Digital Art in the Age of Social Media: A Case Study of the politics of personalization via cute culture.

Larissa Hjorth

RMIT University

Swanston St, Melbourne

Australia

E: larissa.hjorth@rmit.edu.au

ABSTRACT

Undoubtedly, as social media ubiquity spreads, the attendant forms of emerging creativity, collaboration and community further appropriate and adapt Digital Art current trends. As Jean Burgess observes in her studies on YouTube, one of the key attributes of this personalization phenomenon is what she calls "vernacular creativity" [9]. Here Burgess spearheads the amateur / professional nexus that has been transformed through networked social media. In these transformations, the role Digital Art vernaculars play in the divergent world of the global games industry in an age of social, networked media has been given little focus. One such vernacular can be seen in cute culture. As a highly emotional and affective vernacular with its roots in Japanese personalization culture, cute culture has straddled various Digital Art terrains such as gaming and new media. I argue that through charting the cartographies of personalization through cute character culture we can gain insight into Digital Art vernaculars both inside *and* outside Game Studies. By honing in upon one of the most pervasive modes of Digital Art—cute character culture—this paper provides new ways to conceptualize Digital Art.

To focus upon cute culture is to explore an aesthetic that has its genealogy in Japanese technocultures — a realm that has, until recently, been left under-researched in the English-speaking world. In a period marked by the increasingly proclivity towards "personalized technologies" it is cute culture, with its history in the rise of Japanese personal technologies from the 1970s, that can lend much insight into the politics and practices of contemporary Digital Art. In this paper I uncover some of the meanings that have caused cute culture to become a lynchpin between so much media converging Digital Art with games in an age in which the personal—epitomized by personal technologies—has a deeply political edge.

Keywords

Introduction

Over the preceding couple of decades, and especially since the beginning of this century, the interdisciplinary nature of gaming scholarship has aptly addressed many issues—around New Media, narratology, interactivity and active audiences—bringing new insights and approaches to the creative industries, global studies and popular culture. In the global games industry, the rise of the divergent, localized forms of Digital Art have become increasingly prevalent. Reflecting the socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, aesthetic and localized factors that inform notions of gameplay (and play more generally), Digital Art practices are progressively becoming emblematic of this phenomenon.

With the rise of cross-platforming and convergent social media, the role of online communities and localized socio-cultural practices such as massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) like Lineage and World of Warcraft (WoW) have identified the importance of community-based collaborative

---

forms of creativity and authorship. These new types of media practice, what Jean Burgess calls "vernacular creativity" [9], highlight emerging forms of labour and producer-user conflations in the form of "produsers" [7] — especially around user created content (UCC). One way of defining the blur between players and producers can be seen in realms like modding (computing modifications) in which creative and affective labour are not viewed as work but rather play — or what Julian Kücklich calls "playbour" [33]. These processes are reflective of the affective nature of technologies today [34]. As sociologist Amparo Lasén has identified, the increasing significance of personal technologies is predicated around its role as an "affective" technology in which emotional and affective labor become the dominant currencies [34]. In this phenomenon, the role of customization through the vernacular further augments emotions with technologies.

In these realms of playbour and social media, the significance of cute culture cannot be ignored — especially outside Anglocentric visions of the Internet and New Media [20]. Social Media like Chinese Tencent QQ deploy online gaming with socializing through the role cute character avatars that helps users negotiate online and offline worlds. The cute makes warm and friendly the coldness of new technology [38] [18] [19] whilst playing more broadly into the mechanics of personalization so prevalent within social media practices. Cute avatars, with their particular brand of cute capital [21], have become an integral part of the emotional, social, creative and financial investment in the "participatory culture" [28] of social, convergent media.

This paper will focus upon one of the dominant, yet misunderstood, genealogies of Digital Art that accompanied the personalization trends within online, networked communities — cute culture (*kawaii)*. Through a case study of cute culture, this paper aims to provide greater insight into the socio-cultural and political dimensions of Digital Art beyond being in-between Game Studies, new media and game art. Given the fact that aesthetics such as "cute" have been under-theorized and problematized within Western canons of gaming cultures due to their "feminine" and "childish" overtones, this paper seeks to reposition this burgeoning culture and aesthetic terrain within its genealogical context.

I argue that cute culture has played an integral role in Japan since the 1970s — functioning as a key lynchpin to forge the personal with technology. Through cute culture we can understand some of the complex ways personalization politics are operating today. The rise of gaming and its success in the Japanese mainstream—as well as the uptake of Japanese games globally—is linked to cute culture which is, in turn, linked to the specific role the personal plays in Japanese technocultures [24] and tradition [15].

Cute culture humanizes technological spaces such as virtuality — rendering the experience familiar, human and emotional. Cute culture also highlights that while much has been written about the rise of gaming within the US, the concurrent birth and growth of gaming in Japan from the 1970s has often been left out of the conversation [32]. Through understanding the genealogy of cute culture as one of the first personalization modes, we can begin to trace a different history of the rise of Digital Art and Games Studies in an age of personal and pervasive social media. By interrogating the rise of politics of personalization vernaculars I argue that we can see new forms of the "politics of the personal" that inform the practice and deployment of contemporary Digital Art.

Locating the personal: Getting Personal

The rise, dissemination, and adaptation of gaming is characterised by unilateral uptakes. These differences are the result of various factors—such as technonationalism and socio-cultural nuances—which inform both micro (individual) and macro (cultural) contexts and practices. Hence to conceptualise gaming, or technocultures in general, we must recognise that it is far from homogeneous in its dissemination globally. For example, what it means to use ubiquitous computing in Japan—where the *keitai* is pretty much *the*

device for everything from emailing, GPS, and SNS, to taking pictures—is a completely different embodied experience than in the U.S., for instance. These differences impact upon the types of games that are played, the way they are played and the preferred platform. I argue that these technocultural localities are best understood through the rubric of cartographies of personalisation. Through the lens of cartographies of personalisation we can insight into how the various different technocultures are emerging in the twenty-first century.

These cartographies take a specific geo-imaginary within the Asia-Pacific. These geo-imaginaries occur around the contested spaces of gendered media consumption and production. They are media and technological maps that create new boundaries that, on one hand, reinforce constructions of the national (in terms of technonationalist policy) and, on the other hand, through the emphasis upon vernaculars they transcend and subverting national geographic boundaries. A country that has pioneered cartographies of personalisation within its technocultures is Japan. One of the key factors that ensured Japan's success of media convergence represented by gaming and *keitai* cultures was the central and defining role *personalisation* played in the uptake of new technologies. And so, what does it mean to think about a politics of personalisation in an age whereby the "personal" is being branded with technology via industry whilst movements such as UCC attempt to claim it back for the people?

One such tradition that has its roots in subcultural, grass-roots practice, as well as the politics of personalization, is cute culture (*kawaii*). Forged within the rise of female writers and "producers" (Bruns 2005) within the *manga* and *anime* amateur movement from the 1970s onwards as well as harking back to one of the first novels (written by a Japanese woman) in 1000 AD, *kawaii* epitomizes "emotional vernacular". It is this notion of emotional vernacular that is central to rethinking the role of politics in an age of personalization. Thus to investigate the *kawaii* is to spearhead this personalization phenomenon.

Through the long and persistent history of the *kawaii* as one of the oldest forms of technocultural personalization in which personalization, social media and gaming are forming new synergies. I argue that we can understand the way *kawaii* culture typifies a localised example of emerging gendered forms of creativity and how the personal can be viewed as political. The *kawaii*, like much of Japanese media, plays on the significance of the *personal* within Japanese tradition [15]; a fact that can be evidenced in Japan's successful role in "electronic individualism" [31] from the Sony Walkman to GameBoy.

The 'personal as political', with its feminist overtones from 1960s and 1970s body politics, has taken on new meanings when the very notion of personal is coming under interrogation. Some argue that the personal is no longer the prerogative of people, but rather technologies [50]. As Lasén [34] has identified, the increasing significance of mobile media is predicated around its role as an "affective" technology in which emotional and affective labour become the dominant currencies. Just like social, networked media, these cartographies are global. So too, like social, networked media, these cartographies are marked by distinctively regional and localised characteristics. Here the notion of *personal* is significant as highlighted Mizuko Ito et al.'s observations that the rise of *keitai* culture (synonymous with ubiquity in Japan) was marked by three key features—the "personal, portable and pedestrian" [24]. These three P's render new technologies relevant—that is, transforming them into an integral part of the technocultural landscape. Indeed the role of "personalization" has been crucial in the rise of ubiquitous and affective technologies such as mobile media — playing a significant role in the media localisation.

According to Ito et al. Japanese *keitai* culture is part of broader "personalization" techniques that can be mapped back to the eighteenth century [15] and thus should be contextualised as part of broader shifts within industrialism and post-industrialism. However, within these broader cartographies, localised and temporalised features occur —

exasperated at particular key socio-cultural and economic periods.[1]

Undoubtedly, as social media and digital storytelling spreads, the attendant forms of emerging creativity, collaboration and community in the form of UCC becomes increasingly pervasive. One of the key attributes of this personalisation phenomenon is what Jean Burgess calls "vernacular creativity" [9]. A key example of UCC "vernacular creativity" is the *kawaii*. The *kawaii* vividly demonstrates the increasingly role personalization plays in the politics of social media. Far from renouncing older media, personalized media such as *kawaii* rehearses and remediates as it converges and diverges — extending and expanding upon the women's tradition of subversive writing around new media in the form of "kitten writing" (or *kawaii* cultures) as well as highlighting the significant role women—as both writers and readers—play in the rise of the novel. The *kawaii* is indicative of not only new forms of negotiating Digital Art and Gaming, it is also exemplary of a revised notion of the personal as political.

Toying with the *kawaii:* cute culture genealogies, play and politics of personalization

To explore the *kawaii* in gaming and Digital Art, the discussion of its genealogy in Japan is unavoidable. However, to understand the *kawaii* as but a mere form of Japanese production of New Media technologies, undersells the growing complexity of the consumption of *kawaii* culture globally. Moreover, as *kawaii* culture takes on new vernaculars in game designing outside Japan, we need to be able to conceptualize the new socio-aesthetic dimensions that are

---

[1] In the case of the Asia-Pacific, whilst the birth and rise of "personalisation" as a key characteristic of post-industrial rhetoric can be noted for decades, it is from the 1997 economic crisis that we see significant transformations in its vernacular — as the region unevenly moves away from being a global site for technological production towards having increasing ideological prowess [23].

being constituted. Once associated with children audiences in locations outside of Japan, the grow of *kawaii* culture globally represents a revision of categories such as children and adults beyond the model detailed by Philippe Ariés in Centuries of Childhood [2] whereby childhood is defined as opposite to adulthood with the abolishment of child labor. Indeed, with global phenomenon such as "kidults" [12]—adults challenging conventions about age and technology by consuming new media technologies akin to modes associated with children or teenagers—such categories as *kawaii* cultures could provide much insight into the localized and temporal role of aesthetics.

In addition, as Ito has noted, the role of the *kawaii* has been pivotal in the uptake of games by female users. As Ito notes, there is an unacknowledged and under-theorized history of females entering the games industry initially as players of *kawaii* games. Ito observes,

> Although Japanese gaming has not been considered central to the girls gaming movement, the role of Japanese gaming genres in bringing girls into electronic gaming should not be overlooked. Much as The Sims has provided a relatively gender-neutral avenue into gaming for women, Pokémon broke new ground for girls who subsequently adopted the Game Boy platform and trading card games [25].

Moreover, *kawaii* culture can be a site to explore nostalgia (for an "imagined" childhood), emotion and localization. As Wai-ming Ng [46] notes in his eloquent analysis of consuming Japanese games in Hong Kong, "consuming Japanese games in Hong Kong is not a form of cultural imperialism, because we have witnessed the making of a dialectical nexus between global (Japan) and local (Hong Kong) in terms of ongoing cultural hybridization".

In order to understand the *kawaii* firstly we need to define the history of *kawaii* aesthetics in Japan. As an aesthetic and philosophy, the role of k*awaii* culture is pivotal in the rise of personalization. As a prominent example of the rise of

subversive female subcultural languages in the 1970s, *kawaii* culture in the form of "kitten writing" has been linked to female and feminine cultures in Japan [30], particularly in light of its role in customizing domestic technologies in the form of the "technocute" [38]. Practices such as "kitten writing" are examples of youths subverting Japanese concepts by intentionally misspelling words in acts of political neologism [30]. Kitten writing can be seen as earlier examples of *emoji* (emoticons) before it was institutionalized by industry as part of built-in *keitai* customization. The various possibilities for women as players and makers is undoubtedly catered for and addressed by the *kawaii* within games cultures. As Ito notes in the case of American girls' deployment of Japanese games, "from the perspective of style, Japanese media mix content is also distinctive because of the centrality of "*kawaii*" (cute) culture. Hello Kitty and Pikachu are the face of *kawaii* culture overseas" [25].

According to Sharon Kinsella's groundbreaking research, *kawaii* culture arose as a youth subculture in the 1970s as a means of self-expression and rearticulation, and as a reaction to the overarching traditions that were perceived as oppressive. Young adults preferred to stay childlike rather than join the ranks of the corrupt adults [30]. This phenomenon highlighted the way in which "childhood" as a construct is conceived and practiced in locations such as Japan, with its premature adulthood, in contrast to the west [2], [52]. The *kawaii*, while stereotyped as a young female's preoccupation, and thus associated as female, was seen as traditionally asexual — that is, a gender without sex. Like the typical consumer, the *shôjo* (young female), the *kawaii* was a female without sexual agency in a society where the *oyaji* (salaryman) was the national symbol post World War II.[2]

In "Portable monsters and commodity cuteness; Pokémon as Japan's new global power", Allison eloquently outlines the phenomenon of Pokémon both in Japan and the US [1]. In doing so, she not only reinterprets the role of cuteness as a Japanese form of global commodity, but also explains how this allows us to see Japan's changing role in the global economy. For Allison, cuteness isn't necessarily linked to the cliché of girlishness and the "feminine". Cuteness is—as she finds in interviews with both Japanese and U.S. youth consumers of Japanese commodities such as Pokémon — deeply embedded in the idea of *yasashii* or gentleness [1].

Kawaii culture is also, according to Allison, "postmodern" in nature — "it is this polymorphous, open-ended, everyday nature of Pokémon that many of its Japanese producers or commentators refer to under the umbrella of 'cuteness'" [1]. Just as *kawaii* cultures have given rise to various forms of gender parody and irony [42] that reflect new forms of femininity in Japan, this is even more amplified with gaming and *anime* contexts. The deployment of *kawaii* for both male and female game characters in such key games as Final Fantasy have afforded many 'flexible' modes of gender performativity [8]. As Judith Butler notes, gender is not natural but rather a construction that is continuously maintained through a set of regulations. *Kawaii*-inspired Digital Art can be viewed as a site for new localized female subjectivities and agencies that, in turn, provide new spaces for young females — both within and outside of Japan.[3]

---

[2] As John Whittier Treat perspicuously notes, the *shôjo* signified a sexually neutral, consumption-focused female [53]. However, as *kawaii* culture married *keitai* scapes and was forged into virtual spaces, the *kawaii's* gender-without-sexual identity took on new characteristics [18]. Most notably, the *kôgyaru* (fashionable female in her twenties) deployed ironic appropriations of *kawaii* to infuse the gendered commodity with sexual connotations, thus transforming the *kawaii* into a gender *with* sexuality. This was predominantly

enacted through *kawaii* customisation whereby the cute was no longer deployed in an a-sexual manner.

[3] The importance of customizing and personalizing the technology continued as the *kawaii* expanded into a broader form of aesthetics, provoking Allison [1] to define the *kawaii* aesthetic as "postmodern" (that is, culturally relative and contesting interpretations) by way of its underlying mode of *yasashisa* (gentleness) in techno-cute practices. Koichi Iwabuchi sees phenomena such as Pokémon as selling a global image of Japanese technology as "odorless" [26]. Iwabuchi's notion of odorless—as a type of flavour of Japanese cultural products at the level of global consumption—is both evocative and provocative, echoing as it does the essentializing "Confucius capitalism" of the region at that time. As Arif Dirlik [13], [14] noted, "Confucius Capitalism"—that is, particular adaptation of Capitalism via Asia by deploying "Asian" morals to modernization—could be seen throughout the region after

Taking <u>Pokémon</u> as a symbol of "cuteness" (*kawairashisa*), Allison analyzes how this translates for consumers — both Japanese and also American. Pointing to the history of *kawairashisa* in Japan as a site for the 'imaginary', as well its link to traditional Japanese culture to its commodification in the 1970s with the likes of Hello Kitty, Allison argues that "in the millennial play product[s] Japan is selling—and using to sell itself—on the popular marketplace of global (kids') culture" links back to this genealogy [1]. Allison's discussion of the global dissemination of Japanese products seems to reflect the "glocal" techniques utilized by the likes of Sony Walkman. As Roland Robertson [48] notes, Japanese business models for globalization saw that an integral part of the process was the play between the local (customized) and the global (the standardized). This technique was called "glocal". In the case of Allison's reading of Iwabuchi, she somewhat underestimates the complexity encompassed by the odorlessness analogy. This is partly to do with her deployment of the "postmodern", in which she utilizes a clearly Western definition rather than engaging with a non-western definition such as artist Takashi Murakami's "superflat" notion [44].

Superflat is a postmodern relationship to surface and commodity that Murakami argues has its origins within traditional *nihon-ga* (Japanese narrative painting) of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. For Murakami the "posmodern" in Japan differs greatly from its ontology in the West. Murakami's argument for Japanese modernity parallels Kenichi Fujimoto's [15] discussion of *keitai* customization and *nagara* mobilism (*nagara* meaning "whilst doing something else") as an extension of *shikôkin* ("pleasurable favourites")

---

the 1997 economic crisis. This phenomenon informed Iwabuchi's argument about the reinvention of Japan and selling Japan both within and outside the region. However, in contrast to Allison's ethnographic focus, Iwabuchi's model focuses on the production and industrial side of the "circuit" of Japanese "odorless" culture, and neglects to gain a sense of the ways in which consumers—at a grass root level—negotiate this odorlessness in everyday life.

that can be mapped back centuries to the ongoing significance of tea ceremonies within Japanese life.

One of the defining features in customizing new technologies and gaming spaces in the region is through the role of cute aesthetics: in the Asia–Pacific the cute is all-pervasive and yet disjunctive in its meanings. The use of cute capital (i.e. cute characters) has long been viewed as a popular mode for both young and old to "domesticate" new technologies [17]. This is a phenomenon that does not translate into other contexts such as the US [19]. By investigating customization techniques (the politics of personalization), as indicative of the socio-cultural context, we can gain insight into the relationship between online and offline identity and attendant localized notions of individualism, community and social capital — important factors in the emergence of Web 2.0 and avatar culture with gaming. I assert that we must read this emerging phenomenon of the politics of personalization around divergent localized cute culture vernaculars in terms of reciting earlier forms of mediation [22]. Just as we see that such of Digital Art language and tools like Photoshop and Final Cut are haunted by the analogue [35], so too does it draw on broader aesthetics that are informed by socio-cultural tendencies.

Customizing invokes users to conceive of the technology as remediated [4]. Through cute customization of mobile media and games in the region, new technologies are linked into earlier cultural histories and media archaeologies that are distinctive from European or American models. As I have argued elsewhere, Occidental misreadings of the region's obsession with cute customization as an affectation of the region's feminine or childish qualities can be found in online discussions about Asian cute games such as <u>Kart Rider</u> [21]. As Ito has noted, the *kawaii* has been a key avenue for women becoming interested in gaming — so much so that an alternative history of the rise of women in games could be mapped through *kawaii* culture [25].

Just as the cute is no longer associated with Japan, so too is it no longer just the preoccupation of females. Increasingly

versions of cute culture grace mobile and gaming spaces, socializing the technologies and contextualizing the new into the media histories in the region. Moreover, once identified as a form of Japanization both within the region and globally, cute culture has taken on various formations in different contexts, such as in South Korea, that are distinctive to the Japanese form.[4] The dissemination and reappropriation of the *kawaii* highlights its significance in broader processes of transnational personalization politics — particularly prevalent within Digital Art and convergent gaming discourses. The *kawaii* not only can teach us about the localized politics of the personal operating today, it can also provide a lens upon Digital Art vis-à-vis New Media and Game Studies in an age of emotional and social networked media.

Cute Capital Inc: the future of Digital Art within social, networked media

The rise of the *kawaii* represents a specific relationship and engagement between the game space and gamer, a particular kind of playful identification and affective representation that allows various atypical or casual players to enter into gaming. It seems fitting that given this discussion paper's focus on the under-theorized and insufficiently contextualized phenomenon of the *kawaii*—as a barometer of personalization politics today—that I conclude with some thoughts about the future of "cute capital"; That is, the value of cute culture as emotional vernacular currency, a key form of exchange in the market of online social media and increasing personalization.

---

[4] This was evidenced in case study interviews with Korean users of the cute online community, Cyworld Mini-Hompy, in which users claimed that the cute helped socialize the technological space [20] — from the cute avatar and mini-room (cyber-room) to the pages of customized photos performing and parodying "cuteness", the cute is an integral part of socializing.

Living in an age of social media means grappling with revised notions of agency, engagement, authorship, collaboration and creativity. One way of conceiving these revisions is in terms of the rise of customization characterized by the Internet from Web 1.0 to 2.0. As Manuel Castells [10] notes, as the Internet becomes global it is exemplified by two dialectical forces — standardization and customization. With the rise of UCC and new avenues and forms of vernacular creativity, as I have signposted in this paper through the lens of cute culture, these two influences have become entwined within the politics of personalization.

In an epoch defined by personalization politics, cute culture has taken on new forms of capital in Pierre Bourdieu's [5] sense, in terms of its ability to denote the social, cultural and economic capital (or "knowledges"). Within many contemporary technocultures and online communities the role of cute cultural capital as a form of affective and emotional language has become a key phenomenon both *inside* game space customization (i.e. Nintendo Wii) and *outside* (social networking sites such as Cyworld mini-hompy) within broader social, networked media. Far from mere child's play, the cute has graduated into a dominant player in the age of social media. It is integral in the politics of personalization in an age of affective technologies.

As we sit posed at the dawn of a new era in gaming cultures—in which producers, players and produsers converge and conflate—it is important to consider some of the gaps in the literature that have plagued both Digital Art and Game Studies more broadly. Through the example of the *kawaii*—as part of a broader rubric of personalization politics within social and participatory media networks—I have endeavoured to highlight that some of the ambiguities of the Digital Art, as with Game Studies, are embedded with socio-cultural genealogies. These ambiguities reflect wide-ranging issues concerning reconceptualizations of identity, community, creativity and collaboration that are not new but rather remediated. In this discussion paper, I have attempted to theorize and conceptualize cute culture within a context of historical and contemporary discourses of personalization that

have become an important component within the multiple directions of Digital Art — past, present and future.

REFERENCES

[1] Allison, A. (2003). Portable monsters and commodity cuteness; Pokémon as Japan's new global power. Postcolonial Studies 6 (3): 381–398.

[2] Ariés, P. (1962). Centuries of Childhood: a Social History of Family Life. Trans. R. Baldick, New York: Knopf.

[3] Benjamin, W. (2008 [1936]). Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In Selected Writings. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

[4] Bolter, J. and Grusin, R. (1999). Remediation: Understanding New Media. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

[5] Bourdieu, P. (1984 [1979]). Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. Trans. R. Nice. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

[6] Bruns, A. (2005). Some Exploratory Notes on Produsers and Produsage, Snurblog, 3 November 2005. Retrieved 10 December 2007. http://snurb.info/index.php?q=node/329

[7] Bruns, A. and Jacobs, J. (Eds.) (2006). Uses of Blogs. New York: Peter Lang.

[8] Butler, B. (1991). Gender Trouble. London: Routledge.

[9] Burgess, J. (2008) "'All Your Chocolate Rain Are Belong to Us"? Viral Video, YouTube and the Dynamics of Participatory Culture', in ed. Geert Lovink et al. The VideoVortex Reader, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

[10] Castells, M. (2001). The Internet Galaxy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[11] Cleland, K. (2009). Face to Face: Avatars and Mobile Identities. In G. Goggin and L. Hjorth (Eds.) Mobile Media. London: Routledge.

[12] Crawford, K. (2006) Adult Themes. Sydney: PacMacmillan.

[13] Dirlik, A. (1995). Confucius in the borderlands: Global capitalism and the reinvention of Confucianism. Boundary 2, 22(3), 229-273.

[14] Dirlik, A. (1999). Culture against history? The politics of East Asian identity. Development and Society, 28(2), 167-190.

[15] Fujimoto, K. (2005). The Third-Stage Paradigm: Territory Machine from the Girls' Pager Revolution to Mobile Aesthetics. In M. Ito, D. Okabe and M. Matsuda (Eds.) Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life (pp. 77-102). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

[16] Goffman, E. (1959). The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Harnmondsworth: Penguin Books.

[17] Haddon, L. (1999). The Development of Interactive Games, in Mackay, H. and O'Sullivan, T. (eds) The Media Reader: Continuity and Transformation, Sage, London, pp.305-27.

[18] Hjorth, L. (2003). "Pop" and "Ma": the landscape of Japanese commodity characters and subjectivity. In F. Martin, A. Yue and C. Berry (Eds.) Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia (pp. 158-179). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

[19] Hjorth, L. (2005). Odours of mobility: Japanese cute customization in the Asia-Pacific region. Journal of Intercultural Studies, 26: 39-55.

[20] Hjorth, L. and Kim, H. (2005). Being there and being here: gendered customising of mobile 3G practices through a case study in Seoul. Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies 11: 49-55.

[21] Hjorth, L. (2006a). Playing at being mobile: Gaming, cute culture and mobile devices in South Korea. Fibreculture journal, 8. Retrieved 10 January 2007, http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue8/issue8_hjorth.html

[22] Hjorth, L. (2008). The Game of Being Mobile: One Media History of Gaming and Mobile Technologies in Asia-Pacific. Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, Gaming special issue (Eds.) J. Wilson and H. Kennedy 13(4): 369-381.

[23] Hjorth, L. (2009). Mobile Media in the Asia-Pacific. London/New York: Routledge.

Hjorth, L. and D. Chan (2009). Gaming Cultures and Place in Asia-Pacific. London/New York: Routledge.

[24] Ito, M. (2005). Introduction: Personal, Portable, Pedestrian. In M. Ito, D. Okabe and M. Matsuda (Eds.) Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life (pp. 1–16). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

[25] Ito, M. (2006). The Gender Dynamics of the Japanese Media Mix. Paper for the Girls 'n' Games Workshop and Conference, May 8-9, University of California, Los Angeles.

[26] Iwabuchi, K. (2003). Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

[27] Jenkins, H. (2006a). Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Intersect. New York: New York University Press.

[28] Jenkins, H. (2006b). Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers. New York & London: New York University Press.

[29] Katsuno, H. and Yano, C. (2002). Face to face: on-line subjectivity in contemporary Japan. Asian Studies Review, 26 (2): 205-231.

[30] Kinsella, S. (1995). Cuties in Japan. In L. Skov and B. Moeran (Eds.) Women, Media and Consumption in Japan (pp. 220-254). Surrey UK: Curzon Routledge Press.

[31] Kogawa, T. (1984) Beyond Electronic Individualism. Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue Canadienne de Thetorie Politique et Sociale, 8 (3), Fall. Retrieved 20th July 2007 from http://anarchy.translocal.jp/non-japanese/electro.html

[32] Kohler, C. (2004). Power-Up: How Japanese Video Games Gave the World an Extra Life. London: Dorling Kindersley/Brady Games.

[33] Kücklich, J. (2005) Precarious Playbour: Modders and the Digital Games Industry. Fibreculture Journal, 5. Retrieved 23 July 2008 from http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue5/kucklich.html

[34] Lasén, A. (2004). Affective technologies — emotions and mobile phones. Receiver vol. 11. Retrieved 20 September 2008 from http://www.vodafone.com/flash/receiver/11/articles/pdf/11_03.pdf

[35] Manovich, L. (2003). The paradoxes of Digital Photography. In Liz Wells (ed.) The Photography Reader. London: Routledge, pp. 240-249.

[36] McGray, D. (2002). Japan's Gross National Cool. Foreign Policy. May/June: 44–54.

[37] McLuhan, M. (1964). Understanding Media. New York: Mentor.

[38] McVeigh, B. (2000). How Hello Kitty Commodifies the Cute, Cool and Camp: 'Consumutopia' versus 'Control' in Japan. Journal of Material Culture, 5 (2): 291–312.

[39] McVeigh, M. (2004). Nationalisms of Japan: managing and mystifying identity. Oxford, New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

[40] Matsuda, M. (2005) Discourses of Keitai in Japan. In M. Ito, Okabe, D. and M. Matsuda (Eds.) Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life (pp. 19–40). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[41] Miller, D. (1987). Material Culture and Mass Consumption. London: Blackwell.

[42] Miller, L. (2006). Beauty Up. Berkley: University of California.

[43] Morley, D., and Robins, K. (1995). Spaces of Identities: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries. New York: Routledge.

[44] Murakami, T. (2000). Superflat catalogue. Tokyo: Parco.

[45] Nakamura, L. (2002). Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet. New York: Routledge.

[46] Ng, B. (2006). Street Fighter and The King of Fighters in Hong Kong: A Study of Cultural Consumption and Localization of Japanese Games in an Asian Context. Game Studies, 6 (1), 2006, http://gamestudies.org/0601/articles/ng

[47] Okada, T. (2006). Youth Culture and the Shaping of Japanese Mobile Media: Personalization and the Keitai Internet as Multimedia. In M. Ito, D. Okabe and M. Matsuda (Eds.) Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life (pp. 41-60). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

[48] Robertson, R. (1992). Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture (London: Sage).

[49] Silverstone, R. and Haddon, L. (1996). Design and Domestication of Information and Communication Technologies: Technical Change and Everyday Life. In R. Silverstone and R. Mansell (Eds.) Communication by Design: The Politics of Information and Communication Technologies (pp. 44-74). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

[50] Shirky, C. (2008) "Here comes everybody", presented at the Aspen Ideas Festival, June 30-July 8th, Aspen Coldrado. Retrieved 20 January 2009 from http://fora.tv/2008/07/06/Clay_Shirky_on_Social_Networks_like_Facebook_and_MySpace#chapter_01

[51] Toffler, A. (1980). The Third Wave. William Morrow and Company, Inc.: New York.

[52] White, M. (1993). The Material Child: Coming of Age in Japan and America. New York: Free Press.

[53] Whittier Treat, J. (1996) Introduction. In J. Whittier Treat (Ed.) Contemporary Japanese Popular Culture (pp. 1-16). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.