

Gender Roles in Japanese *Manga*: Ethical Considerations for *Mangaka*

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“Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.

But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.”

– John Berger, from *Ways of Seeing*.

“Whether you can draw like this or not, being able to think up this kind of design, depends on whether or not you can say to yourself, ‘Oh, yeah, girls like this exist in real life.’” Hayao Miyazaki, Interview

Abstract

The meanings and messages of *manga*, a Japanese popular visual cultural form akin to comics, are created through the intersection of the reader and the visual text itself. The production and marketing of manga along gendered lines systemically stipulates who the readership of a certain manga genre would be, which in effect reinforces gender stereotypes and tropes as they are employed and repeatedly aimed towards specific gender groups for that genre. However, this system that creates a feedback loop of gender stereotypes is only possible as long as the creator of manga also caters to using those stereotypes in a way that reinforces them within the medium. Taking the exchange between CEDAW and the Japanese Women’s Institute of Contemporary Media Culture in the spring of 2016 as my starting point, I contend that creators of *manga* have an ethical responsibility to creatively subvert the gender essentialist system that manga production is currently bound to. By employing ideas that came out of the Japanese modernist literary movement that placed priority on novels to culture the public, I argue along deontological lines that as creators of a widely disseminated medium, creators of *manga* have an ethical responsibility to challenge social norms within their works.

Introduction

In March 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) released a report on gender discrimination in Japan. One of their concerns focused on media portrayals of sexual violence against women that “exacerbate[s] discriminatory gender stereotypes and reinforce[s] sexual violence against women and girls” (CEDAW 2016 20, 21). To solve this problem, the committee recommended that the Japanese state take measures to regulate media, such as video games, *manga*, and *anime*, to reduce the amount of sexual violence and gender stereotyping that prevails in said genres of media. In response, the Japanese Women’s Institute of Contemporary Media Culture (Women’s Institute) rejected the UN’s recommendation on the grounds that specifically in regard to *manga*, 1) *manga* and its production has been a creative space for women, and so regulating it would

disenfranchise women in the industry, 2) the medium's depictions of sexual violence creates empathy towards women, and 3) protecting the rights of actual women is more crucial than the rights of 2 dimensional women (Women's Institute of Contemporary Media Culture 2016).

Manga is a term generally synonymous with “comics” and “cartoon” that encompasses a wide range of visual material created for children, adolescents, and adults in Japan. *Manga* can be anything from a 4-panel comic strip to a full-fledged series of multiple volumes, ranging in content from an instructional manga explaining government policies to a manga that depicts an epic story. For the purposes of this paper, I use the term to refer to *manga* that is organized around a plot to tell a story created in the context of the *manga* industry. *Manga* is created in the industry through a production cycle made up of *mangaka*, the actual artists of *manga*, their editors, and the publishing company, who disseminate the *manga* through magazines and books. Whether or not a manga is discontinued or serialized after initial publication depends on popularity, but serialized manga have the potential to be published as a separate book, as well as be adaptation into *anime* and aired on media outlets such as television for audiovisual consumption (Kinsella 2000). *Manga* is organized and marketed around genres separated not only by subject matter, but also around age and gender, which is a characteristic unique to manga (Unser-Schutz 2015). *Manga* generally has been considered unrefined trash culture in Japan (Ogi 2000), but with the attraction of international acclaim since the 1990s and the Japanese government's use of *manga* within its campaign of “Cool Japan” to export Japanese culture as soft power, the social role and political role of manga is currently fluid and changing (Suter 2016).

The CEDAW committee sees manga as a problematic cultural artifact that needs to be regulated in order to uphold human rights for women. In opposition, the Women's Institute sees such regulation as subverting women's rights to creative and economic freedom. Considering that the production and distribution of *manga* is a heavily gendered process that reinforces socially constructed gender roles, however, neither CEDAW's suggestion of regulation nor the Women's Institute's implicit ignoring of the problem is a viable solution to the fact that *manga* has sexually explicit visual elements that cannot be completely divorced from gender inequality in Japan today. To address the problem requires an examination of the relationship between Japanese gender role culture and *manga*, taking into account the fact that *manga* is a site where current culture is reproduced, created, and informed from a pre-existing ideology transformed into culture through the use of repetition in the earlier years of *manga*. The genre of *shojo manga*, which is *manga* explicitly geared towards little girls, is one such illustration of the complicated process of *manga* as cultural creation as well as an artifact coming out of a pre-existing ideology that has been canonized into culture through repetition (Ogi 2001). The creation of culture and stereotypes through *manga* is not only a result of the *mangaka* producing work, but also due the systemic

way in which manga production occurs as an industry, where the sustenance of the *manga* also depends upon the audience it is geared towards and the people within that audience who consume the work.

That being said, however, I posit that *mangaka* are in a unique ethical position as creators that initiate the process of making meaning, and thereby culture, in *manga* to critically engage with this problem of gender role representation within their work. *Mangaka* have an ethical responsibility to creatively subvert the gender essentialist system that manga production is currently bound to through their duty as artists to challenge social norms. To illustrate this, I first provide a brief background to the situation of women in Japan to contextualize the CEDAW committee and Women's conversation conversation on manga and women, and then analyze their positions in light of the history of manga and its production, focusing on the specific genre of *shojo* genres to explain how both positions fail to properly address the problem at hand. I then move to explain why the *mangaka* occupy such a unique role in solving the problem given their placement in creating the actual visual text on which meaning can then be constructed through the reader reading the text. Lastly, I explain the ethical duties of the *mangaka* are by drawing a parallel between the role of the *mangaka* to that of the Meiji literati *bundan* movement that elevated the novel to art, arguing that the moral creative impetus has its grounds in ideas of duty of social responsibility that come out of Japanese modernist thought.

Literature Review

In order to examine the ethical problem of the representation of gender roles in Japanese *manga* I will draw from the writings of cultural and manga critics and theorists, philosophers, and linguists, as well as feminist thinkers from both within and outside of Japan.

The conversation between CEDAW and the Women's Institute about *manga* and its effect in creating harmful stereotypes is problematic at a basic level in that they both stem from a very simple and static understanding of how *manga* as a cultural artifact engages in culture. CEDAW treats *manga* as a problematic cultural artifact whose production needs to be regulated, whereas the Women's Institute sees *manga* as a positive cultural artifact that has both sustained women economically and women have sustained creatively. Both views oversimplify the complicated interplay of manga as both a cultural artifact and practice. To provide a basis for a nuanced view of culture I draw from cultural anthropologist Sally Engle Merry's definition of culture, which conceptualizes culture as a porous set of ideas and practices that are contested and discourses of which either "legitimate or challenge authority and justify relations of power" (Engle Merry 2006, 11). It is from Engle Merry's definition of culture that I begin my exploration of the relationship of manga with culture and the following ethical responsibility of the *mangaka*.

Since I examine manga in the context of how it affects Japanese women, the context of women in Japan and legislation pertaining to women's rights will first be laid out using commentary on Japanese feminist history by contemporary feminists like Chizuko Ueno (1987), along with scholar Laura Dales (2009) and Sumiko Iwao (1993). The history of feminist movements, especially the initial one that also doubled as a literary movement, will also be relevant to my discussion later on that pertains to the ethical responsibility of *mangaka* having a moral impetus from the responsibilities novelists had to create social change.

In discussing *manga*, I will be joining the field of *manga* criticism and discourse, comprised of both Japanese and English writers, within which occupies a vast array of different topics from manga production to critiques on the medium, in addition to specific genres. There are a number of researchers who have published works on manga production. Sharon Kinsella's "Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society" (2000) is a foundational book regarding the production of manga and its history, and I will draw upon it to locate the CEDAW committee's critiques within a domestic dialogue of critiquing *manga* for its moral content. For more recent sources on the production of manga, scholar Giancarla Unser-Shutz has written regarding the linguistics that make up the genres that are organized around gender lines (2015), and Jennifer S. Prough gives a more recent report on the production of *shojo manga* (2006). These elements of manga production that illustrate sexism in the manga making process is then put into conversation with American feminist and legal consultant Catharine MacKinnon's theory of the dominance approach to point out how the production of *manga* as a whole contributes to gender inequality due the power dynamics that exist within its production that replicate oppressive structures.

The CEDAW committee's criticism against *manga* is two-fold: one is against depiction of sexual violence against women, and the other is against the depiction of harmful gender stereotypes (CEDAW 2016). Sexual violence against women can be treated in varying genres of manga, but scholar Ito Kinko identifies it within serialized manga geared towards men (1995). Although the Women's Institute cites women as creating empathy for women by depicting sexual violence, the marketing of such manga is skewed towards women, which does not help to challenge gender norms due to circulation of the same ideas amongst one group.

To examine *manga* and its depictions of gender stereotypes, I look at the *shojo manga* genre specifically, simply due to that genre having the greatest amount of scholarship. I join into the conversation of what the category of *shojo manga* means with scholars Fusami Ogi (2000, 2001), Sharalyn Orbaugh (2003), Kathryn Hemmann (2006), and Deborah Shamoony (2008). Ogi and Orbaugh posit that *shojo* as a category is problematic because it came out of the ideology of *ryousai kenbo*, or "good wife wise mother", a Meiji concept that defined the expectations of women within Japanese society. In contrast, Hemmann provides a different take on *shojo* manga by highlighting the genre's

possibilities for empowerment through examination of female subjectivity (2006). Shamooin provides a similar reading of the genre (2008), and both proponents and opponents to elements in *shojo* are integral to the discussion of manga and culture, as it serves to elaborate on Engle Merry's concept of culture as malleable with possibility for both empowerment as well as abuse.

In situating the *mangaka* as the best suited to solve this ethical dilemma between *manga* and culture, I argue that *mangaka*, as the creators drawing the manga and thus creating the text, are the spark that enables the process of creating meaning between the visual text and reader. This claim falls within discussions of semiotics and aesthetics, and so I go into conversation with manga theorists Natsume Fusanosuke and Ito Go, who conceptualized and wrote on the semiotics of manga and where meaning is located and created through manga's combined visual and textual elements. Due to limitations on access to material, however, apart from the translation of Natsume Fusanosuke's manga criticism: Reading manga through manga (Natsume 2008), and an abridged translation of the forward and opening chapter of Ito Go's "Tezuka is Dead" (2011), I have not read the primary material pertaining to their manga semiotics and theory. Due to that limitation I will augment this section with selections from not only what other scholars have said in relation to Natsume and Ito Go's work. Since the meaning of manga and the messages that arise come out of the intersection of readers and the text, I also bring in John E. Ingulsrud and Kate Allen's work on manga literacy and readership preferences (2009). I synthesize these to show that although *mangaka* as creators do not exert absolute control over what the meaning of the manga is they are still in a position where they have duties to subvert and challenge gender norms.

To consider the connection morals and fiction I draw from philosopher Kendall Walton's "Morals in Fiction and Fictional Morality" (1994), who paints the relation between morals and fiction with caution, skeptical of the ability of fiction to affect the reader's morality. Within this discussion I will also keep in mind John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* wherein which images and how one sees it cannot be divorced from the context both in which one sees it as well as from which one sees the art (1972). From a synthesis of Walton and Berger, I press the idea of *mangaka* having ethical responsibility to creatively subvert gender norms along deontological lines in a way that does not constitute censorship. Said discussion of ethics in *manga* creation is further informed by Meiji modernist thought for literature, where the idea that creative artists have an ethical responsibility to educate and culture the masses is not a new idea in Japan, and it comes out of theorists like Nakajima Mitsuo and Tsubouchi Shoyo, who thought that novels as art were the best means to achieve this. I draw upon Japanese feminist writer Hiratsuka Raicho's ideas on what women should strive for in creating media, and Asian Studies scholar William De Bary's insights on what constituted Meiji thought on what constituted the noble individual to elucidate the duties of the *mangaka*.

Before delving into the discussion between CEDAW and the Women's Institute, I'd like to provide a brief history of women in Japanese history. The following summary is not meant to be all-comprehensive, for the history of women's rights and feminism in Japan is long and complicated, but will provide a brief sketch of Japanese gender roles and feminism to provide background and highlight laws and movements that have occurred in relation to CEDAW to provide background into the discussion between CEDAW and the Women's Institute.

Women in Japanese Society

To begin, feminism in Japan is not the same nor something one can compare in terms of progress to feminism in the US, as the ideas and situations surrounding feminism and the priorities Japanese feminists have are not the same given the different social contexts. Japanese feminism started politically as a literary movement with Hiratsuka Raicho and the creation of the journal *Seito* (Bluestocking) in 1919 that railed against the Meiji ideology of educating women to be *ryousai kenbo* (good wife wise mothers). After World War 2, the US-drafted post-war constitution guaranteed women's right to equality in the eyes of the state, as well as in the domestic sphere (Dales 2009). Since equal rights had been already secured constitutionally, Japanese feminists have focused on the equality of opportunity to prioritize, unlike feminists in the US (Iwao 1993). Post-war Japan also ushered in a new ideal family model with gender roles. Said model was the *sengyo shufu – sarariman* model (housewife-salaried man model), where the wife, as the *sengyo shufu*, would provide for her husband and nurture the children, and the husband would work, only coming home to eat and sleep (Dales 2009). With the 1970s, which Dales calls "second-wave feminism", Japanese feminist groups included radical feminist groups like Tatakau Onna (Fighting Women) and the woman's lib movement, which challenged traditional discourses on women's body and sexuality (Dales 2009, 19).

Japan signed as state party to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in May 1980, and in 1986 the Japanese Diet passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Law as an area of legislative change to ratify CEDAW. This piece of legislation in effect systemically created gender discrimination, as companies in response immediately created two different tracks for promoting personnel, the career track and noncareer track, "changing gender discrimination into 'personal choice,' but [where] less than one percent of newly hired women graduates enter the career track" (Ueno 1987, 34). Ueno's statistic is dated, but this law, in addition to the political and economic stability of the 1980s and societal criticism of working mothers, undeniably created the situation where young Japanese women aspired to return to be the *sengyo shufu* within the *sengyo shufu – sarariman* model of gender roles (Dales 2009). This regress back to the *sengyo shufu* was due to the fact that the only way for women to have successful careers was if they could fulfill the same responsibilities

expected of the *sarariman*, which was not only impossible given systemic gender discrimination in employment, but was also undesirable in the face of the comfort they could have as housewives in the booming economy (Ueno 1987).

Since then the bubble burst, leading to a gradual economic decline, and the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society (1999) was approved and in 2001 the Japanese government created the Gender Equality Bureau. Recently the Japanese government's policy on women has been characterized by the term "gender free", which, although was used to refer to freedom from compulsory gender roles, has also become a term of contention between feminist and conservative groups (Yamaguchi 2014). Despite these recent efforts, however, and international problems with South Korea on the treatment of comfort women notwithstanding, in terms of domestic women's rights 2015 US Human Rights Report cited domestic violence, sexual harassment and workplace discrimination as problems within Japan (US Human Rights 2015 Report). The CEDAW report in 2016 that included the critique against manga was the seventh and eighth periodic reports submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and examined largely examined the Japanese government's implementation of the Convention from 2006 to 2013 (CEDAW Introduction).

CEDAW and the Women's Institute of Contemporary Media Culture

The general thrust of the CEDAW committee and The Women's Institute's conversation focuses around whether or not it is ethical to have the state regulate the production of manga in order to protect women from harmful stereotypes and any resulting sexual violence that can occur as a result. From the CEDAW committee's point of view, due diligence of the state requires the state to put active effort into preventing violence against women (Engle Merry 2006). Therefore, in this case of the *manga* industry creating harmful media, due diligence for the Japanese government consists of regulating the production of harmful images. However, this solution of the state regulating media does not work because it could only at best function as obscenity laws that are arbitrary in application or be a form of censorship that limits freedom of expression, both of which would be ineffective to CEDAW's aims of promoting human rights.

CEDAW's suggestion of regulation does not work in light of the fact that manga is state-regulated, and the results of such regulations support the Women's Institute's argument against regulation. Although CEDAW's critique is different in scope in that it comes from an international body, it falls neatly within the domestic critique that question *manga's* cultural and moral worth in Japan. In 1964, the Indecency Act, or Article 175 of the National Penal Code, was passed. This Act regulates *manga* distribution in that anything deemed 'indecent' cannot be sold to minors under 18 years old. In

addition to this law, local laws to protect youth, widely referred to as the Youth Ordinance, has been made so that local movements, including police, can label and blacklist manga as ‘harmful’ and remove them from bookstores (Kinsella 2000). Both laws use fines to regulate and prevent the distribution of what committees of local movements and ethics boards have deemed ‘indecent’ and ‘harmful’, which has led manga publishers to stop producing manga categorized as such, although the definition of what makes something ‘indecent’ or ‘harmful’ is vague and unclear (Kinsella 2000). Kinsella notes that “[a]rtists whose work was categorized as ‘harmful’ lost large parts of their incomes in royalties on manga books that could not be sold” (2000, 150). As the definitions of ‘indecent’ and ‘harmful’ lack concrete criteria for what constitutes those characteristics and serves to limit the range of creativity within the mangaka’s work, these laws are censorship laws that are not only vague and arbitrary in application, but also limit the creative freedom one has within the medium. Examining the current policies already in place, the Women’s Institute does have a point in arguing that increased regulation of the industry would disenfranchise some women in the industry.

This does not mean, however, that the current state of affairs should, as the Women’s Institute says, be left as is. It is true, that, as The Women’s Institute argues, that the *manga* industry, or at least certain subsections of it like the *shojo manga* genre, has become a predominantly women-dominated space. For these women *mangaka* it is reasonable that a regulation of content and banning certain series on the basis of content could disenfranchise women who are in the industry. However, that response does not address the problem that the CEDAW committee sees with the portrayal of sexual violence or perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes within *manga*. The fact that the *shojo manga* industry is mostly made up of women does not mean that the content produced therefore is not sexist; as per feminist theory, within oppressive systems there is a group within the oppressed who contribute to that oppression (hooks 2000).

In addition, the Women’s Institute’s second point that manga is a medium by which women can create empathy for women by recreating and depicting the lived experiences of women in manga is untenable because the industry is set up in such a way that only girls would read those manga. The production cycle of manga, as well as its history, has been from the beginning been a sexist structure. Borrowing MacKinnon’s dominance approach, such sexist structures will inherently reproduce oppression (MacKinnon 2006). Let us take for example *shojo manga*, wherein which 99% of the *mangaka* are women. *Shojo manga* is a genre specifically geared towards little girls; all manga are grouped into genres that are catered along gendered lines and marketed according to age. Something to note in addition to this is that the production of *mangaka* involves editors, and 75-80% of these editors in *shojo manga* are men (Prough 2006, 140). This is not to contradict myself in saying that criticism or edited work by men are inherently sexist, but since manga is created and publicized magazines that are

published along gender lines, the readership tends to be structured along those lines, although there has been crossover readership, predominantly of girls reading boys' manga (Prough 2006, 63). Not to mention, critics, *mangaka*, and editors all define *shojo manga* as *manga* catered to “what girls like”, and since most female *mangaka* come out of those who read *shojo*, there is a pre-existing idea of what girls should like that is imposed into the manga itself (Prough 2006, 3). Therefore, depicting authentic women's lives and experiences predominantly to girls and women only creates a feedback loop where the media only impresses upon women and girls their role and situation in society, doing nothing to change the situation. In order to create something new in order to break stereotypical gender molds, one must be aware of the inherent systems in place that perpetuate oppression, and from there start producing culture in such a way that subvert those systems.

Furthermore, manga aimed at men objectify women as sexualized objects. In an analysis of 29 volumes of weekly comic magazines geared towards men published between the end of 1990 and beginning of 1991, of the total 314 stories in these volumes 60 did not contain any female characters at all, and of those stories with women in them 56.7 percent “contained sexism of varying forms from manifest to very subtle (Ito K 1995, 128). Ito describes the sexism within these stories to include gang rape, victim shaming, as well as containing visual objectification of women as nothing more than their genitalia where men were always in positions of power (1995).

The Women's Institute's third point against CEDAW – that regulating the portrayal of 2D women does nothing to protect the rights of actual women – is tenable only as long as portrayals of the ‘2D women’ have no affect whatsoever on real women. In general, *manga* holds affective power on its readers that motivates them into action in ways that have “significant influences on economy, culture, as well as people's day to day life”(Wang 2010, 2). For example, the traditional board game “Go”, whose professional society was on the decline, had “tens of thousands of children [start] signing up for classes” after a *manga* whose story plot centered around Go became popular (Wang 2010, 2). More serious examples include an instance in Belgium in 2007 where “a body was found with a note that read ‘Watashi wa Kira desu (with a Romanized misspelling of the verb desu), or ‘I am Kira’”, which alludes to the popular manga series Death Note (Drummond-Andrews 2010). In Japan, the most notable incident linking manga and criminal behavior was the Miyazaki incident in 1989, where a young man named Miyazaki Tsutomu committed the mutilation and murder of four young girls (Prough 2006). Upon Miyazaki's arrest, Miyazaki's home was found to possess a large number of girls' manga, *Lolicon* manga, pornographic manga, anime videotapes, and related merchandising, cementing the idea within the public mind that fans of manga were psychologically unbalanced in addition to manga (Kinsella). With 40% of annual print publications in Japan being manga, and the manga books taking up about half the space of a typical Japanese bookstore (Ogi 2000), it is difficult to say that *manga*, with its divisive gender

marketing, holds no bearing whatsoever on Japanese culture that stresses the division of labor along gendered lines.

The Women's Institute's position is further complicated by the fact that *shojo* manga has been used to popularize a certain ideology that advocated for the education of women to solely focus upon becoming "Good wives and wise mothers", or *ryousai kenbo* (Ogi 2000). The connection between *ryousai kenbo* and *shojo manga* establishes a direct line between a sexist ideology and the cultural artifact and practice of manga that cannot be explained away by pointing to *manga* being pieces of fictitious popular culture created largely by women. *ryousai kenbo*, "Good wives and wise mothers", was the education policy that Meiji intellectuals determined for women in conceptualizing the role that women should play within Japan as a nation during the Meiji Restoration (Inoue 2002). *Ryousai kenbo* became the founding basis for the concept of *shojo*, which then went on to be popularized through *shojo manga* (Ogi 2001). As an educational policy, it created a curriculum by which female students were taught women's social roles, but it also created a stage of moratorium in which *shojo*, "little girls", are students, free and unhampered, before "entering society" to take on the imposed social roles of motherhood and marriage (Orbaugh 2003, 207). The early magazines during the Meiji Period, aimed at older female students, actively supported *ryousai kenbo*, and those published for little girls "represented the dreams and illusions of those girls rather than their reality as future mothers", which then were reproduced by *manga* (Ogi 2001, 16). The educational policy physically created a phase where young females were neither children nor women, and the *manga* in magazines reinforced the idea that women can only have power and autonomy during this time of the *shojo* (Orbaugh 2003, 226).

Therefore, considering that *manga* has been used to perpetuate a sexist ideology that has been repeated over and over within its contents, enough that it has become a recurring part of current popular culture as it continually changes, simply having women make manga is not enough to solve sexism that pervades manga and manga production. However, as Engle Merry states, culture, and by extension cultural practices are contested and fluid (Engle Merry 2008), and the solution to manga and the way it impacts society negatively is not through getting rid of it altogether; even *shojo* manga, with its sexist origins, can change as a force to combat the stereotypes it once was created to reinforce. Engle Merry's understanding of culture is something Ogi draws upon when she makes the distinction between *shojo* and *shojo manga* to make the statement that although *shojo* manga does put forth a certain image of what *shojo* is, it never can encompass the concept of *shojo* in its flexible entirety, as "[s]*hojo* in *shojo* manga acts like an item of clothing which anyone can wear, but the way of wearing it creates an individuality and sometimes works as subversion, a process by which never lets the person look the same as before, or like others wearing the same clothes" (Ogi 2001, 350). In order to change loosen the boundaries for the gendered concept and image of what a *manga* genre is pointing to in order to transgress gendered genre

lines, the ethical responsibility to initiate that change does not belong in the hands of the state, but in the hands of the *mangaka* themselves.

What I am suggesting in placing primary ethical responsibility to the *mangaka* may seem contradictory, especially given that I have just explained the structure by which manga as a cultural product is produced and reproduced to hold a certain ideology. However, I argue that this very structure places *mangaka* in the position of power to change the culture because the production cycle of *manga* cannot start without the *mangaka*. As the person who literally draws the pages, the *mangaka* is largely responsible for creating the characters and the storyplot, along with the planning the paneling and individual page layout of the *manga* itself (Wang 2010, 57). As I previously noted, editors do have a say in the creative process that can be domineering depending on the situation, but the idea ultimately must come from the *mangaka*. I'd like to make a distinction between the way I am framing my idea from the way the Women's Institute has framed their solution, because the two are close but very separate. The Women's Institute ignores the history of the use of *manga* as cultural artifact and practice altogether to posit that the women *mangaka* who dominate certain subsections of the manga industry are, by virtue of working within the industry, subverting gender norms through their work. I do not find that that is enough to subvert the gender essentialist structure the industry operates under, nor change the course of culture that is currently being produced under the influence of preexisting *manga* culture. *Mangaka*, no matter whether they are male or female, have an ethical responsibility as a creator of art to actively challenge societal norms through their work, critically examining the choices they make in their art to continually strive to create better artwork that portrays the world as it should be.

Manga as Art: Duties

Mangaka are best situated in order to challenge social norms in today's society, because although meaning of manga is created at the intersection between the reader and the manga, *mangaka* are still the ones drawing the primary material that the reader interacts with. A *manga* criticist who participates in the discussion in Japanese on *manga* semiotics, Natsume Fusanosuke locates the meaning of manga within the paneling and design of each page to direct the reader (Natsume 2008). By arranging and framing panels visually a certain way, the *mangaka* exerts the power over the reader to see the image faster or slower or have the readers fill in gaps between the panels spatially or temporally within their imagination. Berger's idea that each image constitutes a way of seeing is pertinent here in that the way a *mangaka* directs the reader through the story is a way that the *mangaka* intends the reader to read it (Berger 1972).

However, Berger also contends that on the other end of the spectrum, the way the reader experiences the image and sees the image will also depend on their particular way of seeing: "it may be,

for example, that Sheila is one figure among twenty; but for our own reason she is the one we have eyes for” (Berger 1972, 10). Given the subjective factor of viewing an assigning assent or dissent to a piece of work, Kendall Walton expresses skepticism at the moral malleability of a reader when reading a piece of fiction, since one would have to have a set of moral principles in the real world before reading a piece of fiction and so coming across a story and finding it morally repugnant is something “up to us, the spectators, to decide on the moral attributes of these actions” (40). I agree with Walton, however, the ability to contemplate and entertain a certain moral idea to judge it according to one’s moral values presupposes that the spectator first has a solid grounding on morals, and is literate in reading and analyzing manga and can spot how a particular scene is moral (Ingulsrud and Allen 2009). Since readers choose to read material that suits their interest, how does one initially develop interest, let alone a moral grounding in the case of *manga*? Since Japanese children are exposed to manga from when they are very young, the manga they choose first will most likely depend on the genre marketed towards their age and gender. Therefore, although the manga’s meaning is created when said individual comes in contact and engages with the manga, the mangaka are in the position to first direct feelings and thoughts through visual means that influences youth.

Therefore, *mangaka* have duties as creators to create *manga* that challenge gender norms and subvert the gender essentialist system that the industry of manga operates under. I take a duty-based approach to attribute ethical responsibility to the *mangaka* for pragmatic reasons, because a duty-based approach allows for creative freedom while holding *mangaka* to a standard that they set for themselves. By iterating that they have a duty to subvert and challenge gender norms, *mangaka* can consider how they ought to create their work a certain way, which leaves room different creative possibilities, although how successful they are depends on their skill and creativity. On the other hand, a rights based approach that seeks to have *mangaka* act a certain way taking into consideration the rights of women not to be portrayed a certain way can only be restricting, since that would have to create concrete rules on what images are appropriate and which are harmful to women. Such a method can only lead to censorship, which is ineffective in having the *mangaka* consider their own values in their method of manga production, although arguably censorship may stimulate creativity in the sense that *mangaka* can find a way to get around it. With a duty-based approach the economic condition of the *mangaka* can also be considered into the equation as well, as the *mangaka* is responsible for creating works that challenge social and gender norms, which does not exclude achieving a wide readership – appealing to readers in creative ways that are in line with the mangaka’s thoughts on social change is possible in this framework of ethics. Therefore, in terms of pragmatics, the duty based approach is most appropriate for the *mangaka* to have creative freedom while having the imperative to create works that challenge harmful stereotypes and create change.

The duty of the *mangaka* is charged morally on the basis of their being an artist, which is to create art that takes into account the particular subjective position of the artist to challenge the status quo and creatively envision a better world. To iterate the moral duties that *mangaka* have towards their society at large, I will bring in a pre-existing model that has already existed for novelists in the Meiji era that would be very familiar to most *mangaka*, given their schooling in Japan. Japan began to commit to modernizing its nation during the Meiji Restoration, and one of its concerns in its transition from seeing the masses from subjects to citizens was in raising the general level of culture among the Japanese masses (De Bary 2004, Kindle Locations 1697-1699). During this era Tsubouchi Shoyo wrote the *Essence of the Novel, Shousetsu Shinsui*, which iterated that the novelist should, in seeing their literary work as art, seek to create novels that, although they are fictitious, portray realistic depictions of society that are grounded in truth (Twine 1981, 15). The role of the novelist, or the literati *bundan* was then equated with the Japanese modernizing project as the language was standardized and literacy rates increased. As literary critic Nakamura Mitsuo put it, “For [the *bundan*] the novel was not merely an artistic representation of human life. Rather, it was the means of searching for a new, true way of living. At the same time, it was the record of this search”(De Bary 1989, 248).

The *mangaka*'s duties, too, should be conceptualized in this way – in striving to create the best work they can, to explore and seek out ways that allow for a more just society within their *manga* using the medium as both a process in exploring the solution in addition to being the solution to change the preexisting culture. Of course, the *bundan* were, in effect all male and these were the very intellectuals who created the idea of “Good wife wise mother”. However, the goals of their literary creations are not far removed from what feminists are also searching for within their own work. For example, Hiratsuka Raicho, a prominent feminist writer, wrote that “[w]hile continuing to feel such insecurity from within, and while battling a great deal of unreasonable persecution from without, we shall continue our search, fundamentally doubting and fundamentally questioning what, indeed, the genuine life of a woman should be” (Bardsley 2007, 107). In the first Japanese women’s literary magazine Blue Stocking’s manifesto, Hiratsuka states that the role of the movement was to “give birth to the female Genius of tomorrow” (Bardsley 2007, 97). Hiratsuka’s ‘Genius’ is a spiritual awakening that transcends the gender demarcations of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ that are extant in all people, and such a duty to create something that inspires and frees others is representative of the duty of the *mangaka*.

I do not mean to say that in thinking about their work, *mangaka* need to look at a checklist of things to insert or avoid into their work; that would be nothing short of censorship and that is an oversimplification of my point. Just as philosopher Kendall Walton sardonically points out in his essay on imbining morals into works of fiction, “[t]here is a science fiction; why not a morality fiction?” (Walton 2003, 346). The process of creating a work of art is not so simple; however, the first and foremost duty of

an artist is to create artwork that invites those who engage with their work to question the status quo, and for *mangaka* that involves a question of how to subvert gender norms inherent within the production of *manga*.

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Grade Sheet for Final – Worth 20% of course grade

I use essentially the same grade sheet as that above, except I add a box to assess the extent to which you responded to the comments you received during the workshop.

<i>Exceptional</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Weak</i>
<p><i>Substance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Clear, thorough exploration of Asian human rights case <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ origins & development ♦ id of participants ♦ explanation of alternative positions <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic, convincing development of clear thesis statement, with no tangents <input type="checkbox"/> Precise, well informed literature review that supports your thesis <input type="checkbox"/> Careful & convincing use of rich array of scholarly and primary sources <input type="checkbox"/> Sustained engagement with & understanding of appropriate ethical and normative perspectives <input type="checkbox"/> <p><i>Quality of writing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Well-organized paper with introduction, lit review, body, conclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Precise, clear abstract <input type="checkbox"/> Bibliography complete & properly formatted <input type="checkbox"/> Concise, tight writing, minimal use of passive voice <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal mechanical mistakes <p><u>Revisions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful, thorough substantive revisions <input type="checkbox"/> Thorough attention to previous mechanical errors 	<p><i>Substance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Clear presentation of Asian human rights case, exploring each element <input type="checkbox"/> Clear thesis developed throughout the paper <input type="checkbox"/> Clear, coherent literature review supporting thesis <input type="checkbox"/> Solid foundation of scholarly and primary sources, perhaps more desirable <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of serious effort to engage appropriate ethical and normative perspectives <p><i>Quality of writing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> In need of better organization (i.e., outline, paragraph structure) <input type="checkbox"/> Clear abstract <input type="checkbox"/> Bibliography complete, some formatting mistakes <input type="checkbox"/> Some style mistakes <input type="checkbox"/> Some mechanical mistakes <p><u>Revisions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Significant substantive revisions <input type="checkbox"/> Clear attention to previous mechanical errors 	<p><i>Substance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of case incomplete, missing one or more required elements <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/confusing thesis <input type="checkbox"/> Poor thesis development <input type="checkbox"/> Missing/confusing literature review <input type="checkbox"/> Thin or uneven use of sources <input type="checkbox"/> Confused about or unengaged with ethical and normative perspectives <p><i>Quality of writing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Missing basic structural elements of paper (introduction, lit review, body, conclusion) <input type="checkbox"/> Confusing/missing abstract <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete bibliography <input type="checkbox"/> Poor writing interferes with communication of ideas <p><u>Revisions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Scant substantive revisions <input type="checkbox"/> Scant attention to previous mechanical errors

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