

Becoming a Fan

Using Foucault to show how we consume media to create it

April 2014 - Lauryn Ash (laurynash.com) | Nicholas Theisen ([patreon](https://www.patreon.com/ntheisen))

Introduction

In *Hermeneutics of the Self*, Foucault asks us to consider relationship of the self to itself the same as its relationship to the environment. By participating in the environments we inhabit, human beings are in a constant state of being. We become our selves through a series of practices, habits, and revelations. We do not think ourselves into existence; we *become* our selves through existing. This means existing creates a natural dialogue between self-affirmed identities within us and the performance of those identities to the outside world. Construction of personal identity parallels the construction of a fan identity. Readers interact with the text, discuss this text with each other, and then fuse those interactions together to create an identity as a fan. Readers can also be considered non-initiated fans, as general readership is not considered fandom. Fandom is an environment that perpetuates performances that inevitably lead to constructing identities of readers as self-proclaimed fans. Fans form clusters within a larger fandom, perform multiple roles that contribute to this fandom, and create new fans to perpetuate the cycle.

Fans of Japanese imported culture in particular have a phenomenon where a seemingly unassociated group of people find themselves partaking in a similar fan activities and habits. Although there are different interpretations of manga as

Japanese derived versus Japanese inspired, the definition of manga as Japanese derived is used. Manga are commonly accepted as Japanese comics throughout the United States, with anime as its animated cartoon counterpart. Through dedicated participation and earned social capital, fans perform a variety of roles for a variety of circumstances that may or may never overlap. Our question becomes not “what is a fan?” but “how do we identify as one?”

The Foucaudian-Constructed Fan

Foucault offers a “self” as an actualized and accepted self—a willing participant that engages, questions, and influences the discourse they live in. Alongside Foucault’s theory of the self, manga is not simply a cultural medium of communication or a literary genre to critique. Manga fandom is defined by the interactions of its fans, creators, and critics. Their continually changing discourse strengthened by the self-identity of its members.

Foucault gives us two ideas that function as ways to identify the self: the knowledge of and the care of oneself. To know oneself appears throughout the Greek philosophical texts Foucault regularly discusses as a rule that means to acknowledge the existence of the self as a subject. Yet, it is not enough to know that the self exists. It is through caring of the self that the knowledge of the self is affirmed and created.

“The [care of oneself] is an attitude towards the self, others, and the world; second, the [care of oneself] is a certain form of attention, of looking...away from the outside...third, the notion of [care] does not merely designate the general attitude or this form of attention turned on the self. The [care] also

always designates a number of actions exercised on the self by the self...by which one changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself. It involves a series of practices..." (Foucault 10-11).

We think something; we ask it to the world; something we perceive "outside" perceives it; and we evaluate ourselves based on that. In order to become more like ourselves, we take necessary actions to facilitate the things we like most; then form new thoughts, opinions, project those, reflect, and repeat. In order to know ourselves, we must care for ourselves. This cycle of identity acts no differently between self-identity and fan-identity.

Ingulsrud and Allen conducted surveys and direct interviews of manga readers in Japan between preschool and university age. Although the reading of manga itself was an individual activity, parents, siblings, and friends first exposed these readers to manga before they began reading (Ingulsrud and Allen 93-95). The relationship between siblings, parent and child, and friends deepened with manga as time progressed. These relationships provided a communal context for manga reading alongside a solitary reading practice of individual texts. As younger children became more manga-aware, they became manga-versed—collecting manga texts, loaning them to friends, or participating in school sanctioned club events. When they graduated to university, Ingulsrud and Allen found a correlation between manga reading and community. Without a local network to support their manga reading habits, these manga readers quickly stopped collecting and engaging with the texts (Ingulsrud and Allen 95). Similarly, Lawrence Eng conducted interviews with American fans of Japanese anime. These fans relied on their local networks of

peer-to-peer watching and recommendations to further their online habits of looking for anime. These local networks of friends who introduced watchers to anime (and subsequently to their manga counterparts) were crucial to maintain not just those interpersonal relationships, but also were vital to continue a repeating habit of individually watching anime and reading manga separated from that social environment (Eng 166).

Local networks affirm readers' thoughts and positive feelings towards manga. With negative reinforcement, manga readers turn away from manga as a creative outlet (Ingulsrud and Allen 120). Implying, readers need other readers to propagate continued readership. Becoming a fan requires something more than dedicated reading. What is this something? Foucault's *Hermeneutics of the Self* encourages the idea of identity as a self-affirmation process. Fans are routinely affirmed by their practices of fandom, but without that affirmation by the self and because of the self, would the fan identify as one? Analyzing these interactions as identity forming processes reveal the different identities of a fan and the roles within those constructed identities. Foucault extends his argument for caring for oneself into caring for one's life. "The art of living and the art of oneself are identical; at least, they become, or tend to become, identical" (206). In caring for themselves, fans create the community that cared for them. Although Foucault spoke nothing of fan identity or the Internet, he did provide an illustrative cycle to analyze how fans identify within the anime/manga fandom. Transposing Foucault's theory to ideas of fans as consumers, communities, and producers of the fandom reveals a less

dichromatic relationship between self-identified fans and their performances within the dynamic, discourse of manga.

Fans as Consumer

Current scholars largely emphasize the relationships between fans and their fandoms as consumer relationships. Morikawa's historical research on Akihabara's transformation to reflect a fan identity perpetuates this ideal that a manga fan is inevitably a manga consumer. In Japan, otaku is used to describe not just a fan of a particular fandom, but also an overtly consuming fan of their fandom. This definition persists within manga/anime fan scholarship; yet it does not adequately represent all fans. Morikawa's believes an otaku overly consumes their fandom, and this persists in his argument in tracking the history of Akihabara:

“The concentration of marginal personality type in an urban district has exposed the previously hidden interests of otaku in Akihabara to the extent that it transformed an urban space...The otaku's stance outside the mainstream, the understanding of themselves as a marginal subculture, is the most significant characteristic that distinguishes Akihabara's transformation” (Morikawa 155).

By placing the otaku outside of the mainstream, Morikawa isolates the anime/manga fan group as a marginal subset of a larger demographic. This identifies otaku-driven is consumer-driven. Noting that scholarship divides otaku for “normal” consumption practices encourages a reading that otaku can be identified by their

consumption practices (Morikawa 136). Further in American standards, Matsui also highlights how the flow of manga from Japan into the American publishing market largely impacted the readership as consumers, not as communities of readers (16). While Morikawa identifies 'otaku' as a fan, I refer to general fans not as consumers of manga, but as communities. Akihabara's case is not due to a mass fan consumer insurgence, but a mirrored practice of self-identification already taking place.

Akihabara mirroring its consumers' interests and tastes illustrates Foucault's principle of life mirroring the self *en masse*. "Although the *Evangelion* boom was the catalyst, it would not have triggered a change unless there was an existing demand for otaku culture in the area" (Morikawa 151). Akihabara identified with people who enjoyed computers, building robots, and specialized electronic interests. *Evangelion* is an anime where humans pilot computerized robots. *Evangelion* appealed to an already existing identity of computer geek, which seemed to transform a district, but in actuality, just perpetuated their pre-established self-identity.

Recognizing the self-transformation of otaku is important to differentiate between fan consumerism and fan self-identify. Foucault suggests, "Truth is only given to the subject at a price that brings the subject's being into play" (15). Truth references a constant, or absolute, for a subject. Truth by itself cannot change a person; but if that truth engages that person, then the person is changed by it, even if the change just reaffirms the already existing idea. In Akihabara's case, the computer geek's truth was computers are cool. This truth, reaffirmed by *Evangelion's* theme, then reestablished by the retail stores now selling *Evangelion* garage kits. The subject transformed to their truth, in a new state of being. Morikawa

calls this being “anime otaku” (155). Yet both are fans. Akihabara’s transformation was not because of an insurgence of new Morikawa deemed otaku-consumers, but a conversion of existing fan hobbyists who transformed from purchasing robot-garage kits to purchasing *Evangelion* figurines, converting themselves to a new breed of fandom.

Consumer practices are only one example of conversion to the self. It is very possible for a fan to engage in a commercial environment without actually buying anything. Many manga readers practice *Tachiyomi*—standing and reading—in bookstores without the intent to purchase (Ingulsrud and Allen 113). Even if complete strangers, *tachiyomi* in bookstores are a semblance of the community that exists outside the bookstore. Interacting with other manga readers is a central part of becoming a fan. Foucault stresses the attitude of the self towards the world, and the actions of maintaining that self. I would extend this argument, saying through this projection to others, we identify more with ourselves than with them. For example, readers reading similar series in a bookstore together are not silently pleased at finding a new friend. They are silently affirmed of the manga series they are reading. It wasn’t just them. Consumption of the manga text itself is a form of caring for oneself as caring for oneself as a fan. Foucault stresses daily rituals as daily evaluations of the self. This repetition of the habit returns the self to the practice of reading manga.

Active engagement with the text strongly resonates with active engagement in the community of fans associated with those texts. Serialized by week or by month, manga builds storylines over multiple volumes, anime likewise. This

serialization creates discontinuous storylines readers mentally keep up with to stay in line with the story. Around 90% of manga readers read the text more than once, and 35% over ten times (Ingulsrud and Allen 187). Rereading a text indicates the need to recall important facts. This practice builds up a mental knowledge base. Readers with this knowledge do not keep it to themselves. Collectors of manga regularly loan those books out to friends. They extend their knowledge network, including new readers, and answering questions about series locally and online. They share their knowledge—maybe show off their knowledge—online through link sharing, or offline through physical loaning. Manga collectors become valuable guiders for new readers to the fandom online. Internet forums and websites transpose Foucault's ideology based in the pre-Internet physical environment to the post-Internet digital environment. Knowing Akihabara's transformation happened during the rise of Internet communities aligns Morikawa's collective otaku spaces online with his "transcendence" to a physical space of Akihabara (152). Yes, fan interactions online escalate the identity cycle; but the cycle of caring for oneself, as caring for oneself as a fan, continually exists.

Foucault extends his relationship of self to self: "looking after the self so as to be able to take care of others...one must take care of the self for itself, the relationship to others being deduced from and entailed by the relationship one establishes of the self to the self" (206). With looking after the self as a fan, fans begin to look after others. Having converted themselves into dedicated readers and knowledge networks, fans broaden their self-conversion to taking care of others. This conversion towards the self as a fan enables one to convert others towards a

self as a fan. Establishing a strong relationship with the self allows a strong relationship to others. Taking care of themselves as a fan, fans enable themselves to take care of others fans by performing their self-identity as fan-identity.

Fans as Community

Pedagogy only exists when a divide between knowing and unknowing exist, enabling one person to teach and another to learn. For anime/manga fans, the newest members cannot give knowledge, as they do not have it. Older members of the community, those that have watched or have read more, become these knowledge centers. Foucault's "truth" is an absolute determined by the speaker of this truth. In discussing *parrhēsia*, speaking freely, Foucault aligns the truth speaker with a master, and the truth-listener a disciple, or subject of hearing this truth. This truth sharing "establishes a certain pact between the subject of enunciation [he who says] and the subject of conduct [he who does]" (Foucault 406). Now, who he says and he who does are not necessarily two different people. In fact, Foucault emphasizes how the one who becomes a "master," the truth-teacher, must be both (406). Through a constant interaction with the text itself, fans grow their self-knowledge of manga and anime, which allows them to improve the knowledge of other fans. Multiple fan networks cultivate the identity as a fan. Within the fandom, fans form multiple, and simultaneous forms of, pedagogical relationships within that context.

Fans perform pedagogy through loaning purchased manga/anime and sharing links online. Original Japanese language manga and anime have words or phrases that cannot be translated perfectly into English. Scanlated—meaning scanned and translated—manga appear online frequently with sound effects written in the traditional Japanese style. In dialogue boxes, these scanlators will also leave formal address titles—whose equivalents would be roughly akin to using Mr./Mrs.—without translating, providing the pronunciation of these titles in a Romanized Japanese lettering. Rampart cites these discrepancies that “do not make allowances for the uninitiated readers” (227). Where he correctly analyzes the technical practices of distributing these scanlated works online, he does not highlight how central online communities encourage and provide help for these uninitiated readers. Popular website OneManga both distributes scanlated works and provides an entire section dedicated to helping new fans. Eng highlights the importance of fans participation in the anime/manga fandom:

“Anime News Network encyclopedia includes a lexicon explaining the meanings of various Japanese words commonly heard in anime and also anime- and fan-related jargon. [The important distinction between Anime News Network and a similar site AnimeNfo.com is that] the database [of Anime News Network] is based on a crowd-sourced model and is open to registered users, so that people with information on a show can add it to the database. As such having a large number of users on the site with a collectively broad range of knowledge on anime allows the encyclopedia’s database to be very rich in detail” (170).

This crowd-sourced type of pedagogy on the Internet siphons the idea of pedagogy into a larger space. Instead of a unique individual providing recommendations, fans can learn from a community of teacher. Foucault's notion of truth requires speaking and doing to be aligned. Interestingly, the Internet implies both these things are occurring. Fans log into Anime News Network, create entries, or add onto others; yet in order to do so, they must have actually watched and/or read the series. Fans who speak anime/manga online have to participate in the anime/manga they are speaking about. Fan interactions online create the same "conversations, relationships of shared lives [making it easier] to perceive the truth expressed, because the pact is constantly reproduced in the chain of examples and discourse" in Foucault's pedagogical example in *Hermeneutics of the Self* (407). Interactions between these fans become central to establishing the self-identity as a fan. These online relationships strengthened Rampart's uninitiated readers as initiated fans. In searching for fan communities online, these fans speak their fandom and are answered, transformed, and practice the care of themselves as fans. In the search in the outside, fans search for and contribute to the "element, which is same on both the subject side and the object side" (Foucault 53). Living for oneself as a fan and living in of itself is enabled by the same fan community practices that perpetuate its existence in the first place.

Participation within a fandom allows fans to be acknowledged as fans. Although Rampart introduces scanlators as aware "of the legally ambiguous nature" of their work, he does not analyze why scanlators continue to operate despite this awareness, nor how this affects the fandom that reads those works (227). Mizuko

Ito's essay on the ethics of fansubbing—translating and then subtitling for distribution online— best illustrates community as an interactive contribution. Ito provides a clear comparison between fansubbers— those that translate and subtitle anime for online distribution—and fan leechers—those that watch and do not subtitle. Pedagogy in fansubbing is less a crowd-sourced information hovel, but a direct connection within smaller, niche community of the larger fansubbing community. “Learning within the fansub scene is embedded in an authentic set of work practices in peers who share their passionate and specialized interests” (Ito 194). Mentorships and peer-to-peer direction create new fansubbers to take over communities once more experience members leave for work that may or may not be related to their initial fansubbing activities. Without this pedagogical relationship, fansubbing as a noncommercial practice most likely would be unable to sustain itself. Once fans gain more experience and become established as known fansubbers online, they take on roles as experts, enabling them to mentor new, interested fansubbers (Eng 194). This example of pedagogy affirms that the self as a fan must be cultivated and encouraged by the community in order to give back to that community. As fans freely distribute work that was commercially produced, Ito considers the implications of fan subbing practices not just on the fan community, but on the industry that produced those works.

Debates on the ethnics of fansubbing are solely based on the perception of the value of that fansubbers contribution. Fansubbers do not associate their fansubbing as “giving back,” but as “adding value” to an existing community (Ito 191). These works target the general anime/manga fandom, and are consumed by

the same community that practices *tachiyomi* and borrowing anime DVDS offline. These fansubbers acknowledge the illegality of their contributions and their emphasis on general consumption by the fans. Yet, they continue to partake in the ethnically dubious practice. "I can release something that conforms to my standards and make it available to the world of anime" (Lanis qtd. Ito 192). What would seem as a marked line between commercially produced and fan-redistributed, most ethnical fansubbers take down their contributions once officially licensed anime are released. Fansubbers view their work as contributing to and improving the fandom for fans, by fans Still, fansubbing provides the community a service that effectively gives them a product to consume. These productions are noncommercial, making the consumption of these products different. Unlike Morikawa's consumerist Akihabara where money is exchanged for goods, the digital fan exchange trades fansubbed and scanlated works supposedly for social capital. Ito's interviews with fansubbers determined they were motivated by "self-actualization and reputation rather than financial needs" (182). This demonstrates Foucault's theory in action. Fansubbers affirm themselves, releasing fansubs that both help them *and* help the community. By affirming their identity, these fans affirm the community's identity. They are aware of this. "Opening new markets and recruiting new audiences to anime" plays a key role in rationalize their technically illegal practices (Eng 192). The implications of this mindset reach further than the direct impact on the community. By taking up the work of production, distribution, and conversion of new audiences upon themselves, fans begin to produce for initial community that produced them.

Becoming a fan is not just an identifiable series of processes, but a continuous interaction between networks of different social relationships. As fans mirror their lives around living for themselves as fans, their self-affirmed fan identity relies on performance of that identity. Foucault introduces the metaphor of a spinning top to analyze the constant forces acting around the self:

“The top is something that turns on itself at the behest and on the instigation of an external impulse. On the other hand, the top successfully presents different faces in different directions and to the different components of its surroundings. And finally, although the top apparently remains immobile, in reality, it is always in movement” (207).

On the surface, fan identity appears dynamic and unsettled. Acted upon by an outside commercial Akihabara or outside production companies, fans react to the behest of the industry’s publication models. Without the industry, fans would not exist. Yet without fans, the industry would have no basis for its own identity. The spinning top metaphor illustrates the numerous relationships of the fans, the industry, and the fans to themselves. Even if just small commercial analyses—girls regularly read commercially produced manga targeted at boys (Ingulsrud and Allen 160-61)—or big major fan events—Anime Expo, a four-day, mid-week convention in Los Angeles celebrating industry members and amateur artists and Japanese snacks—fans are hyperaware of their position in the fan community. Foucault’s metaphor of the top doesn’t stop at paralleling the centrifugal forces away from the self and centripetal force pushing on the fan, he holds the counterbalance between them—the conversion that comes by turning in towards the self as the self turns around the

world. Returning to the self as a fan returns to the fan to the experience of reading that text, participating in that fan community, the discourse, and inevitably repeating the same process that first created these behaviors. This conversion is not a one-time experience, but repeated throughout the manga fan's interaction through the discourse. A fan identity is created by this activity within the discourse. The more active the self the more active the fan performs within. This interactivity between the fandom and the fan causes fans to create themselves through their performance to others.

Convention spaces in Japan and the United States portray fans in various performances both a convergence of fandom and a source of conversion for fans. Fan interactions online and in convention spaces facilitate the maintenance of the self as a fan beyond a pedagogical relationship into performance within an extend network of peers:

“The practice of the self is now integrated within, mixed up, intertwined with a whole network of different social relationships in which mastership in the strict sense still exists, but in which there are also many other possible forms of a relationships” (Foucault 206).

Participating in multiple relationships of the fandom reaffirms the identities of individuals as fans. Cosplayers epitomize this performance, because not only are they speaking the truth of fandom, they literally wear it on their sleeve. Cosplayers dress up in costume and role-play their favorite characters, colloquially known as cosplay. This literal performance of the fan amplifies the fan, not the character they are supposed to be. When seeing another favorite character, they take pictures

together and cast characters from different shows as best friends, lovers, or mortal enemies. Despite Morikawa's parallel to Akihabara, it is entirely possible for fans to attend a convention, and not purchase anything once there. Attendees participate in classroom styled panels, learning how to speak Japanese or proper techniques for applying costume makeup. Video rooms showcase the newest or most popular anime. Conventions serve as an informal gathering to "socialize with other anime fans" (Eng 175). Fans who enjoy watching fansubbers finally get to meet them. They learn about ethical fansubbing techniques, and the industry standards that threaten to shut them down. Ito considers these anime fansub watchers more sophisticated media consumers, so far as to call some of their tastes "elitist," due to the better fan quality than industry quality in America (197). Attending these conventions gives non-subbers a chance to purchase the DVD sets, justifying their leeching behaviors. How would they have known to buy the anime, if they hadn't seen it first? (Ito 198). Fans who regularly participate within the discourse further a type of personal self-reflection. The critic and the collector are not defined by their fandom, so much as supplemented by their performance of it. Conversion towards the self becomes a key element for assimilating the self-actualized identity.

Performing the fan identity in the community proves the self as a fan, because the life of the fan is performed and reaffirmed by the lives of other fans. The fan convention leads to "increased access to other networks, information, and goods... becoming well connected or well known within otaku circles allows one to engage with the community at a high level" (Eng 175-76). Even without attending this convention space physically, digital fans enjoy the fan reaffirming practices. Live

blogging popular conventions such as Anime Expo, live bloggers—especially on Tumblr—take videos and pictures throughout the weekend. Their followers reblog these videos and pictures. Re-sharing those experiences on their blogs exemplifies the social performance of fandom. Followers reblog, and then the followers of those followers reblog it, and the cycle continues. Rather than an exchange of material or digital goods, fandom is a growing community of performance. Raising offline and online social capital raises the notion of the self as a fan, thanks to the relationships of others. “For in pedagogy, the master inasmuch as he holds the truth, expresses the truth, expresses it properly and within rules intrinsic to the true discourse he conveys” (Foucault 408). Simply by acting as fans, fans identify as fans and then sharing that fandom, begin to represent that larger fandom. Establishing offline relationships and transposing them online only continues turning towards the self as emphasized by Foucault. Without other fans as a point of reference, the fan would not know if they were one.

Understanding fan contributions to fan community through participating as consumers and as community members is only a part of understanding fan identity. Fan contributions through fansubbing and scanlating may perpetuate the self-actualization of fans identities, but also helps sustain the industry. As with the fansubbing community, fan artists, fan writers, and fan musicians—collectively referred to as fan creators—contribute their own modifications of art and writing, emulating the same practice found in industry level professions. Fan creators interact alongside the discourse. Fansubbers acknowledge their presence as producers and distributors of existing work. Fans as creators of their own work

engage in the same industry practices such as merchandising, commissioning artwork, and selling *doujinshi*—self-published works, usually manga in conventions around the world. Although separated into Artists’ Alleys in America, Japan hosts ‘Comiket Tokyo,’ with the primary focus of selling *doujinshi* artwork, stories, and other merchandise. In both areas, amateur convention space and company promotional and commercial space converge. Conventions have become amalgam of professional fans and fans as professionals. Fans are not limited to the *doujinshi* market. “Many in the anime industry used to be amateur fans themselves and continue to be fans of the products they distribute” (Eng 174). Caring for oneself as a fan does solely imply caring for the fandom as an outsider, but extends beyond consumer and community fan discourse, but to the production “world” of anime/manga.

Fans as Creators

Manga/anime are not just serialized into multiple volumes, many are adapted and reimagined beyond their original medium of serialization. Popular manga series *Deathnote* followed Light Yagami’s quest to reshape the world through his *Deathnote*, a book that kills people by writing their name. His murders of death row inmates attracts the attention of world-renowned detective named L. Trapped in a game of cat and mouse, “Kira”—Light’s alter ego—finally bests L, killing him mid series. Fans mourned L’s death, but continued reading. *Deathnote* grew in popularity, adapted not only into an anime series, but also modified into two live action movies. The movies ended with L’s death and resurrection, using the same *Deathnote* that

bested him in the manga to capture Light in the movie. From that movie, an additional novel titled *L: Change the World* depicted his last 23 days. The industry creators and the fans form a “matrix of fan cultures” surrounding the various by-products of one manga’s success (Bryce and Davis 6). Manga as an interconnected medium demands an interconnected following.

Fans as fan artists regularly recreate their favorite manga, posting to sites such as Pixiv and Deviant Art to share their creations with other creators. Fan fiction writers regularly rewrite the story, resurrecting fallen characters or recreating entire universes with the same characters, known as “AU” or alternative universe. Character resurrection sounds strangely familiar. L rose from the manga grave to live action and light novel star in the same way fan creators adapt and rework plots. Do fans emulate the industry or does the industry emulate the fans? Surrounded by this interconnected industry environment, fans interconnect unconnected series and characters in “cross-overs.” Fans create fan-works for self-production and distribution, known as *doujinshi* or fan-comics. Eventually, fans become the creators that create fans through commercial works. In essence, both are true.

Similar to fansubbers and scanlaters, *Doujinshi* creators alter work to conform to their tastes. Comiket is a non-profit event, specifically for the sell and purchase of these fan-created works known as *doujinshi*. Comiket is the largest fan-run and fan-centric event in the world, designed to draw “attention, circulation, collection and preservation” of *doujinshi* in Japan (Lamerichs 160). American equivalents, referred to as Artists’ Alleys, are smaller subsections of fan conventions that center on connecting fans to other fans and fans to industry members. *Doujinshi*

artists frequent Comiket to promote their work, selling everything from comics to yoga tutorials (Lamerichs 161). Held twice a year, this event brings in a half-million attendees every edition, where an estimated 700 individuals participating in artist groups—‘circles’—to showcase their fan creations. Although Comiket emphasizes they are an alternative venue for comic artists, *doujinshi* are unlikely to make living from selling solely at Comiket.

FanHackers, a subset of the Organization for Transformative Works, pulled a catalog survey from Comiket 81, which reported that 66-67% of *doujinshi* attending Comiket in 2011 lost between 0¥ and 50000¥ or over 50000¥. Even if these spaces are meant as a self-publishing environment, Comiket and Artists Alley are more for self-promotion than economic gain. Outside of Comiket, Mandarake, a second-hand bookshop, sells new and used manga texts, including a section for *doujinshi* (Lamarichs 159). For others, their limited print runs for *doujinshi* perpetuates their exclusivity, with rare comics sometimes selling online for ten-times the original offline price (Lamerichs 159). In the United States, selling *doujinshi* in this manner infringes copyright; but in Japan, these *doujinshi* markets open new fan commercial environments that blur the line between professional creator and fan creator.

Doujinshi creators catering to the tastes of other fans are both financially intelligent, and receptive to readers’ tastes and tolerances. The same fans creating popular *doujinshi* are scouted as prime talent for Japanese manga publishers (Bryce and Davis 6). Even if produced for self-enjoyment, *doujinshi* creators highlight the transposition of fan identity into this professional identity. Popular manga artists Clamp and Rumiko Takahashi were scouted at Comiket. Rising from their popularity

in *doujinshi* markets, they went on to publish several well-known commercial works (Bryce and Davis 6). Other artists become popular online and get invited to produce work in *doujin* groups as an amateur, and even after being scouted and securing employment as a professional artist, continue to partake in *doujin* activities. Even before thinking of attending Comiket, younger artists can submit to Japanese magazine publishers through contexts. Developing art skills in an established community of friend groups, peer-to-peer interactions directly transfer to eventually obtaining professional status for manga fans still in high school or university (Ingulsrud and Allen 120). Winners are recommended by the publisher, gaining opportunities for apprenticeships, and eventually hope to become a *mangaka*—manga creator—themselves. Fan creators create for themselves, and share that work with others of equal or better skill to further hone their skills. Despite the current overwhelming tilt on the fan as a social and interaction between individual fans, art is created for the self, even as it needs a community to reaffirm it.

Fans as creators are fans and artists, and writers, and musicians. The care of the self and performing the identity of the self onto the fan creation community is returned to the self as a fan, as a creator, and in the best of cases as both. Art Jams are social circles where fan artists draw favorite or original characters in manga/anime series settings. Deviant Art and Pixiv simulate an Art Jam experience online where artists give feedback through comments and critiques on uploaded artwork. Fans produce fan creations, yet instead of emulating the source material to perfection, fan creators regularly stray from the original “canon” storyline for the promotion of the fandom’s whims instead. Fan creators establishing pair

complimentary characters in relationships as friends, lovers, and enemies on paper, like cosplayers through performance. Participating in fan creation habits establishes work practices easily translatable to professional creative work environments. As fans creators, *doujinshi* continually return to the self with each subjective interpretation of their work, which enables the fan creator to get better by motivating a return to the self.

Self-actualized identities must be centered to feel comfortable challenging themselves in the first place. For Foucault, this challenge comes from questioning the self, evaluating the self against the outside, and eventually returning to the self as a changed and centered individual. This element of conversion plays out as fan creators acknowledge where they need to get better, and how to do that. “Taking stock of one’s own ignorance and by deciding precisely to care about the self, to care of the self” is the second stage in Foucault’s conversion to the self (209). Fan creators seek out those better than them to get better than they currently are. Pedagogical mentors challenge them to become better than themselves, creating a dissonance between skill and self, which necessitates evaluation of their own work, reverting the creator back to themselves as another version, a stronger version, of their previous self as a fan creator. Real life example, Dai Sato, is a Japanese anime writer for numerous series, including *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, *Cowboy Bebop*, *Samurai Champloo*, *Eureka Seven*, and most recently *Space Dandy*. As a young fan creator, he quickly figured out he couldn’t draw; but his doodles in his schoolbooks became mini-stories. His first experience writing a fully fleshed out story was an origin story for his favorite Western hero, Obi-Wan Kenobi (Sato). Sato

continued writing more *Star Wars* spin-offs in his spare time, chronicling Han Solo's adventures through space with Leia. Sato began writing script after script for various companies. Turned down by some, accepted by others, Sato constantly sought out advice and help from the companies that rejected his scripts. For his debut anime, Dai Sato was assigned an anime that combined spaceships and gun slinging protagonists. During a block of writing, he remembered his *doujin* works. He pulled ideas from his old stories, expanded upon them, and funneled them into the anime. The popular anime series *Cowboy Bebop* was born (Sato).

The process for fan artists and writers in America to establish themselves in the industry remains the same; fans must send in samples of work that parallels the brand of the particular comic they want to work on. American comic artists show art samples to American publishing companies. Christopher Jones, lead artist behind *Young Justice* started his career as an American "*doujin*," regularly submitting work to DC and Marvel comics before getting work at the company, DC (Jones). Still a huge fan of Batman, he regularly submits samples of his work to work on their series as contract labor. Even as industry professionals, creators of fan works are perpetual fans of those works. Advancing towards a goal of becoming an industry professional, they advanced towards their selves as fans. Foucault argues: "you must advance towards yourself as you would advance towards an end. This is not merely a movement of the eyes [looking], but a movement of the whole being [doing], which must be towards the self as the sole objective" (213). Fans create not just to affirm themselves, using the practice of fan creation as a goal towards themselves. Achieving professional status can legitimize their goal and affirm themselves as fans

for creators for a wider audience, but their practice and aim continues to be fixed upon themselves. Looking at this idea of reflection of the self on larger professional-fan conglomerate, the fan phenomenon surrounding the digital voice software known as “Vocaloid” parallels fan creation activities using different words to identify a similar process.

Vocaloid software uses recorded human voices on MIDI-based notes, allowing musicians to input lyrics for the vocaloid to sing. With vocaloid software, musicians can record their own musical instruments and song lyrics, without having to find a vocalist or band to perform them. With Zero-G’s release of Leon, Lola, and Miriam as the first vocaloid trio in 2004, vocaloid was known as a software, but never took off as pop culture phenomenon. Three years later Yamaha developed vocaloid synthesizers of their own, and partnering with Crypton Future Media released a brand new, the world’s first “International Diva” named Miku Hatsune. Miku Hatsune was a marketing tactic perceived as a brand strategy that didn’t end as box art. Crypton did not revolutionize vocaloid software; they opened up their software and their brand to the fan community. Japan’s leniency on copyright allowed Crypton to encourage derivative works of Miku’s image online at <<www.crypton.co.jp/mp/pages/prod/vocaloid/cv01_us.jsp> and a community exchange for Miku’s amateur created songs on <piapro.jp> (Collin 36). Although vocaloid software had already been used, Miku erupted to the fan scene not because she was software, but because she was a template. Crypton’s digital environment gave Miku’s fans a place to directly interact with one another. These interactions facilitated the individual creators’ practices on creating with Miku’s software. For those that didn’t purchase

the software, or weren't musicians, they drew fan art for others' songs, albums, and eventually videos. Miku succeeded where Miriam did not, because she wasn't a brand or box image. She was a discourse fans could make theirs. Identifying with themselves as they created songs, gained mentors and followers as fan creators of music and art, these fans perpetuated the growth of Miku into a chart-topping sensation in 2010 (Collins 36). Miku Hatsune's success led to subsequent vocaloid software being released, each with a unique character design fueling the *doujin* creators perpetuating the vocaloid fandom. Miku continues to bring value to fans as an image to redefine—a projection of their creative work. *Doujin* creators as artists and music groups also blur the line between industry forces and fan participants. Supercell, a popular vocaloid mixing user-collective online signed to Sony Music Entertainment Japan. RedJuice999, a popular Miku fan artist on DeviantArt, now creates concept designs for Japan's figure company Figma. He continues to participate *doujin* circles at Comiket. His professional status naturally continues his care for himself as a fan creator. Fan activities between anime, manga, and vocaloid fall alongside each other in a greater tandem. The conversion of many only requires the conversion of oneself. Fans as producers become initiators of the very discourse that initiated them. Living for themselves as fans begins to parallel the life these fans begin to live. Reaching out beyond the occasional figure purchase to designing the figurines for others to purchases, fans identify with themselves, with each other, and through this identification do not just perpetuate their own fandom and actions, but impact the larger anime/manga discourse.

Conclusion

Foucault's *Hermeneutics of the Self* sheds an interesting light on the process of becoming a fan. Rather than industry professionals serving corporate interests and portraying subliminal messages, fans at the industry level create the manga and anime that inspire future fans to create. Although constructed for consumption, the cycle of becoming oneself as fan relies more on interacting within the community than the text or associated merchandise. Caring for oneself is caring for this community, contributions to fansubbing groups and scanlating websites are a form of self-gratification. With high views and mentorship, self-actualization reaffirms the fans' status, raising their social capital in the community wherein they take on the mentorship roles for those now in need of their assistance. Subjectivity becomes a ritualized habit for fans that mirrors the fandom, living for oneself as living for one's fandom.

Manga/anime discourse is only a smaller part of the general fan community. As mentioned in *Fans as Creators*, Vocaloid fandom has emerged from similar practices of the manga/anime fandom. This illustrates the larger implications for studying fan culture through Foucault's caring for oneself. We as people will interact within a variety of discourse that are neither similar nor compliment one another. Yet, by centering on ourselves, we can perform the various roles within those communities simultaneously like a top spinning on an axis. Becoming the industry professionals in our respective fields, which fuel more "fans" of those fields, and

continuing a cycle that does not divide production and consumption, but connects them.

Like Akihabara, fan conventions become conversion points to connect with fans and convert back to the self an affirmed fandom. Establishing fandom in the self allows fans to reach out and explore themselves as community fans. Foucault's subjectivity necessitates the need for one in order to have the other. Networked cultures facilitate this process and reveal how those interactions sustain it in the first place. Foucault's argument as a human identity argument extends beyond an anime/manga fan community and into a general pop culture community: how do people interact with people, especially escalated through the Internet, to change media trends, historical politics, and globalized mentalities?

Fans continue being fans. People continue being people. Through studying fan identity as a cycle, we study a smaller sample of general human identity. Fan identity creates and is created by a suitable pro-fan environment. Foucault's circular theory of subjectivity in self-identity formation is not exclusive to the manga fandom. Its universality only heightens the validity for using Foucault as a theoretical framework in future comics' studies. Fans can perpetually perpetuate their discourse simply by identifying as fans.

WORKS CITED

- Bainbridge, Jason and Craig Noris. "Hybrid Manga: Implications for the Global Knowledge Economy." Johnson-Woods, Toni, ed. *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2010: 235-252
- Bryce, Dr. Mio and Mr. Jason Davis. "Manga/Anime Media Mix: Scholarship in a Post-Modern Global Community." *CAESS: Conference Scholarship and Community*. University of Western Sydney, 2006: 1-10.
- Collins, Nick. "Trading Faures: Virtual Machines and Machine Ethics." *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol 21, *Beyond Notation: Communicating Music*. MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2011: 35-39
- Eng, Lawrence. "Anime and Manga Fandom as Networked Culture." Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Izumi Tsuki. *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012: 149-178
- Foucault, Michel. "Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of Parrhesia." University of California Berkley. Oct. – Nov. 1983.
- "How Much Money Do *Doujinshi* Creators Actually Make? Some Statistics From Comiket." *Fanhackers*. Organization for Transformative Works, Online: 10 June 2012. <<http://fanhackers.transformativeworks.org/2012/06/how-much-money-do-doujinshi-creators-actually-make-some-statistics-from-comiket/>>

- Ingulsrud, John E and Kate Allen. *Reading Japan Cool: Patterns of Manga Literacy and Discourse*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009.
- Ito, Mizuko. "Contributors versus Leechers: Fansubbing Ethics and a Hybrid Public Culture." Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Izumi Tsuki. *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012: 179-203
- Jones, Christopher. "Getting Started in Comic Art." Anime Detour. Hilton Doubletree, Bloomington, MN. 6 April 2014. Panel.
- Lamerichs, Nicolle. "The Cultural Dynamic of Doujinshi and Cosplay: Local Fandom in Japan, the United States, and Europe." *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies, Vol. 10, Issue 1*. Maastricht University, Netherlands, May 2013: 154-176
- Matsui, Takeshi. "The Diffusion of Foreign Cultural Products: The Case Analysis of Japanese Comics (manga) Market in the US." *Working Paper Series*. Princeton University, Spring 2009: 1-28
- Morikawa, Kaichiro. "Otaku and the City: The Rebirth of Akihabara." Trns. Kaichiro Morikawa. Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Izumi Tsuki. *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012:
- Rampart, James. "The Manga Polysystem: What Fans Want, Fans Get." Johnson-Woods, Toni, ed. *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2010: 221-232

Sato, Dai. "Question and Answer with Dai Sato." Anime Detour. Hilton Doubletree,
Bloomington, MN. 6 April 2014. Panel.