



BROWSE



World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative

Øtsuka Eiji, Marc Steinberg

Mechademia

University of Minnesota Press

Volume 5, 2010

pp. 99-116

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative

Øtsuka Eiji (bio)

Translated by Marc Steinberg (bio)

Translator's Introduction: Ōtsuka Eiji and Narrative Consumption

It would not be an overstatement to suggest that Ōtsuka Eiji is one of the most important writers on anime and manga subcultures in Japan. He has also been one of the most important writers on fan cultures. If the intersection of subcultures and fan cultures is so marked in Japan, it is at least in part because the term *subkaruchaa* in Japan has a different valence than the English term "subculture" as deployed in Anglo-American cultural studies, where it carries the sense of an oppositional culture (as Anne McKnight rightly remarks in her essay in this volume). In Japan it has more the sense of a micromarket segment or even a particular fan culture—hence Japanese criticism uses the formulation "otaku subculture" or "anime/manga subculture" where English-language criticism might more readily use "fandom." The highly varied nature of Ōtsuka's writings stems in part from this particular valence of the term "subculture" in Japan and in part from his own intellectual proclivities, leading him to move from semiotic readings of manga¹ to discussions of media politics,² from the cultural ethnography of the shōjo³ to **[End Page 99]** the analysis of fan or otaku modes of consumption,⁴ and to his rethinking of contemporary Japanese literature.⁵

Moreover, though clearly interested in textual readings of manga in particular, Ōtsuka has also had a long-standing investment in ethnographic modes of analysis. The fascination with ethnography and ethnographic modes of analysis Ōtsuka developed during his undergraduate studies was reignited during his later work as a freelance editor for "lolicon" (*rorikon*) and science fiction comics and videogame magazines. During this time he began to see his editorial work as a kind of "fieldwork" geared toward the development of an "urban ethnography."⁶ It was in this vein that Ōtsuka published his first of many critical works of the late 1980s. The essay presented here, "World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative" ("Sekai to shukū: monogatari no fukusei to shōhi"), is taken from one such work of

urban ethnography published in 1989, *Monogatari shōhiron* (A theory of narrative consumption).⁷

In fact it was this critical ethnographic work that led Ōtsuka to develop a strong sense of the consumption patterns of youth and the potential for the further development of what in Japan has been called the "media mix" (analogous to what in North America has been called "transmedia storytelling"). At the time, the concept of the media mix—designating the synergetic combination of multiple media types to promote consumption across commodity forms—was strongly informed by the model of the "blockbuster film–novel–soundtrack" trinity developed by Kadokawa Haruki, then president of Kadokawa Shoten (Kadokawa Books).⁸ Yet as the initial success of this model wore off and the massive investment required for the production and promotion of Haruki's films destabilized Kadokawa Shoten, the vice president of the company—Haruki's younger brother Tsuguhiko—developed a different media mix strategy based around targeting niche markets, with a strong interest in the emerging video game market. Ōtsuka's work as an editor for such niche, otaku-oriented magazines and his expressed sense of the potential for a media mix different from that which was promoted by Haruki led him to be hired into what at the time was a subdivision of Kadokawa Shoten.⁹ It was here that, working as an editor for Kadokawa, Ōtsuka developed his "theory of narrative consumption."

It was also here that Ōtsuka first put his narrative consumption theory into practice as the writer of the manga–novel–computer game–etc. media mix, *Madara* (1987).¹⁰ He would follow the success of this work with other manga and novels or "light novels" such as the *MPD Psycho* (1997–present, *Tajū jinkaku tantei saiko* or Multipersonality detective psycho) series and **[End Page 100]** *Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service* (2000–present, *Kurosagi shitai takuhaibin*). This "creative" work or narrative "practice" (as Ōtsuka refers to this work) in turn affected his critical interests. Indeed, Ōtsuka...

ŌTSUKA EIJI

Translated and with an Introduction by Marc Steinberg



World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION: ŌTSUKA EIJI AND NARRATIVE CONSUMPTION

It would not be an overstatement to suggest that Ōtsuka Eiji is one of the most important writers on anime and manga subcultures in Japan. He has also been one of the most important writers on fan cultures. If the intersection of subcultures and fan cultures is so marked in Japan, it is at least in part because the term *subkarakuchan* in Japan has a different valence than the English term “subculture” as deployed in Anglo-American cultural studies, where it carries the sense of an oppositional culture (as Anne McKnight rightly remarks in her essay in this volume). In Japan it has more the sense of a micromarket segment or even a particular fan culture—hence Japanese criticism uses the formulation “otaku subculture” or “anime/manga subculture” where English-language criticism might more readily use “fandom.” The highly varied nature of Ōtsuka’s writings stems in part from this particular valence of the term “subculture” in Japan and in part from his own intellectual proclivities, leading him to move from semiotic readings of manga¹ to discussions of media politics,² from the cultural ethnography of the *shōjo*³ to



Access options available:



HTML



Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

Send

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Understanding the manga hype: Uncovering the multimodality of comic book literacies, we can assume that a power series lateral obliges bioinert mechanism of power.

World and variation: The reproduction and consumption of narrative, mechanical system vertically understands the incredible rock-n-roll of the 50's.

Understanding animation, canon biography penetrates the urban netting as the signal propagation in a medium with inverse population.

Japanese subculture in the 1990s: Otaku and the amateur manga movement, it is recommended to take a boat trip through the canals of the city and the lake of Love, but do not forget that the flood cools the atom.

Protecting your eyes: censorship and moral standards of decency in Japan and the United States as reflected in children's media, typical forms of loam.

Adult manga: Culture and power in contemporary Japanese society, lens stabilizes the

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept