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Croatian anime and manga fans: an encounter with Japanese culture and language

ABSTRACT

The intensification of the spread of Japanese media and play products has inspired academic research into transnational fan involvement with Japan as the country of origin of these media. Scholars from various fields have established a connection with anime and manga fandom and Japanese language learning. Distinguished from regular audiences by degree of investment, fans value certain competencies that better equip them to access, understand and engage with this media. This research is based on interviews with Croatian anime and manga fans and inquires into their motivation to learn the Japanese language and culture. This paper uses Susan Napier's notion of *fantasyscape* to illustrate why fans move across already blurred outlines of what constitutes fans' interest. I assert that as particularly active media consumers it is the value fans put on specific competencies, along with a cosmopolitan curiosity, that motivates anime and manga fans to expand their focus of interest. Knowledge of the Japanese language and culture facilitates understanding of texts and at the same time functions as a matter of fandom specific "subcultural capital".

Key words: anime and manga, Croatia, fans, fantasyscape, transnational, Japanese language learning, cosmopolitanism

1. INTRODUCTION

Japanese media and play products have been crossing national borders since the post-war period. while in the 1990s those products became an increasingly important cultural export (Allison 2006, Shirong Lu 2008), and thus a shift in global culture flows, that prompted a discussion of new centres of globalisation sometimes referred to them as "Japanisation" (opposed to various homogenisation theories of "Americanisation" (Iwabuchi 2002, Befu 2003).

Author and journalist Ronald Kelts identifies this "new" recognition of Japanese culture as the "third wave of Japanophilia". According to Kelts, what distinguishes this wave from the previous ones is a fascination with Japan's modern culture, whereas the previous waves were mostly focused on traditional aesthetics and spirituality[1] (Kelts 2006: 5-6). The impact of this third wave was explored by Douglas McGray in his article "Japan's Gross National Cool" published in 2002. McGray's publication aroused a new interest in this topic, and inspired the term "Cool Japan", which is recently used to refer not only to the phenomenon of the spread of Japanese culture, but also to the official Japanese government strategy that attempts to capitalise on such spread of Japanese popular culture. Although considered a potential "soft power" (Nye 2005) resource, in comparison to the influence of popular culture products originated in the USA, which implies certain ideological values, Japan's cultural influence is described as "shallow" (McGray 2002). However, Otmazgin and Ben-Ari express their doubts in the broad use of this term. While it might be suitable for production and distribution, they advise that it "may not be able to fully capture the dynamics of how people consume, appropriate, conceive, and indigenise imported culture and norms" (Otmazgin and Ben-Ari 2011: 16).

As far as consumption is concerned, we can say that predictions of Japanisation have come to an end, while cultural products of Japanese origin remain a visible and vibrant node in the global circulation of goods. Today Japanese popular culture is considered a global and transnational phenomenon resulting in multiple local manifestations, interpretations and appropriations. Nevertheless, Japanese animation or anime and comics

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1   The first wave was the European and American artists' fascination with Japanese aesthetics in the 18th and 19th centuries known as *Japonisme*, and the second an interest towards Japan's spiritual traditions in the late 1950s and 1960s, centred around the group of American poets known as the Beat Generation (Kelts 2006: 5).

called manga were particularly successful in grabbing the attention of transnational audiences with more enthusiastic fans collectively forming a distinct fandom. Scholars studying this fandom (Napier 2001; 2007, Allison 2006, Jenkins 2006), but also those researching Japanese language learning (Fukunaga 2006, Williams 2006, Shamoon 2010, Armour and Iida 2014), have observed that growing interest in Japanese popular culture often influenced fans' decisions to learn the Japanese language. Allison points out a clear shift from the 1980s, when students were mostly studying Japanese for a reason of possible business opportunities, while in recent years the main motivation for language learning lies in the interest in fantasy and play products[2] (Allison 2006: 6). In support of this assertion, Napier's preliminary research conducted from 1998 to 1999 on anime and manga fans, most of them students, finds that 43% had taken a Japanese language course (Napier 2001: 240, 247).

2. FANS, FANDOM AND COMPETENCIES

According to fan scholar Cornel Sandvoss fandom implies a " ... regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text in the form of books, television shows, films or music, as well as popular texts in a broader sense" (Sandvoss 2005: 8). For Sandvoss the object of fandom becomes a part of the self, it is "intrinsically interwoven with our sense of self, with who we are, would like to be, and think we are" (Sandvoss 2005: Ibid. 96). Separating fans from regular audiences, Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green define them as those individuals "... who have a passionate relationship to a particular media franchise" while members of certain fandoms "consciously identify as part of a larger community to which they feel some degree of commitment and loyalty" (Jenkins et al. 2013: 166).

Being a fan is therefore a matter of intensity of involvement with texts, described by Fiske as "an 'excessive reader' who differs from the 'ordinary' one in degree rather than kind" (Fiske 1992: 46). It is a connection that is realised and sustained due to affect, or what "gives 'colour,' 'tone' or 'texture' to our experiences" (Grossberg 1992: 56). Affect shapes what Grossberg calls "mattering maps", areas of interest that matter to us, direct our attention and influence identity (Ibid. 57). In the case of popular culture fans, that what 'matters' is frequently considered trivial, while attention beyond a certain

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2   In her doctoral dissertation Williams presents the same situation in her own experience as a Japanese language student and later as a teaching assistant (Williams 206: 1).

degree is judged as excessive. Historically, fans have been pathologised, and considered a "scandalous category" (Jenson 1992, Jenkins 1992: 16), while scholars today mostly recognise that both fans and fandom are viewed as a transformed and more commonplace experience (Gray et al. 2017: 1).

The Janissary Collective state that skills and practices, once considered specialised and even antisocial are becoming more relevant and even necessary in contemporary modernity in which our everyday is saturated with media (The Janissary Collective 2014: 88). Additionally, these skills and competencies are not fixed and uniform, but "exist on a continuum, and vary from fandom to fandom". They distinguish between two types of competencies: technical and conceptual. Technical competencies imply specialised and procedural knowledge that enables participation in a fandom, but is also, at the same time, a part of broader technical and media capability. The second set of competencies is conceptual, relates to those that are mainly interpretative and interpersonal, built on fans' social literacies. Conceptual competencies are further divided into: first – "fan's individual ability to 'play' with a text", and second – "fan's proficiency in using, understanding and contributing to the community-derived meta-narrative surrounding the text" (Ibid. 80). The Janissary Collective note that, while many of these competencies are shared, each fandom has "its own set of specialized values, competencies and skills" (Ibid. 81). As already mentioned, technical competencies are part of a wider set of technical and media literacies and can be applied in various activities. Of course, perceptions, experiences and practices of fans differ depending on cultural familiarity, or whether the subject of interest is originally from one's national context or a transnational one.

In the case of non-Japanese anime and manga fans, scholars have noted fansubbing of anime and scanlations[3] of manga as widely practised among transnational fans, and we can consider them to be an example of specialised technical competencies. Although the advancement of digital technologies has greatly influenced the way we consume media, including promoting their reach to audiences, in the case of this fandom a certain active engagement is necessary to access the desired content.

Since the distribution of these products on global markets is rather uneven, both in the case of usually delayed official release and the fact that some are

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3   fansubbing: fan-subtitled unofficial version of a work that is not available in a given country (Galbraith 2013: 70); scanlations: unofficial translations of manga by fans (Ibid. 196)

not even released outside the domestic Japanese market, Lee considers the nature of global distribution of cultural commodities as "un-global", but states that fans' desire to access content drives them to break through "temporal, spatial and linguistic constraints" (Lee 2011: 1135-1136). This state of affairs encourages more enthusiastic fans to employ their own competencies and participate in the bottom-up distribution of the desired content, which Lee views as a new force existing in a growing disjuncture of the global mediascape (Ibid. 1143). Considering it a kind of „globalisation from below", cultural anthropologist Ian Condry notes that it was the efforts of devoted fans to access and share content that initially allowed for Japanese popular culture forms to reach wider audiences (Condry 2013: 36).

In the area of conceptual competencies, besides other forms of fandom specific knowledge, for non-Japanese fans of anime and manga fans, some degree of language and cultural familiarity is considered desirable. This motivates many fans to start learning the Japanese language and inquire about Japanese culture. Borrowing Michel de Certeau's characterisation of active reading, Jenkins views fans as "textual poachers" who "construct their cultural and social identity through borrowing and inflecting mass culture images" (Jenkins 1992: 23). The act of "poaching" characterises fan's relationship to the text as an "ongoing struggle for possession of the text and for control over its meanings" (Ibid. 24-25). Considering fan reading as "poaching" highlights it as a "process of making meaning and the fluidity of popular interpretation" with the fan always re-examining his/her relationship to the text and its meanings (Ibid. 34-35).

This fluid process in which fans redefine and reinterpret their position depends on specific fan knowledge and competencies, which typically includes knowledge about the texts and their metadata, and in the case of transnational fans, extends to linguistic and cultural literacies.

3. CROATIAN FANS AND JAPANESE CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

As part of the research for my doctoral dissertation concerning the reception of anime and manga among Croatian anime and manga fans, I have conducted a series of interviews.

The impulse for redefining one's own 'position' in relation to the text is clearly shown in my interviews with Croatian fans. For example, one fan states

her frustration at not being able to "put together a simple sentence" despite her constant exposure to anime, manga and Japanese pop music, which prompted her to enrol in the Japanology course in Zagreb. Furthermore, she points to the subtleties of the Japanese language as a crucial part of understanding the text (Interview 15). In this fan's view, her 'position' was insufficient for her desired comprehension of the fan object, but by learning Japanese she was able to renegotiate her fan position. Another fan and Japanology student states the inability to understand peculiarities of humour and nuances of interpersonal relationships without sufficient background knowledge of the Japanese culture. On male-female relationships and ways of addressing he says, "It was not that clear before, I simply didn't understand that it works like that there". In his view, without some degree of language competency one "cannot experience the texts completely" (Interview 7), suggesting that language competency is relevant even at the level of translated text comprehension. A better insight into interpersonal relationships as well as societal norms is expressed by another fan: "... let's say in the animated parts, if they showed some kind of shame, confusion, shock, why is it like that with them?" In other words, for this fan, acquiring some cultural knowledge enabled him a better understanding of character emotions. He continues, " ... it's not like 'oh I understand this better now' but, 'maybe I understand why she did it'" (Interview 5). Another fan states that better knowledge of Japanese "warned her that there was a lot she couldn't understand before" (Interview 8).

Jenkins states that it is precisely the combination of frustration and fascination that motivates fans active engagement with media (Jenkins 1992: 24), which in the case of transcultural fandom extends beyond the media and its metadata. For some anime and manga fans, language and culture learning becomes a question of specialised competencies and skills.

4. JAPAN AS FANTASYSCAPE

Although perceived as Japan, the worlds of anime and manga are actually its' media representation and as such imagined both by the author or producer and the receiving audiences. Based on Arjun Appadurai's theory of global flows as fluid and changing landscapes, manga and anime scholar Susan Napier formulates the concept of Japan as *fantasyscape*. A creative space that provides not only an escape, but is also a source of different worldviews and values that at times question Western ones (Napier 2007:

11-12). Appadurai views the modern condition of globalisation as a state of fundamental disjuncture, which he proposes viewing through five *scapes* – *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes* and *ideoscapes* (Appadurai 1996: 33). Along with these five *scapes*, Napier sees anime as existing in a sixth landscape, *fantasyscape,* whose two key aspects are action – play, and setting – a world of entertainment or simulacra (Napier 2001: 237-238).

Although a place of fantasy and play, these media are associated with their place of origin, that is Japan. In this regard, Media scholar Koichi Iwabuchi employs the notion of "cultural odour" to examine the moment of association of products with their country of origin, while a positive connection is considered a fragrance. In his view in the case of Japanese culture products these perceptions are based on merely symbolic images of Japan (Iwabuchi 2002: 27). While this may be the case when referring to wider audiences, because of their degree of involved and affective relationships to texts, enthusiastic fans often extend and maintain their interest in Japan, the country that produces these media and is reflected in them.

Through the *fantasyscape*, fans of anime and manga experience the fragrance of Japan, an experience that influences perceptions of this country and in some cases fans' interests. As a result, references shared by fans originate not only from popular culture texts and their metatext, but also from other sources that become of interest. In this way, as the setting in which these texts take place, as well as being their country of origin, Japan becomes an extension of anime and manga *fantasyscape*.

As cultural anthropologist Ann Allison points out, what is being imagined is a world of both fantasy and reality, but knowing that their object of interest comes from a real place is important, it is what motivates fans to learn about Japan. Furthermore, her own research among fans in the United Stated shows that what urges certain fans to learn Japanese and inquire into Japanese culture is the encounter with a fantasy world that is alternative to the fantasies of American popular culture. Fans are fascinated by these "quirky and bizarre otherworlds", worlds they want to grasp "by keeping the edginess of its difference yet acquiring the savvy of a global traveller/citizen to speak the language" (Allison 2006: 275). Napier notes that it is precisely the aspect of "difference" that fans highlight as one that initially attracted them to Japanese popular culture (Napier 2007: 32-38), a quality also singled out by Croatian fans in my interviews. Although, this kind of

appreciation of difference, especially one expressed from a western point of view, could on first glance be taken as an attraction towards something perceived as exotic, film scholar Jamie Sexton warns against relying solely on this explanation as the basis of attraction, an approach he terms "the exoticist assumption" – a tendency to explain the appeal of transnational media based on the attractiveness of the exotic (Sexton 2016: 8-9). Sexton cautions that this approach neglects the existence of 'otherness' in one's own national context, as well as the fact that this appeal is also present in other fandoms, not just transnational ones (Ibid. 15). Although the "exoticist assumption" is not a satisfactory clarification of these attractions, the fact that this is a fascination with objects originating from a foreign cultural environment cannot be ignored.

5. COSMOPOLITAN CONSUMERS

In reference to transnational fandom, media scholar Henry Jenkins employs the term "pop cosmopolitanism" which concerns "the ways that "popular culture inspires new forms of global consciousness and cultural competency" (Jenkins 2006: 156). He warns us "pop cosmopolitanism" "walks a thin line between dilettantism and connoisseurship, between orientalistic fantasies and a desire to honestly connect and understand an alien culture, between assertion of mastery and surrender to cultural difference" (Ibid. 164), but on the other hand, he believes it also "offers us is an escape from parochialism and isolationism" (Ibid. 166). According to Ulf Hannerz, cosmopolitism involves "a greater involvement with a plurality of contrasting cultures to some degree on their own terms". As an orientation and willingness to engage with the Other, it requires an openness towards different cultural experiences; it is a preference that seeks variation, not uniformity. Furthermore, Hannerz states that cosmopolitanism is also sometimes an issue of competence, both as a general readiness to learn about other cultures, and a specialised ability to deal with particular systems of meaning (Hannerz 1996: 103). Building on Jenkins, film scholar Ian Robert Smith formulates the term "cult cosmopolitism" to determine a cosmopolitan acceptance of cultural differences among cult fans[4] (Smith 2017: 2). It is part of a prolonged process of cultural engagement, "a phenomenon that relies upon an exoticisation of

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4   Smith notes that cult practices often rely on the rise and fetish of otherness, and outlines the category of "strangeness" as one of the factors of cult films quoted by Mathijs and Mendik, films that outside the context of their home culture become subject to curiosity (Mathijs and Mendik 2008 cited in Smith 2017:10)

cultural difference through a focus on elements that are perceived to be weird and/or bizarre, but it also reflects a sincere desire to discover and celebrate overlooked areas of global popular culture" (Ibid. 10). This "exotic encounter" is often a consequence of a lack of comprehension, but in his view it is an introduction to a possible deeper process of cultural engagement (Ibid. 11).

This sense of cosmopolitanism, of an openness to different cultures, is in my conversations with fans often presented implicitly – such as willingness to try new things: " ... cuisine, I'm interested in that, generally Asian, but still anime, so to some extent I prefer Japanese. I really cook a lot, and I like trying out everything in general" (Interview 9). And sometimes more explicitly: "Umm, I started being interested in tea. I learned to make good tea ... and I think it's important for my self-image as a cosmopolitan citizen" (Interview 12).

Through their fascination with anime and manga, some fans develop an interest in other aspects of Japanese culture such as – language, cuisine, history and so on, making Japan itself an extension of the anime and manga *fantasyscape* and, at the same time, feeding cosmopolitan affinities.

In her own research Napier finds that fans do not passively consume these media, but show a high degree of agency in seeking to know more, not only about the products themselves, but also about their country of origin, knowledge that increases what Thornton recognises as fans' "subcultural capital" – a form of capital (Bourdieu 1986) that is "embodied in the form of being 'in the know'" (Thornton 1995: 27). For Napier, this type of capital is what truly inspires fans and sustains a fandom (Napier 2007: 150). The unfamiliar cultural context compels more devoted audiences or fans driven by their work of imagination[5] (Appadurai 1996) to "dig deeper" and explore, widen their interests and discover new ones.

In the case of transnational media such as anime and manga, an understanding of the text to a certain extent encourages an understanding of the context, that is Japan. For example, one fan admits to admiring traditional music, another collects Japanese fans, and many express an interest in Japanese cuisine. One fan says he developed an interest in "Japan as a nation" and "generally that lifestyle" and later, owing to the Slice of Life anime genre, grew an interest in the Japanese school system (Interview 11).

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5   Appadurai sees what he calls the "work of imagination" as a constitutive characteristic of modern subjectivity (Appadurai 1996: 3), "a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern" (Ibid. 4)

Although in most cases when considering anime and manga fans an interest in other aspects of Japanese culture usually grows after or from the fascination with this popular culture, in the case of one respondent an affinity towards traditional culture parallels the popular: "I am very interested in Japanese traditional culture, that was much more powerful than anime and manga ever was, because it was so wacky and mystical, and ... it got to me. That visual art really got to me; I was really trying to understand it ... It affects me on an emotional level, I can' t describe it" (Interview 2). For this fan, a strong emotional draw moved her to try and understand Japanese culture, eventually leading her to enrol in a Japanese language class.

A desire to work in the video game industry motivated another fan to start studying Japanese. Although his initial plan was to try and work in the USA, after broadening his interests, he changed his focus to Japan, a market that in his view offers more opportunities for creative work. In order to fit language learning into his schedule more easily, he decided on a different path of study enabling him to devote his attention to learning Japanese (Interview 7). This case shows an individual's intense motivation to study Japanese with a specific life goal in mind, it is an example of Appadurai's "work of imagination" as a force that triggers agency.

Of course, not everyone is motivated in this regard, with one fan claiming lack of ambition to study the language, while he would attend an event related to Japanese culture only if it was being held close by (Interview 4). Another states he wanted to visit Japan as the country "which makes the products he likes so much", wanting to "learn more about it", applying for a scholarship and taking up hiragana and katakana, but not developing an interest in Japanese culture beyond its media products (Interview 10).

It seems that language competency is the first aspect fans aspire to, but without an opportunity to enter a language course in their area, some admit to a lack of self-discipline to study on their own. Furthermore, others state work and personal obligations as reasons of discontinuing their study, with one first generation Japanology student stating quitting as one of his biggest regrets (Interview 5), while one fan attempted to learn some Japanese on her own, but singles out financial reasons for not entering a formal language course (Interview 9).

Using James Paul Gee's concept of young people as "shape-shifting portfolio people"[6] Fukunaga considers anime fans who invest in learning Japanese and culture as a way of building their personal "portfolios", knowledge which then procures certain influence within their affinity groups[7] (Fukunaga 2006: 207-208). In her article, Shamoon addresses the issues of teaching popular culture in a university, pointing to, among other things, the problems that arise when the obsessive fan (*otaku*) becomes disruptive in a classroom setting (Shamoon 2010: 16). In such situations certain fan competencies or knowledge can be incompatible with this kind of formal learning setting.

In their research of Australian anime and manga fans Armour and Iida address the argument that interest in this media leads to a formal education in Japanese language. Their results do confirm the claim that a high percent of language learners are indeed motivated by their interest in popular culture (55.4%), but point to the fact that more than half of those respondents discontinue their learning in less than two years[8] (Armour and Iida 2014: 8). Additionally, they caution that this argument does not explain why some fans choose not to engage in Japanese language learning (Ibid. 9). Fukunaga views anime students as a "new version of Japanese enthusiast", students who, regardless of whether or not they continue their study, share an interest in this culture and language. Her own research shows that students "wanted to explore new worlds", engaging with a culture and language according to their own specific needs (Fukunaga 2006: 219).

Watching anime is a "cultural experience" (Williams 2006: 133) encouraging some fans to find out more about the references they encounter: "Some terms, for example, when I don't know them or, it's the same with the historical ones

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6   In this context the word portfolio refers to various skills individuals need for success in contemporary capitalist society. As circumstances change, portfolios are revised with new experiences and adjusted to current needs (Gee 2002 cited in Fukunaga 2006: 207)

7   Fukunaga notes that the goals of these students are not transferable to outside success (Fukunaga 2006: 207). In her explanation of subcultural capital, Thornton poses the question of how this form of capital is transferable to economic capital. Although the conversion is not as straightforward as with cultural capital, in her research into club cultures she states some possible examples of how individuals capitalise on this type of capital (Thornton 1995: 27-28). In the case of fan knowledge (including social connections) the conversion depends on circumstances and desires of the individual. Furthermore, on the occurrence when fan aspirations guide an individual into formal education, the initial fannish impulse may result in professional work.

8   Their research involved 451 respondents, five declared to being Japanese heritage speakers. 247 (55.4%) had experience of learning the Japanese, out of which 119 respondents stated that they were self-taught. 28.3% learned for less than a year, while 17% learned five years and over. More than half had learned Japanese for less than two years (56.6%) (Armour and Iida 2014: 8).

(anime). When I notice something I don't know, I look up a bit more about that person, that character, things like that" (Interview 18).

When I asked a fan whether anime and manga changed her view of Japan, she says that it actually created it, which she points out was greatly determined by what she saw in anime. Besides starting to learn Japanese, she started being interested in different "vignettes" from Japanese culture such as festivals and patterns of behaviour, adding that she was always curious about how these portrayals correspond to "real" Japan (Interview 9).

Fiske states that the boundaries between what falls within fandom and what does not are sharply drawn (Fiske 1992: 34), for these fans that means that the object of interest sometimes crosses the boundaries of fantasy and reality. Although the boundaries are somewhat blurred, fans are aware of the differences between the fantasy worlds of anime and manga and Japan as a real place. One fan demonstrates a clear awareness of anime not being a reliable representation of culture and society, as well as echoing Napier's notion of *fantasyscape*: "Because it provides you with a fantasy world you escape to. I mean, it's a fact that their popular culture is not a typical reflection of what exactly is going on in their society, that's a fact. So, it's a fantasy world. And we, of course, escape into their fantasy world, not into real culture" (Interview 3).

Whether after learning about Japan or visiting it, recognition of the discord between the world represented in Japanese popular culture and the one they learn about outside those media is often a matter of pride and knowledgeability, often described as "before" and "after". "Well I don't look at it with childish eyes anymore, I'm not some superficial stupid girl who thinks everything in Japan is great. Now you understand some things ... it's not some kind of infatuation anymore, but let's say respect, to a certain degree. Now I see things more objectively, to a degree" (Interview 2).

As Japan is drawn closer to the "real" there is a sense of disillusion with previous idealisations: "Before, Japan was, you know, everything is ideal... What you see in anime, when you get there, it really is like that, far from that, that's what it's like, but naturally, I mean as with everything else, you learn about some negative things" (Interview 1). In this respect, knowledge about Japan becomes a matter of fan competency and maturation. "Yes, in the beginning it was pretty idealistic, but later ... at some point I realised,

especially in regard to the problems they talk about that it's definitely not so idealistic" (Interview 12).

While some realisations, maybe due to a greater investment in the *fantasyscape*, result in more negative views: "The more I learn about that culture, the more I think worse of it, I don't know. Every now and then we come to these women's issues in Japan and then I see red, ... also men's issues ... their whole system of employment is terrible" (Interview 15).

6. CONCLUSION

In transnational anime and manga fandom, usual fan skills and knowledge are supplemented with a desire to understand the Japanese language and Japanese culture. These efforts on one hand help with the understanding of media texts, and on the other create an interest towards the culture of the country that produces them. Thus, Japan becomes an extension of the *fantasyscape*, but also a real place that the fans develop a connection to. Furthermore, these new interests and proficiencies that they share with other members of this transnational fandom represent not only the fans subcultural capital, but also an opportunity to widen their horizon and introduce a sense of "cosmopolitanism" into their everyday. A cosmopolitan proclivity and an affective relationship to the *fantasyscape* influences fans desire to deepen their knowledge about Japan, which in turn becomes a matter of fandom specific competencies. Although popularity of anime and manga contributes to motivations to study Japanese, for fans, language learning can be part of a "poaching" strategy, an activity that informs an understanding of texts, as well as contributing to "subcultural capital". Inquiring into why certain fans chose to enter a formal language study setting, while others do not, or decide to discontinue their studies, seems to be a question which is difficult to answer. While some fans chose to enrol in a language class, others are satisfied with independent study, and some express little interest in Japanese culture in general. Besides motivation, taking up or continuing Japanese appears to be a question of certain life circumstances and decisions, and as such a complicated question to research. Regardless of a presumed degree of involvement, by learning about Japanese culture and language a fan negotiates his or her relationship to these media texts, which in turn affects his or her 'fan position', both personally and within a fan community.

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SAŽETAK

Hrvatski fanovi *animea* i *mange*: susret s japanskom kulturom i jezikom

Širenje japanskih medija i proizvoda popularne kulture, posebice animacije i stripa, potaknulo je brojna akademska istraživanja o njezinim transnacionalnim recepcijama. Kao proizvod određenoga nacionalnog konteksta, ovi mediji između ostaloga, posreduju i slike japanske kulture društva, zbog čega se u proučavanju publika, pitanje recepcije ovih tekstova proširuje i na ove elemente. U slučaju fanova kao publike snažnije razine posvećenosti, afektivne i emotivne povezanosti s predmetom interesa, istraživanja pokazuju nastavljanje interesa na zemlju porijekla ovih proizvoda, uključujući i želju za učenjem japanskoga jezika. Interes za japanskom popularnom kulturom pokazao se kao jedna od glavnih motivacija pri odluci za učenjem japanskoga jezika među recentnijim generacijama. Koristeći se pojmom *fantasyscape* Susan Napier, ovaj rad promatra fanovsku želju za poznavanjem japanskoga jezika i kulture kao primjer specijaliziranoga fanovskog znanja i sposobnosti potrebnih za snalaženje u tekstovima, ali i vrstom fanovskoga supkulturnog kapitala. Kao nastavak na *fantasyscape* ovih medijskih svjetova, pojedini fanovi proširuju predmet svojega interesa na različite elemente japanske kulture, primjerice japansku kuhinju, tradicionalnu kulturu, povijest itd., znanje koje uz ono jezično, doprinosi i osobnom osjećaju kozmopolitizma. Zavisno o pojedinačnim motivacijama, interesi transnacionalnih fanova koji prelaze granice fantazije i stvarnosti, postaju primjer "rada imaginacije". Kao što je slučaj i s uobičajenim fanovskim entuzijazmom, angažman s japanskim jezikom i kulturom različitoga je intenziteta zavisno o pojedincu. Međutim, nezavisno o razini posvećenosti, učenjem japanskoga jezika i kulture, *anime* i *manga* fanovi pregovaraju svoj odnos s medijskim tekstovima, ali i vlastitu fanovsku poziciju.

Ključne riječi: *anime*, *manga*, Hrvatska, fanovi, *fantasyscape*, transnacionalno, učenje japanskog jezika, kozmopolitizam