating in LGBT lives and 3) urban media ecologies emerging from the circulation of animated images. Future research may therefore examine the history of minorities through participative cultures and media mix models, while critically investigating the integration of queer perspectives on moving images into mainstream modes of cultural production.

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