漫畫圖像再創與性別認同：
以三位漫畫同人誌女性創作者為研究個案

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Manga Fan Art and Gender Identity:
Three Female Manga Doujinshi Artists as the Subjects

摘要

　　青少女漫畫迷與漫畫同人誌創作者在漫畫次文化的角色往往被忽略或甚至被扭曲，在青少年次文化研究場域與再現中經常缺席，頗有二度邊陲化的傾向。然而，青少女不僅是漫畫同人誌次文化的主要參與者，而且是文本生產者和敘事者，其喜好並衍生創製的女性化漫畫風格與類目已形成此文化優勢，因此，本研究即針對青少女漫畫迷與同人誌創作者的再創與書寫進行探索，以理解這些青少女漫畫同人誌創作者的性別概念與認同。本研究主要從以下兩個層面進行：（一）青少女漫畫迷與同人誌創作者如何觀看、挪用、改變和再現商業漫畫文本中的女性影像；（二）青少女漫畫同人誌創作者如何使用漫畫藝術作為一種抗拒、改變或認同主流文化所建構的性別形象。研究結果發現青少女漫畫同人誌次文化的主體身分地位是相當弔詭的，她既複製其文化母體及權力結構關係，却又違抗顛覆社會禁忌，挑戰優勢意識形態。藉此討論與發現，本研究最終的目的則希望刺激藝術教育界重新看待青少女漫畫創作與書寫的特性與價值，以及重構更具女性關懷的藝術課程。

關鍵詞：挪用、漫畫同人誌、漫畫同人界、漫畫次文化、漫畫同人誌次文化、性別概念、性別認同、性別角色、性別意識形態、性別刻板形象

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Abstract

Little attention is paid to the roles of young female manga fans and amateur artists. The gender issues and problems of marginalization remain invisible and are neglected by academic research in Taiwan. This study, thus, takes an initiative step to explore young female manga fan artists' conceptions of gender and gender identity from two aspects: (1) how young woman amateur manga artists perceive, appropriate, change and represent female images through manga media; (2) how young female fan artists use their amateur manga art as a site of resistance, change, or conformity toward the gendered roles constructed by Taiwan's dominant culture. Ultimately, this study will provide insights for art educators who strive to bridge the gap between "mainstream" school culture and adolescent subculture.

Key words: Appropriation, Comic/manga Doujinshi , Comic/manga Doujinworld, Comic/Manga Culture, Doujinshi Sub-culture, Conception of Gender Roles, Gender Identification, Gender Roles, Gender-Role Ideology Sexual Stereotypes

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Introduction

Youth manga (Japanese comics) fandom is one of the biggest subculture groups in Taiwan, which is subjected to its own social patterns, artistic production, aesthetic values, and systems of circuiting fan art. So is youth manga fandom distinctive from the commercial manga industry. Commercial manga is surely a crucial component of forming this subculture for it is what fans consume so as to produce their own amateur manga or doujinshi[2] . In other words, the media of both commercial manga and doujinshis are the major enervators to activate and conglomerate the whole mass of youth manga fandom. This is a community that its participants have strong interests in manga, animation, publishing, and/or creative writing and through which participants can socialize and interact with like-minded individuals. In this community, manga fans and amateur artists are creative on their own terms. They tend to appropriate, adapt, recreate, and challenge original texts in every possible way in order to give manga characters new incarnations, or completely different lives. That is why we see many examples of fan art or manga doujinshi belonging to the genre of parody manga— a kind of fan manga in which participants re-write or revise published commercial manga stories and characters.

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[2]Doujinshi is a Japanese term used to refer to coterie or self-published fanzines distributed within specific groups or communities. Although doujinshi becomes well-known in manga fan culture, it is also used to refer to other media such as self-published novels, stories and sci-fiction. Thus, in this study manga doujinshi will be used to emphasize those manga pamphlets or magazines that manga fans or amateur artists publish. Along with the growth of the commercial manga industry, the number of doujinshi artists and fans printing materials of amateur manga increased (Kinsella, 2000).

As was found, the majority of youth manga fans and amateur artists who actively participate in Comic Markets/ Comiket[3] are young women in their mid-teens and mid-twenties (Chen, 2004). Kinsella (2000) considered that manga fan culture was more a girls' culture than a boys'. This is not only because girls are in the majority but also because girls' manga and feminine expressions are the leading genres in the subculture. What's interesting is that these young woman manga fans are very active in creating new genres of manga doujinshis within the subculture, and often are bolder and more liberal in manipulating the plots, stories, and visual imagery than professional manga artists.

Little attention has been paid to these young woman fans and amateur artists in respect to either gender issues or problems of marginalization. They continue to remain invisible to or are intentionally neglected by both academic research and schools in Taiwan. There underlies certain a bias as what Kinsella (2000) observed in Japan: The intellectual tendency continues to perceive girls' manga as "stubbornly self-interested, decadent and anti-social" (p. 138), and manga subculture dominated by young women as "an unwelcome alien" (p. 138). As a matter of fact, it is the crossover of young men into girls' culture that provokes particular unease, such as *otaku*[4] panic, in Japanese society (Kinsella, 2000).

Being a woman scholar and researcher of art education, I have felt obliged to listen to these young female manga fans and fan artists so as to unveil the world that has been discriminated with labels of distaste, social deviancy, and moral delinquency. Therefore, young woman fans' participation in youth culture can be better understood and young women artists' conceptions of gender and gender identity can be known as well.

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[3] Comic Market (also known by the abbreviations Comiket and Comike) is ostensibly a voluntary, non-profit making organization. It is held in the form of a convention where anime/manga fan art and amateur manga can be bought, sold, displayed, or exchanged.

[4] Otaku is a Japanese term for "fan". However, the Japanese media sometimes use it negatively to denote extreme, and often dangerous, fixation.

Gendered Images in Manga

Clark (1999) pointed out, "children's literature was imbricated with material culture, and reading and play were seen through the lens of gender" (p. 1). Being a kind of children's literature and featuring the combination of text and image, manga is one of the core texts that carry a culture's values toward the young as a way of constructing childhood. In Taiwan, manga is very popular among children and adolescents, so we can imagine how powerful it might be in influencing Taiwanese youth's gender categories and values. This is particularly threatening when manga tends to strengthen gender stereotypes and overemphasize feminine sexuality to such an extent that female body is no more than sexually pleasant products for male consumption.

Japanese manga is gender-bound in that most mangas could be classified to boys' or girls', men's or women's, and men's erotic or women erotic genres. According to Izawa's (2000) explanation, boys' comics are usually told from a male perspective, and vice versa. Also, each genre has its own features such as that girls' mangas tend to focus on human relationships and the boys' focus more on competition or contests of will. Lastly, the girls' manga tend to have artwork that is dreamier and softer, while boys' comics tend to be brasher and flashier. Izawa (2000) found it common that traditional stereotypes of gender images are strengthened in Japanese manga. The theme of "men ought to be stronger than women" is very pervading to sum up many gender relations in manga and anime. The underlying idea is that women, no matter how strong or independent they are, should be looking for someone whom they can depend on and who will protect them.

Hamilton (1996) observed that images of female sexuality and implied innocence are amplified in manga and anime by means of exaggerating features — legs, eyes, breasts — to be sexually appealing and extremely seductive. Although these images of female sexuality are highly artificial and not closely approximated to the human body, their charms remain strongly the same to the viewers. Hamilton

(1996) believed the hypersexualization of characters is grounded on certain preconceived notions of feminine sexuality that are quite often the result of a patriarchal image of what "feminine" should be. This may lead us to assume that the imagery in manga/anime is a male construction of femininity for consumption by other males. Interestingly, a large proportion of the artists and writers that create manga and anime (including *Sailor Moon*) are female and, as a matter of fact, these images of feminine sexuality also attract a great amount of young females (Chen, 2004).

Text-Reader Interaction as a Battlefield

In the past, researchers and educators used to perceive manga/anime as undesirable within a particular aesthetic, and often accused it of harmful social effects or negative influences upon their readers, especially young students (Jenkins, 1992a). As could be understood, such a perception is also based on an assumption that the readers are as passive as a receiver for whatever they could have, and unable to select or tell right or wrong, true or false.

It wasn't until this recent decade that researchers in cultural studies begin to view readers, fans in particular, as actively subjective consumers and producers (Fiske, 1989, 1992; Jenkins, 1992a, 1992b). According to Jenkins (1992a), fans are not "cultural dupes, social misfits, and mindless consumers" as what they have been labeled (p. 23). Rather, fans are able to digest the media texts that they consume so as to produce their own artworks and be creative on their own terms (Jenkins, 1992a, 1992b). Reading/consuming/ reproducing is essentially "dialogic" (Bakhtin, 1981) and often in a negotiating process (Morley, 1980). In other words, the reader-text relationship is not completely fixed, and it is believed that fans as readers play an active role in approaching to the texts from perspectives that serve their own interests, and manipulating of meanings to construct their cultural and social identity. Jenkins

(1992a) believed, "The fans' response typically involves not simply fascination or adoration but also frustration and antagonism" (p.23). It is this complicated pro-and-con interaction that allows for 'semiotic resistance' (Fiske, 1989, p.72) and the fans' active engagement with the texts.

What Fiske (1989) meant by 'semiotic resistance' is that the consumptive productivity is through text-reader interaction that enables a reactive practice to the forces of hegemonic dominance and puts an end to relations of subordination. Lately, researchers have been criticizing Fiske's resistance theory is over-romanticized. jagodzinski (2004) rephrased Miller's comment as this, "While fantasy is a private and intimate experience, which can be part of a strategy of resistance, it is also the very seat of seduction where hegemony reinstates itself" (p. 258). Then, jagodzinski further explained that the resistant readings flowing through the excess of meaning are often too infinitesimal to overcome the overwhelming dominance of patriarchal and capitalist fantasies. The notion of semiotic resistance has over-dramatized its political effectiveness, but underestimated the works of capitalist hegemony (jagodzinski, 2004).

Research Concerns

In Taiwanese, manga fans are highly active and productive. Particularly in the doujin circles, made up from those manga fans who are able to create manga doujinshis, there is no a clear-cut line between artists and consumers (Chen, 2003). As mentioned earlier, young woman manga fans and doujinshi artists outnumber their male counterparts, and images of female sexuality are overemphasized and widespread in the subculture. After being exposed to manga for many years and while reproducing their fan-art, how do young female manga fan artists in Taiwan battle with their favored texts, especially in respect to these gender types and sexuality? This study, thus, will study three young female manga doujinshi artists' conceptions of gender and gender identity from two aspects: (1) how they perceive, appropriate,

change and represent female images through manga media; (2) how they use their amateur manga as a site of resistance, change, or conformity toward the gendered roles constructed by Taiwan's dominant culture.

Methodology

1. Data Collection

Field notes: This study will be initiated at a field trip to the ComicWorld convention given in July in Taipei, Taiwan. This ComicWorld-July is one of the largest conventions that takes place during the summer break when many adolescents could attend. Observations will focus on young female fans and amateur artists who are between the ages of 15 to 25 as most of the active animé/manga fan artists are in this age range (Chen, 2003; Kinsella, 2000). Field notes of observed behavior and ongoing socio-cultural phenomenon in these gathering events will be taken. Manga fan art and some doujinshi work will be collected as many as possible. Another purpose for taking field trips is to contact female animé/manga fan artists who are potential participants for this study and to get their consent for formal interviews.

The Subjects: The present study is constructed on the method of a qualitative case study, by which I select three female doujinshi artists purposely to be the participants. They are selected mainly because they have been on the doujinworld for more than five years and are very experienced at making doujinshis. These three girls have their own alias; the youngest girl's virtual name is Yuki, the second Tsukasa, and the older one Chiyong. Chiyong was my student in her junior year in the department of fine arts at the National Chia Yi University when the study took place. She is a member of the club, "Shadow & Shine" with a cyber-link to the website http://gpaper.gigigaga.com/default.asp. Tsukasa just graduated from a senior high school in Taipei and ready to enter a university for higher education at the time when the interviewed was conducted. Yuki was a senior high student then. The interviews

to these three participants, however, took place in two different years: Tsukasa and Chiyong were done in July, 2003, while Yuki in May, 2005. Tsukasa and Chiyong's narratives were utilized in another article published in the Journal of Social Theory in Art Education, 2004. These data are re-used here simply because they are relevant to the topic and themes of this study and will widen the view toward the issue of gender identity in making of fan art by young female manga doujinshi artists.

Formal Interview: This study employs the technique of a formal interview to approach to the subjects and the worlds of their amateur manga and doujinshi. Each interview lasted more than one hour, and was conducted through the method of the semi-formal interview; that is, I designed a few questions for guiding the major course of the interviews, and drew up more questions from their responses. Interviews were all tape-recorded and transcribed afterward.

Visual data: This study collected some manga artworks done by Yuki, Tsukasa and Chiyong.

Data Analysis

Content analysis will be used to make possible qualitative interpretations. Content analysis also will be used as a basis for setting up hypotheses with respect to the amateur manga artists' experiences in reading manga and in drawing their own manga. Based on these hypotheses, all categories, typologies and themes will be developed from coding and sorting data. Also, an intensive description will be made to pave the way for interpretation.

Description

Case 1:Yuki

Yuki is 17 years old, in her second year of senior high school. She started to read manga while she was eight or nine, but it was not until the age of 12 that she became very serious about drawing manga characters. And now, she has been in this doujinshi circle for five years. Like many young woman fan artists, Yuki were fascinated to

Sailor Moon and started to draw those pretty girls. While reading, Yuki tended to read a variety of manga including shonen manga (boys' manga), shojyo manga (girls' manga), sci-fi and "boy-love" (gay) and "girl-love" (lesbian) manga. She once got so fanatic about "boy-love" manga, but now has been back to all types of manga as far as they are "good". I asked Yuki why she liked to read "boy-love" manga. She answered:

> **It is very pleasant to be able to see many good-looking guys all at the same time. This is for satisfying my eyes and hearts and many curiosities. I assume this reason could be applied to guys' inclinations to "girl-love" manga as well." (Yuki, personal communication, 2005/5/11)**

In addition to reading, Yuki also drew "boy-love" manga doujishi. She showed me her very recent copy of doujinshi which was adopted from "Tennis Prince". *Tennis Prince* is categorized to shonen manga. There are only a few female characters in the manga and they are very minor in the plots. In Yuki's *Tennis Prince* doujinshi, she not only changed the original story into a "boy-love" version, but also created a heroine. Yuki explained:

> **Although I appropriated the heroes from *Tennis Prince*, I made up my own stories and plots. I even changed those main characters' personalities; for instance, the first hero is a serious and straightforward person, while in my version, he becomes shy and delicate. This is a lot of funs because I am just like a sculptor, sculpting the heroes into my dreaming ones…. For certain reasons, I think it is odd that there is not a heroine in *Tennis Prince*. I see no reasons that Tennis belongs only to boys, and it is ridiculous that the entire story is like men's talks in a men's club, which is so exclusive**

to girls. So, in my version of *Tennis Prince*, I created a heroine and made her playing an important role. She may be a little troublemaker, but it is fun to see a men's world losing control just because of a girl breaking into it. (Yuki, personal communication, 2005/5/11)

Yuki used to feel more confident in drawing female images than male images, but recently she tends to focus more on exploring and developing male characters, especially those "bishonen" types in boy-love manga. Yuki explained the reasons for such a shift as follows:

I used to be fond of drawing female characters, but I decided to make a change after seeing that my female characters were so much similar to my own personality and preferences. It is scary to see myself exposed so much in my female images. I had tried to develop a new female character without projecting too much my own self into it, but simply found it difficult to shake off such limits. Also, it is boring to see another person similar to yourself repeated again and again. People like to read something that they don't know or feel curious about. That is why many girls like to read "boy-love" manga and boys prefer girl-love manga. As a matter of fact, "boy-love" mangas are targeted on young woman readers and mostly are drawn by female managa artists. So, the reason why I switch to drawing "boy-love" manga is twofold: (1) breaking away the stereotypes of my own female characters, and (2) being able to attract more young woman fans. (Yuki, personal communication, 2005/5/11)

In the interview, Yuki was not very talkative, but she was nice and willing to answer all the questions. She looked pretty and intelligent, but very reserved to tell me which high school she attended. Yuki had a unique hairstyle, short hair in the back and very long hair on both sides, which was very similar to manga characters' hairstyles. Yuki was happy about her own hairstyle, but she said her father was angry with her for having such a hairstyle. Her father complained that her hairstyle made her looking like a lesbian. However, Yuki insisted to keep the hairstyle, but, meanwhile, gave her father a promise that she would behave as he and the society would expect. I could tell that Yuki wasn't subordinate and docile in her will, nor was she a rebellious and anti-social type. No wonder, she liked the type of heroines who may not be very beautiful in her appearance but so in her heart and mind. And then, Yuki further explained that her favored heroines weren't those who were extremely nice, docile, subordinate, and obedient, but those who are kind, honest, but also natural to her own thoughts, opinions, and tempers. Most of the heroines that Yuki developed and drew tend to be this type.

Picture 1

Picture 2

Case 2: Tsukasa.

Tsukasa is 18 years old. She graduated from a senior high school this spring and was accepted to a private university. She started to read mangas while she was 9 or ten, but it was not until the age of 14 that she became very serious about drawing manga characters. In this process of learning and practicing to draw manga, Tsukasa, like Yuki, tended to read a variety of manga. Tsukasa confessed that she even read manga pornographies for personal curiosity, but she found that many female characters in the genre are well drawn and beautifully presented. Apparently, the figure drawing techniques and skills still hold a great charm to attract Tsukasa's attentions.

Tsukasa did pay attention to the development of manga characters, and complained a lot about the gender stereotypes of heroines in manga. Tsukasa said she found that in many of Japanese manga, the heroines are not very smart, but they are usually chased by a swarm of guys. She then said some people might argue that if these heroines were smart, kind, tender and beautiful, then they would be too perfect, too good to be true, and could not attract many readers. Tsukasa really doubted about that explanation, but she had to admit that she could not stop reading these mangas without blaming these heroines why they behaved so stupidly and dumbly to earn these guys' mercies. However, Tsukasa also explained that although many of these heroines were not smart, they were often presented as very nice, kind, gentle, and considerate girls. These heroines were often mistreated by malicious, wicked and bad-hearted people (mostly female), but their kindness, consideration, and gentleness to people finally won them the victory of a true love and a happy life, etc. Tsukasa clarified that she did not blame them to be kind and nice to people, but she simply could not understand why these heroines had to be so submissive, stupid, soft-minded and docile. In certain degrees, Tsukasa would prefer to be a wise and knowledge girl and be like a boy to chase his love and to conquer all the obstacles to fulfill his own dreams and missions.

Recently Tsukasa seemed to lose her enthusiasm in manga/anime, and had switched her fondness onto the group of Japanese popular song singers, named V6. Now she would identify herself as a V6 fan much more than a manga/anime fan. Utilizing V6 singers as the main characters of her manga doujinshis and storylines, Tsukasa was about to create a V6 doujin-site on the web, where V6 doujins (those adore V6 as their idols) were able to post their fannish works such as manga doujinshis and novels. Among these six singers, Tsukasa tended to adore Ken Miyake and Hiroshi Nagano more. These singers are young, thin, tender and good looking with feminine dispositions, very different from those of American types of handsome guys as the strong, energetic, athletic, muscular, and masculine. As a fact, their feminine dispositions are much similar to those of "bishonen" (beautiful boys) in the manga fantasy worlds.

Like many V6 fans, Tsukasa would depict Ken Miyake in manga styles (see picture 3) and base her novel characters on them in developing the stories. Tsukasa said she disliked some V6 fans who would like to place themselves into the plots of their novels as if they were dating with V6 singers. She said:

For some reasons these fans tend to satisfy their own desires of being beloved by V6. That is it, fulfilling their own vanity and dreams, which a lot of female fans like to make their own novels that way. I think that type of plotting was disgusting, in certain aspect, and not enough to intrigue readers to explore deeper into the souls of the characters, the stories, and eventually the writer who develops the stories. For my own cases, I prefers to develop stories totally out of V6 singers, that is, a completely make-up story about these singers, and no interfacing between the fantasy and the real worlds (Tsukasa, personal communication, July, 6, 2003).

To be able to do so, Tsukasa explained that she had to study these singers' songs, performances, news reports, and other materials to get thorough information about each member's personality, tastes, habits, philosophy, values, etc. In this aspect, Tsukasa believed that she was different from many other female fans who were crazy about V6 singers for their appearances.
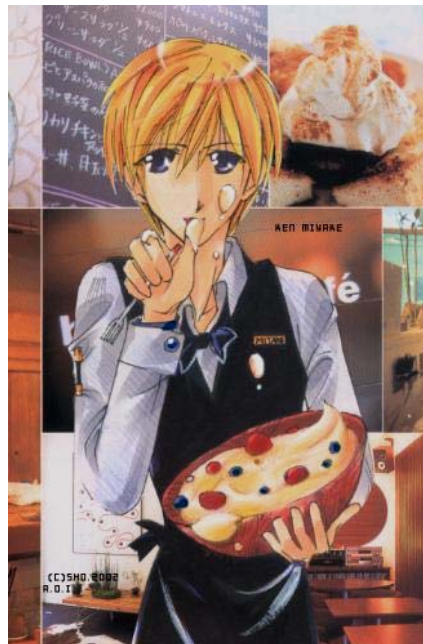
Picture 3

Case 3: Chiyong

Chiyong is an art-major undergraduate student about 20 years old. She started to read manga when she was in kindergarten. At that time she could not read much Chinese so she mainly looked at those pretty characters. When she was in seventh or eighth grade, *Sailor Moon* was very popular in Taiwan. Like many girls, Chiyong was attracted to those pretty female soldiers. Chiyong stated when she first saw the comic book, she was amazed that the lines and colors applied to the manga characters were so delicate and beautiful. At that moment she was completely drawn in by its charms and decided to imitate the way these female soldiers were depicted. Chiyong said that

her enthusiasm was highly aroused then, so she devoted a lot of time and effort to drawing these characters. She made great progress in drawing manga characters during this time.

Chiyong started from copying to draw female manga characters, particularly those pretty and cute soldiers from *Sailor Moon*. To this day, her enthusiasm remains strong as can be seen in picture 4. Almost 95 percent of Chiyong's figure drawings are female.

Picture 4

Chiyong did not just read shojyo manga but also shonen manga, boy-love manga, and girl-love manga. Her interest in drawing beautiful female manga characters did not limit her from reading other types of manga. However, Chiyong stated that in Taiwan's manga market, girl-love manga was not often found. It seemed that girl-love manga was not as popular as boy-love manga. Chiyong confessed that

she was much more interested in boy-love manga and had more accesses to it. This might create an illusion that boy-love manga is more favored than girl-love manga.

In the interview, Chiyong explained why she and many other girls like to read boy-love manga:

The main reason we girls like to read boy-love manga is that most of the characters are what we called "bishonen". It is extremely pleasant and joyful to see so many beautiful boys all at the same time. To me, gay love is a symbol of ideal love that is beyond the limitation of traditional values. It is powerful to pursue true love no matter what would happen. In this aspect reading about bishonen could bring psychological satisfaction to many females. We read boy-love manga not because we are homosexual but because we come to experience how they escape the restraint of tradition and how they fulfill a deep love. There are many romance novels in the book markets but we are simply tired of reading the same old stories constrained in the social structure and institutional values. (Chiyong, personal communication, July, 18, 2003)

From the above statement, I came to understand that to many females, reading boy-love manga is a channel for running away from social oppression. Even though they might not be consciously aware of gender discrimination and patriarchal oppression of women in this society, they seek alternatives. It is also a good way for these young female readers to fulfill their desire for ideal love that they could never possess in this mundane world. In the interview, Chiyong did not attempt to criticize inequalities towards women in society for she did not sense these inequalities. She simply described her experience and observations from reading boy-love manga. Chiyong stated;

We have been educated to keep silent about sexual desire, behavior and love since we were very young. It would be shameful if we talk about it boldly, and that is why we do not dare to read boy-love mangas brazenly and openly. We read the boy-love and pornographic mangas, and talk about homosexual love and sexual love secretly behind our parents and teachers. I know that the love stories and characters in most boy-love mangas are beautified to feed on most females' expectations. This type of ideal, utopian love is lifted up from the female dreams of love and aimed at arousing women's fantasy for spiritual and psychological love. For this reason, boy-love manga may include scenes of making love but they are not as numerous, brazen, violent, or sadistic as those that appear in girl-love or pornographic mangas meant to appeal to male readers. (Personal communication, July, 18, 2003)

Japanese manga has created a type of male beauty that appeals so much to the female readers in Japan as well as in Taiwan. This type of male beauty is incarnated in beautiful boys, called "Bishonen" in Japanese. Bishonen possess feminine and tender, delicate qualities in appearance and personality, completely different from those macho, athletic, energetic, and muscular guys favored in popular American culture. Chiyong stated, "Taiwanese girls do not like guys who grow mustaches and body hair all over; that looks dirty and scary. They would like someone clean, elegant, tender and delicate". Recently Chiyong attempted to depict male manga characters and they were all bishonens (See pictures 5 & 6). Sometimes, it is a little difficult to distinguish her female characters from her male characters. They are so much alike.

As apparent in her manga artwork, Chiyong took the aesthetic values of the Japanese manga mainstream—qualities of elegant delicacy, softness, tenderness, mysterious femininity and romantic airs. No matter what gender of manga characters

she depicted, they had to be beautiful and romantic in Chiyong's terms. In a sense, these manga characters were very much like the mythical deities or spirits in nature—too beautiful, mysterious, gentle and delicate to be true. Chiyong stated frankly that she liked to see something femininely beautiful, so would she present everything as beautiful. She said, "It is because I cannot find something ideally beautiful in our real world that I put it into my manga artworks. I try my best to make my figures beautiful, pleasing to my eyes, my imagination and my psychological needs." (Chiyong, personal communication, July 18, 2003)

Picture 5   Picture 6

Uncovering the Undermined Meanings

Self-projection into mediated images

Although most manga fan artists tend to create their manga doujinshi by imitating commercial manga, they can never completely abandon projection of self into the invented or appropriated characters of a story. However, it is also true that these young fan artists adjust or re-shape their own visions of self as they begin to identify themselves with the mediated images and characters with which they are infatuated (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Chen, 2003; 2004; Jenkins, 1992a; Njubi, 2001). In this study, I found it common that the participants' doujinshi works reflected the artists' own characters, values, beliefs, and concepts of gender. They might be aware

of the tendency of the projection of self into the mediated images, but often are not conscious of doing so. For instance, Yuki had mentioned that she was frightened to see a great part of herself projected in the female images she had made, but felt unable to free herself from such a boundary if she kept drawing female images. In order to create new and fresh characters, she then switched to draw male characters. Interestingly, her male images carry certain dispositions that are corresponsive to those of her female images (See picture # 1, & 2).

Images of self-in-other

From the above descriptions, some aspects are found interesting and insightful in respect to adolescents' gender identity. I will further discuss in the following:

1)　Dreaming to be "He" vs living in the ideal "She".

As was seen in two of these three cases, Tsukasa and Chiyong had different gender identities, which, so to speak, were at two opposite ends. Tsukasa tried hard to identify herself as more similar to a boy. Such a distinction implies an apparent bias of that the male are better than the female in many aspects such as, (1) the characteristics of male personalities of being upright, rational, calm, and responsible, etc, (2) the qualities of diligent exploration and research to the deeper basis of meanings and thoughts, not just caring about the external appearances and shallow romantic love as many girls do, and (3) the power of intelligence, capability and subjectivity, not just playing dumb, cute and charming to win other people's mercies as many girls do. When she was valuing the male dispositions inside herself, she had depreciated the female stereotypes as being unintelligent, jealousy, flirting, and intriguing against each others, as well as caring too much about personal appearances and romances. In a sense, Tsukasa was unconsciously dreaming to be a boy, and, from the bottom of her heart, she felt that being a boy would be freer, convenient, and comfortable in today's society.

On the contrary, Chiyong had no attempt to become a boy and it seemed that she felt comfortable to be a female. In the interview, she did not make any

complaint about herself as a girl or any inequalities in the society. However, in her manga artworks revealed a dream of being ideal beauty which was taken from the mainstream manga aesthetic values. She kept drawing manga characters of her ideal beauty to fill in the gap between the real she and the ideal modes of fantastic females built from the manga fantasy; indeed, she lives in a fantasy mode of "she".

2) Expecting an ideal gender of combining male and female merits together.

From both cases, we could find that "Bishonens" (beautiful boys) were favored to Yuki, Tsukasa and Chiyong, so to many other girls. For them, a good-looking, handsome guy should be like a bishonen, a male possessing the feminine, delicate, gentle and considerate qualities. The image of "Bishonen" is a symbol of a perfect person, in whom the male and female merits are mixed together to make the gender distinction meaningless. It is implied when the man is like a bishonen, then there should be no male chauvinism and domination.

Using Sexual Themes as a Means of Resistance

In Japan, manga fans and amateur artists like to produce sexually explicit themes in their manga doujinshi as a specific response to the highly gendered structure of commercial boys' and girls' manga. Kinsella (2000) described distinctive genres of amateur manga parody, yaoi[5] , and Lolicom[6] as having "betrayed a widespread fixation with male and female gender types and sexuality" (p.11). Manga critics also consider the dominancy of "sexual themes" in manga fan art is manipulated to be a creative outlet for changes in the gender politics of society (Kinsella, 2000). This means that manga fan art can be a powerful means for fans and artists to remodel the

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[5] Yaoi means boy/boy love stories, a kind of erotic manga that features gay relationships between male characters. In yaoi, male characters are often the kind of "bishonen" (beautiful boys"). Yaoi manga seems quite popular among heterosexual girls in Taiwanese culture.

[6] Lolicom is an abbreviation of Loita complex. Lolita complex is used to refer to the theme of sexual obsession with young pre-pubescent girls. Lolicom manga usually features a young girlish heroine with large eyes and childish faces, but with voluptuous bodies (Kinslella, 2000).

social and political construction of gender and sexuality in society.

As found in this study, young woman fans and amateur artists tend to read a variety of manga genres, even "boy-love", "girl-love" or pornographic manga. For certain degrees, their reading of those manga genres that are prohibited in the society is symbolic of rebellion to standards of social values, and that Yuki appropriated images of heroes in *Tennis Prince* and developed them into a new 'boy-love' story can be understood as more aggressive in resisting mainstream cultural values. However, such kind of 'semiotic resistance' has given Yuki an alternative to express her thoughts and imaginations, but unfortunately could not change her position in the patriarchal structure.

"Bishonen" animé/manga characters invented for yaoi manga have been very popular among young woman fans. Such popularity has led the Japanese animé/manga industry to adjust styles of male characters to please a greater number of female readers' tastes. Popular culture in Japan as also promoted those with bishonen features as male role models. A women's gaze used to be forbidden but now it is mildly forcing cultural change, reinventing gender roles. Japanese animé/manga fan culture has been prevalent with feminine privileges. It gives a gaze of liberation. Every bishonen is subject to female free will, as these female fans can gaze at these images and create their own narratives. They can appropriate images of their idols and rearrange them into their own favorite types whenever they want. For instance, we see Tsukasa's idols, the V6 singers, drawn as cute effeminate boys (see picture # 3) that are in a sense, male dolls that Tsukasa can play with and control. Similarly, we find effeminate young men in Chiyong's drawings (see picture #7, 8) who all shy away from the spectator's gaze. It is the viewer who has the power of gazing at them. In contrast, if we look at the young women in Chyong's other drawings (see picture #4), we will be stunned by their gazing at us. These female characters gaze at us—spectators—as if they have the control and power in the world. The point is that girls in manga fan culture have empowered themselves, legitimizing their own type of girls' culture and feminine values.

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