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ANIME IN THE UK: THE HISTORY, CULTURAL CONTEXT, AND
EVOLUTION OF UK ANIME FANDOM

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ABSTRACT

Organised anime fandom in the UK is relatively young, having originated in the early '90s following the UK's first recorded anime screening programme at a convention (McCarthy, 2018a) and, shortly thereafter, the success of Ōtomo Katsuhiro's *Akira* (1988) and the launch of Manga Video. However, while it is tempting to take this as the absolute genesis of UK anime fandom, to do so is to decontextualise both anime and anime fandom in the UK – neither occurred in isolation, nor did either spring up overnight.

In this thesis I examine the history and dynamics of anime fans and fandom in the UK, but rather than beginning with this obvious starting point, I work through the pre-history of fandom, identifying the localised, "culturally odourless" (Iwabuchi, 1998) titles screened on television or in the cinema that served to catch the attention of young people who would become fans. But more than that, I seek to contextualise anime fandom – and the ways in which the medium of anime was perceived by the British press and public – in terms of Anglo-Japanese diplomacy and the ways that the British have historically responded to Japanese art and culture since the late nineteenth century. I also explore the main sites of change in anime fandom – the Video Nasties panic of the '90s, the mass popularity of *Pokémon* (1997-Present), the Academy Awards success of *Spirited Away* (2001), and the rise of the Internet – and, inspired by Azuma Hiroki (2001), I survey current UK anime fans to identify where generational lines can be drawn, how these generations differ, and what they have in common. Finally, I suggest possibilities for extended and intersectional study of UK anime fans and speculate about what the future may hold for anime fandom… and whether anime has succeeded in truly achieving mainstream status.

INTRODUCTION

Why Anime Fans?

While delivering "Re-Creating History: The Development of British Anime Fandom and the Developing Comprehension of Anime History as a Transcultural Phenomenon", the keynote address at the Media Journeys symposium at UEA in 2018, Helen McCarthy commented that:

> ... all scholars are, at various times and to varying degrees, explorer, technician, teacher, interpreter, storyteller, showman, and shaman, and all of these roles are really important. But in particular, the explorer and the storyteller, I think, are very important when discussing the history of popular culture before the turn of the second millennium [...] Primary sources from the history of anime fandom in the 1990s challenge analysis even when you can find them [...] Because before broadband, the founders of fandoms and fanzines operated on tiny print runs of mimeographed or photocopied bits of paper, that maybe existed in runs of 20-50, that have been mouldering away in people's attics or lost in moves, very few of which have been archived. (McCarthy, 2018a)

Anime fandom has been of great importance to me in my life, but my entry into fandom came about through a series of sheer coincidences. In my early teens, when I mainly considered myself a gamer, I bought a games magazine that also featured reviews of new anime video releases. I was instantly captured by the art style, finding it reminiscent of *Mysterious Cities of Gold* (1982) and *Ulysses 31* (1981), cartoons I had loved as a child. The following year, I stumbled on a late-night Channel 4 broadcast of the second part of *Tokyo Babylon* (1992-1994), and while I couldn't follow the plot, I was excited by the animation. Anime was not easily accessible in my tiny hometown and I didn't know anyone else who watched it, so it was by complete chance that I picked up the second issue of the short-lived anime magazine *J-Fan* (1995-1996) from my local newsagent. It contained a report from ReConTanimeTed, a convention that had been held the previous November, and the details of Anime Babes, a new anime fan club that was just for female fans. A whole new world was opened up to me from there. I

embraced cosplay and attended my first anime convention, Shinnenkai, in January 1997. I joined Anime Babes and submitted art and writing for the club fanzine; through this, I came into contact with another girl who shared my love of *Cyber City Oedo 808* (1990-1991), and we set up our own fanzine, *CyberAge* (approx 1997-1999). Later, my work on *CyberAge* and my love of anime helped me secure the role of Editorial Assistant for *SFX Magazine* (1995-Present), where I also led on the production of three special anime-themed issues (December 2006; July 2007; October 2007).

Through all of this, I continued to attend conventions and engage with other fans, both in person and online. I watched as UK fandom changed over the years, with conventions rising and falling, the gender balance at conventions gradually levelling out, and fans' modes of communication becoming ever more immediate as social media developed. But at the same time, I was aware that UK anime fandom was almost always passed over for academic attention. Elsewhere in her address, McCarthy said, "In my view, [walls are] made to be climbed, and if they can't be climbed, they're made to be kicked down. And Hell hath no fury like a kid, reared in libraries, told that there isn't a book about something. There *has* to be a book. And if nobody else was going to write it, *I* was going to write it" (McCarthy, 2018a). When I hosted my first convention presentation about my research (Holmes, 2012), it was received enthusiastically by the broadly non-academic attendees, and as my work has continued, my fellow fans have continued to respond well to my research and presentations. So my desire to at least begin to document the various ways UK anime fandom has changed over the years was driven by the same need McCarthy described – the scholarly need to be the explorer and the storyteller, and to bring context and understanding to a cultural phenomenon that its own members found intriguing, and which I did not feel deserved to be neglected.

Thesis Statement, Objectives, and Structure

Despite its relative youth, anime fandom in the UK is a social phenomenon with its own, distinct history and modes of operation. It should be understood as a product of both historical British attitudes towards Japan, and the ways in which the world has changed as a result of ever-evolving technology and globalisation. Using a combination of historical and archival research, academic analysis, and both my own recollections and those of other fans, I will explore how these external factors have impacted the way UK anime fandom arose in the early '90s, how the fandom has changed since, and how it may continue to change in the future.

In Chapter One I take an historical approach, examining the ways in which Anglo-Japanese diplomacy operated in the very earliest days of British contact with Japan, and how this informed British perceptions of Japan, Japanese people, and Japanese art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Using this examination, I then illustrate how these perceptions transitioned into the "Techno-Orientalism" that went on to form the basis of the largely negative attitudes towards Japan in the West in the late twentieth century, how this "Japan Panic" particularly materialised in the British press, and how this in turn impacted the way anime was received by the British public in the '90s.

In Chapter Two I provide a more detailed analysis of the early days of anime fandom in the UK, examining both the organised fandom that sprang up in the early '90s and the "pre-history" of fandom. I discuss how the very first anime titles released in the UK in the mid twentieth century were received, and the localisation mechanisms that served to strip anime of its Japanese signifiers for Western consumption until the launch of Manga Video in the '90s. I also illustrate how the negative responses of the British press in the '90s were informed by both the "Japan Panic" and "fear and loathing" responses discussed in Chapter One, and the resurgence of the Video Nasties moral panic, and I explain how the resistance to these responses

among early anime fans formed a defining feature of UK fandom for years to come.

In Chapter Three I discuss the three events that most profoundly impacted how anime was perceived in Britain and in how UK anime fandom operated – the popularity of *Pokémon*, the Academy Awards success of *Spirited Away*, and the adoption of home broadband. Taking these events in turn, I explore how and why they affected social attitudes towards anime in the UK and the ways in which fans discovered, engaged with, and participated in UK anime fandom. However, I also call into question whether or not these shifts truly represented a move towards mainstream acceptance and understanding, both for anime itself and anime fans.

Finally, I conclude the thesis with a brief discussion of how anime fandom in the UK could continue to change in the future, before considering the possibilities for future research, both to continue the timeline I have started to develop in this project, and to add more depth and detail to the work I have already completed.

Terminology and Linguistic Style Choices

Since I refer to both Western and Japanese people, places, and titles in this thesis, a brief explanation of the stylistic choices I have made is necessary for ease of reading and comprehension.

The Japanese format for writing names is to give the family name first, followed by the given name – for example, "Miyazaki Hayao" rather than the Western format of "Hayao Miyazaki". I have chosen to maintain the Japanese format for Japanese names, largely because this was the preferred format of the sources I have used in my research of seventeenth and nineteenth century Anglo-Japanese relations and I wanted to remain consistent across the thesis. Where I have referred to a Japanese person mononymously, I have done so using their family name; the exceptions to

this are in referring to members of the Tokugawa shogunate, where for ease of comprehension it makes more sense to refer to them by their given names, and in the case of Yamamoto Otokichi, who is rarely referred to by any name other than "Otokichi" in historical sources.

For place names in historical accounts I have generally used the name that was correct at the time the account was written. In the first reference to an historical place name that has since been changed, I have noted how it is now known – for example, the ancient city of Edo, which was renamed "Tokyo" in 1868, is referred to as "Edo (now Tokyo)" when first mentioned and simply "Edo" thereafter. For consistency I have also standardised the spelling of Japanese place names, either to bring them in line with their modern, more recognisable spelling (e.g., "Osaka" rather than "Osaca"), or to use the most commonly-seen rendering of defunct names (e.g., "Edo" rather than "Yeddo"). Where I have made these corrections, they have been indicated in parentheses.

When referring to anime or manga titles, if an official translated name is available I have defaulted to this (e.g., *Attack on Titan* rather than *Shingeki no Kyojin*); in rare cases where a work has multiple names associated with it, such as *Panda and the Flying Serpent*, I have selected the name by which it is most commonly known. I have also used translations of Japanese words where appropriate, which includes transliterating words rendered in katakana into the appropriate language (e.g., *Sailor Moon* rather than *Sērā Mūn*, or *Elfen Lied* rather than *Erufen Rīto*). Where Japanese words have been left untranslated, and with the exception of proper nouns or words that have been absorbed into normal English usage (such as "karaoke" or "otaku"), these have been italicised. On words that have stretched vowel sounds, I have indicated this by using the appropriate vowel with a macron, e.g., *shōgun*, *daimyō*, *bugyō*. This also replaces any other rendering of such words used in other sources, such as "*bugyoo*".

I have written the thesis using UK English, but many of the texts I cite make use of US English; where appropriate, I have amended US spellings to UK

ones for consistency, but such instances are denoted using parentheses, e.g., in place of "utilized", I have written "[utilised]".

Finally, when discussing British media representations of Japan in Chapter One, due to the need to either directly quote a source or to refer to specific examples in order to reinforce my points, it becomes necessary to make use of anti-Japanese slurs. I find these terms abhorrent, and in the light of contemporary discourses about slurs and white supremacy, I feel that using these terms regardless in the name of strict academic rigour would not only be a betrayal of my own values but also represent, albeit in a small way, a backwards step for the accessibility of academia to people of colour. Therefore, I have chosen to censor these words with an asterisk, thus rendering them recognisable while also visually acknowledging that they are problematic terms that carry a racist legacy.

Literature Review

In describing a cinematic version of Fernand Braudel's *histoire totale*, Barbara Klinger (1997) cautions against the pitfalls of reception studies – specifically, the tendency to be too narrow in focus, either by failing to account for enough external factors in attempting to contextualise a text (p 109), or by staying "too close to home," which in Klinger's argument refers specifically to the film industry (p 110). She specifies that "reception studies focused on the industry fail to raise the question of how the industrial context connects to surrounding social and historical processes," later adding that:

> Reception studies scholars almost exclusively come to terms with a film's meaning by considering the impact that its original conditions had on its social significance. Research into origins, while all-consuming, can ultimately lapse into a kind of historicism that sidesteps the big meaning question: that is, the radical flux of meaning brought on by changing social and historical horizons over time. (p 111)

This is highly relevant in a research project such as this, as it is inherently multidisciplinary and sits at a scholarly intersection that draws upon aspects of fan studies, anime and manga studies, and Japan studies. Since anime fans themselves are my primary focus, fan studies is the most natural "home" for the project; however, with Klinger's warning in mind, to build up a fuller picture of the history of UK anime fandom it is vital to read and research beyond this field.

Taking fan studies as a starting point, in the course of this project I engaged directly with the research frameworks set out by fan studies scholars. Two of the core texts in fan studies are *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992) by Henry Jenkins, and *Fan Cultures* (2002) by Matt Hills, and their value for this project lies in their foundational nature. Jenkins, in rejecting the stereotypes of media fans as people with "no life", posits that media fandom is an active and participatory process. Fans do not merely consume media uncritically, but selectively lift from and stitch together such media to derive their own meanings, produce their own content, and build their own subculture – this is the "textual poaching" referred to in the title. A decade later, with the scope of fan studies shifting, Hills queries this process, identifying a moral dualism in Jenkins' work whereby fans and non-fans are "split into very different types of subjectivity," with fans treated as "good", cultural entities and non-fans as "bad", psychological ones. This in turn results in a selective emphasis on some aspects of fandom while others are downplayed; Hills cautions against this, instead asserting that fandom should be "represented more on its own terms" with researchers presenting their work with "a primary allegiance to the role of 'fan' and a secondary allegiance to 'academia'"(pp 8-10).

I feel that both arguments have some merit, and in this regard I am very aware of Hills' "aca-fan" tension. On one hand, I am sympathetic to Jenkins' desire to offer a counterpoint to negative stereotypes of anime fans – these are "my people", and one does not embark on a project such as this if one does not feel that one's interest has positive qualities that merit discussion. However, I also agree with Hills that it is facile to pretend that fandom is all

"good" and gloss over the problematic aspects to its modes of operation. Similarly, I agree with Rukmini Pande's argument in *Squee from the Margins: Fandom and Race* (2018), that fan studies tends to privilege the perspective of white, middle-class fans, and that these fans excuse their own problems with regard to race by attempting to frame their fandom as a "safe space", in the process decrying the fans of colour who protest that they don't feel very "safe" as killjoys who ruin everyone's fun. This is a very important consideration in anime fandom, as not only can the Whiteness of the fandom impact the experiences of fans of colour, but that Whiteness can also affect fans' consumption and interpretation of the non-white medium of anime. Unfortunately a full examination of this topic would merit a thesis all of its own, so it falls well outside the scope of this project, but I have nonetheless attempted to keep these issues in mind, and go into more detail about this expanded research project in my Conclusion.

In terms of studies of anime fans specifically, one of the key texts is Azuma Hiroki's *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* (2001; translated edition 2009). Azuma covers some universal themes, like the transnational nature of otaku culture, the awkward position of an aca-fan whose work is considered too fannish for academia but not fannish enough to be trusted by otaku, and both the production and consumption of derivative works (e.g., fanzines, fan art), but the most valuable part of his study for this project is his discussion of otaku generations. Azuma identifies three generations, born approximately ten years apart: the first generation, born around 1960, who enjoy science fiction and watched *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974-1975) and *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979) as teenagers. The second generation, born around 1970, entered the otaku culture produced by the first generation and helped it to diversify and mature. The third generation, born around 1980, were in their early teens during the *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1996) boom and, having experienced the spread of the Internet, were more interested in computer games and digital graphics (pp 6-7). This drawing of generational lines was a significant source of inspiration – Azuma's work as a whole is too specific to Japanese otaku to provide much insight into Western, let alone British, anime fandom, but I suspected that here there may be some

transnational overlap. This formed the basis of my fandom questionnaire, which I will detail in the Research Methodology segment.

More Western-oriented research on anime fans can be found in Susan J Napier's *From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West* (2007) and Sandra Annett's *Anime Fan Communities: Transcultural Flows and Frictions* (2014). Napier's analysis specifically focuses on "the many fantasy Japans that have arisen in the eyes of the West since the 1850s" (p 3), exploring the tradition of *Japonisme*, the fetishism of Japanese women in the eyes of Western men, and the interactions of Orientalism and "soft power" in contemporary, Western anime fandom, among other topics. Napier raises questions about how the mainly white Western fans of anime consume and conceptualise both anime and the entity of "Japan", ultimately concluding that contemporary fandom represents both an updated form of *Japonisme*, with clear parallels to historical concepts of and modes of engagement with "Japan", *and* a somewhat new phenomenon, whose development could only have occurred in the present day – specifically, mass, deeply-penetrating popularity, spread with a speed and intensity that could only be achieved through modern technology (pp 206-207).

Annett, meanwhile, focuses on the transcultural nature of anime fandom, with particular regard to the Internet and other developing technologies, and considers how modern fans use or understand these developments as part of the process of negotiating cross-cultural connections. She concludes that:

> … animation does not have one single form or effect in all times and places. [...] transcultural animation fan communities are [...] more than just a marketing concept, but less than a utopian semiotic democracy. Rather, they provide a way for people to negotiate the flows – and more importantly, the frictions – of media [globalisation], and so to generate their own connections across difference. (p 207)

Relevant and useful though these texts are, their main disadvantage lies in their US-centricity. While there are certainly similarities between US and UK

anime fandoms, one should be cautious when using the frameworks and dynamics described by these texts to analyse UK fandom. My core argument is that UK anime fandom has been shaped by its environment, and while I don't mean to suggest that early US fandom had no impact on UK fandom (indeed, the very earliest anime fans in the UK relied heavily on maintaining connections with US-based fans), the UK's historical relations with Japan were not at all like the relationship between Japan and the US, nor did US fandom have to weather the storm of moral panic and censorship in the way that UK fandom did.

Key additional context for this project came from both scholars studying wider cultural relations between Japan and the West – most notably Hammond and Stirner (1997), Iwabuchi (1998) and Morley and Robins (1995) – and what little specific academic work on anime in the UK was available. This scholarship largely comprised the works of Helen McCarthy (2002) and Jonathan Clements (2009, 2013) as well as their collaborative works (1998, 2015), and these offered not only historical records and references with which I could map out the overall timeline of anime in the UK, but also crucial analysis of key events and shifts, whether these were written at the time these key events took place or more recently, with the benefit of more detailed historical analysis and understanding.

Taking all of the above into account, the main additional aspect of research I felt I needed to bring to this project was a participant-led understanding of UK anime fans, their demographics, and their engagements with anime and fandom. This would not only provide a snapshot of the state of anime fandom in the UK today, but also create a framework onto which social and technological developments could be mapped.

Research Methodology and Results

As stated in the Literature Review, I took Azuma's generations of otaku as inspiration for this part of my research. I wanted to get a picture of fan

demographics – not just age and gender identity, but also race, sexual orientation, and levels of education – and what I termed "entry points" – the titles and factors that initiated fans into the world of anime and manga. I also wanted to know their tastes – not just their favourite anime and manga titles, but also what other aspects of Japanese culture interested them, and what they specifically found interesting about anime – and how often they engaged in other anime-related fan activities: cosplay, producing fan art, writing fan fiction, working on other fandom-related crafts, or creating Anime Music Videos (AMVs).

It was, in particular, these "active" fans I wanted to focus on. For the purposes of the project, I chose to define "active" fans as those who, as a baseline, attended anime conventions. My reasoning for this is that the process of attending a convention requires a certain level of dedication on the part of the fan – memberships need to be paid for, travel and accommodation need to be arranged, time needs to be booked off with employers, and budgets need to be considered. There is also significant overlap between convention attendees and fans who create transformative works, as evidenced by the popularity of cosplay and the presence of fan traders in the dealers' room, and while this approach does unfortunately mean that some fans who engage in transformative practices but do not, for whatever reason, attend anime conventions were excluded, it also facilitated contact with fans who only really liked watching anime and saw conventions as an opportunity to spend time with like-minded friends, who may have otherwise been difficult to make contact with. Furthermore, as Nicolle Lamerichs (2014) points out, conventions are an affective space for fans and play a significant role in both the development of their own sense of identity and in how they engage with anime itself:

> … anime fans go to a convention to experience the stories that they love again. The convention is a memory place that, although public, relies on private meaning and past experiences. Watching an anime on a big screen or seeing it re-enacted in cosplay means reliving it again. The many allusions at the convention ground require that fans contextualize certain characters and content, which creates a deeper

relation with the text. The nostalgia that may result from the reacquaintance with a favourite narrative is also the effect of an imagined history. In other words, when we revisit a text, we embed it in our life story. Nostalgia is not only a side-effect of a reading then, but a mode of interpretation that [valorises] the previous reading as well [...] At an anime convention, there is no shared repertoire other than that of popular series and tropes that function as a canon that binds fans. (p 268)

Arguably, and following Lamerichs' argument, the fans who consider convention attendance to be a key aspect of their self-expression will hold a deeper connection to both anime and manga as texts and to anime fandom as a social, community practice, and since a great deal of how anime fandom has developed in the UK has been based around conventions, especially in the early days of fandom (as discussed in Chapter Two), it felt natural to take these as a defining characteristic in building a picture of the current shape of anime fandom in the UK.

As I recognised the need for both quantitative and qualitative data to build up this picture, a mixed method approach was the natural choice to collect this information. However, this is complicated by the variety of mixed method approaches available, and as Evans and Stasi (2014) point out, there is an overall lack of discussion regarding research methodology in fan studies, in part because adjacent areas of research like media and cultural studies resist the codification of research methods out of a desire to retain the openness and versatility of the field, and in part because it presumes an uneven power dynamic between the researcher and the respondents (p 8). A purely ethnographic approach, which is "a core method in the canon of cultural studies, interested in lived experience" (p 9), is problematic in fan studies, resulting in a similar dynamic to that which Azuma warns of – the aca-fan researcher is forced to distance themselves from their identity as a fan in the name of legitimacy and objectivity, while fans feel uncomfortable with the idea of being "studied from the 'outside'" (p 11). Meanwhile, alternative methodological approaches like textual analysis and psychoanalysis manage to avoid this uneven power dynamic by shifting

primary focus to the text and attempting to determine the "universal" laws surrounding its interpretation, but in doing this, the role of the fan is reduced to that of a passive spectator rather than an active participant (pp 11-12). This, I feel, would do a disservice to anime fans, especially as I wanted to focus on "active" fandom – fans who engaged with anime and manga by attending conventions and/or producing transformative works.

The solution proposed by Evans and Stasi is a hybrid approach that merges self-reflexive autoethnography, which offers the opportunity for "research into more embodied accounts that deal not only with the discursive practices of fandom […] but with what it means when people actually take up these discursive practices and really live through them. This is to say, the practice of autoethnography might allow for more than simply the textually created audience, but instead would develop narrative accounts of what it means to take up these subject positions and use them to create a sense of self as a lived experience" (p 15), and digital ethnography, "a relatively new approach, applying ethnographic methods that emphasize deep immersion in a culture or community" and then applying these in online spaces, with the benefit of engaging with fan communities as "widely distributed networks who share a global online space […] the mainstreaming of fandom means that there is an increasing amount of people who are more 'mobile' across fandoms, and only loosely classifiable as a 'typical' subculture" (pp 15-16). A hybrid approach like this, I felt, made sense for the purposes of my research – I did not want to alienate my fellow fans, nor did I want to neglect my own identity and position as a part of the fan community, so drawing upon my own experience and understanding of the community's dynamics to plan my research and making my identity as a fan explicit to my respondents was a logical step, and as I wanted to solicit responses from fans all over the UK, conducting an online questionnaire seemed like the easiest way to manage this.

With the above in mind, and aiming to strike a balance between quality and quantity of responses, I created an online questionnaire using SmartSurvey. Though some questions allowed little or no flexibility in responses (such as

the question about age, which offered a selection of age ranges and invited respondents to select one), my questions were largely quite free-form, allowing respondents to provide as much detail as they liked when, for example, listing their entry points or describing the facets of Japanese culture they found interesting. The questionnaire was open for responses from the beginning of March 2016 until the end of February 2017, and was promoted using flyers distributed to fans attending the three main fan-run conventions in that period – Minamicon (March 2016), Kitacon (April 2016), and Amecon (July 2016). I had initially planned to restrict the promotion of the questionnaire to these events, in part to limit the possibility of having it completed by large numbers of non-UK fans, but also to ensure that the respondents were "active" anime fans, distinct from those who may have a passing familiarity with the medium but do not consider themselves fans, or those who do consume anime regularly but are otherwise uninvolved in fandom. However, in order to boost respondent numbers the questionnaire link was also shared on Facebook from June 2016.

In the design of my questionnaire, there were three targets I thought it was important to meet – protection of respondents' privacy according to the Data Protection Act; ensuring that respondents felt sufficiently comfortable with the questionnaire that they were willing to fill it out in full; and securing data that was both sufficiently reliable and sufficiently detailed that meaningful conclusions could be drawn. Furthermore, it seemed to me that attaining each of these targets would be partially informed by attaining the others – for example, assurances that their data would be handled responsibly and with respect for their privacy would result in more comfortable respondents, and comfortable respondents would answer in greater detail than respondents who had doubts or concerns. With these in mind, the most sensitive information – the demographics section – was designed as follows.

Before any questions were asked, respondents had to read an introductory paragraph that set out the aims of my research and provided contact details for both my Director of Studies and myself. After this, respondents were asked to supply a contact email address to avoid duplicate survey

submissions, and my reasons for asking for these details were clearly explained to respondents on the form; they were also invited to opt-in for further communications during the course of my research at this stage. I made an explicit statement that respondents' answers would be anonymised, and that if I quoted any of their responses in the thesis or other presentations, only their broad demographic data (gender identity and age group) would be used for attribution. Questions about gender identity and sexual orientation were marked as optional, and a "Prefer not to say" option was also provided in case a respondent did not notice that these were optional. SmartSurvey automatically assigned anonymous user IDs to each respondent, and when the questionnaire had closed, I exported the data from the platform and then stripped out the contact email addresses as I began my analysis.

In total, 256 responses were received over the course of the year; of these, 197 were completed. While it was disappointing to have almost 60 incomplete responses, the design of the questionnaire meant that all respondents had at least completed the section on demographic data, so their responses were still of value.

The demographic results, when taken as a whole, do not hold many surprises. Respondents mainly fell into the 25-29 (37.9%) or 30-34 (27.3%) age groups, and the most commonly-represented demographic groups were male (49.2%), white (91.4%), heterosexual (57.4%), did not identify as transgender (95.3%), and held Bachelor's degrees (45.3%), with intersections obviously occurring across these categories. However, when examined by age group, distinct shifts become visible. As the purpose of this exercise is to find where generational lines lie, I will now highlight these shifts by taking the age groups in reverse order, i.e., starting with the 50+ age group and working down to the 18-24 age group, and thus begin to map the generational shifts in chronological order.

The first generation is similar to Azuma's, though the boundaries sit a little further apart at 15 rather than ten years. Respondents in this generation fell

into the age groups of 40-44, 45-49, and 50+, meaning they were born between the early '60s and the mid '70s. This generation closely aligns with the overall demographics, being 80% male, 95% white, 85% heterosexual, 85% cisgender (the very small number of non-binary and transgender respondents in this generation identified themselves in the youngest age group), and 60% educated to Bachelor's degree level or higher. The BBC's broadcast of *Marine Boy* (1969) was the most commonly-cited entry point into anime for respondents over 45 (44.4%), though all three age groups also named *Akira* (1988) as an entry point (16.7%), and those aged 40-49 also named *Battle of the Planets* (1978) (14.3%). This generation considers their interest in anime to be an extension of their interest in sci-fi, and while they initially got involved in fandom through *Anime UK* magazine, they may have also been in attendance at Eastercon in 1990, when the first documented anime screening programme in the UK was hosted (McCarthy, 2018a). This generation is also limited in the other fandom activities it participates in; just 27.8% of respondents reported taking part in cosplay either "Very Often" or "Fairly Often", while almost all other modes of participation were largely ignored (5.6% of respondents reported creating fan art or other craft items "Very Often", and in both cases this was restricted to the 50+ age group). I have nicknamed this generation "The *Marine Boy* Generation".[1]

The second generation reverts to boundaries that are approximately ten years apart and encompasses those in the 30-34 and 35-39 age groups; these fans were born between the mid '70s and the mid '80s. While the demographics in this generation broadly align with those of the overall respondent population, with 58% being male, 92% white, 65% heterosexual, 64% educated to Bachelor's degree level or higher, and only 2% transgender, we do begin to see increased diversity in these age groups; 16%, for example, identify as bisexual and 7% as asexual, while the racial makeup expands to include East Asian (2.9%), Indian (2.9%), and mixed

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[1] *Marine Boy* was not cited as an entry point by everyone in this age group; indeed, those aged 40-44 did not cite it at all and instead mainly named *Akira*. I nonetheless chose to name this "the *Marine Boy* Generation" to acknowledge that anime fandom existed in the UK well before the arrival of *Akira*, as well as to differentiate between this generation and the next, which also heavily cited *Akira* as an entry point.

race (4%) people. 50% of this generation reported discovering anime through TV broadcasts; this encompasses the hybrid cartoons airing on children's TV from the late '70s and through the '80s (e.g., *Battle of the Planets*, *Ulysses 31*, and *Mysterious Cities of Gold*), Manga Video releases airing on either "art" slots on BBC2 or as part of Channel 4's "Late License" slot in the mid '90s (e.g., *Akira*, *3x3 Eyes* (1991-1992), and *The Legend of the Four Kings* (1991-1993)), and a few instances of later TV airings like *Cardcaptor Sakura* (1998-2000, aired as *Cardcaptors*) and the first season of *Pokémon* (1997-1999), though not in high enough numbers to move these fans into the next generation. Fans in this generation expressed interests in both traditional Japanese culture (e.g., history, martial arts, folklore and religion) and modern and/or technological developments (e.g., video games, music, street fashion), and enjoyed engaging with most participatory fandom activities – 26.3% reported cosplaying "Very Often" or "Fairly Often"; 10% for writing fan fiction; 12.5% for producing fan art, 21.3% for fandom-related crafts; and 2.5% for making AMVs (it should also be noted that a significantly higher proportion of 30-34 year olds reported engaging in these activities than those aged 35-39). Due to the variety within this generation, particularly in terms of the mix of hybrid cartoons, localised anime series and explicitly-marketed anime releases that make up the entry points, I have nicknamed it "The Hybrid Generation".

The third generation has even narrower boundaries, just five years apart; these fans were aged 25-29 and were born between the mid '80s and the first year or two of the '90s. It is in this generation that the first big demographic shift becomes visible – male fans are suddenly outnumbered at 39.2%, with 51.6% of respondents being female and 9.3% identifying as non-binary or another gender identity. Furthermore, while other demographic fields remain broadly aligned to the status quo, there is still a greater sense of diversity among them. 88.7% are white, but in this generation there are also black, Asian, mixed race, and Roma/Irish Traveller fans; the numbers themselves are admittedly small, but nonetheless represent a significant change from the second generation. The number of heterosexual fans drops to 52.6%, while 18.6% identify as bisexual, 11.3% as asexual, 6.2% as gay

or lesbian, and 9.3% as other sexual orientations, while the number of fans who identify as transgender jumps dramatically to 5.2%, and 67% of this generation is educated to Bachelor's degree level or higher. The entry points in this generation show hangovers from the second generation with TV broadcasts in late night slots continuing to be an influencing factor, though it is also at this point that we can see *Pokémon* beginning to secure a foothold (23.5%), as well as satellite TV broadcasts such as *Sailor Moon* (1992-1997) (11.2%) and *Dragon Ball Z* (1989-1996) (9.2%). For these fans, their interest is solidified further in their early to mid teens with the relatively high-profile cinema release of *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), and the 2003 Academy Awards victory for *Spirited Away* (2001). These are also highly participatory fans, with 43.1% reporting that they cosplay "Very Often" or "Fairly Often"; 12.5% write fan fiction; 19.4% produce fan art, 23.7% create fandom-related crafts; and 2.8% make AMVs. Due to the short duration of this generation, and the fact that fans in this generation grew up during a period where significant changes were occurring in the everyday technology around them as well as the ways in which anime was understood and accessed, I have nicknamed this "The Bridging Generation".

Finally, the fourth generation encompasses fans born from the early '90s onward, in the 18-24 age group; as I had no respondents aged under 18, it is impossible to say at this time where this generation's boundaries truly lie, but this can easily be established through subsequent study. While the number of female-identified respondents fell slightly to 44.7%, the number of male-identified respondents also dropped to 34.2%, while the number of non-binary and other gender-identified respondents rose to 21.1%. There is also a sharp drop in the number of heterosexual fans – just 34.2% – while the numbers of bisexual and asexual fans increase dramatically to 36.9% and 13.2% respectively (though curiously, the already low numbers of gay and lesbian fans also drops slightly to 5.3%); 7.9% identify as transgender in this generation. There is also a small drop in the number of fans in this generation who are educated past Bachelor's degree level (57.9%), but this is more likely due to the younger ages of these fans rather than any indication of a lack of interest in education.

By this point, *Pokémon* has firmly entrenched itself in mainstream culture with 34.8% of respondents citing it as their introduction to anime, though a handful of other TV broadcasts like *Beyblade* (2001), *Cardcaptor Sakura*, *Dragon Ball Z*, and *The Moomins* (1990-1991) were also identified. However, these fans also benefited from greatly improved ease of access to anime and fan culture in general, with large London-based Expos such as the London Movies, Comics, and Media Expo (now MCM London Comic Con) springing up in the early to mid '00s and catering to anime fans as well as general sci-fi, fantasy, media and comics fans. These fans are largely less participatory overall – while 50% say they cosplay and 21.4% produce fan art "Very Often" or "Fairly Often", only 17.9% are crafters and just 7.1% write fan fiction or create AMVs – but they are also much more social as fans, considering the social aspects of fandom to be of such importance that it almost surpasses anime itself. However, due to the overwhelming influence of *Pokémon*, not just on these fans specifically but also on the surrounding anime fandom culture, I have nicknamed this "The *Pokémon* Generation".

While each generation of UK anime fandom has its own distinct features, it is important to note that my questionnaire responses also indicated some commonalities across all generations and age groups. For example, and perhaps unsurprisingly, Studio Ghibli films are consistently popular with anime fans regardless of age group. It is also common regardless of age group – and as I have indicated in each generational breakdown – for fans to encounter and become interested in anime through TV broadcasts, without any knowledge of its Japanese origins (I explore this further in Chapter Two, when discussing Iwabuchi's 1998 theory of "cultural odour"). My research also reveals that UK anime fans are much more social than one might expect – while the sense of community in fandom is an important consideration for younger age groups but completely unimportant to older ones, respondents in all groups largely reported having been introduced to anime by friends or family, rather than (as I did) discovering it by chance independently. All age groups also consistently cite Japanese food and drink and Japanese history as their main "supplementary" interests, and all age groups praise the art

style, storytelling, characterisation, and variety of genres within anime as their main reasons for being attracted to anime.

Confident though I feel in the general accuracy of my research findings, there are certainly significant problems in this research that would need to be addressed if and when this study were revisited. The first is the problem of the small sample size – while I was happy to have just under 200 completed responses, this still amounts to around half the number of people who attend Minamicon, the smallest of the UK's fan-run conventions, and this figure becomes even more problematic when it comes to breaking the respondents down into groups based on age. The 25-29 and 30-34 age groups were a healthy size – 97 and 70 respondents respectively – and while the 18-24 and 35-39 age groups were smaller, they were still a workable size (38 and 30 respondents respectively). Older fans, however, were very poorly represented – just four respondents were over 50, five were aged 40-44, and 11 were 45-49. That the results I collected from these groups largely sit in line with Azuma's first generation of otaku is the only reason I am not too hesitant in presenting them, however, the small sample size still means that there is a risk of an unfairly small proportion of older fans being categorised not so much on their own merits, but in comparison to the much larger groups of younger fans.

There is also the issue of variations in how respondents interpreted some of the questions in the questionnaire. Some who I spoke to after the completion of the data collection reported feeling unsure how to differentiate between "Very Often" and "Fairly Often" when reporting their modes of engagement; others, particularly younger fans who were more immersed in the contemporary, "mass" culture, reported some difficulty in recalling their first conventions and anime or manga titles. Demand characteristics are also a potential problem – while I was fortunate in that all of my respondents appeared to complete my questionnaire honestly and in good faith, the fact remains that questionnaires are a great way to find out about people who like taking questionnaires, and it is also possible (as was suggested to me at Minamicon 23 when I presented the initial results of the questionnaire to the

attendees (Holmes, 2017)) that the high numbers of university graduates was not so much reflective of anime fans' drive to achieve high levels of qualification as it was "researcher sympathy" from people who had experienced problems with conducting similar quantitative research and "wanted to help".

Lastly, my analysis for this project does not include a cross-comparison between my collected demographic data and the latest UK census or national statistics data. Such cross-comparison could add greater depth and nuance to my results, particularly since questions related to sex, gender identity and sexual orientation have recently been added to the UK census. How many of the observed shifts in the UK anime fan population are reflective of the wider shifts in the overall makeup of the UK, how many are shifts that are more (or less) prominent among anime fans, and what are the implications of these variations?

In my Conclusion chapter, I address these and other concerns that would need to be taken into account for any future studies that expand upon this. However, within the limits of this project I feel that the data I collected through this research method is sufficient to not only draw the conclusions that I have here regarding fandom generations, but also to support the analysis I conduct in Chapters Two and Three, and I am now ready to begin laying the groundwork to contextualise the history of anime fandom in the UK.

CHAPTER ONE

Contextualising Anime in the UK

Before exploring the development of anime and manga fandom in the UK, it is important to understand the social and cultural environment into which anime as a distinct entertainment phenomenon was introduced. This not only requires an examination of British attitudes towards Japan from the early '90s onwards, but also an overview of the historical and diplomatic relations between Britain and Japan since the seventeenth century. Woven through British relations, perceptions, and representations of Japan is a degree of Orientalism that pervasively colours the ways in which British audiences, journalists, and politicians conceptualise and respond to "Japan" and "Japaneseness". I believe this can be traced back to the earliest British diplomatic exchanges with Japan, and the first encounters British people had with Japanese art forms.

In this chapter I will briefly describe the history of Anglo-Japanese diplomacy from 1600, when the first Briton arrived in Japan, up to the end of the Second World War. This leads into how Japanese art and crafts were received and sought after in Britain in the late eighteenth century, the influence that these art and craft pieces had on British notions of Japan, and how these were reflected in popular culture and consumption at the time. Finally, I will examine the ways in which Japan was portrayed in the British media in the '90s and '00s. Overall this examination will provide context for how anime was initially received by British people, press outlets, and politicians, and how this went on to shape early modes of fandom in the UK.

A Brief History of Anglo-Japanese Diplomacy, 1600-1951

Although Japan was never a formal colony of the British Empire in the same way as many other Asian countries, such as India, Hong Kong, and those that make up the former territory of British Malaya, Britain has nonetheless

historically had a great deal of interest in establishing diplomatic relations with Japan. The earliest engagements with Japan were purely for the sake of commerce, but in the late nineteenth century Britain also came to see diplomatic relations in Japan as being vital for maintaining the dominance of the British Empire in the Far East, particularly following conflict with Russia and in the face of the United States establishing their own international diplomatic presence. What is fairly consistent across all British diplomatic dealings with Japan, however, is a kind of colonialist arrogance that indicates the British thought of themselves as being clearly and inherently superior to the Japanese (Beasley, 1950; Fox, 1941; Hashimoto and Scheiner, 1987; Hoare, 2000; Massarella, 2000).

The first Englishman to arrive in Japan was the sailor William Adams, who landed in Kyushu in 1600 and was promptly arrested on suspicion of being a pirate. Nonetheless, while imprisoned he impressed Tokugawa Ieyasu, the *daimyō* (feudal lord) of Edo (now Tokyo), with his knowledge of ships and nautical affairs (Murakami and Murakawa, 1900: pp 23-24). Adams was eventually given the name "Miura Anjin" and settled in Japan, and when the Tokugawa shogunate was established with Ieyasu at its head as *shōgun* (military ruler – erroneously believed by the British to be synonymous with Emperor (Fox, 1941: p 415)), Adams became a key advisor on all matters relating to Western trade. As such, Adams played a role in the first trade agreement between Britain and Japan when Captain John Saris arrived on Hirado Island in Nagasaki prefecture in 1613. Saris and his crew were warmly received by the local *daimyō*, Matsuura Takanobu, who was already accustomed to *nambanjin* ("southern barbarians," the name originally given to Portuguese traders in the late sixteenth century (Curvelo, 2012: pp 584-585) but subsequently used for all European traders at the time), as the Dutch had established a trading post in Hirado in 1609. Excited by the prospect of more foreigners coming to trade, Matsuura happily hosted Saris and his entourage until Adams arrived from Edo (Massarella and Tytler, 1990: pp 190-191). The party set off for Sumpu (now Shizuoka) for an audience with Ieyasu, before heading to Edo to meet with Tokugawa Hidetada, Ieyasu's son and nominal *shōgun* at the time. The party arrived

with gifts and a letter from King James I to "the highe and mightie the Emperour of Japan, etc", in which he addressed Ieyasu as an equal and posited that trade between Britain and Japan would be mutually beneficial; a point upon which Ieyasu apparently agreed (Massarella, 2000: p 5). Saris returned to England with two sets of varnished armour as gifts for James I, and with Ieyasu's *shuinjō*, a Red Seal permit that granted a number of privileges, most notably the right for British merchants to engage in free trade without customs or duties; the right to land British ships in any port in Japan; and the right for Englishmen to build their own houses that they could both reside in and trade from (Massarella and Tytler, 1990: pp 197-198). The Hirado factory was established later that year and placed under the control of East India Company employee Richard Cocks.

Optimism about this arrangement proved to be misplaced. Cocks became frustrated by the trading conditions in Japan, resenting that the British were expected to offer gifts to the *daimyō* (which was seen as an unofficial customs duty) and feeling that the privileges granted under the *shuinjō* were unfairly curtailed in 1616, when British commerce was restricted to Hirado and Nagasaki and they were only permitted to deal with the *itowappu* guild, made up of merchants from Edo, Kyoto, Osaka, Sakai and Nagasaki, for the trade of textiles (that the Japanese would have been subject to similar exactions had they chosen to export goods to England was apparently lost on Cocks) (Massarella, 2000: p 8). The Hirado factory also fell victim to mismanagement, with East India Company directors in England failing to think of it as being distinct from their other Far East factories in Ayutthaya and Patani, which led to a failure to understand and exploit the local market in Hirado:

> The English company, founded in 1600 to secure spices and sell English manufactures, opened settlements in Siam and Patani in 1612 and in Japan in 1613. The growing hostility of the Japanese government towards Europeans, particularly after 1616, the failure to find the expected market for English manufactures there, and the severe trade depression in Siam and Patani had quickly discouraged the directors in London. [...] Because the factory of the London

Company in Hirado had been established for selling national manufactures, particularly broadcloth, its success or failure was measured by that criterion alone; practically no effort was made to exploit the demand in Japan for the hides, silk, and sappanwood procurable in Siam and Patani. Shortage of capital is not an adequate explanation for the failure of English merchants in this quarter of Asia: even the limited stock available was used in the most inane manner. (Bassett, 1960: pp 34-35)

The Hirado factory was closed down and abandoned in 1623. In 1633, Tokugawa Iemitsu announced his isolationist foreign policy, *sakoku*, which closed Japan off to the outside world. For the next 220 years it was largely forbidden to either enter or leave Japan, and while there was still some international trade, it operated only from the ports in Nagasaki and was open exclusively to the Netherlands, China, and Korea. This remained the case until 1853 when Commodore Matthew Perry, under instructions from US President Millard Fillmore, arrived in Edo Bay and intimidated the Japanese into reopening the country, resulting in the signing of the 1854 Convention of Kanagawa and the opening of ports in Shimoda and Hakodate to American trade. This in turn led to the creation of the Anglo-Japanese Friendship Treaty in October of 1854.

Vice Admiral James Stirling arrived in Nagasaki in September 1854 and, along with a Queen's Proclamation declaring war on Russia, he delivered a letter to the *bugyō* (governor) of Nagasaki setting out his demands for a treaty. There was little reason for the Japanese to pay any real attention to the demands of the British, but nonetheless the *bugyō* acknowledged receipt of the letter and said that it needed to be delivered to the *shōgun* in Edo, so the British would have to wait for a month to receive word back. Stirling soon grew impatient and, well before the month had passed, threatened to travel directly to Edo to seek his response in person. After much pleading from the *bugyō* he was ultimately persuaded to stay in Nagasaki, and finally word came back from Edo authorising the drafting of a convention (Fox, 1941: pp 413-416).

Stirling did not actually have the diplomatic authority to draft anything – for this reason he had not even been able to secure the services of a suitable translator, instead recruiting Yamamoto Otokichi, an uneducated Japanese castaway, and relying on unofficial support from Donker Curtius, the chief of the Dutch factory at Dejima. Written communications from Stirling were translated by Curtius into Dutch so that they could be translated into Japanese by the *bugyō*'s own interpreters; communications returned by the *bugyō* in Japanese were read aloud so that Otokichi, who could not read or write kanji, could translate by ear. The result was a number of translation difficulties, especially since Stirling's letters were written using "the language of Western diplomacy, which did not correspond to any normal vocabulary in the Japanese of that period nor to any ideas familiar to Japanese officials," and was challenging for the inexperienced Japanese interpreters (Beasley, 1950: p 754). This may have worked in his favour, however – Stirling's letters were mistranslated in ways that also somewhat changed the tone of his requests, and the Japanese, being mindful of the terms of the Kanagawa treaty, agreed to terms that went beyond Stirling's original draft, and Stirling happily attempted to expand on these terms as much as possible. Among these expansions was an insistence on a "most favoured nation" clause, which was queried by the *bugyō* on the basis that the Chinese and Dutch had been trading in Japan for far longer than the British and therefore they should not enjoy fewer privileges than newcomers. The eventual form of the clause granted British ships and subjects "enjoyment of an equality of advantages with those of the most favoured nation, always excepting the advantages accruing to the Dutch and Chinese from their existing relations with Japan." (Fox, 1941: pp 417-418)

When a compromise was finally reached, Stirling proudly wrote back to England, saying "I am firmly convinced we occupy at present a high position in the estimation of the Japanese." (Stirling in Fox, 1941: p 421) The actual agreement that was reached, however, favoured the Japanese, and it was not well-received among the British, either at home or in other parts of the Far East. Of particular concern was the inclusion of a clause that stated: "When this Convention shall be ratified, no high officer coming to Japan shall

alter it" (Fox, 1941; p 419), apparently meaning that nothing could be done in the future to revise any terms the British were unhappy with. The editors of the *China Mail* in Hong Kong were particularly scathing, saying Stirling had "achieved nothing creditable to the arms of his country and something rather discreditable to his own diplomacy," and deriding Parliament for agreeing to build a steam yacht, as per Stirling's request and at a cost of £10,000, as a gift for the *shōgun* (Fox, 1941: p 427).

The yacht was completed in 1857 and its delivery presented an opportunity for the British to renegotiate Stirling's treaty. Lord Elgin, who was already in China to negotiate the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin, volunteered to deliver the yacht and use it as a means of introduction so that a new treaty with Japan, based on the American Treaty of Amity and Commerce negotiated by Townsend Harris in July 1858, could be created. He brought the yacht to Edo and then refused repeated attempts by the Japanese to have him deliver it elsewhere, insisting on opening negotiations while he was there (Beasley, 1995: pp 186-187). The resulting Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce was an unequal treaty that vastly favoured the British and gave Japan semi-colonial status, permitting a British representative to permanently reside in Edo, opening the ports of Hakodate, Kanagawa, Nagasaki and Hyōgo to British commerce, and permitting British subjects to travel within 25 miles of each of these ports and to reside in Edo and Osaka. The treaty also granted extraterritoriality to British subjects in Japan, meaning that British subjects were not subject to Japanese laws and could not be tried by Japanese courts. Unsurprisingly, the result was constant tension (Hoare, 2000: pp 108-110).

One noteworthy incident during this time was the Namamugi Incident of 1862, wherein a group of four British subjects – merchants Charles Richardson, William Marshall, and Woodthorpe C Clarke, along with Marshall's sister-in-law, Margaret Borrodaile – were travelling on a sightseeing tour along the Tōkaidō Road from Kanagawa to Kawasaki, south-west of Edo. Near the village of Namamugi, the group encountered a large, armed retinue of samurai escorting Shimazu Hisamitsu, the regent to

the *daimyō* of Satsuma Domain, as he returned to Kyoto. Reports of what happened next vary depending on whether they are told by the British or the Japanese, but what is key is that the British, who had not dismounted from their horses to allow the group to pass as would be expected of Japanese travellers, found themselves in the middle of the retinue and were attacked by the samurai. Marshall and Clarke were injured and Richardson, who fell from his horse after the attack, was killed.

This incident represents a clash of cultures with a number of contributing factors. Neither country held a high opinion of the other; the British thought of non-Europeans as uncivilised compared to themselves, while the Japanese, who were growing increasingly frustrated with the presence of foreigners as a result of the post-Perry unequal treaties, considered Europeans to be "barbarians who do not understand morality, humanity, or justice; they are merely clever at what is profitable" (Hashimoto and Scheiner, 1987: pp 71-72). The use of the Tōkaidō Road by foreigners was also a point of contention – although they had a right to use it, it was mainly used not by ambassadors but by private citizens indulging in sightseeing, as the Richardson party had been, and the Japanese were becoming increasingly annoyed by their attitude. It is likely that if Richardson and the others had dismounted, removed their hats, and let the retinue pass, they would have experienced no trouble from the samurai, but given Richardson's background in China, where he witnessed how British imperial might dominated the Chinese, it was probably inevitable that a clash would occur: "Richardson probably did not think it the right of any Asian, no matter how powerful, to be allowed to pass; yielding even the smallest part of the road would have seemed an act of great generosity. [...] Until just before the moment of contact, the samurai's menacing looks and attitude of suppressed anger had not entered into Richardson's world at all because those actions occurred in an alien dimension" (Hashimoto and Scheiner, 1987: pp 77-78).

The British demanded reparations for the Namamugi Incident from the shogunate, saying that the killing of Richardson was a violation of the extraterritoriality agreed in the terms of Elgin's treaty. Satsuma responded by

saying they were not bound by the terms of the treaty and had done nothing wrong, as Richardson had committed an impropriety and it was unavoidable that he was cut down; the fact that he was killed by a samurai after falling from his horse was an act of mercy, as he was fatally wounded. The shogunate was caught in the middle and attempted to calm the situation, but the British were insistent, bringing a fleet of ships into Kagoshima Bay and leading to the Bombardment of Kagoshima, a short and relatively bloodless conflict that ended in a British retreat (Hanashiro in Perez, 2013: pp 167-168).

Ironically this was the beginning of something of an alliance between the Satsuma and the British. Satsuma was actually broadly in favour of modernisation and was growing increasingly discontented with the shogunate. The Satsuma agreed to pay £25,000 reparations, then began to focus on destabilising the shogunate while the British became increasingly forceful about the implementation of the terms of the Stirling and Elgin treaties under the management of Consul-General Sir Harry Parkes from 1865 onwards (Hoare, 2000: p 110). The Tokugawa shogunate finally collapsed, returning power to the Imperial throne and beginning the Meiji Restoration.

Sir Harry Parkes remained as Consul-General until 1883, and while he initially worked well with the Japanese by maintaining a veneer of neutrality while pushing for British interests, by 1868 his reputation among the Japanese was less flattering, known for "his dogged pursuit of British interests and for advice to the rulers of Japan which was clearly sometimes delivered in a hectoring and aggressive tone" (Hoare, 2000: p 112). His belief that his advice was given (and should absolutely be followed) for the benefit of the Japanese, combined with his willingness to intervene on behalf of British employees if he suspected they were being misused by Japanese employers, did not endear him to the Japanese. Parkes' successors gradually softened their approach to dealing with the Japanese, and in 1893 the British agreed to abandon the Stirling and Elgin treaties. The 1894 Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, which came into force in

1899, heralded the end of the era of unequal treaties and of British extraterritoriality. But this did not fully ease the tensions between Britain and Japan, in part because the concessions came over a decade too late for the Japanese, which "created a sense of arrogance among foreigners and a sense of grievance among Japanese" (Hoare, 2000: p 123).

The signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, and its subsequent revisions in 1905 and 1911, was a great boon to both countries. It enabled Britain to adjust its approach to international relations, as the business of managing a worldwide empire became increasingly complicated. For the Japanese, an alliance with a global superpower provided a support structure and sense of status as Japan expanded its own international presence (Steeds, 2000: pp 197-198). The 1905 revisions secured Japan's control over Korea following the Russo-Japanese War, and also acted as what Britain hoped would be a deterrent to Russia potentially expanding into British territory in Central Asia by including a clause that compelled the Japanese to immediately come to Britain's aid in the event of an attack on British territories in Asia (Steeds, 2000: p 207). In 1907, amid European concerns about Germany's growing military strength, a series of treaties were signed that strengthened Britain against Germany and Japan against the United States (Steeds, 2000: pp 209-210). However, over the next few years British feelings towards the Japanese began to sour. This was partly because the alliance was adversely affecting Anglo-American relations, but also because Japan's rapid modernisation from the late nineteenth century onwards increasingly provoked anxieties in Britain, giving rise to a perception of the Japanese being "inscrutable" and fundamentally standing in defiance of European conventions (Hashimoto and Scheiner, 1987: p 89). But while diplomatic relations between Britain and Japan were largely tense in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was also at this time a growing interest in Japanese art, crafts, and culture among British citizens, as Japanese textiles, ornaments, and accessories became increasingly in demand. However, despite this surface-level interest, the duality of British perceptions of Japan – simple and fascinating, but also mysterious and "Other" – can also be seen in the responses to the various works of

Japanese art that arrived in Britain at the time. Furthermore, many of these responses can be seen to be echoed in late twentieth-century treatments of Japanese art and culture in the British press, politics and society.

British Responses to Japanese Art in the Nineteenth Century

Although there is evidence of Japanese art and craft being exported to Europe in the seventeenth century – the suits of armour sent as a gift following Saris's visit, for example, or Japanese swords, which were desired for their artistry and used to represent wealth, travel, or exoticism in Dutch paintings (Schola Gladiatoria, 2018: 03:15-06:35) – it was only after the Elgin treaty that the British became fully enamoured of Japanese art and aesthetics. This is largely attributed to the International Exhibition, the second world's fair to be held in London, between May and November 1862.

This was the first world's fair to include an exhibit representing Japan, and the second exhibition purely dedicated to Japanese art in Britain (the first having been in Pall Mall in 1854) (Watanabe, 1984: p 669). It was almost entirely stocked with items from the personal collection of Sir Rutherford Alcock, who had been Consul-General (and the first British diplomat to live in Japan) from 1858 until 1864, when he was succeeded by Sir Harry Parkes (Hoare, 2000: p 111). Alcock was extremely taken with Japanese art pieces, and details his shopping trips in different cities in Japan, many of which were for display at the International Exhibition, in his memoirs:

> The first day [in Osaka] we gave up almost entirely to shopping and the theatre [...] We were taken to some silk shops that were on a large scale, larger it seemed than the largest in [Edo], and the display of goods was in proportion [...] I made a selection of tapestry, embroidery, and silks, according to my feeble lights in such matters feminine [...] A very quaint and elegant hanging night lamp, and an elegantly carved *chauffrette* for charcoal, alone took my fancy, and these, to my surprise, I obtained without difficulty, at a moderate price [...] In passing through one of the streets, a quaint grotesque-looking piece of earthenware caught my eye, and long before my *yakonins*

[official government escorts] could wheel from the front, or come up from the rear embarrassed by the crowd, I had both priced and appropriated it, and was already deep in the farther recesses of the store, with a perfect wealth of 'palissy' pottery, with raised fishes, and fruit gathered about me, and for the most part priced, when the obstructives arrived [...] Some very perfect eggshell china also was picked up here; and when we left there must have been a great vacuum on the shelves. (Alcock, 1863: pp 110-112)

... we passed through a clean, flourishing, well-to-do little town called [Arimatsu], celebrated in Japan for the manufacture of a peculiar stuff for ladies' dresses. It was certainly the most *comfortable* looking town we had seen; and we stopped to buy several specimens, which, on the principle already intimated of doubt as to my own capacity for choosing what might be deemed wearable by my fair countrywomen, were duly despatched after the silks and tapestry, to the Exhibition, to take their place in the class of 'textile fabrics' from Japan. (Alcock, 1863: p 146)

But while Alcock gave the impression of a man well-versed in art and craftsmanship, feeling qualified to say that "in all the mechanical arts, the Japanese have unquestionably achieved great excellence [...] I have no hesitation in saying they not only rival the best products of Europe, but can produce in each of these departments works we cannot imitate, or perhaps equal," (while also haughtily adding that "No Japanese can produce anything to be named in the same day with a work from the pencil of a Landseer, a Roberts, or a Stanfield, a Lewis, or Rosa Bonheur, whether in oil or watercolours") (Alcock, 1863: pp 280-281), his collection at the International Exhibition was less joyously assessed by the First Japanese Embassy to Europe, who visited the fair while they were in London. One official said of the collection, "sadly everything that has been sent [from Japan] is very lowly, and it is unfortunate that [the goods] are inferior to [those of] all the other countries" (Takashima in Foxwell, 2009: p 40). Another said the collection was "unbearable to look at [...] a miscellaneous heap of objects from an antique shop." (Fuchibe in Foxwell, 2009: p 40)

Nonetheless the exhibition was a success among British visitors, and a number of the artefacts displayed were purchased for exhibition by the South

Kensington Museum (now the V&A), or for sale by Farmer and Rogers of Regent Street, where the young Arthur Lasenby Liberty worked – he would go on to found Liberty's department store in 1875, which was known for its Oriental collections (Watanabe, 1984: 670). 1875 also marked the expansion of William Whiteley's from a fancy goods shop to a department store, which included an Oriental department stocked with inexpensive fancy goods from Japan (Cheang, 2007: p 4). In response to this increased demand, along with the dismay felt by the shogunal officials at the International Exhibition, the Japanese began to take a more active role in supplying art pieces to the West, both for sale and exhibition. The Meiji government participated in its first world's fair in Vienna in 1873 (Foxwell, 2009: p 41), and with substantial funding from the South Kensington Museum, the Japanese statesman Sano Tsunetami curated "an historical collection of porcelain and pottery from the earliest period until the present time, to be formed in such a way as to give fully the history of the art," which was then displayed in the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, the first world's fair in the United States (Jackson, 1992: p 245). However, if the goal was to present the West with a more accurate vision of Japanese fine art than Alcock had done in 1862, the Japanese efforts quickly hit a stumbling block: "artists, exporters, and cultural administrators in Japan were aware of the Western interest in all things Japanese; the main question was how to direct it in a way that would be economically and politically profitable for Japan. This turned out to be a delicate manoeuvre because of the Japanese sensitivity toward *Japonisme*'s primitivising tendencies, and because Westerners turned out to prefer ancient Japanese pieces over modern ones." (Foxwell, 2009: p 45)

Following the end of *sakoku* and the reopening of Japan to the West, there was a belief – considered to be only natural by the British, given Japan's extended period of isolation – that Japanese civilisation had ground to a halt over the previous two centuries, and therefore it was a nostalgic wonderland, simpler and happier than the progressive West (Jackson, 1992: p 247). Indeed, Japan was imagined to be more akin to the Middle Ages than Victorian England, and that Japanese people were primitive and childlike: "it was believed that mental differences meant that while Western man

intellectualized, the Japanese experienced directly. The intuitive, perceptual way of dealing with the world in the East was constructed in opposition to the Western rational, introspective, abstract mode of comprehension" (Jackson, 1992: p 247). This in turn fed into Western expectations of Japanese art, with collections and exhibitions being gleefully met with assessments of "quaint," "curious," "graceful," "pure in form," or "ingenious" by the British (Watanabe, 1984: p 681), and Japanese craftsmen were "praised for not attempting innovation, whereas the British example of ceramics from Lambeth demonstrated what could be done 'by fresh energy working with knowledge and judgement'" (Jackson, 1992: p 247). Praise of Japanese art at the time emphasised its exoticism, its difference to anything British – its Otherness – as its primary desirable trait, and this extended beyond mere works of art to also describe the Native Japanese Village built in Knightsbridge in 1885.

Organised and opened by Tannaker Buhicrosan, a British entrepreneur who had spent some time in Japan, the exhibition was intended to "show his fellow British citizens that the Japanese were not a race of semi-barbarians," and to this end over 100 Japanese people, including 26 women and children, were brought to England to build and inhabit the Village and demonstrate aspects of everyday Japanese life for the British visitors (McLaughlin, 2007). Familiar descriptors appeared in British responses to the Village: "The words 'strange,' 'merry,' 'content,' 'little,' 'childlike,' 'simple-minded,' and 'grotesque' appear again and again throughout Village descriptions" (Williams, 2017a: p 3). Many news reports of the time insisted on the authenticity of the Village, such as the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent who said "Here we find a Village transplanted with strict fidelity in every particular from the Land of the Rising Sun", and a writer for *The Children's Friend* went so far as to say she had "paid a highly interesting visit to a foreign country this morning, without the aid of that 'magic carpet' or 'wishing ring' which, in fairy stories, is considered necessary in order to accomplish such an undertaking" (Williams, 2017a: p 2).

A popular myth is that the Village was a direct inspiration for William Gilbert in writing *The Mikado*, which premiered at the Savoy Theatre two months

after the Village opened to the public. In fact, Gilbert had begun work on the libretto for *The Mikado* in 1884, and in 1882 he had commented on the British fascination with Japan through the character of Bunthorne in *Patience* (McLaughlin, 2007). What does appear to be true, however, was his desire for authenticity, inviting a male dancer and a tea girl who were employed at the Village to come and work with the *Mikado* cast and teach them "Japanese deportment [...] how to walk or run or dance in tiny steps with toes turned in, as gracefully as possible; how to spread and snap the fan either in wrath, delight, or homage, and how to giggle behind it" (Cellier and Bridgeman in Williams, 2017b: p 2). Just as with the Japanese Village, the perceived authenticity of *The Mikado* was a great success with British audiences and critics alike: "Opera reviewers [...] discussed the 'fidelity of characterisation' and the 'characteristics of Japanese art [that] are reproduced with wonderful fidelity in the scenery, costumes, and groupings'. One reviewer wrote, '*The Mikado* is richly and beautifully mounted, and is realistic to a hair. We are in Japan'" (Williams, 2017b: p 2).

However, while the Village and *The Mikado* may have served to further endear Japan to the British, neither did much to humanise Japanese people, and instead reinforced the belief that Japan was quaint and primitive. The Village led its visitors to think of the Japanese people working there as simply part of the scenery, indiscernible from any other work of art in an exhibition (Williams, 2017a: p 3), while *The Mikado* reduced Japan to "a world of characters whose Japanese nature was identified in terms of art objects such as fans, screens, and vases," and Japaneseness to little more than a costume that could be worn by Westerners and even be more convincing than "the real thing" (Williams, 2017b: pp 2-3). This all, along with the art collections that were so successful and popular at the time, fundamentally served to maintain a notion of Japan with which the British could feel comfortable: "Like children, the English dealt with an other, unknown culture by turning it into something knowable, something very Victorian: safe, proper, and comprehensible" (Beckerman, 1989: p 318).

At the same time, Jackson theorises, compartmentalising Japan in this way helped Westerners to ease their own anxiety about the rate of social or industrial progress closer to home. "The lives of these supposedly simple, innocent, primitive Japanese people could be viewed with escapist longing by those coming to terms with the complexities of life in the industrialized West" (Jackson, 1992: p 250). And this escapism was easily rocked, as can be observed in any discussion about Japanese art pieces or exhibitions that were made using European techniques, or for the purpose of display in Western exhibitions. Designer Christopher Dresser, an enthusiast of Japanese art, feared that "the art works of Japan have deteriorated to a lamentable extent" as a result of exposure to the West (Dresser in Jackson, 1992: p 250). In response to the Philadelphia exhibition, reporters commented that the erection of a Japanese dwelling "was built 'with curious tools and yet more curious manual processes,'" but also that they were "disappointed when the Japanese working at the exhibition did not seem to conform to the Western image of Japan as the exotic East" (Jackson, 1992: pp 247-248). Commentaries on the Philadelphia collection itself were vague and general, unlike the more specific comments that were usually levelled at displayed pieces at international fairs – and this was despite the Japanese having provided a translated catalogue to accompany the collection which listed numerous details about the works, including craftsmen's names (Jackson, 1992: p 247).

In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes Orientalism as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience," later adding that it is "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said, 1978: pp 1-2). A third definition is also given, defining Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, 1978: p 3). Said mainly used the term "Orientalism" to refer to Western European perceptions of North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, these being the regions that had been most affected by imperialism and colonialism. However, in these early interactions between Britain and Japan, it is clear

that there is an Orientalist dynamic at work that fits, at various times, with each of these definitions. John Stirling's arrival in Japan and techniques for negotiating trade were apparently carried by little more than a belief in British superiority and a desire not to lose out to either the Russians or the Americans. We see this mentality too in the way that Lord Elgin held a gift for the *shōgun* to ransom so he could demand a renegotiation of Stirling's treaty; we see it in Harry Parkes and his determination that "Japan's new rulers should listen to his advice [and] accept his interpretation of what was best for Japan" (Hoare, 2000: p112); in Charles Richardson, even when faced with a heavily armed retinue of samurai, not thinking for a moment that there was any possibility that his actions could be met with dire consequences (Hashimoto and Scheiner, 1987: pp 77-78). And in the late nineteenth-century fascination for Japanese arts, crafts and culture we see the praise for Japanese artisans and people given structure and definition by the fact that it is all so different to the familiar British experience, particularly in the sense that it is considered astonishing that the Japanese could attain such beauty and ingenuity despite – and, indeed, because of – its isolation from the West.

All of this is a clear demonstration of Said's argument. It is not enough that Britain is perceived as superior and progressive while Japan is primitive and simplistic – they must also remain that way, lest some vital essence of national identity be lost. Thus the disappointed responses to modernised Japanese art and the knowledge that Japanese people were beginning to adopt Western styles of clothing, even though kimono and other Japanese clothing and accessories were being eagerly bought by fashionable middle-class Britons in upscale London department stores. As Jackson explains:

> Japan's [modernisation] programmes had been initiated so that the country would be on a parity with Western powers rather than be dominated by them. But the achievements of modern Japan were received with coolness in Britain and viewed as hollow imitations of the accomplishments of its betters. Britain found it increasingly difficult to define itself in contrast to the 'other' that was Japan, because Japan was becoming increasingly like Britain. Its 'otherness' was becoming blurred. [...] The anxieties this produced led to British commentators

retreating into 'Old Japan' and stressing the unchanging aspects of the country. (Jackson, 1992: pp 251-252)

This dynamic is described by Rey Chow as a variation of Freudian "melancholia", the existence of "a person who cannot get over the loss of a precious, loved object and who ultimately introjects this loss into his ego" (Chow, 1993: p 3). Chow invokes this with specific regard to sinologist Stephen Owen, who in reviewing an English translation of the Chinese poetry collection *The August Sleepwalker* complained that the work of non-Western poets was "no longer distinguished by a true national identity", and that "the 'disease of modern Chinese poetry' is that it is too Westernised" (Chow, 1993: pp 1-2). Tonally this complaint barely differs from the British response to Japanese art intended for Western audiences: "Westerners [...] frequently expressed the desire for a Japan that was literally frozen in the past, lest all that was different and admirable about it 'should disappear under the withering influence of European contact'" (Foxwell, 2009: p 49). The Orientalist melancholic, Chow says, has an outlet for his sense of loss, and he turns it on the people from the culture that he feels he has lost. They have betrayed the truth of their existence, and in so doing, betrayed him. "This is the anxiety that the Chinese past which he has undertaken to penetrate is evaporating and that the sinologist himself is the abandoned subject" (Chow, 1993: p 4). Chow expands this dynamic even further in her description of "the Maoist", a "special sibling" of the Orientalist that was "the phoenix which arose from the ashes of the great disillusionment with Western culture in the 1960s and which found hope in the Chinese Communist Revolution" (Chow, 1993: pp 10). Likewise, we can see this in the Victorians with their "escapist longing" in the context of the growing complexities of life in an industrialised West (Jackson, 1992: 250), while reporters from the Japanese Village said that "life goes very easily in Japan, I fancy. There are few demands made either by society or climate, and living is usually very simple," and commented on the "free-and-easy" existence of the Japanese in the Village (Williams, 2017a: p 3).

As Japan modernised and sought out a means of defining itself in relation to the West, "the consequent blurring of 'difference' created anxieties in Britain's relationship with this newly rediscovered nation" (Jackson, 1992: p 245). This gradually turned the gleeful curiosity of the British to a fearful sense of unfamiliarity regarding the Japanese, and it wasn't long until this turned to suspicion and an idea that "the country is so 'extraordinarily strange and foreign' that Westerners cannot understand it" (Hammond, 1999: p 314). This Othering of Japan was by no means exclusive to Britain – as Morley and Robins point out, the so-called "problem of Japan" has also been noted in American and French commentary, generally using similar language that casts the Japanese as suspicious, alien, and threatening, at once "the chrysanthemum and the sword" (1995: pp 147-148). Morley and Robins also argue that this "Japan Panic" is not merely an artefact of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but an ongoing process that continues to shape Japan as an Other to the West, particularly as the country's rapid modernisation has "destabilised the neat correlation between West/East and modern/pre-modern […] Japan can no longer be stereotyped as the 'Orient'; it is not possible to marginalise or dismiss Japanese modernity as some kind of anomaly. Its distinctiveness insists that we take it seriously. And, at the same time, it insists that we seriously consider the implications of this for the West's own sense of privilege and security" (p 160). From the mid-'80s to the early '90s, with Japanese companies investing in Western businesses and cultural endeavours (including Sony and Matsushita's respective purchases of Columbia Pictures and MCA-Universal) along with the country gaining an international reputation technical innovation, this anxiety shifted to "techno-Orientalism", acknowledging Japan's modernity while repositioning the same old stereotypes. The Japanese were no longer barbarians with no sense of human civility; instead, with their technological advances, they were robots with no sense of humanity (p 172), and either way they were not to be trusted. Intriguingly, both stereotypes remained on display in the British press at this time, and this set the stage for the way anime was received in the UK in the '90s.

Perceptions and Representations of Japan in '90s and '00s Britain

The '90s are a particularly interesting time to examine British perceptions of and responses to Japan, for a number of reasons. 1991 marked the centenary of the Japan Society of the UK, which was celebrated with a nationwide festival of Japanese culture. 1995 saw a number of major events that attracted Japan-related news coverage in the British press, most prominently the Kobe Earthquake in January, the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack in March, and the 50th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day in August. The '80s and '90s also saw the beginnings of what would grow into the "Cool Japan" movement of the 2000s, and the early '90s also saw the arrival of anime releases like *Akira*, *Fist of the North Star*, and *Legend of the Overfiend* in the UK (Wells, 1992: p 70) – titles that were neither Japanese-European co-productions (e.g., *Ulysses 31*, 1981; *Mysterious Cities of Gold*, 1982) nor localised edits of existing Japanese animated series (e.g., *Marine Boy*, 1969; *Battle of the Planets*, 1978). In this section I will explore the ways in which Japan was represented by the British media during this period, and how this impacted the development of early anime fandom in the UK.

Coverage of Japan in British newspapers was the subject of two separate studies in the '90s: Douglas Anthony's *Reporting Japan: British Media Attitudes Towards a Nation and a People* in 1991, which was conducted for the Japanese Study Centre at the University of Wales; and Taga Toshiyuki's *The Image of Japan as Appeared in British Newspapers*, conducted during Taga's time as a Visiting Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs between 1996 and 1997. Both used similar methodologies, tallying the stories written substantially about Japan and printed in a selection of British newspapers over a six-month period, and using this data to analyse the overall tone used in each story. Anthony's study also incorporated the daily output of Reuters News Agency during this period – 1,238 items in total – in order to assess the number and types of news stories that were potentially available to press outlets, explaining that as Reuters is "a kind of 'wholesaler' of news," its reports are "generally couched in straightforward, non-emotive

terms," so any tone that appears in the same stories, once published in a newspaper, has been consciously added by the newspaper reporters and/or editors (Anthony, 1991: p 3).

Anthony's study ran from January to June of 1991 and incorporated 33 newspapers, which included all of the national daily and Sunday newspapers and a selection of regional papers deemed to be of suitable importance. Both the daily and the Sunday national newspapers were also subcategorised – the "serious" papers (broadsheets – *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Financial Times*, and these papers' Sunday editions where they exist), the "tabloids" (the *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, *The Sun*, *The People*, *News of the World*, and *Sunday Mirror*), and "intermediates" that existed between these two groups (*Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Today*, *The Mail on Sunday*, and *Sunday Express*) (Anthony, 1991: p 4). News stories printed during the study period were also categorised as "Positive" ("a story or report that gives – whether mistakenly or not in our opinion – favourable treatment to the Japanese achievement"), "Negative" (stories or reports "judged to have a negative slant because of the language used" or which "[undervalue] Japanese achievements in the economic [...] political, social or cultural spheres"), or "Neutral" (where "no attempt can be detected in the intention of the author to draw or infer conclusions from them that are either 'favourable' or 'unfavourable' towards Japan") (Anthony, 1991: pp 5-6).

Anthony's study concluded that, for a variety of reasons – mainly financial, as the cost of maintaining correspondents in Japan was beyond the budgets of most newspapers (Anthony, 1991: pp 13-14), and linguistic, as only one of the correspondents Anthony interviewed was sufficiently fluent to be able to conduct interviews and research in Japanese (Anthony, 1991: p 16) – British newspapers devote comparatively little space to news stories about Japan, with the notable exception of the *Financial Times*. It also concluded that reporting on Japan was, for the most part, neutral overall, with economic reports – either of the Japanese economy or the impact of Japanese business activities on the British economy – being the most prevalent.

Positive reporting tended to focus on Japanese automotive or technological developments, and sometimes took a tone of "let's learn from the Japanese". However, such reporting was "not numerous", and across all of the daily newspapers (again with the exception of the *Financial Times*), stories about Japan were markedly more likely to have a negative slant than a positive one (Anthony, 1991: p 19). This was particularly the case with the tabloid subcategory, with the *Daily Star* having nine out of 16 stories classified as negative while just four were positive, while *The Sun* had 15 out of 20 stories classified as negative and none positive (Anthony, 1991: p 6). Even among the broadsheets, negative stories tended to outnumber positive ones by three to one. Negative stories also tended to take two forms – one of moral superiority, reporting on Japanese dolphin and whale hunting, wartime atrocities, or the Japanese contribution to the Gulf War effort; or, more commonly, stories that emphasised the strangeness and difference of the Japanese, which Anthony calls "Funny J*ps" stories. The language used by *The Sun* and *Daily Star* were also singled out as being particularly vicious, with headlines such as "Banzai Butchers" and "Banquet of Blood" and lurid descriptors like "sickening" and "gorge" used in reports on whale hunting. "It would be hard," Anthony says, "to draw a distinction between [*The Sun* and the *Daily Star*] when it comes to viciousness, vacuity and sheer negative spitefulness in their treatment of most items on Japan." (Anthony, 1991: p 7)

Taga's study also monitored British press coverage of Japan over a six-month period, this time from January to June of 1996, using the same daily and Sunday broadsheet newspapers sampled in Anthony's study. The study also incorporated *The Economist*, on the basis that its influence both within the UK and abroad is "considerable," and Taga also adds that "the articles of the tabloids were also studied especially when they concerned rather sensational events" (Taga, 1997: p 2). While Taga does not categorise stories in this period as "Positive", "Negative" or "Neutral", as Anthony did, he is specific about the subjects covered in each month, categorising them as "Internal Politics", "External Relations", and "Other Topics". Most of the stories published during this period were political – Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi stepped down in January and was replaced by Hashimoto Ryūtarō,

who was immediately charged with settling the issue of housing loan companies with bad debts and, as a result, overhauling the Ministry of Finance. International relations with the US in particular came into the spotlight as three American soldiers stationed in Okinawa were found guilty of kidnapping and raping a 12-year-old Japanese girl, and debates continued about the US military presence in Japan; numerous questions were also asked about Japan's role in international security and defence, and the issue of Korean-Japanese relations arose through ongoing debates about sovereignty over the Liancourt Rocks – "Takeshima" to Japan and "Dokdo" to Korea – in the Sea of Japan. The details of the Sumitomo copper affair, a major financial scandal at one of the world's largest general trading companies, were also uncovered and widely reported on. Other events of note in this period were the beginning of the trial of Aum Shinrikyo leader Asahara Shōkō; speculation about the future of the Japanese Imperial Family, whose two Crown Princes had yet to produce a male heir; and numerous reports of racial discrimination and unfair dismissal in Japanese companies based in the UK.

While there is little that is unusual about the fact that these events were subjects for international reporting, Taga also highlights the tone used by British press outlets in their reports, as well as instances where the British press attempted to explain or contextualise certain aspects of the stories – for example, the Asahara court case was used to highlight the differences between the British and Japanese legal systems (Taga, 1997: pp 64-65), and in reporting on the Japanese Imperial Family's questions of succession, *The Independent* made numerous comparisons with the British Royal Family in a manner that was both admiring and grudging (Taga, 1997: pp 45-48). Taga notes that a Japanese reader of many of the stories published in British newspapers would at best be "surprised" – for example, in the many comparisons between Prime Minister Hashimoto and Elvis Presley, and descriptions of him as having "a very un-Japanese sense of irony and sarcastic humour" (Taga, 1997: p 10) – or at worst, somewhat offended – referring to an article published in *The Sunday Times* that compares the succession "crisis" of the Imperial Family to the impending extinction of the

crested ibis, Taga says "this article also has a tone of cynicism and even ridicule, which many Japanese, had they read it, would find unpleasant" (Taga, 1997: p 48). The "exoticness" and "difference" of Japan is also emphasised frequently, not just in "daily life" stories that Taga notes are more common during periods where there are fewer "spectacular incidents" to report on (Taga, 1997: p 3), but also as facets of major stories. For example, both *The Observer* and *The Independent*, in their stories on the housing loan company debt crisis, reported on the role played by the Yakuza in the situation and used a tone that painted it as exotic and exciting (Taga also notes that *The Observer* and *The Independent* were particularly fond of "reporting unusual and 'exotic' things about Japan") (Taga, 1997: pp 30-31). In reports on the Sumitomo copper affair, in which it emerged that the chief copper trader at the Sumitomo corporation had spent a decade making unauthorised trades and hidden losses of $1.8 billion (later revised to $2.6 billion), many newspapers printed articles that painted a picture of the scandal being a facet of Japanese corporate culture, rather than the actions of a rogue individual – Taga specifically assesses the report in *The Times* as being written in a way that "suggests an image of evil-minded Japanese corporate leaders trying to manipulate the market" (Taga, 1997: pp 85-86).

Taga also highlights a number of stories, published in *The Sunday Times*, *The Independent*, and *The Independent on Sunday*, about Japanese companies and investment in the UK. Each of these stories posits that the Japanese are too inescapably different from the UK – and furthermore, believe *themselves* to be inescapably different and unique – to ever truly achieve internationalisation, which results in sexual or racial discrimination in the workplace and the inability of British staff to earn promotions or strong rates of pay. As Taga points out, there is no reason why a Japanese businessman based in the UK should cease considering himself to be Japanese, just as there is generally no expectation that a British worker who goes overseas for work should relinquish his identity as a Briton. Nonetheless, in these stories Japanese companies are strongly criticised for their failure to integrate, and this is chalked up to cultural arrogance ("they think they're superior and are very proud of their success," says an

interviewee in *The Independent on Sunday*) and social backwardness, with an adherence to Confucianism being given as the reason for gender-related clashes in the workplace (Taga, 1997: pp 70-80).

Whether or not these criticisms have merit, when taken in the broader context of how Japan is portrayed in the British press these stories serve to paint a picture of Japan that is distant, stubborn, hamstrung by its own traditions, and thoroughly incomprehensible to the British. And while there are certainly practical factors that contribute to this, as highlighted by Anthony and reiterated by Tessa Mayes and Megan Rowling (1997), there does nonetheless seem to be a vested interest in continued negative portrayals of Japan in the British media during this period. Phil Hammond provides even more examples, many with specific regard to British coverage of the VJ Day celebrations in 1995, especially when contrasted with the VE Day celebrations in the same year:

> The different tone of the two occasions reflected the decision not to invite any Japanese representative to August's sombre commemoration of VJ Day, in contrast to the invitation extended to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to attend the celebratory festivities marking VE Day in May. The reaction of virtually all sections of the British press was loud approval. As the *Daily Mail* declared, 'there is a huge difference in the way we are treating these once mortal enemies. Rightly so' (6 January 1995). (Hammond, 1999: pp 314-315)

Hammond also highlights more examples of "Funny J*ps" stories, which he defines as "usually brief and trivial stories which highlight some bizarre event or exotic aspect of Japanese society or culture" (Hammond, 1999: p 312), and calls attention to instances of wilful defamiliarisation on the part of journalists when describing certain phenomena to make them seem more "Japanese." He quotes a June 1995 *Guardian* story that reads: "it is time to head for the indoor beach park, with its predictable waves, clean, rubberised sand-grained flooring and perfect weather – rain or shine [...] the concept is not that radical in Japan: attempts to improve on the environment have a long history. Japanese gardens are supposed to be cultivated and trimmed

into perfection. Nature is not expected to happen naturally" (Easton, 1995: p 12). As Hammond points out, the article has not in fact described alien and exotic concepts – indoor swimming pools and gardening, respectively, both of which were certainly familiar ideas in Britain in the mid '90s – but nonetheless used language that ostensibly shows "Japan's utter difference from the West" (Hammond, 1999: p 312).

In isolation, this would be peculiar, but not necessarily malicious. However, Hammond argues that the trivial nature of such stories means they are afforded little critical analysis, and when taken in bulk, they often lead from a funny anecdote to some attempt to rationalise about the Japanese psyche or "national character". Under the headline "Do Not Be Deceived – They Are the Deadliest of Friends," a *Daily Telegraph* article from November 1994 begins with a story about a Japanese visitor to the West purchasing the wrong kind of equestrian gear ("jodhpurs and hunting pink") for a weekend of cowboy-style horse-riding in Nevada, describes this error as "characteristically Japanese, stemming from minute attention to the detail of appearances, while remaining ignorant of the big picture," then incredibly uses this as groundwork for a claim that this "characteristic" clash between appearances and reality is what makes Japan threatening to the West: "Appearance offers no clue about the facts. In Japan, what you see is not what you get. The supremacy of presentation over reality is apparent everywhere and the Japanese don't try to hide it – they are proud of it. But the consequences are not confined to trivia. They extend to the core of society [...] Tokyo hates comparisons with repressive or backward countries, but they are unavoidable" (Gurdon, 1994: p 23).

Characterisation of the Japanese as "deceptive," and of things "not being as they seem," is common in the period Hammond examines, and the VJ Day celebrations in 1995 provide an excuse to amplify this portrayal. *The Guardian* describes the Japanese as "the people without guilt" and attributes this, through an anonymous Japanese commentator, to guilt being "a Judaeo-Christian concept" (Rafferty, 1995: p 12) and thus not felt by the Japanese. *The Daily Telegraph* takes its Othering of the Japanese even

further, describing them as "The Tribe That Can't Admit It Was Wrong" and cements this idea by saying:

> "The real truth, however, seems to centre on the fundamental belief that the Japanese hold about themselves, which is that they are different from all the rest of us – and not only different but superior. [...] It is one of their tribal customs not to admit that the tribe has done wrong, either in the present or the past. It would indeed be wrong to make such an admission: wrong for the tribe, wrong for any individual member. Do not expect an imminent breach of this central principle of theirs." (Keegan, 1995: p 17)

The overall message imparted by British newspaper reports is summed up by Bryan Appleyard, writing in *The Independent*: "The message of all such stories is: these guys are unbelievably weird. And, when combined with the economic stories, the message becomes: these guys are unbelievably weird and very frightening. They are taking over the world and are absolutely nothing like us" (Appleyard, 1994: p 19). But even though Appleyard is more introspective and critical of British stereotypes of Japan than most writers of the time, even describing Japan as "not simply a country, it is also a non-specific condition of the Western mind, the blank screen upon which we project our fantasies and terrors," he stops short of decrying these stereotypes altogether. The article is accompanied by an Aidan Potts cartoon that depicts a view, from between the legs of a gigantic sumo wrestler, of a cowering Uncle Sam and John Bull. It's easy to infer from this that Japan is a big, scary, faceless threat to the West.

Perhaps the most hostile treatment of Japan in the British press in the late twentieth to early twenty-first centuries was "Mad in Japan", an essay written by AA Gill for the *Sunday Times Magazine* in 2001 (pp 56-67). Gill declares that "You don't have to go to Japan to have an inkling that the Japanese are not as the rest of us are. In fact, they're decidedly weird [...] It's not that they're aliens, but they are the people that aliens might be if they'd learnt Human by correspondence course and wanted to slip in unnoticed". He later goes on to say, "The atomic bomb that wiped out Hiroshima, killing 140,000

people and reducing a wooden city to ash and black rain was, if you ask me, with the benefit of hindsight, all things considered, a good thing"; speculates that the religious mix of Shinto, Buddhism and Christianity in modern Japan means that "they believe everything and nothing [...] A Japanese man on his own doesn't think he exists. It's just a static, miserable round of corporate responsibility and filial duty"; sneers about high rates of suicide ("After schoolkids, retired men have the highest hara-kiri rate"); and decries the entire medium of manga as "those ubiquitous pornographic comic books [...] Nothing is as unnervingly sordid as manga, and nothing would so distress the European parents of a daughter. And the Japanese think less than nothing of it". That British men will openly read *The Sun* in public, with its topless models on Page 3, is apparently lost on Gill, and while this is addressed by Japanese expat and author Takao Keiko in an accompanying article by Lesley Downer ("We know it's not all English people who do this, just the stupid ones"), it consists of a mere couple of lines in a piece that does little else to balance Gill's article (Downer, 2001: p 67). Gill's evident hatred for Japan, which also appeared in his reviews of Japanese restaurants ("it's a pity you'll never know what your decorative plagiarised trinket civilisation looks like through sophisticated western eyes," he says, bizarrely, in his 2006 review of Saki (Gill, 2006: p 50)), encapsulates Anthony's point about "viciousness, vacuity and sheer negative spitefulness" in British journalism about Japan, as well as Hammond's analysis of the pervasive focus on cultural difference in British reporting as being an expression of "a coded form of racial thinking" and "implicitly seen as inferiority" (Hammond, 1999: pp 313-314).

When not being treated with explicit "fear and loathing" in the British media, as Hammond and Stirner (1997) describe it, Japan is often treated with a different form of curiosity – one that serves to simply poke fun at Japanese people and culture. Leaving aside serious documentaries about nature or society, a number of entertainment TV programmes that aired in the UK over the past 20 years have existed to illustrate "quirky Japan". *Eurotrash* dedicated two episodes to Japan in December 1995, subtitled "Under the Kimono"; Jonathan Ross's *Japanorama* aired on BBC Choice in 2002 before

moving to BBC Three from 2006-2007; comedy duo Adam Buxton and Joe Cornish explored Japanese life while also trying a number of stunts to make themselves "Big in Japan" in *Adam and Joe Go Tokyo* (BBC Three, 2003); two separate celebrity-fronted travelogue programmes aired under the title *Turning Japanese*, the first featuring Kelly Osborne (ITV2, 2007) and the second with Justin Lee Collins (Channel 5, 2011); Karl Pilkington visited Japan for an episode of *An Idiot Abroad* in 2011 and three episodes of *The Moaning of Life* in 2013 and 2015; and reality TV personality Charlotte Crosby dedicated an episode of TLC show *The Charlotte Crosby Experience* to Tokyo in 2014. All of these programmes featured similar contents – cosplay, high-tech toilets, capsule hotels, sexual products or services, and the annual *Kanamara Matsuri*, a spring fertility festival informally known as "the penis festival". Although arguably less aggressively hostile than the treatment given to Japan by British newspapers, the purpose of these programmes was to infantilise and other Japan in order to reinforce an overall image of the country as an incomprehensible wonderland where the mundanities of everyday life barely exist. And while some of these programmes did address the strange customs of other countries, few are so universally considered to be "weird" as Japan.

These portrayals of Japan in the British media – as a country and people so unrecognisably different to the West that they can never be understood – and the anxieties that accompany them in the press, echo Hashimoto and Scheiner's description of the English perceptions of Japan after the Namamugi Incident and the Bombardment of Kagoshima:

> As common ground between Japan and the West expanded [...] English uneasiness increased concerning differences they could not understand. Two new contradictory images of Japan appeared: sometimes it was a superior country, rare in Asia, standing within the hierarchy of advanced nations in which England occupied the summit; sometimes it was an 'inscrutable' country defying the advanced European nations. (Hashimoto and Scheiner, 1987: p 89)

While it is probably unlikely that the British need to portray Japan as threatening at worst and just plain weird at best is a direct result of some unconscious memory of events that took place over a century beforehand, the fact that such interpretations of Japan as being so "different" to Britain can be traced back to the late 1800s, and that examples can be found in diplomatic, military and cultural writings about Japan throughout this period, does somewhat suggest that this kind of thinking is, at best, habitual to the point that "the Japanese are weird" has become a truism. Given this history, it is unsurprising that when adult-oriented anime was first released in the UK, it was met with confusion and suspicion.

CHAPTER TWO

The Development of Anime Fandom in the UK

In addition to the tradition of British suspicion or derision of all things Japanese discussed in Chapter One, there was another factor that meant anime as an animation medium for adults was destined to have something of a bumpy landing when it arrived in the UK in the '90s. Animation as a whole was largely considered to be a medium for children, and while animated films that contained material that was not entirely suitable (or, indeed, wholly unsuitable) for children were not unheard of (e.g., *Fritz the Cat* (1972), *Heavy Metal* (1981), and *Watership Down* (1978), which reputedly "traumatised a generation" (Power, 2018: p 46)), such films were not as commonplace as they were to become in the '90s due to the marketing decisions of Manga Video and their imitators. These factors, combined with some unfortunate coincidences, resulted in a hostile environment that not only absorbed the medium of anime itself, but also the growing fandom in the UK.

In this chapter I will chart the development of UK anime fandom up to the end of the '90s, from the "pre-history" of anime being screened as localised cartoons to an unaware British audience to the rise of organised anime fandom in the UK, and examine the critical and opposing voices that arose from outside anime fandom, and how the broader society and culture of the UK in the '90s shaped this early fandom.

Early Appearances of Anime in the UK

While the genesis of organised anime fandom in the UK is generally considered to be in 1990, following a screening programme of anime curated by Helen McCarthy and held at that year's Eastercon, the first appearances of anime in the UK began around 30 years beforehand. On 15 October 1959, the Third London Film Festival held two subtitled screenings of *Hakujaden* (1958), itself the first full-colour anime film, under the title *The White Snake Enchantress* (National Film Theatre, 1959). In September 1961, the film was

then given a general cinema release, this time with an English dub and under the title of *Panda and the Flying Serpent* (*Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1961); this was followed in January 1962 by English-language cinema releases for *Saiyūki* (1960) and *Shōnen Sarutobi Sasuke* (1959) under the titles *Alakazam the Great* and *The Magic Boy* respectively (*Monthly Film Bulletin*, January 1962).

The surviving reviews of each of these films in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* are quite positive, balancing their inevitable comparisons with Disney with praise for the films' overall aesthetics and narrative flow while acknowledging their Japanese origins. On *Panda and the Flying Serpent*, the review said:

> Its dependence on the Disney tradition is evident, especially in the treatment of the animal characters; but it manages to avoid the worst excesses of Disney archness and possesses a very real charm of its own. The human figures suffer from the usual wooden movements, but are drawn with greater elegance than their Western counterparts. (September 1961: p 129)

On *Alakazam the Great*:

> This Japanese cartoon has an American commentary, dubbed voices and music. But while much of it is derivative of second-grade Disney, it has a pleasing sense of fantasy and an occasionally vivid gift for crude imagery [...] The spectacle and non-stop feats of magic, though ultimately monotonous, are lavishly imagined. (January 1962: p 14)

And on *The Magic Boy*:

> The main attraction of this Japanese feature-length cartoon is its elaborate visual style based, in part, on old prints [...] Some of the comic characters and the forest animals suggest rather too strongly the influence of Disney, but the narrative is so eventful that one has little time to both [sic] about these derivations. (January 1962: p 14)

It is difficult to say for certain how these films were received by the UK general public, but they don't appear, at that time, to have prompted any great demand for more Japanese animated films.

Three short, surrealist pieces by Kuri Yōji were shown in the UK in the mid-'60s – *Love* (1963) was included on the short film programme at the Eighth London Film Festival (National Film Theatre, 1964) and subsequently released alongside *Human Zoo* (1962) in 1966 (*Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1966), followed by *AOS* (1964) later that year (*Monthly Film Bulletin*, October 1966) – but they were reviewed with only mild curiosity in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, and no comparisons were made between these films and the earlier, more Disney-like films (nor, indeed, was any concern raised about these films being unsuitable for children despite their animated format).

In 1970, *Gulliver's Travels Beyond the Moon* (1965) was released in the UK, but it was described in a very brief, negative review as a "charmless animated feature, made over in America and provided with some noisy songs" (*Monthly Film Bulletin*, June 1970: p 128). The next anime film to arrive in the UK would not be until eight years later, with the release of *Space Battleship Yamato* (1977) under the title *Space Cruiser* (*Monthly Film Bulletin*, February 1978). By this point, and in contrast to the first anime films shown in the early '60s, Japanese animation released in the West had largely become what Iwabuchi Koichi calls "culturally odourless" (Iwabuchi, 1998: p 165), localised for non-Japanese audiences and with any hint of its Japanese origins stripped back or removed altogether. This is evident in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* review of *Space Battleship Yamato* which, rather than invoking any well-known Japanese films or tropes, instead compares it to *Star Wars* and *Jaws*, and even describes one character as "the crudest of Western caricatures of a short, cross-eyed Japanese" (Pym, 1978: p 32), even though the characters were created and designed by renowned Japanese manga artist Matsumoto Leiji. However, the process of localising Japanese animation in such a way as to remove its "cultural odour" was evident in the UK well before the release of *Space Battleship Yamato*, in the form of titles shown on television from the late '60s onwards.

Indeed, from the late '60s until the mid '80s localised anime found a fairly regular home on British children's TV programming. The earliest appearance of Japanese animation on television in the UK was *Marine Boy* (1965), which aired in an early evening, family-friendly slot on BBC One from February 1969 until July 1971, per the BBC Genome Project (genome.ch.bbc.co.uk). In line with Iwabuchi's description of culturally odourless products as "products which [...] do not immediately conjure images of the country of origin in the minds of consumers" (Iwabuchi, 1998: p 165), few hints of *Marine Boy*'s Japanese provenance were given and viewers of the time had little knowledge of (or interest in) the programme's origins – indeed, the appeal of Marine Boy may have had more to do with its similarities to Gerry Anderson's supermarionation series *Stingray* (1964-65). This continued as a trend through the '70s and '80s, with TV broadcasts of *Battle of the Planets* (1978), which was a localised version of sci-fi action series *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* (1972), and Euro-Japanese co-productions like *The Mysterious Cities of Gold* (1982) and *Ulysses 31* (1981), which were co-created by French writer Jean Chalopin and produced in conjunction with Japanese producers for NHK and Nagoya Broadcasting Network respectively.

As McCarthy (2018a) reports, there were also several anime video labels in the UK at this time, largely unknown and releasing what was perceived to be "badly made kids' stuff". These companies included Kids Cartoon Collection, Krypton Force, Parkfield Playtime, and MY-TV, and their releases included *Once Upon a Time* (1987), which was a recut of *Windaria* (1986); *Ninja the Wonderboy* (1985), an edited version of *Manga Sarutobi Sasuke* (1979); and *Crushers*, an edited version of *Crusher Joe* (1983). A handful of other, more recognisable titles were also released on video in the '80s, such as *Warriors of the Wind* (1985), a heavily edited English-language version of Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984) that was certificated for UK release in 1986; and *Speed Racer* (1967-69), a localised version of *Mach GoGoGo* (1967-68), that received two VHS releases in 1987.

The fact that these titles lacked the "cultural odour" to indicate that they were Japanese meant that they were taken to be no different from any other animated children's programming available on TV or video, and they were consumed in the exact same way. Clements notes that this was also the case in other international markets and points out that much of anime's foreign revenue in the '70s was from "invisible" imports, defined as "works that were, *or were made to be*, lacking any aesthetic identification as 'Japanese'," and including "denationalised" sci-fi series and World Masterpiece Theater releases, which were generally adaptations of classic Western literature like *Anne of Green Gables* (1979), *Little Women* (1987), and *Heidi, Girl of the Alps* (1974). "Localisation during the 'hidden import' period usually regarded Japanese animation as a raw material that needed to be honed into something suitable for the American market, typically without the approval or interference of the original owners" (Clements, 2013: pp 180-181).

Programmes such as these served as an introductory point for many people in the UK who, attracted by the aesthetic of the Japanese art style, would come to identify as anime fans in the 1990s. Respondents to my fandom questionnaire who were aged 35 or older also mentioned being unaware of the Japanese origins of the titles they saw at this time:

> I was in Italy in the late 1980s and the Lupin III movie, *The Castle of Cagliostro*, was on the TV, cut up into a 4-part serial. I totally loved it. It was called *Lupin L'Incorreggibile* and dubbed, so I presumed it was Italian. The Fiat and the sharp clothes kind of added to my delusion. (male respondent, age 50+)

> [My first exposure was] seeing an *Akira* VHS tape for sale in WH Smith. Then finding an early issue of *Anime UK* magazine. It wasn't until later that I realised that *Marine Boy* and *Battle of the Planets* were anime. (male respondent, age 45-49)

> When I was a child in the 1980s I grew up on tv shows such as *Ulysses 31* and *Mysterious Cities of Gold*. I loved the art style and

storylines and through them I discovered anime. (non-binary respondent, age 40-44)

I heard from schoolmates about *Akira* when it was on TV. Soon afterwards I realised I had been watching *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*, *Ulysses 31*, and *Mysterious Cities of Gold* without realising they were Japanese (or partially Japanese) in origin. (female respondent, age 35-39)

But McCarthy points out that not all consumers of anime products in the '80s were completely unaware of their Japanese origins – having grown up on *Marine Boy*, and/or experienced translated titles through American or European connections, adult fans in the UK began buying video releases from MY-TV and Kids' Cartoon Collection. And although it wasn't available on UK TV at the time, *Robotech* (1985), which was created in the US by splicing together the TV series of *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* (1982), *Super Dimension Cavalry Southern Cross* (1984), and *Genesis Climber MOSPEADA* (1983), served as the inspiration for the UK's first anime fanzine, *Robotech UK*, produced in 1986 by Tony Luke and featuring artwork by British artist Steve Kyte (McCarthy, 2018a). While these represented small pockets of interest in the medium of anime rather than a groundswell of fan attention, it was enough for McCarthy to justify running an anime screening at Eastercon, and would prove to be the bedrock upon which organised anime fandom in the UK was built.

Eastercon, *Anime UK*, and Early Fan Culture

McCarthy had, herself, discovered anime and manga in 1981, when she was shown a Spanish-language version of Go Nagai's super robot manga *Mazinger Z* (1972-74). Endeavouring to learn more about Japanese graphic culture, she recalls finding very little in English beyond a few short, dismissive descriptions in the BFI archives. This absence of information inspired her to begin researching anime, with the goal of writing and publishing an English-language reference book about the medium

(McCarthy, 2018a). In late 1988 she was invited to join the committee for Eastercon, the British National Science Fiction Convention, and as a condition of her committee membership she asked to be allotted a video room with a time slot of around eight or nine hours to screen anime (McCarthy, 2018b). The anime screening room at "Eastcon" in 1990 ran for a total of 36 and a half hours, with a diverse programme that ran from the kid-friendly titles *Once Upon a Time* and *Crushers* to more adult-oriented titles that are now considered classics of the medium, like *Akira*, *Fist of the North Star* (1986), and *Urotsukidoji: Legend of the Overfiend* (1989) (Bernhardi, 2015).

McCarthy's plan in staging the anime programme was to gauge the potential interest among UK science fiction and media fans so that her planned book about anime would appear more commercially valid to publishers, and the overall response was very positive – "we got a lot of people coming round saying, 'I didn't realise how diverse this stuff was, I didn't realise it had so much in it, I didn't realise it could do proper science fiction'" (McCarthy, 2018b); the screening of *Legend of the Overfiend*, which was advertised as "sexist, racist, violent, and offensive to everybody", proved to be the biggest draw of the convention, with the room filled beyond fire capacity and several under-18s trying to gain access to the screening room despite the 18+ door policy (McCarthy, 2018a). McCarthy and Kyte collected contact details for interested fans throughout the weekend, and on the final day of Eastcon they decided to establish an anime newsletter, which would provide UK anime fans with both news about anime and manga, and a means of making contact with other fans. The original *Anime UK* newsletter was produced, as many fanzines at the time were, using low-tech methods on McCarthy and Kyte's dining room table – typed using a typewriter and manually-set column widths, glued into place, and photocopied – and distributed by post to around 200 people on a quarterly, and then bimonthly, basis. One early subscriber to *Anime UK* newsletter was artist Wil Overton, who was working for London-based graphic design company Sigma, and showed the newsletter to his manager, Peter Goll. Goll offered to sponsor the production of a professional magazine edition and the first issue was released in late 1991, with

McCarthy as editor and Kyte and Overton as staff artists and designers. The magazine ran for five years in total – including a year's period where the magazine rebranded as *Anime FX* – and in addition to its UK distribution, it was also available in the US, parts of Europe, and Japan, where it was translated into Japanese (McCarthy, 2012).

The original *Anime UK* newsletter, with its sharing of both information and contact details, was instrumental in the early development of anime fandom in the UK. Fans were now able to contact each other and share their resources (such as contacts in the US or Europe), and through the growing use of home video tape recorders and personal computers, could copy and trade bootleg tapes of Japanese-language anime titles with fan-made subtitles (McCarthy, 2018b). Fans also began organising small-scale screenings, held in "people's bedrooms, and front rooms, and community centres, as part of the grassroots of a fledgling fandom" (Bernhardi, 2019). Dedicated anime conventions began to spring up – the first UK anime convention was Anime Day, sponsored by the Sheffield Space Centre and held in March of 1991, and the first weekend-long anime convention was ContAnimeTed, held in Birmingham in October 1993; *Anime UK* also held its own convention, AUKcon, in London in 1994. UK anime fans embraced fanzine production "with joy" and several were produced throughout the '90s, providing a mix of news, reviews, general articles, and original fan art and fiction (McCarthy, 2018a). And as digital technologies improved, UK fans began to build an online presence that was distinct from international (and particularly American) fan communities, such as the newsgroup uk.media.animation.anime (UMAA), which was created in 1996 and populated by users who had previously communicated through the US newsgroup rec.arts.anime (Weeks, 1996).

Concurrent with these early modes of expression in the UK was a gradual increased interest in anime and manga in sections of the art world. *Akira* had received its UK film festival premiere at the 1989 Bristol Animation Festival, where it was screened six times over the course of the festival and "created a cult following as the week progressed" (Jefferson, 1990: p 10). This was

followed by a successful series of screenings at the Institute of Contemporary Arts from January to March of 1991, and from October to December of 1991, comics scholar Adam Lowe curated and presented "Manga, Comic Strip Books from Japan", an exhibition of experimental manga that included pages from Tezuka Osamu's *Astro Boy* (presented at the exhibition as *Tetsuwan Atom*) (1952-68) and Takemiya Keiko's seminal *shounen ai* manga *Kaze to Ki no Uta* (1976-84) – this exhibition was originally intended to be shown as "The Exploding World: The Image of Contemporary Comics in Japan" at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford as part of the 1991 Japan Festival and would have been "the first in-depth survey of what must be the most important and unknown aspect of contemporary culture in Japan", but a failure to secure adequate funding (or, as McCarthy speculates, the Museum of Modern Art seeing some of the exhibition material and getting cold feet (2018a)) forced the exhibition to be scaled down and moved to the Pomeroy Purdy Gallery in London (Lowe, 1991: p VII).

As McCarthy notes, it was *Akira* that was the "game changer" for anime in the UK, and after its appearance at the ICA, Island World Communications decided they "had to have it" (McCarthy, 2018b). Chris Blackwell, a music entrepreneur who founded Island Records, declared that anime was "the new punk rock" and began to shift the image of anime as disposable Saturday morning kids' fare into "the world of sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll" (McCarthy, 2018a). The earliest anime releases under Island World Communications, such as *Fist of the North Star*, *Dominion Tank Police* (1989), and *Venus Wars* (1989) fulfilled this image, and in March 1993 the Manga Entertainment label was created (though Island World Communications' anime releases had also carried the "Manga" branding prior to this). The marketing of anime by Island World Communications marked a shift from "cultural odourlessness" to "cultural fragrance" (Clements, 2013: p 181), making a virtue of the titles' Japanese origins and positioning them as cool, edgy, and crucially, proof that cartoons were "not just for kids anymore" (Clements, 2009: p 273). However, Manga Entertainment's success in bringing anime into the public consciousness

(albeit often under the incorrect nomenclature – erroneously referring to anime as "Manga" was common throughout the '90s) had less to do with the titles they chose for their catalogue and far more to do with their ability to provoke controversy in the mainstream press.

Anime and the UK Press

Just as had been the case with Kuri Yōji's surreal short films in the mid '60s, anime releases and screenings in the early '90s were, at first, met with sparse and relatively neutral coverage in the UK press, with the medium regarded with little more than mild curiosity or confusion. The ICA's screenings of *Akira*, though popular, received surprisingly little fanfare. There were some positive reviews, and they were quite glowing – the *Daily Telegraph* said "It is by any standards an extraordinary piece of work […] most strikingly of all, the film is bathed in the harsh brilliance of a post-Einsteinian consciousness" (Davenport, 1991: p 15), and *Time Out* described it as "[featuring] some of the most mind-blowing animation ever seen [...] Artwork apart, the admirably complex plot is imaginative and serious, clearly derived from enduring Japanese obsessions and fears" (Andrew, 1991: p 23). But most of the handful of reviews at the time were quite lukewarm. *The Guardian* said that "The narrative of derring-do may contrive to cut across received Japanese notions of hierarchy, but the action tends to be weighed down by both the crypto-photographic design and the quantity of dialogue" (Malcolm, 1991: p 25); *The Observer* called it "a virtuoso exercise in realistic animation, if more than a trifle overlong" (French, 1991: p 52); and *The Times* said "The apocalyptic plot defies encapsulation [...] The visual style remains boringly tethered to comic-strip habits, with rigidly drawn characters posed against static backgrounds. Acclaimed for its 'phenomenal animation', the film – two hours long – merely pushes the art down a depressing cul-de-sac" (Brown, 1991: p 21). *Time Out* did provide some extra coverage in the form of an interview with, and profile on, Ōtomo Katsuhiro which also discussed *Akira* (Rayns, 1991: pp 16-17), but otherwise it slipped below the radar of most mainstream press outlets of the time.

The coverage afforded to the "Manga! Manga! Manga!" festival the following year, which heavily featured Manga Entertainment releases, was even more sparse. It was previewed in a small number of publications, specifically the *Weekend Telegraph* ("Beyond Endurance?", Davies, 1992: p 17), the

Sunday Times Culture magazine ("Cartoon Hells", Perry, 1992: p 9), and *Time Out* ("Manga! Manga! Manga!", Wells, 1992: p 70), and of these three, only the first could be described as showing much of Hammond's "fear and loathing". Indeed, both the *Time Out* preview and the *Sunday Times Culture* article spent more time commending the artistry and poignancy of *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), which was shown at the festival under the title *Tombstone for Fireflies*, than condemning the sexual or violent content of other films on the programme – both glossed over the content of *Urotsukidoji: Legend of the Overfiend*, which was screened in its uncut form at the festival. *Time Out* instead highlighted *Fist of the North Star* as being "one for splatter-hounds" and commented that "the animation is nicely stylised and the fight scenes astoundingly bloodthirsty" (Wells, 1992: p 70), while the *Sunday Times*, looking more broadly at Manga Entertainment's home releases at the time, paid more attention to *Dominion Tank Police* and noted with mild puzzlement that "nobody looks particularly Japanese: heroes tend to be heavy-featured Schwarzenegger types, while the criminally-inclined Cat Sisters have retroussé noses and an armoury that ranges from high-tech weapons to ancient feminine wiles" (Perry, 1992: p 9).

The *Weekend Telegraph* piece by Tristan Davies was rather more hostile in tone. It opened by saying, "As eastern cultural phenomena go, Manga is somewhat removed from the elegance of the Japanese water garden recently created by expats at my local park in west London," and added that "even adults, when they're not mutilating dummies of their bosses or being shoehorned onto commuter trains, read Manga strips and watch Manga TV and films" (Davies, 1992: p 17). The article is accompanied by an image of *Dominion Tank Police*'s Puma Sisters, captioned "Sex-kitten terrorists"; Davies postulates that the art direction in *Venus Wars* reveals "a good deal about Manga writer-director Yushikazo [sic] Yasuhiko's interests: voyeurism and a sexually predatory camera and art direction are common here", and describes *Legend of the Overfiend* as "seriously disturbing […] this is a riot of sci-fi horror, mutilation and destruction." Referring to *Endurance* (1980), the Japanese "torture" game show that was popular fodder for both *Clive James on Television* (1982-1984) and *Tarrant on TV* (1990-2005) and which is also

invoked in the article's title, Davies concludes by saying "Anyone who saw [*Endurance*] will know the Japanese to have some rum tastes. But what the warped sadism of Takayama's *Overfiend* reveals of the national character, I shall meditate on when next in their water garden."

A little later, in February 1993, the *Guardian 2* supplement printed two articles – "Dirty Work" about sexual harassment in the Japanese workplace, and "Blood and Guts and Bambi Eyes", about manga – which were distinct and separate articles, but clearly intended to be viewed as companion pieces, laid out next to each other, under a large, dramatic "Men's Manga" panel (uncredited, but taken from *Blood of Matools* (1992)), and with the strapline of "Japanese women are standing up to harassment at work, but still the men's comics are full of sexual violence". "Blood and Guts and Bambi Eyes" quotes a Japanese anthropologist, Dr Miyanaga Juniko, as saying "Men's Manga is quite different from women's. It is dedicated to the themes of success, violence and conquest and to attraction to the female body – to romantic love with a very submissive type of woman" (Burgess, 1993: p 13); when taken with the quote in "Dirty Work" from Japanese consultant Kaneko Masaomi that "Japanese men do not realise that sexual harassment is a form of sexual discrimination" and that they "often do not understand what they are being accused of" (Smith, 1993: p 12), it appears as an attempt to pathologise Japanese men through a criticism of the manga they read. This not only echoes Davies' sentiment in "Beyond Endurance?" but also perpetuates the negative stereotype of the "strange and incomprehensible Japanese" while maintaining the British sense of moral superiority, as identified by the works of Anthony (1997), Taga (1997), and Hammond (1997).

However, negative though these articles were, and as much as they are a close tonal fit with more general news pieces about Japan in the early '90s, as far as anime-related coverage is concerned they can be considered to be minority voices of the time. The coverage of "Manga! Manga! Manga!" in both *Time Out* and the *Sunday Times* was little different to how any other international cult film festival might be reported on, and merely noted that,

despite its "cartoon" format, the films on show at the ICA and in the Manga Video catalogue were "unsuitable for the very young" (Perry, 1992: p 9). The medium received little attention elsewhere in the mainstream press, and organised anime fandom in the UK was still very much in its infancy, so the overall visibility of anime in the media was extremely limited. This was set to change suddenly and unexpectedly following the high-profile abduction and murder of James Bulger in 1993.

The facts of the Bulger case itself have no ties to anime – toddler James Bulger was abducted from a Merseyside shopping centre and subsequently murdered by two ten-year-olds, Robert Thompson and Jon Venables. The brutality of the murder and the shock at the youth of Thompson and Venables led to heavy news coverage as the British press cast about for answers that might explain how such a horrific crime could be committed by such young children. A number of newspapers seized on one aspect of the police investigation in particular – Jon Venables' father, who considered himself "the Barry Norman of Merseyside", had a fondness for horror films and had rented several such videos in the months prior to the murder (Sharrock, O'Kane and Pilkington, 1993: p 2). Police investigated the titles that had been rented and among them was *Child's Play 3* (1991), which was singled out in many press reports as being of "special interest" for supposed parallels between the film's climactic fight against the evil doll Chucky and the manner in which James was murdered. Although detectives denied there being any conclusive link – "We went through something like 200 titles rented by the Venables family. There were some you or I wouldn't want to see, but nothing – no scene, or plot, or dialogue – where you could put your finger on the freeze button and say that influenced a boy to go out and commit murder," one told *The Independent* (Kirby, 1993: p 1) – the judge presiding over the case, Mr Justice Morland, commented that "It is not for me to pass judgment on their upbringing, but I suspect exposure to violent video films may in part be an explanation" (Pilkington, 1993: p 1).

Empowered by this statement, a number of tabloids launched campaigns against violent videos and reignited the '80s debate about "video nasties".

More fuel was added to the fire shortly after the Bulger trial, with the conclusion of the Suzanne Capper murder trial – a similarly horrific case in which the teenage Capper was held captive, subjected to torture, and finally burned alive by six people – during which it emerged that the perpetrators had used a rave track featuring samples from *Child's Play* to torture Capper (Petley, 2011: p 89). The *Daily Mirror* covered this under the headline "Murdered by Chucky's Children" (White and Mulchrone, 1993: pp 1, 7); the *Daily Star* said "Tortured to Death by Chucky" (Fullerton, 1993: p 1); and *The Sun*, hot on the heels of their "Burn Your Video Nasty" campaign (Pharo, 1993: pp 1, 11), headlined their story with "Ban Chucky Now", adding "First it was James, now Suzanne. How much more horror before we sweep this filth off the shelves of our video shops?" (Troup & Ludden, 1993: pp 4-5).

Following the conclusion of the Bulger trial, and against the backdrop of tabloid campaigns, MP David Alton called for tighter regulations to control violent material, and on 12 April 1994 he proposed amendments to the Criminal Justice Act 1993 that would strengthen the Video Recordings Act 1984. If passed, the amendment would require the BBFC to add a "Not Suitable for Home Entertainment" certificate, supported by "a statement that, either because it presents an inappropriate model for children, or because it is likely to cause psychological harm to a child, no video recording containing that work is to be supplied for private use, or viewed in any place to which children under the age of 18 are admitted"; additionally, the amendment would criminalise anyone who supplied any such video to members of the public, or allowed it to be shown in a place where children could be admitted (HC Deb 12 April 1994).

Alton ultimately withdrew the full version of his proposal at the end of the parliamentary debate in April 1994, following speeches from both Home Secretary Michael Howard and Shadow Home Secretary Tony Blair. Nonetheless, many newspapers erroneously celebrated the new "ban" the following day. Most notable of these was the *Daily Mirror*, whose front page proudly proclaimed "Banned Thanks To Your *Daily Mirror*" (Bradshaw and Morris, 1994: pp 1, 4-5) and went on to list a number of other films, under the

heading "Chucky's Pals Face Censor", that it believed could also be banned, including *Hard Boiled* (1992), *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1986), and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) (Mirror Reporter, 1994: p 5), though in the end none of the films on the *Mirror*'s list would be banned outright and several were passed for release with no cuts required. The final form of Alton's amendment, approved by the House of Lords on 14 June as part of the new Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, introduced stronger penalties for violations of the Video Recordings Act concerning the supply of films to children who were underage, but all that otherwise remained of Alton's original proposal was a clause laying out new statutory requirements for the BBFC that forced its classification panels to consider whether the contents of a video work may cause any harm to "potential viewers", specifically listing criminal behaviour, acts of violence or horror, or sexual activity as points of concern (Petley, 2011: pp 93-94). In practice this made little difference to the overall workings of the BBFC, as then-Secretary James Ferman noted:

> These criteria represent not a break with former policy, but a confirmation of it, since they put on the face of legislation factors which the Board has been taking into account for many years. (Ferman in Petley, 2011: p 96)

Although no anime titles were named in any of the original debates or identified as being linked to the Bulger or Tapper cases, the subsequent discourse about violent video content nonetheless absorbed anime. By Ferman's own acknowledgement, the BBFC was already closely monitoring video releases for sexual, violent, or criminal activities prior to Alton's amendment, so early Manga Video releases would almost certainly have still been on the receiving end of cuts and editing even if there had not been a resurgence in the video nasty debate. However, the increased attention on "video nasties" in the press did put additional pressure on the BBFC, which resulted in closer attention being paid to Manga's output.

Anime and the BBFC

Press responses and Acts of Parliament aside, anime did initially present a challenge for the BBFC as, according to one examiner, they "weren't quite sure what to make of it" (Karim in Ridout, 1996: p 118). The animated medium and youthful appearance of many of the characters, combined with the adult themes of many of the titles released throughout the '90s, clashed with the preconception of animation as being a children's entertainment format that should automatically receive a "U" certificate. The BBFC described this problem in a 2006 blog post:

> A great deal of anime would seem to appeal to a young audience, populated as it is by teen and pre-teen characters, furry fantasy creatures and robots. However, there is sometimes a mismatch between the theme and the presentation and appeal, and this has presented difficulties for the BBFC. Some of the most problematic anime works for the board have been those in which children are presented as sexually active. The characters in anime works are often presented as childlike, with their big eyes and high voices. They can change form according to their mood and a character that appears adult in one scene can look like a toddler in the next. Sometimes the only way to tell which character is which is through the consistent nature of their hair colour and style. (BBFC, 2006)

Writing specifically about *Legend of the Overfiend*, Emma Pett goes into more detail about how anime presented a problem for BBFC examiners: "For a regulatory body largely unfamiliar with anime, *Legend of the Overfiend* was problematic in that it was difficult to locate, both culturally and generically: there was a lack of precedents" (Pett, 2016: p 396). Examiners' reports from the time express bewilderment about who the audience for the film might be, and in the process we see lines being drawn that frame Japanese norms as being completely alien to British ones: "this animated orgy of sexual violence from Japan has no place on any video shelf in Britain and promises to provoke as much animated discussion as *Golden Lotus* because of its alien cultural origin," said one examiner, with another agreeing: "it's not clear to me where all this is heading… in Japanese society, where elements of social and psychological control are so different, this may be harmless. In Britain this is not so" (Pett, 2016: p 395). The BBFC's annual reports through much

of the '90s also illustrate these concerns, repeatedly praising the technical aspects of anime while damning the sexual or violent content (1995: p 20; 1996: p 21) and setting Japanese and British cultural values in stark opposition: "In Britain, there would be uproar were such scenes to be shown publicly or made available uncut" (BBFC, 1996: p 21), even though *Legend of the Overfiend* had been screened uncut at Manga! Manga! Manga! in 1992 with little controversy.

Furthermore, in the vein of Davies in the *Weekend Telegraph* and Smith/Burgess in *G2*, these reports erroneously attempted to use the content of the titles that had been assessed and cut as a means of "explaining" the Japanese – and Japanese men in particular – in a manner that reinforced notions of danger, perversion, and depravity as dominant Japanese (or, to a lesser extent, Far Eastern) traits, sometimes including outright falsehoods and even going so far as to invoke Nazi Germany in one case:

> An increasing problem for the Board has been the growing popularity in Britain of adult videos based on Japanese 'manga' comics or 'anime' cartoons. In Japan, it seems, these films provide sex and violence for men who watch them after work in male clubs where sexual favours are bought and sold. (1994: p 14)

> In many of these cartoons, there seems to be an underlying hatred (or is it fear?) of women, which can only be slaked by destruction of the female principle. In Nazi Germany, similar fantasies have been documented from the writings of fascist warriors, who apparently longed to destroy the 'filthy softness' of female bodies. (1995: p 20)

> In Japan, it seems, such videos are only seen by men, who are not expected to empathise with the rape victim [...] Nor are the attitudes towards women conveyed by such cartoons considered relevant to the incidence of rape in Japan. (1996: p 21)

> Once again, the most disturbing treatment of rape and sexual violence has been in films and videos from the Far East, many of them openly sadistic and revelling in the exercise of power over defenceless, sobbing women. As noted last year, these films seem designed to demonstrate how easy it is for rape to make a weak man feel strong. (1997: p 18)

Action videos from the Far East and Japanese manga cartoons accounted for the lion's share of those works which contained scenes of sexual or eroticised violence which were as harrowing and disconcerting as we have ever seen. (1998: p 36)

Pett notes that this is also reflected in the examiners' notes about *Legend of the Overfiend*, in which concerns about the "social threat" of the film were intertwined with "the unwelcome spectre of cultural prejudice" and, in some cases, "degrading caricatures of Japanese people, culture and society; these focused primarily on sensitivities surrounding gender and sexuality, whereby Japanese cultural norms were perceived to be significantly different from British ideals at the time" (Pett, 2016: pp 395-396).

It is also worth noting that anime distributors – mainly Manga Entertainment, but also smaller companies like Kiseki and East2West Films – contributed to both the BBFC's bewilderment and the resulting press response through their own marketing decisions. In part, this was not terribly different to how other distributors of East Asian cinema have handled their releases – Gary Needham, describing Tartan Films' marketing for its "Tartan Asia Extreme" imprint, points out that:

The language of its promotional material speaks for itself, announcing that 'If the weird, the wonderful and the dangerous is your thing, then you really don't want to miss this chance to take a walk on the wild side.' The promise of danger and of the unexpected is linked with the way in which these films are marketed according to their otherness from Hollywood, and subsequently feeds in to many of the typical fantasies of the 'Orient' characterised by exoticism, mystery and danger. (Needham, 2006: p 9)

Manga Video's marketing materials in the '90s did also make use of this technique (Pett, 2016: p 397), but having experienced commercial success with *Akira*, the company consciously chose to continue releasing titles that would have similar appeal. Between September of 1991 and June of 1994, Manga (or its predecessor, Island World Communications) had released almost 30 video titles in the UK market, 12 of which were sci-fi and 14 were

horror/fantasy; the remaining titles were farcical sex comedy *Ultimate Teacher* (1988) and action/thrillers *Crying Freeman* (1988) and *Golgo 13: The Professional* (1983). As former Managing Director of Manga Mike Preece explained:

> When we started the market, as I say, we went for that youth culture, because the first film we had was *Akira*, and that by definition is sort of the *Godfather* of manga, it's the *Blade Runner* of manga, and that's the thing that moved it forward. So it would be ridiculous if you started a ball rolling in one particular genre, to cut it immediately to go for cookery, or for sport, or for something else, if we had a hit with a sci-fi film. It's the same as the record industry – if you do a rap record, you wouldn't follow it up with Riverdancing or something. (*Anime!*, 1997).

The main shift in focus was not so much in terms of genre, but of audience perception. *Akira* had been a great success as an arthouse film, but to maximise breadth of appeal, Manga "identified [their] core audience as uneducated teenagers in search of inarticulate, brassy thrills, while marketing sheets openly courted a group that came to be known as the beer-and-curry crowd" (Clements, 2009: p 273), and other distributors followed suit. Indeed, Manga engaged in a practice called "fifteening", wherein swearing was gratuitously added to the English-language dub script in order to attain a higher certificate and preserve anime's "controversial" and "edgy" image; the result was that "relatively innocuous titles such as *Appleseed* (1988) and *Patlabor* (1989) [both of which received 15 certificates] appeared with artificially augmented dialogue" (Clements, 1998: p 88). Manga's next major success on video was *Legend of the Overfiend*, this time passed through the BBFC, edited to remove the most shocking material and awarded an 18 certificate, but consciously marketed by Manga to stir up controversy and attention, quoting Davies' assessment of "seriously disturbing" on its promotional material and issuing press packs detailing how shocking the film was (Clements, 2009: p 274). This deliberate marketing decision combined with the mid-'90s anxiety about the effects of violent videos on children and resulted in an overall belief that anime was all "tits and tentacles", and this was in turn reflected in mainstream press coverage at the time.

"Cartoon Cult with an Increasing Appetite for Sex and Violence" said *The Independent* in October 1993, going on to say "There would be little point in cult teenage videos that had parental approval, but some of these films are likely to alarm even the most liberal parent" (Lister, 1993: p 10). In January 1994, in the wake of Alton's initial call for tighter restrictions on the supply of videos with sexual or violent content, the *Daily Star* cried "Snuff Out These Sick Cartoons," falsely claiming that "scenes in Manga [include] bestiality, decapitation, rape and anal sex, often involving children". Although Alton never raised the subject of anime in any of the debates covering his proposed amendment, he is also quoted in the article as saying "The use of graphics does not excuse portrayal of sexual violence. They should not be available for home viewing whether certificated 18 or not" (Sengupta, 1994: p 8). And in February 1995, after the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 had been signed into law, the *Sunday Mail* launched a campaign targeting the mail order provision at the Manga Fan Club, using the headline of "£10 for Evil Video Passport" and bemoaning the fact that children could lie about their ages to join the club and order 18-rated videos by post (Drury, 1995a: p 7). This was framed as a problem entirely unique to the Manga Fan Club, experienced by no other mail order video companies at the time, and it was implied that prior to the existence of the Manga Fan Club, no child had ever lied about their age to get access to age-restricted materials. A week later, when Mike Preece responded to the report by saying "Mail order is a minute part of our activities. We are considering ending it or preventing these abuses happening again. We are a big company. We don't need all this bad publicity," the *Sunday Mail* echoed the *Daily Mirror*'s earlier triumphalist tone and claimed a moral victory, under the heading "Last Post for Kids' Filth – *Mail* Gets Action on Video Nasties" (Drury, 1995b: p 29).

The press treatment of anime, Clements says, "informed" the BBFC's attitude and "made its censorship of anime overly strict" (Clements, 1998: p 92). This is reflected in some of the titles viewed and cut by the BBFC at the time – *The Adventures of Kekkō Kamen* (1991) was cut by 3 minutes and 59 seconds; *Adventure Kid* (1992-1994) was renamed *Adventure Duo* at the

request of the BBFC due to concerns that its original title might attract underage viewers, and it lost 1 minute 8 seconds from its first episode, 7 minutes 35 seconds from its second, and 9 minutes 28 seconds from its third; and *La Blue Girl* (1992-1993) was refused a certificate outright "because the extent of material judged unacceptable meant cuts would not leave a viable work intact" (Taylor, 2008). The first episode of *Urotsukidoji IV: Infernal Road* (1993) was also refused a certificate due to its multiple depictions of rape, many of which involved children as either victims or witnesses (BBFC, 1997: p 18); its second episode (1994) was never submitted for classification due to similar content. Sexual violence, regardless of the perceived ages of the victims, was the main justification for edits made to anime throughout the '90s and into the early '00s, but some were edited for scenes of strong, bloody violence, such as *Angel Cop* (1989) and *Violence Jack* (1986-1990), and in a small number of cases – *Ninja Scroll* (1993), *The Adventures of Kekkō Kamen* (1991-1992), and one volume of the *Urusei Yatsura* TV series (1981-1986) – cuts were made for the depiction of the use of "ninja" weapons, specifically shuriken and nunchaku, that were either restricted or illegal under the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Despite the large amounts cut from some of the most notorious titles, the BBFC maintained that "cut works remain a very small percentage of the anime product which comes through the Board," adding that "most works are passed at the 12 category, perfect for Manga Entertainment's stated target market, 12-19 year old British males" (BBFC, 2006). This is somewhat reinforced by Ridout (1996: p 120), who notes that only a quarter of anime titles available in the mid '90s were 18-rated, while almost half were given either 12 or 15 certificates (12% and 36% respectively). But the "tits and tentacles" perception of anime persisted as a result of an interplay between the BBFC, the press, and marketing activities by the distributors, who saw the removal of shocking material from their releases as a way of getting free advertising:

> As the BBFC's attitude towards anime began to eat into the value of the tapes, essentially removing much of the consumers' reasons for buying the videos, some distributors started playing up this angle, sending out press releases that described in detail the scenes which would be cut from the videos [...] gaining column inches and free advertising for something which their readers would never be able to buy. (Clements, 1998: p 92)

The result of this feedback loop was an overall perception of anime among the general public as a medium that was full of hardcore violence, depraved sex, and misogyny. "The 'man on the street' can easily tell you how shocking anime are, even if he's never seen one, because his daily newspaper has told him all about them," Clements says of this period. "He has been told to avert his eyes from a cataclysmic cavalcade of depravity, even though he will never see the most offensive material, because the BBFC will have removed it from the tapes he can buy in the shops [...] British journalists are wasting their time calling for the 'filth' to be banned. It already has been" (Clements, 1998: p 92).

Throughout all of this, UK anime fans who were aware of the breadth of the medium outside of Manga's releases grew increasingly discontent. The feedback loop meant that many fans were subject to mockery or suspicion from their peers, particularly those who were young or female. The response, however, was for fans to cast themselves as staunch defenders of the medium, and fans in the '90s were forthright in resisting the criticisms made by the press and the public. They found their own ways to express their love of anime, stepping out of the confines of the anime video selection presented to them on video store shelves, and creating worlds that suited their own needs and desires.

Fandom Resistance

"Blood and Guts and Bambi Eyes" describes two fans, Clare and Chris, who are found in the Forbidden Planet store in London (it is unclear whether they

are customers or staff). They are introduced in the article and then immediately quoted as responding in defence of manga, specifically in terms of its representation of women, by comparing it to Western comics: "There's much better representation of strong female characters than in most US comics, which have a fixation on women with large breasts and skimpy outfits running about." The article later adds that "here, questions about debased images of women elicit exasperated groans from Manga enthusiasts," and again quotes Clare: "Why damn an entire innovative art form because of a pornographic element? [...] And remember, these are only cartoons. If someone gets turned on by them, well, they must have a sad life – and good luck to them." (Burgess, 1993: p 13)

These arguments are not without their inaccuracies and blind spots, the most noteworthy of which is that Clements actually identifies a mere six female character archetypes in anime – "The Girl Next Door", "The Tomboy", "The Maiden", "The Older Woman", "The Alien" (which Clements uses to refer to not only literal aliens from outer space, but also robots or androids such as Naomi Armitage from *Armitage III* (1995), deities such as Belldandy and her sisters from *Oh My Goddess!* (1988-2014), other humanoid species like elves, and foreign human women (Clements, 1998: pp 104-107)), and "The Child" – and says "most importantly for some of anime's most fervent feminist apologists, it should be noted that all these archetypes are keyed towards *male* wish-fulfilment" (Clements, 1998: p 95). But this was nonetheless a common defence made by anime fans in the '90s when faced by criticisms about the perceived sexism of the medium – that it was unfair and inaccurate to condemn anime or manga as a whole based on a mere handful of titles picked for a very specific audience. Indeed, I and many of my fellow anime fans at the time (and much like the aforementioned Clare and Chris in "Blood and Guts and Bambi Eyes" (Burgess, 1993: p 13)) quickly formed standard responses to people who attacked the medium – either to point out that the selection of anime available in the UK represented a very limited sample of what was available across the medium as a whole, or to simply challenge the attacker as to whether or not they had actually watched

any anime, knowing that their critics often had not and were instead basing their opinions on press misrepresentations.

While UK anime fan culture was small at the time, it was accustomed to hostility. Before there was any press coverage, McCarthy recalls that broader science fiction and fantasy fandom was indifferent at best and actively hostile at worst, not just about anime, but about other, TV-based fandoms, such as *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who*, and *Blake's 7*. "Several people [...] felt that this just wasn't proper science fiction, it was catering too much to kids, it wasn't rigorous enough, it wasn't scientific enough. Other people were actively and openly hostile to the fact that it was bringing so many women into SF fandom [...] the idea of a woman with a mouth and a brain and an attitude of 'I don't care what you think about science fiction, this is what *I* think is science fiction,' was very unpopular" (McCarthy, 2018b). So by the time the negative press coverage of anime began, UK anime fans were ready and able to push back whenever the opportunity arose. Often this was in the form of letters to newspaper editors – when *The Guardian*, in 1994, claimed that the popularity of British animated TV series exported to Japan like *Paddington Bear* and *Noddy* was a sign of "a reaction against violent tendencies in Japanese television, characterised by torture-ridden game shows and martial arts Manga cartoons" and that "there is a shortage of good, wholesome programming" in Japan (Culf, 1994: p 24), the following week two letters were published pointing out that "There are literally hundreds of animated shows which have been produced for Japanese children which do not feature violence as their main attraction – or even at all. Any correspondent who undertook the slightest amount of original research would have learnt that there is no 'shortage of good wholesome programming'," (Payne, 1994: p 23) and "A large number of series and films made by the Japanese animation industry over the past 25 years have followed the pattern of school and everyday-life stories, fluffy animal tales, and retellings of myth and fairytale popular with young children all over the world. It is precisely because a strong market exists for 'non-violent, traditional storytelling' in the animated form that Japan is so keen to buy more of this product from the rest of the world" (McCarthy, 1994: p 23) – but fans found other ways to mobilise

as well, and two particularly noteworthy examples from the 1990s are the founding of the Anime Babes fan club, and the launch of Minamicon.

Anime Babes

Anime Babes was a girls-only fan club established in November 1995, with the stated aim of building up "a following of female fans who will help to get the female point of view heard, and to help get more girls' anime released in the UK" (Munns, 1995). McCarthy describes the movement as "a group of very feisty, very talented, ferocious teenage girls who banded together to [...] set up a club called Anime Babes, and claimed the turf, and said 'this doesn't belong to guys, this belongs to us, deal with it'" (McCarthy, 2018a). The founding members were Lisa Munns and Laura Watton, who started out as penpals as a result of the contact pages in *Anime UK*. "Lisa wrote to me and it was so nice to be in touch with someone my age (indeed she said so first)," Watton (now Watton-Davies) recalls (2018). A fledgling artist, Watton had contributed art to other magazines previously but had never founded one, so she was excited by Lisa's suggestion of setting up an anime fanzine for girls, and it was from this that the Anime Babes fan club was created.

Membership was available at low cost – £1.50 or six first-class stamps – and granted access to a membership contact list so that members could write to each other, establish penpals, and arrange trades of both video and cassette tapes, as well as free copies of the quarterly *Anime Babes* fanzine, which was entirely populated with art and writing from the club members. No fixed editorial policy was in place and the fanzine's contents were fairly free-form – the basic information sheet provided to prospective members said "it is your fanzine, so feel free to send us any articles, artwork, comic strips, reviews etc, and we will do our best to print them" (Munns, 1995). The fanzine itself ran for four issues in total, and while the second issue stated that "the media campaigning just wasn't working," the club retooled itself as "a fangirl collective, a network to unite and guide female fans [...] we hope to unite international girl fans to form a friendly network of female otaku" (Munns,

1996: p 3). The fanzine was also sold to non-members, either by post or at convention dealers' tables, and picked up positive reviews in a number of other publications, including the Super Nintendo magazine *Super Play*.

The club and fanzine ultimately closed in late 1996 as the editorial team, who had all been around 15-16 years old, transitioned into working on their A-Levels and could no longer dedicate their time to managing the project. But despite its short lifespan, the influence of Anime Babes was still significant. It provided a safe space for female anime fans and offered a platform for their creative endeavours at a time when negative perceptions of anime as being "sick cartoons" and "tits and tentacles" for a male audience dominated the public perception (Sengupta's "Snuff Out These Sick Cartoons" had been published a little over 18 months before the club was set up, and the *Sunday Mail*'s "Evil Video Passport" campaign was printed in February of the same year). It was representative of the drive and resourcefulness of its founders and members, who produced the content they wanted to see and created their own world within fandom, using low-tech methods, basic computer programs, and no small amount of manual labour. Also of note is that a number of the original members of Anime Babes, having started out by contributing to the fanzine, have continued their creative endeavours into adult life, the most prominent of which is Sweatdrop Studios, which was co-founded by Watton in 2001 and continues to this day to be an "independent publisher and comic collaborative"; noteworthy members of Sweatdrop Studios include Emma Vieceli and Sonia Leong, who went on to publish *Manga Shakespeare*; Joanna Zhou, an illustrator and designer who created her own line of collectables called Momiji Dolls; and graphic designer Morag Lewis, whose work was published in the second volume of *The Rising Stars of Manga UK and Ireland* in 2007.

Minamicon

Minamicon held its first event in Portsmouth in July 1995. Run by members of the Minami Anime Club, it was also set up as a reaction against the sexual

and violent titles that had become most strongly associated with the medium, and ran with the explicit aim of showing "a wide selection of Japanese Animation with an emphasis on the 'CUTER' side of anime rather than the sex [and] tentacles predominant in UK releases" (*Minami Anime*, 1995). Initially running as single-day events in Portsmouth in July of 1995 and 1996, Minamicon moved to a weekend-long format in 1997 and relocated to Southampton. The conventions offered a standard selection of activities and events for attendees, including video rooms showing a mixture of established favourites and new releases, a dealers' room, and a cosplay masquerade. Minamicon is noteworthy for having outlasted all other UK anime conventions and is now the UK's longest-running anime convention, having celebrated its 25th year of running in March 2019. Despite this, it remains a small and relatively intimate event, still held in the same Southampton venue and with membership capped at 400 attendees.

Although less emphasis is now placed on "cuter" anime, Minamicon continues to position itself as an event that is suitable for all ages, and is run largely as a "cultural event" rather than purely as an anime convention. In the absence of video rooms, which have been abandoned in part because of a desire to maintain good relations with UK anime distributors, the con now runs a number of regular events dedicated to explorations of Japanese culture, including a "matsuri" party on Friday night, a cosplay cafe on Sunday, and a Japanese cookery lesson hosted by long-time attendee and organiser Simon Bland; the rest of the weekend is made up of panels and events pitched and run by attendees, and which range from tutorials on cosplay techniques and photography to analysis of specific anime series and discussion of elements of Japanese culture, as well as games, quizzes and competitions. The cosplay masquerade remains the most popular and well-attended event of the weekend, and is one of the few residential convention masquerades to still announce prizewinners afterwards – albeit in categories that are announced in the spirit of fun rather than as prestigious awards.

The main point of interest for Minamicon, however, is that as the longest-running dedicated anime con in the UK, attendees tend to be regulars who

have attended faithfully for several years, and as a result it encapsulates many aspects of the evolution of UK anime fandom. Attendees who started out at Minamicon as teenagers or university students have lived full lives in the intervening years, growing up, getting married, and having children, and a growing number of attendees now consider the Minamicon weekend to be a weekend family break, bringing their children along, letting them join in with cosplay, and engaging with the rest of the con attendees. Some longstanding attendees have also passed away – the convention's treasurer, Ewan Chrystal, died in early 2009, and regular gopher Andrew Almond passed away in late 2018; both have been memorialised as part of the convention, and the annual convention charity collection is divided between the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research in their honour. Having started out as a direct reaction against the limited range of anime available in the UK, Minamicon has evolved into a supportive fandom network and community, which welcomes new attendees as willingly as long-established fans.

If the drive to introduce the UK to the full depth and breadth of what anime had to offer was the foundation of anime fandom in the UK, then community-building endeavours such as these would become the backbone. These activities represented fans' efforts to not only shape and curate their own experiences when there appeared to be little or no interest in anime being officially presented or understood as anything other than "inarticulate, brassy thrills" (Clements, 2009: p 273), but also to form a kind of safe space – an environment in which UK anime fans could talk to each other, feel assured that they would be mutually understood, offer support to each other and, through this sense of community, attempt to raise awareness of anime outside of fan circles, protest misrepresentations when they arose, and attempt to welcome other, new fans into the fold. UK anime fandom could not have survived and reached the form it has today if not for the work of '90s anime fans who pushed back against a narrative that was being unfairly thrust upon them, and the echoes of these efforts inform much of contemporary anime fandom, from the format of fan-run, residential conventions to the diversity of gender identities, sexual orientations, and racial backgrounds seen in younger fans today.

However, these efforts alone were not, and could not have been, responsible for the rapid changes that both anime and anime fandom underwent after the year 2000. Three core factors proved to be major turning points in how anime was perceived in the UK, the form that anime fandom took, and the ways in which fans engaged both with anime and each other – the launch of the *Pokémon* franchise in the UK in 1999; the Academy Award success of Miyazaki Hayao's *Spirited Away* in 2003; and the development of fast, accessible, stable broadband. In the next chapter I will examine these factors, discuss the impacts they had on both anime fandom and the wider awareness and accessibility of anime titles in the UK, and briefly discuss how both anime and anime fans have subsequently been portrayed and represented in mainstream press and media.

CHAPTER THREE

Changing Tides: Anime in the UK in the Twenty-First Century

While the key factors mentioned in the previous chapter – *Pokémon*, the success of *Spirited Away* at the Academy Awards, and home broadband access – occurred at separate times and distinctly from each other, their combined influence triggered rapid shifts in both how anime was perceived and understood outside fandom circles, and in how fans consumed anime, engaged with their fandom, and communicated with each other. The effect has been to transform the shape of anime fandom enormously in a very short amount of time. Anime is now so familiar a sight, is so easily accessible, and has had such a noticeable influence on Western animation, film, and graphic arts, that it rarely – if ever – triggers the "fear and loathing" response that was commonplace outside of fandom circles in the '90s; indeed, anime movies are now often treated as art pieces by the press, while children's TV shows rarely attract commentary of any kind.

Fandom has also become less insular and more connected – it is uncommon now for fans to see little of each other outside of convention environments; improved access to information and resources has meant that fans' transformative works are more polished and more easily shared with others; and UK fans are increasingly engaging with global fandom by attending overseas events, such as Japan Expo in Paris and American conventions like Katsucon, Anime Expo, and Dragoncon, and participating in international cosplay competitions such as the World Cosplay Summit, European Cosplay Gathering, and Eurocosplay. Fans are also increasingly turning their fandom into professional endeavours, with both fan artists and small businesses like Coscraft and Discord Comics now having significant trade presences at both fan-run conventions and large-scale events.

In this chapter I will map how these shifts occurred and discuss their overall impacts on UK anime fandom, before providing an examination of the modes of engagement among contemporary anime fans in the UK.

The Rise of *Pokémon* in the West

The first mention of *Pokémon* (1997 – present) in Western press was in late 1997, following the so-called "*Pokémon* Shock" incident that occurred on 16 December after the Japanese TV broadcast of the episode "Dennō Senshi Porygon". The episode featured a scene in which red and blue lights flashed rapidly and repetitively on the screen, creating a strobe light effect that led to a number of viewers reporting feeling unwell, with complaints of headaches, nausea, dizziness and blurred vision (Katsuno and Maret, 2004: pp 80-81). Approximately 700 people were taken to hospital by ambulance, and while most recovered during the journey, around 200 were admitted, with two patients reportedly requiring an extended hospital stay of over two weeks (Takahashi and Tsukahara, 1998: p 631).

While subsequent examinations and discussions of the "*Pokémon* Shock" have concluded that it was, in fact, a fairly mild incident – the number of patients diagnosed with photosensitive epilepsy was minuscule, and many of the complaints of illness at the time had more in common with a case of epidemic hysteria than genuine epilepsy (Radford and Bartholomew, 2001: pp 201-202) – Western media of the time seized upon the incident as another opportunity to criticise Japanese animation further. "The mainstream perception of Japanese animation had finally been vindicated," wrote Wil Overton in an article for *Manga Max*. "Anime was a vile and evil influence on the young, and now even its home country knew it to be true" (Overton, 1998: p 37). The result was press reporting that contained a mixture of half-truths and outright falsehoods. *The Sun*'s report stated that "More than 700 children were taken to hospital with convulsions after watching a cartoon creature's brightly flashing eyes on TV [...] Doctors told how some went into a trance-like state, triggered by what they called a form of 'television epilepsy.' Experts say the condition is similar to one which affects some children who play video games" (Troup, 1997: p 23), and four months later, *The Independent* reported on *Pokémon*'s return to Japanese TV screens by

using similar language to that which had been used throughout the '90s about anime, with a headline of "Sick Cartoon Back on TV" and repeating the exaggerated claim that "at least 700 viewers – mostly children – were rushed to hospitals with symptoms ranging from nausea to convulsions" (*Independent*, 1998: p 11).

While this can be seen as typical journalistic hyperbole (albeit rather more lurid than one might expect from a broadsheet such as the *Independent*), it served to continue the specific narrative that anime, which "everyone just knew" had always been a corrupting influence anyway, was now directly and demonstrably harmful to the health and wellbeing of children. However, this particular response to *Pokémon* was not to last much longer; while the piece in *The Sun* said that there were "no plans to show the TV cartoon in Britain," it did also note that the *Pokémon* video game, which had sold seven million copies in Japan alone since its release in February 1996, was due to be released worldwide in 1998 (Troup, 1997: p 23). *Pokémon Red Version* and *Pokémon Blue Version* finally received European releases on 5 October 1999, and in the time between the "*Pokémon* Shock" story and the games' release date, UK press coverage had shifted from a fear that the *Pokémon* anime would injure or corrupt children by causing epileptic seizures or warping young minds, to more conventional criticisms about fads, commercialism, and addiction related to the overall franchise. By the time the anime series did air on UK TV in March 1999, fears related to the "*Pokémon* Shock" seemed to have been forgotten, and instead gave way to warnings that "a new must-have toy craze is about to sweep the country [...] And it will set out to capture our children's minds – not to mention their parents' cash" (Hall, 1999: p 38).

This response was certainly not unique to the UK; as Christine R Yano notes, "in contrast to *Pokémon*'s uncontroversial reception in Japan stands the harsh critique *Pokémon* has received globally, a critique that depicts *Pokémon* as a mysterious, sinister force taking over children" (Yano, 2004: p 113). Indeed, the range of toys, branded goods, and trading cards that accompanied the release of the games and anime series provided additional

scope for scare stories, as reports came in from the US about schools banning *Pokémon* cards because they encouraged speculative trading (Alexander, 1999: p 16), an incident in which a nine-year-old boy stabbed his friend after an argument about *Pokémon* cards (Chalmers, 1999: p 13), and another in which an autistic seven-year-old choked to death when a golf ball-sized *Pokémon* Power Bouncer became lodged in his throat (Swanton, 1999b: p 4). As Christmas approached, a number of press reports took on a familiar, hand-wringing tone about commercialism. "Your child will be an addict by Christmas," warned *The Independent on Sunday* in its Lifestyle supplement, adding:

> This is the most contrived and controlled phenomenon ever conceived. The cartoon feeds directly into the sales of the game, running alongside it like a permanent commercial – but one that makes rather than costs money. The game meanwhile is one long continuous product placement, featuring a hundred and one gimmicky spin-offs that are, of course, available at a toy shop near you. (Swanton, 1999a: p 1)

Other articles also stressed the financial cost to parents in the specific context of satisfying their children's Christmas demands. "Come Christmas mothers will be plodding the high-street, patience and purses severely depleted," warned *The Times* (1999: p 19), while *The Sun* said "cash-strapped parents who have seen it all before with toys like Teletubbies and Furbies will be tearing their hair as youngsters demand to collect the lot. To buy the full range of 82 will cost a staggering £375.18, not counting spin-off items like T-shirts and a computer game" (Cohen, 1999: p 20).

The common thread across all criticisms of *Pokémon* at this time is a fear of the "loss" of an innocent childhood exemplified by playing with simple wooden toys and engaging in low-tech, outdoor activities, and trading healthy, inexpensive pleasures for a craze that costs parents money while reducing the childhood experience to a series of disposable commodities, even though video games and toys based on popular films and TV

programmes had been fairly consistently topping Christmas wishlists since 1982 (Mallon, 1999: p 40). As Yano observes:

> The *Pokémon* panic is built on a moral order fearful of capitalism in both its productive and consumptive dimensions. Many critics, from school principals to child psychologists and parents, adopt a Frankfurt-school approach, alleging that consumers are helpless dupes of a cunning, manipulative culture industry [...] The indignation of anti-*Pokémon* critics arises in particular because consumers are primarily children, described [in critiques] as particularly passive victims, defenseless against multibillion-dollar conglomerates. (Yano, 2004: p 115)

This is particularly visible in British press coverage after Christmas 1999, when criticisms of *Pokémon* continued, often with a nostalgic slant that bore little resemblance to reality. "It says a lot about the modern condition that our children do their collecting with the press of a button rather than by standing on railway platforms or looking under rocks" (Sutcliffe, 2000: p 1), wrote *The Independent*'s Lifestyle supplement, while its counterpart *The Independent on Sunday* bemoaned:

> How did we get to this state? It is not long since children played with unbranded baby dolls, catapults and balsa-wood aeroplanes until they turned into teenagers. They also wore jeans from British Home Stores and plimsolls from the local shoe-shop, and were grateful for it. (Morrish, 2000: p 25)

However, despite the heavy criticism levelled at *Pokémon* at this time, it is worth noting that relatively few of these complaints were levelled at the anime incarnation – aside from the aforementioned claims that it was a "permanent commercial" for the toys, games, and other merchandise, the anime was mainly relegated to having its artwork used to illustrate criticisms of the franchise as a whole (Clements, 2009: p 276). When the first *Pokémon* movie, *Mewtwo Strikes Back* (1998), was released in UK cinemas in April 2000, the moral panic had all but died down, with the largely negative press reviews merely paying lip service to the wider franchise before describing the film as "humourless, boring, impenetrable and with animation of such

staggeringly low quality that it constitutes an insult to cinemagoers of all ages" (Bradshaw, 2000: p 6-7); "the worst major kids' film since *Power Rangers*" (Benson, 2000: p 3); and a "big-screen debut [that] could hardly have been worse" (McGillivray, 2000). Some papers had even moved on to talking about the next "next big thing", citing *Digimon: Digital Monsters* (Howe, 2000: p 20) and *Dragonball Z* (*Evening Times*, 2000: p 20).

Samuel Tobin (2004) states that the *Pokémon* craze was "dead" by the winter of 2000, based on his observations of the nine- to 13-year-old children he was teaching at the time:

> [Being in an upper elementary school setting] is key to understanding contemporary children's consumption because it is elementary children who decide when a children's fad is over. By February 2000, the kids had spoken – the cool boys had dropped *Pokémon* as quickly as they had embraced it a year earlier. The coolest, most mature kids had moved on, which meant that most of the other, less cool and younger kids would soon follow. *Pokémon* lasted several months longer in the lower elementary grades and it will, no doubt, go through a similar cycle in other countries. I would bet that the cool upper elementary school students in those communities, too, led the way in and will lead the way out of *Pokémon*. (S Tobin, 2004: p 253)

With 15 years of hindsight, Tobin's assessment is not entirely accurate – *License! Global* magazine reported that The Pokémon Company International's annual retail sales in the year 2013 alone had been worth $1.5bn, making it the 40th highest-value licensor worldwide (Lisanti, 2014: p T15); two new games, *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield*, represent the eighth generation of games in the main series and received a worldwide release on 15 November 2019; and in addition to the "Pokémon Center" stores that already exist in Japan and Singapore, a pop-up *Pokémon* store opened in London in the four weeks leading up to the games' release and attracted an "unprecedented" number of visitors, resulting in the store closing entry queues several hours before closing time and reporting that they would run out of some items before the promotional period ended; The Pokémon Company eventually set up a dedicated Twitter account to report on queues

and stock levels to avoid disappointing would-be visitors (Craddock, 2019). The augmented reality-based mobile game *Pokémon GO*, released in July 2016, also enjoyed a great deal of success – by the end of 2016 it had amassed a worldwide consumer spend of $950 m (App Annie, 2017: p 25), and in 2018 it generated an annual revenue of $1.3 bn (SuperData, 2019: p 9). And the anime series continues to air, with the latest season, *Sun & Moon – Ultra Legends*, concluding in Japan at the end of October 2019 (*tv-tokyo.co.jp*, 2019) and set to conclude in the US in early 2020. So while there are no longer scare stories about children stabbing each other over *Pokémon* cards or how much parents may be expected to pay out in order to satisfy their children's Christmas demands, this does not truly indicate that the popularity of *Pokémon* has dwindled to the extent that it could ever be considered uncool or unpopular.

Indeed, Joseph Tobin notes that "*Pokémon* at its peak was so successful that it could drop two-thirds and still be one of the world's most profitable children's products" (J Tobin, 2004: p 290). It is probably more accurate to say that *Pokémon*, which never truly died out as most fads and crazes do, has simply survived long enough to become familiar. It has been available and popular in the UK for over 20 years with no recorded long-term ill effects, and many of the children who watched the anime or played the games in the late '90s and early '00s have now grown up, had children of their own, and introduced a new generation to Pikachu and friends, as can be seen at any of the all-ages conventions and events that run in the UK during the year[2]. What little controversy there has been surrounding *Pokémon* in recent years came after the release of *Pokémon GO*, and even then the reports circulating in the press spoke more to standard tech anxieties – the sharing of personal data (McDonald and McKlung, 2016: p 9), excessive spending on microtransactions (Jones, 2016: p 38), or being distracted by mobile phones leading to misadventure (Weich, 2016), inadvertently breaking the law

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[2] This is an anecdotal statement based on my own experiences of congoing, made purely because no formal study of parents who, having grown up with *Pokémon*, choose to introduce their children to the series seems to have been conducted as yet. This is a possible future research project that could expand upon my findings in this thesis.

(Porter, 2016), or becoming a victim of crime (*Leigh Journal*, 2016) – than anything to do with *Pokémon* in and of itself.

Overall, the main impact of *Pokémon* in the long term has been to do what anime fans in the '90s had hoped for – to provide a counterpoint to the perception of Japanese animation as being all sex and violence for the "beer-and-curry crowd" (Clements, 2009: p 273) and reintroduce the medium as a valid source of entertainment for children. However, by itself this still presents a stark dichotomy – disposable kiddies' entertainment that is largely ignored by adults, and edgy adults-only trash consumed by teens and creepy adults looking for cheap thrills – which fans knew to be unrepresentative of anime as a whole. A visible middle ground was required, and that came in the form of the films of Miyazaki Hayao and Studio Ghibli.

Studio Ghibli, the British Press, and Anime as Art

Studio Ghibli and Miyazaki films had, of course, had Western (or English-language, at least) releases prior to the '00s – *Warriors of the Wind* is a notorious early example of an attempt to localise a Miyazaki film for Western children, but *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988) was also dubbed into English in 1988 by Streamline Pictures, initially for screening on Japan Airlines flights, before receiving a cinema release in the US by Troma Films in 1993 and, in 1994, a VHS release by Fox Video (McCarthy, 2002: p 133). *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989) was also dubbed by Streamline Pictures for JAL (McCarthy, 2002: p 143), and the airline subsequently became a major investor on *Porco Rosso* (1992), which was screened during their flights well in advance of its cinematic release in Japan (McCarthy, 2002: p 163). Some Studio Ghibli films, despite not being released on home video at this time, did also receive UK TV screenings – as mentioned by one of my questionnaire respondents, *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (1986) aired on ITV in 1988, and I, myself, saw the JAL localisations of *My Neighbour Totoro* and *Porco Rosso* when they screened on Sky Cinema, circa 1996 – but in general, the work of Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli received little recognition outside Japan except among

anime fans throughout the 1990s, until the licensing of *Princess Mononoke* (1997) in the US garnered wider attention for Studio Ghibli.

Picked up by Disney in 1998, released through their subsidiary Miramax in 1999, and featuring a localised script by Neil Gaiman (McCarthy, 2002: p 196), the film was broadly well-received by critics in the US – Roger Ebert called it "a great achievement and a wonderful experience, and one of the best films of the year" (*rogerebert.com*, 1999); *Entertainment Weekly* said "a windswept pinnacle of its art, *Princess Mononoke* has the effect of making the average Disney film look like just another toy story" (*ew.com*, 1999); and the *Los Angeles Times* said that "in *Princess Mononoke*, Miyazaki brings a very different sensibility to animation, a medium he views as completely suitable for straight dramatic narrative and serious themes" (*latimes.com*, 1999). The US box office figures, however, were disappointing – it took just $144,446 in its opening weekend and grossed $2,375,308 in total at the end of its eight-week run (*boxofficemojo.com*). When it was finally released in the UK, it went straight to video in October 2001; its only cinematic release was as part of the Barbican's "Studio Ghibli – The Art of Japanese Animation" festival from 19 October to 11 November 2001.

Princess Mononoke's reception in the British press was also much cooler; when it was first released in Japan in 1997, *The Guardian* headed their news report with "Japan in Grip of Blood-Soaked Cartoon Film", before going on to describe it as "at times extremely violent: humans and animals spill buckets of each other's blood in the battle for survival" (Watts, 1997: p 16). In 2001, ahead of the Barbican's Studio Ghibli festival, the paper then described it as "the most improbable smash hit imaginable" before going on to paint a picture of Studio Ghibli as a studio constantly teetering on the verge of failure, whose output "lacks the polish viewers of *Toy Story* and *Shrek* are accustomed to" (Delaney, 2001: p B9). And, as Andrew Osmond points out, in the year 2000 the wider British perception of anime was still that it was "either schlocky 'manga' that clogs up the shelves in video stores, or the cheap factory animation that ruins children's television", adding that "*Mononoke* might change the picture, but we'll never know [...] In the UK, [the

distribution rights] were passed to Buena Vista, Disney's distribution arm. However, *Mononoke* is no Disney-style film" (Osmond, 2000: p 6).

Despite this, along with fans' contentions that Buena Vista failed to adequately promote its Studio Ghibli acquisitions, "the movies single-handedly rehabilitated the medium" (Clements, 2009: p 276). Indeed, as Rayna Denison notes, there was a concerted effort to build Studio Ghibli and Miyazaki as recognisable brands that Western mainstream audiences would associate with high-quality, artistic works. "From the first Miramax-produced trailer for *Princess Mononoke*, claims were made about [Miyazaki Hayao] being a 'master animator' and subsequent trailers continued this pattern. For *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), for example, Miyazaki was labelled a 'master filmmaker' and an Academy Award winner." (Denison, 2015: p 120). *Spirited Away*'s success at the 2003 Academy Awards was indeed the biggest turning point for the success of Studio Ghibli outside Japan, boosting their visibility significantly and, as Denison notes, the award "has since become an integral part of Miyazaki's brandname status in the USA" (Denison, 2015: p 120).

The timing for *Spirited Away* was also fortuitous. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) launched its Best Animated Feature category in 2002, and around the same time that the inaugural award was given to *Shrek*, *Spirited Away* picked up the Golden Bear at the 2002 Berlin Film Festival – an unexpected victory, given that *Princess Mononoke* had been a flop in Germany. Suzuki Toshio, one of the co-founders of Studio Ghibli and long-time producer of the studio's films, attributed this success in part to AMPAS "raising the status of all cartoons with the newly created Animation Oscar" (Clements, 2009: pp 260-261), and following *Spirited Away*'s US release in April 2002, it picked up a nomination for the 2003 Academy Awards. When it won, it cast anime in a whole new light:

> Suddenly, anime was art-house again [...] Hollywood studios all
> started acting like kids themselves, with anime as their oversized
> *Pokémon* cards. If Disney had [Miyazaki Hayao], then DreamWorks

wanted the works of [Kon Satoshi], and Columbia scrabbled to acquire anything by *Akira* creator [Ōtomo Katsuhiro]. (Clements, 2009: p 276)

The press response, too, was much warmer than it had been previously. *Spirited Away* received a theatrical release in the UK on 12 September 2003 and the reviews were almost universally positive. *The Guardian* named it Film of the Week after it left reviewer Peter Bradshaw "purring with pleasure" (Bradshaw, 2003: p B12). In *The Observer*, Philip French said "it held me transfixed for more than two hours, and I never sat back merely admiring Miyazaki's virtuosity" (French, 2003: p D11). Angie Errigo in the *Mail on Sunday* said "it's an enthralling journey to another world, as profound as it is funny, as poetic as it is exciting (Errigo, 2003: p 72-73). Even the *Financial Times* weighed in, awarding the film six stars out of five: "yes, that's right, six stars. Exception must be made for the exceptional. *Spirited Away* is a feast of enjoyment, a movie classic and a joy that will enrich your existence until you too are spirited away" (Andrews, 2003: p 38). British animator Nick Park also paid tribute to Miyazaki's artistry:

> Spirited Away has a childlike view of the world, which I think is necessary for people working in animation, and it is very sophisticated. [Miyazaki] asks the question: 'what if?' That, for me, is where it all starts. (Park, 2003: p B10)

The success and acclaim of *Spirited Away* finally cemented in the minds of non-fans an image of Studio Ghibli as a producer of anime films that were wholesome, family-friendly, and artistically valid – classics that could be enjoyed and cherished by a generation of children in the same way that their parents or grandparents had enjoyed and cherished classic Disney films (Hornaday in Denison, 2015: p 122).

Several subsequent Studio Ghibli films have picked up Academy Award nominations for Best Animated Feature – *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004) in 2006, *The Wind Rises* (2013) in 2014, *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* (2013) in 2015, and *When Marnie Was There* (2014) in 2016, as well as the Studio Ghibli co-production *The Red Turtle* (2016) in 2017 – and while none

of them have won the award, their nominations continue to contribute to this overall brand image. And slow though the progress has been, this level of recognition has helped to lay the foundations for other anime film releases, which have largely received a much warmer reception than they may have been able to hope for prior to 2003. Shinkai Makoto's *Your Name* (2016), already a huge commercial success in Japan, was called "a bittersweet ache of a tale about astronomy, memory and whatever love is" by the *Financial Times* (Leigh, 2016), a "splendid movie, which will leave audiences in a heady reverie long after its mysterious light has faded from the screen" by the *Observer* (Kermode, 2016), and a "dazzling, gleaming daydream" by the *Telegraph* (Collin, 2017).

Meanwhile, the works of Hosoda Mamoru also began to garner widespread praise and comparisons to Studio Ghibli. *Wolf Children* (2012) was described as "the simplest of fairy tales, so scrumptious you'll want to devour it whole" by the *Evening Standard* (O'Sullivan, 2013), a "calm, funny, only occasionally schmaltzy family film" by *The Guardian* (Michael, 2013), and "a gloriously emotional new picture, which has the grace, magic and exquisite drawing we associate with the very finest of Ghibli" by *The Telegraph* (Robey, 2013). Hosoda's next film, *The Boy and the Beast* (2015), was called "a beautifully animated tale that is often more appealing than some live-action blockbusters competing for your attention this summer" by the *Daily Express* (Hunter, 2017), and his latest film, *Mirai* (2018), was described as "a lovely Japanese animation about sibling rivalry, parenting and magically-passed-on wisdom" by the *Daily Mail* (Bond, 2018), a "beautiful Ghibli-inspired anime" by *The Sun* (East, 2018), and a film that "definitely puts Hosoda in the Japanese industry's top league, showing a similar spirit of high-blown romanticism as *Your Name*, anime's high-water mark in recent years" in *The Guardian* (Hoad, 2018). *Mirai* was also the first anime movie with no connections to Studio Ghibli to receive a Best Animated Feature nomination.

Despite these successes, which have been embraced and celebrated by anime fans who fought long and hard to convince non-fans that anime was more than just schlocky trash in the '90s, this new perception of anime as a

medium is not without its problems. "For a few brief months, anime was flavour of the month again," Clements writes of how anime was portrayed after *Spirited Away*'s Academy Awards win. "It's not just kids' stuff, gushed the newspapers. It's Art. It's high quality. Sadly, of course, the equation of all anime with [Miyazaki Hayao]'s cinema masterpieces was just as silly as claiming it was all video porn" (Clements, 2009: p 276). One cannot fully grasp the nuance and variations of the medium of anime purely through an appreciation of Miyazaki and other anime films celebrated for their artistic value, any more than one can do so through reading all of the BBFC's annual reports from the '90s or by watching every episode of *Pokémon*. The state of play is an improvement over the "snuff out these sick cartoons" era, certainly, but it does not represent true mainstreaming of anime, just a shift in the compartmentalisation of the medium. The films of Miyazaki, Shinkai, and Hosoda will always attract attention and praise from professional film critics and cinephiles, if not family audiences. *Pokémon* and the shows that followed it – *Digimon* (1999–2003), *Yu-Gi-Oh!* (2000–2004), *Bakugan Battle Brawlers* (2007–2012) and others – are still predominantly considered to be "just for kids", with their overall visibility mainly restricted to children's newsstand publications and toy stores. Despite being more easily accessible now than ten or 15 years ago and covering a much wider range of genres, from psychological mystery thriller *When They Cry* (2006) to madcap action comedy *Kill La Kill* (2013) to musical slice-of-life drama *Carole and Tuesday* (2019), the majority of anime titles released in the UK simply fall between the cracks of public consciousness, receive little attention outside specialist press outlets, and are mainly consumed and acclaimed by people who are already anime fans and don't need to rely on mainstream press coverage to find out about new releases. Indeed, the "dead tree press" is far less crucial for anime fans in the twenty-first century than it was in the early days of UK anime fandom, with fans now being able to access both news about anime and anime titles themselves through the Internet.

Fandom Beyond Borders: The Internet and the Move Towards Transnational and Transcultural Fandom

The impact of the Internet in everyday life is far-reaching. According to the Office for National Statistics, as of August 2019 93% of all households in Great Britain have Internet access, and of that figure, 98% have fixed broadband while 64% also make use of mobile broadband. Furthermore, 87% of adults in Great Britain report using the Internet daily, and 84% use "on the go" Internet, connecting through a mobile phone or smartphone, laptop, tablet, or other handheld device. Email is the most common use for the Internet at 86%, though other applications include "finding information about goods or services (78%), Internet banking (73%) and use of instant messaging services such as Skype and WhatsApp (72%)," while 71% of women and 64% of men use it to engage with social media. And while the report does not include statistics regarding video streaming, it does state that 65% of adults now use the Internet to listen to music (Office for National Statistics, 2019).

The UK was, however, much slower to adopt Internet technologies than the United States or Europe. Although home broadband has been available in the UK since 2000, uptake was very slow, with only 9% of households in the UK having broadband by 2001 versus 30%-40% in Sweden and Germany. It wasn't until 2008-2009, when Virgin Media began rolling out fibre optic broadband and, as part of a BT scheme to invest £1.5bn in the development of superfast broadband, Openreach pledged to connect 2.5 million customers to fibre by 2012, that a significant jump in home broadband use was observed (Mercer, 2018).

Within anime fandom itself, the first UK-based anime BBS, uk.media.animation.anime (UMAA), was set up in August 1996, by which time its American equivalent, rec.arts.anime, was already eight and a half years old. UK anime fandom through the '90s and into the early to mid-2000s was, as a result, the domain of the relatively privileged – those who lived in or could travel to large cities and therefore had access to a wider range of

anime and manga releases and merchandise (including through Japanese stores, such as the now-closed Yaohan Plaza shopping centre in North London, which contained the largest Japanese bookstore in Europe, Asahiya Shoten (Weeks, 2003), or the Japan Centre Food Hall, which has had a bricks and mortar store in Central London since 1976 (Japan Centre, nd)); those who could afford to travel for conventions, network with other fans, and build up the connections that would facilitate tape-trading; those who either had the technology to play NTSC video tapes (as the majority of fansubs were created and distributed in the US) or knew someone who had the facilities to convert them to PAL; and those who were able to adopt Internet technology early on, either by paying to have it installed at home or by accessing it through a stable university Internet connection (UMAA, for example, was established by Duncan Law-Green, who was at the time a student at the University of Leicester). Writing about early US anime fandom, Sean Leonard (2005) describes a "closed [proselytisation] commons [which] offered a world of creativity – a world of difference – to those who had access to it" (p 290), and this was mirrored in early UK anime fandom. And, as with early US fandom, technological changes and the improved accessibility of subtitled anime to the public marked a shift to more of an "open [proselytisation] commons" (pp 291-292), widening the field enormously for new and younger fans, albeit much later than in the US.

In describing his third generation of otaku, Azuma says that they "experienced the spread of the Internet during their teens, and, as a result, their main forum for general fan activities has moved to web sites, and their interest in illustrations, to computer graphics. Both distribution routes and forms of expression greatly differ from those of earlier generations" (Azuma, 2009: p 7). While Azuma is, in this case, talking about Japanese otaku, McCarthy (2018b) argues that a similar dynamic not only occurred in UK anime fandom, but was a defining factor in its evolution. While it was illicit tape-trading that formed the backbone of anime fandom in its early years, she says, the biggest turning point on an international scale was the arrival of cheap, easily accessible home broadband, which rapidly changed how fans consumed anime, communicated with each other, and engaged with their

fandom. Many of the changes are very obvious, such as the shift away from the trading of low-quality, illegally copied videotapes towards high-quality, fan-subtitled video files distributed through web torrents, and finally to inexpensive and legal high-definition streaming options. Other effects are more subtle, such as the shifts in discourse surrounding the legality (and morality) of file sharing, the move from Bulletin Board Systems to web forums to social media groups, and the ways in which fans share their creative and/or transformative works.

The impact of the Internet as a point of introduction to anime is also observable in my own survey results. No respondents aged 35 or older cited the Internet as being an entry point for anime at all, with most instead citing TV broadcasts (which, as previously mentioned, ran from *Marine Boy* to *Mysterious Cities of Gold*). More respondents aged 25-29 reported the Internet being a factor in their discovery of anime than other age groups (though this may be in part due to the smaller sample group of younger respondents), and respondents aged 18-24 were the first to specify having first encountered anime through YouTube. What is noteworthy, however, is the fact that this youngest group of respondents almost universally cited the Internet as a *supporting* influence rather than a *primary* one – most said that they had first encountered anime through TV broadcasts (for these groups, this was mainly the likes of *Pokémon*, *Cardcaptor Sakura*, and *Dragonball Z*) and then either stumbled upon anime-related content online later, or actively gone looking for it after the initial discovery.

> After watching *Cardcaptors* on CITV I researched it on the Internet and found *Cardcaptor Sakura*. From there, I realised it was under the same umbrella as *Pokémon* and *Digimon* and discovered other anime and manga series. (female respondent, age 25-29)

> Growing up, I frequently watched shows like *Pokémon* and *Cardcaptors* on TV, but didn't realise they were 'anime'. I learned what anime was, and that these shows were part of the genre, in the early 2000s, when I started to become more active on the Internet. A lot of the forums I posted on were filled with anime lovers, so I learned from them. (male respondent, age 25-29)

> The first time I ever watched an anime as an anime was either when I was on YouTube and accidentally found *Wolf's Rain*, or when my Dad, who was interested before me, showed me *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time*. (female respondent, age 18-24)

> When I was younger anime used to be on mainstream television: *Pokémon*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Digimon*. At the time I did not realise these were anime as I was too young to understand. However when these programmes disappeared from mainstream television I went to YouTube to carry on watching them, as these were among my favourite programmes growing up. (male respondent, age 18-24)

This is perhaps not terribly surprising in and of itself – the youngest respondents in this survey would have been born in 1998 or 1999, so given the earlier statistics about Internet uptake in the UK, they would have been around ten years old by the time broadband was more widely adopted in UK homes, whereas *Pokémon* and the like would have been readily available on TV and as games and toys through the entirety of their childhoods. The opportunity for exposure is a simple matter of available time, and television was there for these age groups well before the Internet. So what is interesting in these groups is not that the Internet was the thing that introduced them to anime ahead of all other influences (which is a dynamic that may be observed in younger age groups if the survey were repeated in five or ten years' time), but that it played a pivotal role in developing their identity as fans through the information they accessed and the social connections they made.

Pre- or early Internet UK anime fans were restricted in terms of how they discovered more about anime, largely having to rely on coverage in specialist magazines (which not only included anime-specific magazines like *Anime UK* or *Manga Mania*, but also some video game magazines, most notably *Super Play*) and communicating with other fans by post or telephone unless they were fortunate enough to have access to a university club. But younger generations of fans have been able to make use of a fairly well-developed web, with access to search engines to find news and information about

anime, manga, cosplay or conventions; high-speed Internet connections that more easily facilitate both downloads and uploads; powerful, legal, and affordable video streaming services to stay up to date on new releases (although how many fans exclusively use these legal options is perhaps a subject for another paper); and web forums and social media platforms to make contact with other fans and join in discussions about their interests. And with the growth of online platforms, a number of sites specifically for UK-based fans began to emerge. 1995 saw the establishment of Otaku.co.uk, a dedicated importer and mail order company for anime, manga and related paraphernalia, while bricks-and-mortar stores and existing offline mail order companies like Sheffield Space Centre, MVM, and United Publications established online storefronts in the late '90s and continue to operate to the present day. Prominent fan news site UK Anime (uk-anime.net) was launched in 1995 and given a revamp in 2000, followed in 2002 by Otaku News (otakunews.com), both of which are still in operation. Cosplay Island, an online gallery and networking hub for UK cosplayers, was launched in 2007 to provide a more local alternative to similar US-based sites like Cosplay.com, and in 2010 Coscraft was launched to offer UK cosplayers a domestic alternative to American or Japanese cosplay suppliers, primarily selling a wide range of wigs and wig-styling accessories, but also specialist construction materials like Polymorph, Worbla, spirit gum, and a curated selection of paper sewing patterns.

However, while domestic resources for UK anime fans have been able to arise and survive due to their Internet operations, the geographical boundaries between fans are less distinct on communications platforms. For example, while many UK cosplayers have accounts on Cosplay Island, it is not uncommon for them to also have accounts on US-based sites like Cosplay.com or Cospix, or on WorldCosplay, a Japan-based site developed to accommodate the growing numbers of international cosplayers setting up accounts on the Japanese cosplay platform Cure. Other platforms for sharing fan creative and transformative works, such as Archive Of Our Own (AO3) for fan fiction and deviantArt for artistic works, make no geographical distinctions across users and are used by fans worldwide, while social media

platforms, where fans can also share their creative works as well as engaging in conversation with other fans, are by their very nature transnational (albeit heavily weighted towards US-based users in some cases, such as Tumblr).

Sandra Annett argues that the Internet has "enabled the formation of truly *transcultural* animation fan communities", elaborating on this to say:

> The transcultural animation fan communities that have formed in the first decade of the twenty-first century are sites where people from many backgrounds may experience a sense of connection across difference. This connection can be felt as agreement or as contention. Fans online participate in a continual dynamic tension between clashing with others and working through their differences productively. Their connections are mutual, as they can instantaneously communicate back and forth over unprecedented distances, and yet asymmetrical, as not all fans can participate equally all the time. Transcultural connections are thus made across the links and firewalls – the points of access and denial – that structure the virtual and social worlds of the early twenty-first century [...] it is the mutual, many-to-many exchanges now possible between unequally positioned fan groups online that are the defining hallmark of transcultural fan communities on the twenty-first century Internet. (Annett, 2014: pp 137-138)

These dynamics are clearly visible on social media platforms, especially in cases where users from different countries and communities are in contact with each other. It is, for example, common to find creative tutorials shared for free among fans on Tumblr, deviantArt or YouTube, detailing complex cosplay construction methods, tips on how to get the best results from image editing software, or alternative creative techniques for users who don't have access to high-end resources. This represents – in theory, if not always in practice – a free flow of information across borders, where fans with a high level of expertise volunteer their knowledge for the benefit of those with less experience or fewer resources – a dynamic that would have been almost impossible prior to widespread Internet access and certainly would not have had the same level of reach.

It is also common, given the increased visibility of marginalised groups such as people of colour, LGBT+ people, and people with disabilities, for discourses and criticisms to arise about representation and oppression within fandom circles. This is particularly common in cosplay communities when questions arise regarding race – a notable recent example is the debate surrounding French cosplayer Alice Livanart, whose costume was disqualified from the 2019 finals of Eurocosplay in London on the basis that, as it comprised a prosthetic bodysuit representing a black man, it constituted blackface; Livanart and her supporters defended the costume as having no derogatory intent behind it and claimed that it was instead a demonstration of "the power of cosplay", while critics, many of whom were people of colour, stated that the intent was irrelevant, as racism was still a day-to-day reality for them and the use of their skin colour as a costume was offensive regardless. While this was not the first time debates had arisen around a white cosplayer painting their skin to look like a black or Asian character, it was the first time that the controversy was sufficient to gain attention outside of fandom circles, with news stories appearing on the BBC (Gerken, 2019), *Daily Mail* (Martin, 2019), Sky News (Minelle, 2019) and *Newsweek* (Lemieux, 2019) websites in October 2019.

Annett points out that, while "the idea that the Internet's virtuality transcends embodied limitations was very common in literature and scholarship during the late 1980s and into the 1990s 'Dot-Com bubble' era," in practice:

> We cannot say that the Internet has fulfilled these bright early visions. It has not provided a utopian space of perfect connection in the tumultuous first decade of the twenty-first century, nor has it actually erased existing hierarchies of race, class, and gender. On the contrary, the Net has been repeatedly critiqued as the same old cultural imperialism dressed up in new media clothing. (Annett, 2014: pp 135-136)

While there are many positives about the transnational and transcultural nature of online fan communities, Annett's point is clearly illustrated in these

debates about race and cosplay. The Internet has indeed enabled massive growth in anime fan communities, but as these communities remain rooted in the "real world", they are still subject to the debates and discourses of that real world, and the increased visibility of these fan communities and debates in turn impacts how anime and its fans are perceived.

Extra-Fandom Perceptions of Anime Fans

Rather than opening the door for widespread mainstream acceptance, as '90s fans would have hoped for, the ubiquity of *Pokémon* and its ilk, the acclaim given to Studio Ghibli films, and the increased visibility of anime fans through the Internet have instead resulted in a simple refocusing of how anime, and its fans, are perceived. There is less open hostility to anime as a medium overall, but again, it is not that it has become *popular*, just *familiar*, and anything that is neither a kids' cartoon nor a film with "artistic merit" is still considered a "special interest", even as other geek properties have made their mark on the mainstream consciousness. The series finale of *Game of Thrones* had 3.2 million viewers in the UK in its 2am premiere slot on Sky Atlantic (*theguardian.com*, 2019); *Avengers: Endgame* grossed £43.4m in its opening weekend in the UK, beating the gross opening weekend takings of both the James Bond movie *Spectre* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (*forbes.com*, 2019); and in 2017, Primark's Oxford Street East store opened a whole department dedicated to *Harry Potter* branded goods (*insider.com*, 2017) which, as of November 2019, is still going strong. The geeks have inherited the earth, but even within geek circles anime fans are under-represented; promotional images for MCM Comic Con generally favour images showing Western sci-fi or fantasy properties, and even Hyper Japan, a biannual J-culture event that has taken place in London since 2010 and was at one time the venue for the UK's World Cosplay Summit selections, places more emphasis on Japanese food, music, and traditional clothing than anime and manga in its advertising.

Meanwhile, despite their greater visibility and social engagement online, anime fans themselves also remain subject to scrutiny as being weird or overly obsessed. In 2010 the *Sunday Telegraph*, having been invited to Aya Revolution in 2009, published a report on the convention that portrayed the fans in attendance – and cosplayers in particular – with bewilderment. "Shelf stacker by day, android cop by night", it led, before going on to describe cosplayers as "different species" and treat its interviewees like aliens.

> I am chatting to three lithe and pale girls. One is a giant ant; I am not sure what the other two are. 'Here,' the ant-girl says, 'you can run around in a costume without people thinking you are really weird. The police don't stop you for having wooden swords. The Scientologists don't give you evil looks. The Christians don't come up to you and say: "You are going to hell".' For some reason, she explains, the Scientologists and Christians have taken against the cosplayers, who often go and run around Hyde Park in London at weekends. Why the Scientologists? Perhaps a group that believe that people are immortal aliens trapped in human form don't like the competition?
>
> [...]
>
> I approach a man who is dressed as an enormous teddy. He is tall and fat and he is sitting alone in the convention hall, looking like something *Sesame Street* spat out. So, I ask, why are you dressed as a teddy? He begins to mumble something incomprehensible about a long-dead video game [...] When the teddy realises I don't understand what he is talking about, he starts sweating and shaking with the effort of trying to explain himself. He is in the worst shape of any man dressed as a teddy I have ever met.
>
> [...]
>
> Masquerade time. The hall is now full of cosplayers – it looks just like the intergalactic senate in *Star Wars* [...] The lights dull, and out they come – wolves, fairies and angels, green women with golden snakes for hair. They won't get prizes or money for this; they just come on and say: 'I'm an alien,' and go off again. I sit down. We're not in Warwick anymore, Toto. (Gold, 2010: pp 14-15)

The response from cosplayers, particularly those who were in attendance at Aya Revolution, was very negative, with frustration expressed at the article's

tone and portrayal of its interviewees. Ka Ho Chan, the then Chairman of Ayacon, posted scans of the article on his Livejournal on the day it was published; in a comment on Chan's post, a cosplayer with the name "lulu_rose" said, "The article is written VERY poorly. It's not really done a good job of showing us cosplayers and con [attendees] in a good light. It's not so much degraded us, rather it has somewhat made us seem a tad more… well geeky I guess [...] I know we are geeky, I know we are outcasts, but they could have at least tried to [shine] more of a light on the fact that we are still decent people regardless", while another cosplayer, "xaerael", who was interviewed for the article and is the person referred to by the headline as a "shelf-stacker by day, android cop by night", said "they should have tried not to misquote/omit context on me so much". Chan himself also commented on the post, saying, "Yeah, the report wasn't great, I was half expecting that we would get the article so we can do a quick read through before it's printed but alas no, maybe we should organise a tighter leash on them if they show up at a con again" (Chan, 2010).

Such criticisms of cosplayers have become less common in recent years, with many articles and programmes becoming more celebratory in tone, such as *The Guardian*'s coverage of the Sci-Fi Weekender in 2014 (Allison, 2014) or the BBC's "Real Life Superheroes" episode of *True North* (2019). However, as with the promotional material for MCM Comic Con, such coverage tends to focus more on Western properties like Marvel superheroes, Disney princesses, and sci-fi staples like *Star Wars* or *Doctor Who*. Whether intentional or not, the overall effect is to create a division between sci-fi and fantasy fans – who may be geeks, but at least they're geeks for something that's attained a level of mass appeal for all ages – and fans of anime, whose interests remain primarily aligned with something that is still considered to be comparatively weird, niche and incomprehensible.

This is further reinforced by occasional press coverage which, while certainly not on the level of "Snuff Out These Sick Cartoons", discusses pornographic anime and manga as if it were as commonly consumed and readily accessible as *Pokémon* or a Miyazaki film, and by association, paints anime

fans as degenerates. For example, the coverage of the 2014 conviction of Robul Hoque under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 described Hoque as a "jobless fan of Japanese anime" and the images for which he was convicted as "[depicting] young girls, some in school uniforms, some exposing themselves or taking part in sexual activity" (Lightfoot, 2014), and included the courtroom comment from Judge Tony Briggs that "this is material that clearly society and the public can well do without. Its danger is that it obviously portrays sexual activity with children, and the more it's portrayed, the more the ill-disposed may think it's acceptable" (Palmer, 2014). The following year, the BBC asked "why hasn't Japan banned child-porn comics?" and interviewed one of the organisers of the quarterly *dōjinshi* fair Sunshine Creation, who nonchalantly said "I like young-girl sexual creations, Lolicon is just one hobby of my many hobbies," and that his wife "probably thinks [my hobby is] no problem, because she loves young boys sexually interacting with each other" (Fletcher, 2015).

Instances such as these are frustrating for anime fans, as they mean that – just as had been the case in the '90s – fans are forced to take a defensive stance by default when speaking to non-fans; meanwhile, other hobbies and interests are perceived as not attracting the same level of scrutiny and criticism, with sports fandom (and football/soccer fandom in particular) being a very common point of comparison. There is certainly a feeling among anime fans that they are negatively stereotyped for their interests, a feeling encapsulated by the earlier comment from "lulu_rose": "I know we are geeky, I know we are outcasts, but [...] we are still decent people regardless". This feeling of being negatively stereotyped is not unique to UK anime fans by any means, as indicated by Reysen et al:

> When typing 'why are anime fans' into Google, autocomplete finishes the sentence with 'so weird,' 'so ugly,' and 'losers.' These suggested searches reflect what people are searching with respect to anime fans and, more importantly, illustrate the content and prevalence of anime fan stereotypes. (Reysen et al, 2016: p 80)

Reysen et al conducted a study into the stereotypes surrounding anime fans, in which participants who were aware of anime fandom but did not self-identify as anime fans were asked about their perceptions of anime fans. This study made use of two methodologies – one in which participants were asked to describe the qualities of a prototypical anime fan, for example by describing their modes of dress, forms of social engagement, and likely occupation; and another in which the same participants responded to a list of specific stereotypes by rating how accurate they felt they were to anime fans, such as fandom demographic makeup, fans' motivations for participating in anime fandom, and fans' religious and political allegiances (pp 83-86). While the overall study did yield some surprising results, particularly that the participant pool rejected the stereotypes of anime fans as being overly obsessed and sexual deviants, it also showed that non-fans preferred to only interact with anime fans when it was obligatory to do so, and that they perceived anime fans to be "low on warmth and high on competence". Overall, Reysen et al concluded that "the perception of the anime fandom may not be as negative as once thought, though the fandom nonetheless remains a stigmatized minority fan group" (p 94). However, there are limitations within this study, particularly in terms of the participant pool, which was made up entirely of undergraduate students at one university in the US, and the fact that it did not test for the accuracy of the stereotypes within anime fan communities (p 93). Additionally, the study did not ascertain from its participants whether or not they themselves belonged to any related fandoms, such as comics or science fiction, nor did it explore how anime fans' knowledge of these stereotypes impacted either their own sense of identity or the way in which they perceived and responded to other fans, a phenomenon that has been observed in other fandom community examinations such as Mel Stanfill's discussion of *Xena: Warrior Princess* fans (2013). A detailed exploration of these questions is of merit in order to understand how anime fans in the UK are perceived by non-fans, how heavily these perceptions are influenced by press and media portrayals of anime fans, whether or not there truly is a "hierarchy" among fans of geeky media and properties, and the extent to which anime fans internalise these

perceptions and how this affects their self-image; however, it falls outside the scope of this project at this time.

Overall these shifts in visibility, access, and discourses leave many questions open regarding both the interplay between "real world" norms and the social functioning of fandom communities, and the scope for how anime fandom and fan identities may change as geographical boundaries become increasingly blurred and Internet technologies continue to evolve. At this time one can only speculate about the latter, while the former merits further, more focused examination as part of a larger research project.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF UK ANIME FANDOM

As touched upon in the previous chapter, anime fandom in the UK continues to change and evolve as Internet technologies develop, social norms and discourses shift, and new, younger fans begin to rise up through the ranks. Obviously one cannot predict the future and state with any degree of certainty how these changes and evolutions will occur, but it is possible to speculate based on the (admittedly anecdotal) data currently available.

Let us start with the normalisation of anime, as both a medium and an aesthetic. As I have already shown, anime is now very familiar to audiences as a result of the popularity and acclaim afforded to *Pokémon* and Studio Ghibli films. However, what I have not yet touched upon is the influence of anime and its aesthetic on Western graphic design and animation. Indeed, contemporary animation for children frequently includes nods to Japanese animation, primarily through its aesthetic design but also in its storytelling and through allusions to a Japanese influence.

An obvious example of this is *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005-2008). Although created by American writers Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko, it is clear that a number of East Asian influences played a role in the development of the series. This was confirmed by both writers in a 2007 interview with IGN, with Konietzko saying "Our love for Japanese anime, Hong Kong action and Kung Fu cinema, yoga, and Eastern philosophies led us to the initial inspiration for *Avatar,*" and DiMartino adding "Bryan and I love the films of [Miyazaki Hayao]. The stories and emotional depth of *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke* were big inspirations for us when we began creating *Avatar*. Also, the character design and animation of *Fooly Cooly* from Studio Gainax was influential as well" (Vasconcellos, 2007). The series found many admirers among Western anime fans, who embraced it as willingly as the 9- to 14-year old boys that were considered to be the target demographic by Nickelodeon (Bynum, 2006). The sequel series, The *Legend*

of Korra (2012-2014), enjoyed similar audience devotion despite scheduling problems, with a *Forbes* article stating that:

> There are very few shows that boast as vocal a fan base as *The Legend of Korra*. *Game of Thrones*, *Orphan Black*, *Arrow*, *Hannibal*, none of them can compete with the level of fandom that comes with Nickelodeon's half-hour, animated drama. From debates over its merits among the likes of Japanese anime, to the business nature of Nickelodeon's ultimate choice to place the show online due to a mixture of ratings and content, one constant has remained: the viewers. (Barr, 2014)

Other Western animated TV programmes have followed in similar footsteps to *The Last Airbender*. Pendleton Ward, the creator of *Adventure Time* (2010-2018), has said that he is a big fan of *My Neighbour Totoro* and that this influenced his writing for *Adventure Time*:

> It's really beautiful and it makes me feel really good inside to watch it and I want to recreate that feeling. I'm just inspired by that feeling. I often times try to make things like that. We try to have moments like that. (DeMott, 2010)

A number of *Adventure Time* alumni have subsequently gone on to work on their own animated series that also have anime influences, such as Natasha Allegri's *Bee and PuppyCat* (2013-2016), which shows clear influences from magical girl anime such as *Sailor Moon* (1992-1997), and Rebecca Sugar's *Steven Universe* (2013-2019), which in addition to the overall aesthetic, featured a number of visual references to anime and Japanese popular culture, including a direct visual homage to *Revolutionary Girl Utena* (1997) during a sword-fighting scene in the season one episode "Steven the Sword Fighter" (Vas, 2014). Meanwhile, a number of other American animated series have emerged which, although they don't show any explicit Japanese influences, have nonetheless found favour among Western anime fans, such as the reboots of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (2010-2019) and *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (2018-Present), and the French/Korean/Japanese co-production *Miraculous: Tales of Ladybug & Cat*

Noir (2015-Present). All of these programmes are popular sources of inspiration for cosplayers and are frequently represented through cosplay at anime conventions, and this popularity among adult anime fans comes in addition to the success these programmes enjoy with children, who are the intended audience.

However, as stated in the previous chapter, this nonetheless does not represent a true mainstreaming of anime as these programmes are still primarily considered to be children's media, and their American origins mean that they are technically hybrid cartoons rather than "true" anime. However, their ongoing success *is* indicative of the growing influence that Japanese animation has had and continues to have on Western visual language, as artists and animators who were fans of anime and/or influenced by the anime aesthetic in their childhoods reach adulthood, build careers as artists, and go on to communicate these influences in their work. Additionally, since these programmes are still consumed by the children they have been created for, in the future we may be able to expect to see further hybridisation and development of animation and graphic arts that shows joint Western and Japanese influences.

The other aspect of anime fandom that we can perhaps expect to see change is the standard mode of consumption among anime fans. The Internet facilitates a level of access to anime that '90s fans could only have dreamt about – not only are there a huge number of titles available at a low cost on legal streaming services such as Netflix, Crunchyroll, and Amazon Prime, but Netflix has also begun to actively invest in anime production, starting with the localisation and international distribution of *Knights of Sidonia* (2014-2015) in 2014 and followed by the addition of anime titles to their selection of "Netflix Originals", with recent success stories including *Aggretsuko* (2018-Present), *Ultraman* (2019-Present) and *Knights of the Zodiac: Saint Seiya* (2019-Present). The convenience, accessibility, and quality of these legal options broadly appeals to older fans who remember the days of tape-trading or the risks associated with illegally downloading fansubbed video files from torrent sites, while younger fans who have grown

up accustomed to the instant access afforded to them by the Internet can find the material they want quickly, with a guaranteed standard of video quality. And it does appear that the popularity and availability of Video on Demand services has had an effect on the rates of illegal downloads, as noted by Hernández-Pérez et al:

> The [standardisation] of Video on Demand is the greatest achievement of the recent anime market. Although it still constitutes a small market, it is an increasingly popular alternative to illegal distribution. Recent reports by the Intellectual Property Office suggested that legal services such as Netflix have contributed to a decrease in filesharing. [...] In the European market, Video on Demand Systems experienced an increase of 250% in sales during the period of 2006-2008 (JETRO Japan External Trade Organization 2011a, 30). It is expected that official distributors, pay-per-view (PPV) and View on Demand (VoD) systems, and even unofficial channels (mainly p2p and other file sharing systems) may open the gates to new audiences for anime genres. (Hernández-Pérez et al, 2017: pp 19-20)

That said, Hernández-Pérez et al do go on to acknowledge that "Internet download distribution may be illegal, but it remains a common practice" (p 22), and it is difficult to be certain just how common a practice it is. While debates do occasionally arise on social media about the morality, if not the legality, of illicit downloads (Leonard, 2005; Lee, 2011), it is possible that most people would not openly admit to participating in illegal downloading or streaming (or, indeed, may not investigate a streaming or download site in enough detail to be certain of its legal status, especially if the files they stream or download are hosted on an ostensibly reputable site like YouTube), and laws against it are difficult to enforce (Lee, 2011: p 1136). It would also be naïve to assume that, just because a wide range of titles are available legally through a selection of reputable sites, fans will never be in a position where they find themselves unable to obtain a given title legally (most likely due to licensing rights, but also perhaps due to low income) and thus go looking for it from illegal outlets.

These are reasons why, along with the inherently unknown nature of the future, it is impossible to do more than speculate about how anime fandom in the UK will evolve in the years to come. What is certain is that there *will be* changes, and they may be quite substantial, so further, more focused research that goes beyond the scope of my fandom questionnaire for this project is required to build up a more comprehensive map of the flow of UK anime fandom.

Further Investigations

The purpose of my fandom questionnaire was, within the practical confines of this project, to build up a snapshot of how anime fandom in the UK operates, how fans express and engage with their fandom, how the demographics have shifted in terms of racial background, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and where generational lines can be drawn. While this yielded interesting results as detailed in my research methodology and discussion of UK anime fandom generations in the Introduction, it also lacked detail in some areas that merit further investigation, as well as presenting the state of UK anime fandom as a static phenomenon rather than one that continues to change and evolve. In order to gain a clearer understanding of the various factors at play in the UK anime market, the UK anime fan scene, and the wider social context of fandom in the twenty-first century, a number of further studies should be conducted.

On a very basic level, it would be worth revisiting the fandom questionnaire in five, ten, or 15 years' time to see whether the trends observed in this research remain constant, and what new trends, if any, emerge, though it would also be beneficial at this point to add some questions about modes of consumption and respondent attitudes towards legal and illegal points of access. Conducting this additional research would enable the collection of data relating to new fans who were exposed to anime and manga as a result of their parents' fandom, as well as those who were not the children of existing fans but discovered anime through other means. This would in all

likelihood provide a framework for the next generation of fans (which I will speculatively call "The Netflix Generation") and, perhaps, indicate the beginnings of the next generation after that. However, there are other pockets of data that offer interesting avenues of exploration but which have not been touched upon in my research. An obvious example is a closer examination of the fandom experiences of people from marginalised groups.

Among these groups, the one whose experiences are perhaps most deserving of more detailed investigation is fans of colour. As indicated by the results of my questionnaire, the number of anime fans in the UK who do not identify as white has increased considerably in recent years, but little of my analysis in this project has allowed room to explore the diversity of fan experiences and how these differ depending on a given fan's racial background. This is a problem not just within this project, but also in the wider field of fan studies, as asserted by Rukmini Pande:

> Because of their status as minorities within Western media fandoms, nonwhite fans are seen to interrupt normative operations of such structures only in specific contexts when they make themselves visible. What I mean by this assertion is that race is only seen to be a relevant factor for [theorisations] about Western fandom communities when it is seen to be specifically interpolated by the presence of a significant character or issue that explicitly foregrounds the operations of nonwhite identity. In this construction, because whiteness is not considered a [racialised] identity with specific effects, its operations on fandom structures can be presented as normative. (Pande, 2018: p 6)

While Pande's work focuses primarily on fans of Western media like *Star Trek* or *Hannibal*, and acknowledges that academic discussions of anime and manga fans (along with fans of other non-Western media like K-Pop and Bollywood) are more likely to consider the transnational and transcultural nature of fandom, the normativity of whiteness means that it is still easy to treat the "white experience" as a default characteristic and apply it in an essentialistic manner when attempting to analyse anime fandom. More detailed research with fans of colour could reveal that, for example, socioeconomic differences between black and white British people in the UK

mean that black anime fans access and use the Internet in different ways to white people, thus impacting their engagement with fandom resources. Anime fans of East Asian heritage may hold different perceptions of anime and manga as a result of consuming them not just as modes of entertainment, but also as expressions of their cultural background. And critical assessments of the ways white fans consume and engage with anime through the perspectives of fans of colour could reveal some interesting points about privilege, stereotyping and fetishism that have not come to the fore in this project. Furthermore, Pande's point about how fans of colour "interrupt normative operations [...] when they make themselves visible" can be seen in the debate about Alice Livanart and racebending in cosplay that was briefly discussed in Chapter Three, but a more detailed analysis of cosplayers' perceptions of race and cosplay, and particularly the perceptions held by cosplayers of colour, is a project of merit that has thus far been largely glossed over or left absent in other scholarship related to cosplay (Ramirez, 2017; Lamerichs, 2018: pp 199-230; Mountford, Peirson-Smith and Geczy, 2019).

Another avenue worth exploring is neurodiversity among UK anime fans, particularly the possible factors that result in a higher than expected number of fans who have received autism diagnoses – a subject left completely unexplored by my fan questionnaire. Steve Silberman has commented briefly on the overlap between neurodivergence and fandom, with specific regard to the possible appeal of science fiction fandom for people on the autism spectrum:

> Darko Suvin, a leading scholar of the genre, described the subversive impulse at the heart of science fiction as an expression of 'cognitive estrangement' from the mainstream. Fandom tapped into a deep yearning to rise above the circumstances of humdrum existence and become part of something noble, deeply informed, and not widely understood. The thrill of being part of something that few people could appreciate was particularly keen for those who had spent their lives being ridiculed. No one could make you a fan – or prevent you from being one – but yourself, and no-one could judge you but your peers of choice: your fellow 'fen'. (Silberman, 2016: pp 252-253)

There are certainly similarities between this dynamic and that of neurodivergent anime fans, but there are probably also stark differences – the worlds presented by Western science fiction, after all, do not have the same social or cultural grounding as the worlds of Japanese animation. But a more detailed investigation into why anime appeals to neurodivergent Western fans – whether it's an outlet for escapism, an opportunity to project wish-fulfilment fantasies onto fantastic characters, or simply representative of a social structure that holds greater appeal than the equivalent Western structures for whatever reason – would provide an additional level of detail and improve the inclusivity of the mapping of anime fandom dynamics.

Lastly, an examination of LGBT+ fans and their reasons for becoming fans would also be of merit. While, as Pande points out, studies of the intersection between fandom and queerness are common within fan studies (2018: p 95), comparatively little has been written about Western anime fans, let alone UK-based fans, with most focus on queer identities among fans being on cosplayers (Lamerichs, 2018: pp 209-213; Mountford, Peirson-Smith and Geczy, 2019: pp 232-253). This leaves a considerable gap in the scholarship, especially given the broad range of gender and sexual identities reported by my questionnaire respondents and the comparatively high proportion of respondents who identify as transgender. As with race and neurodiversity, a more focused study on LGBT+ anime fans, their reasons for being drawn to anime, and the ways that they engage with their fandom would provide a great deal of extra detail in reaching an understanding of UK anime fandom dynamics, especially when examined at the intersections between these marginalised identities.

One other topic that warrants further study, as raised in Chapter Three, is the question of how anime fans are perceived. Taking Reysen et al's 2016 study of perceptions and stereotypes of anime fans as held by non-fans as a starting point, it would be worth attempting to address the weaknesses in this study by, for example, surveying a wider field of respondents, including those with limited exposure to anime and anime fans, and anime fans themselves.

This would enable an analysis of fandom perceptions and stereotypes that cuts across multiple segments: people who have little or no personal experience with anime or anime fans and who are not involved in other geeky fandoms; people who do not identify as anime fans but do identify as science fiction, comics, or video game fans, and thus may have a keener sense of geeky fandom dynamics; people who do not identify primarily as anime fans but do have some interest in anime; and anime fans who are not only aware of and have opinions about fandom stereotypes, but may also have formed their own critical opinions about anime fandom as a whole.

Within these groups we could see, for example, how great an impact mainstream press coverage and representations of anime and anime fans has on people who are uninvolved in fandom; whether or not there is an inter-fandom hierarchy where, for example, fans of the works of Isaac Asimov, Philip K Dick, or William Gibson look down their noses at fans of *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, or *Doctor Who* for having unsophisticated tastes (as suggested by McCarthy, 2018b), and these fans in turn look down *their* noses at anime and manga fans for being into "kids' stuff"; whether or not there are further hierarchies within anime fandom where, for example, those whose favourite anime titles are "highbrow" works like the films of Oshii Mamoru are dismissive of those fans who prefer more populist works like *Attack on Titan* (2013-Present) or the *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* series (2012-Present); and how much, if at all, anime fans have internalised the popular stereotypes of non-fans, whether they use these in critically assessing their own fandom and/or that of their fellow fans, and whether these critical assessments manifest in the form of intra-fandom boundary policing (Busse, 2013: pp 73-88).

As I asserted in my thesis statement, anime fandom in the UK is like any other social phenomenon. It did not form and arise in a bubble, nor can its particular dynamics and modes of operation be assessed or understood as entirely unique and divorced from all external influences. UK anime fandom is very much a product of its environment, and its formation and evolution are strongly linked to external forces, both long-standing ones – such as the

UK's historical relations with and perceptions of Japan, and the modes of operation within science fiction and media fandoms – and newly-developed ones – such as the widespread accessibility of the Internet, and the development of streaming and Video on Demand services. Through this project I have attempted to highlight these various influencing factors and begin to pull out the specific aspects of each that have had a noteworthy impact on how UK anime fandom formed, developed, and continues to evolve and operate today.

In Chapter One, I took an historical approach, reaching back to the UK's very first engagements with Japan to provide the groundwork to contextualise how anime was received in the UK in the late twentieth century. Through this examination I uncovered not only evidence of how British colonial attitudes extended to their responses to the people and politics of Japan (Fox, 1941; Hashimoto and Scheiner, 1987; Beasley, 1995; Hoare, 2000), but also how early British responses to Japanese art and culture served to emphasise the Otherness of the Japanese, with enthusiasts offering back-handed praise to the simplicity and quaintness of Japanese art when compared to what they saw as sophisticated and intellectual European art (Alcock, 1863; Watanabe, 1984; Jackson, 1992). These attitudes not only laid the groundwork for how British people would continue to think of the Japanese for decades to come, as elaborated on later in Chapter One, but they also echo the reasons given by many anime fans who responded to my fandom questionnaire when asked about why they were attracted to and interested in anime – the perception that Japanese art, whether it's nineteenth century pottery and textiles or twenty-first century manga and anime, is profoundly "different" to Western art, and therein lies its main appeal.

Also in this chapter, I traced how British attitudes towards Japan began to sour in the late nineteenth century and as the twentieth century progressed, largely motivated by Japan's rapid modernisation, which provoked Western anxieties about a Japan that was alien, inscrutable, and so fundamentally opposite to Western values that it could never be fully comprehended (Hashimoto and Scheiner, 1987). This went on to inform late twentieth

century responses to Japan in the UK, even as both countries celebrated the centenary of the Japan Society of the UK with a nationwide festival of Japanese art, science and culture in 1991. Combined with the shock of the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack and the harsh patriotism stirred up ahead of the 50th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day in 1995, this led to an environment where the British press was largely hostile in its handling of anything related to Japan (Anthony, 1991; Taga, 1997; Hammond and Stirner, 1997; Mayes and Rowling, 1997), and it was into this hostile environment that anime, marketed as "the new punk rock" by the newly formed Manga Video and replete with sex, violence and swearing, was introduced.

This hostile environment provided a lead-in point for Chapter Two, where I traced the development of UK anime fandom in the '90s and early '00s. However, while it is generally agreed upon that *organised* anime fandom in the UK began in the early '90s, this was not where UK fandom originated. Using press archives like the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, BFI Special Collections, and BBC Genome, I built up a timeline showing that anime had, in fact, been known in the UK since 1959, and furthermore that while the earliest cinema releases of anime had been reviewed as Japanese products, from the mid '60s onwards there was a conscious effort to localise anime titles in such a way as to remove their "cultural odour" (Iwabuchi, 1998; Clements, 2013), leading to the titles' Japanese origins going unremarked upon in reviews of the time. As a result, there were anime fans in the UK a full 20 or 30 years prior to the formation of Manga Video – they just didn't know that the animation they were enjoying was Japanese in origin. It is these fans that make up the first two generations of UK anime fans identified by my fandom questionnaire, and it is they who were brought together throughout the '90s as a result of the anime screening programme at Eastercon 1990 and subsequent establishment of *Anime UK* (McCarthy, 2018a), the greater accessibility of anime as a result of Manga Video's output, and the spirit of resistance within the fandom as the British press, stirred up by the murder of James Bulger in 1993 (Petley, 2011), embarked on a moral panic about "blood, guts and bambi eyes" (Burgess, 1993), "sick cartoons" (Sengupta,

1994), and "kids' filth" (Drury, 1995). These fans also laid the foundations for UK anime fandom as it would come to be, using this spirit of resistance to carve out their own spaces and shape their fandom experiences so that they didn't have to rely solely on the curated anime titles released by Manga Video (and often cut by the BBFC) to consume the types of titles they wanted. While the fandom was growing during this time, it remained small and low-tech, with fans communicating through penpal pages and fan clubs, where they traded tapes, purchased fanzines, and formed social bonds. Although some fans had Internet access in the mid to late '90s, it was largely limited to university students with institutional access, or those who could either make use of Internet cafes or register for dial-up Internet access at home.

UK anime fandom was not to undergo its greatest changes until the early to mid 2000s, as I explored in Chapter Three. The convergence of the popularity of *Pokémon*, the Academy Awards success of *Spirited Away*, and the increasing adoption of home broadband served to change the face of UK anime fandom forever, and led to rapid changes in both public perceptions of anime and the ways in which fans engaged with anime, each other, and their own sense of fandom. While there was some initial cynicism about *Pokémon*, largely informed by the "*Pokémon* Shock" incident, the mass appeal of the anime series, video games, and tie-in merchandise meant that the initial Japan-centric fears quickly gave way to traditional anxieties about commericalism and addiction (Yano, 2004), which were themselves silenced when *Pokémon* stayed in the public consciousness long enough to become familiar and unthreatening. Meanwhile, following the 2003 Academy Awards, the films of Studio Ghibli became widely acknowledged outside anime fandom as works of great artistic value and paved the way for future cinema releases by directors like Hosoda Mamoru and Shinkai Makoto, which were largely regarded by mainstream press as being works of art in the same tradition as Studio Ghibli. And while this was all happening, anime fans embraced broadband and the new opportunities it offered, from web forums and social media platforms as modes of communication between fans, to rapid downloads from file-sharing platforms and, eventually, legal and

affordable streaming services, and a number of UK-oriented businesses and communication platforms established online presences to further meet the needs of UK anime fans.

However, despite these developments, questions still remain about how "mainstream" anime truly is, and whether the improved visibility of the medium has had much of an impact on how it, and its fans, are perceived. As I discussed, while '90s anime fans' dreams of readily available anime titles that more accurately reflect the diversity of the medium have come true, this does not necessarily mean that anime as a medium has attained widespread and mainstream acceptance in the same way as other geeky or "cult" media. There is evidence (Reysen et al, 2016) that fans are still subject to stereotypes among non-fans, and it has been observed in other fandoms that these stereotypes can become internalised by fans and used as the basis for the formation of intra-fandom hierarchies and boundary policing (Stanfill, 2013: Busse, 2013).

From my own perspective as an aca-fan, the most striking thing about this project has been the sheer depth of the subject; as a fan, I did not give much thought to the steps and processes by which I, or my fellow fans, became anime fans, or the extent to which this fandom formed a crucial facet of our identity, and while I had some knowledge of how things had changed both within and around anime fandom as a result of having lived through much of it, it was nonetheless astonishing to unpick the narratives I thought I knew, find the truths that lay beneath the surface, and piece together the unexpected ways in which the evolution of anime fandom in the UK has been tied to wider social shifts and phenomena, including those – such as the '90s resurgence of the Video Nasties panic, and the general hostility towards Japan historically exhibited by the mainstream British press – that seemed largely or wholly unconnected.

Furthermore, as an academic, it has amazed me to find how open my fellow fans are, not only in sharing their own, individual experiences as fans, but also in expressing an interest in my work, coming to my panels whenever I

hold them at anime conventions, and engaging with my research, asking their own questions and volunteering their own perspectives within the context of my research-in-progress as it has been presented. Anime fans can be jokingly self-deprecating about themselves and their fandom – at one convention, when I stood up to promote my questionnaire during the closing ceremony, the MC comically interjected to ask, "why are you studying us losers?" to the amusement of the audience – but through this project, as I have presented numerous panels to packed event rooms and spoken to fellow fans about my research, I have realised that UK anime fans are actually very interested in learning about and engaging with their own history. As much as I was conscious of Azuma's warning about how otaku tended to be suspicious of academics and considered them to be insufficiently fannish to be trusted, I encountered no such problems in speaking to UK anime fans. Perhaps this was because I have been a long-term, visible member of the community; if this is the case, then perhaps this kind of research is, in fact, best carried out by someone who is open about their aca-fan status. Overall, the results of my research and the response from both my academic peers and other anime fans make me feel optimistic, not only for my own future projects in this area, but also for the projects that will be initiated by other UK anime aca-fans who will expand upon, challenge, and add to the work I have started.

In essence, this project has served as an introductory primer to the history, cultural context, and evolution of anime fandom in the UK. There are still plenty of questions that could and should be answered through further, more detailed research that more closely examines the intersections of fan identity (race, gender, sexuality, neurodiversity), whether these projects are managed by me or by upcoming anime or fan studies academics. UK anime fandom is a rich source of research opportunities that has been largely neglected to date, and it is my hope that it will be explored in more detail in the years to come.

APPENDIX I: TIMELINE OF ANIME IN THE UK

As part of this project, I created a timeline to record the key anime-related events that took place in the UK, both for my own record-keeping and for the benefit of other researchers. It will continue to be updated as time progresses.

The timeline is accessible online at:
https://www.preceden.com/timelines/652256-anime-fandom-in-the-uk.

APPENDIX II: UK ANIME FANDOM QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

My name is Leah Holmes, I'm a postgraduate student at Bath Spa University working in the School of Humanities and Cultural Industries. My thesis topic is concerned with the history and development of anime and manga fandom in the UK, and our particular culture as a fandom. The purpose of this questionnaire is to build up a picture of current UK anime fandom and develop an understanding of UK fandom history and culture. I have asked for a contact email address on the next page - this is partly to avoid duplication and partly so I can contact you again if I need more detail or information about anything. Your email address will not be shared with anyone else, and in the event that I quote or refer to anything you tell me as part of my thesis, no identifying information will be included without your express consent. If you have any further questions you can contact me by email on ███████████████████████. My supervisor at Bath Spa University is Dr Richard Stamp, and if you wish to address any queries to him you can contact him by email on ████████████████.

PART 1 – PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please provide your email address. This is for the purpose of avoiding duplication and possible future contact - your address will not be shared with anyone.

2. I may need to contact respondents for further information or more details. Are you happy to be contacted?
Yes
No

3. How old are you?
1   Under 18
2   18-24
3   25-29
4   30-34
5   35-39
6   40-44
7   45-50
8   Over 50

If under 18, please state your age:

4. Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage?
1   White
2   Black (African)
3   Black (Caribbean)
4   Black (other)
5   East Asian

6   South-East Asian
7   South Asian
8   Middle Eastern
9   Roma or Irish Traveller
10   Mixed
11   Other (please specify):

5. What gender do you identify as? (Optional)
1   Male
2   Female
3   Non-binary
4   Other (please specify):

6. Do you identify as transgender? (Optional)
1   Yes
2   No

7. What is your sexual preference? (Optional)
1   Straight
2   Gay/Lesbian
3   Bisexual
4   Asexual
5   Other (please specify):

8. What is your highest level of education?
1   GCSEs or equivalent
2   A-Levels
3   Other Level 3 qualification (e.g., BTEC Extended Diploma, Access to HE)
4   HNC or other Level 4 qualification
5   HND or other Level 5 qualification
6   Bachelor's degree
7   Master's degree
8   Doctoral degree
9   Other postgraduate (e.g., PGCE, MPhil)
10   Apprenticeship
11   None
12   Other (please specify):

9. Where did you hear about this questionnaire?
1   Minamicon
2   Kitacon
3   Amecon
4   Other (please specify):

PART 2 – EARLY EXPERIENCES

10. How did you first find out about anime and manga? What interested you about them?

11. What was your first anime?

12. What was your first manga?

13. What are your favourite anime series (up to five)?

14. What are your favourite anime movies (up to five)?

15. What are your favourite manga series (up to five)?

16. Including the year, what was your first anime convention?

17. Which UK anime conventions have you attended? List all that apply.
1   Minamicon
2   Amecon
3   Ayacon
4   Kitacon
5   Auchinawa
6   Alcon
7   Sunnycon
8   Wildercon/Tokonatsu
9   Hyper Japan
10   London Anime and Gaming Convention
11   Other (please list):

PART 3 – PARTICIPATION AND PERSPECTIVES

18. How often do you participate in the following activities? Choose from: Very often, Fairly often, Occasionally, Rarely, Never.
Cosplay
Writing fanfiction
Producing fan art or dojinshi
Producing AMVs or similar
Producing other craft items

19. What is your favourite thing about anime and manga?

20. What other elements of Japanese culture are you interested in? What interests you about them?

21. What have you learned about Japan and Japanese culture from watching anime/reading manga?

22. Have you ever been to Japan?
Yes
No

If "Yes", for what reason?:

23. Have you ever taken a Japanese Studies or Japanese Language course? List all that apply.

1   Japanese Studies, university level
2   Japanese Studies, other formal study
3   Japanese Studies, self-study/immersion
4   Japanese Language, university level
5   Japanese Language, pre-university
6   Japanese Language, adult or leisure course
7   Japanese Language, self-study/immersion
8   None of the above

24. How would you rate your Japanese language fluency?

1   Native speaker
2   Fluent
3   Intermediate Conversational
4   Basic Conversational
5   Very basic
6   None

Thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire! As previously stated, if you have any further queries then please contact me on ████████████████████████, or my supervisor on ██████████████████████.

You can read Bath Spa University's policy on research ethics on its website – click here.

APPENDIX III: STATEMENT OF RESEARCH ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS

Supplement to MPhil thesis: Anime in the UK: The History, Cultural Context, and Evolution of UK Anime Fandom
Leah Holmes, 12 August 2021

As part of my research into UK anime fan culture, I wanted to build up a picture of the demographics of UK anime fandom, while also gaining an understanding of what their favourite anime and manga titles were, what appealed to them about anime, what other interests they had that were related to Japanese culture, and how (if at all) they engaged with their fandom, for example, through cosplay or fan art.

To conduct this research, I designed and deployed a mixed qualitative/quantitative questionnaire, inviting responses from the attendees at three of the most prominent UK anime conventions in 2016 – Minamicon, Kitacon and Amecon. To boost numbers, I later opened this up to Facebook as well; I had initially hoped to avoid social media promotion so that I could keep the respondent pool within the UK. In preparation, I undertook a Research Ethics training module on Minerva during February 2016. Overall, I decided that there were three specific targets I needed to meet: protection of respondents' privacy according to the Data Protection Act (1998); ensuring that respondents felt sufficiently comfortable with the questionnaire that they were willing to fill it out in full; and securing data that was both sufficiently reliable and sufficiently detailed such that meaningful conclusions could be drawn. Furthermore, it seemed to me that attaining each of these targets would be partially informed by attaining the others – assurances that their data would be handled responsibly and with respect for their privacy would result in more comfortable respondents, and comfortable respondents would answer in greater detail than respondents who had doubts or concerns.

Following the guidelines given in the training module, and with the cooperation of each convention's organising committee, I had an information sheet inserted into the con packs; for reference, I have supplied an image of the information sheet. This briefly explained my research and the purpose of my questionnaire, and directed attendees to complete the questionnaire online. No in-person questionnaires were conducted during this process.

The questionnaire was powered by an online platform, SmartSurvey. As part of the questionnaire design, users had to read an introductory paragraph which reiterated the purpose of my research and supplied both my contact email address and that of my Director of Studies, Dr Richard Stamp. Whilst this paragraph did not make an explicit statement that respondents had the

right to withdraw their consent, it did give them the opportunity to make contact if they had any questions or concerns. This paragraph also explained how their responses would be anonymised if they were used in my final thesis. They could only proceed to the questionnaire after reading this paragraph. At the end of the questionnaire, a link to Bath Spa's research ethics policy was provided.

The only piece of identifying data that I collected was respondents' email addresses, partly to avoid duplication that would skew my data, but also to enable me to contact respondents for more details if necessary. Respondents were explicitly asked to opt in to this, and assured that their contact details would not be shared with anyone else. When the questionnaire was closed, I exported the data to an Excel spreadsheet and deleted the records from SmartSurvey. When I began analysing the data, I worked from spreadsheets that had the contact details stripped out, since SmartSurvey automatically assigned numerical IDs to each respondent, meaning that a unique identifier was available that did not infringe anyone's privacy. The original spreadsheet was password protected and only exists on my personal computer. For reference, I have supplied a copy of the full spreadsheet with the email addresses redacted.

Two of the demographic questions in the questionnaire were more sensitive in nature – gender identity and sexual orientation. I felt that it was important to ask about these as I was aware, both from my research and my own experiences of contemporary anime fandom, that these often play a part in how some fans – and young fans in particular – respond to and engage with both the medium of anime and the fandom. Both of these questions were marked as 'Not Required', and a 'Prefer Not to Say' option was also available for anyone who might have missed that these were not required; however, most people did complete these.

The questionnaire ran from March 2016 to February 2017, so it had closed and I had conducted the bulk of my meta-analysis by the time current GDPR legislation came into effect.

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