

## Abstract

### **“A Moral Firestorm:” The Politics of Researching Controversial Manga in Japan and Beyond**

Manga are among not only Japan’s most successful cultural exports, but also its most controversial. In 2015, an envoy from the United Nations criticized Japan for not banning “extreme” manga, specifically depictions of sexual violence against underage characters. That same year, a contributor to an English-language collection of academic essays advocated refusing to translate such material to stop its global spread. For many, it appears that there is no need to consider the content any further. It is not only offensive, but ought to be illegal. Against this backdrop, the talk traces the fraught publication of a translated personal interview with, and drawings by, Uchiyama Aki, known for his contribution to the sexualization of cute girl characters in manga in the early 1980s. In both popular and academic environments, the publication encountered resistance for fear of backlash and being associated with controversial images and ideas. Some scholars wonder if we are giving manga “a fair trial,” but what research would it take to give Uchiyama’s work such treatment? Who would conduct the research, where would it be published and with what consequences? In this way, we can begin to consider the politics of researching controversial manga in Japan and beyond.

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