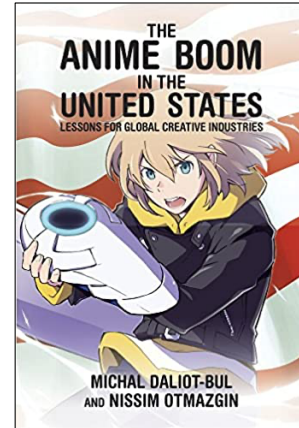


Michal Daliot-Bul and Nissim Otmazgin, **The Anime Boom in the United States: Lessons for Global Creative Industries**, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017, 230 pp., \$39.95 (hardcover).

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The authors of *The Anime Boom in the United States: Lessons for Global Creative Industries*, Michal Daliot-Bul (University of Haifa, Israel) and Nissim Otmazgin (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel), are well-known figures of Japanism. They are prestigious academics, having consolidated their careers in the study of Japan's cultural industries. A large body of their previous work has focused on the dialectic of transnational consumption of Japanese culture in the West. In their outputs, they have analyzed the Israeli market with special interest, although most of the conclusions of their work are easily transferable to other national markets. Despite the fact that they are two very different authors with distinct individual backgrounds, they seem to have found great harmony in this work to successfully combine their wealth of knowledge, underpinned by several methodological traditions, from economic policy (Otmazgin, 2013) and national branding (Daliot-Bul, 2009) to the textual analysis (Daliot-Bul, 2007) of these narratives.



This work can be judged as a mature and consolidated, if not definitive, version of the history of the production and reception of anime in the United States, as one of the most valuable contributions (in terms of gross markets) of these global industries. This is an interest that links to many of these authors' previous works. Despite being a short volume, it is successful in its aim to offer a coherent narrative of the irruption of the anime industries in the American market, and its legacy.

The main ideas of the book are pitched in the Introduction. The golden age of anime barely lasted a decade, as recognized by the authors. The purpose of this study is defined as the tale of this short-lived adventure—the birth, development, and finally, decline of this market in the United States and, implicitly, in many other Western markets. The main ambition of the study is also introduced here: to serve as a prescriptive model for other transnational cultural industries. Thus, lessons can be learned from the failure of anime distribution models in relation to other global industries (i.e., Hollywood) but also from the great potential and the new ways that it has opened up for the economy. If American cinema and television have made us talk about globalization, anime has made us talk about Japan, infusing new meaning to national branding and reconceptualizing soft power in the most popular form of Japan Cool. Finally, the third main idea of this study is the one that presents the result of this transit through the American Market, in terms of “hybridization.”

In the first chapter, “Reframing the Anime Boom in the United States,” the authors set a rather ambitious goal to be achieved within the context of a volume of this length: to reconsider the frameworks of artistic and business interaction between Japan and the United States. The text is of great interest, and although limited to the world of television animation, it offers valuable insights about the dynamics between

countries in the realm of television. A high number of examples are provided, but they seem more easily recognizable to those readers born in the 1980s or earlier, and may only be accessible to younger fans online.

In the second and third chapters, "Building Silk Roads" and "Entrepreneurs of Anime," the main theses of the book are developed, while continuing the metaphoric representation of Japan as Asia and United States as the West. Competing creative industries are extensively characterized, and the role played by directors, producers, and other content creators (mangakas, character and technology creators, or *mecha* designers) in creating intellectual property is discussed. These sections are illustrated by numerous examples to understand how production and distribution models may explain the failure of anime markets to achieve sustained success. These are two highly recommended sections for fans of manga and anime culture. They also present a more developed version of ideas or "lessons" that could have been distilled from previous anthropological research papers (such as Condry, 2013), also built on interviews.

In the fourth chapter, "The Legacy of Anime in the United States," the authors delve into a stylistic analysis. "Anime-inspired cartoons" is a form of animation and a style of character design that has been related to other traditions such as the Amerimanga in the production of American comic book (Hernández-Pérez, 2015) or the *animésque* properties of other animation styles, also originated in coproduction (Santiago Iglesias, 2018). In this case, the productions analyzed are intended to provide evidence of the hybridization stages presented in the first sections. The remaining question, which deserves some discussion, is whether the decline of these hybrid productions really happened in parallel to the academic discussions that identified them and how this cross-cultural style differs from those extinct hybridizations.

The final chapter, "Japan's Anime Policy," is surely the least important one, as it will undoubtedly become outdated. Here the authors explain the change in Japan's attitude toward the content industries, and the progressive instrumentalization, and even institutionalization, of these industries in economic and diplomatic terms. This is a fascinating idea, although it has been widely (over)developed in media studies, including the work of the authors of this book, in the last two decades.

The presentation of the book is excellent, especially the hardcover version. The writing style is enjoyable and easy to read. The biggest shortcoming, the lack of an original and complex theoretical framework, does not detract from the helpful work of synthesis and analysis provided by the authors in terms of data, industry reports, and commentary on main theorists. For example, the Introduction summarizes the main concepts and the main models from media studies and animation studies—but they are extremely synthetic and could have been more up to date. It would therefore be unsatisfactory for those academics most familiarized with the topic. Nevertheless, it could well be a must-read for any media student, due to the appeal of the examples and their lasting validity, including the classic animations and popular products linked to leading copyrights holders such as Warner or Disney.

It is not necessary, or fair, to comment on the limited framework of analysis that derives from research focusing exclusively on the American market, yet extending some of the theses to markets other than Asia (e.g., the European market) would make the already interesting insights of this long-term work much richer. The book may be understood as a brief history of anime in America, something that is well summarized in the preface of the book. This, in itself, is not negative, and the high quality of the reading is unquestionable,

but the book possibly squanders the great potential that this topic and this case study have and, beyond the case study, what these "Lessons for Global Creative Industries" can really contribute to media studies.

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