

Sexy Stillness

Towards a Queered Approach to Images' Movement In, Out, and Between Japanese Popular Media (and Probably Beyond?)

Edmond “Edo” Ernest dit Alban, comments and art by Fabrissou

A Fierce Introduction: When We Say “Queer,” What Are We Talking About Again?

As I remember that one of my students used to wear an “Anime made me gay” T-shirt during class, I am left to wonder how the profusion of sexually and gender-wise ambiguous characters in Japanese popular cultures tends to attract conflicting discourses on the potential *queerness* of otaku cultures (e.g., subcultures surrounding Japanese manga, anime and video games). On the one hand, tentative of academic debates about queer-baiting marketing strategies and the misrepresentation of queer lives in Japanese popular media represent a valid set of arguments, even though little people actually ask LGBTQ+ persons how they feel about this very issue (there are a few exceptions, including Tom Baudinette). On the other hand, rarer, sympathetic yet naïve reactions sometimes praise how “progressive” the Japanese cultural market is for having “video games for gays” (when discussing BL games or slash games initially made by women for women). If I am a 100% convinced by the discourse of the recently edited collection by James Welker, *The Door that BL Opens* (order it now?), and have experienced the intersectionality and activist potential of certain female and queer otaku communities myself, the usually vague comments about the positive power or commercial controversy of (so-called, but I still need receipts because I am greedy) queer representations in anime and manga make me uneasy. Indeed, in the mix of intentions, (non) queer creators and audiences, local but also global circulation of texts, media, and moving images, I find it rather ambitious (and maybe vain?) to ask for a simple definition of *what makes Japanese popular media queer* just by judging a book by its cover.

We (academics, fans, and people in between) talk a lot about the queer readings of texts, narratives or characters. But when the question comes to actually defining a corpus, an epistemology, and a method for the study of queer animated media, well, things get complicated.

“You know, for me the notion of queer comes from a specific place; to my knowledge it emerged mostly from the culture of trans women of color who were in a precarious place even in the LGBTQ+ spectrum. Queer is opposed to heteronormative and patriarchal systems and is therefore always in opposition to them. But queer is not a synonym for gay or lesbian per se, especially since we can still see in our communities how certain persons merge more or less with heteronormative-like behaviors. I therefore find it difficult to find something queer in Japanese animation and manga where most ‘queer’ characters are never called out for being different. Madoka is not queer, she might have a romance with another girl but ‘the world’ is not putting them aside: these shows de-problematizes queer representations to make them acceptable by larger audiences. Some series like *Sarawanmai* or *Utena* do incorporate these tensions and develop characters that are in the LGBTQ+ spectrum of representation and

respond to the opposition to norms that I understand as the basis for queerness” (Fabrissou, Personal communication with author, December 17, 2019).

So, then, honey (I mean dear readers), what is exactly *queer* in the vast spectrum of the so-called otaku subcultures anyways? What is *queer* in manga, anime or Japanese video games? I believe this debate might not find any satisfying answers if we always remain on the bare surface of (mis)representations. In a very low-cost parody of my idol Chantal Akerman, we should not simply ask what kind of queerness is represented but how *certain techniques of expression or modes of media production might embody and perform* queerness in the realm of the colorful and (over) expressive Japanese popular media ecology of moving images. How is queerness discussed through visual media? By who? Are there dedicated structures of production? What kind of social practices emerges from specific *queer* tactics of image composition and animation? To which end? What impact on society can communities emerging around tiny moving images (animated by a queer motion) have in the first place?

As it is developed in the following text, I advocate for the hypothesis of queered origins in the sexual, psychological and intimate techniques of still-image representations that have sustained otaku fan communities in conventions as well as the anime industry’s media mix (simply put, marketing) since the late 1970s. In short, the sexy images of famous characters featured across multiple amateur production (fanzines in multiple shapes) and official products (you know, the badges, key-holders and other pieces of plastic) might have a certain link to the past of subcultural visual tactics exploring “the subject inside” of the characters appearing in women’s and gay manga (and by extension the media ecology of anime or video games poaching similar techniques of expression). If anything is *queer* in anime’s milieu of moving images, *it must be some kind of movement*. Can we then start thinking about a queered approach to animated media from within the techniques of character motion?

To develop this idea, I term “sexy stillness,” the *komawari* techniques emerging in girl’s manga since the 70s (someone at a conference said since the 60s so we have a lot to learn I guess) to reveal the psyche, inner monologue and sexual drives of manga characters. What’s *komawari* again? And why are we talking about stillness in manga, a media that is not cinema or animation, and therefore *always* still? Simply put, the term *komawari* refers to the ensemble of techniques to cut down the pages of a book into manga strips. Etymologically speaking, I like to convince myself that it is a copycat term of *komadori*, a term that could be related to stop motion film techniques. Many scholars and practitioners talk about how Tezuka Osamu cut (*wari*) his pages as movie storyboards, using each *koma* (strips) as a camera shot. The gender division of *komawari* has been largely discussed in Japan within manga historiography (if you know good translators, can you ask them to translate Mori Naoko? Seriously she’s good). Girl’s manga is notorious for using *still* images quite different from the *cinematographic* approach to *komawari* in let’s say *Shōnen Jump* (*Dragonball? Naruto? My Hero Academia?* What are young people reading these days?). If boy’s manga is cinema, girl’s manga is literature. Or at least illustrated novels often discussed with the pioneering work of female artists like Hagio Moto and Takemiya Keiko that featured homosexual romances, moments of introspection, and sexy still images of naked bodies reflecting upon their social and gendered condition. Ishida Minori (another great person that needs an English translation) noted how queer representations and still images techniques converged (at least in *shōjo* manga) in the 70s. Now, this is an intriguing start to get out of the mere question of the representation of queer characters and dive into the potentiality of queer movement in the realm of the interconnections of manga and anime: after the revolution of *shōjo* manga, sexy stillness has been used to produce *another* type of motion. A motion that was not intended by mainstream heteronormative narratives of the 70s. A motion that let readers dive into characters. A motion that changed the relation between animated bodies and their fictional interiority. A motion that gives characters undermined by gender, sexual, and sometimes racial discrimination a space to collect their thoughts and emerge as subjects.

Anyways, let’s do the time warp to a time when stillness in the manga media ecology was synonymous of a new technique to represent psychology, intimacy and sexuality in the “genderless bodies” (ask Ueno Chizuko, she wrote about it, not me) of dangerously attractive androgynous boys invading the pages of girls’

manga. The legacy of Sexy Stillness techniques mostly grew from magazines like *June* with “classrooms” sections for young women to learn how to express themselves through erotic novels and manga (again, Ishida Minori has a great book on this). Can we call their educational project rethinking gender and sexuality through stillness “queer” as in LGBTQ+? Maybe not; Nakajima Azusa (who was in charge of one of these “classrooms”) said a couple of times that the queer element was not really that central to her vision of the project. From what I have read and researched, these sexy stillness techniques democratized with straight women’s sexual fantasies have however been reused in multiple straight and LGBT communities alike since the 70s to form the erotic and pornographic arts of *Lolicon*, *Shōnen Ai* (and *Yaoi*, and *Boy’s Love*) as well as the so called “Bara” gay amateur manga (friendly reminder, *bara* also meant “pansies” back in the days and has a tendency to make older generations of Japanese gay artists very uncomfortable). If the actual impact of these techniques on LGBT manga needs to be elucidated (I’m working on it, give me a few months...or years since academic publishing is slow) similar trends in their evolution can be found; especially in the progressive integration of inner monologue within the motion of sexual intercourses (just like in post-*Lolicon* and BL manga). From what I know, the so-called discovery of inner space in manga might even come from gay and lesbian illustrations printed in pornographic magazines in the late 60s and early 70s.

When asked about the techniques for a queer art in comics, Fabrisou explains: “I am a gay artist doing pornography so I’m not really a queer artist: I give people what they want inside of a very specific social context. Pornography is all about that connivance with the audience. I have seen multiple examples of North American queer comics and the usual technique is to create a distance between ‘the world’ and the readers and characters: ‘ugly’ drawings, ‘weird’ perspective, ‘wtf’ narration. It’s all about breaking the codes of comics and destroying the connivance of our point of identification, characters, with society and norms. There is an opposition between inner space and society’s space” (Fabrisou, Personal communication with author, December 17, 2019).

In sum, there is something about stillness in manga (and potentially anime and video games since they are interconnected by common animation techniques) that makes it possible to express, discuss and negotiate the way we represent (and therefore think and experience) interiority, gender and sexuality. So, what about queerness? Well that’s what I’m trying to find out. Spoiler Alert, I think sexy stillness could represent a queered movement of images.

Ok great, but why do we need to take our time-machines to the golden age of girls’ manga in the first place? Although sexy stillness might not “make you gay”, this queer performance of (not-so) moving images lies at the center of an often-repeated set of questions in academic writing and fan practices alike. When discussing the specificities of the anime industry, we ask why fans desire characters and their images. (Well, they are sexy and still right?) When exploring the apparatus (e.g Baudry’s complex word to say camera, yes this definition is too simple, I see you coming for me film scholars) used to produce anime, we ask what happens to gender representations in the new space emerging from the movement of celluloid sheets superposed and shot frame by frame. (Again, they are sexy and still?) When drawing pornography in manga the question of how to organize the space of pages to create a sexual atmosphere is also crucial. One could say that graphic details and movements of sexual intercourse should prevail. Yes, but again the format and techniques are important. The recent inflation of Patreon owners in the global gay fanart scene is getting us back to sexy still images: most of the production revolves around image sets organized as the different frames of sexual intercourse. This decomposition of motion into still images exploring sexuality responds both to the interconnections of manga and anime techniques (I mean it is literally the art of changing some layers of the image to induce a stripping progression), and *to the potential of sexy still images to be in between different registers of motion*. This gap in between stillness and motion has been invaded by multiple gay, lesbian, trans and straight artists in order to deconstruct the oppression they live and re-articulate gender and sexuality in their own terms.

“Patreon’s sets of images are like a cheap animation you know? It adds ‘a story’ to a simple illustration just by adding or erasing certain elements of the image. You can totally transform it into a GIF. It is a very

good product in the current economy: it's only one image so it is rather cheap to produce, and people love it 'because it is not just an image'. I think this format also tells a lot about the potential impossibility of pornography to be "queer": maybe my vision is to western-centered and focused on the commercial aspect of pornography but, you need to give people exactly what they want. The spectrum of the LGBTQ+ expectations in terms of porn is sporadic. I recently made a comic with a throuple including a trans man and I'm not sure how this is going to be received by my usual consumers" (Fabrissou, personal communication with author, December 17, 2019).

I can already hear a (shady but) reasonable attack on my take on sexy stillness: "but Edo, this is not different from what Thomas LaMarre described like a 1000 years ago for any kind of anime genre in *The Anime Machine!* Why is this specific to a queered motion?" The affiliation of stillness with certain readings, social praxis, and erotic markets expends only after the re-appropriation of the material, aesthetic, economical limits of anime and manga by gay, lesbian and women artists. I am not sure yet of how to articulate the complex two sides of this coin: is stillness sexy *per se*, because it has a peculiar impact on our senses in the realm of usually *more* mobile images, or is it mostly a socially constructed form of expression revolving around the representation of subjectivity in specific manga subcultures? Both? (Call me to chat about that!) Although I do not intend to explain the full spectrum of global otaku cultures through a common use of sexy stillness techniques, the question of the balance between motion and stillness of character's bodies remains an important part of industrial production, academic theories and amateur legacy of media practices. What if, this very dimension of *dynamic immobility* (Oh, hi Marc!,...Steinberg 2012) was our way into discussing both the queering of gender and sexuality in otaku media, as well as the prerequisite for its industry to feed on our need for sexy 2D characters? That would be great hey!

While remaining humoristic, I propose to take my joke of sexy stillness seriously. The Japanese anime industry often called media mix spreads thousands of (not-so) still images circulating on key holders, posters and other "stuff" that *we* (count me in) desperately need to mark our personal space. What if we are actually chasing images that, because they are in between motion and immobility, invite us to perceive the intimate, psychological and sexual dimension of our favorite characters? What to do about this intimate world that spreads in between images, transported in cities, and circulating on the web? The sexualization of characters is a well-guarded market often reprehending fans for crossing the line and proposing their own (pornographic) interpretation of franchised characters. If it is possible (and encouraged) to gaze at the naked abs of sexy male fictional anime characters, reusing this image to create your own sexual content is therefore usually prohibited. Scholars (including myself) working on the question of women's social space have often highlighted how the image of male characters serve as an alibi for communities to meet in public, create common expressions and support niche markets. If the convergence of sexy stillness, hot 2D male characters, women's fan communities and their industry described by Ishida, Mori, or Azuma (Sonoko, not Hiroki and his postmodern straight agenda) has been demonstrated, I feel like we are still sitting on a solution to our "bigger questions" about how stillness serves both as a queering performance liberating fans and their exploitation (ok, let's say "integration" to sound less polarizing) by the media mix industry.

Both use stillness. Period. The tension therefore lies in the history of the queering practices inherent to sexy stillness and its industrialization serving causes that are often pretty far from fighting for equal rights for women and sexual minorities. This could nevertheless be our cue to 1) solve the so-called mysteries of manga characters' likability; 2) understand the motivations of fan communities sexualizing characters; 3) analyze the grasp of the otaku media industry on intimate moments; and 4) add some deserved diversity to the very straight history of media mix since it apparently relies on queering tendencies to survive (you're welcomed, sis). If *political* action can't help us, well, maybe sexy stillness and its emprise on the Industry can (emphasis the maybe part, my parents where quasi French situationists so Debord runs in the family)? That is in a way the road recently taken by Gengoroh Tagame within the manga industry to "educate" straight masses, and agree or not, his shots of still bodies reflecting upon discrimination and acceptance still moved enough people to generate some theatrical adaptations (sexy stillness!).

These are a lot of questions for a very short piece and for one gay person to handle (and yes, this is also a shameful PR for my next articles and book). I partnered with my dear friend (and boss) Fabrissou to speak his mind on the matter of sexy stillness as a famous gay artist producing pornographic fanzine for the (tiny?) masses of the Japan expo in Paris. Now you know who is that guy appearing in between paragraphs! His fanzine *Dokkun* (the Japanese onomatopoeia for ejaculation, yes, you needed this information and you will remember it) tells a similar story to already existing (yet often ignored) scholarship on the relation of queer stories in manga, techniques of still images (sexy stillness) and the media mix industry. Fabrissou's illustrations and thoughts serve as counterpoints to my (almost?) academic demonstration in order to induce a dialogue in between the practice and theory of not-so-much-moving-images.

Don't worry, the actual essay is shorter than the intro.

Academic Questions, Amateur Queer Answers: Sexy Stillness or “Can You Stay Still while I Sexualize (and Subjectify) You?”

“The internet is for Porn” (Avenue Q)

“So are the techniques of queering movement in “otaku” media?” (Edo, 2020)

I would like to start by remembering the (in)famous art of Yamakawa Jun'ichi, mysterious gay mangaka and now source of memes for straight people who love to laugh at gay porn on the internet. Judged “too girly” by the gay audiences of *Barazoku* magazine back in the days of his publications in the 80s, “Yamajun” represents an interesting mediation in between the sexy stillness usually affiliated with *shōjo* manga and other forms of contents popular in Japanese subcultural (mostly gay and lesbian porno) magazines. With notorious inspirations from Jōjō-e and Gurabia, his way of telling the story behind a sexual intercourse is not far from the format, the aesthetics and the modus operandi of June's “classrooms” teaching romance storytelling as a mystery: “Why did two boys kissed? Explain the before and after!” Well, the great enigma of feelings, love, and sexuality seemed often to be resolved within still images with inner monologue written out of speech bubbles. Mori Naoko's work on *komawari* in hardcore BL and other genres of pornographic manga nevertheless inspired me to look at the conjoined evolutions in the techniques of women's slash manga and gay manga: sexy still techniques transformed from illustrations discovering inner monologues to an integrated psychological dimension of sexualized bodies. In short, through the decades, sexy stillness progressively metamorphosed from an intimate pause in the narrative to an integrated psychological dimension of bodies in motion.

Either way, stillness became sexy in a growing milieu of manga and anime moving images. In the 70s, media mix strategies, and character merchandizing were transforming with the anime boom and the birth of local libraries (I have a few academic pieces on that if you need 'em). It was not rare to see characters move differently in manga, anime, radio and other paraphernalia. As such, most visual expressions revolved around the use of character (corporeal) motion to develop stories. This trope of the Japanese anime media ecology has already been brilliantly explained by Tom (LaMarre) so I will give you some details: more than focusing on a scenario, anime relies on character motion to produce narratives (until the never-ending wave of Kadokawa light novels adaptations after the 2000s that is, all Tea all shade). In a world determined by the mere mobility of bodies, stillness therefore became a way to challenge the limits of gendered, psychological and intimate boundaries of characters. Only through the pause in character's motion could subcultural communities find the place to stop certain discourses and reinvent new ones. This was probably the birth of a queered motion of bodies (by that I mean that we have queer representations but also a technique to get away from normative scenarios and practices) a way to read in between the line, the images, the presence of a complex subject that is not just a plasmatic moving image like Mickey (please do not sue me Disney).

Indeed, the dynamics between motion and stillness were already used in TV's limited animation and its marketing (media mix) since the 60s. This (re)discovery of the space *in between the frames* provoked by sexy stillness nevertheless became the now well-known missing psychological layer of male characters in boy's manga, a layer retrieved by female fanzine: why is Tsubasa (or Naruto, or name any male cha-

acter from *Jump*) so pissed in episode 10? (Because his rival *tsundere* lover was bad to him the night before riiiiight gurls?). But this “in between frames” is also known as the (often misunderstood?) notion of *kyara/kyarakutā*. Celebrating the death anniversary of Tezuka as a chance to change discourses in manga historiography, Ito Go proposed to look at the fluctuation of character’s visual and psychological tropes in *komawari*. Long story short (and probably revisited by me?) *kyara* officiates as a reduced version of *kyarakutā*, that is to say, a fictional being developed through moving images. Isolated, *kyara* are simplified (*déformé* as they say), stereotypical and reduced to repeated iterations of simple narratives. The limited motion of *kyara* makes it easy to understand and reproduce (which is especially great in media mix strategies that extends its motion not in a single media but in between products with no particular story). Put together, the fragments of *kyara* evolve into a well fleshed, self-standing character (*kyarakutā*). The complex motion of characters passes through multiple moments as *kyara* unified through different *komawari* or animation techniques. Characters are therefore always in flux between *kyara* and *kyarakutā*, stereotype and subject, still image and animated body. Why does this matter when we speak of queering movement and techniques of expressions linked to gendered and sexual minorities?

The “discovery” of an intimate space and motion in manga and anime is synonymous of the emergence of certain socio-cultural projects led by women and LGBTQ+ people (not always together, that is for sure #yaoiroisō) to describe “full” subjects (see Nakajima, Mori, and in a sense Tagame). “Full” subjectivity emerges from the (dis)continuity of *kyara* to *kyarakutā* and the power, as a mobile image to fluctuate in between the two. If characters can be reduced to (sexual) *kyara*-objects, it never destroys the psychological agency they have on their bodies as *kyarakutā* (characters). Techniques of pornographic expression in women’s and gay manga often use the dynamics in between objectification and subjectification to create still sexy images: these representations of sexual pleasure are working for the recognition of sexualized bodies as subjects. *Sous les pavés la plage*. Well, under the moving body of characters there is an invisible subjectivity at stake. On the one hand, yes, these are sexual images to gaze at. But on the other hand, we can read through bodies with inner monologues and penetrate (yes that was a bad choice of words) the inner space and psyches of characters. The sexy dude having an erection on (name one “*bara*” artist)’s art is not just a piece of meat, there is a *real* subject underneath (is my way to get the 200 pages of Mori’s book to you in a sentence, yay!).

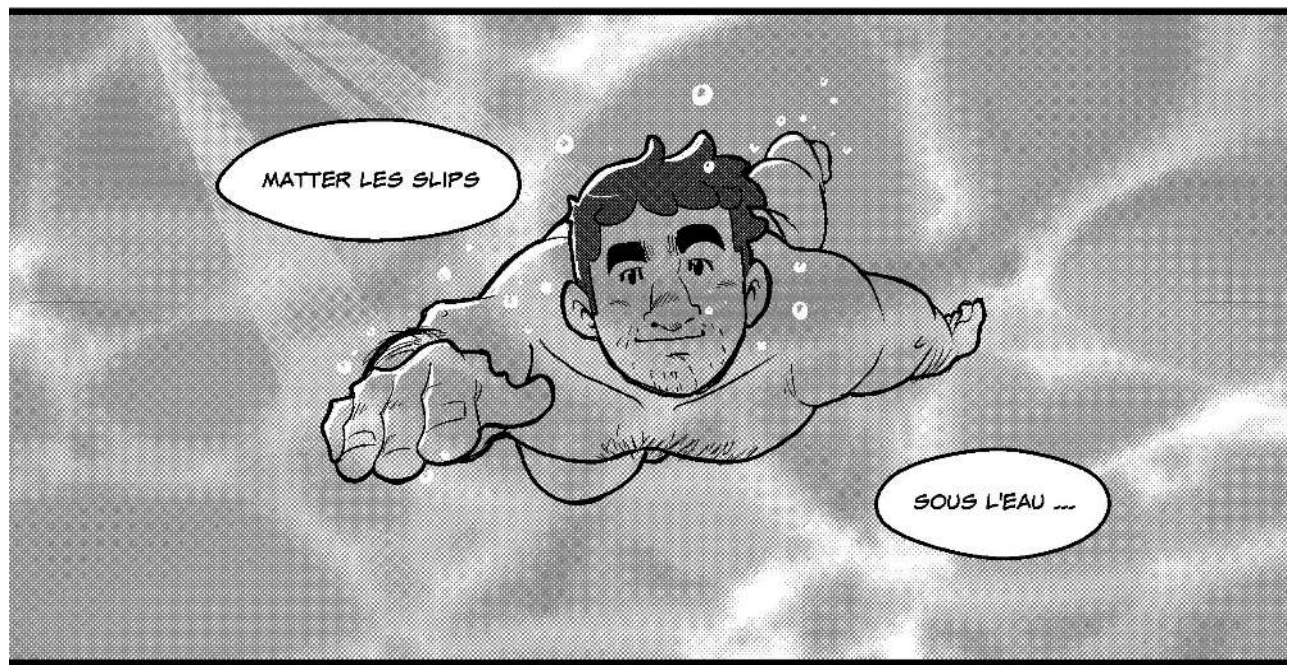
Remembering the art of Nakajima Azusa, Takemiya Keiko, Yamakawa Jun, Gengoroh Tagame and Fabrisou, there is a certain quality of stillness within manga and anime that gives us the opportunity to oscillate in between certain degrees of identities and agencies. Most artists talk about the equality (e.g. as a women or queer person to be recognized as a peer in both public and intimate spheres) and freedom (to imagine other modes of subjectivity in BDSM gay art) they seek in

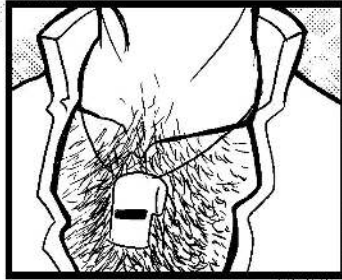


Figure 1.
Dokkun, vol. 7. Art cover by Fabrisou.

Figure 2-1 and 2-2. (following pages)
La piscine by Fabrisou. 2015.

Here in *La piscine* (2015) we can gaze upon on of the moments where manga enthusiast Fabrisou also uses a mix of inner monologue, still images and montage in order to develop the main protagonist. This balance echoes with similar scenes in Tagame and Yamakawa’s art where sexy still images come into play as a moment of introspection into sexualized bodies. These tales of gay men finding agency upon their bodies and sexualities often resolve around techniques to queer the reductive corporeal description of bodies with the induction of subjective experiences.





LA VACHE !



these sexualized representations. If their level of privileges and projects are obviously different and should be historicized and contextualized case by case, the question of the so-called “alternative” (I will come back to these aggressive quotations very soon) feminine/gay history of manga could mostly be a story of queering movements emerging through still techniques of animation not looking at mobile bodies but invisible inner spaces.

As LaMarre advocated for the idea that anime was creating a different way of seeing and experiencing the world through certain visual techniques different from cinema, one part of his legacy is to deconstruct representations of gender, subjectivity and sexuality into *new* motions (I am almost sure that Patrick W. Galbraith said this in a more clever way somewhere). The intimacy of introspective or sexual pauses proposed by sexy stillness therefore negotiates an invisible layer of characters that has evolved through the history of otaku media. The disappearance of inner monologue and the (re)emergence of dialogues, spoken voices and character-dialect (*kyarago*; see Maynard K. Senko for a fantastic ride) might tell a story of the various techniques mobilized to describe this inner space impossible to represent through mere corporeal motion. *Eroge* (pornographic games for male audiences) of the 90s also used stiff (I would say sexy still) animation in game to explore the tragic stories of cute girls (*you* still want to bang). This is our cue to question why stillness was needed and how it was integrated into a larger ecology of media relying on moving images. This is also our clue to evade the question of simple queer (mis)representations and look at stillness as a tool to rethink all genders and sexualities, including straight masculinities.

Maybe this is particular to what eroticism and pornography does, or maybe we should apply the theories of Porn Studies and Gender Studies to *komawari* in a more precise way? Either way there is something going on with queer representations in *otaku* cultures that goes with character motion... well, immobility. And we need to get to the bottom of this someday.

Conclusion: No Alternative? What If Queering Was In Fact Part of Media Mix History All Along?

“Astro Boy was the first Bishōnen” (Hagio Moto 2014)

“See, media mix was queer since Tezuka’s Astro Boy? (aka the dawn of times in discourses about manga history and media mix)” (Edo 2020)

As *Astro Boy* stickers started to spread from the sweet boxes of marble chocolates in the 60s, a model of marketing, called media mix, progressively invaded TV animated series, children’s magazines, toys, and radio programs. Although the term is now democratized and (sometimes quite vaguely) used by scholars, industrials and fans to refer to the production of either anime transmedia storytelling or paraphernalia (or both? Yes, it is both), the importance of media mix lies in the use of moving images. *Steinberg’s pioneering book reminds us that the “crappy” motion of anime is at the center of inter-media relations.* The existence of other terms in and out of Japan also point at different organizations of inter-media relations and franchising: is it narratives and convergence (Transmedia)? Images and divergence (Media Mix)? Toys (Cross-media)? User data (also Cross-media but different academic field)? What is the core of these industries? In the case of media mix, stillness. Or *dynamic immobility* as Steinberg puts it. If it is now evident that not-so-moving images of characters are used to create bridges in between anime, manga, games, books, badges and even food, I find it strange that no one has noticed the importance of stillness in the larger spectrum of the expressions and techniques that has sustained the otaku fandoms and anime industry for decades. Sexy stillness motivates to create more media mix to discover more hidden aspects of characters. Sexy stillness helps fans to construct their own narratives exploring the underdeveloped sexuality of characters, or more simply, their everyday lives. Sexy stillness is the reason why *we feel a subject* behind the character and wonder about the whereabouts of Hatsune Miku (is she still alive btw? Most “P”s went to Utau to be fair). But mostly sexy stillness works as similar techniques of character animation distributed in between various media platforms, all developing characters in different ways (and therefore we need them all because games and books, as an example, can’t “show us” the same things).

Now, attentive readers will notice that I just fused the notions of media mix and dynamic immobility

with sexy stillness. This is indeed problematic, maybe polemic, as a quasi-act of historical revisionism. The Tezuka legacy of media mix is not necessarily queer from the beginning, even though Hagio's comment about *Astro Boy* being the first *bishōnen* points at a comical (yet high) probability of his sexy still image to have influenced a vast audience of young women *mangaka* to start their quest of a queer motion. We however face numerous attempts of "alternative" histories nowadays looking at how women, people of color, indigenous nations and LGBTQ+ people are what some clumsily frame as "the other side of history". What if histories converged, not in a naïve sense that they always worked together for the greater good but are interdependent? Can we reconstruct histories that talk to one another rather than separating them? The usual looks that we give at media mix history are the ones focused on straight male fandoms.

The same fandoms we know for sure used the representations, techniques and discourses of *shōjo* manga and got stigmatized as *otaku* for not being masculine enough, liking fictional sexual representations and being "sissies" (well, I recall *okama*? Fxg?) in general when the *lolicon* genre was discussed in *Manga Burikko*. I have no intention of claiming media mix history as a queer "thing" for women and LGBTQ+ fan communities, however, I am sure that the queered motions of sexy stillness and the subcultural communities using these techniques were a central part, for a loooooong time now, of the media mix history and so-called *otaku* cultures. From the *moe* boom to the flourishing BL industry, queering tactics of character motion have been at the center of the *otaku* industry looking for a way to create a "total work of art". The unholy alliance of Disney and Eisenstein, almost fascist mobilization of fandom, said the serious troll Ôtsuka Eiji. Well, from a historical point of view, I would agree that the capitalist alliance of a grassroots' needs for queering representations of genders and sexuality met the appetite of publishers to reuse these local energies in fan mecca to polish the theories, practices, and commodities of media mix (Steinberg and me 2018; me 2020 in *Mechademia* 12.2; also my future book that I am advertising here with this trashy pitch). Sexy Stillness might sound like a joke, but it is central to understand how queer motions emerged and conquered mainstream forms of media production in Japan.

For detailed bibliographical information, see the suggested bibliography in this issue's introduction.