

Training Grounds: Postwar Manga Magazines and Shueisha's *Weekly Shōnen Jump*

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Manga as an industry solidly developed in Japan following the end of World War II in 1945 and the subsequent American occupation until 1952, largely through several weekly circulating magazines marketed and oriented towards children.¹ These magazines developed at the same time as the first television programs were broadcast in 1953. By the end of the 1950s, television ownership would explode from a few thousand to over eight million.² Manga magazines grew alongside television broadcasting to provide a new constant flow of media content into consumers' lives.

While manga in Japan is a rich artistic medium – arguably richer in its variety of subjects, genres, and readerships than the comics of any other country – the focus of this essay will be on a particular type of manga called *shōnen manga*, or manga made primarily for young males in grade school from the ages of four to eighteen. Quite simply, *shōnen* manga are manga published in *shōnen* manga magazines. The content of *shōnen* manga varies widely, though the stories tend to focus on themes that are “popular with boys” such as action, adventure, sports, science fiction, fantasy, and gag comedy. In other words, *shōnen* manga focuses more on genre entertainment, as opposed to *shōjo manga*, or manga for girls, which tend to focus on

¹ Oono Shigeru, *Sundei to Magajin: Sōkan to shitō no jūgonen* (Sunday and Magazine: The 15 Years from Launch to Mortal Combat) (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 2009), 9-10.

² Horace Newcomb ed., *Encyclopedia of Television* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1211.

romances. Due to the escapist nature of the material and the younger target demographic, *shōnen* manga tend to have a wider range of stories and the biggest possible audience of any other manga in the country.

This essay will detail the collaborative production that goes into the hub of *shōnen* manga's production and dissemination, the weekly manga magazine. The first half of this essay will briefly detail how manga were first formulated in the post-war era through black markets, and how *shōnen* manga stories began to proliferate among these haphazardly produced books. This section chronicles the development of the *shōnen manga* magazine, showing how these magazines came to exert their influence on both the magazine publishing industry and the media at large. I focus particularly on the efforts of Shueisha's *Weekly Shōnen Jump* in wresting market share and readership away from stalwarts such as *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* and *Weekly Shōnen Magazine* through a series of industrial innovations that helped to purge talent from rivals and shape the conditions of production that remain today. I then turn to the pages of the text itself, analyzing the format and construction of *Weekly Shōnen Jump* to argue how it was able to organize a training ground around its product that fomented reader interest, got consumers invested behind its growth, and then opened up the process where readers could begin to produce for the magazine themselves.

A Brief Postwar History of *Shōnen Manga*

While most manga magazines (and the de facto manga industry) today are located in Tokyo, the first market that emerged for manga was located in the black markets of Osaka. Known as *akahon*, or “red books,” these first manga arrived in the form of cheaply-made booklets that originated in Tokyo during the Edo era, stapled together with a red cardboard cover, anywhere from ten to thirty-six pages in length, and ten to ninety yen in price.³ The production of these books shifted to Osaka during the occupation period, where the black markets fed a ravenous appetite for

³ Shimizu Isao, *Zusetsu manga no rekishi* (An Illustrated History of Manga) (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1999), 85.

reading material when shortages of paper led to government regulation. *Akahan* novels were distinguished for their pulp stories oriented toward young readers, with everything from adventure tales to detective fiction as subjects. The majority of *akahan* was cheaply made and produced to flood a market that had insatiable demand. While some *akahan* were made by established publishers, most were produced and distributed by candy and toy stores, as well as printers and paper brokers. The number of distributors ensured that quality frequently did not meet demand; there were apparently over 3000 publishers of *akahan* books and manga following the war, though most of these publishers were back in Tokyo by 1949.⁴

After the war and the flood of American cultural products, *akahan* became a medium for telling illustrated stories, with scenarios and characters freely pirated from American GI comics. While manga had theretofore been relegated to gags and instructional material, *akahan* permitted longer stories and a variety of subjects to take form. It was here that the first of “story manga” artists emerged, including the pioneering “god of manga” Tezuka Osamu. Osamu’s *Shintakarajima* (“New Treasure Island”), co-written by Sakai Shichima, was among the most notable early story manga for its novel incorporation of cinematic visual techniques into the form. The manga displayed multiple panels to indicate a single action, invented sound effects through the use of textually distorted and twisting onomatopoeia, and ignored basic layouts to showcase a wide variety of angles and perspectives. Story manga such as Tezuka’s work freely borrowed from cinema for their visual form, creating manga’s visual grammar from these sources in order to tell stories that were unexplored in manga to this point. Heavily influenced by the animation of Disney, Tezuka also introduced what would become the trademark look of his manga, and consequently future generations of manga:

⁴ Unknown author, “*Kodomo no akahan – Soku aku manga wo tsuku*” (Children’s Red Books – An Attack on Vulgar Manga), *Shūkan Asahi*, 4 April 1949. In the same article, top Tokyo artists and cartoonists are asked about their thoughts on the *akahan* boom. Written shortly after a famous temple in Nara was partially torched, artist Kondō Hidezō famously offered up the quote, “Akahan sell, Horyuji burns. Such is the state of Japanese culture today.”

the big eyes with glossy irises.⁵ The content of story manga was no less altered than the form. Where pre-war manga were usually no more than seven to twenty pages in length, with each story concluding as a single episode, story manga were serialized narratives that could be told in several episodes spanning weeks, months, or even years. Tezuka also instituted a “star system,” where characters introduced in one work would reappear in other works; such a system helped readers stay attached to certain characters even when their manga series had concluded serialization.⁶ The scope that story manga allowed their artists created a variety of styles and subjects that greatly expanded the medium and its audience.

By the early 1950s, however, the *akahon* market had experienced severe decline even in demand. Market saturation, a new *akahon* book tax, and increased public criticism of *akahon* from newspapers and PTA groups as a negative influence on children all contributed to the gradual erasure of *akahon* from the public sphere.⁷ The biggest change, however, came from the emergence of a new market in the form of the *kashihon*, or “rental book,” system. *Kashihon* rental shops cropped up in cities and urban centers across the country renting out magazines and illustrated books that served up largely the same sorts of pulp material that were popular with *akahon* readers, with manga increasingly stocking the shelves of stores. *Kashihon* books took the form of 150-page books and magazines, and could be rented for as cheap as five yen.⁸ With more consumers preferring to rent books than buy them in

⁵ Tezuka was raised in Takarazuka, a town just outside of Osaka, and he was also heavily shaped by the eponymous all-female theatre revue. The sweeping epic scope of their lavish Western-style musicals had a profound impact on his own conception of manga stories. For a detailed analysis on the influences of Tezuka's style, see Susanne Phillips, “Characters, Themes, and Narrative Patterns in the Manga of Osamu Tezuka,” in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. M.W. MacWilliams (New York: M.E. Sharpe), 68-90.

⁶ Helen McCarthy, *The Art of Osamu Tezuka: God of Manga* (New York: Abrams ComicArts, 2009), 37.

⁷ Nakano Hideyuki, *Manga Sangyōron* (Theory of Manga Industry) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2004), 55.

⁸ Frederik Schodt, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (New York: Kodansha, 1983), 66.

the deflationary economy, mangaka such as Saito Takao, Yamate Kiichiro, and Shirato Sampei began producing manga for the *kashihon* market for small wages. It was also at this point that several mangaka started preferring the larger format of *tankōbon*, or “independent books,” that collected several episodes of a mangaka’s manga into a single volume. While the revenues from books sold were less than the weekly commissions provided by magazines, *tankōbon* ensured mangaka their creative freedom apart from the prejudices of magazine editors. By the end of the decade, both *kashihon* and *akahon* would lose the most talented mangaka (and their customers) to the burgeoning weekly magazine format, but both markets should be looked upon as incubators for the first generation of manga professionals.

Mainstream publishers watched the growth of manga in the alternative markets and slowly incorporated more and more manga into their children’s monthly magazines. When the first televisions were sold in Japan in 1953, publishers introduced weekly magazines to keep up with the demand for more regular and immediate entertainment. In 1958, the publishing company Kodansha launched *Weekly Shōnen Magazine*, a 300-page behemoth and the first weekly manga magazine for boys. Its publishing rival Shogakukan followed this just one week later with their launch of *Weekly Shōnen Sunday*.⁹ Both magazines were an extension of monthly boys magazines that featured articles about sports and education, but the weeklies were packed with several series of story manga. Featuring episodes written by multiple mangaka every week such as former *akahon* and *kashihon* mangaka Mizuki Shigeru, Ishinomori Shotaro, and Umezu Kazuo, both *Magazine* and *Sunday* proved to be immensely popular. What is important to note is that though these magazines featured brightly colored covers, the stories inside were produced on cheap newsprint. The ephemeral nature of the magazine thus gave it a lack of permanence, implicitly encouraging readers to embrace the constantly updating and exclusive content, rather than the material form of the reading commodity itself.

⁹ For a breakdown of the race between Kodansha and Shogakukan to publish the first weekly boys’ magazine, see Oono, 26-70.

Readers were goaded in this way to devour content on a regulated basis. With issues selling for only thirty or forty yen, initial sales figures were immediately high: *Magazine* and *Sunday*'s first issues sold over 200,000 and 300,000 issues, respectively.¹⁰

What is important to note about these magazines is that a large part of their success was predicated on the growing Japanese economy and the increased buying power of Japanese families and particularly children. These magazines were the first media in post-war Japan to transform young readers into the consumers of their own interests. Monthly boys' and girls' magazines were often over 100 yen and purchased by the children's father on his way home from work. However, by the early 1960s, incomes for most families had increased, and children began receiving their first weekly allowances.¹¹ This meant that parents could no longer be able to regulate their children's reading habits as strictly. Importantly, it also meant that children could begin reading and purchasing manga from as early as grade school age. As the economy improved through the 1960s, the magazines' sales continued to grow, with *Weekly Shōnen Magazine* topping one million copies sold per week in 1966.¹² This newfound purchasing power among Japanese youth would have several reverberations that would greatly expand the growth and content of the manga industry. For one, it created consumers out of readers, putting control of content into the hands of the target audience from a very young age. Manga became a central part of the lives of many Japanese, and the consumption of manga became habitual. Reading manga as an adult would no longer be taboo when these children graduated university and began careers decades later. As these children aged, some would continue to read the magazines they read as a child, but others would desire stories that featured more mature content or characters that related to their experiences of the world, leading to new types of story manga and visual styles to emerge in line with these sensibilities. Children who grew up on manga would grow up

¹⁰ Ibid, 66.

¹¹ Nakano, 32-33.

¹² Ibid, 22-23.

to emulate their favorite stories and create manga of their own that either drew upon or opposed their predecessors for inspiration. Through the manga magazine, story manga became a central fixture and natural outgrowth of the everyday environment of Japanese life.

The Innovations of *Weekly Shōnen Jump*

In 1968, the publishing industry was selling over 2 million copies of weekly manga magazines every week. The marketplace began to get crowded with more weekly magazines, but the demand for manga had not yet peaked. It was in this market that the publishing upstart Shueisha launched *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, a weekly manga magazine whose circulation would eclipse even that of *Weekly Shōnen Magazine* in just five years. *Shōnen Jump* was created from the ashes and leftover editorial staff of *Shōnen Book*, a monthly boys' magazine anthology that itself was organized from the staff of *Fun Book: Shōnen King*, but the magazine established a set of criteria that aimed to recruit and foster new talent for its magazine that helped it control a large part of the market in a short amount of time, criteria which continue to guide the magazine's editorial philosophy and influence its readership to this day.

First, *Weekly Shōnen Jump* was the first truly all-manga weekly magazine. While other *shōnen* magazines had put an emphasis on manga series in their weekly issues, other issues such as articles and essays on school, sports, and personal fitness also buffeted manga episodes. *Shōnen Jump* packed their inaugural issues with a plethora of manga episodes and a dearth of advertisements. The strategy was to get readers acquainted with the new mangaka brought in to the magazine, but primarily to orient readers into prioritizing manga content over other cultural content. What few ads that were inside consisted of the *tankōbon* of popular collected manga series. Like other magazines, *Shōnen Jump* was sold at just slightly above production cost, meaning that large volumes of sales were needed to turn even a modest profit, but much larger profits could be made with the sales of individual volumes of popular series. In this way, *Shōnen Jump* became one

of the first mass media in Japan to offer what today could be viewed as “freemium” content. Chris Anderson has described the “cross subsidy” business model as one where the company initially loses money or just breaks even on giving away free or low-priced content with the long-term goal that consumers will invest money somewhere down the line to experience more content.¹³ With *Shōnen Jump*, readers/users are introduced to series in weekly, bite-size installments, but will have to invest in the manga directly through the collection of *tankōbon* if they want to own their favorite manga, read their favorite chapters repeatedly, or flip back and forth between chapters spaced far apart. In addition to this direct investment from fans, the magazine would produce revenues through multi-media adaptations and licensing agreements in exchange for foregoing direct reimbursement from advertising subsidies. *Shōnen Jump* became subsidized by fans, who gave their opinion regarding the magazine's quality directly with their wallets.

Second, with the prioritization of manga came a necessity for more mangaka talent and the guarantee that they would only be read in *Weekly Shōnen Jump*. Mangaka were brought in through a contract system, whereby they were obligated to write their material only for Shueisha and *Shōnen Jump*.¹⁴ The hiring of mangaka on contracts in some ways mirrors the placing of a stable of talent on long-term contracts in Hollywood during the classic studio era. Well-known mangaka could comprise a “house style” for the magazine, providing a recognizable look or theme for the magazine's content through long-running series. New writers who had yet to find an audience or chance in other magazines were promised a yearly annuity, in addition to whatever salary they received per page, with the hopes that they will produce a work that becomes serialized. If the mangakas' series were cancelled, they still received a salary while they continued to work on the

¹³ Chris Anderson, “Free! Why \$0.00 is the Future of Business,” *Wired Magazine* (25 February 2008).

¹⁴ Sharon Kinsella, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 50-55.

submission of a new series. Successful mangaka that managed to build a large volume of individual episodes could find additional financial windfalls in sales of *tankōbon*, since the yearly annuity and page stipends did not amount to a large amount. The contract system also mirrors the increased use of contractual labor following the breakup of the old studio production model, as mangaka who failed to produce were unceremoniously cut and left to find another magazine or project. However, unlike film directors or screenwriters who work on a film that becomes the property of the studio, mangaka would still own the rights to their series in perpetuity. While the publication of series could only be in *Shōnen Jump*, lest a rival magazine attempted to poach successful artists and series, they were free to end the series and write a sequel or spin-off in another magazine. Owning the rights meant that mangaka could profit from long stream of royalties should the manga become a hit and its ancillary merchandise continue to provide revenue for them. In this respect, mangaka, like most film workers in the post-studio era, are not “employees” of the magazine, but rather are “independent contractors” who manage their brand and creative business with the assistance of the publisher.

Shueisha received an influx of new talent through this system, artists who were eager to prove themselves and had few bargaining chips to negotiate better conditions since they were very rarely established names. *Shōnen Jump* could claim bragging rights over rival magazines, birthing the catch copy, “You can only read xxx-sensei’s manga in the pages of *Weekly Shōnen Jump*.”¹⁵ Through the contract system, *Shōnen Jump* was able to attract new manga talents such as Nagai Go and his violent erotic works, and Motomiya Hiroshi and his stories of the fighting downtrodden.¹⁶ Such a

¹⁵ Okada Toshio, *Otakugaku nyūmon* (Introduction to Otaku Studies) (Tokyo: Shincho Bunko, 1996), 290.

¹⁶ Nagai started his own company, Dynamic Productions, just a year after publishing his first series, *Harenchi Gakuen* (Shameless School) in the inaugural issue of *Shōnen Jump*. He eventually left Shueisha after *Harenchi Gakuen* was concluded and his contract was finished, publishing in a variety of magazines thereafter. Motomiya was nearly lured away by *Shōnen Magazine* when his contract was about to expire in 1970, but was coaxed by *Shōnen Jump* editors to remain at Shueisha, where he publishes

system gave mangaka insurance policies in case their series lost popularity, but this security came with a cost, as limits were placed on the mobility of mangaka who were unable to renegotiate their contracts by comparing conditions with other publishers. They were beholden not only to the readers of *Shōnen Jump*, but also their editorial staff, who decided what manga would debut in future issues.

Once a series debuted, however, all mangaka were in the hands of the readers, as *Weekly Shōnen Jump* placed an increased emphasis on immediate reader feedback. This was first accomplished through the *ankēto* or “survey” system. First introduced by Kodansha and Shogakukan in their own weekly magazines in the early 1960s, Shueisha incorporated surveys towards the end of *Shōnen Book's* life in 1964.¹⁷ Small cards addressed to the editorial offices of Shueisha were attached to every issue, and readers who sent in cards with their responses would be eligible for a small prize. The cards asked readers to respond to a series of questions, such as, “What word most warms your heart?” and “What word is most important to you?” and “What makes you happiest?” The most frequent answers to these questions were the words “*yūjō*,” “*doryoku*,” and “*shōri*,” which translate respectively to “friendship, hard work, and victory.” These three words that readers mailed in became the guiding editorial philosophy of *Shōnen Book*, and was adapted to *Shōnen Jump* soon after *Book's* demise.¹⁸ The editors planned on aiming for a younger audience than the established *Magazine* and *Sunday*, which had targeted an audience of primarily middle and high school aged students. *Jump* sent their survey to grade school children as an effort to gauge their feelings and what they valued as important. With the *ankēto* system, the very mantra of *Shōnen Jump* reflected the desire from editors and staff to directly respond to readers' voices.

The editorial staff of *Shōnen Jump* from this point forward placed

actively to this day. See Motomiya Hiroshi, *Tennen Mangaka (Natural Mangaka)* (Tokyo: shueisha Bunko, 2003), 135-165.

¹⁷ Oono, 81.

¹⁸ Nishimura Shigeo, *Saraba, waga seishun no Shōnen Jump* (Farewell, the *Shōnen Jump* of my Youth) (Tokyo: Gentosha, 1997), 31-32.

an extraordinary amount of importance on the *ankēto*. Where other magazines would use the survey to gauge reader interest in topics and series, *Shōnen Jump* would use it as a de facto ratings barometer, asking readers to rank their favorite episodes from each magazine issue. From the early 1970s, editors placed a strict policy on all series running in the magazine: regardless of reputation or multimedia tie-ins, series that were unpopular with readers would be cut from the magazine immediately, to be replaced with series from new mangaka. This rigid stance to deciding what series would stay or go was dubbed the *ankēto shijō shugi*, or “doctrine of the survey’s supremacy” where series that did not receive votes would eventually be cancelled.¹⁹ Such a radical adoption of the survey had the effect of galvanizing mangaka into constantly improving their work, as well as providing struggling mangaka with ideas and directions from readers who liked their manga. The *ankēto* also had some predictable consequences, such as the prioritization of trendy art styles or topics, the difficulty in raising unseasoned mangaka who could learn from mistakes, and the obvious inability to gauge the reaction of readers who never bothered to mail in the surveys. An unintended consequence was that mangaka of popular series were pressured by editorial staff to continue their manga in perpetuity. Finally, the emphasis on immediate positive reaction fostered content and visuals with high impact and less subtlety, making *Shōnen Jump* series known for their rapid pacing, constant cliffhangers and plot twists, and a format that prioritized consistent “action” in order to draw votes from young readers. This emphasis on manga “seriality” reflected

Finally, *Weekly Shōnen Jump* found great success in bi-directional textual synergy, spinning off their series into various animations, video games, and merchandise, or what was just becoming popularized in Japan as the “media mix.” It was not the first magazine to adapt its series into animation or live-action, as *Sunday* and *Magazine* had adapted several of its popular manga into television anime in the 1960s and 70s. But from the late

¹⁹ Okada, 291-292.

1970s, and particularly due to the introduction of Toriyama Akira's gag manga *Dr. Slump* (1980), *Shōnen Jump* placed increased importance on creating transmedia around any series that proved viable. *Dr. Slump*, about an android girl named Arare and her oddball friends and neighbors in Penguin Town, proved to be immensely popular with children upon its initial release, but its diverse and colorful cast of characters won over fans of various ages and demographics.²⁰ Fuji Television approached Shueisha on a number of occasions requesting to sponsor an animated broadcast of the show, until an initial run of *Dr. Slump – Arare-chan* was approved in 1981, just five months after the manga's serialization. The show's popularity carried into its highly-rated broadcast, but what Shueisha was not prepared for was the effect the anime had on sales of the manga. While adapting a show into an anime as a means of expanding the potential audience was a well-known business strategy since the early 1960s and television adaptations of Osamu Tezuka's *Tetsuwan Atomu*, *tankōbon* sales of *Dr. Slump* exploded, as did circulation of weekly copies of *Shōnen Jump*, which sold more magazines than in any other period in Shueisha's history. The animation of *Dr. Slump* was so effective and popular in helping expand the manga's popularity that editors began to encourage mangaka to make manga that would quickly become anime based on their genres or characters. In some cases, producers would approach Shueisha for the anime licensing rights after reading just a single chapter, banking on the brand, track record, and appealing characters of *Shōnen Jump*.²¹ For the remainder of the 1980s, editors placed increased emphasis on stories with genres and characters that would sell animated television shows and merchandise to casual fans and families.

Through the example of *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, we can see how manga developed from the black market as an alternative form of entertainment into a commodified product that was consumed regularly by a mass market. It was then delivered as a cheap package into children's homes every week through manga magazines, which incubated popular series until

²⁰ Nishimura, 293.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 296.

enough popularity was evident to launch a successful television series. In other words, readers and creators reinforce the responses of one another in the manga magazine to create popular content for a mass audience.

The Survey System: Training Creators

The editorial searching and training of future mangaka is reliant on communication lines established through the magazine. Readers write more than just questions and fanmail to their favorite mangaka. Many readers send in creative contributions of their own, often mailing in interpretations of characters and settings of their favorite series. How this feedback is then absorbed into the shape and construction of the magazine itself is a complex training process that directly involves readers into the production of manga. The social network of *Weekly Shōnen Jump* is formed from readers, who are encouraged to join the ranks of the creators to whom they write. The magazine employs two prize systems – *ankēto kenshō*, or reader surveys, *shinjinshō*, or newcomer contests – to attract reader responses and opinions. These two systems are used in a number of other popular *shōnen* magazines through a manga education system. As Jennifer Prough notes, *shōjo* manga magazines incorporated a similar method to recruit talented artists and storytellers through the “manga school” system.²² However, there are some important differences in the way readers are recruited than in *shōnen* manga compared to *shōjo* manga regarding the incorporation of readers into the magazine’s aesthetic. *Shōnen Jump*, in particular, has more conspicuous and active recruitment due to an editorial policy and interface that heavily favors dialogue between editors and readers.

As previously noted, *Weekly Shōnen Jump* has long favored reader opinion polls known as *ankēto* to gauge reader interest in serialized manga. From the late 1970s, however, this reliance upon reader opinion intensified with a change in editorial direction. Under the stewardship of editor-in-chief Nishimura Shigeo, in particular, the magazine began to hold reader opinion

²² Jennifer Prough, *Straight from the Heart: Gender, Intimacy, and the Cultural Production of Shōjo Manga* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 81-87.

supreme. While editors would continue to choose the new series and mangakas that would debut in the magazine every year, *ankēto* were the primary method in determining which series would continue to run in the magazine. Nishimura established a radical precedent, where “any series that failed to reach the top two in popularity over a period of ten weeks would be put on the track for discontinuation.”²³ There were exceptions to this rule, such as gag manga that did not attract a large fan base but were considered important for the magazine’s balance of content, or series that were popular in other media formats despite ranking low in the weekly *ankēto*. The rule did apply to many new series, however, and a ruthless atmosphere prevailed in the magazine where new series were expected to provide an immediate impact.²⁴ Readers voluntarily functioned as a Nielsen Ratings system, essentially voting out titles if they did not immediately provide the entertainment of the “top three” best chapters of any given issue.

This had a large impact on the direction of content for the magazine. From the late 1970s to the early 1980s, rival magazines siphoned off a large portion of *Weekly Shōnen Jump*'s readership. Series such as Yanagisawa Kimio's *Tonda Couple* (1978-81) running in *Weekly Shōnen Magazine*, or Takahashi Rumiko's *Urusei Yatsura* (1978-87) and Adachi Mitsuru's *Touch* (1981-86), running in *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* and *Weekly Shōnen Magazine* respectively, attracted readers through stories that combined the romantic comedy genre with fantasy, sports, or science fiction elements.²⁵ *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, however, largely refused to alter their editorial policy that was established by their own readers. Through the rest of the 1980s, the types of series that remained in the magazine were catered towards a readership that pushed and voted for their favored series. The series that tallied the most votes favored violent or comedic content geared

²³ “*Shōnen Jump* toiū jyanru” (The Genre of *Shōnen Jump*), *Studio Voice* no.2 (2008), 22-24.

²⁴ Okada, 291.

²⁵ Some critics, such as Patrick Galbraith and Okada Toshio, argue that it was through this genre that the term *moé* developed, a fan word for strong affection for cute female characters.

towards young boys such as Yudetamago's *Kinnikuman* (1979-87), Buronson and Hara Tetsuo's *Fist of the Northstar* (1983-88), Kurumada Masami's *Saint Seiya* (1986-91), and Toriyama Akira's *Dragon Ball*, manga that focused on superhero wrestlers, apocalyptic renegades, Zodiac knights, and comedic adventures and battles inspired from Chinese mythology, respectively. Even the gag manga that remained, such as Tokuhiro Masaya's *Jungle King Tar-chan* (1988-90), went out of its way to titillate with sexual jokes and imagery. These series proved popular with readers and went on to dominate the manga and television anime market for the remainder of the 1980s and early 1990s.²⁶

The emphasis on *ankēto* also had large ramifications on the structure of the magazine itself, which can be viewed by flipping through the first pages of any issue. Editors place the most popular series towards the front of the magazine as a symbol of its status within the magazine's hierarchy. Younger mangaka are encouraged to “dethrone” established manga from the top of the hierarchy and earn their way to the front of the magazine. Popular titles are not only provided with premier issue space – readers do not have to spend time flipping through the magazine to find their favorite series – but are also frequently given a *kanban*, or “cover” feature. Popular manga are selected to grace the front of a given issue in a dynamic spread with a “color” chapter, where a portion of the manga (usually the first three to five pages) is illustrated with a full color palette. Chapters that are provided with the *kanban* are often timed to coincide with a pivotal point in any given manga series, and mangaka attempt to provide the episode with additional drama through more dynamic events and illustrations to justify their *kanban* and attract more reader votes. This inevitably results in a circular effect, where popular manga are given the space to increase their popularity, while newer manga must attract new votes without the glossy production values of their established competition.

²⁶ The cultural theorist and self-proclaimed *otaking*, or “king of otaku,” Okada Toshio has termed this period of *Weekly Shōnen Jump*'s market dominance as “*Shōnen Jump*'s Winner-Take-All Era.” Okada, 292.

Ankēto also strongly affects the turnover of mangaka as well. With readers voting out manga once plotlines stagnate, new talent in the form of fresh ideas and young mangaka is in constant demand. As previously noted, *Weekly Shōnen Jump* editors aggressively courted young mangaka who had yet to debut and signed them to exclusive contracts in order to differentiate itself from its competition. But the recruitment was enacted within the pages of the magazine itself through *shinjinshō*, or “new artist awards.” Similar to the “manga school” system in *shōjo* manga magazines, these are contests that turn readers into artists themselves. First introduced by *Weekly Shōnen Magazine*, the contests recruited new mangaka to the magazine by encouraging readers to submit manga of their own for potential publication. Editors would read and evaluate the manga sent in by readers, and if any given manga was deemed to have potential, the editors would write back to the authors and ask them to submit a follow-up. If the manga had legs, it would then run in the magazine and become subject to readers’ approval in the *ankēto* just like any other manga.

Weekly Shōnen Jump took these reader submissions seriously and instituted award contests that treated readers professionally. In just its second year of circulation, the manga magazine introduced the “Tezuka Prize.” Readers were asked to mail in submissions for a “story manga” contest that would be judged not by editors, but by the “god of manga” himself, Tezuka Osamu. Readers were evaluated on a total score based on the strength of their art, characters, story, framing, and originality; winners were provided with a substantial cash prize, with the grand prize winner promised serialization of their manga.²⁷ In 1975, *Shōnen Jump* introduced the “Akatsuka Prize,” a manga prize for “gag manga,” in honor of its most popular comedy mangaka, Akatsuka Fujio. These two prizes anchored a steady supply of submissions to the magazine throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and continue to be two of the most desirable prizes in the magazine industry today, with manga luminaries

²⁷ Tezuka’s exacting standards often meant that no grand prize winners were selected, though winners were divided into first, second, and third prize categories based on the strength of their submissions.

such as Toriyama Akira, Watsuki Nobuhiro, and Inoue Takehiko acting as judges in the stead of the late Tezuka and Akatsuka. These prizes remain the most prominent and desired prizes in *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, with the winners going on to publication with the greatest degree of frequency.

New contests and prizes, however, have become institutionalized within the pages of the magazine. Some contests, such as the “Golden Future Cup,” pit potential mangaka against one another over a series of issues, with readers asked to vote on the best manga among the new talent. Certain specialized contests, such as the “G Cup,” invite readers to submit short comedy works from five to fifteen pages to be judged by both gag manga mangaka and even celebrity comedians. Cash prizes, as well as a chance to be published and pursue a career as a mangaka, motivate readers to submit their works. Other contests, such as the Treasure Newcomers’ Manga Prize, are held every month. Readers are asked to send in “one-shots,” or manga that will conclude within a single episode. Every month, one or more manga are selected as Grand Treasure Winners, and their one-shot is run in the magazine for that week, competing with other series in the magazine for votes. If a particular one-shot has significant fan response, the manga will have a chance at continued circulation in either *Weekly Shōnen Jump* or one of the “brother” publications.²⁸ With the expansion of *Shōnen Jump*’s online website, moreover, even works that receive honorable mentions have a space to attract reader attention without having to compete with the rarefied and limited page counts of the magazine. While rare, a handful of manga have found an audience and eventual publication through internet response.²⁹ For *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, however, the litmus test for serialization remains the *ankēto* that readers must write and mail in by hand, a decision that Shueisha’s editors continue to keep in place.

²⁸ *Aniki* or *otōto* manga magazines refer to *shōnen* manga magazines under the same publisher but are targeted at a different age demographic. Examples of brother manga magazines to *Weekly Shōnen Jump* are the teen and young adult *Young Jump*, or the edgier, alternative manga magazine *Ultra Jump*.

²⁹ See, for example, One and Murata Yusuke’s *One Punch Man* (Tokyo: Shueisha, 2009).

What the abundance of the contests all share is their desire to ease readers into the role of creators. The purpose of the contests is less about finding particular hits, and more about training readers in a process of being judged for their work. The Treasure Newcomers' Prize rewards particular manga not strictly for the combined effect of story, art, and characters, but also manga that excel in particular characteristics, recognizing strengths while offering constructive criticism for development. Readers might not win a prize on their first or second submissions, but all are provided feedback from mangaka and editors in order to improve upon their weaknesses.³⁰ Mangaka themselves evaluate submissions, and provide suggestions in the magazine for future mangaka to follow.

This transparent dialogue is often displayed in the magazine for readers to see and learn from. For the 82nd Treasure Newcomers' Prize, mangaka Matsui Yusei tells readers to put considerable care into how characters are introduced. "A character should communicate his or her personality within the first page," he says through his avatar (a talking eyeball). "The first two-four pages are also extremely important. Most readers will become bored if the immediate action isn't interesting, so think of how you will draw readers into your world before they lose interest."³¹ By way of example, Matsui includes a page from his manga, *Assassin's Classroom* (2012-ongoing), to literally illustrate his advice on "kyara dashi," or character intros. In the scene, teacher Irina Jelevic is first introduced to her classroom. In the first panel, she kisses her junior high student on the lips. Matsui says that this scene conveys, right away, gives the reader a strong impression of her Jelevic's perverted nature. It is something the readers can identify her with and leaves them thinking, "What kind of manga is this?" Matsui's comments illustrate how mangaka function not only as authorities and judges, but also as teachers and mentors for reader/creators within the

³⁰ Some editors will often become a *tanto*, or "manager," in charge of young mangaka who will continue to submit their work to the same editor in the future.

³¹ "Jump Treasure shinjin mangashō daiboshū," in *Weekly Shōnen Jump* No. 19 (21 April 2014), 118.

pages of the magazine.

Pages of every issue are dedicated to explaining contests, showing prize awards, and offering professional advice from editors and mangaka. The advice can be specific, ranging from critiques of page layouts or drawing techniques, to suggestions on improving story development or character designs. One of the subtle differences between the “manga school” of *shōjo* manga and the “contests” of *shōnen* manga is the emphasis on nurturing creation versus creative competition. Prough points out that the editors frequently use the word “raise” (*sodateru*) to describe the process of recruiting mangaka in *shōjo* manga.³² The system of recruiting artists through the magazine is the same, though the discursive strategies that underpin the contests are couched in language that reflects the contemporary subjects of the manga series. Readers are “students,” who submit their “assignments” to their “teachers;” when the winners are determined, the “grading results” (*seiseki happyō*) are announced.

With *shōnen* manga, on the other hand, characters from various series of the magazine voice encouragement to potential submitters through the contest pages. Readers, moreover, are prodded to take up the “challenge” (*chōsen*) and respond to mangaka or editor criticisms like one of their heroes would in their favorite manga series by being told to “improve their skills,” “realize their dreams,” and “become the best” (*saikyō ni nare*). Readers are imagined as part of a large *shōnen* manga story, with any of Japan’s mangaka as its potential characters. These recruitment campaigns play on the popular themes of the manga magazines – dramatic school life romances for *shōjo* manga, competitive physical and mental battles for *shōnen* manga – suggesting to readers that they can become the protagonists of their own story by telling someone else’s. These recruitment tropes feed on audience familiarity with the manga magazine’s well-worn themes and subjects. No longer relegated to artist manuals or even the paratexts of the magazine, such direct instruction is intertextually woven into the figurative fabric of the

³² Prough, 85.

Training Grounds: Postwar Manga Magazines and Shueisha's *Weekly Shōnen Jump* (Bryan Hikari Hartzheim)
magazine's architecture.

Conclusion

Readers of *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, accustomed to the content of the magazine, are conditioned most to what entertains other readers, and in turn are best suited to know the orientation of their audience. One editor I spoke to lamented that this also has the detrimental effect of fewer and fewer original works from younger and younger mangaka whose sole life experience has been gleaned from the pages of other mangaka. Because of this self-selection, *Weekly Shōnen Jump* has gravitated more and more towards the type of action and comedy that befits its young readership, while funneling mangaka with more life experience or original stories towards its older “brother” magazines.

Mangaka are thus harvested at a relatively young age and work their way through the “brother” magazines as their content changes or matures. While their first manga are rarely selected for publication upon winning a prize or collecting a favorable proportion of votes from readers, this process of submission, feedback, and resubmission provides budding mangaka with a free training program to become professional creators.