and thoughtful history of this multifaceted
and successful businesswoman. Gerber
portrays Handler as someone who could
rise above corporate adversity. There are
some areas in the book, though, where the
mix of business history and Handler’s his-
tory is less well organized. And in some in-
stances, the author seems too sympathetic
to Handler’s shady business dealings. Some
readers might argue that Gerber portrays
Handler in a light similar to Handler’s own
autobiography. Gerber does an excellent
job, however, of drawing from interviews
conducted by Fern Field for a film that was
never produced, and the author is thought-
ful in her explanation of Handler’s decision
not to include the details of Ken’s illness in
her autobiography.

*Barbie and Ruth* contributes to the
history of business, of women, and of
technology by looking at one woman’s
rise up the corporate ladder long before
many had such opportunities. The world’s
most iconic doll was not the only woman
to leave an imprint in the toy industry and
on corporate America.

—Susan Asbury, Elizabethtown, PA

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**The Japanification of Children’s Popular Culture: From Godzilla to Miyazaki**

*Mark I. West, ed.*


This collection of nineteen essays provides
a helpful overview of several media—live-
action films, manga (graphic novels), video
games, and film and television *anime*
(animation)—including such related com-
mercial products as collectors’ cards and
Hello Kitty items and their appearances in
Japan and the United States. Interspersed
throughout are some anecdotal essays re-
lating experiences with Japanese media,
and within the analytical pieces, several
authors confess to being fans themselves
as children and as adults.

A number of the pieces discuss the
deep interplay between Japanese and U.S.
texts. A brief article by Dale Pike on the
film *Gojira* (1954) and its transformation
to *Godzilla* (1956) for theatrical release
in the United States opens the book. The
essay provides some concise background
and acts as a teaser for what is to come. In
“The Allure of Anthropomorphism in
Manga and Anime,” Fred Patten notes the
intercultural popularity of talking animals
and argues postwar Japanese popular cul-
ture was particularly influenced by U.S.
products. Patten describes several shows
initiated by Japanese artists and compa-
nies that aired on American television. In
one case, artist Osamu Tezuka animated
*Jungle Emperor* for NBC, making numer-
ous changes requested by the network. The
series aired to U. S. audiences as *Kimba the
White Lion* without notice of its Japanese
manga origins. Jan Susina’s jam-packed
article takes a close look at many episodes
of *Rugrats*, noting that the Reptar and Cyn-
thia characters are parodies of Godzilla
and Barbie, repackaged via Japan. In “Early
Japanese Animation in the United States:
Changing *Tetsuwan Atomu* to *Astro Boy*,”
Brian Ruh meticulously demonstrates that,
from its very beginnings, Japanese anime
often considered the export market. The
localization of the second season of *Tet-
suwan Atomu* for the U.S. market served
as a precursor for the anime that followed, which partly counters the argument that Japanese products airing in the United States are simply diluted.

Several essays investigate the variety of objects produced or licensed by Japanese corporations. Kathy Merlock Jackson describes the phenomenal popularity in the United States of Hello Kitty, a character designed and licensed by Sanrio Corporation beginning in 1974. She also briefly examines kawaii (cute) culture, which she states is pervasive for adults of both genders in Japan. Jackson also suggests American and Japanese children are tutored in consumerism through Sanrio products which make them feel mature because they can themselves buy inexpensively priced Hello Kitty items. I might add that this consumption behavior is reinforced by the cheapening of labor in the Asian countries where the Sanrio items are actually made. Two essays on Pokemon culture analyze the popular, parental, and educator responses to the cards, television series, video games, and the marketer’s “Gotta catch ‘em all” slogan and philosophy. Cary Elza explores the ways children can become experts and exclude adults in the Pokemon realm. Relying on the theories of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, Mark Pizzato writes, “Given the virtual realities and interactive demands of postmodern life, with its many mirror stages and screens, such training of wild monsters in the child’s pocket becomes a valuable learning tool” (p. 82). Arguing that Pokemon culture may reinforce aggression, capitalism, and consumerism, Pizzato nonetheless concludes there are educational benefits of kids playing with Pokemon, including practice in math, puzzle-solving, and reading.

A pair of articles focuses on video games. Joe Wezorek provides an overview of games from 1980 to the early 2000s in “Japanese Dominance of the Video-Game Industry and the Future of Interactive Media.” Wezorek believes Japanese game-designing studios consistently demonstrate more willingness to explore and innovate, whereas American studios simply take a blockbuster mentality borrowed from the film industry. His argument may well describe U.S. studios, which are averse to pushing genre and gender boundaries, but it does not adequately describe current independent game developers, who distribute their works without help from large publishers (using, for example, Valve’s Steam Web site). Derek A. Burrill analyzes design elements and modes of play in video games marketed for children and for adults, using Jet Set Radio (2001 Sega) as a prime example for transforming young players into “digital transnational citizen(s)” (p. 116).

“The anxieties and desires produced and reproduced in video games mark cultural shifts as technological objects par excellence” (p. 111), writes Burrill as he explores two design styles: the first is influenced by Tezuka, with characteristics such as “soft, bright, cute, child, nature, feminine.” The second is influenced by Techno style and includes “hard, dark, sleek, adult, technology, masculine” characteristics (p. 110). According to Burrill, Jet Set Radio melds these two styles.

Some chapters study anime fans. Brent Allison interviews and discusses twelve fans aged thirteen to eighteen. One, he notes, is African American, and the remaining eleven are Caucasians, which, he states, fairly accurately represents the anime fan base in America. Antonia Levi
brieﬂy discusses the genre called yaoi in North America, i.e. gay male romances usually written by women and largely read by girls and women. Levi then analyzes her 2003 online survey of yaoi, which gathered responses from 370 women, 43 men, and 18 people who identiﬁed themselves as other (transgender). In addition, Levi also examines the attempts of American television to erase homosexual couples in anime, so that, in the case of Sailor Moon, a lesbian couple became close cousins and one male character in a gay couple was dubbed over in English by a woman. Without formerly interviewing fans but by talking with his students, Hiroaki Hatayama also tries to determine why people in the United States ﬁnd manga and anime so appealing. Hatayama cites scholars who ﬁnd great variety, depth, and characterization in manga and anime. He argues that because the Japanese Ministry of Education requires teachers to help develop a student’s individual character, manga and anime are meant to serve children as role models.

Perhaps in response to charges that anime is too violent and too sexualized, one article concludes that providing “authentic” Japanese texts is an unalloyed good and that editing or dubbing them are problematic. Analyzing the anime series Dragon Ball and Dragon Ball Z (1986–1996), Rieko Okuhara examines differences between the Japanese and U.S. broadcast versions. Japanese broadcasts include the cultural norms regarding sexuality and violence, but U.S. studios and networks are more apt to “censor” sexuality and edit images and dialogue accordingly. Okuhara’s concludes “American children are smart enough to digest Japanese animation programs” (p. 207), which assumes that changes are made in order to censor content. In a chapter that meticulously shows how readers with different cultural backgrounds may interpret the same work, Nicole Farrell examines the visual grammar of the anime series Inu Yasha and discusses cultural content from the American viewers’ point of view (who the author assumes are not aware of certain Japanese cultural ﬁgures and myths). Some American viewers of Japanese descent or students of Japanese culture may understand the tropes the anime references. Exploring the reasons children in the United States enjoy Japanese products, Farrell argues anime offers more complexity than American cartoons. Characters in Japanese anime stories, for example, more frequently change rather than remain static as many of the American-made characters do.

Many of the articles mention what kids learn through their interactions with the texts, and a couple of the essays explicitly address the question. Discussing the shojo (girl’s) manga Cardcaptor Sakura, created by four women artists, Bill Ellis explains that its incorporation of the Western fairy tale “The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods” in a key episode also resonates with Japanese audiences familiar with a similar Japanese folktale. Ellis argues that adolescent girls learn from Cardcaptor Sakura to “face puberty with courage and acceptance of their own sexual identity” (p. 265). In “Anima and Anime: Environmental Perspectives and New Frontiers in Princess Mononoke and Spirited Away,” Nathalie op de Beeck champions Hayao Miyazaki’s ﬁlms because they “do not deny that young viewers have hard ethical decisions ahead of them” (p. 275). Analyzing the plots, she ﬁnds these two ﬁlms “depict the horror
and tragedy of human progress and the easy violence done to new generations of children who incorporate and perpetuate hostile economies. But these films also imply and politicize hope” (p. 280).

As a whole, the book effectively illustrates often mutually beneficial networks connecting Japanese and American products from the 1950s to the early 2000s. It provides helpful introductions to manga, film and television anime, and video games; discusses how they are related; analyzes a variety of the more popular series; and may be of special interest to educators.

—Greta A. Niu, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY