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Published on H-Japan (November, 2022)

Commissioned by Martha Chaiklin

From the first scholarly endeavors, analyzing manga (Japanese comics) has been, in some sense, about analyzing Otherness. Yoshiko Okuyama goes one step further and brings this loaded concept to the forefront with a nuanced and complex exploration of a particular and underscrutinized subject—that of disability—in a quest for education and inclusion. With *Reframing Disability in Manga*, Okuyama explores representations of the five conditions classified as disability or shōgai in Japan: deafness, physical disability, visual impairment, autism spectrum disorder, and gender identity disorder, and the narratives about such characters in a very popular medium in order to surface embedded biases and show “that carefully selected manga can teach us about disability from an unconventional perspective” (p. xvi).

This careful use of concepts, theories, and definitions is thoroughly explored in part 1 of the volume, titled “Representation of Disability: Past and Present Perspectives.” Chapter 1, “Theorizing Disability,” looks at historical myths and folkloric references to disability in Japan as a metaphor for bringing good luck (fukugo) or as impurity (kegare), arriving at the contemporary major models of disability in Japanese society: medical (disability as illness with treatment) and social (disability as socially structured). The author then further explains connected terms such as “neurodi-
versity,” “abjection,” and “markedness” in a brief but thorough literature review, so as to lay the grounds for the relationship between definitions of disability and the perceptions and even prejudices that they create, support, or mask. A highlight here is the analysis of the “supercrip” trope—the “superhuman” Paralympic athlete, for instance, as a character inherently removed from reality that is subject to “embedded ableism” (p. 17).

Chapter 2 highlights the relationship between media and disability, especially in film and comics, both in Japan but also with reference to critical scholarship and media productions from North America and Australia. Using the works of Beth Haller, Katie Ellis and Gerard Goggin, and Patrick Hopkins, to name but a few, Okuyama explains the most common stereotypes of disabled characters as pitiable, evil, objects of violence, or victorious against all odds. With such definitions and representations in mind, Okuyama proceeds to analyze the fifteen manga titles in the second part of the volume, inspiring title “Reframing Disability in the Imagined World of Manga.”

What follows in the next five chapters is an interesting approach in terms of methodology, as the author blends legal, social, and medical facts from Japan and international organizations dedicated to the specific disability under scrutiny with a close reading of each manga title as an overview of characters, their realistic circumstances, and manga symbolism. This is then reinforced by observations taken from interviews to better understand the sociocultural elements and the personal stories informing each manga.

As there are many thought-provoking aspects that Okuyama brings to light, I will further highlight a selection with the caveat that I found those to be particularly well articulated but by no means exhaustive. One particular analysis follows the wheelchair trope and hypermasculinity in Inoue Takehiko’s Real manga series, where one of the characters suffers an orthopedic impairment. The author manages to critically explore tropes of sports manga (and sports narratives in popular culture), such as overconfidence, arrogance, and power, in connection to the supercrip and other such representations in North American films and comics, like X-Men’s Charles Xavier. It is a powerful way to highlight “invisible” biases pertaining to media-defined masculinity and the harsh realities of a physical disability. This pattern of choosing stories of transformation and real, personal tragedies in contrast to a “superhuman” or “glamorous” cultural construct becomes prevalent throughout the chapters and manages to achieve the author’s intent of a more realistic rendition and understanding of these people’s realities.

Another such example is bringing awareness to degrees of visual impairment with the analysis of The Vision Field of Affection by Sone Fumiko or to “invisible” disabilities such as Yamaguchi Kako’s Can I Quit Being a Mom? depicting a daughter with autism. By selecting works that portray real life, usually termed “slice of life” as a manga/anime broader genre, Okuyama manages to pinpoint the spectrums of disability and what that entails on a day-to-day basis—aspects that are juxtaposed with talks of outdated psychological models or laws. For instance, autism is further analyzed in correlation with the 1970s “refrigerator mother” hypothesis, which implied that cold, indifferent mothers caused it, while blindness is explored in couples of sighted person/visually impaired person. Taking this route of content analysis is followed by context analysis, the author not only offers a selection of realistic narratives but a means to uncover the public policies and their historical evolution to put the reader in an educated position. I believe this is the most compelling approach to getting the point across to a diverse audience.

One final aspect is the complex discussion on being deaf versus being hard of hearing and the manga Someone Else Also Feels Lonely by Yoshimoto Koji. This ties into the above-mentioned
aspect of degrees of disability but also continues the conversation about identity, belonging, and discrimination: “Being unable to sign fluently and identify culturally with the Deaf community, they typically find themselves part of neither the hearing nor the deaf population” (p. 61). Discussing a manga based on interviews with people with hearing impairments and the focus on the hard-of-hearing disability in such terms is a productive line of research, further conceptualizing what a minority is and how homogenizing experiences can be harmful.

Overall, *Reframing Disability in Manga* is a wide-ranging read that transcends the specificity of anime and manga studies. If there is one aspect that I would criticize, it is that the manga analysis would have been richer with more emphasis on the particularities of the medium and references to manga-specific scenes and visual patterns that sustain the realistic representation of characters with disabilities or characters usually stigmatized and discriminated against on such grounds. But it nevertheless makes a strong argument for manga as a potential agent of change and medium for raising awareness and educating various audiences in a more authentic and empathetic way. For scholars dealing with social activism, media representations, or diversity and inclusion, it is a very fruitful introduction to the Japanese context. For the broader subject of Japanese popular culture research, it is a most needed addition.

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