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SHIFTING GROUND AND SHIFTING BORDERS IN THE GERMAN-SPEAKING MANGASCAPE

PAUL M. MALONE

In 2007 I gave a conference paper in Lambrecht, Germany, entitled “Mangascape Germany: Comics as Intercultural Neutral Ground.” This was revised and published in early 2010 as a chapter in the book *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures*.¹ My argument, and the source of my original title, was that the huge popularity of Japanese manga in Germany (and, by extension, in Austria) had prompted the major German comics companies not only to corner the market for imported and translated manga, but also to leverage the extremely participatory nature of manga fandom to recruit and cultivate manga artists, or *mangaka*, closer to home. This investment in time and money was producing a small but vital generation of artists, largely young women and to a surprising degree first- or second-generation immigrants from Eastern Europe or Asia, who were given virtually unprecedented opportunities to publish

1 Paul M. Malone: “Mangascape Germany: Comics as Intercultural Neutral Ground.” In: *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures: Essays on the Interplay of Media, Disciplines and International Perspectives*. Ed. Mark Berninger, Jochen Ecke, and Gideon Haberkorn. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2010. Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy 22, pp. 223-34.

their work—within the restraints of a certain level of fidelity to the formal conventions of manga, rather than to those of Western comics: a form of ersatz “authenticity,” also signalled in the very insistence upon using the Japanese term *mangaka* to describe these artists.

For the most part, these artists were happy to embrace these restraints—manga, after all, was what they wanted to draw. Moreover, this ideal of “authenticity” was also fruitful, in that it created a kind of virtual community that I dubbed the “mangascape,” inspired by Arjun Appadurai’s description of spaces where “cultural material may be seen to be moving across national boundaries.”² In the German mangascape, the overriding importance of this rather dubious formal authenticity de-emphasizes the actual ethnicity of the mangaka, thus giving rise to “an exotic but neutral meeting place for artists of differing backgrounds to contribute to a field that has become ‘multicultural’ beyond the simple opposition of Germany and Japan” (Malone, “Mangascape,” p. 232). In what follows, I attempt to bring my three-year-old observations up to date.

The title of the Goethe-Institut’s new exhibition, “Comics, Manga & Co.: Die neue deutsche Comic-Kultur/ The New Culture of German Comics,” would seem to imply that comics and manga are something like equal partners in the current German comics scene. When journalist Andreas Platthaus writes the introduction for the accompanying catalogue, however, he seems to be somewhat uncertain what to do with manga. This is in part because Platthaus

2 Arjun Appadurai: *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. P. 33.

locates the resurgence of German comics—here meaning specifically comics *from Germany*—in the reunification twenty years ago: “Dass Deutschland wieder auf der Weltkarte der Comics verzeichnet ist, verdankt sich der Vereinigung von Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD) und Deutscher Demokratischer Republik (DDR). Und es ist der ostdeutsche Landesteil gewesen, der den wichtigeren Anteil an dieser Rückkehr hatte, zumindest wenn man das Augenmerk auf ästhetische Aspekte richtet statt auf rein ökonomische.”³ This last is an important distinction. And this, of course, is exactly what Platthaus is doing; he continues,

Natürlich gab es auch vor 1990 schon einzelne deutsche Comic-Zeichner und -Zeichnerinnen, die anerkannt waren, aber egal, ob man Matthias Schultheiss nennt oder Ralf König, wenn es um international beachtete Künstler geht, ob Walter Moers oder Rötger Feldmann alias Brösel, wenn man rein einheimische Erfolgsgeschichten hören will, oder ob mit Hannes Hegen und Rolf Kauka die 1950er- und 1960er-Jahre angesprochen werden—sie alle übernahmen längst etablierte Stil- und Erzählformen aus anderen Ländern, seien dies nun Einflüsse des in den 1950er Jahren gegründeten amerikanischen Comicsatiremagazins Mad, von Walt Disney, aus Frankreich oder aus dem amerikanischen Underground. Deutsche Bildergeschichten gab es zwar bereits von Wilhelm Busch oder e. o. plauen, eigentlich Erich Ohser, der von 1934 bis 1937 die Comicserie Vater und Sohn zeichnete. Aber erst die Comic-Avant-garde ab 1990 kann man wieder als eigenständig bezeichnen. (Platthaus, “Der deutsche Comic,” p. 4)

Platthaus is constructing two narratives here: one, perhaps coincidental though no less interesting for all that, seems to be conflating German comics independence, as the “wieder” in the final phrase implies, with German territorial and political unity—not in any reactionary sense, since in this account it is exactly the academically trained members of

3 Andreas Platthaus: “Der deutsche Comic ist wieder da: Zeichner/innen und Tendenzen der letzten zwanzig Jahre.” In: *Comics, Manga & Co.: Die neue deutsche Comic-Kultur/The New Culture of German Comics*. Ed. Eva Maria Schmitt and Matthias Schneider. Munich: Goethe-Institut, 2010. Pp. 4-6; here: p. 4.

former East Berlin collectives who, thanks to reunification, have played a major role in the aesthetic revivification of German comics: “Sie fertigten bevorzugt Comics an, auch wenn sie ihr Auskommen nur dank anderer grafischer Arbeit fanden. Diese Unabhängigkeit vom finanziellen Ertrag der Bildergeschichten ermöglichte jedoch Experimente, die etablierte west-deutsche Comic-Zeichner/innen gar nicht erst wagten, um ihren kommerziellen Erfolg nicht zu gefährden” (Platthaus, “Der deutsche Comic,” p. 4).

The other narrative, however, certainly deliberate, is based on what Ole Frahm, in reference to a similar essay written ten years earlier, calls the “Dialektik der Comic-Geschichte.”⁴ According to Frahm, Christian Gasser, writing the introductory essay to another catalogue, constructs a “hegelianisches Modell” of comics history in three stages: first, a period of early comic strips where aesthetic quality and popularity coexist, ending when syndication turned comics into a true mass medium before World War I; then a long, dark age of mere entertainment; and finally the rise of “independent comics” in the 1960s, when comics became “endlich erwachsen” and thus worthy of serious consideration.⁵ Platthaus, writing ten years later, focusses upon German comics alone rather than taking a broader, global view, and thus the demarcations of the phases have been shifted later accordingly; but in both cases, as Frahm argues regarding Gasser’s essay, “bleibt die Frage, ob sich

4 Ole Frahm: *Die Sprache des Comics*. Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2010. Fundus-Bücher 179, pp. 292-4.

5 Christian Gasser: “Mutantenkosmos: Von Mickey Mouse zu Explomaus.” In: *Mutanten: Die deutschsprachige Comic-Avantgarde der 90er Jahre*. Ed. Christian Gasser. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 1999. Pp. 5-18; here: pp. 6-7. Three artists are represented in both *Mutanten and Comics, Manga & Co.* eleven years later: Martin tom Dieck, Anke Feuchtenberger and Henning Wagenbreth.

der Begriff der Avantgarde, der kleinen hervorstechenden künstlerischen Vorhut, überhaupt auf Comics anwenden lässt” (Frahm, *Sprache*, p. 293). For Frahm, the essential qualities of all comics are self-reflexivity on the one hand, which is often seen as the exclusive territory of the avant-garde; and parody, stereotype, repetition, on the other—hardly qualities that can be reconciled with the high aesthetic ideals of that same avant-garde. Gasser’s, and hence Platthaus’s, use of such a term can only be interpreted by Frahm as a form of salesmanship: “Was Avantgarde ist, ist neu, was neu ist, bleibt interessant. In kapitalistischen Gesellschaften eine einfache und seit 200 Jahren halbwegs verlässliche Gleichung” (Frahm, *Sprache*, p. 294); though, as Herbert Heinzelmann has observed—likewise in reference to Gasser’s essay—such salesmanship is strictly *pro forma*, since at the same time “Avantgarde ist nie und nirgends marktgängig,” and moreover, “ganz ohne Nabelschnüre zum Massenkörper kann kein Medium überleben.”⁶ One need not share Frahm’s opinions in this regard, however, to be uncomfortable with the idea that comics need to transcend commercial considerations and “grow up” into a form of art (and/or literature) before they can become *salonfähig*.⁷

Platthaus’s discomfort, however, seems to lie more in finding something to say about manga and manga artists that can

6 Herbert Heinzelmann: “Das Kaleidoskop der Bilder.” *Schau ins Blau* 13 Sept. 2008. P. 3. URL: <http://www.schauinsblau.de/herbertheinzelmann/essays/das-kaleidoskop-der-bilder.pdf>.

7 This metaphor of comics “growing up” continues to be popular in both English and German; see, for instance, Tanja Rupp. “Comics werden erwachsen.” *Hochschule der Medien Stuttgart* 5 Sept. 2010. URL: http://www.hdm-stuttgart.de/view_news?ident=news20100901150131; and Philipp Rimmel: “Der Comic ist erwachsen geworden: Der neue Trend zur Graphic Novel.” *Aspekte* 26 Nov. 2010. URL: <http://aspekte.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/24/0,1872,8146584,00.html>.

compare to the high aesthetic praise he has already heaped (quite deservedly) upon the independent, avant-garde and academic artists in the exhibition. In the last two of his eleven paragraphs, he allows: “Dagegen haben zahllose deutsche Zeichnerinnen und Zeichner aus der jüngeren Generation ihre Vorbilder in Fernost gefunden: Der seit den 1990er-Jahren anhaltende Siegeszug der Manga hat auch in Deutschland ein ganz neues Segment entstehen lassen, das mittlerweile eigene einheimische Künstlerinnen und Künstler hervorgebracht hat.” He rightly points out that many of these artists are women and that, unlike the avant-garde group, they are not academically trained as artists, and thus less bound by “Schulen” or “Traditionen” (which may also be seen as a rather dubious claim—are the visible influences of Oda Eiichirô or Toriyama Akira, for instance, or the decision to work in a *shônen* or *shôjo* style, not comparable to schools or traditions?). Platthaus concludes: “Die offeneren Strukturen dieser Szene haben dem deutschen Comic gerade im kommerziell-populären Bereich viel frisches Blut zugeführt, und die längst weltweit reüssierte Mangaästhetik sorgt auch dafür, dass die jungen Künstlerinnen und Künstler über die Grenzen hinaus bekannt werden” (Platthaus, “Der deutsche Comic,” 6). And that is a good thing for Platthaus, at least, since it returns us to Germany’s new place in the sun on the “Weltkarte der Comics,” where the essay began.

Note, however, that we have simultaneously descended from sublime “ästhetische Aspekte” to the secular “kommerziell-populärer Bereich”; in the first, longer part of the introduction, the artists are named individually and

given a historical and biographical context, their particular techniques of working are described in detail, and they are placed in relation to one another and to influences both artistic (Expressionism, Holbein, Bosch, Böcklin) and intellectual (Deleuze, Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, Ernst Haeckel). In the second, by contrast, seven mangaka are listed in a breath—chiefly to demonstrate that the group is predominantly made up of women—and no individual information is given about them, nor is anything said about their styles or methods (“manga” apparently subsuming all that in a single word). To be fair, two artists’ works are then singled out for praise, though indeed specifically for *including aspects of German culture*—Christina Plaka’s *Prussian Blue* (the colour was invented in Germany, you see, and mentioning it also permits a brief shout-out to Hokusai) and Anike Hage’s *Gothic Sports* (which is about football; Platthaus, “Der deutsche Comic,” p. 6)—even though Plaka is the only mangaka whose work is actually represented in the exhibition and catalogue, and that by *Prussian Blue*’s later incarnation *Yonen Buzz*. Despite the exhibition’s title, therefore, manga is as much marginalized as celebrated in its composition. This may represent an ideal of comics that can be “sold” *as culture*, but it is hardly an accurate portrayal of the current *deutsche Comic-Kultur* in the broader sense, where manga plays a much more prominent role both economically and, arguably, aesthetically.

To be sure, many of the developments in recent years have not been positive for the manga market. In fact, not only in Europe, but globally, the manga market has been experiencing a lengthy downturn, reflecting hard

times for comics of all kinds. Over two years of widespread economic recession, with its attendant high unemployment or underemployment, have certainly had a negative impact on discretionary spending. As a result, at company after company in the West manga titles have been abandoned in mid-series or cancelled before publication; and smaller companies devoted to nothing but translating and printing manga have gone under—according to received wisdom, because they continued to license and churn out increasingly minor titles, often with little or no advertising, as if their shrinking novelty value alone would be enough to sell them to sharp-eyed young readers who are manga-savvy enough to spot second-rate, derivative material. At the same time, the rise of freely available “scanlations,” or amateur translations of manga made available online, has reportedly taken a massive bite out of professional translators’ and publishers’ business, and all the more given many fans’ reduced budgets.

This, at least, is what can be read on hundreds of comics-related blogs, in English and German as well as in other languages. There is, indeed, a good deal of truth to these statements, particularly in the relatively easily quantifiable terms of publishing and retailing companies downsizing or shutting up shop, and in the number of titles appearing on bookstore shelves, as opposed to what can now be found on the internet for free.⁸ Nonetheless, all

8 See, for example, Calvin Reid: “Tokyopop Revamps; Cuts Titles, Lays Off 39.” *Publishers Weekly* 04 Jun. 2008. URL: <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/book-news/comics/article/43145-viz-media-lays-off-60.html> . Kai-Ming Cha: “Manga Publishers Face Uphill Battle Against Scanlation.” *Publishers Weekly* 29 Jun. 2010. URL: HYPERLINK “<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/book-news/comics/article/43672-manga-publishers-face-uphill-battle-against-scanlations.html>” <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/book-news/comics/article/43672-manga-publishers-face-uphill-battle-against-scanlations.html>.

is not doom and gloom; not even in North America, for example, where this crisis has been most evident: “Despite a serious downturn in the U.S. economy and a 20% drop in sales last year, manga, or Japanese comics, still represents more than \$140 million in sales and continues to be a significant niche in the American comics market.”⁹

On the German-language market, by contrast, even the setbacks of the last two years have not yet undermined the dominance of manga; although Didier Pasamonik begins a recent account of the comics publishing scene in Germany with the dispiriting statement, “les mangas perdent du terrain en Allemagne,” he then goes on to say that “en l’espace de deux ou trois ans, leur part de marché s’est réduite de 75% à 60%.”¹⁰ This may well mark the end of a boom—and booms by their very nature must reach an end—but it would hardly be described under most circumstances as a bust, particularly in comparison with the U.S. market, where during the same time period manga have dropped from only about 30% at the height of their popularity to a mere 20% of the total comics market.¹¹ Why is there such a huge discrepancy between the figures for these two countries?

First of all, it should not be overlooked that due its very different historical, economic and institutional context, the German comics industry reacted to the huge wave of

9 Kai-Ming Cha: “Down, but Not Out: Manga Holds On in a Tough Market.” *Publishers Weekly* 22 Jun. 2010. URL: <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/book-news/comics/article/43495-down-but-not-out-manga-holds-on-in-a-tough-market.html>.

10 Didier Pasamonik: “Erlangen 2010: Le Graphic Novel change la donne sur le marché allemande.” *Mundo B-D* 8 Jun. 2010. URL: <http://www.mundo-bd.fr/?p=2970>.

11 Based on figures given in “U.S. Graphic Novel Sales Down 6%.” *Publishers Weekly* 26 Apr. 2010. URL: <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20100419/42976-u-s-graphic-novel-sales-down-6-.html>.

global interest in manga in a manner very different from most other Western comics producers. After World War II, economic developments and differences in population size in Germany and Austria gave Germany the upper hand in the spheres of book and periodical publishing, and so over the years of the Economic Miracle the comics industry was consolidated as a German, or at the time more specifically *West German*, undertaking. Ironically, the firms that came to dominate this scene were themselves not of German origin: Egmont Ehapa in the 1950s, and later Carlsen in the late 1960s, were both branches of farsighted Danish firms, with their headquarters in Copenhagen. In the earlier decade, Egmont and a number of smaller foreign and locally-run publishers—among the former, the Danish Aller and the French Mondial; among the latter, Alfons Semrau and Gerstmayer—licensed and imported foreign comics from elsewhere in Europe, but also largely from the U.S.; Egmont, for instance, specialized in the lucrative Disney characters.

The outcry against comics as *Schmutz und Schund* that arose in both Germany and Austria in the mid-1950s thus saw comics not only as a bad influence on children, but often as a foreign interloper to boot: there was a strong anti-American aspect to the German protests, and given the economic realities, an additional anti-German element in the Austrian objections.¹² In a further irony, this

12 See, for example, Luke Springman: "Poisoned Hearts, Diseased Minds, and American Pimps: The Language of Censorship in the Schund und Schmutz Debates." In: *The German Quarterly* 68.4 (1995): pp. 408-29; here: p. 414; Goran Jovanovic and Ulrich Koch: "The Comics Debate in Germany: Against Dirt and Rubbish, Pictorial Idiotism, and Cultural Anphabetism." In: *Pulp Demons: International Dimensions of the Postwar Anti-Comics Campaign*. Ed. John A. Lent. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999. Pp. 93-128; here: p. 107; Georg Vasold: "'Zentralproblem Bild': Zur Geschichte der Comics in Österreich." In: *Randzone: Zur Theorie und Archäologie von Massenkultur in Wien 1950-1970*. Ed. Roman Horak, Wolfgang Maderthaner, Siegfried Mattl, Lutz Musner and Otto Penz. Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2004. Reihe Kultur.Wissenschaften 10, pp. 81-102; here: pp. 86, 90; Edith Blaschitz: "Kampf gegen 'Schmutz und Schund':

counter-movement and the resulting institutionalization of both external and self-censorship for German-language comics did far more damage to the small publishers, some of which actually hired local, German artists, than they did to Egmont, whose Disney material was brilliantly translated, and deliberately much de-Americanized in the process, by Erika Fuchs,¹³ but who never attempted to set up local production of Disney stories as other European countries did.

Of the original smaller publishers, only a very few survived into the 1960s, such as the Walter Lehning Verlag, having carved itself a niche in sensationalistic boys' adventure stories published in the handy and dirt-cheap "piccolo" format, a tiny, strip-sized comic imported, like much of Lehning's material, from Italy. The Hannover-based Lehning also hired German artists like Walter Kellermann, Wilhelm "Bob" Heinz and the indefatigable Hansrudi Wäscher, though he paid them as little, and as seldom, as possible. Lehning ultimately fell victim to his own economies, as his cheaply-produced and hurriedly-executed comics became increasingly unattractive to ever more prosperous and discerning young readers; he went bankrupt for the last time in 1967.¹⁴

Platthaus is thus certainly not wrong to write that the

Medienrezeption in Österreich (1945–1965)." In: *Medienbildung in Österreich: Historische und aktuelle Entwicklungen, theoretische Positionen und Medienpraxis*. Ed. Edith Blaschitz and Martin Seibt. Vienna, Berlin, Münster: LIT (2008). Pp. 136–147; here: pp. 179–80.

13 Klaus Bohn: *Das Erika-Fuchs-Buch. Disneys deutsche Übersetzerin von Donald Duck und Micky Maus: Ein modernes Mosaik*. Lüneburg: Verlag Dreidreizehn, 1996. Pp. 53–60.

14 Hartmut Becker: "Die bundesdeutsche Comic-Geschichte seit 1945." In: *Comics*. Ed. Annemarie Verweyen. Führer und Schriften des Rheinischen Freilichtmuseums und Landesmuseums für Volkskunde in Kommern 30. Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag, 1986. Pp. 37–50; here: pp. 43–4.

German comics industry relied overwhelmingly on either copying or simply importing wholesale “längst etablierte Stil- und Erzählformen aus anderen Ländern”; a trend that was further consolidated when Carlsen, which would become the other major publisher, entered the comics market at the end of the 1960s, not without misgivings, by licensing Hergé’s *Tintin* as *Tim und Struppi*—a comic so respectable, in part due to its Franco-Belgian provenance and its status as an institution in the Francophone world, that it was hardly even regarded as a comic—while other publishers (Bildschriftenverlag, Condor) arose to import Marvel superheroes and other properties from America. Egmont, on top of its still wildly successful Disney licenses, also imported and translated French-language comics (chief among them Goscinny and Uderzo’s *Astérix*) and gained the license for *Superman* and the other DC characters. The long-running *bandes dessinées* in particular became *Dauerbrenner* for Egmont and Carlsen, who could afford to keep older albums in these popular series in print alongside the latest volumes (Becker, “Comic-Geschichte,” p. 49). By the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s, there were some domestic stars, but largely in the field of humour-oriented comics, foremost among them Rötger “Brösel” Feldmann, Ralf König and Walter Moers, who barely kept the German-language comics market from being completely swamped by foreign imports (Malone, “Mangascape,” p. 225).¹⁵

The 1980s, however, also saw the arrival of economic problems for the now dangerously overextended German

15 Indeed, Heinzelmann places here the beginnings of “das Wachsen einer nationalen deutschen Comic-Kultur,” since the establishment of the Erlangen Max-und-Moritz Prize in 1984 (Heinzelmann, “Kaleidoskop der Bilder,” p. 1).

comics scene—many well-established series came to an end as their publishers jumped ship (Becker, “Comic-Geschichte,” p. 48). When the further post-*Wende* recession hit soon afterward, even many of the previous bestsellers finally began running out of steam—including *Astérix* and the venerable *Micky Maus*—and the popularity of manga was doubly fuelled by its novelty and the ready availability of free advertising, since the appearance of private television broadcasters throughout Western Europe had entailed the rise of a huge market for relatively cheap programming in order to sell advertising time, and a wave of Japanese anime series swept the continent, bringing in its wake a hunger for the manga upon which the cartoons had been based.¹⁶

In the US and France, arguably the twin capitals of Western comics, there were long-established local comics traditions and large publishers—nowadays frequently arms of diversified conglomerates such as Time Warner or Hachette—that had been founded on exactly those traditions. These large firms showed little interest in manga when the boom began, and so small niche publishers were created, often with the participation of Japanese manga publishers eager to export, to fill the gap. By the time the majors realized how much money there was to be had in manga, it had developed into a separate subculture of both production and consumption, to which the bigger, older firms found little entry, and for which they still show little real enthusiasm or aptitude, particularly in the U.S. By contrast,

¹⁶ See Andreas C. Knigge: *Alles über Comics: Eine Entdeckungsreise von den Höhlenbildern bis zum Manga*. Hamburg: Europa Verlag, 2004. Pp. 69-70; and Paul M. Malone: “The Manga Publishing Scene in Europe.” In: *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*. Ed. Toni Johnson-Woods. New York: Continuum, 2010. Pp. 315-31; here, in particular: pp. 324-6.

in the 1990s the major German publishers, accustomed as they were to serving as colonial outposts of other countries' comics scenes, did not have the same kind of resistance to adopting Japanese manga as had their American and French counterparts—the less tradition, the less baggage. And so, in the new century manga became the lifeline for the mainstream German comics publishers (originally the “big three,” Egmont, Carlsen and the Italian Panini, a relative newcomer in Germany) rather than a niche market relegated to *parvenu* firms, as it had been elsewhere. As a result, where in the U.S., for example, the historical and institutional contexts make it perfectly understandable to see manga as “opposed” to comics in a kind of Darwinian competition, in the German-speaking world it makes more sense to emphasize the continuity of adopting manga as only one of the latest, if no longer the latest, in a series of foreign influences upon an already hybrid and shifting mix.

The difference in the statistics between the two nations—manga occupy 20% of the comics market in the U.S., 60% in Germany—thus in part reflects these very different historical contexts. And so, German bookstores and comics shops still have plenty of manga on the shelves, and often you can still find young readers lounging in the section, even sitting on the floor, reading them; at least, if the bookstores in central Cologne can be considered typical, this is the case. And even in North America, it should be remembered, manga remains a “significant niche” in the market. Western kids have indeed now grown up with manga; if you can remember when nobody knew what

they were, you are already middle-aged or worse.¹⁷ Manga, it seems, are here to stay. But what of specifically *German* manga, by which I mean original German-language (OGL) manga?¹⁸

In the conclusion of the previous essay, I tried to strike a fairly optimistic tone. After all, as Martin Jurgeit would later say in 2008, “Diese Künstler [d.h., die deutschsprachigen Mangaka] haben mit ihren Auflagen und der Leserresonanz die besten wirtschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen, die der Comicnachwuchs in Deutschland je hatte.” Another two years down the road, however, it is certainly fair to ask whether that optimism has been borne out: to examine whether German-language manga have been a viable attempt to establish German-speaking artists on the comics market, and in particular the *export* market; or whether they have rather been merely a flash in the pan, another dead end that leaves Germany and Austria in the awkward position of having a long and notable comics history, and yet no comics tradition.

To begin with a correspondingly optimistic observation: The downturn in the fortunes of manga need not be seen as striking a fatal blow to the publishers’ support of home-grown manga. In 2004, when Germany’s major comics-oriented specialty periodical *Comixene* first devoted sustained attention to the phenomenon of home-grown German-language manga, the article “Es muss nicht immer

17 German mangaka Christina Plaka, born 1983: “Man merkt deutlich, dass meine Generation mit Manga, Anime und Videospiele aus Japan aufgewachsen ist.” In: Böckem, “Sind die süüüß!”: p. 11.

18 The term OGL *manga* is coined here by analogy with *original English-language* or OEL *manga*, a commonly current term on the North American market; and in preference to the infelicitous portmanteau “Germanga,” which misleadingly deemphasizes language in favour of apparent nationality—and is difficult to pronounce to boot.

Japan sein” bore the preface:

Mangas bleiben trotz stagnierender Verkaufszahlen und einigen eingestellten Serien sehr beliebt in diesen unseren Ländern. Und mehr noch! Ehemals abwertend als Modeerscheinung bezeichnet, sind sie inzwischen ein fester Bestandteil der deutschen Comic-Kultur geworden. So ist es kein Wunder, dass sich schon seit einiger Zeit auch deutsche Zeichner dem Phänomen Manga angenommen haben und auf den professionellen Markt vorgestoßen sind. Ein guter Grund, sich einmal näher mit ihnen zu beschäftigen: den deutschen Mangaka—den Germangaka.¹⁹

Thus the decision to train and support German manga artists, even initially, was not simply taken as a means of spending “extra” money during a boom period; rather, like many investments, it was made in still uncertain times and in hopes of contributing to a more secure future. Six years later, the publishers seem indeed to have maintained a surprisingly strong level of commitment. As a result, many of the mangaka I mentioned in my previous essay are still publishing. Anike Hage, for instance, has finally produced the fifth and final volume of *Gothic Sports*, making her the first German mangaka to complete a major story arc of more than three volumes. She has also contributed the concluding story to *Wilhelm Busch und die Folgen*, a tribute volume spearheaded by Ralf König, featuring a number of contemporary comics artists of various styles, including Volker Reiche, Laska, Ulf S. Graupner, DuO, Flix, Martin tom Dieck, Ulf K. and Martin Baltscheit.²⁰ Most recently, Hage has illustrated a graphic adaptation of Gudrun Pausewang’s novel for young readers *Die Wolke*. Her style is well suited to crossing back and forth between manga and Western-style

19 Steffi Holzer, Martin Jurgeit and Sascha Krämer: “Es muss nicht immer Japan sein: Mangas aus deutschen Ländern.” In: *Comixene* 70 (2004). Pp. 6-14; here. p. 6.

20 Anike Hage: “Die feindlichen Nachbarn.” In: Ralf König et al.: *Wilhelm Busch und die Folgen*. Cologne: Egmont, 2007. Pp. 129-44.

comics, and she appears to have been given opportunities to do just that.²¹

Likewise, Christina Plaka has continued to turn out volumes of her rock-band saga *Yonen Buzz*, with the fifth and final volume still yet to appear for Tokyopop next year; progress has been slowed by her studies in Japanology, but she has had time to produce a one-shot volume for Carlsen, the magical romance-fantasy *Herrscher aller Welten*.²² Judith Park has continued to publish regularly, if not frequently, for Carlsen, and to appear at conventions and book fairs; her projected volume *KimChi*, however, which would combine a Korean protagonist and a setting in Hamburg, has fallen behind schedule.²³ Alexandra Völker has had a career similar to those of Park and Plaka, with regular publications, though mostly for Egmont, with one one-shot in Carlsen's small-sized *Chibi Box* series. Völker, too, often appears at conventions and book fairs. Her most recent work is the fantasy *Dark Magic*.²⁴ Carlsen and Egmont seem to be generally happier publishing shorter story arcs, with Park and Völker so far confined to single volumes or, at the most, two-volume series (though Völker's *Paris* is a sequel of sorts to the two volumes of *Catwalk*).

DuO (the team of Dorota Grabarczyck and Olga Andreienko) have also been slowed down by studies,

21 Anike Hage: *Gothic Sports*. 5 vols. Hamburg: Tokyopop, 2006-2010; *Die Wolke: Nach dem Roman von Gudrun Pausewang*. Hamburg: Tokyopop, 2010.

22 Christina Plaka: *Prussian Blue*. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2003; *Yonen Buzz*. 4 vols. to date. Hamburg: Tokyopop, 2005-; *Herrscher aller Welten*. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2009.

23 Judith Park: *Dystopia: Love at Last Sight*. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2003; *Y Square*. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2004; *Y Square Plus*, Hamburg: Carlsen, 2007; *Luxus*. Hamburg: Carlsen Chibi, 2007.

24 Alexandra Völker: *Catwalk*. 2 vols. Cologne: Egmont, 2006; *Make a Date*. Hamburg: Carlsen Chibi, 2007; *Paris*. Cologne: Egmont, 2008; *Dark Magic*. Cologne: Egmont, 2010.

with their series *Indépendent* still left hanging after three years and some dispute as to whether it will be continued; certainly, it does not appear in any of Egmont Manga's promotional material for the foreseeable future. However, they most recently also took part in *Wilhelm Busch und die Folgen*.²⁵ Finally, one of the few male mangaka of note on the German scene, Robert Labs, has returned to manga after attempting a more Western-style comic, *Black Beach*, in 2005. Although he had complained at the time that he had come to find the manga style too restrictive, it may be that he found his contract with Carlsen even more so.²⁶ Since that contract ran out in 2007, Labs has changed publishers, following his former mentor Joachim Kaps from Carlsen to Tokyopop for his horror-fantasy *Domicile*, set in Cologne immediately after World War II.²⁷ With this new project already falling behind schedule, however, it remains to be seen whether the remaining two of the three projected volumes will appear on time, or at all.

Other artists mentioned in the previous essay have been less conspicuous on the manga scene, though Nina Werner, whose *Jibun-Jishun* won the Sondermann Prize for best German manga in 2006, and Gina Wetzel, of *Orcus Star*, have founded careers as illustrators, working in various styles besides manga; Lenka Buschová has concentrated more on her education than on publishing, but portions of a second volume of her *Freaky Angel* have been made

25 DuO: *Mon-Star Attack*. 2 vols. Cologne: Egmont, 2004-5; *Indépendent*. 2 vols. to date. Cologne: Egmont, 2006; "Die beiden Enten und der Frosch." In: König et al., *Wilhelm Busch*, pp. 75-92.

26 Thomas Kögel: "Interview mit Robert Labs." *Comicgate: Unabhängiges Comicmagazin seit 2000* 16 Dec. 2005. URL: <http://www.comicgate.de/interviews/labs-robert.html>.

27 Robert Labs: *Dragic Master*. 2 vols. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2001-5; *Crewman* 3. 2 vols. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2003-4; *Black Beach*. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2005; *Domicile*. Hamburg: Tokyopop, 2009.

available online.²⁸ Detta Zimmermann followed up her charming fantasy series *Isce!* with a one-shot for Carlsen, *Tarito Fairytale*, and then moved to webcomics, though her online story *The Tale of Yanlin* is unfortunately currently nowhere to be found.²⁹

Multicultural elements, as described in passing in “Mangascape Germany,” have continued to be present, particularly in the persons of two artists whose names quite coincidentally appeared in a list near the end of the essay. Ying Zhou Cheng’s *Shanghai Passion* overtly takes as a main theme Chinese, rather than Japanese, culture, and peripherally describes the historical tensions between the two, specifically at the time of Japan’s invasion of Manchuria.³⁰ Meanwhile, Reyhan Yildirim’s *Tylsim* introduces elements of Turkish ornament, language and folklore to striking effect.³¹ Judith Park, of course, remains the greatest success story in this area, followed perhaps by the Japanese sisters Prin and Umi Konbu, whose three volumes so far of *Tomoe* for the smaller Eidalon Verlag are among the few German manga that delve into the Japanese historical genre of *jidai-geki*.³² The long pause after the third volume, however, now looks likely to become permanent; in the present economic circumstances, Eidalon has cancelled many of its less profitable series, manga or otherwise.

28 Nina Werner: *Jibun-Jishun*. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2006; Gina Wetzels: *Orcus Star*. Cologne: Egmont, 2005; Lenka Buschová: *Freaky Angel*. Cologne: Egmont, 2005; “Freaky Angel 2” (djinschi). Animexx.de. URL: <http://www.fanarts.eu/doujinshi/39495/>.

29 Detta Zimmermann: *Isce!*. 3 vols. Hamburg: Tokyopop, 2006-7; *Tarito Fairytale*. Hamburg: Carlsen Chibi, 2008.

30 Ying Zhou Cheng: *Shanghai Passion*. Cologne: Egmont, 2005.

31 Reyhan Yildirim: *Tylsim*. Hamburg: Tokyopop, 2008.

32 Prin and Umi Konbu: *Tomoe*. 3 vols. to date. Brandenburg: Eidalon, 2004-5.

The difficulties that will continue to face comics publishers in an ongoing weak economy, however, pale in comparison to the hurdles faced by the artists and writers who choose to try to make a living by producing comics of any kind. A common thread that runs through even the success stories enumerated above is the difficulty of keeping to schedule in a demanding and time-intensive job, particularly when German mangaka, unlike so many of their Japanese counterparts, work without assistants. At the same time, the relatively low remuneration in the comics industry makes it difficult to get by economically by drawing (and/or writing) comics alone—yet taking on additional, often better-paid work in more commercial fields is a further obstacle to keeping manga projects on schedule. The fact that so many of the mangaka are also of school or university age, and due to their interests and talents well-suited and motivated to acquire secondary education in art, design or Asian studies, leads to many of them juggling demanding class and study schedules with their creative work. No wonder, then, that so few of these young people have been able to sustain a consistent level of output, and so many of them have left the field or relegated it to an occasional sideline.

In this respect, the warnings uttered by Claus D. Scholz in a 1980 *Comixene* article entitled “Comic-Zeichner: Traumberuf oder Alptraum?” remain current as ever: even in booming times, and in countries with more positive attitudes toward comics, the majority of artists have been economically marginalized.³³ In the 1950s and early 1960s, pioneering artist Hansrudi Wäscher, who has been trumpeted as “Bis heute

33 Claus D. Scholz: “Comic-Zeichner: Traumberuf oder Alptraum?” In: *Comixene* 33 (1980). Pp. 4-6.

... einer der erfolgreichsten, produktivsten, einflussreichsten und langjährigsten Comiczeichner Deutschlands,”³⁴ was an exception only because he was willing to submit to exploitative working conditions, at times working more than sixteen hours a day and producing five different series at once for Walter Lehning, all anonymously. On the one hand, this unbelievable productivity allowed him not only to make a decent living, but also to indulge his taste for fancy sports cars by buying an E-Type Jaguar; on the other, it frequently drove him to the verge of breakdown, and certainly did no favours to the quality of his drawing—on the contrary, it stunted his artistic development, as he relied increasingly on repetitive shortcuts to produce ever more similar plots, scenes and tableaux.³⁵ In these respects, Wäscher became the exact opposite of one of his models, Hal Foster, of whom Scholz writes: “Als ‘Star-Zeichner’ konnte es sich Foster leisten, pro Woche nur eine Seite zu zeichnen. So hatte er die Möglichkeit, seine Grafik zu einer fast unübertreffbaren Perfektion zu entwickeln” (Scholz, “Comic-Zeichner,” p. 6).

In his defense, the pragmatic Wäscher forthrightly declared in 1985: “Über eines müssen wir uns immer im klaren sein: Was ich hier mache, ist etwas *Kommerzielles*, es soll verkauft werden! Viele Leute scheinen zu glauben, ich säße hier im ‘Wolkenkuckucksheim’ und machte das zum Selbstzweck. Dem ist nicht so. Ich weiß nicht, ob ich

34 “Deutsch: Hansrudi Wäscher erhält Peng!-Preis für sein Lebenswerk. Schöpfer der Sigurd-, Nick- und Falk-Comics wird von der deutschen Comicszene geehrt.” URL: <http://www.comicradioshow.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=2968&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0> .

35 Gerhard Förster: *Das grosse Hansrudi Wäscher Buch*. Schönau: Norbert Hethke Verlag, 1987. Pp. 9, 84, 87; Karlheinz Borchert: “Im Schlupfwinkel des Vertrauten: Hansrudi Wäscher und das Golden Age deutscher Comics.” In: *Comic Almanach* 1993. Ed. Joachim Kaps. Wimmelbach: Comicpress Verlag, 1993. Pp. 20-29; here: p. 27-9.

Comics machen würde, wenn ich nicht gleichzeitig damit Geld verdienen könnte” (Förster, *Hansrudi Wäscher*, p. 15). The need to make a living impelled Wäscher, who luckily had an understanding spouse and no children, to accept such conditions; most other comics artists—and even Wäscher, in the early stages of his career—have had to supplement their incomes with other graphic work, and even so they are likely to remain, as the title of a 2004 *Spiegel Online* article has it, “Zeichner ohne Zaster.”³⁶ Three of the four artists profiled in this article, incidentally—Felix “Flix” Görmann, Jens Harder and Markus “Mawil” Witzel—are also represented in this year’s *Comics, Manga & Co.*, where their inability to make a living from their work is celebrated as “Unabhängigkeit vom finanziellen Ertrag” (Platthaus, “Der deutsche Comic,” p. 4).³⁷

The continuing currency of these concerns was underlined two years later by Jörg Böckem in describing the work habits of young German mangaka: “Tatsächlich sitzen Anike [Hage], Asu [und] Reami [Mitglieder von DuO: Dorota Grabarczyk und Olga Andryienko], Marie Sann und ihre Kolleginnen oft bis zu zwölf Stunden täglich an ihren Zeichnungen, einige zeichnen neben dem Studium, nachts und an den Wochenenden” (Böckem, “Sind die süüüß,” p. 11). Similarly, the necessity of long working hours and the uncertainty of adequate remuneration were reconfirmed as recently as October 2010, both at the international conference “Intercultural Crossovers, Transcultural Flows: Manga/Comics,” held at the Cultural Institute of Japan in

36 Stefan Pannor: “Comic-Absolventen: Zeichner ohne Zaster.” *Spiegel Online* 24 Aug. 2004. URL: <http://www.spiegel.de/jahreschronik/0,1518,331495,00.html>.

37 The fourth artist, Stefan Atzenhofer, is the only one who claims in 2004 to be making ends meet with comics; he is not featured in the 2010 Goethe-Institut exhibition.

Cologne at the beginning of the month, and a couple of weeks later at the Frankfurt Book Fair. At the former venue, a panel discussion with German mangaka Christina Plaka (*Yonen Buzz, Herrscher aller Welten*), Anne Delseit and Martina Peters (writer and artist of *Lilientod*, each with several individual projects and manga as well) stressed exactly these facts; at the latter, a roundtable consisting of German mangaka Anike Hage (*Gothic Sports*) and Natalie Wormsbecher (*Summer Rain, Dämonenjunge Lain, Life Tree's Guardian*) and their Swedish counterpart Natalia Batista not only made the same point, but also underscored the fact that real earning conditions have deteriorated somewhat in five decades, since Hage and Wormsbecher, unlike Wäscher, have little hope of ever buying a sports car with their earnings: "Vermutlich werde ich auch niemals einen Porsche haben."³⁸ The title of the Frankfurt discussion, probably coincidentally, even echoes that of Scholz's *Comixene* article of thirty years previously: "Mangaka in Europa-Albtraum oder Traumberuf?" Plus ça change...³⁹

Six years ago, in 2004, the *Comixene* article "Es muss nicht immer Japan sein" concluded its examination of German-speaking manga by opining: "Es bleibt nur zu hoffen, dass die meist blutjungen Talente nicht rücksichtslos verheizt werden, sondern auch die Förderung von Seiten der Verlage

38 I was present at the Cologne conference, and I extend my gratitude to Christina Plaka, Anne Delseit and Martina Peters for speaking with me individually as well as sharing their experiences in plenum; the Frankfurt Book Fair discussion was video-recorded, and is available at the Splashcomics.de website: "Mangaka in Europa-Albtraum oder Traumberuf?" URL: http://www.splashcomics.de/php/messen/berichte/869/mangaka_in_europa_albtraum_oder_traumberuf.

39 The fact that these difficulties are not only confined to Germany, but also extend to the lands where comics are more popular and more highly esteemed, is evidenced by a recent study by Morgan Di Salvia and Pascal Lefèvre, with Haruyuki Nakano: *Bande dessinée et illustration en Belgique: État des lieux et situation socio-économique du secteur*. Brussels: SMartBe, 2010. Di Salvia announced the study's publication in an online article entitled "Profession dessinateur ou illustrateur, comment en vivre?" *ActuaBD* 18 Nov. 2010. URL: <http://www.actuabd.com/Morgan-Di-Salvia-Profession>.

erhalten, die sie benötigen, um sich zu entwickeln. Wir dürfen gespannt sein, was die Zukunft uns noch bringt” (Holzer, Jurgeit and Kramer, “Es muss nicht,” p. 14). In the same year, however, Andreas C. Knigge, a stalwart of the German comics industry as journalist, publisher and agent, made the pessimistic prediction: “Auch wenn der Manga in Deutschland seinen Zenit mit Sicherheit noch nicht überschritten hat, hat er, in langfristigen Perspektiven gedacht, keine Zukunft.”⁴⁰

Nonetheless, in 2006 Tokyopop GmbH editor Joachim Kaps, no less experienced than Knigge in the industry (and at one point Knigge’s successor as editor at Carlsen), told *KulturSpiegel*: “Im Moment investieren wir in die deutschen Mangaka. Aber eigene Produktionen sind für uns eine Chance, uns langfristig an das andere Ende der Wertschöpfungskette zu setzen ... nämlich: Auslandslizenzen zu verkaufen und vielleicht in absehbarer Zeit Merchandising-Produkte und Videospiele zu unseren deutschen Serien.” He further spoke of plans, “den Anteil der deutschen Eigenproduktionen bei Tokyopop auf 20 Prozent zu steigern.”⁴¹ The Hamburg branch of Tokyopop was then only two years old, and already had two German tentpole series in production, Plaka’s *Yonen Buzz* and Hage’s *Gothic Sports*. The more diversified, elder publishers Egmont and Carlsen were also already fostering local artists ambitiously, though it seems unlikely that they ever envisioned devoting one-fifth even of their manga output to home-grown artists. In any case, *Gothic Sports* has concluded, *Yonen Buzz* will soon do so

40 Julia Neugebauer: *Interview mit Andreas C. Knigge*. ARTE.tv 19 Oct. 2004. URL: <http://www.arte.tv/de/Printing/677614.html>.

41 Jörg Böckem: “Sind die süüüß!” *KulturSpiegel* 9 (2006): pp. 8-11; here: p. 11.

as well, and Kaps's plan simply has not been realized. It now seems, on the contrary, to have been impractical from the very beginning.

And yet, with manga still the dominant form on the German-language market, established publishers are still entering the fray even now: earlier this year the venerable Verlagsgruppe Droemer Knauer, hitherto involved with manga only as a publisher of how-to manuals for aspiring artists (mainly written by Americans, rather than Japanese), took up manga directly, and now markets manga by German artists under the Knauer Taschenbuch imprint, with not only one-shots and anthologies, but also several projected series in the works.⁴²

The last few years have also seen impressive growth in the sub-genre of boys' love manga (in the West often also called BL or *yaoi*, and in German frequently labelled *shōnen ai*), dedicated to women's depictions of male homosexual relationships for a female readership. The first home-grown BL manga was the abovementioned *Shanghai Passion*, by Ying Zhou Cheng, published by Egmont; since then, Carlsen and Tokyopop have also published boys' love stories, including Martina Peters' and Anne Delseit's *Lilientod* and Anna Holmann's successful *Stupid Story*.⁴³ The passion that BL fans put into both producing and consuming these

42 To name only a few: Rebecca Jeltsch: *Sternenstaub*. 1 vol. to date. Munich: Knauer TB, 2010; Marika Paul: *Daftball*. 1 vol. to date. Munich: Knauer TB, 2010; Daniela Winkler: *Grablicht*. 1 vol. to date. Munich: Knauer TB, 2010; Nina Nowacki: *Guns and Swords*. 1 vol. to date. Munich: Knauer TB, 2010.

43 Martina Peters and Anne Delseit: *Lilientod*. 3 vols. to date. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2009-; Anna Holmann: *Stupid Story*. 2 vols. Hamburg: Tokyopop, 2008-9. See also Paul M. Malone: "From BRAVO to Animexx.de to Export: Capitalizing on German Boys' Love Fandom, Culturally, Socially and Economically." In: *Boys' Love Manga: Essays on the Sexual Ambiguity and Cross-Cultural Fandom of the Genre*. Ed. Antonia Levi, Mark McHarry and Dru Pagliassotti. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010. Pp. 23-43.

stories has been leveraged by a growing number of niche publishers; since the mainstream presses such as Carlsen and Egmont, who also publish comics and books intended for children, have felt themselves constrained from producing material that might be too controversial on the basis of erotic and particularly homoerotic content,⁴⁴ these smaller publishers such as Fireangels Verlag, Cursed Side (result of a merger between The Wild Side and Cursed Publishing), and most recently Hotate Books have rushed in to fill the breach.⁴⁵ On a correspondingly smaller scale, these boys' love publishers (and perhaps to a certain extent the more heterosexually oriented *Experienze* and *Delfinium Prints Intoxicated*, both of which specialize in erotic and sometimes violent material) serve as the nearest equivalent to the independent publishers that were created in the U.S. and France when the mainstream firms hesitated to take up the manga trend at all.⁴⁶

It becomes clear in retrospect that for at least the last half-decade, there have been reasons to argue both sides of the question as to whether the German publishers' adoption of manga, and particularly their decision to foster home-grown talent by means of the popularity of manga, has been a successful strategy or not. Knigge's pessimism and Kaps's optimism both reflect an intimate knowledge of the historical background, the economic situations, and the industrial realities. Certainly, it is true that manga remain the

44 Christian Könen: "Interview mit Georg Tempel, Verlagsleiter von EMA." *AnimePRO* 13 April 2006. URL: <http://www.animepro.de/interviews/georg-tempel-2006.htm>.

45 See Paul M. Malone: "Home-grown Shojo Manga and the Rise of Boys' Love among Germany's 'Forty-Niners.'" *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 20 (April 2009). URL: <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20/malone.htm>.

46 Special thanks to Anne Delseit for furnishing detailed information regarding some of the smaller publishers.

dominant factor on the German-language comics market for the time being, and German manga artists have also increasingly been officially tied into a specifically German-language comics history: not only have DuO and Anike Hage taken part in the tribute *Wilhelm Busch und die Folgen*, but Asu (Olga Andryienko, the artist half of the DuO team) is also one of the forty-two German comics artists who contributed a page to *Wäscher: Pionier der Comics*, the volume created to commemorate Hansrudi Wäscher's receipt of the PENG! Comic Prize at the 2009 Munich Comic Festival.⁴⁷ Whatever the aesthetic judgement of Wäscher's work, this paean to his long and successful career in a crushingly difficult industry unites Wäscher's surviving contemporaries (Helmut Nickel) with artists from every succeeding generation to the present, and bridges commercial, academic and avant-garde spheres, including no fewer than four artists who are also featured in *Comics, Manga & Co.*: Hendrik Dorgathen, Ulf K. (i.e., Keyenburg), Reinhard Kleist and Isabel Kreitz.

Kleist and Kreitz, of course, along with Mawil, Jens Harder and Ulli Lust—only the first three of whom are represented in *Comics, Manga & Co.*, though Platthaus mentions them all and several others—are subsumed into the avant-garde by virtue of their academic training, but in fact they have come to form the leaders of a new movement in German-language comics: the graphic novel, which will hopefully unite commercial appeal and intellectual prestige in a manner that comics have never before achieved in German-speaking Europe. Didier Pasamonik, in describing

47 Gerhard Schlegel, ed.: *Wäscher: Pionier der Comics*. Wuppertal: Edition 52, 2009. P. 15.

the recent drop in manga sales in Germany, openly links this drop to the growing popularity of this newer import: “Cette décade se fait au profit d’une forte progression des romans graphiques dans ce pays.” Pasamonik places the victory of the graphic novel firmly at the feet of Ralf König, “le grand auteur allemand de sa génération, un peu l’équivalent de notre [Claire] Brétecher”; König, by publishing his lengthy but popular comics of the 1990s (in particular *Der bewegte Mann*) with the respectable literary publishing firm of Rowohlt rather than a comics press, “fait prendre conscience aux jeunes créateurs allemands que la bande dessinée n’est pas seulement un produit d’importation” (Pasamonik).

There may be some truth to this, but König's comics predate the import of the Anglophone label “graphic novel” and become such a thing only retroactively. It may be more pertinent that the German comics publishers have taken note of how successful their American counterparts have been with “umfangreichere Comicerzählungen, die sich an ein erwachsenes Publikum wenden,” and as a result, “Seit einiger Zeit verwenden auch deutsche Comicverlage das Etikett ‘Graphic Novel.’ Zur inhaltlichen Abgrenzung von Asterix, Tim und Struppi und Co., aber auch als Marketingbegriff, um Comics besser in normalen Buchhandlungen platzieren zu können, wo ein literarisch interessiertes Publikum Comics entdecken kann.”⁴⁸ Graphic novels by Arne Bellstorf (*Acht, neun zehn*), Line Hoven (*Liebe schaut weg*) and Ulli Lust

48 Martin Gramlich: “Comics in Deutschland: Die Bildgeschichten sind wieder da!” SWR 2, broadcast 14 Oct. 2010, 8:30 A.M. URL: <http://www.swr.de/swr2/programm/sendungen/wissen/comics-in-deutschland/-/id=660374/nid=660374/did=6807216/1x9m9ma/index.html>. The transcript of the broadcast is available as a .pdf file. URL: <http://www.swr.de/swr2/programm/sendungen/wissen/-/id=6807218/property=download/nid=660374/b6wupe/swr2-wissen-20101014.pdf>. Here: p. 9.

(*Heute ist der erste Tag vom Rest deines Lebens*) have won the ICOM Independent Comic Prize (in 2006, 2008 and 2010 respectively); and Reinhard Kleist's graphic biography of Johnny Cash, *Cash: I see a darkness*, took 2007 Munich's PENG! Prize and Frankfurt's Sondermann Prize in 2007 and the Max-und-Moritz Prize at Erlangen in 2008. The English translation of Kleist's work, perhaps thanks in part to its American-oriented subject matter, went on to be nominated in the U.S. for both a Will Eisner Comic Industry Award and a Harvey Award (named for Harvey Kurtzman) for Best New Talent in 2010, prompting Carlsen's current comics editor Ralf Keiser to observe, "da sind wir auch froh, dass wir da mittlerweile an einem Punkt sind, wo uns die anderen [Länder] als Comicproduzenten auch ernst nehmen, das war ja nicht immer der Fall" (Gramlich, "Comics in Deutschland," p. 10).⁴⁹The German publishers have thus now pinned their hopes on this new trend; the extensive German website *Graphic Novels* offers news and advertising devoted to the form, set up jointly by the commercial giant Carlsen and the smaller but prestigious art presses avant-verlag, Edition 52, Edition Moderne and Reprodukt.⁵⁰ Moreover, they are now looking at manga (whether imported or home-grown) in a new light, and hoping to leverage the success of manga in attracting readers as a tool to draw an audience for graphic novels in turn: as Carlsen's Keiser puts it, "das sind ja auch Comics, allen Unterscheidungen zum Trotz, es sind Comics, und man kann glaub ich sagen, dass auch noch nie so viele

49 Arne Bellstorf: *Acht, neun zehn*. Berlin: Reprodukt, 2005; Line Hoven: *Liebe schaut weg*. Berlin: Reprodukt, 2007; Ulli Lust: *Heute ist der erste Tag vom Rest deines Lebens*. Berlin: Avant-Verlag, 2006; Reinhard Kleist: *Cash: I see a darkness*. Hamburg: Carlsen, 2006.

50 *Graphic Novels*. URL: http://www.graphic-novel.info/?page_id=3408.

Leute wie heute in Deutschland Comics gelesen haben, so in der Breite und das ist eigentlich ganz ermutigend” (Gramlich, “Comics in Deutschland,” p. 10). Whether these expectations can be met remains to be seen; though here, too, Keiser’s erstwhile predecessor Andreas C. Knigge was already pessimistic six years ago: “Es wäre vermessen, zu glauben, dass *Dragonball*-Leser irgendwann zu *Corto Maltese* greifen, von Einzelfällen vielleicht abgesehen.”⁵¹

In summary, it seems that the German publishers are likely to continue supporting German home-grown manga (the good news), if only as a means to the end of maintaining an interest in German creators that can then be transferred to graphic novels (not necessarily bad news). The latter form is now a serious rival to manga in terms of offering the German publishers potential export material, and yet manga remain too strong in market terms simply to discard. However, this strength is not particular to home-grown OGL manga, and it may well be that OGL manga is one of the weaker aspects of manga’s market performance in the German-speaking countries. It will be interesting, in the context of this tension between the continuing dominance of manga on the German-language comics market and the small part of that market share devoted to OGL manga, to see whether German mangaka as a group are either willing or able to take up this newly imported form (as Anike Hage seems already to have done with her adaptation of Gudrun Pausewang’s *Die Wolke*), or perhaps to combine elements of manga and graphic novel into a new genre. To finish once

51 Matthias Wieland: Interview mit Andreas Knigge. *Subway.de* 21 Dec. 2004. URL: [http://www.subway.de/themenpark/interviews/?hnr=217&tx_mfarticle_pi1\[showUid\]=4471&chash=99fd812c8d&hnr=206](http://www.subway.de/themenpark/interviews/?hnr=217&tx_mfarticle_pi1[showUid]=4471&chash=99fd812c8d&hnr=206).

more on a more optimistic aspect, it is here that we might fruitfully combine a more upbeat, if still pragmatic, closing statement of Knigge's from 2004—"Auf unsere heutige Zeit bezogen sind Manga einfach die überlegene Erzählform. ... Die Zeit des klassischen Comics ist vorbei. ... Das sind alles Übergangsmedien, trotzdem wird es sicher immer Bücher geben und damit auch Comics" (Wieland interview)—with Platthaus's perceptive close to the problematic essay with which we began: "Und so bewährt sich der deutsche Comic auch als Manga vor allem darin, dass er seine eigenen Geschichten und Stile sucht und findet" (Platthaus, "Der deutsche Comic," p. 6). And perhaps the German-speaking audience will come to see that as their tradition after all.