



EAST ASIAN POPULAR CULTURE

Shōjo Across Media

EXPLORING “GIRL” PRACTICES
IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

EDITED BY JAQUELINE BERNDT,
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East Asian Popular Culture

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Shōjo Across Media

Exploring “Girl” Practices in Contemporary Japan

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Introduction: Shōjo Mediations

Jaqueline Berndt

Since the turn of the millennium the Japanese word *shōjo* has gained currency on a global scale, accompanying the transcultural consumption of manga (graphic narratives) and anime (animated TV series and movies), as well as the spread of associated fan-cultural practices. In recent use, *shōjo* refers on the one hand to commercial genres marketed to female audiences—*shōjo* manga (girls’ comics) to begin with—and on the other hand to a character type, which may appear in entertaining graphic narratives, non-narrative games, or branding campaigns: the cute adolescent girl. While Japanese writings still show an inclination to conflate this character type with real-life girls, whether as agents or objects of desire, in actuality, *shōjo* does not signify real girls as such, but “a crafted concept,” as Masafumi Monden puts it in his contribution to this volume (which does not rule out the possibility that real girls apply it, or have it applied, to themselves). It is against this backdrop that the present volume re-approaches the already well-studied *shōjo*, foregrounding the mediations which have both engendered and engaged it.

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“GIRL” AS PERFORMATIVE PRACTICE

During the first half of the twentieth century the prolonged phase between childhood and marriage for girls of the urban middle and upper classes had shaped *shōjo* as a social category. *Shōjo* marked the young woman’s “transitional state between the social roles of child and wife or mother”¹ and as such a liminality or in-betweenness. In prewar Japan, modern media addressed to an adult and predominantly patriarchal public had given rise to *shōjo* discourse.² Through entertaining media targeted at and employed by female adolescents—magazines containing illustrated girls’ novels (*shōjo shōsetsu*), among other things, and later *shōjo* manga—this discourse became part of girls’ culture: at least in part, girls twisted what was marketed to them into their own subculture. While inextricably linked to school education, the term *shōjo* designated out-of-school activities,³ first and foremost, the participation in an imagined community of girl magazine readers. By engaging in such practices real-life girls became *shōjo*, according to literary scholars Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley.⁴ The magazine-induced formation of an exclusive and safe space of kindred spirits culminated in postwar *shōjo* manga discourse, as the writings by manga critic Yukari Fujimoto evince.⁵

But from the 1990s onwards *shōjo* underwent a significant shift. Already in 1991, Sumiko Yokokawa, a scholar of children’s literature, had pointed out that the non-contradictory unity of girl and “girl” under the term *shōjo* was becoming obsolete, and that the same name started to assume a different meaning.⁶ *Shōjo* changed from being employed by girls (and women) as a reference point for affiliation, to providing a stock of aesthetic conventions and narrative tropes, a whole “*shōjo*-scape” in Monden’s words. This pool of girlhood signifiers has proved to be expedient for differently gendered users and various usages, even among girls. In early twenty-first century Japan, *shōjo* operates as a code, one which women themselves increasingly remove from use as social representation. Today, *shōjo* is not anymore confined to straightforward representation; it probably never was. As Heather Warren-Crow puts it in her ground-breaking monograph *Girlhood and the Plastic Image* (2014), “Girlhood is itself a practice, a performative process.”⁷ Indeed, girl culture has often been associated with role-playing and masquerade, escapism, and the indulgence in fantasy, preferably in relation to non-reproductive sexuality. Furthermore, indicative of performativity is the fact that the girl has been identified by modern patriarchy as

a “‘not-quite-female’ female,”⁸ embodying “less a state of being than a state of becoming,”⁹ which modern critics regarded as a lack of autonomy, accountability, and agency.

While shōjo is already spreading beyond Japan—not only in the technical sense that analog and digital networks have made it possible for Japanese “contents” to expand globally—the word itself still evokes a sense of locality, namely Japanese particularity. Dedicated fans of manga and anime, Japanese critics, and non-Japanese mediators of Japanese culture alike have conceived of shōjo as a specifically Japanese discourse, investigating its rise under the conditions of twentieth-century Japan.¹⁰ While this is of continuing importance, the fact that shōjo has entered the lexicon of non-Japanese users in recent years cannot be traced back to a successful unidirectional export from Japan. It is clearly related to a more general, transcultural “embrace of girliness”¹¹ within the contemporary digital mediascape. With regard to the attributes of the digital image—malleability, transmediation, and openness to change—Warren-Crow asserts this transculturality as follows:

While the Japanese shōjo and the Western adolescent girl are not exactly symmetrical concepts, the capacity of each to embody transformation and potential [...] is exactly what allows them to be evacuated of their more nationally and culturally specific meanings.¹²

The present volume approaches shōjo from the perspective of media rather than (Japanese) culture to complement the so far prevalent and often history-oriented focus on cultural specifics, social representation, and actual girls. Equal emphasis is put on transcultural commonalities, non-representational enjoyment, and girl characters, or more precisely character types arisen from the manga-derived shōjo-scape, such as beautiful boys (*bishōnen*), and cute girls (*bishōjo*).¹³ While acknowledging that shōjo has mediated a multitude of discourses throughout the twentieth century—discourses on Japan and its modernity, consumption and consumerism, non-hegemonic gender, and also technology¹⁴—this volume seeks to raise awareness of shōjo mediations, stretching from media for and by actual girls to shōjo—the performatively practiced and conventionalized sign or image, that evokes certain affects—as media.

Through its diverse chapters, this volume provides an overall picture of what shōjo research has accomplished so far, and on which avenues it might proceed in the future. Some of the chapters focus on girls and

young women in modern Japan and how they have been positioned as a social entity in the name of *shōjo*, a model of identity, or selfhood, shaped by patriarchal society and men's desire, but also formed by girls themselves, swaying between resistance and conformity as all subcultures do. In line with the majority of previous research, which has been informed by Japanese-studies and gender-studies concerns,¹⁵ these chapters are primarily interested in girl culture, or the “*shōjo* world,” as being mediated by representations and character types which have evolved with respect to specific target groups. In contrast to Masuko Honda, the expert of children's literature who opened up *shōjo* research in the 1980s,¹⁶ most English-language publications of the last decade do not seem to see a potential in the political, historical and social “emptiness” of *shōjo* fiction or art; many exhibit an urge to explain how the apparently “mere decorative” expressions relate to women's societal empowerment and to changes in gender policy—that is, how imagined experiences with fictive characters affect real-life girls. In a way, this is similar to attempts at legitimizing manga via reference to traditional notions of serious, sophisticated literature instead of developing new concepts in the face of new media.

The majority of chapters, however, take the existence of *shōjo*—as a genre of popular girl-oriented fiction, a mode of address, a trope—for granted, reversing the relation between means and end to the extent that aspects of the contemporary media environment can be explored: interrelationality, or connectivity, mobility, and modifiability as constitutive of both images and actors. These chapters, too, take girl culture into account, but often in the sense of fan-cultural communities which, leaning on media-specific conventions, interrelate different genres within one media as well as different media with each other: for example, *shōjo* manga with fashion and cosplay, or the women-oriented boys' love (BL)¹⁷ manga with BL audio drama, anime, and Visual *Kei* rock band performances. But before introducing all chapters individually, some remarks on wording are in order.

NAMES FOR “GIRL” IN JAPANESE

This volume proceeds on the assumption that the term *shōjo* is inextricably linked with modern, mainly entertainment media, and not only a category of social representation but also mediation, or interrelationality.

As such, this volume does not regard shōjo primarily as a “compendium of commodities”¹⁸ and neither a direct reflection of societal issues pertaining to the situation of woman in general and girls in particular. As already mentioned, shōjo has served as a tool of self-expression and a vessel of different projections, but over the years it has asserted its own agency as a performative rather than representationalist conception.

It goes without saying that shōjo, the signifier, defines itself through what it is not supposed to signify—in terms of gender, *shōnen* (boy), and within the female gender, “woman,” largely confined to the social role of “good wife and wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*), in particular in prewar Japan. Up to the present day, adult women, specifically mothers, feature in popular “female” media often as evil antagonists for girls—in this volume evinced by Emerald L. King’s discussion of manga sources for cosplay and Akiko Sugawa-Shimada’s survey of the magical girl genre in anime. Adult women may also remain completely absent, forced back by the predominance of homosexual beautiful boy characters for female consumers (*bishōnen*) or cute girl characters for male consumers (*bishōjo*). To repudiate this propensity as a “writing out of women” demonstrates ignorance of modern Japanese patriarchy, and also of modern girlphobia, that is, adultist arguments brought forward in favor of “the knowledgeable, focused, literate, and above all mature subject.”¹⁹

However, in modern Japanese media, not every unknowledgeable, dreamy, subliterate, and infantile girl (character) is called a shōjo, or calls herself by that name. To begin with older designations, there is the “daughter” of a good family (*musume*, *ojōsan*), and there is the *otome* (maiden). The *otome* invokes a nostalgic male conception imposed on modern young women, as Kaori Yoshida claims in her chapter on films that melodramatically feature female A-bomb victims. Craig Norris, too, points out in this volume that the *otome* is “considered an old-fashioned and out-dated term associated with antiquated ideals of femininity and virginity,” but he also exhibits an awareness of the word’s recent revival in so-called *otome* dating games. Due to their romantic content, these women-oriented video games are traced back by some critics to resurgent conservative notions of heterosexuality. Yet, no matter whether such commercial genres reflect or represent a specific ideology; for consumers, they gain identity in the first place by distinguishing themselves from similar genres in the same market. Minori Ishida mentions in her chapter, that voice porn targeted at female consumers, another new current, is

marketed in the name of both *fujoshi* and *otome*. While to her *otome* functions as a mere taste category signaling heterosexual content, the first term—*fujoshi*, lit. rotten girls—designates mainly heterosexual female fans of male–male romance, i.e., BL. Two things are noteworthy here: first, that the label *fujoshi*, which had been used disparagingly for women indulging in *shōjoesque* fantasies of non-reproductive sexuality was turned by those labeled into an affirmative self-designation²⁰; and second, that the label of *otome* came to be employed in response to the spread of *fujoshi* subculture, setting fictive heterosexuality against fictive homosexuality. A similar thing had happened in the early 1980s when so-called *otomechikku* [maiden-like] *manga* flourished within *shōjo* manga.²¹ These small-scale and cute heterosexual love comedies with straightforward narratives and everyday life settings—represented, for example, by Mutsu A-ko—appeared as the antithesis to the grand narratives by those female artists who were labeled the Year 24 Group or Magnificent 49ers (*Hana no 24nen-gumi*), artists who went down in manga history as revolutionary in part for their replacement of girl protagonists with homosexual boys, laying the ground for today’s BL.

The case of *otome* clearly facilitates the performativity claim made above, as it demonstrates that all the names for “girl” and the implied conceptions are liable to change according to era and, furthermore, media. *Otome* apparently helped to oppress the voice of female victims in melodramatic movies of the 1960s–1980s, but it is now successfully employed in marketing heterosexual porn to self-confident female consumers, as well as fannish affinity spaces to young East Asian tourists in Japanese cities such as, in the case of Norris’ chapter, Fukuoka.

One of the most common designations for actual girls today is *onna no ko* (lit. female child).²² According to Sugawa-Shimada, who has contributed to this volume a chapter on girl characters in girl-oriented anime, “girls and young girls [sic!] address themselves as an *onna-noko*, but almost never as a *shōjo*.”²³ Likewise, *joshi*, the prevailing legal term for woman, is used for self-designation by contemporary women. Although including the character for child (in the reading *shi*), it signifies merely a gender difference, without any connotation of infantilization, and it is purportedly given preference by women themselves over the more scientifically sounding *josei* (woman, feminine, female) or *onna* (female, woman, sometimes also mistress), words that had been set by feminists against *fujin* (lady).²⁴ Both terms are deliberately distinguished

from shōjo. While this is due to shōjo connoting the girl as an object of male desire, as Sugawa-Shimada suggests, the same distinction can be taken as a confirmation of the shōjo's fundamentally mediatic constitution: it is a media image, not a legal subject.

In this volume, further names for “girl” surface, such as *moga*, the prewar “modern girl,” and *kogyaru*, a spectacularly dressed teenage girl with heavy make-up, in Sohyun Chun's chapter, and *burikko*, the comic fake girl, in Patrick W. Galbraith's chapter. Whatever the name, the multiplicity is striking, as it exceeds designations of “boy” and attests to a societal difficulty of coming to terms with the malleable, unfixed girl.

SHŌJO AND/AS MEDIA

The media considered in this volume stretch from the initially analog, but increasingly digitalized representatives of Japanese popular culture—manga, anime, and audio drama, cosplay and fashion, the Takarazuka all-girls revue and the stage art of Visual *Kei* music—to web-based novels for mobile devices and a tourism website. The picture is rounded up by two excursions into women's literature and live-action film. While these do not necessarily exhibit a media-conscious approach, they help to illuminate what such an approach implies: primarily, the deliberate distinction between medium/media in the narrow sense of referring mainly to technical systems and material support, and media used in the form of both a collective singular and the plural. In order to sufficiently account for the conventionalized practices and institutional frameworks, which, once established, predetermine how individual mediums are being used, it stands to reason to follow art historian W.J.T Mitchell and media theoretician Mark B.N. Hansen, who in their *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, aim at “something more than the form of a specific content, and thus something that exceeds the pluralization of the term *medium*” (2010, location 88 of 5202), namely a “crossroads of aesthetics, technology, and society” (location 174).²⁵ This implies a shift of perspective which allows for attention to mediation, i.e., how media operate, especially with regards to the relations and environments they engender.

Shōjo Across Media starts from shōjo manga, which has been a vital point of departure and persistent intermedial reference of shōjo-media practices since the 1970s and addressed mainly from the perspective of manga's gendered genres.²⁶ Ordinarily, a chapter on the Magnificent

49ers, or Year 24 group—who actually had never formed an association according to their year of birth, Shōwa 24, that is, 1949—would have been placed here, if only for the ongoing prominence of these artists. Their works of the 1970s found recognition beyond the initial girl culture due to innovative narratives, male critics' attention, and a significant change in medium, namely, publication in book form (*tankōbon*) following the ephemeral (and as such shōjoesque) magazine serialization. An exceptional rather than a representative phase in the evolution of the genre, last but not least with regards to sustained creative impact, the canonization of the Magnificent 49ers in the name of gender criticism and experimental style has triggered unusual academic interest, but it has also overshadowed the normality of shōjo manga.²⁷ Within this volume, Craig Norris gives an account of the Magnificent 49ers' central position in previous shōjo (manga) research, and Alisa Freedman approaches the history of girl culture in modern Japan through a manga series by Waki Yamato, purportedly one of them.

Refraining from factual claims about what shōjo manga *is*, Part I offers three representative examples of how contemporary academics view shōjo manga: as a means for the study of Japanese culture; as a subject of genre theory within manga studies; and as a generically established gendered mode of graphic storytelling which activates specific practices of reading and gazing.

Alisa Freedman's chapter "Romance of the Taishō Schoolgirl in Shōjo Manga: *Here Comes Miss Modern*" provides an introduction to prewar shōjo history by taking the example of a shōjo manga series first published in the latter half of the 1970s. The manga's protagonist, who embraces the new opportunities of modern life available from the late 1910s onwards, appears as the epitome of the initial shōjo, a "gender identity applied to female children of the urban middle class" who were sent to secondary school by their parents and who had access to girls' magazines.²⁸ Complementing the manga's representation with knowledge about both the girl-oriented mediascape of prewar Japan and genre-specific traits of shōjo manga (largely modeled on the Magnificent 49ers), the chapter arrives at the conclusion that shōjo manga turns schoolgirls of the past into idealized figures of resistance, highlighting the bright side of the shōjo position, that is, a certain freedom of action, mobility, and the implied defiance, at the expense of its dark side, i.e., social privileges and constraints. As a consequence, shōjo manga appears incapable of living up to historical realism.

In contradistinction, Giancarla Unser-Schutz' chapter on "Redefining Shōjo and Shōnen-Manga Through Language Patterns" maintains, with regards to characters and their speech patterns, that shōjo manga works appear more realist than those of shōnen manga. This contrast to Freedman's chapter may have to do with the fact that the manga narratives analyzed here are newer, namely from the 2000s, and further, that shōjo manga's reality is not measured against history at large, but everyday life and interpersonal relations. Similarly vital is the author's interest in "how language is used in manga and how that shapes manga as a medium," especially in relation to manga's gender-specific genres. In light of recent changes—the shrinking role of manga magazines as the initial carriers of those genres, an increased cross-genre consumption by previously segregated reader demographics as well as the cross-pollination with regards to visuals and type of narrative—Unser-Schutz proposes a new model of genre differentiation based less on publication site, target group, and stylistics, and more on the use of linguistic devices, such as handwritten background thoughts, which foreground characters and their relationships. With their focus on feelings, Unser-Schutz finds shōjo manga facilitating and even compelling empathy, as distinct from the global bestsellers of shōnen manga which consist of fantastic, densely populated, and plot-driven narratives and precisely thereby may provide an "alternate reading experience [... to] many female readers who desire something else."

The last point is noteworthy as it goes beyond the common sense of shōjo-manga discourse to treasure empathy above all. This stance is related, on the one hand, to the long-time devaluation of character-centered atmospheric narratives without much physical action, and on the other, to the cherished shōjo community and its inclination to sameness, to excluding the hegemonic social Other in an attempt at establishing a safety zone (which, as Adrienne Renee Johnson observes in her chapter, is also practiced by a specific group of music fans). How characters of manga narratives published within the institutional framework of a male genre become anchors of empathy—i.e., mobilize a generically female, if not girlish reading practice—is the central issue in Olga Antononoka's chapter "Shōjo Manga Beyond Shōjo Manga: The 'Female Mode of Address' in *Kabukumon*." While in line with the strand of shōjo manga research, which privileges the Magnificent 49ers and thereby the representation of non-hegemonic gender as a source of agency for both characters and readers, Antononoka moves one step

further, entwining gender theory with comics aesthetics. Specifically, she proceeds from the observation that comics are composed of fragmented (paneled) pages, which require reiteration to generate a seemingly continuous narrative, just like gender as inconsistent performance in Judith Butler's account, and the invocation of "woman" through body parts in Jacques Lacan's conception of *objet petit a*. Taking as her example a recent manga series that features theatrical performance and male impersonators of female roles (*onnagata*), Antononoka investigates the media-specific performativity of manga with a particular focus on how sequences of panels and pages bring "woman" into momentary existence as an onstage construct. She demonstrates further how the actors' acceptance of femininity as part of themselves connects to their artistic agency within the authoritarian institution of kabuki theater.

Girls are apparently not involved here, neither as target group nor character; and typical visual markers of shōjo manga, such as extradiegetically used flower decors, frills, and ribbons, or wavy hair, do not surface either. Fusami Ogi has identified shōjo as a code and ideological institution that can also be investigated in women-oriented texts without girl characters (for which she had the Magnificent 49ers in mind).²⁹ Yet, in Antononoka's discussion, this code appears to have changed direction, being employed by male artists in a male genre to promote a "female" mode of empathy-centered reading and thereby leaving behind its initial social bonds.

Part II shifts the emphasis to other forms of narrative than manga, namely two kinds of literature—one pre-digital, auteurist, and connected to the wider mediascape mainly through the shōjo trope, the other one produced with digital technology within communities of high school students—and two kinds of moving images. The latter include live-action feature film for theatrical release and a genre of TV anime, or more specifically, a genre which was first targeted at small girls but has also been appropriated by male viewers in recent years.

Shōjo narratives in the form of novels were the primary media of pre-war girls to interconnect and form an imagined community, and from the 1960s onwards magazine-based manga serials assumed that role, but since the 2000s, female high school students have engaged in creating and sharing web-based novel-like content adapted for mobile media. In their chapter "Practicing Shōjo in Japanese New Media and Cyberculture: Analyses of the Cell Phone Novel and Dream Novel" Kazumi Nagaike and Raymond Langley demonstrate how the texts themselves lack

specificity (of depiction, authorial voice, characters' proper nouns, etc.) to the extent that they could have been generated by an algorithm, yet it is that very lack which proves to be their strong point, as it evokes empathy and the feeling of being in synchronicity with the community.

Emptiness, or stereotypicality, facilitates connectivity, as Warren-Crow observes about the girl as digital and protodigital image.³⁰ In a similar vein, literary scholar Noriko Adachi has discerned relationality in the works by the Magnificent 49ers as follows:

Here, “emotions,” for example “expressed” in the form of words, as signs of countenance, or through background tones, do not “belong” solely to one character in the way the modern novel presumes it as a matter of course. It is the related affect which moves the narrative forward, sometimes surfacing in a way strangely detached from specific characters, thrown in between them, inducing a subtle resonance.³¹

Nagaike and Langley investigate cell phone novels, and in extension, dream novels, that is, web-based narratives in which readers may substitute their own names for that of a designated character and thus become an immediate part of a now virtual reality. Relatedly, they argue that the girls and girl characters deviate from the “I” or “me” of modern individualism in favor of a fluid multidimensional identity, which matches the new digital and global environment, while resting on the protodigital capabilities of shōjo.

In contrast, Sohyun Chun's chapter “The Shōjo in the Rōjo: Fumiko Enchi's Representation of the Rōjo Who Refused to Grow Old” introduces a stand-alone literary work, first published in 1974, and reads it as a critique of hegemonic gender. Here, the shōjo trope represents the possibility to act uninhibitedly on one's personal desires. Reinvigorating the “girl” within herself, the protagonist, an aged woman (*rōjo*), is able to overcome self-regulation and experience empowerment. As a story of resistance to social expectations of aged women, this novel helps to confirm that the conception of shōjo is not confined to chronological age or sex, but that it can apply to young as well as old women and even to men. While men are not included in the chapter's discussion (and neither are the topics of literature as media or literature's intermediality regarding shōjo), the quiet delinquency of the protagonist is being related to various other forms of deviance by young women in prewar and contemporary Japan, as in, for example, the non-compliance to cuteness.

Likewise disregarding target groups and audience communities beneath the national level, something central to media-conscious accounts of *shōjo*, Kaori Yoshida's chapter "Mediating *Otome* in the Discourse of War Memory: Complexity of Memory-Making Through Postwar Japanese War Films" illuminates one of the "dark sides" of the girl trope, namely its deployment within the patriarchal memory culture of postwar Japan. The widely familiar combination of hyperfeminization and nation-as-victim narratives, which occurred across all popular media including manga, is dissected here through the example of two live-action movies released in 1966 and 1985 respectively. At the center of both movies is a melodramatic narrative about a so-called A-bomb maiden (*genbaku otome*), portrayed by the same actress, Sayuri Yoshinaga. Leaning mainly on U.S.–American war film studies, as well as affect theory applied to individual film reception, the chapter reads the movies as a romanticization of radiation illness, which privatizes the political and deprives the real women of their voice. It ultimately arrives at the conclusion that "a melodramatic woman-centered war narrative does not necessarily give credit to the multiplicity of female victims' experiences." In a way, this is reminiscent of *shōjo* manga representations weighed against historical realism and found wanting. But what appears here as a patriarchal girification of female victims, so to speak, may give a different picture if examined from the perspective of a multiplicity of viewers, viewings, and intermedial relations.

Scrutinizing the lack or potential of female empowerment permitted by the *shōjo* trope is also the main concern in Akiko Sugawa-Shimada's chapter "Shōjo in Anime: Beyond the Object of Men's Desire." She surveys the genre of magical girl (*mahō shōjo*) anime from its beginnings in the late 1960s to the mid-2010s, focusing on changes in representation and societal environment, spectatorship, and broadcasting time. With respect to representation, the magical girl character is shown to have grown into a self-affirmative role model for girls over the years, the initial equation of magical powers and feminine traits such as caring and mothering being attenuated; a hybridity of feminine and masculine traits developed, without radically challenging hegemonic gender. In addition to representation, the chapter foregrounds spectatorship—on the one hand, little girls as the initial target group, and on the other hand, young men to whom an increasing number of late-night anime programs has been addressed in more recent years. An outlook at the possibility that empowerment and conservatism operate on both sides is given at the

end of the chapter. In order to explore this possibility further, it may be worth considering how the genre interrelates with the medium, that is to say, how narratives of magical transformation are afforded by animation itself. After all, magical girl anime “animates shōjo” in a way which invokes Warren-Crow’s discussion of the “morphing, mobile, and girlish digital image.”³²

From a gender perspective that is not media-conscious, “the question of shōjo [sic!] tends to be posed first and foremost in terms of a gap between girl and image, which can be read in terms of representation or misrepresentation, normative regulation (social codes and norms), or a filling-in and transforming of the image by girls (performance),”³³ as Thomas LaMarre notes in *The Anime Machine*. It is the latter kind of performance that opens Part III, which is dedicated to enactments and stagings within the shōjo-scape. In his chapter “A Dream Dress for Girls: Milk, Fashion and Shōjo Identity” Masafumi Monden highlights the understudied role of fashion as crucial for performing shōjo. Taking the fashion brand Milk as his point of departure and contrasting it with the Lolita style as well as the older ballerina garment developed in shōjo manga, Monden accentuates the empowering potential of girl dresses which often indicate passivity and submissiveness to feminist observers, especially outside of Japan. In addition, he elucidates the intricate relation between transcultural commonalities and intercultural differences through the tropes of Alice in Wonderland and the Victorian princess, whose symbolism changed significantly upon appropriation within the shōjo media of postwar Japan.

The performance of shōjo by means of clothing and the intermediality involved are also at the core of Emerald L. King’s chapter “*Sakura ga meijiru*—Unlocking the Shōjo Wardrobe: Cosplay, Manga, 2.5D Space,” although the main focus is not on self-expression or gender identity, but on cosplayer’s efforts to animate shōjo characters regardless of their own age and gender. Girlness is called into existence through costuming, make-up and posing, and this takes place in a shōjo-exclusive safety zone, which has been expanded to comprise fan conventions, the cosplay competition stage, and the setting for cosplay photo shoots. Remarkably, it is again the magical girl that plays the lead in the discussion. Her wardrobe represents gender, age, and capabilities not just statically, but accumulatively in accordance with the gaining of power, constantly equating the costume with identity and the changing of clothes with transformations of a higher dimension. Thus, it is persuasive when King calls

these cosplayers (and performers in anime-inspired live-action shows) “live-action magical girls.” With the initially two-dimensional characters having priority for the fans at the expense of the three-dimensional performers themselves, this new shōjoesque space has come to be perceived as 2.5-dimensional.

Shōjo has actually been enacted onstage since the 1910s, most of all by the Takarazuka Revue. This musical company provides an all-girls school environment not just with respect to its female-only performers who attend the revue’s boarding school, but also in the broader sense in regards to its predominantly female, and by now cross-generational, fan community. In her chapter “Multilayered Performers: The Takarazuka Musical Revue as Media,” Sonoko Azuma proposes a new perspective on the matter, exceeding the long-time preoccupation with issues of gender and representation and, relatedly, questioning the continuity of prewar and postwar girl culture. Her focus is on Takarazuka’s performers, with the female impersonator of male roles (*otokoyaku*) leading the way, and she considers not only the troupe’s promotional and fan-cultural media, but also the mediality of the performers themselves, discerning four layers. The first is the male, or female, typecasting, that is, the ascribed role, which is reminiscent of the cosplayers’ “characterization” (i.e., transformation into fictive characters)³⁴ brought up already in the previous chapter. Yet, the Takarasiennes, as they are called in Japanese, operate in equal measure their onstage persona (as actress), their offstage persona (as troupe member), and their real-life personality, their fans indulging in all four layers without any attempt at confuting one with the other.

Minoru Ishida, too, looks at performers, but these performers are male and, as the title of her chapter “Sounds and Sighs: ‘Voice Porn’ for Women” indicates, theirs is an auditory stage. Questioning the widespread assumption that shōjo is, first and foremost, a phenomenon appertaining to visual culture, Ishida introduces two examples of male voices mediating explicit sexual content to female listeners: BLCDs with homosexual boys’ love fiction, and heterosexual Situation CDs which put the listener in the position of the directly addressed love interest. At first glance, this may appear unconnected to shōjo discourse as investigated from the perspective of cultural anthropology, but the chapter reveals two main points of contact. The first one reverses the still wide-spread notion of shōjo as an object of male desire by bringing up the fact that the purchase of these CDs is not restricted by age, and that high school girls actually consume them. “This fact shows that the concept of the

shōjo in women's popular culture is becoming a mere façade," Ishida states. The second point is the familiarity with female manga genres and anime imagery, which help to package the pornographic content in a women-friendly way. Finally, the chapter addresses the use of stereophonic sound for the recording of Situation CDs, and it is here that the issue of gender inequality is considered: in order to achieve utmost immediacy, the listener's position in the acoustic space has to be fixed, which renders her passive opposite the male voice.

With regard to sharing enjoyment of the same magazines, narratives, images, and costumes, shōjo mediations have always involved a fan-cultural element. While this element surfaces in a number of chapters, for example, the ones on cosplay, Takarazuka, and cell-phone novels, it occupies center stage in Part IV, which discusses both fans of shōjo (characters) and shōjo-like fans.

Adrienne Renee Johnson's chapter "From Shōjo to *Bangya(ru)*: Women and Visual *Kei*" highlights the power and empowerment of female fans using the example of Visual *Kei*, a music genre performed by men whose stylized onstage appearance and online self-display are highly reminiscent of beautiful BL characters. Dismissed by feminist critics for the lack of women performers, and also by (foreign) fans for a perceived musical decline in proportion to commercialization, Visual *Kei* is approached here from the perspective of its consumers, in particular band girls, or *bangya(ru)*, those most devoted fans who actively participate in live performances. Often single and in employment, these women are "embracing the liminal, non-(re)productive position of the shōjo" to act on their personal desires, as Johnson concludes from her ethnographic research, which included observations of *bangyas'* behavior in the "gendered safety zone" of live-concert venues. Ultimately, the chapter reaches beyond the female subversion of hegemonic femininity, acknowledging that Visual *Kei*, with its women-oriented non-hegemonic representations of gender, provides both women and men with an opportunity to perform ambivalence towards societal norms.

Taking a different perspective, Craig Norris' chapter "Shōjo Fantasies of Inhabiting Cool Japan: Reimagining Fukuoka Through Shōjo and Otome Ideals with Cosplay Tourism" foregrounds how fan identity is being performed in promotional travel narratives, which, in a way, may appear as the counterpart to anime "pilgrimages" initiated by fans themselves. In particular, he looks at the magazine-style news and entertainment website *asianbeat*, which promotes the city of Fukuoka

as a destination that is affective, transformative, and safe enough to be enjoyed as a “shōjo affinity place.” As its articles about famous Asian cosplayers and their visits to spots in old and new Fukuoka suggest, visitors from Asia can indulge in fannish activities without meeting public rebuff in the city. Norris pays special attention to the fact that the “fan-advocacy mode of address” is being operated by cosplayers. They stand in for the active fan, but also her/his object of desire, and their enacting of various characters approximates the malleability of shōjo, which offers “an empowering opportunity for foreign visitors rather than a wishful nostalgia,” as Norris concludes.

The final chapter, authored by Patrick W. Galbraith and titled “Seeking an Alternative: ‘Male’ Shōjo Fans Since the 1970s,” interrelates the gender-studies concern with alternatives to hegemonic forms of masculinity, the anthropological concern with the mediations practiced by consumers and fans, and the media-studies concern with both the non-representational operating of fictive characters and the embeddedness of media texts within a network of genre conventions. The chapter’s focus is on bishōjo, one type of manga-induced character that is easily dismissed as another variant of idealizing girls by hegemonic male desire, objectifying women, or evincing a disability to confront mature women, especially if created by men for men. Against this common assumption, Galbraith traces the emergence of such characters back to a “male” fascination with shōjo manga setting in in the 1970s. His analysis of testimonies by creators and critics reveals two important points. First, that those men were invested not in actual, three-dimensional girls, but virtual, two-dimensional girl characters, which due to their medium-specific affective potential were capable of moving their readers. As foregrounded in Part I of this volume, initially “female” manga have leaned on prioritizing interpersonal relations and empathy, not only among characters but also between characters and readers. Once firmly established as a distinct genre, shōjo became codified, and as such its close ties to actual girls loosened. It is to this turning point that the early “male” engagement with shōjo manga seems to attest. Second, interrelations within the contemporaneous manga-media environment become visible in the chapter. Long before heterosexual otome productions countered the increasing homosexual fujoshi creations, male artists reacted to the female predominance in the fan-cultural realm by resorting parodically to cute girl characters, which was a matter of both gender and genre: the queering of hegemonic masculinity by means of shōjoization went hand

in hand with the queering of an exclusively female media. By conjoining all the major issues raised in this Introduction, Galbraith's chapter brings *Shōjo Across Media* full circle.

NOTES

1. Deborah Shamon, *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls' Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 9.
2. For pioneering research see, Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), especially 61–70.
3. Erika Imada, *Shōjo no shakaishi* (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 2007), 10.
4. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley, "Introduction," in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 23–37.
5. Beginning with Yukari Fujimoto, *Watashi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no? Shōjo manga ga utsusu kokoro no katachi* (Tokyo: Gakuyō Shobō, 2008 [1998]).
6. Sumiko Yokokawa, *Shochō to iu kiributa: "Shōjo" hihyō josetsu* (Tokyo: JICC, 1991), 8–9.
7. Heather Warren-Crow, *Girlhood and the Plastic Image* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2014), 50.
8. Robertson, 65.
9. Warren-Crow, 23.
10. Representative of shōjo studies and most widely referenced are, in addition to the already cited authors, Jennifer S. Prough, *Straight from the Heart: Gender, Intimacy, and the Cultural Production of Shojo Manga* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011); Sharalyn Orbaugh, "Busty Battlin' Babes: The Evolution of the *Shōjo* in 1990s Visual Culture," in *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, eds. Joshua Mostow, Norman Bryson, and Maribeth Graybill (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 201–228; Fusami Ogi, "Beyond Shoujo, Blending Gender," in *A Comics Studies Reader*, eds. Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, 244–252 (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008 [2001]); Mizuki Takahashi, "Opening the Closed World of *Shōjo Manga*," in *Japanese Visual Culture*, ed. Mark McWilliams (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), 114–137; Michiko Oshiyama, *Shōjo manga jendā hyōshōron: "Dansō no shōjo" no zōkei to aidentiti* (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 2013 [2007]); Minori Ishida, *Hisoyakana kyōiku: yaoi, bōizurabu no zen-shi* (Kyoto: Rakuohoku Shuppan, 2008); Hōsei Iwashita, *Shōjo manga no hyōgen kikō: Hirakareta manga hyōgenshi to Tezuka Osamu* (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 2013).

11. Warren-Crow, 20.
12. *Ibid.*, 133.
13. The media-related conception of shōjo proposed here implies that bishōnen do not represent Japanese gay men just as bishōjo do not represent actual female minors.
14. See, Thomas LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), Chapter 7 “Only a Girl Can Save Us Now,” 77–85.
15. For an account of the respective Japanese-language research see, Masafumi Monden. “Manga Studies #7: Shōjo Manga Research: The Legacy of Women Critics and Their Gender-Based Approach,” *Comics Forum*, March 10, 2015, last accessed November 1, 2018, <http://comicsforum.org/2015/03/10/shojo-manga-research-the-legacy-of-women-critics-and-their-gender-based-approach-by-masafumi-monden/>.
16. For her most widely cited essay, see, Masuko Honda, “The Genealogy of Hirahira: Liminality and the Girl,” trans. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley, in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley (New York: Routledge, 2010 [1982]), 19–37.
17. What currently circulates most widely under the name of BL (boys’ love) in the Japanese market, had its forerunner in the *shōnen’ai* subgenre of 1970s shōjo manga and is called *yaoi* outside of Japan as well as in reference to markedly fan-cultural activities within Japan. This volume employs BL as the respective umbrella term.
18. Frenchy Lunning, “Under the Ruffles: Shōjo and the Morphology of Power,” *Mechademia* 6 (2011): 4.
19. Warren-Crow, 46.
20. The release of a special issue on *fujoshi* by the monthly magazine *Eureka* in June 2007 was indicative of the turn.
21. For one of the few mentions in English, which symptomizes the presence of the name in Japanese media discourse, see the (in terms of manga, unreliable) entry by Yuika Kitamura, “The Emergence of Girls’ Manga and Girls’ Culture,” in *The Cambridge History of Japanese Literature*, eds. Haruo Shirane, Tomi Suzuki, and David Lurie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 750.
22. I would like to thank lawyer Takashi Yamaguchi for his advice in this regard.
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24. Kazue Kawahara, “‘Joshi’ no imi sayō,” in *‘Joshi’ no jidai!*, eds. Nobuhiko Baba and Daishin Ikeda (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2012), 26–29; Nobuhiko

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PART I

Shōjo Manga



CHAPTER 2

Romance of the Taishō Schoolgirl in Shōjo Manga: *Here Comes Miss Modern*

Alisa Freedman

The Taishō-period (1912–1926) schoolgirl—dressed in a *hakama* over a kimono patterned with *yabane* arrow feathers,¹ a ribbon in her long hair, happily riding a bicycle or chatting with classmates—has long been a protagonist of shōjo manga. As I will argue, shōjo manga, more than other media, has romanticized the Taishō schoolgirl as an alluring figure of resistance, promoting an optimistic view toward Japanese national change and the belief in women’s power to determine the courses of their own lives. At the same time, depictions of these spirited, upper-class adolescents have encouraged readers to ignore the darker sides of Japanese history and the real poverty and discrimination that women faced. Starting in the second half of the Meiji period (1868–1912), the number of *jogakusei* (female students) increased because of the confluence of economic advancements, ideological changes, and educational reforms. Schoolgirls, conspicuous in their “uniforms” then as well as today, were viewed as paragons of innocence and budding sexuality and symbols of new notions of gender, class, mobility, and modernity. Stories of schoolgirls proliferated when magazines helped to define “girlhood”

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and showed that women both consumed and produced cultural trends. Shōjo manga has adopted all these representations and associations.

A prime example is Waki Yamato's *Haikara-san ga tōru* (officially given the English title *Here Comes Miss Modern*, hereafter *Haikara-san*) serialized in *Shōjo Erendo* (*Girls' Friend*) manga magazine from 1975 to 1977. In this romance set between 1918 and the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake and drawn in a style inspired by Taishō-period art, protagonist Benio Hanamura navigates new opportunities and old constraints for women in education, marriage, and employment and falls in love with a Japanese-German soldier. Benio is called “high collar” (*haikara*), slang coined in the Meiji period for dressing and acting modern in the sense of being Westernized.² The manga was adapted into a forty-two-episode television anime series (1978–1979) that aired in Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere, along with live-action films, Takarazuka all-female dance revues, and other formats. In honor of the series' fortieth anniversary, two additional anime films were in production in 2017.

In this chapter, I will first examine the image of the Taishō-period schoolgirl, the modern changes she represents, and the popular culture created for and about her. Then I will contextualize *Haikara-san* in shōjo manga and explore how this medium promotes the Taishō period as a “time of romance,” to borrow the tagline of the 1987 and 2002 *Haikara-san* film adaptations. As I will show, a reason for the positive depiction of the Taishō schoolgirl is the perceived nature of her resistance, which is seen as a means to achieve self-discovery or acceptance within the patriarchal system rather than as an act that threatens the sociopolitical status quo. Visualization of schoolgirls provides the opportunity for manga artists to experiment with mixing Japanese, European, and American aesthetics, as artists in the Taishō period did; clothing and hairstyles are important to the schoolgirl's romanticization. Lastly, I will analyze how *Haikara-san* has influenced later series, such as *Taishō Baseball Girls* (*Taishō yakyū musume*, 2008–2011).

These case studies provide insight into how media targeted at girls have influenced the ways history has been experienced and remembered. Schoolgirls in manga are often extreme or overdetermined caricatures, reflecting but also parodying lived reality. A theme of this chapter is how, through shifting social discourses and aesthetic conventions, gender roles come to represent, both at the time and for subsequent generations, the age that presented them.

RISE OF THE SCHOOLGIRL

The 1905 military defeat of Russia demonstrated to the Japanese state that it had achieved its nineteenth-century aspirations of “rich country, strong army” (*fukoku kyōhei*) and was becoming a first-class nation equal to those of the West. Many of the political goals of the Meiji state had been accomplished, and greater government and corporate attention was focused on the construction of urban institutions and spaces, advance of consumer capitalism as a way of promoting the nation-state, and pursuit of private interests, while continuing to build up the military and expand imperialist ventures in other parts of Asia.³ Improvements in women’s education were part of the government-led modernization program and were meant largely to cultivate “good wives and wise mothers” (*ryōsai kenbo*). These reforms can be seen, in hindsight, as among the first historical examples of how Japanese legislation to better women’s lives has in many cases been promulgated not for the sake of gender equality but to support the family as the basic unit of society and the backbone of the nation.⁴

Following the establishment of compulsory elementary education in 1872, a growing number of children attended classes, but there remained fewer schoolgirls than schoolboys. In 1888, 28.3% of girls nationwide received some form of education, and this figure rose to 96.1% in 1907.⁵ The term *jogakkō*, generally used in the Edo period (1600–1868) for any school that included female students, came to denote elite girls’ secondary schools that offered up to six years of education (raised to seven years in 1918). *Jogakkō*, which taught Japanese and Chinese classics, could be contrasted to *Eigo gakkō*, which taught English and Western culture and were often founded by foreign ministries. One of the first elite academies was the Government Girls’ School (Kanritsu Jogakkō), established in March 1872 and renamed Tokyo Jogakkō in December that year.⁶ (It closed in 1877.)

Especially after the passage of the Girls’ Higher School Law (*Kōto joshi gakkō rei*) of 1899, more secondary schools were opened. Although there were only twenty-six all-girl higher schools in 1897, by 1907 there were 133 girls’ secondary schools, with 40,000 female students.⁷ The 1899 law mandated uniforms, standardizing *hakama*, which had become more widespread after medical expert Erwin von Baelz discussed their merits at Tokyo Women’s Higher Normal School (Tokyo Joshi Shihan Gakkō, now Ochanomizu University) in 1896.⁸ Umeko Tsuda,

who had studied in the United States, was the first Japanese educator to establish a university for women. In 1913, three women entered Tohoku University, one of Japan's then five imperial universities; two studied chemistry, while the other studied mathematics. Keio University, founded by Yukichi Fukuzawa, an early proponent of women's education, was one of the first to host male international students (from Korea in 1881, Taiwan in 1895, and India in 1899) but did not accept any female students until 1946.

Both in reality and image, teenaged students were usually middle or upper class; attending a girls' secondary school was seen as a sign of good breeding. Especially after the Girls Higher School Law, the curriculum was standardized to housekeeping, embroidery, etiquette, and other skills needed to become good wives and mothers, along with English and mathematics, all subjects shown in *Haikara-san*. The goal was not to encourage girls to work outside the home, although fashionable jobs in the 1920s, such as those in modern department stores and corporations, sought higher school graduates.⁹ Schoolgirls helped perpetuate upper-class associations of "shōjo," a term dating from the nineteenth century. As stated by Deborah Shamon, "In the prewar period, the term *shōjo* also implied a certain refinement, marked by chastity, sentimentality, and the use of polite language. Even after World War II, the word *shōjo* still has a lingering connotation of the elegance of the all-girls school and the private space of girls' culture."¹⁰ A comparatively small percentage of girls nationwide attended secondary school; others worked in factories, shops, and farms, and as domestic help. The 1907 hit song "Schoolgirl Song" (*Jogakusei no uta*) suggests these young women's increasing popularity was not dependent on their numbers.¹¹

While they were idealized as good daughters and future mothers, female students were also eroticized as sexual objects, as their figures were observed and described in literature, journalism, and other media. The public appearance of schoolgirls—for example, while commuting to school on trains and bicycles—meant that these youths, who once moved in exclusive social circles, were seen by greater numbers and more diverse kinds of people. Arguably, there is a correlation between the increasing visibility of schoolgirls and the first photographic beauty pageant for daughters of affluent families, which was held in 1907.

In July 1907, the *Jiji Shinpō* (Current Events) newspaper company (founded by Yukichi Fukuzawa) received a telegram from the *Chicago Tribune*, asking them to send a photograph of a contestant to represent

Japan in a world beauty contest. Photograph beauty pageants were not new in Japan, but they were, up to this time, only for geisha, actresses, and other women involved in the entertainment business; it was still considered socially taboo for unmarried women to pose for portraits of any kind. Nineteen newspapers in Japan advertised this pageant, which was limited to daughters of good breeding, and descriptions of the young women's social and educational backgrounds, in addition to their chest and waist measurements, were to be sent with their photographs. Kenko Kaneda, an unmarried daughter of a wealthy family from northern Japan and a graduate of an elite secondary school, placed second out of 7000 entries, and her photograph appeared in newspapers nationwide. In an interview with a *Jiji Shinpō* reporter on March 6, 1908, her father remarked that Kenko had received more than 200 marriage proposals. The first-place winner, sixteen-year-old Hiroko Suehiro from Fukuoka on the southern island of Kyushu, a student at the prestigious Tokyo Gakushuin Academy, was emotionally distraught, having been expelled from school as a result of her success in the nationwide contest, although it was announced in February 1908 that she ranked sixth in the *Chicago Tribune's* world pageant. Her brother-in-law, who managed a photography shop, had sent her photograph anonymously and without her knowledge. She went on to marry the son of General Machitsura Nozu, a hero of the Russo-Japanese War, through the mediation of the school's headmaster, Maresuke Nogi, who had made the expulsion decision.¹²

Japan's first women-only train was established in 1912 to protect schoolgirls from being watched, even touched, by other passengers. Nicknamed the "Flower Train" (*hana densha*) and distinguished by the large characters "For Women's Use Only" printed on its side, this type of vehicle appeared first in Kobe and later in Tokyo and was perhaps modeled on antecedents in England (started in 1895) and the United States (1909). "Flower train" was the signifier then used for decorated train cars to commemorate special occasions, such as the birthday of the Emperor or the anniversary of a store. "Flower train" also made reference to the youthful beauty of the students. According to an article in the January 28, 1912 *Tokyo Asahi* newspaper, the Flower Train was instituted to prevent schoolgirls from having their "beautiful figures looked at and enjoyed" by misbehaving male students and other passengers.¹³ The Flower Train was in service during the morning and late afternoon rush hours for students—around 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.—and stopped near many girls' schools.¹⁴ It is not clear whether the idea for this vehicle

was suggested by the female students themselves or was promulgated by municipal, railway or other authorities to protect their supposed innocence and purity. Women were portrayed as passive victims of male attention, unable to protect themselves or even to perpetrate attacks.¹⁵

School fashions furthered the multiple readings of schoolgirls as good daughters, modern trendsetters, and erotic objects. Uniforms make students instantly recognizable, reflect feelings of pride and belonging, serve as signboards (and even selling points) for schools, and promote educational institutions as stylish sites, among other functions. Male secondary school and university students were among the first people in Japan to wear Western-style clothing on a daily basis; they were easily distinguished by their black uniforms, modeled on those of the Prussian military and first used at the University of Tokyo in 1885.¹⁶ Called *gakuran*, a combination of the character for study (*gaku*) and *ran* signifying curious things from the West, this fashion of literally “high-collar” jackets with gold buttons, trousers, and hats with school insignia became a visual marker of privileged status. *Gakuran* has never come to represent schoolboys in the same way as uniforms have represented schoolgirls, although they are associated with coming-of-age practices such as giving the second button to a love interest. Until the mid-1920s, Western-style clothing for women was rare enough to receive media attention, as exemplified by the buzz about the *appappa*, a loose-fitting, simple summer dress, first marketed in Osaka for one yen in 1923.¹⁷

Schoolgirl sailor uniforms (*sērafuku*), a fashion not depicted in *Haikara-san*, were based on British navy uniforms, came into use around 1925, and were the norm in schools by 1930. Early antecedents include sailor tops with bloomers worn for sports. Missionary schools Fukuoka Jogakuin and Heian Jogakuin (Kyoto) both have been credited with the first Japanese sailor uniforms starting around 1921.¹⁸ Accompanied with a change from Japanese hairstyles to braids, the popularity of this uniform can be seen as part of a general trend toward wearing Western-style clothing instead of kimono on a daily basis in the years following the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake. Two-piece suits (blouse and skirt) were more comfortable for sitting on chairs at desks than were *hakama*. Sailor uniforms, which differ slightly according to school, have been personalized in small ways over subsequent decades, such as by wearing thick socks held up with sock glue (especially between 1996 and 1998), lengthening skirts (*sukeban*) in the 1970s and 1980s, and rolling up skirts to shorten them in the 1990s and 2000s.

Trends among students were reported in newspapers and magazines, fueling the belief that they were somehow different from the general population and could be viewed symbolically as representing advancements in and apprehensions about women's social roles. For example, the flourishing Meiji period genre of comics of social mores (*fūzoku* manga) perpetuated and parodied the multiple meanings associated with schoolgirls. In an anonymous single-panel comic in the February 10, 1906 issue of the widely read *Osaka Kokkei Shinbun* (Humor Newspaper), a female student is analogized to a spider, trapping men from male students (including one with the mortarboard hat worn only at Tokyo Imperial University) to government officials in her web.¹⁹ A comic of "Bustling Hibiya Park" (*Nigimaeru Hibiya kōen*), published in the January 1, 1907 issue of the *Kokkeikai* (World of Humor), depicts six male–female student couples dressed in school uniforms of *gakuran* and *hakama*, embracing, strolling, and even kissing by an entrance to Hibiya Park in central Tokyo, a common sight, according to the explanation of the anonymous author.²⁰ A 1909 comic in *Tokyo Kokkeikai* (Tokyo Humor World) shows the seven necessary things for schoolgirls (*jogakusei no nana dōgu*) to be perfume, ink, a book of poetry, hair ribbon, *hakama*, photograph of a male university student, and sweet potatoes.²¹ Artist Beisaku Taguchi in the August 3, 1895 issue of the popular early Meiji newspaper *Marumaru chinbun*, satirizes female students smoking and reading newspapers,²² visual tropes also used for intellectual "new women" (*atarashii onna*), such as members of the Bluestockings (*Seitōsha*) society and magazine (1911–1916).

Magazines for schoolgirls proliferated as part of larger publishing movements toward periodicals for diverse readerships and increased serialization of commercial literature. Magazines—such as *Shōjo no Tomo* (Girls' Friend, 1908–1955), *Shōjo Gabō* (Girls' Pictorial, 1912, merged with *Shōjo no Tomo* in 1948), *Shōjo Kurabu* (Girls' Club, 1923–1963), and *Shōjo kai* (Girls' World, 1922–1950)—helped circulate desirable images of "girlhood" through portrait photography, fashion illustrations, manners guides, advice about school, serialized novels, and other features. Columns of letters and questions from readers exemplified how these magazines became a space for adolescent girls to share their views and experiences²³ and demonstrated that women both consumed and produced cultural trends. The aesthetic language of 1920s girls' magazines influenced later shōjo manga.

WAKI YAMATO AND HISTORICAL HEROINES

Haikara-san represented trends in shōjo manga culminating in the 1970s, several of which had antecedents in the Taishō period. Just as female authors had launched literary careers by publishing in prewar periodicals,²⁴ female artists entered the postwar manga industry by serializing works in weekly or monthly shōjo manga anthology magazines. Shōjo manga magazines, several founded in the 1950s and 1960s,²⁵ were distinct in aesthetics and storylines from shōnen manga magazines marketed to boys, which generally included more slapstick and less character development. Stylistic developments made shōjo manga instantly recognizable: notably, characters with exaggerated feminine and childlike features, such as iconic large eyes to show emotion, encourage empathy, and indicate the main character, and flower symbolism. Both modes of expression appeared in 1920s magazine illustrations and covers drawn by Jun'ichi Nakahara and Masawo Katō, among others artists.²⁶ Shōjo manga magazines formed communities of readers and involved them in the publishing process through surveys, contests to find new talent, letters to and from authors, and other features.²⁷ These periodicals perpetuated the custom, started in the Meiji period, of first serializing stories in “disposable” subscription media, and then, if they are well received, publishing them as books meant to last.

Waki Yamato (born in Shōwa 23, 1948) has been classified as part of the Year 24 Group (*Hana no nijūyonen-gumi*), female manga artists so named because they were born approximately around Shōwa 24 (1949).²⁸ Their creations included female characters with psychological depth, settings not before seen in manga, and a varied appearance of the page by using panels of different sizes, some with borders removed so that characters and scenes could expand outside. The Year 24 Group extended narrative genres beyond romances to historical sagas, school life, sports, philosophy, science fiction, action, suspense, and horror. Plots became more complex, with intertwining subplots and minor characters; human relationships and romance were also given greater precedence. Yamato won the first Kōdansha Manga Award in the category of shōjo manga in 1977 for *Haikara-san*, which was serialized weekly in *Shōjo Furendo* (founded by Kōdansha in 1962). Thus the literary convention, dating back to the 1920s, of using prizes to establish careers and promote new genres, was applied to manga. Yamato shared the award with writer Mizuki Kyōko (penname of Keiko Nagita) and illustrator

Yumiko Igarashi for *Candy Candy* (*Kyandi-kyandi*), serialized in *Nakayoshi* in the same years as *Haikara-san* and adapted into a television anime series (1976–1979) and three anime shorts (1978 and 1992). Candy White, an orphan in the United States in the early twentieth century, falls in love with men around her age and has a long-time crush on a mysterious older “prince on the hill.”

Since her debut in 1966 with *Thief Angel* (*Dorobō tenshi*, serialized in *Shōjo Furendo*), Yamato has created more than thirty-nine shōjo manga, almost all serialized in magazines published by Kōdansha. In general, her female protagonists are spirited, educated young women holding jobs fashionable for their times (or noble positions). Their quests for romance are depicted through adventures with a comedic touch, as Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase aptly describes.²⁹ Arguably, Yamato was one of the first manga artists to feature working women, a character type that became more common in the 2000s, as exemplified by Moyoco Anno’s *Woman Workaholic* (*Hataraki-man*, 2004) and Satoru Makimura’s *Real Clothes* (*Riaru kurōzu*, 2007). Her protagonists’ male love interests hail from Europe or the United States or are Japanese men working there. Her stories are set in both historical and contemporary times, in Japan and abroad.

For example, *Mon Cheri CoCo* (serialized in 1971, adapted into a thirteen-episode TBS television network anime in 1972) centers on a fashion designer, born to a French father and a Japanese mother, living in Paris (a backstory similar to that of the Licca doll, the Japanese version of Barbie first marketed in 1967). *Lady Mitsuko* (*Reidii Mitsuko*, 1976) fictionalizes the life of Mitsuko Aoyama (1874–1941), mother of Richard Nikolaus Graf Coudenhove-Kalegi (1894–1972), Austrian politician, philosopher, and count who promoted Pan-European unity. *Yokohama Story* (*Yokohama monogatari*, 1981–1983) is a romance set partially in London and California during the Meiji period. In *N.Y. Komachi* (*Belle of New York*, 1985–1988), also set in the Meiji period, the protagonist travels to New York, becomes a camerawoman, and marries an American named Danny. *Daughter of Ishtar* (*Ishtararu no musume*, 2009) takes place from the Azuchi-Momoyama (1573–1603) through Edo periods. Yamato spent thirteen years creating the thirteen-volume Heian period love story *Asaki yume mishi* (1980–1993) based on the *Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*), one of the world’s first long prose narratives, most likely written by a woman (Murasaki Shikibu) in the early eleventh century.³⁰ *Little Miss Modern Has Arrived!* (*Haikara-chan ga kita!*, 1998) is a picture journal about Yamato’s daughter.

Haikara-san exemplified the dominant Japanese marketing strategy of “media mix”, or the release of one title in various commercial media formats with adaptations timed to maintain popularity, which has been essential to the success of Japanese manga series like *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan atomu*).³¹ *Haikara-san* was adapted into an anime (directed by Kazuyoshi Yokota, produced by Nippon Animation) that aired on TV Asahi from June 1978 to March 1979. Although production was ended in 1979 and the series was left incomplete, *Haikara-san* was dubbed into French (*Marc et Marie*), Italian (*Mademoiselle Anne*), English, and Arabic, among other world languages. Anime were among the first television programs to globalize, for episodes could be purchased cheaply because of the strength of European and American currencies against the yen and could be easily dubbed into local languages. For example, *Haikara-san* was preceded in Europe, Latin America, and Asia by the 1974 series *Heidi: Girl of the Alps* (*Arupusu no shōjo Haiji*, Fuji Television, fifty-two episodes), loosely adapted from Swiss author Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi* books and directed by Isao Takahata and designed by Hayao Miyazaki, the duo who founded Studio Ghibli in 1985.

HERE COMES MISS MODERN

A complex story replete with exotic settings, emotional outpourings, love triangles, tragedy, slapstick and gags, and other common tropes of shōjo manga, *Haikara-san* has been popular because of its promotion of steadfast love and the ways that romance and family acceptance help the characters to grow into themselves. The protagonist Benio Hanamura, a determined, intelligent, but vulnerable schoolgirl, likes bicycles, kendo fighting, and sake. Seventeen years old at the start of the story, she sees herself in a new era when women have more choices in love, marriage, and work, presenting an idealized rather than realistic vision of the Taishō period. Her bicycle, which she rides recklessly, symbolizes her efforts to make her own way in the world. Her boldness is reflected in the red she wears in the anime and film versions, not a color popular among Taishō period schoolgirls, who instead preferred maroon (*ebichairo*) and olive green.³²

At her *jōgakkō*, the building of which was modeled on the Former Tokyo Music School (founded in 1890), teachers promote becoming good wives and wise mothers, but students discuss other aspirations. To express the students’ desire for free choice in marriage, Benio’s classmate

Tamaki quotes the opening lines of the 1911 inaugural issue of *Seitō* magazine by pioneering feminist Raichō Hiratsuka: “*Genshi, josei wa taiyō de atta*”: “In the beginning, woman was the sun.”³³ Soon after, however, Benio has a perfectly arranged marriage to Tamaki’s childhood crush Shinobu, born to a German mother and Japanese father, who lives with his wealthy grandparents in Tokyo. Benio first encounters Shinobu when she falls off her bicycle, perhaps symbolically reflecting her need for his help in charting her life course. Her conservative father had arranged their marriage to rectify Shinobu’s grandmother not being able to marry Benio’s grandfather. Benio’s mother died when Benio was young. Thus a contrast is made between Benio and women from previous generations.

While attending school, Benio undergoes rigorous training at Shinobu’s household. At first, she schemes to avoid marriage by dressing strangely, cooking badly, and having poor table manners, all small acts of resistance to the roles of good wife and wise mother. Shinobu instead finds Benio even more adorable. She attempts to elope with Ranmaru, a kabuki *onnagata* (male actor who plays female roles) who is one year her junior and from a lower social class, and who is in love with her and performs comic gags in the first part of the manga. With a name that perhaps refers to Ranmaru Mori (1565–1582), young male attendant and rumored lover of historical warrior Nobunaga Oda, the effeminate Ranmaru cross-dresses in a French maid’s uniform to work in Shinobu’s household so he can be close to Benio. Shinobu is sent to Siberia by a senior officer with a grudge against him, worsened by a drunken brawl started by Benio. (The story fictionalizes Japanese militarization in Siberia in 1918.) Benio remains with Shinobu’s family, awaiting his return. Although Shinobu is reported missing while trying to save his fellow soldiers, Benio refuses to believe he is dead.

Benio seeks work to help Shinobu’s family, who face bankruptcy in part due to the expensive funeral they hold for him. She tries various jobs representing greater public roles for women in Taishō-period Tokyo. For example, she becomes an “*ojōsan* geisha” (proper young lady geisha) as a means to becoming a movie actress and model for advertising posters, but she is surprised by how men objectify her. She finds lasting work as the only female reporter for the Jōdansha Company. (The name is wordplay combining “joke” (*jōdan*) and Kōdansha, Yamato’s publisher. Kōdansha is punned, but not as effectively, in other manga, such as “Gōtansha” in *Hataraki-man*.) Editor Tosei, who detests women because of unresolved anger toward his mother, at first refuses

to hire her, but Benio argues that this is an age of equality and demonstrates her bravery when she helps hungry laborers at a rice riot she is assigned to cover. (Real protests spread across Japan in August 1918.) She is given a male pen name to hide her identity. Her success as a reporter provides her the opportunity to go to Manchuria to search for Shinobu. Meanwhile, Shinobu, who has amnesia, is living with the frail White Russian countess Lalissa. Benio is assigned to report on the noble couple's visit to Japan and is struck by how much the count resembles Shinobu. Benio decides to marry Tosei after she learns he has saved Shinobu's family from financial ruin. Their wedding on September 1, 1923 is disrupted by the Great Kanto Earthquake, which hits just as they are saying their vows. Tosei encourages Benio to leave him for Shinobu, who has regained his memory. Lalissa dies; Benio and Shinobu reunite. Tosei, Tamaki, Shinobu's fellow soldier Onijima, and other characters also enjoy happy endings.

Haikara-san presents the coexistence of clothing, foods, and architecture from Japan, Europe, and the United States in Tokyo. In general, Japanese things are depicted as symbols of Japan's past, while those from the West represent opportunities and comforts. For example, Benio's stern father is drawn in kimono and lives in an almost empty Japanese-style house, while Shinobu's grandparents and their servants reside in a lavishly furnished, European-style mansion. Benio bobs her hair (*dan-patsu*) the day of Shinobu's funeral, which would have been scandalous in the Taishō period. However, kimono fashions are glamourized. *Haikara-san* has been credited with starting the fad for women to wear *hakama* to university graduation ceremonies.³⁴ Other aspects of 1920s consumer culture include new Tokyo entertainments like Asakusa opera (inspired by French revues) and cafes; Hollywood films and actors like Rudolf Valentino; buses, zeppelins, and modern transportation; popular songs; and Benio's favorite food *anpan* (bread filled with sweet bean paste). Anachronistic slang based on English words, such as "lady killer (*redī kirā*)" and "dating" (*odēto*), heighten the romantic atmosphere. Japanese imperialism is used as a plot device without being subject to critique; young soldiers are portrayed as brave and self-sacrificing. Images of class inequalities, sexual harassment, and labor unrest make readers aware of some downsides of history, but these scenes serve as backdrops to Benio's acts of generosity and acceptance. Suffering is shown to be part of Tokyo's attractiveness, thereby preventing the reader from having an entirely negative view of modernity.

Visual modes used to express emotion are familiar to shōjo manga readers: Figures are layered and stand out against black backgrounds, techniques that provide pause for readers to contemplate the narrative. For example, a full-length image of Tamaki passionately reciting Raichō's famous lines, excitement in her eyes, her hair flowing, flowers opening around her, takes the entire right side of a page. The left side comprises smaller drawings of her teacher's angered and classmates' surprised reactions, along with additional views of Tamaki. Cinematic shots and transitions (i.e. close-ups, fades, dissolves, and pans) propel the narrative and add visual interest. The most dramatic scenes are those of the 1923 earthquake, damage rendered in uneven frames, jarring diagonal lines, and sound effects. The male characters are drawn as tall, thin *bishōnen*, beautiful youths with feminine attributes like flowing hair and eyes almost as large as those of the female characters.

Thanks in part to the fact that the series has attracted global fans, commercial reprints and reruns, and the cultural influence of shōjo manga, *Haikara-san* has continued to promote romantic views of the Taishō period, as evident in live-action adaptations. Set to cheery music and full of slapstick, the 1987 film—it stars Yōko Minamino, known for playing the schoolgirl lead in *Delinquent Girl Detective*, and actor Hiroshi Abe, and aired as a primetime special on Fuji Television—focuses more on love and less on school and visualizes opulent Westernization in Tokyo. Ranmaru does not appear, and Lalissa is a poor Siberian farm girl. The Takarazuka all-female revue also staged an elaborately costumed musical (April 1979–August 1980) as part of *Takarazuka Television Romances* (*Takarazuka terebi roman*), which aired weekly on Kansai TV (1971–1994). The Takarazuka revue has historically adopted stories with strong female characters, including a 1931 version of the Italian opera *Madame Butterfly* told from the female character's perspective, and Riyoko Ikeda's manga *Rose of Versailles* (*Berusaian no bara*, 1972–1973).³⁵

Members of the girl band Morning Musume adapted *Haikara-san* as part of their *Youth! Love Stories* (*Shinshun! LOVE sutōrizu*), which aired on TBS network television as part of 2002 New Year's special programming. *Haikara-san* was shown in between their retellings of Nobel Laureate Yasunari Kawabata's *Dancing Girl of Izu* (*Izu no odoriko*, 1929), and Yasutaka Tsutsui's *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* (*Toki o kakeru shōjo*, 1966), novels that had been reinterpreted many times. Morning Musume has performed songs and videos based on other popular culture for children and young adults. For example, in 2003 they covered

the theme song to the NHK public television puppet show *Island of Unexpected Contradictions* (*Hyokkori hyōtan-jima*, 1964–1969), a single that reached fourth place on the Oricon charts.³⁶ As advertised, their short version of *Haikara-san* showcases the Taishō period, a “time when women were starting to decide their own ways of life.”³⁷ It focuses on schoolgirl friendships and fashions and ends optimistically with Benio receiving a letter from Shinobu in Siberia, which she celebrates by dancing with her classmates. Morning Musume dressed in contemporary versions of Taishō period clothing, including vivid pink, knee-length *hakama* skirts.

TAISHŌ BASEBALL GIRLS

The early twentieth-century schoolgirl is also envisioned as an alluring figure of resistance in *Taishō Baseball Girls*. The story was first published by Atsushi Kagurazaka and Sadaji Koike in 2007 as a light novel (*raito noberu*).³⁸ It was then adapted into *seinen* manga (comics marketed to men in their twenties) and serialized in *Monthly Comic Ryū* magazine (September 2008–April 2011). The twelve-episode television anime series (2009) in a pastel color palette seems aimed at teenaged girls. Perhaps in order to appeal to adult males, the manga presents an eroticized view of schoolgirls and includes scenes of topless bathing. Other formats include a 2010 visual novel for the handheld PlayStation Portable (PSP) console that involves the player in the plot.

After being told by her betrothed, a male student in the baseball club, that education is useless for girls who should become housewives, fourteen-year-old Aiko Ogasawara, a student at the fictional Tōhō Seika Higher Girls School (Oriental Blossoms Higher Girls School), approaches her classmate Koume Suzugawa with the idea of starting a baseball team. Another reason for their choice of baseball is because it is a new sport for boys. They face troubles, such as finding nine players needed for a team, learning the sport, using equipment sized for men, and getting permission from their parents. They call their team Oukakai, an alternative reading of the character for *sakura*, or cherry blossom and pun for “Westernization” (*ouka*), one of many flower names in the manga. They are coached by Anna Curtland, an English teacher from the United States, drawn with large breasts and blond hair. Team Ouka challenges schoolboys, who are taken aback by the idea of playing girls, especially ones they want to date.

The story is set in 1925, the end of the Taishō period and the time when sailor uniforms were becoming more prevalent: the switch from *hakama* symbolizes greater freedom for women and provides the reader a “fetish” symbol associated with schoolgirls. The manga, more than the anime, shows escalating militarization and includes scenes of Japan producing tanks and other war machines. All adaptations are full of historical anachronisms. The first episode of the anime opens with Koume’s dream about receiving a sailor uniform from her parents and wandering Tokyo singing a version of the 1919 popular song *Tokyo bushi* (Tokyo Song), which celebrates new urban things and places. The schoolgirls carry large bags decorated with baseball-themed plush charms, referencing the fad since the 1990s of personalizing bags and cell phones with accessories.

The story was perhaps inspired by a real girls’ baseball team, established in 1917 by students at the Aichi Prefecture Imabari kōto joshigakkō mission school. A girls’ school baseball tournament was held in Nagoya in 1919. (Professional women’s baseball lasted in Japan from 1950 to 1971.) The plot adapts the commercially successful Japanese formula of what I call *ganbaru* (“try your best and you will succeed”) plots. In *ganbaru* narratives, the fallen hero finds confidence by excelling at an unusual hobby or an unlikely feat with the help of a coach and other players. The coach and other players, in turn, learn to love the activity through observing the player’s hard work and thereby find hope in other aspects of their own lives.³⁹ The manga sequel, *Imperial Tokyo Takoyaki Girls* (*Teito takoyaki musume*, 2009–2010), includes *yuri*, erotic love between girls. After defeating boys in baseball, the teammates focus on schoolwork. Koume does poorly in her studies, while the other girls have crushes on her (and on each other). They regain confidence by challenging an Osaka girls’ school to a food stall battle.

Taishō Baseball Girls perpetuates the multiple readings associated with early twentieth-century schoolgirls: On one hand, schoolgirls exemplify new roles for women (here, athletics), the power of education to expand people’s worldviews, and aspects of Westernization in Tokyo daily life. On the other hand, they are overtly sexualized, drawn in ways that direct the reader’s gaze toward the development of adolescent bodies, and are shown to be as much consumers of new fashions as producers of cultural change. Perhaps in part due to their different target audiences and the tropes that distinguish shōjo and seinen media, the manga version tends to objectify young women, while the anime celebrates their progressive achievements.

CONCLUSION: ROMANCE OF THE TAISHŌ SCHOOLGIRL

As evident by such different series as *Haikara-san* and *Taishō Baseball Girls*, the Taishō period has been romanticized as a time of possibility for educated, elite young women, with more freedom than earlier generations. Reasons include the generally favorable perceptions of Japanese modernization at this historical moment, especially when viewed with a century of hindsight. The schoolgirl's adolescence parallels Japan's maturation during a time of capitalist growth, changes in the individual's role in society, and an increasing imperialism. The Taishō period was instrumental in construction of girlhood and creation of publishing trends that made later manga magazines possible. Behaviors, practices, and media created by schoolgirls have historically received more academic and journalistic attention than those of schoolboys. For example, a spate of nostalgic books for general readers have been published in Japanese and other languages about Taishō schoolgirls and the fashionable modernity they represent. Literature, fashion, hobbies, and friendship feature largely in these illustrated volumes, as they do in *Haikara-san*, while women's academic achievements do not.⁴⁰ The Taishō schoolgirl's acts of resistance are depicted as beneficial, rather than as threatening, to her and her larger society.

Benio's traits exemplify the notion that schoolgirls can be endearingly empathetic characters because of their juxtaposition between strength and "cute." Cute-ifying schoolgirls renders them harmless, unthreatening, and approachable and makes the changes they represent seem more palatable. Notably, *Haikara-san* and other shōjo manga by the Year 24 Group were created in the mid-1970s, a time when *kawaii*, or cute, fashions were becoming more common in Japan,⁴¹ as evidenced by Sanrio's Hello Kitty, first used on a change purse in 1975, the same year as *Haikara-san*.⁴² *Kawaii* is a particular kind of cute associated with vulnerability and the need for care.⁴³ Especially with increased globalization of popular culture in the twenty-first century, Japanese government officials have used the persuasive soft power of *kawaii*, as opposed to the hard power of military force or economic sanctions, to promote international relations and bolster the domestic economy. For example, Hello Kitty—now the world's most recognizable logo—was "appointed" Japanese Tourism Ambassador to Asia in May 2008. This exemplifies the Japanese trend of using cute characters to represent places, events, and concepts, thereby making them easier to remember and softening

their sterner associations. Similarly, in February 2009, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed three young women to serve as Ambassadors of Cute (*Kawaii taishi*) to promote popular culture and present a gentler image of Japan overseas. Each represented a fashion genre that characterized Japanese youth culture in the global imagination; notably, Shizuka Fujioka, a twenty-year-old clothing coordinator for a school uniform store, dressed in the sailor uniform of a high school girl.⁴⁴ The schoolgirl was turned into a cute “mascot,” emphasizing her positive fictional associations and erasing her real-life problems.

School life has been a main theme of manga, in part because of the medium’s attention to the psychological processes of personal change and efforts to produce characters with whom adolescent readers can identify.⁴⁵ *Haikara-san* utilizes the image of the teenage schoolgirl that frequently appeared in early twentieth-century literature, art, and journalism. The historical mix of Japanese, European, and American aesthetics provides settings, costumes, and narrative symbols that can be extended in manga more dramatically than in live-action media. In manga, Japan’s own past becomes the source of fantasy; historical signifiers can become unmoored from their real referents and take on new meanings.⁴⁶ In part because of historical distance, Taishō schoolgirls can be idealized and depoliticized in ways that contemporary schoolgirls cannot.

NOTES

1. Women’s *hakama* are long skirts worn over kimono and tied at the waist. They became the popular dress for female students in the last decade of the nineteenth century and, along with hair ribbons, became metonymy for schoolgirls. See, for example, Masuko Honda, *Jogakusei no keifu* [The Genealogy of the Schoolgirl] (Tokyo: Seidōsha, 1990). For more on schoolgirl fashion, see, Rebecca Copeland, “Fashioning the Feminine: Images of the Modern Girl Student in Meiji Japan,” *U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal* 30–31 (2006): 13–35.
2. Yamato’s manga is not the only popular culture text to depict women who were “high collar.” For example, in the NHK public television morning serialized television drama (*renzoku shōsetsu*) *Haikara-san*, airing April–October, 1982, depicts a young woman who returns from studying in the United States to help to establish a resort hotel for foreigners in Yokohama. This followed the popular *Ohanahan* (1966), an NHK morning serialized drama about a female doctor in the Meiji period.

3. See, for example, H.D. Harootunian, "Introduction: A Sense of an Ending and the Problem of Taisho," in *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taisho Democracy*, eds. Bernard Silberman and H.D. Harootunian (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).
4. For example, the 1985 Equal Opportunity Law and related legislation that revoked protective legislation that limited the hours women could work and thereby made it theoretically possible for women to hold jobs that had traditionally required compulsory overtime were not passed for the main goal of promoting a gender-equal society. Instead, they have been instituted to augment the labor force and increase the number of children as Japanese society ages. See, for example, Masami Itō, "Work-Life Balance Starts at Home," *Japan Times*, January 9, 2008, accessed November 22, 2014, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2008/01/09/national/work-life-balance-starts-at-home-rengo-chief/#.VHGOSXID_8E; Alisa Freedman and Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, "The Japanese Television Drama *Around 40* and the Politics of Happiness: Count What You Have Now," *Asian Studies Review* 35, no. 3 (2011): 298–299.
5. *Asahi Chronicle: Weekly the Twentieth Century, 1906–1907* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 2000), 31.
6. Prefectural academies, such as the Kyoto Girls School (Kyoto-furitsu jogakkō, 1877) were also established the same time. The first Japanese women's university was Ferris Jogakuin Daigaku, founded in 1870 by American missionaries.
7. *Asahi Chronicle: Weekly the Twentieth Century, 1906–1907*, 31.
8. See, Shizue Uchida, *Shōgakusei techō: Taishō Shōwa* [The Taishō Shōwa Schoolgirl Book] (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2005), 77–79.
9. See, Elise Tipton, "Moving Up and Out: The Shop Girl in Interwar Japan," in *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility, and Labor in Japan*, eds. Alisa Freedman et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 21–39.
10. Deborah Shamoan, *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls' Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012), 2.
11. *Asahi Chronicle: Weekly the Twentieth Century, 1906–1907*, 31.
12. See, Alisa Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit: Japanese Culture on the Rails and Road* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 45–46; Kiyo Tsuda and Koko Murata, *Modan keshō shi: yosoi no hachijūnen* [The History of Modern Cosmetics: 80 Years of Make-Up] (Tokyo: Pola bunka kenkyūjo, 1986), 149; *Shūkan Yearbook: Nichiroku 20 seiki—1909* [Weekly Yearbook: Journal of the Twentieth Century—1909] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1998), 9. For information on attitudes about unmarried women and photography in 1907, see, Shirō Murasei, "'San' to 'shi' no

- ikonorojii--Sanshirō, setsudan sareru shōjotachi*” [The Iconography of Three and Four and the Dissected Young Women in *Sanshirō*], in *Sōseki kenkyū*, vol. 2, eds. Yōichi Komori and Chiaki Ishihara (Tokyo: Kanrin Shobō, 1994).
13. *Hyakunen mae no josei no tashinami* [The Achievements of Women of 100 Years Ago] (Tokyo: Maar-sha Publishing, 1996), 105; “Fujin senyō sen-sha” (Women-Only Train), *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* (January 28, 1912). The phrase “Flower Train” (*hana densha*) also connotes a particularly bawdy form of striptease that was popular in hot spring resorts through the 1960s.
 14. *Hyakunen mae no josei no tashinami*, 105. Teizō Ishikawa, ed., *Basha tetsudō kara chikatetsu made* [From Horse Tramway to Subway] (Tokyo: Tokyo-to kōhō fukyū ban, 1963), 3.
 15. The flower train was in use until the Second World War. Movements to reinstate it were successful in 1947, and until 1973, in December 1999, the privately owned Keio line (which connects the western Tokyo suburbs to the city center) initiated a car reserved for women on the last train of the night, followed by similar cars in at least eleven other lines by 2005.
 16. Haruhiko Asakura, *Shinsōban Meiji sesō hennen jiten* [Chronological Dictionary of Everyday Life in the Meiji Period: New Edition] (Tokyo: Tokyodō shuppan, 1998), 243.
 17. *Asahi Chronicle/Weekly the Twentieth Century, 1924* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 2000), 30. The dress might have been so named from the Osaka dialect for the hem being “very,” or “*pa-to*,” wide.
 18. See, for example, Uchida, 77–83.
 19. Isao Shimizu, ed., *Manga ni kakareta Meiji, Taishō, Shōwa* [Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa Japan Depicted in Manga] (Tokyo: Newton Press, 1998), 80.
 20. *Ibid.*, 71.
 21. *Ibid.*, 53.
 22. *Ibid.*, 52.
 23. For more on magazines and reading communities, see Sarah Frederick, *Turning Pages: Reading and Writing Women’s Magazines in Interwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).
 24. Many schools in the 1910s and 1920s had prohibitions against students publishing in commercial venues. For example, author Midori Osaki (1896–1971) withdrew from Japan Women’s University in 1920 after getting in trouble with university officials for publishing the story “From the Doldrums” (*Mifūtai kara*) in the general interest literary magazine *Shinchō* (New Currents) in 1919.
 25. For a timeline and concise history of shōjo manga magazines, see “*Jidai no kūki o utsushitekita, sōzōsei afureru rekishi*” [A History of Creativity, Reflecting the Atmosphere of the Times], in *PEN: Shōjo manga chō iremon* [PEN Magazine: Super Introduction to Shōjo Manga], June 1, 2013 (No. 337): 72–77.

26. See, for example, Shamooin, 38–39; Uchida, 11–18, 68–73.
27. For analysis of the format of shōjo magazines and their reading communities, see Jennifer Prough, *Straight from the Heart: Gender, Intimacy, and the Cultural Production of Shōjo Manga* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011).
28. Other members included Moto Hagio, Yasuko Aoike, Riyoko Ikeda, Yumiko Ōshima, Keiko Takemiya, and Minori Kihara. For more explanation on the Year 24 Group, see, for example, Satoko Kan et al., *Shōjo Manga wandārando* [Shōjo Manga Wonderland] (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 2012), 12–16.
29. Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, “Waki Yamato,” in *Shōjo manga wandārando* (Shōjo Manga Wonderland), eds. Satoko Kan et al. (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 2012), 158.
30. The manga’s title—“And we shall not see shallow dreams,” a warning not to be deluded by the shallow desires of this world—is a line from the Heian period *Iroha* poem, which uses all forty-seven Japanese syllables exactly once each. *Asaki yume mishi* had a record-breaking print run of fifteen million copies, and an abridged bilingual Japanese-English edition was produced. *Gendai manga hakubutsukan: 1945–2005 besatsu* [The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Manga: Supplement] (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2006), 72.
31. For a discussion of media mix, see Marc Steinberg, *Anime’s Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
32. Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit*, 48.
33. Waki Yamato, *Haikara-san ga tōru* [Here Comes Miss Modern], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha manga bunko, 1995), 19.
34. “Shōjo manga wa, onna gokoro o manabu kyōkasho” [Shōjo Manga: Textbook for Learning Female Psychology], in *PEN: Shōjo manga chō iremon* [PEN Magazine: Super Introduction to Shōjo Manga], June 1, 2013 (No. 337): 85.
35. Shikō Tsubouchi, *Shukusatsu Chōchō-san* [Concise Madame Butterfly], trans. Kyoko Selden, in *Special Issue in Honor of Kyoko Selden*, January 2015: 63–80.
36. “Mōningu Musume. no Hyokkori hyōtan-jima” [Morning Musume’s Island of Unexpected Contradictions], *Oricon Style*, accessed November 23, 2014, <http://www.oricon.co.jp/prof/169712/products/501769/1/>.
37. *Mōningu Musume. Shinshun! LOVE sutōrizu* [Morning Musume: Youth! LOVE Stories], TBS. 2002. DVD.
38. “Light novel” (*raito noberu*) is a catch-all category of easy-to-read fiction often with ties to videogames, anime, and other digital culture and aimed at young adults.

39. A popular example is the film comedy *Waterboys* (*Wātā bōizu*, 2001), based on the true story of high-school boys who start a synchronized swimming team.
40. Examples include Shizue Uchida, *Shōgakusei techō: Taishō Shōwa*; Keiko Ishikawa, *Taishō roman techō – nosutarujikku ando modan no sekai* [Pocketbook of Taishō Romanticism: Nostalgic and Modern World] (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2009); Brian Ashcraft and Shoko Ueda, *Japanese Schoolgirl Confidential* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2010).
41. See Toby Slade, “Cute Fashion: The Social Strategies and Aesthetics of *Kawaii*,” in Alisa Freedman and Toby Slade, eds. *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture*, 401–411. (London: Routledge, 2017).
42. In her backstory, Kitty has the surname White, like Candy does in *Candy Candy*, and lives in London, demonstrating a concurrent fascination for characters from Western countries.
43. See, Jim Windolf, “Addicted to Cute,” *Vanity Fair* (December 2009), accessed November 24, 2014, <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2009/12/cuteness-200912>.
44. Singer Yu Kimura promoted Harajuku decorative (*decora*) culture, and Misako Aoki wore Sweet Lolita outfits. See, for example, Jun Kaminishikawara, “Cute Ambassadors’ Roam Globe to Promote Japan’s Pop Culture,” *The Japan Times*, June 17, 2009, accessed on November 24, 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20090617fl.html>; Laura Miller, “Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan,” *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 20, no. 1 (2011): 18–29.
45. *Haikara-san* raises the question of why Taishō period schoolgirls have been more prevalent in manga and anime than in cinema, literature, and other media after the 1920s. To the best of my knowledge, the only Japanese theatrical release feature film to feature a prewar schoolgirl was director Yasujirō Ozu’s 1929 *Days of Youth* (*Gakusei romansu wakaki hi*). In this comedy, two male students vie for the same schoolgirl during a skiing trip.
46. I thank Jennifer Prough, Rebecca Suter, CJ Suzuki, and Sharalyn Orbaugh for our panel discussion of “Reimagining History in Manga Format: From *Gekiga* to *Shōjo*,” Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, March 2013. I also thank an anonymous reader working for the *U.S.–Japan Women’s Journal*.

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Redefining Shōjo and Shōnen Manga Through Language Patterns

Giancarla Unser-Schutz

INTRODUCTION

Genre in manga has traditionally been divided almost exclusively by the gender of the readership, as determined by the magazines in which they originally ran. However, with more individuals reading outside of these gendered genres, and particularly many women reading shōnen manga,¹ the distinction between shōjo manga and shōnen manga has become increasingly problematic.² Indeed, with reading patterns shifting toward *tankōbon* (collected book) editions,³ readers are freer than ever to select only what interests them, regardless of who the original magazines were aimed at. As Itō argues, it appears time to consider what really defines genre in manga, and to consider how shōjo manga and shōnen manga can be defined by more meaningful distinctions, such as plot, characterization, setting, and other factors.⁴

One element that may prove informative is language. While there has been a tendency within manga studies to view language as subordinate to visual elements,⁵ there have long been hints that how language is used

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in the genres may differ (e.g., Ōtsuka's inner language in shōjo manga⁶). In this article, I will examine how language might help redefine genre by touching upon several linguistic analyses of a corpus of ten popular manga. In particular, I will demonstrate that there are distinct differences in how language is used in shōjo manga and shōnen manga, particularly in the kinds of text seen (lines, onomatopoeia, etc.), the kinds of words frequently used, and the use of characters and their speech patterns. While these elements may seem unrelated, I will argue that all three are related to differences in how characters are depicted, how characters interact, and how readers, too, interact with characters, with shōjo manga coming to be seen as a genre which actively creates and develops empathy between its readers and characters—and possibly authors—whereas shōnen manga is more plot-oriented.

GENRE, LANGUAGE, AND MANGA

One of the most important things to approach is why one should expect shōjo manga and shōnen manga to constitute genres in the first place. It would be dishonest to ignore that to a good degree these distinctions are first and foremost reflections of market demographics: who is meant to read them is the determining factor in how manga are produced and sold, affecting everything from how they first hit the market—with the major divisions in *komikku-zasshi* or manga magazines being those intended for women (*josei-muke komikku-zasshi*) and those intended for men (*danshi-muke komikku-zasshi*)—to how they are placed on bookstore shelves, where they are similarly first divided by the type of magazine they appear in, followed by publisher, only being divided by authors last.

Given that readerships are no longer clearly delineated, some researchers have argued that demographics-based genres are no longer appropriate. Most famously, Itō, in his influential work *Tezuka izzu Deddo* (*Tezuka is Dead*), suggested looking instead at *kyara* (role/character), frame structure, and language as factors for considering genre.⁷ In addition, as Shamoons has pointed out, one of the major characteristics of manga from the 1980s onwards has been a tendency toward genre-crossing, with shōjo manga borrowing from shōnen manga at times and vice versa⁸; thus, it may be the case that even if there were distinct characteristics unique to each genre previously, they are no longer unique. This raises the question of whether there really are any salient differences defining the two genres, or if genre should be completely reassessed outside of the shōjo manga/shōnen manga framework.

There have been many suggestions as to what might characterize shōnen manga and shōjo manga, the most common being that the former is action-oriented⁹ or focused on the hero-protagonist's social development,¹⁰ whereas the latter is romance-oriented, focusing on the protagonist's transformation through her romantic relationship with the main male character.¹¹ One of the problems with looking at genres in terms of themes, however, is that exceptions are easily found: there are both shōnen manga where romance plays a central role—such as Rumiko Takahashi's *Inu Yasha* (serialized from 1996 to 2008), in which the relationship between Kagome and Inu Yasha is an important subplot that moves the narrative forward—and shōjo manga where action is key, such as Yuki Suetsugu's *Chihaya Furu* (2007–present), which focuses on the traditional Japanese card game *karuta*, with many scenes taking place at tournaments. Yet intuitively, one can sense that there must be something different between shōjo manga and shōnen manga, a point even Itō notes.¹² After all, while the magazines may be primarily divided in terms of reader demographics, there must be some process at some stage to decide whether a particular story fits better in a shōjo manga magazine or a shōnen manga magazine beyond personal opinion, suggesting that there are other criteria—conscious or not—at play.

Part of the problem observed within manga relates to a universal issue of defining genre. As Altman observes, there is often a drive to extremes in genre research, with a tendency to go toward either inclusive or exclusive definitions.¹³ Inclusive definitions generally focus in on narrative issues or settings, and can act as a kind of “tautological” checklist with which to confirm an item's inclusion in the genre. On the other hand, exclusive definitions tend to focus on looking for the genre's meaning or structure. Discussing their role in films, he also notes that while an inclusive definition “has little explanatory power, it is applicable to a larger number of films,” whereas an exclusive definition can “isolate a genre's specific meaning-bearing structures.”¹⁴

With this in mind, the sense of unease experienced when defining shōjo manga as “romance comics for girls” and shōnen manga as “action comics for boys” is likely due to their being inclusive definitions. While such checklist definitions are common and useful, they can lose sight of the larger question of how they are experienced by readers. Bryce and Davis's comprehensive overview of manga genres, which primarily divides them by the kinds of stories they depict—from fantasy and history to sports and humor, with shōjo manga also related primarily to

romance—is a good example, for while it gives the novice some idea of the diversity of manga, as a list it can simplify the relationships between genres.¹⁵ Altman himself calls for consideration of a genre theory that encompasses both inclusive and exclusive definitions, and alternative ways of looking at genre in manga are possible. For example, Shamoon’s historically oriented account demonstrates shōjo manga’s positioning in regards to girls’ culture (*shōjo bunka*), showing its origins to be in the girls’ magazines of previous generations. This repositioning helps take the definition of shōjo manga beyond merely romance comics, but there is clearly still a need to define new ways of assessing genre in manga.¹⁶

One particularly influential way of looking at genres has been to see them as ways of organizing meaning. By Swale’s definition, “(a) genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes.”¹⁷ Under this conceptualization of genre, experts in the discourse community can recognize what those purposes are, and why they should be considered genres, resulting in constraints on the content and style seen within representatives of each genre. While there are many possible elements that can be subject to such stylistic constraints, previous research on genre has found language to be a very effective tool in genre classification. Stamatatos, Fakotakis and Kokkinakis, for example, have shown that word frequencies and stylistic markers such as punctuation can be useful,¹⁸ and Wastholm, Kusma and Megyesi also have proven the importance of parts of speech,¹⁹ in addition to many other findings such as those of Kessler, Numberg and Schütze and Henry and Roseberry.²⁰ The role of language in categorizing genre can be complex; as Biber has shown, there are many instances where the linguistic qualities of two texts within a commonly recognized genre may be very different, whereas there are other instances where texts which clearly are not of the same genre use language in similar ways, thus classifying them as the same text-type.²¹ These differing results are not incompatible; it is common to see examples of text-type and genre being used interchangeably,²² stressing instead the mutability of definitions of genre, and Biber himself goes on to use combinations of certain language patterns to develop a multidimensional analysis of genre.

While manga is by nature a multimodal medium, using both visual and linguistic elements, analysis of language patterns may give new insight into how shōjo manga and shōnen manga function, and whether they can really be considered distinct genres. Note that I take a very

broad definition of language patterns, including not just the use of actual words or grammatical structures, but also the contexts within which they appear and the amount of text seen. Taken in this way, the previous research suggests that linguistic patterns may be useful for identifying manga genre as well. As noted above, Itō has suggested that language is one of the three elements to look at.²³ In a more concrete example, in his review of shōjo manga from the 1970s to the early 1980s, often described as a time of transition, Ōtsuka described how they used floating, poetic text that appeared unanchored to anything in the drawings, and acted as monologues or windows into characters' internal language (*naimenteki na kotoba*).²⁴ On the other hand, Ōtsuka also commented that onomatopoeic expressions were more common in shōnen manga, as they tend to be action-oriented.

To the best of my knowledge, the previous research has largely focused individually on certain points—such as the use of one type of text in Ōtsuka's case—and has not looked at how the different linguistic elements come together. This study is one attempt to fill these gaps using data from a corpus of ten popular series, as determined by sales ranking and reader surveys described below. The corpus was originally compiled in order to conduct an overall linguistic analysis of manga with a particular focus on popular series, as popularity could be interpreted as a sign of scope of potential impact. My analysis has centered on how language is used in manga and how that shapes manga as a medium. I have focused primarily on three aspects of language in manga: text types, most frequent words, and characters and their speech patterns. While my original goal in compiling the corpus was to ascertain manga's general linguistic characteristics, I found that shōjo manga and shōnen manga showed distinct differences in regards to all three points. Although a detailed analysis of each section must be saved for other forums,²⁵ in the following section I summarize three studies on these elements, focusing on how they differ in shōjo manga and shōnen manga, while saving detailed interpretation of their significance for the discussion section.

CORPUS DESIGN AND TEXT TYPES

Text types are perhaps best described with an introduction to the corpus. A corpus is defined as "... a large collection of authentic texts that have been gathered in electronic form according to a specific set of criteria,"²⁶ and as noted above, the corpus described here was compiled as part of a

larger project to establish the general linguistic characteristics of popular manga. The sample, described in Table 3.1, was selected based on sales rankings reported by PHP, and surveys conducted amongst high school students in 2007 and 2008.²⁷ I included the first three volumes of each series, and included all of the text therein as targets.

The most important part of constructing the corpus was determining how to actually input the text. Because text is embedded within the drawings themselves, language in manga is inherently nonlinear: it requires readers to move throughout frames and look simultaneously at multiple threads, many of which function differently within the text, such as graphic, onomatopoeic expressions and conversational dialogue enclosed in speech bubbles. In part with hints from Groensteen and Kai, I categorized all of the text seen into eight different types based primarily on their visual environment, as detailed in Table 3.2.²⁸

This categorization made it possible not only to isolate individual text types for analysis, but also to look at their overall distribution. One of the immediate things to consider was the distribution of the text types between shōjo manga and shōnen manga. Given what Ōtsuka had noted previously,²⁹ one might have anticipated that shōjo manga would include more thoughts, which are generally internal monologues written on the background as he described, and shōnen manga more onomatopoeia. However, there proved to be no significant differences in this regard. While shōjo manga did feature more thoughts, there were large differences between series, and the use of onomatopoeia was comparable (Table 3.3; Fig. 3.1). Note that in the tables and results below, a text-character will refer to one letter (*ji*) of text, whereas an entry refers to one block of text, such as any individual speech bubble or string of onomatopoeia.

Interestingly, however, there were two points which proved significantly different between shōjo manga and shōnen manga: their use of *Background Lines/Thoughts* and *Comments*, both of which appeared more frequently in shōjo manga than in shōnen manga (Fig. 3.1). While the frequency of *Thoughts* in shōnen manga supports Ōtsuka's assertion that the monologues seen so commonly in earlier shōjo manga also influenced shōnen manga before going into a decline, these two text types may present a new source of genre differentiation. In fact, the two text types are similar on at least three points, including their use of handwritten text and their placement outside of speech bubbles; that they are nonessential, secondary information that is usually of a humorous nature; and that they are basically positioned outside of the main narrative, with

Table 3.1 Corpus sample

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Japanese title</i>	<i>English title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Magazine</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>Finish date</i>
Shōjo manga	<i>Bobura ga Ita</i>	<i>We Were There</i>	Obata, Yuki	BetsuKomi	Shōgakukan	10/2002	2/2012
	<i>Kimi ni Todoke</i>	<i>From Me To You</i>	Shiina, Karuho	Bessatsu Margaret	Shūeisha	9/2005	11/2017
	<i>Nana</i>	<i>Nana</i>	Yazawa, Ai	Cookie	Shūeisha	10/1999	–
	<i>Nodame Cantabile</i>	<i>Nodame Cantabile</i>	Ninomiya, Tomoko	Kiss	Kodansha	7/2001	10/2009
Shōnen-manga	<i>Rab★Kon</i>	<i>Love Com</i>	Nakahara, Aya	Bessatsu Margaret	Shūeisha	9/2001	12/2006
	<i>Death Note</i>	<i>Death Note</i>	Ohba, Tsugumi;	Shōnen Jump	Shūeisha	12/2003	5/2006
	<i>Gin Tama</i>	<i>Gin Tama</i>	Obata, Takeshi	Shōnen Jump	Shūeisha	12/2003	–
	<i>Meitantei Conan</i>	<i>Case Closed</i>	Sorachi, Hideaki	Shōnen Sunday	Shōgakukan	1/1994	–
	<i>Naruto</i>	<i>Naruto</i>	Kishimoto, Masashi	Shōnen Jump	Shūeisha	11/1999	11/2014
	<i>One Piece</i>	<i>One Piece</i>	Oda, Eiichirō	Shōnen Jump	Shūeisha	8/1997	–

Table 3.2 Types of text found in corpus^a

<i>Category</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Text</i>
Lines	Unbroken speech bubbles	Audible information; primarily dialogue, some onomatopoeia	Generally type
Thoughts	Dot-tailed speech bubbles; squares/whitened-out space; on the background	Characters' inner voices; are not audible to other characters; do not directly address the reader	Generally type
Narration	Square captions; directly on background	Text informing plot development, location, etc.; primarily descriptive, often featuring privileged information unknown to characters; any person; not audible/accessible to characters	Generally type
Onomatopoeia	Directly written on background	Do not form full sentences; are not spoken by anyone; are mimetic of real world sounds or describe the nature or atmosphere of a scene	Stylized; graphically handwritten
Background text	Part of drawing	Text written as a part of the scene; is not actually vocalized, such as advertisements, building names, etc.; appear as text to characters	Graphically incorporated into drawing
Background lines/ thoughts	Directly written on background, sometimes marked by straight lines	Text representing secondary lines or thoughts; it is impossible to tell whether they vocalized; often jokes, criticisms or other non-essential information	Handwritten
Comments	Directly written on background, sometimes marked by arrows or stars	Notes or jokes about characters or items; supply privileged information about the scenes that has not been otherwise made available to the readers; generally non-essential information	Generally handwritten
Titles	In captions; directly on background	Titles or subtitles of the chapter or series name; authors' names	Generally type

^aOriginally from Unser-Schutz, "Language as the Visual" (2011a)

Table 3.3 Distribution of text types in corpus^a

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Data type</i>	<i>Category</i>								
		<i>Lines</i>	<i>Thoughts</i>	<i>Narration</i>	<i>Onomatopoeia</i>	<i>Background text</i>	<i>Background lines/thoughts</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Titles</i>	<i>Total</i>
Shōjo manga	Text- characters	219,541	52,398	8,839	15,904	10,115	21,622	2,394	682	331,495
	Entries	16,240	4,284	582	4,164	977	2,310	342	73	28,972
	Entry Length	13.52	12.23	15.19	3.82	10.35	9.36	7.00	9.34	11.44
Shōnen- manga	Text- characters	280,505	40,005	4,819	15,541	12,584	1,209	162	2,022	356,847
	Entries	18,054	2,273	276	4,368	1,212	142	20	163	26,508
	Entry Length	15.54	17.60	17.46	3.56	10.38	8.51	8.10	12.40	13.46
Total	Text- characters	500,046	92,403	13,658	31,445	22,699	22,831	2,556	2,704	688,342
	Entries	34,294	6,561	858	8,531	2,189	2,452	362	236	55,480
	Entry Length	14.58	14.08	15.92	3.69	10.37	9.31	7.06	11.46	12.41
	T-Chars./ Page	94.57	17.49	2.59	5.94	4.29	4.32	0.48	0.51	130.20
	Entries/ Page	6.48	1.24	0.16	1.61	0.41	0.46	0.07	0.04	10.49

Text-characters: The number of “letters”; *Entries*: The number of blocks of text; *Entry length*: The average number of text-characters per entry; *T-Chars./Page*: Average number of text-characters per page; *Entries/Page*: Average number of text-characters per entries
^a Originally from Giancarlo Unser-Schutz, “What Text Can Tell Us?” (2015a)

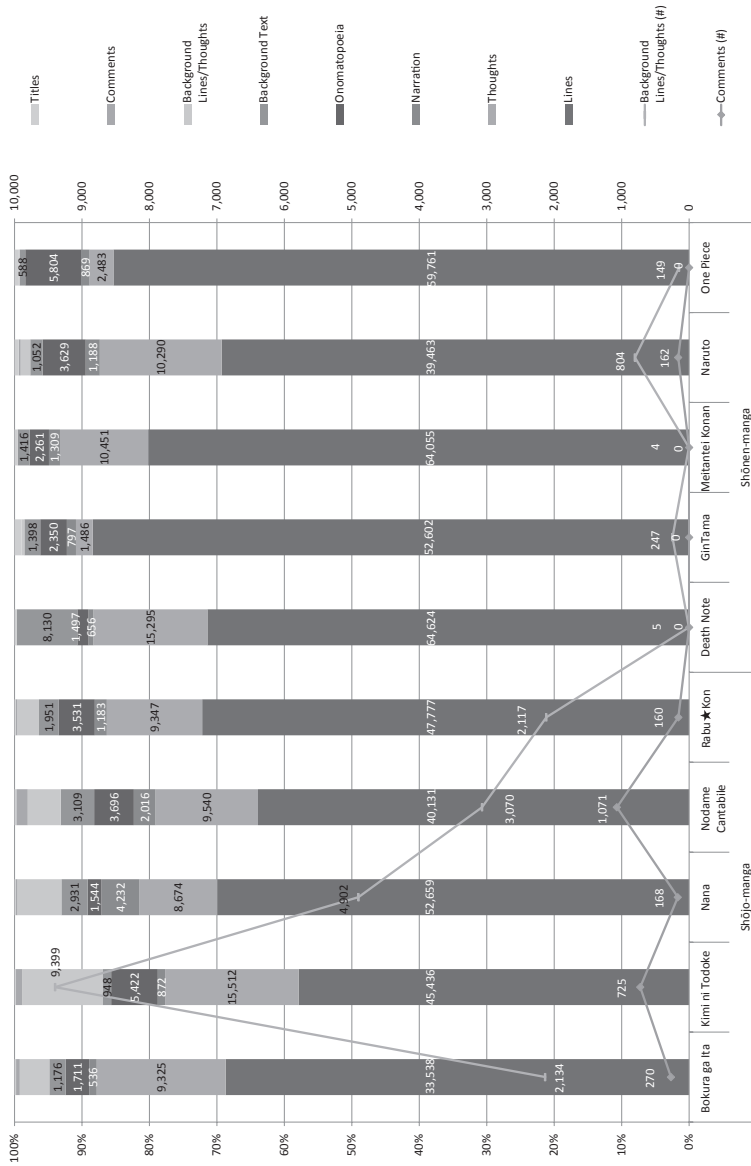


Fig. 3.1 Distribution of text types in the corpus, with focus on *Background Lines/Thoughts* and *Comments* (all data using number of text-characters)

Comments in particular being of an authorial voice, and *Background Lines/Thoughts* often attributable to extras. In so far as these text types are more common in shōjo manga, these characteristics may also shape shōjo manga as a genre.

MOST FREQUENTLY USED WORDS

Given that the text types used differed by genre, one must then wonder whether the patterns seen in the text itself might also differ by genre; that is, does what is talked about in the series also differ by genre? I next conducted a morpheme analysis of *Lines*, which comprised the majority of text, to determine the most frequently seen words. Because written Japanese does not use spaces between words, word frequency analyses rely upon morpheme parsers which use internal dictionaries to probabilistically divide the text. For this, I used ChaMame, a program designed to be used with the UniDic dictionary compiled by the National Japanese Language and Linguistics Institute and the parser MeCab.³⁰

A total of 260,949 words (shōjo manga: 108,769, shōnen manga: 152,180) were obtained and divided by word class (nouns, verbs, etc.). In general, shōjo manga and shōnen manga showed some similarities with trends found in previous research on blogs in particular, which differed by female and male authors, in that shōjo manga and blogs written by women featured fewer nouns and more adverbs than shōnen manga and blogs written by men, suggesting that questions of authorial influence are important in the genres³¹: with the exception of *Death Note*, whose writer has remained anonymous, the shōjo manga and shōnen manga in this corpus all have authors who are the same gender as their imagined audience.

While their lexical characteristics offer many interesting angles from which to analyze manga, the most relevant finding for this article was a tendency for shōnen manga to use words related to their themes or settings. Examples of such words were found in the top ten words for most of the four main word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs), even though the series included in the corpus were actually fairly diverse (crime mysteries in *Detective Conan*; sci-fi thriller in *Death Note*; pirates in *One Piece*; ninja in *Naruto*; alternative world aliens in *GinTama*). Shōjo manga, however, rarely featured recurrent words that could be said to be related to a concrete theme, with many of the top ten nouns instead possibly more related to interpersonal relationships, speaking of

the importance of interaction between characters, and with many of the most frequent words being more familiar, everyday words.

This is particularly clear in the distribution of the most frequent nouns (Table 3.4: Note that in Tables 3.4 to 3.7, the Japanese written and phonetic forms do not represent the way that the words were written in the text originally, but are written in a dictionary form following the results of the morpheme analysis). Overall, in *shōjo* manga, the ten most frequent nouns accounted for a significantly higher percentage of all of the nouns than they did in *shōnen* manga (22.78% vs. 17.94%; $t(8)=2.888$, $p=.0202^*$), which implies that a greater variety of topics are brought up in *shōnen* manga. The main difference, however, was that, while with the exception of *GinTama*, all of the *shōnen* manga included at least one noun related to their themes—such as *sōsa* (investigation) in *Death Note* or *kaizoku* (pirate) in *One Piece*—only one *shōjo* manga, *Nodame Cantabile*, featured theme-related nouns in its top ten: *okesutora* (orchestra) and *shiki* (conduct). Both *Nodame Cantabile* and *GinTama* are exceptional within their groups: *Nodame* is dissimilar from the other *shōjo* manga in its focus on the theme of music, whereas *GinTama* is somewhat different from the other *shōnen* manga in that it is a comedy, so that its unusual settings primarily function as comedic material.

On the other hand, *shōjo* manga generally featured many personal pronouns such as *atashi* (I), *omae* (you)—3~4 per series, average 3.40 vs. 2~4 per series, average 3—and proper nouns (characters' names, 2~4 for each series, average 3.20 vs. 0~2, average 1.00). These results point to a difference in the importance of themes in *shōnen* manga, whereas *shōjo* manga is more focused on interpersonal relationships. To give more context, while personal pronouns and proper nouns were common in *shōnen* manga too, personal pronouns and proper nouns accounted for 15.43% of the top ten nouns in *shōjo* manga, but just 8.11% in *shōnen* manga, with the percentage of top ten percent proper names in particular being significantly higher in *shōjo* manga ($t(8)=4.079$, $p=.0035^*$). These trends imply the importance of interpersonal relationships in *shōjo* manga as they suggest that characters are not only talking *about* each other, but possibly interacting more, too.

While the differences between the genres were less clear for verbs, adjectives, and adverbs (Tables 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7), there are still several points that can be raised. Most of the top ten verbs were common in all of the series, but the theme-oriented word *korosu* (to kill) featured in three of the five series: *Death Note*, *Detective Conan* and *Naruto*, the first two of which have murder as a theme to some degree, and the third of which features multiple fights to the death.

Table 3.5 Top ten most frequent verbs by series ((A) refers to verbs potentially being used as auxiliaries)

Genre	Series	Top 10 verbs	Totals%
Shōjo manga	Bokura ga Iru	為 116 to say (A)	809
		来 74 to come (A)	
		行 66 to go (A)	
Kimi ni Toboke	為 155 to say do (A)	来 74 to come (A)	45.22
		行 66 to go (A)	
		来 74 to come (A)	
Nana	為 175 to say do (A)	来 74 to come (A)	45.22
		行 66 to go (A)	
		来 74 to come (A)	
Nodame Canzabile	為 100 to say do (A)	来 74 to come (A)	44.18
		行 66 to go (A)	
		来 74 to come (A)	
RabūKon	為 227 to say do (A)	来 74 to come (A)	45.97
		行 66 to go (A)	
		来 74 to come (A)	

(continued)

Table 3.5 (continued)

Genre	Series	Top 10 verbs	Rank%									
Shojoen- manga	DeathNote	為 <i>suru</i> 居 <i>iru</i> 言 <i>iu</i> 有 <i>aru</i> 成 <i>naru</i> 見 <i>miru</i> 殺 <i>korosu</i> 分 <i>wakaru</i> 思 <i>omou</i> 出 <i>dekiru</i>	2,178									
		634 to do (A)	410 to be (A)	280 to say (A)	176 to have (A)	157 to become (A)	121 to look (A)	115 to kill	105 to know	92 to think	88 to be able (A)	45.58
		397 to do (A)	168 to say (A)	151 to come (A)	126 to do (A)	125 to be (A)	122 to become (A)	79 to go (A)	75 to have (A)	75 to look (A)	73 to give (A)	38.21
Mitsuzuki Konan	為 <i>suru</i> 居 <i>iru</i> 言 <i>iu</i>	來 <i>karu</i> 言 <i>iu</i> 來 <i>karu</i> 有 <i>aru</i> 成 <i>naru</i> 見 <i>miru</i> 殺 <i>korosu</i> 行 <i>iku</i> 分 <i>wakaru</i>	1,492									
		398 to do (A)	294 to be (A)	174 to say (A)	129 to come (A)	111 to have (A)	98 to become (A)	82 to look (A)	73 to kill (A)	70 to go (A)	63 to know	43.18
Naruto	為 <i>suru</i> 成 <i>naru</i> 言 <i>iu</i> 居 <i>iru</i> 遺 <i>yaru</i> 有 <i>aru</i> 來 <i>karu</i> 殺 <i>korosu</i> 行 <i>iku</i> 見 <i>miru</i> 死 <i>shimu</i>	911										
		273 to do (A)	95 to become (A)	90 to say (A)	86 to be (A)	86 to do (A)	55 to have (A)	55 to come (A)	36 to kill (A)	36 to go (A)	33 to give (A)	33 to look (A)
One Piece	為 <i>suru</i> 言 <i>iu</i>	遺 <i>yaru</i> 來 <i>karu</i> 成 <i>naru</i> 行 <i>iku</i> 有 <i>aru</i> 居 <i>iru</i> 見 <i>miru</i> 吳 <i>kurezu</i>	1,310									
		314 to do (A)	177 to say (A)	153 to do (A)	121 to come (A)	117 to become (A)	106 to go (A)	104 to have (A)	98 to be (A)	65 to look (A)	55 to give (A)	38.14

Table 3.6 Top ten adjectives by series

Genre	Series	Top 10 adjectival forms										Total%
Shojo manga	<i>Bokuwa ga Iru</i>	無 <i>nai</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	好 <i>suki</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	凄 <i>ugoi</i>	嫌 <i>iyu</i>	み <i>mitai</i>	可 <i>kamai</i>	ま <i>maji</i>	大 <i>daijūbu</i>	521
		173 (negation)	139 good	40 like/ love	36 bad	35 great	28 dislike	22 (like)	18 cute	15 serious	15 alright	62.85
	<i>Kimi ni Tadake</i>	無 <i>nai</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	凄 <i>ugoi</i>	怖 <i>komai</i>	み <i>minai</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	ぞ <i>so</i>	嫌 <i>iyu</i>	ま <i>maji</i>	様 <i>yō</i>	495
		149 (negation)	147 good	36 great	33 scary	26 (like)	24 bad	23 that	20 dislike	19 serious	18 (like)	59.14
	<i>Nana</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	無 <i>nai</i>	嫌 <i>iyu</i>	様 <i>yō</i>	ぞ <i>so</i>	大 <i>daijūbu</i>	凄 <i>ugoi</i>	好 <i>suki</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	み <i>mitai</i>	766
		263 good	238 (nega- tion)	43 dislike	39 (like)	39 that	32 alright	32 great	31 like/love	26 bad	23 (like)	61.63
	<i>Nadame Conratable</i>	無 <i>nai</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	凄 <i>ugoi</i>	甘 <i>amai</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	み <i>mitai</i>	様 <i>yō</i>	大 <i>daijūbu</i>	ぞ <i>so</i>	好 <i>suki</i>	439
		127 (negation)	126 good	54 great	37 sweet/ spoiled	24 bad	19 (like)	14 (like)	13 alright	13 that	12 like/ love	59.89
	<i>RabunKen</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	無 <i>nai</i>	好 <i>suki</i>	み <i>mitai</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	可 <i>kamai</i>	嫌 <i>iyu</i>	小 <i>ohisai</i>	面 <i>omoshi- roi</i>	ぞ <i>so</i>	649
		202 good	151 (nega- tion)	66 like/ love	45 (like)	41 bad	34 cute	32 dislike	29 small	25 inter- esting	24 that	60.20

(continued)

Table 3.6 (continued)

Genre	Series	Top 10 adjectival forms										Total%	
Shōnen-manga	Death note	無 <i>nai</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	様 <i>yō</i>	可能 <i>kanō</i>	早 <i>hayai</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	凄 <i>ugoi</i>	面 <i>omoshiroi</i>	大丈夫 <i>daijūbu</i>	雌 <i>meshi</i>	丈夫 <i>tsūbu</i>	586
		252 (negation)	98 good	87 (like)	27 possible	27 early	22 bad	21 great	18 interesting	17 alright	17 certain	57.91	
Grantha		無 <i>nai</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	様 <i>yō</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	早 <i>hayai</i>	好 <i>suiki</i>	た <i>ta</i>	大丈夫 <i>daijūbu</i>	う <i>u</i>	煩 <i>wazurai</i>	う <i>u</i>	659
		327 (negation)	141 good	40 (like)	32 bad	21 early	21 like/love	21 (like)	20 alright	20 that	16 noisy	57.40	
Meitantei Kōnan		無 <i>nai</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	様 <i>yō</i>	早 <i>hayai</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	ん <i>n</i>	唯 <i>taishika</i>	み <i>mi</i>	大丈夫 <i>daijūbu</i>	大 <i>da</i>	夫 <i>fu</i>	431
		189 (negation)	55 good	41 (like)	32 early	23 bad	21 such	20 certain	18 (like)	17 great	15 alright	56.19	
Narrato		無 <i>nai</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	様 <i>yō</i>	み <i>mi</i>	早 <i>hayai</i>	凄 <i>ugoi</i>	強 <i>tuyoi</i>	大 <i>da</i>	大丈夫 <i>daijūbu</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	ん <i>n</i>	306
		106 (negation)	68 good	30 (like)	19 (like)	18 early	16 great	15 strong	12 alright	12 bad	10 such	10 simple	51.43
One Piece		無 <i>nai</i>	良 <i>yoi</i>	強 <i>tuyoi</i>	悪 <i>warui</i>	様 <i>yō</i>	早 <i>hayai</i>	い <i>i</i>	ば <i>ba</i>	大 <i>da</i>	凄 <i>ugoi</i>	た <i>ta</i>	540
		215 (negation)	135 good	27 strong	26 bad	22 (like)	21 (like)	18 early	16 separate	15 terrible	15 great	15 like/love	55.84

Table 3.7 Top ten adverbs by series

Genre	Series	Top 10 adverbs	Total%	
Shōjo manga	Bohara ga Iru	79	that way <i>sō</i>	309
		53	何で <i>nanide</i>	14
	Kimi ni Todoke	79	that way <i>sō</i>	55.48
		53	why <i>nanide</i>	15
	Nana	121	that way <i>sō</i>	391
		60	a little <i>chotto</i>	12
		51	how <i>dō</i>	18
		37	how <i>dō</i>	15
		35	how <i>dō</i>	15
		36	how <i>dō</i>	12
Nadane Chiribable	165	that way <i>nanide</i>	58.18	
	66	how <i>nanide</i>	18	
	57	why <i>nanide</i>	18	
	45	why <i>nanide</i>	18	
RabūKon	69	why <i>sō</i>	58.78	
	66	that way <i>sō</i>	500	
	130	that way <i>sō</i>	59.38	
	66	that way <i>sō</i>	24	

(continued)

General trends are less distinct with adjectives: differences between series seem to speak more about their individual plot lines than genre, such as the frequency of *chīsai* (small) and *dekai* (enormous) in *RabuKon*, whose main storyline follows the relationship between a very tall girl and a very short boy. However, with the exception of *Kimi ni Todoke*, all of the shōjo manga had the word *suki* (like or love) in their top ten list, which was only found in the top ten for two shōnen manga (*GinTama*, *OnePiece*), also possibly demonstrating the importance of interpersonal relationships in shōjo manga.

The most frequent adverbs were largely common between the series, or more series-specific, such as the frequency of *tsumari* (that is to say), *naze* (why), *moshi* (if), and *mazu* (first) in *Death Note*, which may be related to the importance of analysis and logical arguments within the series. It might be interesting to point out, however, the frequency of *nanka* in three of the shōjo manga, but only one shōnen manga (*GinTama*). *Nanka* is a hedge similar to “like” in English (as in, “Like, I don’t know where I want to, like, go”), and is said to be one of the characteristics of young girls’ speech.³² While this will become clearer in the discussion of characters, there appears to be a greater importance of reality in shōjo manga than in shōnen manga, which this may reflect.

USE OF CHARACTERS

If interpersonal relationships are more important in shōjo manga than in shōnen manga, then one would naturally expect characters, too, to differ in how they are used and speak. True to such expectations, and more so perhaps than text types or lexical characteristics, characters showed a very different distribution between shōjo manga and shōnen manga, as I will demonstrate next. I calculated the number of *Lines* spoken by every character in all of the series, additionally tagging them for their gender (*male*, *female*, *both/unclear*, *onomatopoeia*, *animal*). As can be seen from Table 3.8, one of the immediate differences between the genres is that the amount of text spoken by male and female characters is much more balanced in shōjo manga, at approximately 42–57%, as opposed to shōnen manga, where it is 83–16%.

In addition, the actual number of characters in the genres appears to differ: at 120.60 on average, shōnen manga features a much larger number of characters than shōjo manga, which averaged just 72.60. Shōnen manga was also characterized by a very low percentage of female

Table 3.8 Number of Lines seen by the gender of the character speaking and genre^a

Genre	Sex	Entries			Words			Characters		
		Male	Female	Both/Unclear	Male	Female	Both/Unclear	Male	Female	Both/Unclear
Shōjo manga	Male	7,076	43.57%	46,842	43.07%	181	22~59	36.20		
	Female	8,882	54.69%	60,957	56.04%	182	16~54	36.40		
	Both/Unclear	217	1.34%	968	0.89%	-	-	-		
	Onomatopocia	64	0.39%	-	-	-	-	-		
	Animal	1	0.01%	2	0.00%	-	-	-		
Shōnen- manga	Total	16,240		1,08,769		363	38~115	72.60		
	Male	14,286	79.13%	1,26,900	83.39%	526	42~119	105.20		
	Female	2,996	16.59%	23,946	15.74%	77	4~31	15.40		
	Both/Unclear	191	1.06%	1,138	0.75%	-	-	-		
	Onomatopocia	489	2.71%	-	-	-	-	-		
Total	Animal	92	0.51%	196	0.13%	-	-	-		
	Total	18,054		1,52,180		603	46~209	120.60		

^a Modified from Giancarla Unser-Schutz, "What Text Can Tell Us" (2015a)

characters, from just four characters in *Naruto*—which also had the lowest number of total characters (46)—to thirty-one in *Detective Conan*. All of the shōnen manga series had a ratio of at least two male characters to one female character (in *Detective Conan*) to a maximum of over twenty-two male characters to each female character (in *One Piece*).

This is not simply a question of shōnen manga featuring more male characters because they are for boys, as shōjo manga did not show a parallel skewing toward female characters; in fact, the ratio was close to 1:1 for all series, and two had slightly more male characters than female characters (*Nana*, *Nodame Cantabile*). Shōnen manga also tended to feature fewer female characters who played major roles in the narratives, as measured by their *Lines*: only two series featured a female character who individually accounted for more than ten percent of *Lines*, although they all featured at least one male character who did. Yet all of the shōjo manga series featured at least one male and female character who accounted for over ten percent of all *Lines*.

Clearly this is relevant for the visibility of male and female characters in the genres, suggesting that this alone is an important difference. However, this distribution of characters also has an impact on speech patterns themselves. Often, authors utilize stereotyped speech patterns in order to create characters, which Kinsui has dubbed *yakuwari-go* or role-language: by calling upon the image associated with a given speech pattern, authors can easily create stock characters, making it an invaluable tool in a writer's repertoire.³³ As Kinsui describes, however, such stereotyped speech patterns are more likely to be used by characters who are more peripheral to the plot: since they (usually) have a larger speaking role, it takes more effort on the part of authors to maintain consistency when using *yakuwari-go* with main characters.

It is not a great jump to hypothesize that shōnen manga likely features more stereotypical speech patterns: the large number of characters they often include suggests that there are likely to be more who are peripheral. Analysis of the number of *Lines* spoken by individual characters supports this: if one looks at the number of characters who account for less than 150 text-characters (which would suggest that they are not recurring characters³⁴), then shōnen manga has many more peripheral characters than shōjo manga does, averaging 89.80 to shōjo manga's 54.40 (Fig. 3.2).

Note that this appears to be primarily a result of the overall larger number of characters in shōnen manga, and there was no significant difference between the percentage of peripheral characters defined in this

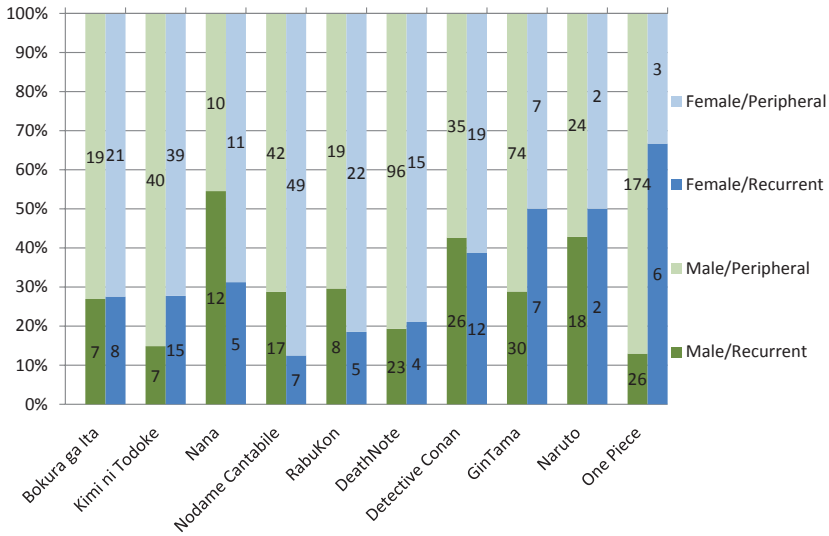


Fig. 3.2 Types of characters by series (*peripheral*: characters accounting for more than 150 text-characters; *recurrent*: characters accounting for more than 150 text-characters)

way between shōjo manga and shōnen manga; in principle, it appears that as the overall number of characters increases, the number of peripheral characters increases too. In regards to gendered differences, while the number of female peripheral characters in shōnen manga is not especially high compared to male characters, this is primarily related to their low visibility overall. Given that they do not appear to be prominent in so far that any individual characters contribute a major part to the dialogue, it seems safe to assume that female characters are especially prone to being somewhat peripheral, and thus use more stereotyped speech.

My research on gendered speech patterns in manga suggests that this hypothesis is supported by the data on characters' speech patterns.³⁵ Subsequent analyses of the use of gendered sentence final particles—nonobligatory, emphatic pragmatic markers that appear at the end of sentences and often show differing patterns of use based upon speakers' genders—showed that shōnen manga used more forms that were stereotypical in nature. In particular, male characters often used strongly masculine forms such as *ze* and *zo*, which are not very common in everyday

speech,³⁶ and female characters also frequently used strongly feminine forms such as *wa* and *kashira*, which appear to be going out of use.³⁷ Characters in shōjo manga, however, used strong forms less often, with female characters in particular rarely using strongly feminine forms, instead favoring neutral and mildly masculine forms, as is the case in natural speech.³⁸

EMPATHETIC SHŌJO MANGA, PLOT-ORIENTED SHŌNEN MANGA

As the results above suggest, all three points—the use of text types, lexical patterns, and characters—indicate that there are distinct characteristics beyond demographics that differentiate shōjo manga and shōnen manga. As noted earlier, one of the criticisms of shōjo manga and shōnen manga as genres has been that they have too much narrative overlap, which makes it interesting to note that what one can observe through language patterns actually says very little about the kinds of narratives they depict. Instead, they seem to say something about how shōjo manga and shōnen manga are constructed.

Nevertheless, how these differences should be interpreted remains to be addressed. While these three points may appear diffuse, they are not without their commonalities: all three point to differences in how characters are treated, and how readers can interact with them. In particular, I believe that the patterns noted in text types, the most frequent words, and the use of characters are related to humor and personalization, orientation toward plots, and realism and empathy, respectively. In turn, I believe that these differences work together to make shōjo manga a genre which is more personal than romance, with a focus on feeling and a connection with and empathy toward both the characters and, to a lesser degree, authors, whereas shōnen manga is more typified by its strong orientation to plot.

First, going back to *Background Lines/Thoughts* and *Comments*, it is important to point out that while neither are frequent in either genre, the fact that they are more frequent in shōjo manga suggests that they may contribute to constructing a different reading experience within the two genres. Two points are particularly relevant. First, in terms of the type of information they provide, *Background Lines/Thoughts* and *Comments* both have similarities with Takeuchi's spectators (*bōkan-sha*), or extras who bridge emotional engagement and understanding through a new view from the sidelines, and mediators (*baikaisha*), or

authorial-like characters who comment on the narrative from an external position.³⁹ As such, they both supply information about the characters (and authors) that compliment what can be otherwise observed, adding depth. Second, their use of handwritten text may also be essential as it can help encode the text and differentiate it from the other text types, and create a connection with a “real” speaker: “Hand-written text clearly speaks of its author ...,”⁴⁰ meaning that *Background Lines/Thoughts* and *Comments* may have a greater connection to their utterer. This can help develop a deeper connection with both the characters themselves, in the case of *Background Lines/Thoughts*, and with the authors, who readers may sense are behind *Comments*.

Second, as observed above, shōnen manga used words related to their plots or themes much more frequently, with only one shōjo manga series including a clear example of such words. This shows the importance of the themes and settings in shōnen manga, and the work involved in setting them up. While all of the shōjo manga series were in realistic, everyday settings such as school or work, all of the shōnen manga series included unusual settings. Even the two series that superficially take place in familiar territory (*Death Note* and *Detective Conan*) actively utilize the fantastic. Creating a rich and vibrant alternate world is no easy task and requires a thorough explanation of the rules of that world, which is reflected in the frequency of words related to themes. However, while the emphasis on settings and themes helps to fill in the landscape, it has the downside of potentially overemphasizing it while characters and their relationships recede to the background. Although there was no pattern as obvious in shōjo manga, the somewhat higher ranking of personal pronouns and proper nouns seems to point to their being foregrounded, as one might expect if the settings remain largely in the background.

Finally, continuing with the question of the use of characters, it is worth remembering that both male and female characters in shōjo manga use gendered speech patterns that are more similar to those in real life, the implication being that characters in shōjo manga are more realistic than shōnen manga. This also has important implications for readers’ relationships with the people depicted, because realism may be one of the important parts of developing empathy for characters.⁴¹ That is, if characters in shōjo manga are more realistic than characters in shōnen manga, then it may also be that readers are able to feel more empathy for them. On the other hand, the more fictive nature of speech in shōnen manga may make it more difficult for readers to feel empathy for

characters. This is not necessarily a bad thing; as I discuss below, feeling empathy for characters cannot be presumed to automatically be positive. However, it does suggest that the relationship between readers and characters is not identical to that of shōjo manga, and that shōnen manga offer a qualitatively different reading experience.

Taken together, it becomes easier to see the emphasis on character and reader relationships in shōjo manga: the use of *Background Lines/Thoughts* and *Comments* creates a space for readers to see alternate sides of characters and be directly addressed by the authors, while the use of a smaller cast of characters more balanced between the genders encourages realistic speech patterns, differences which are ultimately expressed in the kinds of words seen. These characteristics allow us to see shōjo manga as an empathetic, character-oriented genre. While romance is undoubtedly an important aspect, this makes it possible to also consider the role of friendship and other human relationships, which could be said to be more important in three of the five series here, at least within the first three volumes included as targets (*Nana*, *Nodame Cantabile*, *Kimi ni Todoke*).

Viewing shōjo manga in this way may offer smoother consistency with the *shōjo bunka* (culture) from which it has been shown to have evolved. As Shamoon describes, *shōjo bunka* was more focused on the deep friendships between girls.⁴² If one sees shōjo manga as simply being about romance, then the connection with such platonic friendships is largely lost: heterosexual romance must be seen as replacing the focus on homosexual friendship. If, however, one sees shōjo manga as being primarily about interpersonal relationships, with which readers are meant to identify and feel empathy, then one begins to see this not as a loss, but rather as the evolution of the genre. This historical-oriented view can also help to explain why, for example, *Background Lines/Thoughts* and *Comments* are more frequent in shōjo manga, for while they are certainly more “light” than the original monologues that Ōtsuka describes,⁴³ they still may be a natural result of the emphasis on deeper connections between readers and authors that was witnessed in shōjo manga starting in the mid-1970s, as Nanba describes.⁴⁴

Compared with shōjo manga, it is much harder to satisfactorily describe the image that has emerged of shōnen manga. However, the simplest way may be to say it is plot-oriented, and that its themes and settings, rather than the development of the characters, are central. While the sense of reality can suffer as characters can lack depth, by creating such vibrant worlds, shōnen manga provide an alternate space of fantasy,

even if the settings may initially seem ordinary. It might be tempting to suggest that shōjo manga is a more serious or important genre because of the depth of the relationships depicted, but that would be to forget the value of different reading experiences, and how different reading experiences effect readers.

The lower emphasis on reality and the creation of a masculine space of (not necessarily sexual) fantasy reminds one of Nakamura's analysis of Japanese sports tabloids as a space of homosocial fantasy.⁴⁵ In her analysis, the tabloids provide a welcome break for readers by *not* demanding they empathize with the characters. Similarly, the empathetic relationship that can develop between readers and characters in shōjo manga is not without its downsides in the demands they make of readers, who are forced to engage with characters, an at times taxing and potentially stressful process. This can be no less manipulative than stereotyped depictions of characters, for in both cases, the way the genres are structured makes readers respond to characters in certain ways. While the lack of female characters raises the question of how shōnen manga might affect readers' gender consciousness, the alternate reading experience they provide may help to explain why shōnen manga attract not only male, but also many female readers who desire something else.⁴⁶

CONCLUSIONS

This study has sought to examine how language patterns could identify characteristics of shōjo manga and shōnen manga as genres in response to concerns that they were only market segments with no independent characteristics. As I have discussed, however, such criticisms are only legitimate to the extent that one considers genre to be exclusively based on narrative. If one considers genre more broadly, then such criticisms fall apart as other characteristics that make up genres can quickly take their places. Language patterns, taken broadly as I have here, clearly showed distinct differences between the genres in use of text-types, the most frequently seen words, and characters and speech patterns, which I interpreted as demonstrating how readers and characters relate to the genres. In this way, language patterns proved an informative way of examining genre in manga.

Of course, this is hardly the end of the discussion; clearly, there need to be ways to approach apparent outliers like *GinTama* and *Nodame Cantabile*. This is, however, a reflection of the natural "leakiness"⁴⁷

of genres, which are constantly in flux and have eternally fuzzy edges. Instead of being completely independent of each other, or even being on a continuum, it may be better to consider genres as having multiple axes, thus allowing for multiple directions of interaction. Indeed, the genre-crossing that has been described as a characteristic of manga since the 1980s is in fact not likely a new characteristic, but one which was already there, if beyond our consciousness. This is not to say that genre analysis is for naught. Indeed, by looking at language patterns, certain trends have been established which may help identify what it is that readers feel when they talk about shōjo manga and shōnen manga as being different, clearly an important first step in considering genre relations.

NOTES

1. In my own survey of high school students in Tokyo conducted in 2008, I found that amongst the 72 girls who read manga magazines, 44 reported reading shōnen-manga magazines, meaning that more than half of them had experience reading magazines outside of those targeted at them. The rate was lower for boys—of the 64 manga magazine-reading boys, only 7 reported having ever read shōjo-manga magazines—but not insignificant. See Giancarla Unser-Schutz, “Developing a Text-Based Corpus of the Language of Japanese Comics (*Manga*),” in *Corpus-Based Studies in Language Documentation, Use, and Learning Corpus-Based Studies in Language Documents*, eds. Sally Rice, Harald Baayen, and John Newman (Amsterdam: Rodopi), 213, 238.
2. Masahiro Ogino, “Manga o shakaigaku suru” [Doing Sociological Research on Manga], in *Manga no shakaigaku* [A Sociology of Manga], eds. Kōjirō Miyahara and Masahiro Ogino (Kyoto: Sekai Shisōsha, 2001), 134–156; Kate Allen and John Ingulsrud, “Reading Manga: Patterns of Personal Literacies Among Adolescents,” *Language and Education*, 19, no. 4 (2005): 265–280.
3. Haruyuki Nakano, *Manga shinkaron: Kontentsu bijunesu wa manga kara umareru!* [Manga Evolution: Contents Business Begins with Manga!] (Tokyo: Blues Interactions, 2009).
4. Gō Itō, *Tezuka izzu deddo: Hirakareta manga-byōgenron e* [Tezuka Is Dead: Postmodernist and Modernist Approaches to Japanese Manga] (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 2005).
5. Tadashi Nakamura, “Dare no mono demo nai kotoba: 1970–1980 no manga no gengo sōi ni tsuite” [Nobody’s Words: On the Aspects of Language in Japanese Comics in the 1970s–1980s], *Yamagata daigaku*

- jinbun gakubu kenkyū nenpō* [Yamagata University Faculty of Literature and Social Sciences Annual Research Report], 3 (2006): 29–44.
6. Eiji Ōtsuka, *Sengo manga no hyōgen kūkan: Kigōtekishintai no jubaku* [The Expressive Space of Postwar Manga: The Spell of Symbolic Bodies] (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1994).
 7. Itō, *Tezuka izzu deddo* (2005), 63–64.
 8. Deborah Shamoan, *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls' Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 139.
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 12. Itō, *Tezuka izzu deddo* (2005).
 13. Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," *Cinema Journal*, 23, no. 3 (1984): 6–18.
 14. *Ibid.*, 11.
 15. Mio Bryce and Jason Davis, "An Overview of Manga Genre," in *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Toni Johnson-Woods (New York, US: Continuum, 2010), 34–61.
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 17. John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 58.
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 21. Douglas Biber, *Variation Across Speech and Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

22. Brian Paltridge, “Genre, Text Type, and the Language Learning Classroom,” *ELT Journal*, 50, no. 3 (1996): 237–243.
23. Itō, *Tezuka izzu deddo* (2005).
24. Ōtsuka, *Sengo manga no hyōgen kūkan* (1994).
25. Or has already been done elsewhere: In particular, the section on text types calls upon analyses and data described in Giancarla Unser-Schutz, “Language as the Visual: Exploring the Intersection of Linguistic and Visual Language in Manga,” *Image & Narrative*, 12, no. 1 (2011a): 167–188, and the section on characters also largely calls upon Giancarla Unser-Schutz, “What Text Can Tell Us About Male and Female Characters in Shōjo- and Shōnen-Manga,” *Journal of East Asian Popular Culture*, 1, no. 1 (2015a): 133–153 and Giancarla Unser-Schutz, “Influential or Influenced? The Relationship Between Genre, Gender and Language in Manga,” *Gender and Language*, 9, no. 2 (2015b): 223–254. The section on manga’s lexical characteristics partially summarizes arguments first discussed in Giancarla Unser-Schutz, “The Role of Language in Manga: From the Point of View of Structure, Vocabulary and Characters,” Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 2013.
26. Lynne Bowker and Jennifer Pearson, *Working With Specialized Language: A Practical Guide to Using Corpora* (London: Routledge, 2002), 9.
27. See Unser-Schutz, “Language as the Visual” (2011a).
28. Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007); Mutsurō Kai, “Manga no kotoba: Mondai teiki” [Language in Manga: Identification of Problems], *Nihongo-gaku* [Japanese Studies], 8, no. 9 (1989): 33–38.
29. Ōtsuka, *Sengo manga no hyōgen kūkan* (1994).
30. Taku Kudō, “MeCab no kaiatsu keii” [The Development Process of MeCab], February 7 (2016). Last Accessed March 16, 2017, <http://taku910.github.io/mecab/feature.html>; Nihongo Kōpasu, “UniDic no kaiseki seido” [The Analytic Accuracy of UniDic], 2004. Last accessed November 30, 2012, http://www.tokuteicorpus.jp/dist/modules/system/modules/menu/main.php?page_id=3463&op=change_page.
31. Chiaki Kishimoto, “Webu-nikki ni mirareru hanashi-kotoba-teki buntai” [Spoken-Speech Styles Seen in Blogs], *Nihongo-gaku* [Japanese Studies], 27, no. 5 (2008): 168–176.
32. Makiko Iio, “Tandaisei no hanashi kotoba ni miru danwa hyōshiki ‘nanka’ no ikkōsatsu” [A Study of the Discourse Marker *Nanka* in Junior College Students’ Daily Language], *Tōyō joshi tanki daigaku kiyō* [The Toyo Review], 38 (2006): 67–77.
33. Satoshi Kinsui, *Vācharu nihongo: Yakuwari-go no nazo* [Virtual Japanese: The Mystery of Yakuwari-go] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003).

34. The average number of text-characters per page comes to 6.48; any character accounting for less than 150 text-characters would either have to (1) speak very rarely or (2) not appear frequently.
35. Giancarla Unser-Schutz, “Influential or Influenced?” (2015b).
36. Cindi Sturtz Sreetharan, “Students, Sarariiman (pl.), and Seniors: Japanese Men’s Use of ‘Manly’ Speech Register,” *Language in Society*, 33 (2004): 81–107.
37. Shigeo Okamoto, “‘Tasteless’ Japanese: Less ‘Feminine’ Speech Among Young Japanese Women,” in *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, eds. Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (New York: Routledge, 1995), 297–325; Mieko Philips, “Are Japanese Women Less Feminine Now? A Study of Sentence-Final Forms in Japanese Women’s Conversation,” in *Language Change in East Asia*, ed. Thomas. E. McAuley (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 47–69.
38. Mieko Kobayashi, “Sedai to joseigo: Wakai sedai no kotoba no ‘chūseika’ ni tsuite” [Generations and Women’s Language: On the ‘Neutralization’ of Language Amongst the Young Generation], *Nihongo-gaku* [Japanese Studies], 12, no. 5 (1993): 181–192.
39. Osamu Takeuchi, *Manga hyōgengaku nyūmon* [Introduction to Representation in Manga] (Tokyo, Japan: Chikuma Shoten, 2005).
40. Stuart Mealing, “Value-Added Text: Where Graphic Design Meets Paralinguistics,” in *Visible Language*, 1 (2003): 47.
41. Suzanne Keen, “A Theory of Narrative Empathy,” *Narrative*, 14, no. 3 (2006): 207–236.
42. Shamooin, *Passionate Friendship* (2012).
43. Ōtsuka, *Sengo manga no hyōgen kūkan* (1994).
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45. Momoko Nakamura, “Homosōsharu fantajī: Supōtsu shinbun no sekai” [Homosocial Fantasy: Japanese Sport Tabloid Papers], *Shizen-ningen-shakai* [Nature-People-Society: Science and the Humanities], 45 (2008): 1–23.
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47. Richard Bauman, “Contextualization, Tradition, and the Dialogue of Genres’ Icelandic Legends of the Kraftaskáld,” in *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, eds. Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 125–145.

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CHAPTER 4

Shōjo Manga Beyond Shōjo Manga: The “Female Mode of Address” in *Kabukumon*

Olga Antononoka

INTRODUCTION

Japanese manga has evolved in the form of genres based on the target audience’s age and gender: *shōjo* (girl), *shōnen* (boy), *josei* (young adult female), and *seinen* (young adult male). This division stems from the magazine serialization of manga. While in the same magazine any thematic genre may be present, gendered genres are distinguishable by their visuals as well as character settings and character relationships.

The magazine format gave rise to manga’s conventional genres, which have been less defined by the thematic content (such as science fiction, mystery, fantasy etc.) than age and gender, namely *shōnen* (boys), *shōjo* (girls) [...], *seinen* (youth), and *josei* (women). One of manga’s most striking particularities is the “gendering” by publication site and, closely related, style.¹

While female genres frequently position character’s feelings as the kernel of the story, male genres tend to be action-oriented. Another aspect is visual aesthetics. Elements of character design imply personality traits and

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narrative role. The gender-based division also indicates which materials are regarded suitable for “female” consumption, and what kinds of stories are supposed to be appropriately “masculine.” However, the boundaries seem to become more fluid. Recently manga readership’s mobility has been mostly related to the flexibility of female readership. Berndt, too, suggests, that “[...] in terms of the discourse, the standard of manga has manifested itself as that of the male genres. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that genre borders are mostly crossed by women, who may read certain manga—mostly seinen titles—as ‘universal’ works or reframe heteronormative shōnen titles parodically as male-male romances.”² Historically, female readers have been more prone to cross-genre reading, but in recent years there is an overt shift within genres, which draws attention to the industry acknowledging female readership. This chapter attempts to supplement the discussion of this trend by considering cross-genre readings from the perspective of male genres, which again hold the potential to open up new themes and readings to the male readers.

In his seminal work *The Anime Machine*, Thomas LaMarre uses the example of *Chobits*, a seinen manga by the female artist group CLAMP, to demonstrate how female readers are acknowledged by generically male manga texts via what he calls the “female mode of address.” In the case of *Chobits*, genre-specific themes and visual conventions are consciously interspersed in another genre both stimulating and reflecting cross-genre consumption.³ This results in addressing an additional readership, without breaking the fabric of the initial genre, that is, addressing female readers within a dominantly male genre. According to LaMarre the “female mode of address” is closely related to depicting gender in a way oppositional to patriarchal guidelines, which has been one of the leit-motifs of shōjo manga⁴ since the genre’s inception.⁵ In a recent article Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto specifically relates the female mode of address to the visual depiction of male characters for the female gaze by being represented in eroticized poses or subjected to situations where their vulnerability can be aesthetically explored.⁶

In light of LaMarre’s discussion I would like to draw attention to a number of generically different manga narratives about kabuki theater and focus specifically on the seinen manga *Kabukumon* by veteran artist Akio Tanaka and script-writer David Miyahara (*Morning*, 2008–2011). This series has the look and feel of a typical action-oriented seinen title, while introducing explicitly gender ambiguity as a source of agency. The all-male kabuki has become a popular setting for manga in the

recent decade, and it corresponds with the general trend to depict traditional arts and crafts. These titles generally include, and even position as leading characters, the gender-queer *onnagata*, the male actor who specializes in female roles. In particular, the following recent titles can be considered kabuki narratives: the shōjo manga *Pintokona* by Ako Shimaki (*Cheese!*, 2009-ongoing); *Irokaneru* by veteran shōjo manga artist Masumi Kawaso (*Hana to Yume*, 2011–2014); *Kabuki Iza* by female newcomer Sawa Sakura, with a style heavily reminiscent of shōjo manga (*Comic Beam*, 2012–2014); with respect to seinen titles *Kabukumon* by veteran artist Akio Tanaka and script-writer David Miyahara (*Morning*, 2008–2011); *Juntarō* by bestselling author Motoka Murakami (*Big Comic*, 2011); *Onmyōji* by Munku Mutsuki⁷ (*Monthly Comic Ryu*, since 2012); and finally a shōnen title, *Kunisaki Izumo no Jijō* by Aya Hirakawa (*Weekly Shōnen Sunday*, 2010–2014).

Kabuki is an apt setting for interrogating the “female mode of address” in male-oriented manga genres. Whenever *onnagata* are highlighted, kabuki as setting and subject inevitably touches upon the theme of gender. Incidentally, all the above-mentioned titles have *onnagata* as their protagonists or one of the main characters.

GENDER STUDIES IN THE CONTEXT OF MANGA STUDIES

Cross-dressing is a highly recognizable generic trope of shōjo manga, and it also resonates with Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. Two decades ago Butler introduced cross-dressing as a meta-performance of gender. Later she shifted her inquiry to the cross-dresser and transsexuality as well as intersex gender performances. According to her the reiterated embodiment of these genders expands the patriarchal definition of gender, and these definitions blur into each other, making binaries obsolete.⁸ This chapter examines manga representations of *onnagata*, in particular the juxtaposition of acted gender and offstage gender, in terms of Butler’s theory of gender performativity.

In Butler’s theory a special focus is placed on the theatrical quality of gender performance. Sexed—physically male/female—bodies reiterate the elements of socially constructed gender in the context of the patriarchal discourse and thus create an illusion of connection between the sexed bodies and the gender, or gendered behavior. Starting with *Gender Trouble*, and into *Bodies That Matter*, *The Psychic Life of Power*, and *Undoing Gender*, Butler builds her theory of performativity on the

notion that physicality is secondary to cognition.⁹ She theorizes that the body acquires coherency only when it is repeatedly described within patriarchal terms. The agency of adequately gendered individuals (female or male) is socially accepted, yet, those who do not conform (gay, transgender, intersexed, drag) are injuriously deemed “false” or “fake.” Butler maintains that the “fake” genders of transgender or intersex persons can challenge and reshape general perceptions of gender by accepting the injurious names they are designated with by patriarchy, and reiterating them, thus constructing new avenues for agency:

How is it that drag or, indeed, much more than drag, transgender itself enters into the political field? It does this, I would suggest, by not only making us question what is real, and what has to be, but by showing us how contemporary notions of reality can be questioned, and new modes of reality instituted. Fantasy is not simply a cognitive exercise, an internal film that we project inside the interior theater of the mind. Fantasy structures relationality, and it comes into play in the stylization of embodiment itself.¹⁰

As a manga character, the onnagata is frequently involved in power play; his status as a man in patriarchal society is conflicted with the gender he performs onstage. This corresponds to the aforementioned leitmotif of shōjo manga. Accordingly, kabuki manga in male genres may inherently include a “female mode of address.” In *Queering Black Jack: A Look at How the Manga Industry Adapts to Changing Reader Demographics* (2016), Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto systematically raises the question of male genres catering to female audience via representations of the protagonist as an object to the reader’s and other character’s gaze, sometimes implying queer gender. Bauwens-Sugimoto specifies queering as one of the most prominent elements of the female mode of address in male genres. Her focus on visual conventions demonstrates how manga texts may facilitate queering while maintaining generic consistency on the narrative level, and thus open up the possibility of multiple readings. When commercial manga narratives address critical themes such as queer gender, they rarely do this directly within the central plot; readers can skip them easily. Such issues can be introduced through secondary characters, or serve dramatic twists in an otherwise sentimental plot.

In consideration of LaMarre and Bauwens-Sugimoto, I will examine the “female mode of address” in seinen representations of onnagata and relate this to the assumption reiterated in female manga criticism about “female readership” as a “critical” interpretative community.

In regard to manga as a medium, the reader is navigating between graphic and textual cues that may supplement, reinforce or contradict one another. Panel layouts and gutters, and the physical simultaneity of the double spread provide a variety of possible readings, prompting the reader to actively participate in creating meaning, and thus opening manga to a diverse readership. In *Ghostly: "Asian Graphic Narratives," Nonnonba, and Manga* (2013) Jaqueline Berndt prioritizes the reader's agency in meaning construction as follows:

[...] in manga the agency of the reader often counts more than that of the creator as "author." [...] Naming manga a "visual language" [...] refers, above all, to the existence of specific communities that value less a single work's aesthetic or ideological qualities than its facilitating relationships and support of reader participation, from empathy and immersion to fan art/fiction and CosPlay.¹¹

Comics in general are structurally characterized by repetition of disjointed fragments with variation, such as the repeated appearance of characters' faces and settings. Similarly, the visual side of the narrative may reiterate the verbal text and vice versa. While reiterations create the impression of a continuous narrative, at the same time, the narrative is punctuated with gaps, as the panel layout cuts the action into separate fragments with intermitted gutters. Moreover, the heterogeneous media of image and text inconsistently reiterate, supplement, and contradict one another. In this respect, too, manga can be addressed through Judith Butler's theory of performativity in which reiteration plays a crucial role. Reiteration substitutes for the allegedly natural core, giving weight to such abstract and fragmental concepts as gender. A focus on the specific singular performance reveals how it is tailored to suit the individual by omitting, juxtaposing, and reinterpreting the elements. No specific element is irreplaceable, and any sequence can be shuffled, revealing the artificiality of the implied "natural" continuity and consistency.

CASE STUDY: *KABUKUMON*

In order to analyze how male characters which address a female readership inhabit the seinen genre, I will use as a case study one popular seinen manga that appears to consciously target female audiences, *Kabukumon*. Although the seinen genre allegedly targets young adult men, some manga magazines, such as *Morning*, *Comic Beam*, and

Ikki, have frequently introduced “female” elements.¹² Yet on first glance, readers familiar with genre conventions will most likely regard *Kabukumon* as a seinen manga. The character design is aesthetically reserved. The eyes are small and look Japanese, unlike the race-ambiguous saucer-eyes usually associated with shōjo manga. The male characters look anatomically accurate and masculine, even in the case of onnagata cross-dressing. In addition, *Kabukumon* employs a geometrical panel-lay-out, and characters do not transgress panel frames. There are no merged panels or multilayered collages either. Panels do, however, become more fragmented whenever the complex physical movements of onstage performance are highlighted, similar to the “slow-motion” trope in seinen fighting scenes, frequently seen in titles such as Takehiko Inoue’s *Vagabond* (*Morning*, 1998–2014) or Akio Tanaka’s *Shamo* (*Weekly Manga Action*, 1998–2015). *Kabukumon* does not employ decorative elements of shōjo manga such as flowers or sparkles, and it refrains from using backgrounds or scenery as a metaphor for characters’ emotions. It also lacks the speed-lines and exaggerations typical of shōnen manga. Dynamic movement is represented through anatomically accurate depictions of bodily motions. Furthermore, the pacing of the narrative differs little from typical seinen manga: the narrative progresses by presenting the protagonist with ever stronger adversaries and more complex challenges. Finally, the artist Akio Tanaka is associated with the seinen genre. However, in contrast to his usual action-oriented narratives such as his previous series *Shamo*, *Kabukumon* foregrounds artistic growth, human relationships, and gender-bending.

Thus, *Kabukumon* appears to adhere to seinen manga conventions, while encompassing formal elements that allow for a “female mode of address.” Moreover, *Kabukumon* introduces a controversial representation of gender to its initial readership.

Kabukumon tells the story of Shinkurō, a young aspiring *tachiyaku* (male-role actor) with no blood ties to a kabuki family. He has the exceptional talent to feel the audience and bring the stage to life, his trademark being romantic scenes with erotic overtones (*nureba*). Shinkurō gets involved in a political battle between orthodox and innovative kabuki factions. The innovative faction takes an interest in Shinkurō’s talent and gives him the opportunity to showcase his art. Meanwhile, the orthodox faction (*rien*) feels threatened by this outsider’s increasing popularity, and sees their hegemony, which leans on the patriarchal heredity of the art from father to son, challenged. However, Shinkurō’s

talent touches all the actors who perform with him, changing adversaries into friends, and making him a link between traditionalists and innovators. In the end, it is revealed that he himself is a descendant of one of the most prominent Edo-period actors, who propagated “living art” that delves into actors’ own experiences and emotions to bring the roles to life. Therefore, even the traditionalist faction is obliged to recognize his birthright, although Shinkurō is advocating innovation and has never been schooled “properly.”

SOULFUL BODY AND COSTUME

While the main narrative problematizes the myth of art’s heredity and showcases the relationship between different generations of men, gender and gender-bending play a significant role as well. Gender-bending is closely related to the kabuki costume. *Kabukumon* features numerous scenes of cross-dressing and gender-bending on and offstage. Out of the four major arcs in *Kabukumon*, two arcs position protagonist Shinkurō vis-à-vis an onnagata; as the onnagata interacts with the protagonist, the onnagata’s gender is emphasized as well as the balance of power between the onnagata and the protagonists. In *Kabukumon* the cast is all male, and there is no love-related plotline in the offstage part of the narrative. Intradiegetic romance is replaced with romances performed onstage, which appear almost homoerotic as characters identify with their roles more and more. Onstage Shinkurō has two onnagata “love interests”: Koishirō Yoshizawa and Tsukinosuke Namiki, who represent the innovative and the orthodox kabuki factions respectively. Koishirō remains a recurring character after appearing in the second volume; his arc spans two out of eight tankōbon (book) volumes. Tsukinosuke’s arc spans almost four.

In order to analyze the costumes and bodies of onnagata in *Kabukumon*, I will use LaMarre’s concept of the “soulful body” in relation to Butler’s theory of gender as performance. “Soulful body” refers to a character type in anime and manga. Through costume and character design a “soul” is inscribed upon the character’s body, prompting recognition even outside of the narrative. As a result, looks in combination with costumes and props instantly reveal to the reader what type of personality and social setting the character represents.¹³ One of the aspects which makes *Kabukumon* uncharacteristic of the seinen genre is the emphasis on costumes, which are frequently showcased in shōjo manga. In shōjo manga, the costume does not just reveal interiority

beyond the character's body; it becomes a part of the body, or may substitute for the "soul",¹⁴ visually representing a character's emotions and representing her or his relationship with other characters and the environment.

In her analysis of masculine and feminine conventions in shōjo manga character design and setting, Michiko Oshiyama ascribes gendered meaning to the elements of the soulful body, including costumes as extensions of the characters' body. She analyzes the graphic distinction between constructions of femininity and masculinity in manga: long wavy hair, big eyes, and long eyelashes indicate the feminine; a square face with shorter hair and narrower eyes the masculine. These gendered elements can fluctuate in the depiction of the same character, changing according to the character's emotional state and partner. Oshiyama uses as an example Oscar from *Berusaifu no bara* (The Rose of Versailles) by Riyoko Ikeda (*Margaret*, 1972–1973). Oscar is a cross-dressing warrior girl. When she participates in combat, her face is depicted with a stronger jawline, shorter eyelashes, and narrow eyes, which is contrasted to her round eyes, elongated eyelashes, and softer face shape in scenes with her male lovers. Such physical characteristics are correlated with the costume and the movement of costumes (and bodies). Frills and lace with flowing lines indicate feminine characters; straighter lines and "uniforms" signify men.¹⁵ In *Kabukumon*, too, costumes play a vital role in ascribing agency or objectification to characters.

In his discussion of *Chobits*, LaMarre notes how this seinen manga borrows from shōjo manga conventions. The way Chii, a female android, is dressed or is wrapped in her long hair, constantly conceals her body from the reader's and the male protagonist's view. Chii is not physically female: her android body is substituted with the femininity of the symbolically (or fetishistically) charged fragments of the body that can be glimpsed through her attire.¹⁶ Furthermore, Chii's fluttering, frilly clothes reveal her "soul" to be feminine. The costume maintains the illusion of the feminine as long as the gaze is led away from the ambiguity of the android body.¹⁷

In kabuki, costume and makeup similarly represent the character's role type, personality, and social position. This corresponds with the soulful body and the role of costume as an extension of the character's body, visualizing his, or her, interiority. In *Kabukumon*, the roles that the characters play onstage appear to symbolize their inner personalities, which

they cannot truly reveal even in their everyday lives. Since the roles onstage correspond to the characters' interiorities, the stage costumes and their manipulation in the *Kabukumon* diegesis visualize the interiority of the protagonists.

PHALLUS AND GAZE

When exploring gender in anime and manga through the “soulful body,” LaMarre applies Lacanian psychoanalysis, specifically Lacan’s theory of *objet petit a*, or the partial object. Following the Hegelian master–slave dialectics, Lacan determines the gaze as being on the side of the object, with the object returning the gaze and thereby conditioning the subject. The phallic father separates the man from the mother, exerting his right on her and ending oneness with the mother. As a replacement for the lost mother, “woman” is the object for Lacan, which is sought after by the man in the quest for phallic completeness. However, neither object nor “woman” as an object can ever truly exist. The object can only promise fulfillment as long as it is not reachable. It is mitigated by *objet petit a*, a part of the object that only implies wholeness. “Woman” is fragmented into *objet petit a* and reconstructed as a whole by focusing on these fragments, which then are superimposed upon a specific woman, making her an object. The gaze is a tool which constructs the object in accordance with desire; it is similar in function to the phallus.¹⁸ The gaze’s object and subject, i.e. “woman” and phallic man, form the driving dichotomy of patriarchal power. The phallic man is signified by the “woman’s” lack; consequently, the subject is signified by the object being looked at by it, and allegedly being manipulated by the object at the same time. Thus, man is in a dialectic relationship with “woman” as the symptom and condition for his patriarchal coherency.¹⁹

As pointed out previously, in *Kabukumon*, the onstage images of women that the onnagata actors create appear to coincide with the actors’ personality. However, there is no homogenous “femininity” in *Kabukumon*. The two onnagata play very different female role types: a beautiful courtesan, and an ugly, miserable, vengeful ghost. Correspondingly, as men they are shown in opposite relationship with the phallus, represented by the importance of the bloodline in kabuki. Koishirō (who plays the courtesan) does not belong to a kabuki family, while Tsukinosuke (who plays the ghost) is a direct successor. In view

of Butler's theory, *Kabukumon* appears to negotiate gender as inconsistent performance. Precisely this shall be demonstrated in the next section, interrelating functions of gender performance with the agency.

KOISHIRŌ: NON-PHALLIC AGENCY

Koishirō is physically beautiful, short and thin; he has long eyelashes, slanted eyes, and sensual lips. His eyelashes and lips are repeatedly emphasized in close-up panels, generally depicting the perspective of the mesmerized Shinkurō. Off-stage, Koishirō is sexually ambivalent, probably gay. When he is shown in the company of women—for example, when he is entertained by several geisha—no romantic affiliations are implied. Koishirō makes passes at Shinkurō instead. However, Koishirō's visual beauty and “fragility” are misleading; he plays a decisive role in the backstage politics of the kabuki world. He rose to his position through effort and talent which gained him audiences' admiration.²⁰ Koishirō is interested in Shinkurō's art and gives him a chance to prove his worth. At the same time, he intends to use Shinkurō to showcase himself.

Shinkurō and Koishirō perform *Kagotsurube*, a romantic play about the courtesan Yatsuhashi (played by Koishirō), who flirts out of mercy with the country bumpkin Jirōzaemon (played by Sōtarō). Jirōzaemon falls in love with Yatsuhashi and pursues her, only to be rejected. After his rejection he kills Yatsuhashi and her beloved Einojō (played by Shinkurō) with a famous sword named Kagotsurube. Yatsuhashi is one of the role types (*yakugara*)²¹ of the *oiran*²² courtesan, who loves a man, but cannot be with him, and meets her demise because of this love. The *oiran* is the most erotically flamboyant role type, supplemented with exaggerated costumes and elaborate wigs, which mesmerize the gaze of the spectators.²³

Kabuki uses the costume to physically integrate the actor's body into the play's aesthetic; it shapes the body to mimic a specific physique, indicates the character's role type, and implies affiliations with kabuki families. As in *shōjo* manga, costume is also employed as a visual metaphor for the emotional state of the character. LaMarre notes in his discussion of *Chobits* that in the “female mode of address” the gaze of the reader is made to slide across the costume, distracted from the physicality beneath. Visualized through the costume, interiority overcomes the physical body. Thus, according to LaMarre, the “female mode of address” is concerned with interiority written on the surface, but refrains from acknowledging physicality and fleshiness.²⁴

Koishirō's lean, pliant body morphs into an elaborate courtesan's costume. As he gets dressed up, various parts are fragmented in separate close-up panels—made-up face with hidden hair, kimono, wig, ornate outer kimono, and elaborate belt—and then shown as a whole.²⁵ Thus, Koishirō's personality slips behind the grand exterior of Yatsunami, bringing her to life. The costume and the fragments of the costumed body can be read as partial objects that both anticipate and conceal the whole.²⁶ In Lacan's psychoanalysis, the partial object creates a connection to the hidden, or non-existent, whole, temporarily satisfying the desire to replenish the fundamental lack. Costume or emphasis on certain body parts, like hands or feet, and specific codified movements construct the feminine whole as an object of desire. Precisely because each fragment is detached from the whole, the femininity of the onnagata becomes temporarily possible, as this femininity flickers from one fragment onto another.

The depiction of Koishirō embodying the specific kabuki "woman" combines performance techniques and tropes that signify femininity with glimpses of his masculinity. While the semblance of "woman" is created through his performance, it is also revealed as inconsistent, fragmental, and unrelated to biology. However, narratively, Koishirō also performs this "woman" from within himself, not as a mask put onto his body, but as a careful selection of traits of his own personality and emotions, exposing the "feminine" as a part of his peculiar masculinity and further relating it to agency. Thus, the "woman" that Koishirō creates symbolizes his overcoming of the sense of lack imposed upon him by the patriarchal *rien*.

Kabukumon combines the visual language of kabuki with the conventions of manga to depict the onstage performance of a man who is embodying a fantasy of "woman." While the panel layout is rather geometrical and steadily-paced, the emotionally charged (and aesthetically striking) moments are depicted with minute detail through fragmentation of the body. This is clearly noticeable in the first scene of Yatsunami's appearance onstage, the *oiran dōchū* (courtesan parade), one of the key scenes of *Kagotsurube*. As Koishirō performs the *hachimōji* (figure eight like steps), his feet are eroticized. The deliberate dragging of the tall wooden clogs was a part of the actual *oiran* parade, and on the kabuki stage it is one of the most recognizable elements of onnagata eroticism. In the manga the "slow-motion" effect, achieved by panel reiteration, is combined with internal monologue, and relates from several perspectives the dynamics of gazes in this scene.

The entire almost ten-page long sequence, which presents the procession of the courtesan, is punctuated with panels of “her” clogs. While the very first panel relates the perspective of the theater audience watching the onnagata, the second panel employs the perspective of smitten Jirōzaemon: he sees Yatsushashi deliberately displaying her feet. Then Yatsushashi turns around, returning point blank Jirōzaemon’s gaze and smiling directly at him. Enacting the courtesan, the actor Koishirō is depicted in the manga as creating a montage of his body through codified movements quintessential of kabuki sex appeal: bare feet in tall clogs, mesmerizing gait accentuated by the movement of the costume, and finally the smile.

Thus, the manga strings together physical elements, conjoining them with an emotionally charged monologue. Throughout the sequence, Koishirō’s internal monologue reveals that he is at all times in control of his creation; he commands the stage by using fragments of the tragic “woman” to attract and manipulate the gaze of the spectators.

From the perspective of the “female mode of address,” shōjo conventions come to light. One of these is the fluctuating gaze dynamics, or the manipulation of the subject’s gaze by the object. When Lacan writes about the gaze, he denotes object as “woman” and woman as object. He compares “woman” to a painting and describes how a neurosis results in a man imagining a gaze always already aimed at him, coming from the object (despite it appearing unable to gaze). So, the subject’s gaze effectively is a returned gaze. Slavoj Žižek compares the mechanism of this neurosis to the empty house on the hill, a popular trope from horror movies. Both Lacan and, following him, Žižek, compare the object to an inanimate thing that cannot physically stare, in other words, have agency. However, the object is suspected of having agency, caught between anticipation of fulfilled desire and neurosis.

Minori Ishida discusses the possibility of fluctuating agency and mutual gazing on part of the *bishōnen* character. Bishōnen, lit. “beautiful boy,” is a type of male character in female genres, whose emotional interiority is revealed, presenting him as a possible identification anchor to female readers. He is also depicted as both an object of the gaze and a gazing subject, fluctuating between various power-positions within the same narrative. Through the gaze directed at him, the bishōnen acquires agency instead of losing it, because he actively attracts and manipulates the onlooker’s gaze.

Minori Ishida analyzes this gaze dynamics as crucial for the boys' love genre, quasi-homosexual male–male romance narratives aimed at female consumers. Ishida elaborates on the ways that a character, who is depicted as an object, is not just looked at, but also actively displays himself. The object of the gaze acquires agency in as much as he decides how to show himself, to whom and for what reason. In other words, the object of the gaze has the ability to return and condition the gaze. Objectification and being objectified become volitional positions endowed with an agency that transcends the binary phallic hegemony.²⁷

In the oiran parade sequence, the onnagata Koishirō clearly competes with the actor Sōtarō, who plays Jirōzaemon. Sōtarō, as Koishirō puts it, “imposes his art on the spectators”.²⁸ The authoritativeness of Sōtarō's art stems from his connection to the *rien*. By contrast, Koishirō takes pride in becoming a star through negotiating the gaze of the audience, partially adjusting to what they want to see, and at the same time guiding and manipulating them.

Koishirō establishes his dominance through gaze again in the finale of the play, the scene of Yatsuhashi's death, when he competes for the spectators' attention with Shinkurō's skillful portrayal of Einojō. Koishirō folds backwards into the *ebizori* pose,²⁹ and this single movement is stretched over ten pages.³⁰ While he displays fragile femininity, the pose he performs is an extremely strenuous exercise, especially in a heavy costume and wig. The manga display combines symbolic vulnerability with extreme physical ability. The sublime eroticism of Koishirō's male body which is suspended between the vulnerability of the performed role and the actor's physical strength mesmerizes the audience. A whole page is dedicated to the way his foot and bent knee support the weight of his body, which is draped in a long kimono that opens to reveal an undergarment. The following double-page spread is rendered in brushstrokes. Koishirō is depicted dissolving into an ink cloud, out of which a thinly traced face and hand emerge. The perspective changes from Koishirō's point of view to that of the audience.

Moreover, the sequences of oiran parade and *ebizori* include Koishirō's constant internal monologue. This monologue reveals how Koishirō is in control of his performance and sees the action onstage as a means to prove his artistic superiority. The whole sequence plays with the contradiction between external action and internal monologue: while

Koishirō plays the “woman” at her most eroticized, objectified and vulnerable, his inner voice recounts how this is his moment to steal the show and demonstrate the true power of his art. Whereas in shōjo manga internal monologues are supported by abstract flower designs and decorative collages, in *Kabukumon* the elaborate fragmentation of the body, the focus on feet and clog, hands and opening kimono appear to play the same role. Here, the actor’s body and costume visualize the interiority of the character. The body’s fragmentation illuminates the tension of the muscles, and this emphasized physicality allows the reader to affectively experience the movement. At the peak of Koishirō’s internal monologue, the bodily and the emotional exertion merge. Furthermore, the display of physicality produces a tangible erotic effect as it objectifies the male body (after all, the audience and the reader know that the body beneath is male). This eroticism is further emphasized through the revelation of the other character’s perspective: Shinkurō is shown to be stealing glances at Koishirō.

The extent of Koishirō’s art and sway over the spectators is further narratively elaborated on. At another point in the narrative, Koishirō’s performance of femininity makes Shinkurō disregard the fact that the body beneath is male, while Shinkurō’s ability to adjust and synchronize his performance with Koishirō makes Koishirō further merge with his role. The actors consummate their mutual artistic apogee with an onstage ad-libbed kiss. Such deviation from script would be impossible on the strictly codified actual kabuki stage, but *Kabukumon* introduces the kiss as a symbolic element which represents how the “living art” is negotiated between the actors, their art making even themselves believe that the performance is real. A similar kiss is shared in the second onnagata-centric arc, cementing the kiss as a symbol within *Kabukumon*.

Achieving the state of artistic ecstasy is heavily eroticized in *Kabukumon*; it also constructs the onnagata’s achieved femininity as a symbol of an exalted artistic agency. This agency is expressed on several levels in Koishirō’s arc. He uses the performance of the “feminine” to overpower the performance by the “male” *tachiyaku* Sōtarō, the incarnation of the phallic authority of the kabuki patriarchy. Furthermore, Koishirō’s ecstatic merger with the role, depicts his artistic triumph. Embodying Yatsunashi positions him as a power outside of the phallic hegemony.

TSUKINOSUKE: SUBVERTING THE PHALLUS

Patriarchal masculinity is further subverted in the Tsukinosuke arc in which the focus is on the confrontation of “technique” and “living art.” In this arc, the phallic authority is represented by the onnagata Tsukinosuke, who is ordered by rien to sink Shinkurō’s career. Tsukinosuke looks very manly: he is tall and broad-shouldered with a heavy masculine jawline and small eyes. However, he can appear small and fragile by folding his shoulder blades and bending his knees under the kimono. Together with Shinkurō, they perform *Tōkaidō Yotsuya Kaidan*, a horror story about the ruthless villain Iemon, who poisons his wife Oiwa. Disfigured and disoriented by the poison, Oiwa accidentally stabs herself in a frenzy. She turns into a ghost and haunts Iemon until he finds his own demise.

Just as Oiwa is the complete opposite of Yatsunashi, Tsukinosuke’s performance style is also based on a technique opposite to Koishirō’s. Koishirō embodies “woman” by reaching into his own personality, translating his own emotions into his act and filtering the performance through his aesthetic principles. In contrast, Tsukinosuke believes that strict abidance to kabuki’s performance tropes is the quintessence of the onnagata art. He is technically perfect at reconstructing his body to fit the role, switching femininity on and off without personal investment.

In terms of manga tropes, similar to the previous Koishirō arc, “femininity” is achieved through body fragmentation that is, creating partial objects which persuade the protagonist Shinkurō and the reader by extension. Two rehearsal episodes relate how Tsukinosuke holds the short sword. In the first, he elegantly grips it with his thumb, slightly cupping the rest of his fingers to make the hand look narrow and small, so that the sword appears to have no weight.³¹ The manga contrasts these onnagata hand gestures to his “male” persona by showing how big his hands actually are. During the second rehearsal, Tsukinosuke performs an attack with the short sword, but despite the resulting physical confrontation, he keeps holding it in a “feminine” manner, never physically going out of character.³² Similar to Koishirō’s clogs, which draw attention to the feet, Tsukinosuke’s “femininity” is centered on his hands. Focusing on the hands temporarily draws the attention away from the rehearsing masculine body without makeup or costume. The scene is presented from Shinkurō’s point of view: he internally comments on Tsukinosuke’s becoming a woman, or returning to being a man.

Tsukinosuke variously attempts to demonstrate his superiority and the superiority of his conservative art to Shinkurō. However, instead of being humbled, Shinkurō appears inspired by Tsukinosuke's talent, which makes him a threat in Tsukinosuke's eyes. Shinkurō's talent puts Tsukinosuke into a position of constant anxiety of losing to a newcomer. In the beginning of the arc, Tsukinosuke is shown having sex with his female lover, but later he loses his erotic drive due to a nervous breakdown.³³ He also starts high in the hierarchy of the conservative faction, but is diminished in the eyes of his superiors due to his inability to discredit Shinkurō. Both of Tsukinosuke's intertwined agencies are therefore threatened.

The manga parallels how Tsukinosuke's escalating hatred corresponds with Oiwa's metamorphosis after drinking the poison. The actor quickly alters the makeup, disfiguring the face. Narratively, oblivious to her changing appearance, Oiwa goes through the ritual of a wife preparing to meet her husband. She blackens her teeth and puts on lip rouge. But her fragile movements and her initial stage of disfigurement create a jarring dissonance.³⁴ Then she brushes her hair. The manga dedicates six minutely paneled pages to this crucial moment³⁵: Tsukinosuke is shown manipulating his wig, so that the long heavy hair sheds in chunks and falls to the floor. Finally he brushes the hair forward over his face, finishing the transformation of the makeup while hiding behind the wig. The face that emerges from under the flow of black locks has a bald forehead and a swollen tumor over the eye, appearing completely deranged. Thus, the act of brushing the hair, a marker of femininity and sexual appeal, is contrasted with the grotesque image of a monster. The way the manga paneling stretches the moment before the final revelation appears to emphasize or even exaggerate the actual kabuki kata. Similar to Koishirō's arc, this slow-motion sequence, too, is a setting for an emotionally charged monologue, in which Tsukinosuke internally screams to be killed by Shinkurō, as the only way to prove his superiority is by sacrificing his life to his art. The scene leads to his complete mental breakdown. As he collapses, the whole production is put in danger.

Tsukinosuke's hatred of Shinkurō, who becomes the symbol of his own insecurities, merges with Oiwa's hatred to the extent that he starts to embody Oiwa beyond the representation of "woman." Tsukinosuke's mental breakdown culminates in him seeing himself as Oiwa in the mirror. However, discovering Oiwa as a part of himself transforms his neurosis into a new artistic inspiration. Tsukinosuke discards his attachment

to his patriarchal status and comes onstage because his art compels him. He gains new subjectivity as an artist. At the same time Shinkurō is struggling similarly with his role, conflicted as he has to empathize with the motivations of villainous Iemon. As Tsukinosuke and Shinkurō come onstage, both of them have discovered a new relationship to their roles.³⁶

Through identifying with the “woman” character, Tsukinosuke overcomes his breakdown and returns to the stage to meet inspired Shinkurō. From this point on, the panel layout changes noticeably. More full-body shots and close-ups depict a Tsukinosuke who is no longer shifting “femininity” between fragments of his body, but instead embodies “feminine” with the entirety of his body and soul. The face and eyes become the focus of panel layout and body fragmentation. Action fluctuates between close-ups of the face and full-body shots. The costumes cease to be stage props and are used as symbols of the emotional state of both Tsukinosuke and Shinkurō, as their artistic clash escalates to the point of physical violence. At this moment, however, Tsukinosuke and Shinkurō mutually realize that they both share the same passion for kabuki. This understanding comes at the moment when Tsukinosuke is literally threatening to kill Shinkurō. A precarious harmony arises from their passion and gets expressed again in a kiss.³⁷

Tsukinosuke initially appears to “perform” the feminine as the “other” which he can physically imitate, but does not have to emotionally identify with. Through the painful process of relinquishing his faith in the patriarchal hegemony of *rien*, Tsukinosuke transcends the otherness of constructed “femininity” and discovers the “feminine” as a part of himself instead. While feminine elements in *Kabukumon* are related to literally being an “object” to someone’s gaze, they do not rob the character, who embodies these traits, of their authority. Rather the dominant authority of phallic masculinity is replaced with fluid and mutual power-relationships, where subject and object are not defined by any pre-existing equality with an allegedly natural core. “Woman” in this context stands for “art,” and “art” symbolizes ultimate agency. While the merger of Tsukinosuke with Oiwa starts off as a weakness and almost breaks him, later it turns into the agency of Tsukinosuke as an individual rather than a member of a patriarchal faction. His transformation from phallic powerhouse within patriarchal hierarchy is contrasted to the ultimate agency he acquires by entering into a new fluctuating non-phallic power

structure. This also extends to the conflict of orthodox and innovative kabuki factions. On the one hand, he learns how to negotiate femininity within himself, similar to Koishirō; on the other hand, he becomes an ally with Shinkurō, who represents a new power formation in kabuki. As a result Tsukinosuke reaches the ultimate goal in the *Kabukumon* value system: “living art.”

CONCLUSION: SHŌJO MANGA BEYOND SHŌJO MANGA

The structural similarities between the Koishirō and Tsukinosuke arcs illuminate the gendered tropes of *Kabukumon*. The narrative structure furthermore emphasizes the centrality of these onnagata arcs to the overall story. The protagonist’s journey to revolutionize the patriarchal kabuki world begins and ends with onnagata associations: one onnagata guides him; the other one is guided by him. *Kabukumon*’s “woman” is therefore a composite image of kabuki aesthetics of “woman” combined with manga tropes of masculinity and femininity by means of a panel layout which is largely associated with physical exertion and violence. At first glance, the sexualized, vulnerable, victimized, and sometimes destructive “woman” may appear like an image of a patriarchal negative view that “others” femininity as frequently associated with the more action-driven seinen genre. However, at the same time this “woman” arises from the innermost personalities of the male characters and becomes the energy that liberates them from a phallic patriarchy, which is stumping their artistic growth. Moreover, the female characters in *Kabukumon* do not behave like the limit-case kabuki “women,” revealing that what appears to be “woman” is inherently not an “other” whole, but a part of fluid personalities of the characters in question. In Koishirō’s case, the “woman” he portrays is depicted as a part of himself. Meanwhile, Tsukinosuke discovers “woman” inside of himself and with that acquires new agency. Thus, the “real” gender of the onnagata actor (as manga character) appears to be the chimera-like gender of the cross-dresser. Lastly, affiliation with the “feminine” leads to an agency that extends the onnagata’s precarious “fake” gender to a position of power. The lines between the meaning of the terms masculine and feminine are blurred, and these binary terms encompass more and more elements of each other. Moreover, we can see how both arcs reiterate symbolic episodes, such as the kiss, to create a specific performance of “woman.”

Similarly, the lines between male and female genres are becoming more and more ambiguous in the contemporary manga industry. The theme of gender-bending has been closely related to shōjo manga, from the cross-dressing girl to the ambiguous figure of the bishōnen in BL works. The “male” body of the bishōnen became a stage for a variety of non-binary gender performances. Kazumi Nagaike, Fusami Ōgi, and Minori Ishida have discussed the ways that male characters in female genres are portrayed as both possible anchors for female identification and objects of scopophilic desire.

Kabukumon employs shōjo-manga conventions, such as extended internal monologues and flashbacks, to turn excessively masculine characters into anchors for empathy by female readers. The fragmentation of bodily motion in scenes of emotional upheaval serves as a metaphoric visualization of the characters’ interiority. At the same time, the sensuality of the fragmented body and the gender ambiguity of the onnagata characters resonate with Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto’s discussion of the “female gaze” in recent shōnen and seinen titles, which offers points of entry for the female reader, yet does not make the narrative incoherent as a seinen title. While such titles seem to actively open the genre to a female readership, they bring new material to the male reader, effectively turning the male reader into a consumer of allegedly female contents.

Through encompassing mixed audiences, the seinen genre is becoming a forum for new critically charged themes. Allegedly marginalized female genres actively influence an initially male genre, extending the definition of male-oriented contents. In this way, recent seinen manga cater to various audiences through the reiteration of conventions relevant to both male and female modes of address. Such “universality” offers new connections between previously divided readerships.

NOTES

1. Jaqueline Berndt, “Manga, Which Manga? Publication Formats, Genres, Users,” in *Japanese Civilization in the 21st Century* (New York: Nova Publishers, 2016), 125.
2. Berndt, “Manga, Which Manga? Publication Formats, Genres, Users,” 125.
3. Thomas LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 215–217.

4. The Magnificent 49ers (*Hana no 24nen-gumi*), a group of innovative shōjo manga artists, are credited with creating many of the major shōjo manga tropes related to gender, sexuality, and discrimination. They used versatile male protagonists in order to introduce critical themes, performing a variety of genders and power-positions. Beyond visual depiction, male protagonists became equivalent to female protagonists through their interiority being revealed in internal monologues, inciting empathy and identification.
5. LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, 227–230.
6. Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto, “Queering Black Jack: A Look at How Manga Adapts to Changing Reading Demographics,” in *Proceedings from the 2016 NAJAKS Conference at Stockholm University*, eds. Jaqueline Berndt and Gunnar Junmei Linder (Stockholm, 2016), 115–116.
7. Although not a narrative about kabuki, the manga is being advertised as a manga version of the recent stage adaptation of Baku Yumemakura’s *Onmyōji* series with an all-male kabuki cast.
8. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 217.
9. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 20.
10. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 217.
11. Jaqueline Berndt, “Ghostly: ‘Asian Graphic Narratives,’ *Nonnonba*, and Manga,” in *From Comics Strips to Graphic Novels* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2013), 365.
12. Recently some bestselling seinen titles feature female protagonists, and some of the most commercially successful narratives are generically gender-neutral, combining shōnen and shōjo conventions, such as the best-seller of the year and receiver of the Excellency Award (2003) at the Japan Media Arts Festival, *Mushishi* by female mangaka Yuki Urushibara (*Afternoon*, 1999–2003). Tendencies to cater to wider audiences also manifest in genderless pennames of female authors.
13. LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, 205, 230.
14. LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, 230.
15. Michiko Oshiyama, *Shōjo manga jendā byōshōron: “Dansō no shōjo” no zōkei to aidentiti* [Gender Representation in Shōjo Manga: Design and Identity of the “Cross-Dressing Girl”] (Tokyo: Seiryūsha, 2007), 165–170.
16. LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, 229.
17. LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, 227–229.
18. Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Lacan, Jacques and the école freudienne* (London: McMillan Press, 1985), 41–44.
19. Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Lacan, Jacques and the école freudienne*, 41–44; Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 221–222.
20. Via iconic photographs, Koishirō’s character setting appears to be referencing leading onnagata Tamasaburō Bandō, who was also adopted into a kabuki family.

21. The role type (*yakugara*) is comparable to LaMarre's soulful body, as the character is visually represented through costumes and props which denote a specific type of personality and social setting.
22. In kabuki, female characters typically represent one aspect of socially sanctioned femininity (prostitute, wife, young innocent girl, tender princess, old woman, tormented female ghost, etc.).
23. Kathrine Mezur, *Beautiful Boys, Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 148.
24. LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, 230.
25. Akio Tanaka and David Miyahara, *Kabukumon*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2007), 172–173.
26. Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 128.
27. Minori Ishida, *Hisoyakana kyōiku: Yaoi, boizurabu zenshi* [Secret Education: The Prehistory of Yaoi and Boys' Love] (Kyoto: Rakuho Shuppan, 2008), 72.
28. Tanaka and Miyahara, *Kabukumon*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2007), 193.
29. *Ebizori* is a pose when, kneeling on one knee, the actor bends backwards, almost placing his head on the ground. The pose is typical for onnagata roles and symbolic of erotic surrender, or death.
30. Tanaka and Miyahara, *Kabukumon*, Vol. 3 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2008), 154–164.
31. Tanaka and Miyahara, *Kabukumon*, Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Kodansha 2009), 167–171.
32. *Ibid.*, 35–38.
33. Tanaka and Miyahara, *Kabukumon*, Vol. 7 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2010), 58–61.
34. *Ibid.*, 5–7.
35. *Ibid.*, 7–13.
36. *Ibid.*, 58–61.
37. Tanaka and Miyahara, *Kabukumon*, Vol. 8, 72–77.

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PART II

Shōjo beyond Manga



Practicing Shōjo in Japanese New Media and Cyberculture: Analyses of the Cell Phone Novel and Dream Novel

Kazumi Nagaike and Raymond Langley

INTRODUCTION

Constance Penley and Andrew Ross in their work *Technoculture* had the following to say about the possibilities for forming new cultures brought about by the development of technology: “(We) recognize that the kinds of liberatory fantasies that surround new technologies are a powerful and persuasive means of social agency, and that their source to some extent lies in real popular needs and desires.”¹ As Penley and Ross have stated, newly developed technology and the accompanying cyberculture are endlessly giving rise to stories that are characterized by the combination of social issues and fantasies. The term cyberculture is from science fiction and has diverse meanings. Recognizing this diversity scholars have

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offered inclusive definitions. Pierre Lévy states, “Cyberculture is the set of technologies (material and intellectual), practices, attitudes, modes of thought, and values that developed along with the growth of cyberspace.”² David Bell likewise views cyberculture as being composed of a variety of “embedded practices and representations” revolving around an inclusively defined cyberspace.³ Reflecting this approach, in this chapter we will use cyberculture to encompass the variety of interrelated technical and social phenomena involving cyberspace.⁴

In the Japanese anime *Ghost in the Shell* (Kōkaku kidōtai, 1995), whose popularity swept a generation both inside and outside Japan, the cyborg protagonist, Lieutenant Motoko Kusanagi, ultimately attains the body of a shōjo by means of becoming one with a disembodied electronic hacker. Although Lieutenant Kusanagi is a cyborg, the symbol of the fusion of the human and the technological is the vessel of the shōjo.⁵ In this regard, *Ghost in the Shell* may represent the blossoming of a culture where technology and shōjo-ness intertwine in a Japanese socio/cultural context.

Taking the broader issues of new forms of narratives created by and for shōjo in the twenty-first-century’s cyberspace into consideration, this chapter examines narratives of shōjo culture that accompany the advent of new media and technology. As many researchers have pointed out, the shōjo novel was at the heart of shōjo culture which debuted in the late nineteenth century. One of the origins of writing for and by shōjo can be traced back to the female Japanese writer, Nobuko Yoshiya (1896–1973), who created narratives featuring shōjo during the early twentieth century. The development of a particular *shōjo bunka* (girls’ culture) in Japan has been strongly influenced by her writings.⁶ One of her most popular novels, *Hana monogatari* (Flower Tales), was serialized from 1916 to 1924 in a magazine titled *Shōjo Gahō*, which was directed at young women. This work is set in a girls’ dormitory and depicts, in very romanticized language, the emotional (but also overtly sexual) bonding between girls. We should also keep in mind that shōjo culture began at a time of printed novels, characterized by a clear distinction between reading and writing, between the consumer-reader and the producer-writer.⁷

With the advent of the twenty-first century, the development of technologies such as the internet and the cell phone gave rise to new, multifaceted ways of writing and reading. Analyses of “new novels” such as the “cell phone novel” and “dream novel” (which enables readers to change the name of the protagonist in downloaded stories to the reader’s

real name) as they relate to shōjo-ness as seen in the cyberculture which arose in the 2000s allow one to map out the framework for the particularities of shōjo-oriented communities, the ambivalent formation of reality and artificiality, and the transformation of shōjo into cyborg (utilizing Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*). This chapter also aims to make clear that in shōjo-centered cyberculture, the "I" that signifies the shōjo's identity no longer has to be a single clearly established identity; rather, in its place, a plural multidimensional identity, an "I" that comes from a synchronicity with a community brought about by connections with others, has become necessary.

WHAT IS A NOVEL WRITTEN FOR AND READ BY A CELL PHONE?

As the name implies, the genre of the cell phone novel (*keitai shōsetsu*) consists of works written with the expectation that they would be read with a cell phone (or similar portable devices), and therefore are disseminated via exclusive access websites.⁸ Since 2000, the cell phone novel has enjoyed great popularity among middle and high school girls.⁹ Written not by professional writers, it is read mainly by young women in their teens.¹⁰ As such, the cell phone novel is clearly one of the symbols of twenty-first-century Japanese shōjo culture. Works that achieve popularity on cell phone novel sites are later published as print editions (*tankōbon*). Print versions of cell phone novels became popular in 2007. That year they took five of the top ten positions of the printed fiction bestseller list. The number one seller was Mika's *Koizora* (Love Sky); number two was Mei's *Akai ito* (The Red Thread); and number three was Mika's *Kimizora* (You, the Sky). Number five was Rin's *Moshimo kimi ga* (Maybe You...). Number seven was Yūka Inamori's *Jun'ai* (Pure Love). Senko K. Maynard regards this phenomenon as a revolutionary wave in the publishing industry:

This fact marked the emergence of the cell phone novel in popular consciousness, and what was formerly a minor genre accessed only online by middle and high school girls became widely known in book form throughout society.¹¹

The rise of the cell phone novel to such heights of popularity depended upon the widespread adoption of cell phones in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and the further expansion of the internet. As such, it is a phenomenon inextricably linked with mobile culture. Shin Mizukoshi states that "in Japan, the so-called mobile internet has developed and

been popularized faster than in any other country. Starting with ‘I-mode’ in 1999, accessing the internet via cell phone outstripped all other countries.”¹² The cell phone novel must be understood as novel-like content that is adapted for mobile media, for example, by privileging Harlequinesque plot elements and rapid story progression.

The cell phone novel consists of “true-to-life” stories by and for young women. This genre began when writers started uploading compositions characterized by realistic prose, which evoked feelings of empathy in the reader. The cell phone novel which had previously garnered the most attention is *Love Sky* by Mika. *Love Sky* is available from the largest cell phone site *Magic I-land* and it opens with the sentences, “I am writing this based on a true story. If you feel something, I will be happy.”¹³ Previous research on the cell phone novel has substantially been conducted in Japan. One example, Senko K. Maynard’s *Keitai shōsetsugo kō* (Thoughts on the Language of the Cell Phone Novel, 2014) needs to be mentioned here, as the poster work which provides the following details of those characteristics of the cell phone novel that the previous research has revealed. The cell phone novel has been identified as employing the first-person perspective; arranging events to happen in rapid sequence; utilizing horizontal writing; and omitting the depiction of scenery.¹⁴ With respect to representation, Tōru Honda states that prostitution, rape, pregnancy, drugs, fatal illness, suicide, and true love are the seven elements that occur most frequently, individually or in combination.¹⁵ Yūji Kurokawa states that what distinguishes the writing of the cell phone novel from that of the traditional novel is the preponderance of story development through dialog, the skillful use of gaps in line spacing, and the frequent use of emoticons, that is, visual signs instead of language.¹⁶ Kumiko Tanaka views the cell phone novel as an extension of email, and lists the following as its characteristics: short sentences, frequent use of empty space on the page, first-person point of view, limited vocabulary, and varieties of visual expressions such as emoticons.¹⁷

Visual information fulfills an especially important role when reading from a cell phone screen. According to Mika Naitō, writing a novel for this form of media necessitates the following four adaptations. First, to be easily read on a small screen, any expression must be short. Second, the content on each page must spark readers’ interest in a way that keeps them “turning pages” or clicking. Third, to sustain reader interest, any exposition must be kept to a minimum, and lengthy introductions of character and story background must be omitted. Fourth, since one story is only three manuscript pages in length, endings must

be incomplete or without resolution, an “endless end” as it were, to keep the reader on the edge of her seat wondering what will happen next and coming back for more.¹⁸

Below is a translation of a portion of the bestseller *Love Sky*, based on the original online version.¹⁹

‘O~h!! I’m so hungry♪♪’

The long awaited lunch break.

As usual, I open my lunch box
on my desk.

School’s a pain.

Eating lunch with Aya and Yuka, my best friends in class,
is the only think I look forward to.

—Mika Tahara—

A high school sophomore, just started this year in April.

Since starting
not even three months.

Made some good friends, and we enjoy hanging out together every day.

a little short
not too smart
can’t really be called cute
no special skills
no kind of dreams for the future

dyed my strait hair light brown just after starting high school.

Wearing a little make up these days but still not used to it

leading an ordinary life since junior high school.

the usual friends.
the usual romances.

Been in a relationship three times.
Not sure if that’s a lot or a little.

But what all the relationship had in common
was they ended quickly.

Don’t really know that true love is.

What I know about is just puppy love.
That’s all.

And then around that time
 I met you.
 In that way, what would have been turned out to be a very ordinary
 life changed when I met you.

In the above passage, the short sentences, the frequent line breaks, and the abundant use of blank lines give the reader a visual and content-related impression of openness. Additionally, as is typical for the cell phone novel the style is basically poetic; emotionally evocative expressions are frequently used.

—Yūya.
 The one I love.
 But Yūya's eyes never look at me.
 Even when he sees me, even when he hears me.
 You're searching for my sister's face in me, aren't you?
 My second older sister, Haruna.
 That's it...
 Yūya is in love with my sister Haruna.²⁰

Sociologist Shinji Miyadai has offered an interesting analysis of the cell phone novel. According to him, given their formulaic structure—a simple proto-heroine likes a man, but in the end sublimates her feelings after a series of events like pregnancy, miscarriage, drug abuse, illness, the lover's death, failed suicide and the like—cell phone novels could easily have been generated by a computer program:

Cell phone novels are characterized by simplicity. Events are more important than relationships, aren't they. From the start events happen one after the other. Each time, there is someone who says "I know how you feel," which moves the heroine. Because there is no "sense of relationship" here, this is just not literature to the older generation. When there is a relationship between characters, the characters themselves cannot be replaced, but in a cell phone novel, anything is possible, the person providing consolation could be anyone, and this is becoming very acceptable for people who aren't themselves forming relationships, isn't it. If you talk to young people today about relatedness, they either won't understand or they will feel rejected. For readers who have no sense of relatedness, the attraction (of such stories) is precisely because of tragic out-of-the ordinary events like rape, miscarriage, or having your boyfriend arrested by the police.

With the continuous repetition of these kinds of events, anyone would understand that you became depressed. One could use a computer program in place of a person to write such content.²¹

Miyadai's approach to the cell phone novel defines the genre in terms of a narrative that represents the cyberspace of the twenty-first century in Japan, which we will analyze in detail in a later section.

SHŌJO, SYNCHRONICITY OF FEELING, REALITY AND THE CELL PHONE NOVEL

Researchers of the cell phone novel give *kyōkansei* (synchronicity of feeling) as the main feature that is sought most avidly from these novels. The cell phone novel can be seen as an extension of confessional conversations between girls themselves; thus, the frequent use in the cell phone novel of personal revelation, or “coming out,” is a means to obtain the reader's empathy. In addition to reading cell phone novels, shōjo group consciousness, synchronicity, and safety are further engendered by visiting exclusive cell phone novel websites. Satobi Yoshida interviewed high school girls who had read *Love Sky*. They attributed their feelings of synchronicity to “the setting, that they can feel the presence of the writer, and that the words feel real.”²² Yoshida ascribes the reality effect in the cell phone novel to the use of wording that utilizes popular expressions, and psychological depictions that move high school shōjo. Likewise, Onsen Itō, who produced many of the early cell phone novel bestsellers, relates the fascination of the cell phone novel to a feeling of solidarity between writers and readers:

I really think that what the cell phone novel provides is a heightened sense of reality, a sense made even stronger by spelling mistakes, mistaken omissions of Japanese characters, and childlike expressions. The more you respect original formats and content, the more you can feel in real time the growth of the writer. When you see these writers, supported by their community of intimates, getting better and better, doesn't that give you a feeling of solidarity, as well as happiness?²³

Like Onsen Itō, Yumiko Sugiura, too, locates the essence of the cell phone novel experience in synchronicity, in a shared sense of consciousness or “connection” between writer and reader, and among the readers themselves.²⁴ Sugiura says:

The synchronicity engendered by the cell phone novel arises from the absence of a feeling of separation between the writer and the reader. Readers are also writers who produce works. The reason the “cell phone novel” has succeeded is that readers can fill in their own imaginations. Writers are encouraged by messages of support via mobile net sites.²⁵

Onsen Itō interviewed writers of cell phone novels and highlighted quotes like the following.

- “Because people support me and are changed by reading my novels, I went from writing for myself to writing for others” (Mei).²⁶
- “When I come up with a new idea I’m always concerned with what the readers will say. I write, listen to what the readers are kind enough to tell me, and I continue to write. I think I can keep writing just because of the readers” (Chako).²⁷

Clearly, writers’ motivation increases because feedback from readers is conveyed to them directly. In this regard, the cell phone novel is certainly a medium for giving rise to community, and to a heightened degree compared to the culture of printed manga magazines.

Such “interpretative communities”²⁸ are formed by in-members who have a certain “literacy,” and can therefore decode designated signifiers. This is reminiscent of Masuko Honda’s term *shōjo gensō kyōdōtai* (imagined shōjo community).²⁹ Initially using this term in the context of reading practices of girls in the late nineteenth century, Honda later noted that a shōjo fantasy world can also be created through the exchange of private diaries (*kōkan nikki*).³⁰ The symbolic literacy shared only by shōjo code thus needs to be discussed in terms of the development of group consciousness and the process of creating a (fantasmatic) differentiation from others. As Honda and other researchers (e.g. Aoyama and Hartley, 2010) have made clear, one cannot discuss shōjo culture in modern Japan without taking into account the special quality of “community of interpretation.”

In these earlier shōjo community practices, we find the antecedent of the twenty-first-century shōjo interactions with the cell phone novel. In order to fully enter the community of the cell phone novel, the initiation process starts with feeling/imagining such happenings as prostitution, rape, pregnancy, drugs, fatal illness, suicide, and pure love as a part of their real lives. By feeling the reality of the content that they share,

shōjo are able to establish cell phone novel communities. The interaction between a writer and readers, or among readers on the net, provides imaginary narratives of “pseudo-realism” to in-members of cell phone novel communities. Shun’ya Yoshimi, a media studies scholar, coined the term *kaisen no riaritii* (telephone reality) through analyzing the historical development of telephone technology and cultures in Japan.³¹ Yoshimi mentions that the advent of NTT’s *dengon daiyaru* service (“message dial,” that allows one to use variations of four-digit numbers to leave encoded messages) in 1986 expanded the space of our “reality,” forming a constructed “telephone reality.” The primary theme initiated by Yoshimi proves that the “telephone reality” is recognized as part of our own realities. Moreover, he argues that the “telephone reality” can be constantly and formally maintained through making the context of “communication” become more artificial. In other words, the essence of “artificiality” can be conceived of as “reality.” Yoshimi’s “telephone reality” applies equally to the internet, and allows us to speak of “digital reality.” In this regard, the narrative of the cell phone novel provides “reality” to in-members of cell phone communities, precisely because of the nature of artificiality of the cell phone novel, such as unrealistic motifs, patterned stories, and communications limited to the net. Miyadai’s analysis of the cell phone novel as artificial narratives generated by a computer program echoes Yoshimi’s discussion of the essence of reality provided by digital and cyber communications. The ambivalence of artificiality of the digital narratives and communications in cyberspace, and the realism which writers claim for their stories based on real live and readers’ appreciation of this issue in the sphere of the cell phone novel certainly forms the narratives of Japanese postmodern literature and *shōjo gensō kyōdōtai* (imagined shōjo community).

WHAT IS THE DREAM NOVEL?

One more example of the reading and writing practices where cyberculture and shōjo culture intersect is the so-called dream novel (*yume shōsetsu*). While the cell phone novel has been studied to some extent, especially in Japanese scholarship as we mentioned above, the dream novel remains comparatively unexamined in any language. The analysis of the dream novel reveals the presence of new forms of writing and reading by and for shōjo, which implement the interaction of technology and fantasy. Within the discursive framework of technology and fantasy

by and for shōjo, it appears that desires of shōjo writing and reading the dream novel represent a new productive phase of identity, attributing cyborg-like subjectivity to themselves.

Dream novels are works mainly published on the web, in which readers may substitute their own names for that of a designated character. Before starting to read, the reader has the option, by means of cookies or JavaScript, to record a name of their choosing which will automatically be inserted as the name of one of the characters. This practice began around 2000. The term “main character” is used to refer to the designated character whose name can be replaced, even though this character may not be the actual protagonist of the dream novel. Presumably this so-called “main character” is selected as the candidate for name substitution because he or she or it readily serves as an entry by which the reader can identify with or transfer feelings into the story. The term “heroine” is also frequently used because these name substitutions allow the reader to make another, male character her love interest.

By inserting the names of characters from manga, anime, or video games, fans have also created derivative fiction (*niji sōsaku*) that parodies the respective source work, or “canon.” Original fiction is also available in the field of the dream novel. Many possibilities for name substitution can be found, such as for central as well as subordinate characters, and pets. A reader can even substitute his/her birthday. In the story placeholder text such as “family name” and “first name” designate where the “main character” appears. After the reader-user enters their chosen name and presses the record button, the placeholder character string will be automatically replaced with the names and allowed items the reader has chosen. As an example, we have put our two names into the dream novel *Haikyū* (Fig. 5.1). *Haikyū*, the popular serial manga story currently appearing in *Shōnen Jump* about a high school boys’ volleyball club, follows the classic pattern of boys working together and developing/maturing while competing with enemies and rivals. In this series, we find two volleyball players who met by fate and grow up together, sometimes in conflict and sometimes cooperating, and managing to lead a weak team to the national championships.

To be sure, the practice of rearranging existing works to produce derivative works according to one’s liking originated and flowered in anime/manga parody culture. In particular, female fans of boys’ love (or BL) have enthusiastically produced derivative works that embody their fantasies, and share these works with like-minded fans.³² However, in the current shōjo

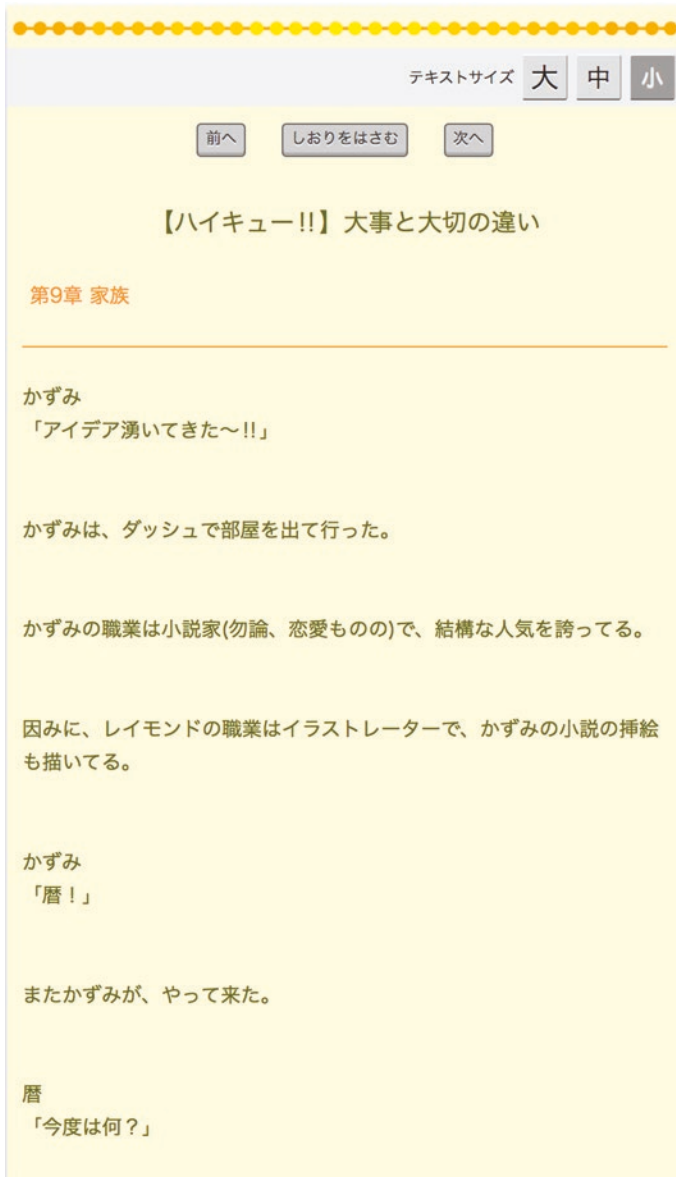


Fig. 5.1 *Haikyū* dream novel example with the authors' names inserted as characters

cyberculture, we find something new. Fans can do more than just read and write derivative works; they now have the technology to express themselves as characters in their own fantasy worlds, and in the fantasies that others create. The dream novel is one example of this new technology.

ANALYZING THE DREAM NOVEL

The analysis of the “realistic cell phone novel” has made clear that specific story elements must be present in order for the reader to experience the stories as “real.” These elements allow young women to empathize with the characters, despite the fictionality or degree of fantasy. These elements include that the story is centered on a progression of symbolic events (prostitution, rape, pregnancy, drugs, fatal illness, suicide, etc.), the omission of background description, and the primacy of the main character’s internal monolog. The cell phone novel, according to Miyadai, reads like the output of a computer program, but it is the dream novel in which we find the greatest manifestation of the unity of reader and writer that these “computer generated” elements give rise to.

The dream novel reader is not required to use her own powers of imagination to merge her world with the fictional one, or to feel the empathy accompanying immersion in that world. Rather, all she has to do is search. She just searches the web for a work that embodies the kind of fictional world she is looking for, be it an original work or derivative work. She can search a dream novel site, for example, using a keyword that pertains to her favorite kind of fictional world, type her name in the field for the main character in a novel that appeals to her, and then press the enter key to “enter” that story. Let’s again consider the example of *Haikyū* to see how this works. A shōjo fan of *Haikyū* would first search the net with the term “dream novel.” At present, March 6, 2017, the first result listed on Google is dream-novel.jp/ (Fig. 5.2).

Here on this site, our shōjo can further search for *Haikyū* if the scenario of this story’s worldview appeals to her. Doing so will yield a considerable number of dream novels set in this world. Finally, all she has to do is replace the designated “main character’s” name with hers, or another name that resonates with her, just like in Fig. 5.1 in which our two names are inserted.

While a certain amount of imagination is needed for her to enjoy the dream novel she has so-entered, this imagination is different from the imagination that lets a reader synchronize with the main character of a



Fig. 5.2 dream.novel.jp, the biggest dream novel site

“realistic cell phone novel,” or from the imagination it takes to compose a derivative work. When using technology as the medium for immersion into a story, an altogether new type of imagination is called for. The technology is at hand that allows our shōjo to immerse herself in a new world by merely taking a second to click “replace name.” Please see Fig. 5.3 that includes the vivid voice of a shōjo fan of the dream novel *Haikyū*. She states that “I do love this dream novel, ’cause it literally follows the original story, but the shōjo character fits in so naturally. I feel as if I’m really part of the story!”

With a mere click, this shōjo fan entered the story and found herself a new “I.”

SHŌJO BECOMING CYBORG

This joining of shōjo and technology can be understood in the light of Donna Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto*. Haraway, the best-known theorist of cyborg subjectivity, explains the cyborg identity in a positive way. In her 1985 *Cyborg Manifesto*, she suggested the possibility of a “cybernetic” fusion of machine and human body. The cyborg would not be burdened with an Oedipal origin of self. Without the psychological dilemma of searching for the father, the mother, or an origin, one with a cyborg subjectivity would enjoy an independent existence. Haraway’s “cyborg theory” is metaphorical. Rather than referring to

[評価] ★★★★★

とにかく好きです。
 ほんとに原作沿いでそれに
 良い感じに女の子が入ってきて
 まさに、ハイキューの中に自分がある感じ！
 あ、ドリーム設定しているので笑←
 なので、ほんとに読むのが楽しいです！
 私の大好きなキャラクターたちが
 皆きゅんきゅんしてくれるのが、何とも…むふ。
 女の子のキャラクターも好きです！
 …何を抱えているのか、此方も気になります。

これからも更新を楽しみにしています。
 頑張ってください！

[投稿者] りいまな。

[投稿日] 2016-10-12 20:54

Fig. 5.3 Voice of a shōjo fan of the dream novel *Haikyū*

a literal fusion of human and machine, the theory argues for the possibility that anyone can possess a cyborg subjectivity, characterized by not being afraid of its joint kinship with animals and machines, by not giving too much importance to established categories of social identity (e.g. “being Japanese” or “being female”) and by not being afraid of hybridity. Cyborg subjectivity allows one to deconstruct hierarchies of gender and ethnicity. Yoshimi’s analysis of the relationship between humans and technology echoes Haraway’s cyborg manifesto. Yoshimi says, “These people (carrying technology) are not only crossing geographical borders, but also cultural and linguistic boundaries, sexual boundaries, and even the very boundaries between humans and animals, between living things and machines.”³³ Perhaps, the shōjo-cyborg Lieutenant Kusanagi in *Ghost in the Shell* can be seen as a harbinger of the modern dream novel readers.

Like Haraway's "cyborg," shōjo in twenty-first-century Japan have lost their fear of becoming "fused" with computers, cell phones, smartphones, or tablets. Indeed, these "cybernetic shōjo" possess multiple unspecifiable "I's" with which they surf the net like embodiments of Haraway's cyborg theory. These various "I" originate in what Jacques Derrida calls the "endless play of signifier and signified." This "play" that is, the concept of the cybernetic shōjo's "I" is not merely an allusion to the shōjo's skill in using a computer to substitute text in a dream novel, to perhaps make it more enjoyable to read. Rather, it suggests a mentality whereby the shōjo uses cyberspace to freely recreate herself. The same can be said of the cell phone novel. Itō Toshirō says about the physicalization of the cell phone:

Hardly anyone feels unease any longer about carrying a cell phone; because to almost everyone "carrying" or "using while walking" is obvious, natural, and universal. We may say with confidence that the cell phone is a part of the body, that in daily life the use of a cell phone has become but one more natural motion of the body. On the other hand, it may be best to point out that the cell phone as medium has transformed into a body part.³⁴

The dream novel too has become a part of the body of the shōjo, for whom the cell phone is an organ and who may thus be said to have already become a cyborg. This cyborg shōjo can now endlessly surf the web, immersed in the identity of assorted dream novel characters, and experience a variety of selves.³⁵

Note that a dream novel self differs from a game avatar self. To be sure, the player does choose the avatar, but since how the story of the game plays out also depends on player choice, no singular (or linear) narrative exists. In contrast, the dream novel story world has the quality of an archetypal narrative, to which the reader makes some minor tweaks that allow more personal involvement. (For example, in *Haikyū* a reader can have her name inserted as the name of the girl who supports the protagonists, Hinata and Kageyama.) In this world where at one click the reader can substitute her name for a character throughout the archetypal narrative, self-identity is not crucial. According to aura theory, which Walter Benjamin advocates in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," postmodernism has truly arrived in an age which possesses the technology for reproduction, for the "aura" of originality disappears with the limitless reproduction of originals. Shōjo cyberculture in

twenty-first-century postmodern Japan may include a type of shōjo identity in which individuality by means of an authoritative “aura” is no longer necessary. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the “I” has disappeared. “I” remains. Rather, the “I” has been reproduced. With multiple undetermined “I’s” a person can freely surf the net, becoming any character, diving into appealing stories. There is perhaps a tendency to take this unfixed “I” negatively, as “an identity of no identity.” Likewise, one may interpret the unfixed “I” as representing a shōjo who seeks a safe self in a society for which “relationship” has become a keyword, and in which a collective “I,” a safe group “I,” offers a more secure feeling than an autonomous “I.” Still, the negative view of the shōjo’s cyborg-like “I” comes from a modernism that seeks a narrative of the end of evolution. Perhaps like history, evolution is not ready to end.

WITHER THE COMPOUND “I”: THE MULTIPLE POSSIBILITIES OF THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SELF

In this chapter, we have examined the construction of contemporary shōjo identity as revealed in the cell phone novel and especially in the dream novel. Shōjo have embraced the possibilities of the new media to the extent that the term cyborg now seems apt to describe them. This blurring of boundaries between human and machine has also been accompanied by the blurring of boundaries between the digital and so-called real worlds. The shōjo community has been essential to this process. We wish to highlight that the production and consumption of the cell phone and dream novel have resulted in the development of a plural and multidimensional identity, one in which a fixed “I” is no longer necessary. The motivation for the development of such an identity is the need to feel synchronicity, to share emotions with the like-minded, and to feel safe and secure in so-doing. This development itself was made possible by the technology of the internet, but this technology in and of itself was not sufficient. Rather, the collective engagement of the shōjo themselves with the possibilities afforded by the new medium allowed for this development. This represents a specific instance of Penley and Ross’s general analysis of how the appeal of new technology lies in needs and desires, and in technology being a means for social agency. The cell phone and dream novel have taken their current forms as an expression of this social agency.

While suspending judgment on the unfixed “I,” we can speculate on what this phenomenon might make possible, and how it might develop. One possible avenue for exploration is the role of an unfixed “I” in a multicultural world. An unfixed “I” might be both advantageous in, and a consequence of, living in such a world. A cultural identity carries with it a set of assumptions for interpreting experience and guiding action. These assumptions differ between cultures, and these differences can lead to barriers in intercultural communication. An individual with an “I” in more than one culture, and the ability to shift between “I’s” as necessary, to take on the “I” appropriate to the situation, could be well positioned to avoid these barriers and indeed to thrive when cultures meet. The very process of learning another language, which brings with it acculturation to the new language, may give rise to a new “I.” Charlemagne is apocryphally supposed to have said that “to learn a new language is to acquire another soul.” Research in bilinguals suggests that their personalities may change depending on which language they speak.³⁶ Might not a shōjo’s reading practice, and experience living with an unfixed “I” be rehearsal or training for developing the kind of self suited to flourishing in a multicultural environment? This unfixed “I” may have originated in Japanese society, but Japanese society itself is a part of the so-called globalizing world. It may be possible to say that to some extent the shōjo’s response to the possibilities inherent on the internet for communication represents her recognition that a fluid self-concept may allow one to flourish in an age of frequent intercultural contact, and thus also represents one manifestation of Japan’s participation in global society. In this light, scholars should take note of the ways in which and the extent to which shōjo culture has taken root outside Japan. Might those outside of Japan who adopt aspects of shōjo culture be doing so as a way of exploring the possibilities of a multidimensional self? Will these international shōjo take to the dream novel?

The emergence of the unfixed “I” may also represent a search for self-understanding. It may not be a coincidence that young women in their teens and early twenties are avid consumers of the cell phone and dream novel. After all, adolescence and early adulthood are stages of development in which the process of self-understanding is vital. This is no easy task. What better way to explore identity, fluid and fickle, than to consider it from multiple perspectives. Wittgenstein in the preface to *Philosophical Investigations* offers the metaphor of “... a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction ...” to explain his approach to

difficult-to-pin-down philosophical inquiry.³⁷ He goes on to state, “The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches made.”³⁸ Could not a similar approach be appropriate for self-knowledge? Surely the self is among the most difficult-to-pin-down of concepts. Could not a cell phone and dream novel reader learn something about the “I” that created her imaginary identity by “approaching that ‘I’ afresh” from the perspective of her imaginary identity? Could not the rest of us learn how to better understand ourselves from the example of these cell phone and dream novel readers?

Is a multidimensional self-unprecedented? After all, modern society often demands that we take on different roles in discrete circumstances. Does not each role require a slightly different self? Does not part of the appeal of cosplay lie in the possibilities it affords to assume if only temporarily a different identity? In the cell phone and dream novel, however, the ease of taking on a different role is vastly increased, and this ease of access allows more participation and exploration. The technology that allows this ease may be said to have enabled an unconstrained expression of a human potential. The shōjo in cyberculture, by collectively embracing and adapting to this technology may well have given rise to emergent phenomena of social identity, with new rules and possibilities, demanding new approaches to understand. In the face of emergent phenomena, perhaps the most appropriate stance is one of openness. In any event, the cell phone and dream novel community are calling our attention to something compelling. It behooves us to pay attention.

NOTES

1. Constance Penley and Andrew Ross, “Introduction,” in *Technoculture*, eds. Constant Penley and Andrew Ross (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xiii.
2. Pierre Lévy, *Cyberculture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), xvi.
3. David Bell, *Cyberculture Theorists: Manuel Castells and Donna Haraway* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.
4. For the analysis of the diversity of Japanese cyberculture, see, *Japanese Cybercultures*, eds. Nanette Gottlieb and Mark McLelland (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).
5. Please refer to Sharalyn Orbaugh’s “Sex and the Single Cyborg: Japanese Popular Culture Experiments in Subjectivity,” *Science Fiction Studies*

29, no. 3 (2002): 436–452 for further analysis of cyborg subjectivity in Japanese popular culture.

6. Masuko Honda, *Ibunka toshite no kodomo* [The Child as Another Culture] (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 1982), 172, and Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, “Early Twentieth Century Japanese Girls’ Magazine Stories: Examining Shōjo Voice in *Hanamonogatari* (Flower Tales),” *Journal of Popular Culture* 36, no. 4 (2003): 724–755.
7. We fully recognize the existence of “printed novels” prior to the late nineteenth century. However, we believe that the emergence of “printed novels” that are specifically directed to shōjo readers can be seen in the late nineteenth century.
8. Concerning the marketing success of the cell phone novel, Toshiro Itō, the original producer of *Magic I-Land* which runs the largest cell phone novel website, had the following to say:

2004 marked the fifth year since our site opened, but already *Magic I-Land* had nearly four million registered users. As for page views, for the whole site the number of pages viewed climbed to nine hundred million per month. This was the largest scale of access of any mobile service (for cell phones) at the time. (*Keitai shōsetsu katsujū kakumei ron* [About the Cell Phone Novel as a Revolution of Printed Text] (Tokyo: Kadokawa SS Communications, 2008, 18))

9. See Senko K. Maynard’s *Keitai shōsetsugo kō: Watashigatari no kaiwatai bunshō o saguru* [Thoughts on the Language of the Cell Phone Novel: Analyzing Conversation Style Writings for ‘I-Narratives’] (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 2014), 1.
10. Yumiko Sugiura, *Keitai shōsetsu no riaru* [Reality of the Cell Phone Novel] (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-sha, 2008), 4.
11. Maynard, 1.
12. Shin Mizukoshi, *21 seiki media ron* [Media Theories in the 21st Century] (Tokyo: Hōsō daigaku kyōiku shinkō kai, 2014), 224.
13. <http://s.maho.jp/book/af5770e0601598ef/6960568627/>. Last access November 1, 2018.
14. Mika Naitō, *Keitai shōsetsu o kakō* [Let’s Write a Cell Phone Novel] (Tokyo: Chūkei Shuppan, 2008), quoted in Senko K. Maynard’s *Keitai shōsetsugo kō*, 9.
15. Tōru Honda, *Naze keitai shōsetsu wa ureru no ka* [Why Do Cell Phone Novels Sell so Well?] (Tokyo: SB [SoftBank] Creative, 2008), quoted in Senko K. Maynard’s *Keitai shōsetsugo kō*, 45.
16. Yūji Kurokawa, ed., *Bessatsu junon chō nyūmon! Keitai shōsetsu no kakikata* [Supplementary Edition of Super Introduction to *Junon*: How to Write

- the Cell Phone Novel] (Tokyo: Shufu to Shakai-sha, 2008), quoted in Senko K. Maynard's *Keitai shōsetsugo kō*, 9–10.
17. Kumiko Tanaka, “Keitai shōsetsu no hyōgen wa mazushii ka” [Are Cell Phone Novels Lacking in Expression?], *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 53 (2008): 38–45, quoted in Senko K. Maynard's *Keitai shōsetsugo kō*, 10.
 18. Mika Naitō, *Nanika o kakitai anata e: Keitai shōsetsu no jōō ga oshieru bunshōjutsu* [To You Who Wants to Write: The Queen of the Cell Phone Novel Teaches Writing Techniques] (Tokyo: Bijinesusha, 2006), quoted in Senko K. Maynard's *Keitai shōsetsugo kō*, 12.
 19. This translation is cited from Kelly Hansen's “Electronic Literature and Youth Culture: The Rise of the Japanese Cell Phone Novel,” in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*, eds. Rachael Hutchinson and Leith Douglas Morton (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 310.
 20. *Ibid.*, 311.
 21. Shinji Miyadai, “Yankii kara nihon o kangaeru” [Analyzing Japan Through the Yankee], in *Yankii bunkaron josetsu* [Preliminary Thoughts on Yankee Culture], ed. Tarō Igarashi (Tokyo: Kawade Shōbō Shinsha, 2009), quoted in Senko K. Maynard's *Keitai shōsetsugo kō*, 4–5.
 22. Satobi Yoshida, *Keitai shōsetsu ga ureru riyū* [Why Cell Phone Novels Sell] (Tokyo: Mainichi Comyunikēshonzu, 2008), 71.
 23. Onsen Itō, *Keitai shōsetsuka ni naru mahō no bōhō* [Magical Ways to Become a Cell Phone Writer] (Tokyo: Goma Bukkussu, 2007), 122.
 24. See Hiroyuki Fujishiro's *Sōsharu media ron: Tsunagari o saisekkei suru* [Theory of Social Media: Redesigning Connection] (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2015) concerning the current state of modern Japanese communication seeking connection.
 25. Sugiura (2008, 40).
 26. Mei is the author of *The Red Thread*, which was ranked number two on the 2007 fiction bestseller list. Onsen Itō, 89.
 27. Previous cell phone novel researchers regard Chako's *Tenshi ga kureta mono* [What the Angel Brought] as the original cell phone novel written by and for shōjo. Onsen Itō, 91.
 28. Sociologist Junko Kaneda borrowed this term from literary scholar Stanley Fish in “‘Manga dōjinshi’: Kaishaku kyōdōtai no poritikusu” [Manga *Dōjinshi*: The Politics of Interpretative Communities], in *Bunka no shakaigaku* [Sociology of Culture], eds. Kenji Satō and Shun'ya Yoshimi (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 2007).
 29. Masuko Honda, *Jōgakusei no keifu: Saishoku sareru Meiji* [The Genealogy of Schoolgirls: Coloring the Meiji Era] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1990), 179.
 30. Masuko Honda, *Kōkan nikki: Shōjotachi no himitsu no pureirando* [Exchange Diary: A Secret Playground for Girls] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996).

31. Shun'ya Yoshimi, *Media bunka ron: Media o manabu hito no tame no jūgo wa* [Theory of Media Culture: Fifteen Topics for Students of Media Studies] (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 2012), 202–203.
32. For a detailed analysis see Takako Natō, “‘Niji sōsaku’ katsudō to sono nettowaaku nitsuite” [“Derivative Writings” and Their Networks], in *Sore zore no fan kenkyū: I am a fan* [Our Own Fan Studies: I am a Fan] (Tokyo: Fūjinsha, 2007), Sharalyn Orbaugh, “Girls Reading Harry Potter, Girls Writing Desire: Amateur Manga and Shōjo Reading Practice,” in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), Sonoko Azuma, “Onna no homosōsharu na yokubō no yukue: Niji sōsaku ‘yaoi’ ni tsuite no ichi kōsatsu” [In Search of the Female Desire for Homosociality: Thoughts on Yaoi and Derivative Writings], in *Bunka no shakaigaku: Kioku, media,shintai* [Sociology of Culture: Memory, Media, and Body], eds. Michikuni Ōno and Nobuhiko Ogawa (Tokyo: Bunrikaku, 2009).
33. Yoshimi, 210.
34. Toshirō Itō, 166.
35. As an example of how the cell phone has become an extension of the body, Toshirō Itō points to the cell phone decorations and accessories, such as affixing large straps, rhinestones and the like, that are especially common among female high school students, 176.
36. See Susan Ervin-Trip, “Language and TAT Content in Bilinguals,” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 68, no. 5 (1964): 500–507, and Michele Koven, “Two Languages in the Self/The Self in Two Languages: French-Portuguese Bilinguals’ Verbal Enactments and Experienced of Self in Narrative Discourse,” *Ethos* 26, no. 4 (1998): 410–455.
37. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), vii. The metaphor of “criss-cross”ing a field had been explored by educational psychologists to advocate an approach to teaching and learning that yields a more thorough understanding of multifaceted concepts by encouraging students to explore topics from multiple perspectives. See Marlene Scardamalia and Carl Bereiter’s “Creating, Criss-Crossing, and Rising Above Idea Landscapes,” in *ICT in Education in Global Context*, eds. R.H. Huang, Kinshuk, and J.K. Price (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer, 2016), 3–16 and Spiro et al. (1987).
38. *Ibid.*, vii.

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- Thoughts on *Yaoi* and Derivative Writings]. In *Bunka no shakaigaku: Kioku, media,shintai* [Sociology of Culture: Memory, Media, and Body], edited by Michikuni Ōno and Nobuhiko Ogawa, 263–280. Tokyo: Bunrikaku, 2009.
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CHAPTER 6

The Shōjo in the Rōjo: Fumiko Enchi's Representation of the Shōjo Who Refused to Grow up

Sohyun Chun

[We] grew up believing that the most important thing about a female body is not what it does but how it looks. The power lies not within us but in the gaze of the observer.

— Gloria Steinem¹

Some women simply refuse to “grow old”: they enjoy wearing girlish clothes, straighten and darken their hair, and wear showy pink makeup regardless of their ages. In November 2016, the Japanese media company Ostance posted a YouTube video featuring three elderly Japanese women dressed variously in kimono and hip-hop fashion dancing to Bruno Mars’ song “24K Magic” along with other hip-hop dancers. As of this writing the video has over 1.3 million views, 19,146 “likes” (compared to only 204 “dislikes”) and an overwhelmingly positive comments section. While old women dancing in a hip-hop music video defies social expectations, these women seem unafraid of exposing themselves

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to public scrutiny on the usual use of their aged bodies. While their behavior may be seen as excessively self-indulgent or unrestrained for “proper” old ladies, they are obviously enjoying themselves, which even appeals to younger audiences; the positive responses to the video are especially notable given the notoriety of YouTube video comments sections for argument and invective.

Obviously, these older women fall well outside the mold of a typical hip-hop music video dancer, not to mention that they are not acting like typical elderly women. They nevertheless inspire congratulatory comments. Is it simply the novelty of seeing dancers so far removed from the norm? If we accept that youth and beauty are indivisible from privilege and power in modern society, then why does a video featuring older women garner so much praise in a music scene that is saturated with shōjo groups such as AKB48? On the contrary, should a video like this, wherein old women defy expectations of age and physical appearance, not strike its young viewers as strange, extraordinary, even aberrant?

Perhaps these women’s unexpected fashion and dancing are their expression of resistance to socially defined expectations of the aged. Literary scholar Yuika Kitamura refers to characters like this who appear in works of Seiko Tanabe (b. 1928) as “eternal girls’ (*eien no shōjotachi*), women of all ages who want to remain shōjo forever...”² while Tomoko Aoyama calls them “aged girls” or “ageless girls,”³ noting their attachment to “freedom and arrogance with humour,” characteristics that epitomize the shōjo.⁴ These aged women seem to be celebrating the active, subversive, and liberated image of the shōjo.⁵ Eiri Takahara explains how this “girl consciousness,” which “is not the sole province of the chronological girl but something that older women and even men can possess,” allows its subject to “function as an active self resisting hegemonic norms”; his analysis of this phenomenon is useful for understanding how these aged women utilize the shōjo image.⁶ Their appropriation of the image is not merely superficial mimicry; the aged woman finds in the shōjo a new means of self-expression and identity.

This unending girlhood signifies a state of mind unconcerned with maturation—both physical and psychological—and the cultural expectations that circumscribe age-appropriate behavior. In 1974, Fumiko Enchi (1905–1986) published “The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers” (*Hana kui uba*),⁷ a short story about an unnamed aging female narrator who encounters a shockingly indulgent *rōjo* (old woman) who gleefully devours crimson blossoms. Reflecting upon the patriarchal prescriptions

for women in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, Enchi exposes the suppression and denial that continued to haunt the aging narrator's girlhood as well as her womanhood. As a shameless purveyor of desire, the *rōjo* prompts the narrator to confront the youthful sexuality she once suppressed, thereby reliving her juvenescence as a much-matured woman. This paper examines how the narrator comes to identify and reinvigorate the shōjo within her aged body as an expression of unfulfilled desire, love, and passion. Through the *rōjo*, who retains certain shōjo characteristics (youthfulness) in her aged body, Enchi not only criticizes restrictive social standards, she also reconfigures the function of shōjo culture as practiced by aging women seeking empowerment against oppressive norms that force women into certain constructed images of proper female bodies.

THE FLOWER-EATING CRONE AND THE GAZE OF SURVEILLANCE

Donna Haraway in her study "The Persistence of Vision" says that "[v]ision is *always* a question of the power to see—and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices. [...] We are not immediately present to ourselves."⁸ Through the visual presentation of the characters in Enchi's story, we can see how the female body is controlled by a visual system and how their images reflect on the "overpresence of image."⁹ Through the interaction between the flower-eating *rōjo* and the narrator, Enchi reveals the powerful gaze of surveillance, which subjugates the individual to constant self-regulation and censorship.

On an autumn day, the aging narrator relishes the splendid flowers of a crab cactus. As she quietly celebrates the revival of the cactus, which had been withering away, another old woman suddenly appears next to her. When the narrator sees the newly emerged female figure, the first thing she notices is how this woman appears to be much older than the narrator herself, so she refers to the woman as a "*rōjo*." After a brief conversation with the *rōjo*, the narrator watches as the woman suddenly plucks the red blossoms and stuffs them in her mouth. Astonished by the sight of "a living thing being consumed," the narrator describes the *rōjo*'s mouth looking "as if it were stained with blood."¹⁰ The narrator's portrayal of the *rōjo*'s eating of the crimson flowers is monstrous and distasteful, as if the *rōjo* has devoured living flesh, not blossoms, with the reddish flower stains on her lips appearing almost bloody. The then question arises: why does the scene of an old woman ingesting blossoms

appear so repulsive and grotesque, particularly in the eyes of the narrator, who is herself an aged woman?

Despite the possibilities of interpreting the *rōjo*'s eating of flowers either as an old woman's peculiar taste or simple mischief, the narrator is simply appalled by the *rōjo*'s behavior, reacting to it as if the *rōjo* has done something intolerably gruesome. The narrator is privileged with a better, more authoritative vision, not merely because of her relatively younger bodily state, but also as the first-person narrator of the story, and her rather harsh, judgmental gaze upon the flower-eating *rōjo* in certain ways resembles the social gaze on mythical demonic female characters such as the *yamamba*.¹¹

The narrator's depiction of the *rōjo*'s flower consumption conjures up one of the most popular and notorious female monsters, the *yamamba*, an entity highlighted by an insane desire that signifies danger and anxiety. While its origin cannot be traced to a single image, as Rebecca Copeland explicates in her article "Mythical Bad Girls":

The *yamamba* represents all that lies outside the social norm, beyond the boundaries of the civilized. She is a woman without a family, a woman who does not conform. Cast out from the security of social sanctuary—she runs through the mountains. Her freedom figured as terror. [...] The nurturer becomes the murderer. The woman who eats nothing becomes the woman who eats all.¹²

The *yamamba*'s notoriety owes less to her sinister nature than to the potential danger that her free and unruly existence represents—*symbolic female power*. Tomoko Aoyama has pointed out that "[j]ust as... Madwoman and Medusa have been used as significant figures in feminist critical theories in the west, the *yamauba* [an alternative term for the *yamamba*] has inspired and triggered a number of important creative and critical works among feminist writers and scholars in Japan," such as Fumiko Enchi and Minako Ōba (1930–2007).¹³ In many of these works, rather than be objectified as a *yamamba* or a *yamamba*-like figure, women characters reverse the direction of the gaze, choosing to take on the *yamamba* role and becoming the subject of the gaze. In Enchi's story, juxtaposed with the *yamamba*'s cannibalistic urges, the *rōjo*'s desire to consume flowers may not appear to be destructive, but merely offensive to those confined within the cultural norms. Nevertheless, under the narrator's appropriating gaze, the *rōjo* is rendered monstrous; as a

woman who freely expresses herself and acts upon her desires, the *rōjo* poses a potential threat to the established social order.

Similar to old women, Japanese female youths are also subjected to the *yamamba* stigma. In the 1980s, *kogyaru*¹⁴ emerged on the scene, garnering attention from the public and media with their outstanding appearance. Most wore “loose socks” and extremely short skirts (often managed by rolling the waistbands once they were out of sight of their parents). A subset of *kogyaru* darkened their skin, sported smoky dark makeup and white hair, and ringed their eyes and mouths with white liner. Frightened by *kogyaru* fashion, the media promptly labeled this subset *yamamba*, or “sexual deviants.”¹⁵

Why have *kogyaru* come to be equated with *yamamba*? Even in the more liberalized society of the 1990s Japan, the appearance of *kogyaru* was shocking, and did not fit into the pre-established image of young girls, who are supposed to be pure, amiable, and demure. However, *kogyaru* have shown the tenacity to challenge social expectations and maintain their own form of self-expression without yielding to social pressure. The emergence of *kogyaru* culture has been seen as a sign of defiance against the demand that young girls should be “cute”—a demand that impedes the freedom of young girls and limits the space they have to express themselves freely. At the risk of being branded a *yamamba* and being socially marginalized, through the stark contrast with the image of cute, docile, pure girls, *kogyaru* not only illuminated the parochial preconception that delineated and restrained how a proper girl should look, but also broadened the spectrum of potential choices for girls in terms of their appearances.

FLOWER, DESIRE, AND SEXUALITY

In her book *Polygendered and Ponytailed: The Dilemma of Femininity and the Female Athlete*, Dayna B. Daniels says that:

[v]iewers base their critique of what they see on a singular ideal of femininity that, although constructed and changing, is understood to be a complete picture...[a]lthough women are aware that there are numerous gaps in the visual representations of women in the media and that casual analysis of any group of women will reveal multiple femininities, the self-surveillance and critique that women apply to their own bodies seem to take precedence over their attention to this breadth of female bodies and presentations.¹⁶

In Enchi's story, the narrator shows an objectified view of women's expression by linking the *rōjō*'s flower-eating to the symbolism of a kabuki scene "where a woman plucks off a white plum blossom and eats it. It seemed to me a kind of refined eroticism."¹⁷ In the artistic context the narrator accepts the expression as "refined," but she remains uncomfortable with and judgmental about the *rōjō*, whose expression seems too frank outside the elegant performative arena of the theater. In addition, the narrator cynically comments on the *rōjō*'s eating of the flowers: "[p]eople who watch you stuff red flowers into your mouth and devour them might think that you have an extraordinary illness, or that you're crazy, don't you think?"¹⁸ Borrowing the disapproving voices of other people, the narrator actually reveals her own critical opinion.

Against the narrator's criticism, the *rōjō* presents an articulate argument regarding her expression of desire. First, the *rōjō* points out that the narrator's interpretation has "idealized the concept of lust."¹⁹ Then the *rōjō* discusses that though kabuki theater and ukiyo-e woodcut prints both contain abundant sexual imagery, instead of candidly capturing natural sexual desire, they display idealized, suggestive, and thus distorted images of sexuality. The *rōjō* counters the narrator's narrow objectified view with her own interpretation of self-expression and her awareness of her own sexuality. The *rōjō* rejects those artistic expressions of sexuality because they are artificial constructions that are meant to be seen by others, and are not generated out of the gratification of one's own desire. Thus, eating flowers represents the fulfillment of the *rōjō*'s own desire, not something to please others:

There's no law that says flowers are just to be seen and not to be eaten, is there? When you think something is beautiful, you want to touch it, you want to pluck it off, and even if you destroy its shape, you want to make it your own. When that desire becomes stronger, then it reaches the point where you want to eat it. Doesn't it?²⁰

For the *rōjō*, consuming flowers is a natural and effectual means of satisfying her desire to possess the beauty of the blossoms. The *rōjō* points out that the dismayed reaction of the narrator at eating flowers originates from the deeply inculcated need of the narrator to fulfill the social expectations for women. By making a reasonable argument, the *rōjō* clearly indicates that she has not eaten the flower accidentally, and belies any notion that she might be suffering from the effects of senility.

To grasp the full significance of flower-eating, it is essential to note the symbolic meaning of the crab cactus flower, which is better known for its ability to survive in an arid environment than for its flowers. One of the reasons that the narrator is delighted to see the blooming of the crab cactus is that the plant had earlier seemed almost dead, so she had not expected it to bloom again. Indeed, its withered appearance causes the narrator to decide that it will not be able to produce anything beautiful, an indication of an ingrained discriminatory gaze toward old age. Nevertheless, “it revived on its own in the second year”²¹ bearing splendid flowers. Although the cactus is merely a plant, the life within shows its true beauty; from this nature is born the desire to sprout buds that bloom into vibrant flowers. In Enchi’s story, the re-blossoming of the cactus, which the narrator has presumed dead for its bare appearance, symbolizes the vibrancy of nature and the potential for renewal. Witnessing the crab cactus’s recovery, the narrator recognizes that her declining body may also revive.

The visual presentation of the “crab cactus” plays a significant role in that the plant itself may symbolize the aged body. It has no leaves, only a jagged stem that looks like a leaf. The Japanese word for leaf, *ha*, has the same sound as the word for teeth. The cactus’s lack of leaves allows an association with toothlessness, a trait that is often closely associated with old age. Terry Kawashima, in discussing how female aging functions in narrative construction of marginality and gender,²² introduces the poem of the old woman Higaki,²³ who was once a popular poetess but now laments her lost reputation. The poem, using the aged images of white hair and lost teeth, presents Higaki’s wish to regain her power by drinking water from the Shirakawa River,²⁴ which will make one’s teeth grow back. In other words, for this Heian-period woman teeth were one of the primary symbols of feminine vitality and power—to lose them was to lose an indicator of one’s humanity.

The *rōjo* has found the most direct way to possess the beauty and power of the flower: by literally consuming it raw and whole. With her lips stained crimson, the white-haired, nearly blind *rōjo* regains color on her ashen face. It is not a coincidence that the word for color in Japanese, *iro*, also signifies Eros, sex and sexuality. Yumiko Hulvey has pointed out in her article “The Intertextual Fabric of Narratives by Enchi Fumiko” that the flowers signify the evanescent nature of life, and “the transience of beauty, youth, and spring.”²⁵ She further notes that the color red is often associated with blood and passion. By consuming

the flowers, the *rōjo* obtains passionate sexual vitality, a fundamental life force that can also be linked to blood.²⁶

Women's power is often considered to originate from their sexuality. Kawashima argues that "old age acts as a marginalizing quality because it is imbued with connotations of lack in an economic sense (poverty) and the physical sense (loss of beauty)."²⁷ Hence the *rōjo*'s eating of the flower may also be seen as an attempt to regain power, to subvert the marginalizing expectation that elderly women should be asexual, disciplined, self-sacrificing, and composed. Eating flowers is a symbolic action, a powerful demonstration of her determination. That is why the old woman's voracious appetite is rendered as not merely ugly, but terrifying and threatening.

Naturally, the *rōjo*'s blatant devouring of flowers unsettles the more demure narrator. Although she had earlier expressed her desire for the flowers by caressing them, it has never occurred to the narrator that she could try to "eat" them, to gain access to their power in reality. It is regarded as unseemly and even grotesque for an aged woman to entertain desires to regain youth and fertility. The *rōjo*'s transgression disgusts and confounds the narrator. The *rōjo* might share the narrator's desire for the reviving power of the blossoms, yet she goes beyond merely articulating her yearnings to physically grabbing and ingesting the flower to make it her own so that she may overcome her blind, marginalized, and limited circumstances.

SUPPRESSED DESIRE AND *BAKEMONO*

Jennifer Waelti-Walters, in her study of adaptations of Western fairy tales, explains that "[s]ocial demands push women into schizophrenic behaviors dividing them within themselves, mutilating them by creating a restrictive environment within which they cannot live."²⁸ As Waelti-Walters points out, social pressure forces women to find alternative means to express their bottled-up desires by separating the expressive egos from their original selves. The social prescriptions instilled in the mind of the narrator in "The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers" prevents her from revealing her true feelings, and causes her to live with a split mind. Enchi's story draws on the monstrous, ghostly *bakemono*²⁹ to present this split.

Through her conversation with the *rōjo*, the narrator finally comes to identify an aspect of herself that has been deeply concealed all these years as socially unacceptable:

[E]ven though you're itching to pluck flowers off and eat them, you give up because you're not the type who can do what you want." The old woman seemed to read my thoughts. "Because you too have reached a point where you can't see very well, the ghosts [*bakemono*] that dwell within you are probably beginning to stir about. In the end, it's pandemonium.³⁰

The flower-eating *rōjo*'s reference to "*bakemono*" touches on the invisible yet powerful nature of the inner struggles that plague the narrator. The *rōjo* argues that suppressed women who have failed to find ways to express their natural feelings under the existing milieu end up resorting to the extreme measure of becoming monstrous. The inclusion of these assertions allows Enchi to redefine the connection between women and *bakemono*, foregrounding how such a monstrous transformation is predicated upon self-control and an awareness of social codes.

Enchi's deployment of the *bakemono*, the inner monster, reveals the narrator's complex inner state of a conforming yet resisting mind, and gestures toward the depiction of similarly schizophrenic female production as outlined by Gilbert and Gubar in the nearly contemporaneous *Madwoman in the Attic*:

Even the most apparently conservative and decorous women writers obsessively create fiercely independent characters who seek to destroy all patriarchal structures which both their authors and their authors' submissive heroines seem to accept as inevitable. Of course, by projecting their rebellious impulses not into heroines but into mad or monstrous women (who are suitably punished in the course of the novel or poem), female authors dramatize their own self-division, their desire both to accept the structures of patriarchal society and to reject them.³¹

The inner monster displays the narrator's conflicted state of both defying and adjusting to social expectations. "The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers" is particularly powerful in its presentation of the narrator's psychic dilemma between expressing desire and self-control—Enchi shows how deeply rooted the sense of self-regulation is within the narrator's mind. The narrator once rejected her desire to express her sexuality because she could not imagine positive, socially acceptable relationship with her lover.

In the form of the *bakemono* that transcends the social rules and customs, the narrator manages to disclose her true self. Nevertheless, by

labeling this self a *bakemono*, which does not belong to the ordered, rational world, the narrator acknowledges and even reinforces the normative categorizations of what is socially acceptable and what is not.

And yet it is the *rōjō*'s reproach of her shyness and self-regulation that motivates the narrator to reflect upon her own life. This exercise calls to mind the forgotten memories of her youth:

I'd liked flowers from the time I was young and had heard that the nectar at the base of azalea petals was sweets and delicious. Occasionally, I tried tasting it with a friend. [...] In fact, often when I thought a flower was beautiful, I couldn't bear just looking at it from afar. Even if I didn't eat it, I couldn't be satisfied unless I touched it.³²

The narrator realizes that she is no different from this *rōjō*. However, at some point in her life, the narrator stopped eating flowers and forgot about ever having had such desire. The change in the narrator's behavior was not because she stopped feeling the urge to eat as she grew older, but rather she unconsciously repressed her impulses in accordance with the social constraints. The remaining habit of touching the flowers became her coping mechanism—a poor substitute for eating them, but more satisfying than merely looking. Nevertheless, the insufficiently fulfilled desires lingered within the narrator after all these years, and the *rōjō*'s action leads the narrator to recognize the sediments of her desire deposited beneath her consciousness. Hence, when the narrator denigrates the *rōjō*'s eating of flowers, she is subconsciously rejecting her buried self.

Poor eyesight plays a significant role in reviewing the narrator's inner state. It also shows how the younger narrator could not perceive her inner trouble at all until her eyesight had weakened significantly. Her healthy body was too preoccupied with being seen by others to examine her own inner condition. Hearing the *rōjō*'s warning, the narrator realizes that she has never been free from her long-suppressed feelings and reflects:

It was true that ever since my eyesight had worsened, those demons and goblins inside me had become restless. How they constantly disturbed me, feeling no compunction about interfering in every aspect of my life. I recalled a strange incident that had happened a few evenings before. Past midnight, I became suddenly conscious of a presence in the study by my bedroom, and softly opening the door, I looked in and saw that I'd left my writing box out, its lid off, and packages of old letters I had been sorting during the day strewn over my desk.³³

Previously, the narrator's attention was trained outward, allowing her to adhere to expectations of gender and age, but the playful demeanor and warnings of the older woman occasion the narrator's newfound desire to investigate the interiority that she had long left neglected. The result of this shift in focus is especially evident when considering the narrator's changing thoughts on a past love.

“NO HAPPINESS IN REALITY”: THE SHŌJO'S REJECTION OF SOCIAL GENDER ROLES

The narrator was at one time romantically involved with a man; however, since their relationship never fully bloomed and the man ended up marrying another woman, the narrator had dismissed it as some foolish deed the older man committed out of perverted affection for a teenage girl.³⁴ When the man died, his widow sent a box full of letters that the narrator had sent to him earlier. Looking through the letters, many of which contain pressed flowers, she comments:

I didn't feel any nostalgia for the past upon seeing the pressed flowers [...] Instead, I felt keenly aware of how immature and ignorant I was then, and in the end, I felt only contempt for the man who had felt attraction for such a young girl. [...] in spite of my intention to avoid dwelling on the past, in the last few days the spirits within me have begun subverting my original intention, provoked, ironically, by the old letters.³⁵

However, the letters tell a different story. Although the aged narrator thinks that “[she] was only slightly attracted to him” and her love was “immature and ignorant,” the pink and violet letters and the pressed flowers enclosed within reveal a deep affection for him that she never admitted, even—especially—to herself.³⁶ Accordingly, the young narrator tried to express her feelings for her beloved in this fashion. Although the narrator conveyed her affection toward her lover by enclosing pressed flowers in her letters, she was not able to more directly confess her love. Her affection was not a living one, but a dried one, wilted and compressed by her willful suppression. Even at a young age, the narrator was not able to express her desire frankly like the *rōjo*, and indeed it was because of her rigid self-control that her romantic relationship could not bear fruit at that time.

When she was a young girl, the narrator enjoyed going to the library to read foreign plays: “What I read today was Galsworthy's *Strife*.

It was interesting.”³⁷ The image of the narrator as an intellectual youth recalls the prewar *shōjo*, who was closely tied to the schoolgirl, a symbol of development of Japanese girls’ education. The narrator recalls an incident from her youth when she received a lecture from her lover:

I suppose it’s useless to tell you not to read books, but I wouldn’t want you to become obsessed. There’s no happiness in books. [...] I’m a graduate of the law department, so I’m not familiar with literature. But somehow, I don’t like the faces of women who have been reading books.³⁸

The young narrator replied:

“But there’s no happiness outside of books either. At least that’s what I think.” I must have looked puzzled as I realized that there was no explanation for the powerful forces quarreling ceaselessly within me. I looked away as if this didn’t concern me. My instinct was to insinuate that he probably liked the faces of women who had been chopping things in the kitchen, but I felt that would be too immature and obstinate. To find no happiness in books; to hate the faces of women who read books! After [he] left, I mulled over his words, becoming incensed. I wasn’t a bit amused.³⁹

In her youthful days, the narrator had been a bright, intelligent girl who was critical enough to notice the social limitations on women. She did not want to become a typical housewife, taking care of menial chores to support the husband and the home—a humdrum life without substance. Mariko Inoue’s study of *jōgakusei* (school girls)⁴⁰ shows that since the Taishō period (1912–1926), girls’ education began to change and women’s middle schools became prevalent after 1922, but

women students were required to spend a substantial amount of time in home economics and sewing; in addition, the Ministry of Education was eager to provide them with more hours for traditional ethics or moral courses. [...] The objective of such an approach was to produce obedient, chaste, and submissive women who would serve family and country as the “good wife, wise mother.”⁴¹

The narrator’s lover’s view was in line with that of the Ministry of Education. The narrator decided to end the relationship, for she believed that getting married and becoming a man’s wife would make her conform to the restrictive social order of gender roles. She suppressed her

love in an attempt to defy social expectations and yet, paradoxically, her resistance was the act that imprisoned her true feelings within the strictly defined social codes. Therefore, she ends the relationship not from lack of love, but because of her rejection of his “normative ideas of girlhood and womanhood,” especially his inflexible patriarchal attitude toward women, who may be intelligent but not independent and liberated. In the 1920s her image as an intelligent, unmarried, independent woman was often associated with the idea of the *curyō* shōjo (delinquent, bad girls), when “the public imagined that the shōjo’s unregulated behavior was leaving her open to promiscuity and petty theft, or simply the failure to continue to the next stage of life or respectable marriage.”⁴²

The narrator laments that “[a]ll my life I had read all the books I felt I ought to read, and now, from overindulgence, my eyesight had begun to fail”; the young narrator sought comfort in reading and learning, but eventually realized that her books offered no more comfort than reality.⁴³ In order to deal with the disappointment of her broken romance, the narrator develops an emotional defense mechanism that views the relationship as unimportant in the first place. Nevertheless, the unsatisfied yearnings have remained buried deep inside her. Noticing her lingering attachment for her former lover, the narrator objectifies her youthful love as the *bakemono* that stalks her home and uncovers the evidence of her early romance.

At the end of the story, after her encounter with the *rōjo*, the narrator harbors a sense of self-pity toward her past self, noticing the generational gulf separating past and present, when—to the narrator’s eyes—contemporary youth seem not to hide their natural feelings anymore:

On a park bench a young man and woman chatted, ate, and threw pieces of paper, their shoulders so close together it seemed as if they were entwined. [...] with my weak eyes, I was unable to distinguish in the lively surroundings which one was the man and which one was the woman. [...] But we Japanese have such a long history of hiding relationships between men and women that even today, such an open display of affection looks unnatural to us. When I went to America some time ago, I was surprised to see male and female students lying entwined on grassy slopes on a campus of a university in California. [...] Even in Japan, young people today are becoming more natural.⁴⁴

The narrator points to overall social changes and lessening cultural differences between Japan and America as evidence for the close interactions

she is witnessing. However, her interpretation of the couple clearly emerges from how she is reconciling the effects of a changing physiology—such as her weak eyesight merging the outlines of people’s bodies—with her awareness of old Japanese customs. Her youthful eyes and mind were both well-attuned to discerning social norms and judging how well she and others upheld those norms, while she was blinded to her own desires. On the other hand, the narrator’s now aged eyes are unable to detect superficial details, and as a result, she fills in her own meanings of the blurry images she witnesses, perhaps under the influence of the surrounding beautiful scenery and her own desires. Prior to realizing the unresolved feelings that lurked within her mind, and realigning her lingering desire to her suppressed sexuality, the aged narrator only shows contempt and annoyance toward the natural expression of desires, such as the *rōjō*’s eating of flowers. However, displaying the subversive change in the narrator’s own critical view at the moment of enlightenment, Enchi emphasizes the importance of questioning oneself. The realization of her true feelings and desires enables the narrator not only to acknowledge her own sexuality, which she had believed was something to be ashamed of and to be concealed, but to embrace those of the others as well:

Only now do I appreciate the fact that the older youth had not regarded me with contempt. [...] although I had ridiculed and despised them at that time, I now happily recall these incidents as evidence of a young girl coming into the bloom of womanhood. Even a devil looks beautiful when it’s eighteen, as the old proverb goes and even coarse tea is fragrant when it’s steeped for the first time.⁴⁵

Presenting the narrator’s reconciliation with her feelings of love which she had before regarded as immature and negligible, Enchi shows how an individual can come to terms with her true self, breaking away from the pressing gaze of surveillance. Parallel to her realization that the cactus had withered because of the stifling atmosphere of her air-conditioned room and that only “nature’s blessing of rain and dew”⁴⁶ had revived it, the narrator comes to understand how her internalization of social expectations had caused her to unconsciously reject the freedom of her youth and suppress the desires she once held. This process is described in a reflection by Masuko Honda, a scholar of *shōjo* culture:

Once I became an adult, it became clear to me that labels such as “vulgar, sentimental, lacking social awareness, stylistically superficial, and having the immature taste of a girl” had been used to condemn the garden of my youth. Accordingly, I pushed this garden into the darkness of the past. It seems that girls today are subject to the same negative scrutiny.⁴⁷

Through her depiction of a narrator recognizing and overcoming this dilemma, Enchi offers inspiration to the reader along with new avenues for rethinking and rewriting women's femininity, for escaping “negative scrutiny” and speaking out about “girl's values and stance of those who deride them.”⁴⁸

CONCLUSION: *Rōjo* WHO LIBERATE THEIR INNER SHŌJO

In “The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers,” Enchi provides room for a reinterpretation of the shōjo and the *rōjo*, whose bodies, regardless of age, are bound by such exceedingly restrictive social regulations they are not allowed to be themselves. In *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity*, Mary Russo answers her own question “Why are these old hags laughing?”⁴⁹ with the explanation that “[m]aking a spectacle out of oneself seems a specifically feminine danger. The danger was of an exposure,”⁵⁰ emphasizing that social repression has allowed women very little freedom to openly express themselves. Like the dancers in the “24K Magic” YouTube video, even if her behavior does not follow social expectations, Enchi's *rōjo* willingly risks making a spectacle of herself in order to challenge the social gaze that straitlances women. She laughs. She enjoys herself, and she shows little compunction over the predictable social backlash. By eating her flowers and laughing all the while, Enchi's *rōjo* frees herself from being objectified by the social gaze, frees her body from social expectations, and frees herself from her own self-conscious restraint.

It is ironic that liberation is achieved by the *rōjo* rather than the shōjo. The shōjo image is associated with ideas of liberation, instability, and transgression, but as Enchi points out through the narrator's memories of her younger self, even shōjo do not enjoy a completely freed subjectivity, and they too struggle with inner monsters. Enchi's story casts a shadow over the shōjo: while her freedom seems bright and self-evident, underneath this illusionary, shallow surface lies a darker reality of self-repression. The shōjo has difficulty breaking social codes: the young

narrator could not find happiness in her waking world, so she avoided her real feelings and escaped through books into a fictional world, knowing all the while that she would never find true happiness there. Now older, caught between the sad promise of the shōjo and the feisty freedom of the rojo, the narrator realizes how she compromised her own desires in deference to social norms and expectations. She betrayed the bloom of her youth by failing to resist the elaborate social codes that claimed her freedom. Her girlhood was just so many pressed flowers. Looking back at that loss, she thinks it may be time to devour flowers.

Meanwhile, Enchi's blinded *rōjo* symbolically suggests that though our eyes may see the social views on our bodies all too clearly, they are simultaneously blinded to our own desires. We have been trained to take part in a social masquerade, covering over our own subjectivity, expression, and individual freedom in deference to a social view of women that binds and constrains; the *rōjo* achieves the freedom that the shōjo could not by situating herself in this social "blind spot."

By using the spirit, freedom, and arrogance of the shōjo, the wry humor and audacious appetite of the *rōjo*, and the supernatural *bakemono* image, Enchi exposes the concealed thoughts of aged women and allows them to rediscover their inner nature and their long-suppressed desires. In so doing, Enchi's protagonist can finally break free from her imprisoned mind-set and adopt a positive outlook on herself and her place in society.

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NOTES

1. Citing from Dayna B. Daniels' book, *Polygendered and Ponytailed: The Dilemma of Femininity and the Female Athlete* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2009), 99.
2. Yuika Kitamura, "Sexuality, Gender, and the Tale of Genji in Modern Japanese Translations and Manga," in *Envisioning the Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production*, ed. Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 329–357.

3. Tomoko Aoyama, "Mad Old Japanese Woman Writes Back from an Attic of Her Own," Refereed *Proceedings of the 2011 AULLA Conference: Storytelling in Literature, Language and Culture*, ed. Peter Goodall (2012), 30.
4. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley, "Introduction," in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. T. Aoyama and B. Hartley (New York: Routledge, 2010 [1982]), 7.
5. It should be noted that the shōjo is also considered a "passive object of male desire." See, Aoyama, "Introduction," 2.
6. Aoyama and Hartley cite Eiri Takahara's notion of "girl consciousness" (*Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, 7).
7. This analysis depends heavily on the Yumiko Hulvey translation, "The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers" (1994), but when noted refers to Lucy North's version titled "The Flower-Eating Crone" (1997).
8. Donna Haraway, "The Persistence of Vision," in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, eds. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 288.
9. Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, eds. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 181.
10. Fumiko Enchi, "The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers," trans. Yumiko Hulvey, *Manoa* 6, no. 2 (1994): 163.
11. Hulvey points out that the works of Enchi actually revel in the negative associations of dangerous women, "employing images of vampires and femmes fatales who lure men to their doom, perhaps for the same reason that some religions believe that contact with defilement can sometimes empower those who dare it." See, Yumiko Hulvey, "Myths and Monsters: The Female Body as the Site for Political Agendas," in *Body Politics and the Fictional Double*, ed. Debra Walker King (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 88.
12. Rebecca Copeland, "Mythical Bad Girls: The Corpse, the Crone, and the Snake," in *Bad Girls of Japan*, eds. Laura Miller and Jan Bardsley (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 23.
13. Aoyama, "Mad Old Japanese Woman Writes Back from an Attic of Her Own," 20.
14. "Kogaru (sic!) (or *kogal*) is a term for stylish, high-school age girls in Japan. [...] 'Garu' reflects the Japanese pronunciation of the English word 'gal.' Thus, kogaru means high-school gal or small gal. The term supposedly emerged among in the early 1990s disco scene, when female high-school students became a more visible segment of the clientele." See, Tadashi Suzuki and Joel Best, "The Emergence of Trendsetters for Fashions and Fads: Kogaru in 1990s Japan," *The Sociological Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (2003): 62.

15. “The press initially linked *kogaru* to various deviant sexual arrangements, including *burusera* (selling used school uniforms or underwear to fetishists), *enjo-kōsai* (dating businessmen for money), and prostitution through tele-*kura* (firms that mediate telephone conversations between males and females). The media reported that *kogaru* engaged in these behaviors, not because they were desperately poor but because they wanted to earn spending money (Yamamoto 2000). Some critics warned that these sexual activities reflected a moral collapse that should be addressed through moral education (Stroh 1996; Watts 1997), although others argued that deviance was simply a more profitable alternative to the modest wages *kogaru* could earn by working in fast-food shops or family restaurants (Miyadai 1994; Kohama 1998). Although the commentators assumed that the number of sexually deviant high school girls was increasing, there was no strong evidence to support this claim, although *burusera*, *enjo-kousai*, and *telekura* were new ways of linking young women to male customers seeking sexual services. While the initial media coverage sensationalized the sexual deviance of *kogaru*, we focus on *kogaru* as trendsetters.” Tadashi Suzuki, and Joel Best, “The Emergence of Trendsetters for Fashions and Fads: *Kogaru* in 1990s Japan,” 62–63.
16. Dayna B. Daniels, *Polygendered and Ponytailed: The Dilemma of Femininity and the Female Athlete* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 2009), 100.
17. Fumiko Enchi, “The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers,” 163.
18. *Ibid.*, 164.
19. *Ibid.*, 163.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. If “[o]ld age is not an essentially or inherently marginal category [...] then we must ask why it is represented as socially ‘marginal.’ In Komachi’s case, this quality becomes marginalized because old age is deliberately associated with the loss of beauty and livelihood.” See, Terry Kawashima, *Writing Margins: The Textual Construction of Gender in Heian and Kamakura Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 127.
23. In *Gosenshū* (ca. 951), “Since the years have passed/ my black hair, too,/ like the White River, Shirakawa/ I now have to get water there/ my teeth have fallen out but are growing back again—.” See, Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 149–150.
24. “At that place, she was a famous woman who loved poetry,” see, *ibid.*, 150.
25. Hulvey, “The Intertextual Fabric of Narratives by Enchi Fumiko,” 207.
26. Hulvey also notes that the fact that “the white-haired old woman eats the mottled red blossoms of the *shako shaboten* (crab cactus), suggests an attempt to recapture that which has been lost” (208). Hulvey’s

article traces the symbolic connections of red flowers to youth, comparing Western myths and Eastern culture. Hulvey also points out Enchi's allusions to the mythology of the West combined with traditional themes from the mythos of premodern Japan point to her concern about the idea of lost youth as she faces the process of aging and its accompanying physical limitations.

27. Terry Kawashima, *Writing Margins: The Textual Construction of Gender in Heian and Kamakura Japan*, 130.
28. Jennifer R. Waelti-Walters, *Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination* (Albans: Eden Press, 1982), 5.
29. Many scholars note that Enchi is not a feminist writer, but she describes the suppressed sexuality or subconscious lust of her female characters with the liberating power of spirit possession and other supernatural phenomena. "Enchi depicts a woman who has changed into an evil spirit unconsciously. After her beloved son's death, her hidden passion, which had been long repressed as she played the role of a good wife and wise mother, emerges and rages out of control." Junko Umemoto, "An Experiment in Gendered Reading: Enchi Fumiko's 'A Bond for Two Lifetimes—Gleanings'," in *Comparative Literature Studies* 47, no. 3 (2010): 370.
30. Fumiko Enchi, "The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers," 164.
31. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 77–78.
32. Fumiko Enchi, "The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers," 163.
33. *Ibid.*, 164.
34. *Ibid.*, 165.
35. *Ibid.*
36. The widow of her former lover enclosed a note when she sent the letters to the narrator: "Please look at the pressed flowers, now faded, that you sent from Nikko and Kamakura during your summer vacation. They were keepsakes of my late husband." See, Enchi, 165.
37. *Ibid.*, 167.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. In the Meiji period, the prevailing ideology of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) confined women's role to the home, where "they had neither a place to exercise their freedom and individuality nor an opportunity to apply their knowledge and ability to life outside the home." See, Mariko Inoue, "Kiyokata's Asasuzu: The Emergence of the Jogakusei Image," *Monumenta Nipponica* 51, no. 4 (1996): 433.
41. *Ibid.*, 434.

42. Sarah Frederick, "Not That Innocent: Yoshiya Nobuko's Good Girls," in *Bad Girls of Japan*, eds. Laura Miller and Jan Bardsley (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 68–69.
43. Fumiko Enchi, "The Old Woman Who Eats Flowers," 167.
44. *Ibid.*, 166.
45. *Ibid.*, 165.
46. *Ibid.*, 163.
47. Masuko Honda, "The Genealogy of Hirahira: Liminality and the Girl," trans. T. Aoyama and B. Hartley, in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. T. Aoyama and B. Hartley (New York: Routledge, 2010 [1982]), 37.
48. Honda, *Ibid.*, 37.
49. Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity* (New York: Routledge and Taylor & Francis, 1995), 73.
50. *Ibid.*, 53.

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Mediating *Otome* in the Discourse of War Memory: Complexity of Memory-Making Through Postwar Japanese War Films

Kaori Yoshida

[W]e must remember that on the screen we see not the events themselves ... but selected images of those events.¹

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Seventy years after the end of WWII, the war is often conceived as a distant event to many people, yet it is undoubtedly “part of our everyday discourse” in “ideological, political, and academic debates.”² In fact, the way in which nations understand or commemorate the war has constantly sparked political controversies. WWII “retains its grip on memory and myth,”³ and is consistently being (re)articulated by means of memorials, museums and popular media, in accordance with specific socio-political contexts. What we “know” about the war has therefore

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been heavily informed by narratives constructed in popular media, as much as (or rather than) information acquired by direct transmission from those who were there.

As many critics have pointed out, war-related narratives in post-war Japan have served to (re)inscribe the notion of Japan as a victim of WWII, which is ensured by the feminization of the war narrative.⁴ This style of gendered narrativization not only downplays Japan's aggression during the period, but also simplifies the complex processes and contexts that led to the war.

Given the fluctuation of gender portrayals in war narratives through popular media, it is intriguing to further investigate this continuous feminization of the war narrative. There has been an unwritten rule in Japan that live action war films, unlike comics and novels, should avoid presenting human (actors') bodies with grotesque injuries or scars, in order to avoid potential prejudice against bomb victims.⁵ Thus, (anti-war) messages and the impact of the devastating aftermath of the war have been conveyed symbolically through the *shōjo* characters, particularly *genbaku otome* (A-bomb maidens), who are directly or indirectly affected by radiation sickness.

Considering the significant role of war films in solidifying a gendered war narrative, it is worth investigating how a particular type of female character operates to impact Japan's collective memory. It should also be pointed out that previous research on war narratives in popular media, particularly in media and cultural studies, has largely focused on the content and the context of film texts.

This chapter aims to demonstrate how the gendered war narrative constituted by postwar Japanese films, through particular manifestations of girls, contributes to the articulation of a victimized public war memory and national amnesia. Discussions here do not only resort to a rhetorical or semiotic and discourse analyses of the chosen films, but also examine the operation between viewer's body and the text (rhetoric), as well as among the viewers, which enables war narratives to circulate long after the film has ended. This approach significantly relies on the affective turn in the field of media studies: a response to the post-structuralist, overly discourse-oriented views. My study is based on the idea that everything in the *mise-en-scène* and narrative do not only prompt cognitive interpretation, but also generate something pre-conscious, or what is called affect.

Certainly film-viewing is far more complicated than either thoughtless consumption or active secondary production.⁶ This chapter focuses on the subjecting aspect of the viewer, with the assumption that the (subjected) viewer responds to and collaborates with the film text as well as with other viewers, rather than seeing the viewer as the implied subject whom the film theoretically addresses, as apparatus theory tends to assume.

This study examines two specific films, *Ai to shi no kiroku* (A Record of Love and Death, 1966) and *Yumechiyo nikki* (The Diary of Yumechiyo, 1985). Both films star Sayuri Yoshinaga, an actress who epitomizes purity and chastity, playing a *genbaku otome*, a young woman suffering from A-bomb disease in Hiroshima, being tossed about by her boyfriend. It is worth noting that the first film was produced during the golden period of A-bomb-themed narratives in popular media, while the second was produced in the period when the A-bomb was so controversial that it was conveniently used as a dramatization tool in popular narratives.

WAR FILMS AND THE DISCOURSE OF WAR: A FORCE FOR GENDERING THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY

With respect to Hollywood cinema, war films in the 1980s can be regarded as an attempt to “remasculate American culture,”⁷ suggesting that male characters were being presented as they were in order to instill a nostalgic sense of masculinity. This remasculinization stemmed from the sense the American man had been emasculated by the inevitable loss in the Vietnam War.⁸

Media representations of war contribute significantly to the historicizing of the (nation’s) past, wherein memories are fetishized and “notions of national, gendered, ethnic and racial identities” are consolidated.⁹ That is to say, our memories are not composed merely of what we experience, but are shaped by information acquired from various sources.¹⁰ As one of these sources, films, with their combination of fiction and fact, have a strong impact, one which causes both postwar and older generations to be “immersed in war-movie clichés” with respect to WWII.¹¹ The war film genre, with its specific stereotyping and archetypal plotting of hero and victim, is capable of continuously influencing the understanding of previous wars.¹²

Many scholars, mainly examining Hollywood war films, have pointed out the changes in gender portrayals in the war film genre over time; for instance, masculinity in recent war films is no longer confined to the hyper-masculine hero.¹³ Gabbard and Luhr verify the shift in the representation of femininity and masculinity in the war film genre, according to social presumptions of these terms.¹⁴ They suggest that the conventions of this film genre in terms of gender representation, whether visually or narratively, shift according to the notion of femininity and masculinity situated in ever-changing socio-political contexts. These observations indicate that the war film genre could bring to light the intimate interplay between a society's view toward war and its gender perception.

Waging war is often associated with the masculine, though the association is fabricated, and thus war discourse devalues women and femininity. Recurring manifestations of the typical role of women in war narratives through popular media—mother and wife on the home front—tend to reinforce the neglect or segregation of females in war discourse.¹⁵ In this respect, war narratives saturated throughout popular media are a “hypergendered” site, wherein men must prove their masculinity through their willingness to kill, die for the motherland, and abide by rigid gender roles, power and control, while women necessarily play a passive role.¹⁶ Thus, the fictional (or mediated) world does not merely offer temporary entertainment, but it extensively acts on the subject formation or socialization of viewers.¹⁷

THE A-BOMB NARRATIVE IN POSTWAR JAPANESE POPULAR MEDIA

The discourse of war in postwar Japan has been shaped significantly through various popular media such as manga and films. With regard to the A-bomb narrative in postwar Japan, Masashi Ichiki, in his study of war manga from 1945 to the 2000s, emphasizes the attribution of the content of such manga to the social perception of the war.¹⁸ According to Ichiki, the period between 1954 and 1973 is viewed as the golden age of the A-bomb manga, a period which includes remarkable anti-nuclear movements protesting nuclear experiments around the world.¹⁹ These movements have advocated the view of nuclear weapons as a social evil. For instance, as Ichiki points out, the impact of *Barefoot Gen*, whose serialization started in 1973, has shattered the ignorant and romantic

imagination that validates the interpretation of the atomic bombings as a *natural* disaster, and by the 1980s and 1990s the A-bomb was considered too socially and politically controversial a topic, inappropriate for entertainment. At the same time, atomic bombs were treated also “as convenient materials to dramatize their stories,” and indeed a number of manga concerning atomic bombs and their victims were produced in this era.²⁰

Meanwhile, associating women with war or militarism has gradually developed in Japan since the 1970s until now. Women’s experiences of war began to be talked about openly in the 1980s, when female political activists and the leaders of feminist movements attempted to engage in politics as “primary citizens,” while placing themselves in the discourse of war (and militarism).²¹ Certainly, “men are not the only propagators of such [belligerent] masculinities”: women can perform them, too.²² What makes the matter rather complex lies in the fact that placing women in the war discourse involves more than a discussion of gender equality; it can lead to the issue of their war responsibility.

SYNERGY OF GENDERING AND VICTIMIZING OF THE WAR NARRATIVE

The tragedy of the atomic bombs has been certainly the core and a distinctive element of war rhetoric in postwar Japan, in which national feminization and victimization combined have conveniently shielded the country from both domestic and international censure for wartime aggression, while the nation’s masculine pride has been somewhat secured. Hiromi Mizuno, focusing on the Japanese context, contends that war fiction often demonstrates gendered national desires,²³ which highlight masculinity to normalize asymmetrical gender relations through the “signifying system of masculine-feminine differentiations.”²⁴ According to Mizuno and others,²⁵ the more a nation (and its masculine aspect) is threatened, the more intensive the manifestation of masculinity becomes in popular media. Japan since the early postwar period has been “feminized” by its pacifist constitution, as well as by its reliance on the United States for protection since its defeat in WWII.²⁶ It is thus reasonable to assume that popular media express a desire for masculinity which can be preferred to the situation of the nation. What is intriguing about this manifestation in the context of postwar Japan is that gendering in

war discourse operates in the form of (hyper)feminization through the nation-as-victim narrative, which necessarily contains masculinizing or patriarchal intentions.

The mediated articulation and perpetuation of collective war memory in postwar Japan, or what John Dower calls a way of “embracing ... defeat,” is gendered in a quite distinct manner.²⁷ The (hyper)feminization, by means of popular media, can be meticulously intertwined with the victimization of the nation, which is mainly manifested to the outside world, while prompting the recovery of a strong masculinity within Japan as well as toward the outside. Narrativizing the previous war effectively serves the synergetic effect of victimization, feminization, and the work of “face-protection” of the nation.²⁸

The view of Japan as the victim of WWII has been consolidated by the desires of postwar Japan through various media. For instance, Christopher Barnard, examining narratives and language used in Japanese history textbooks, has identified the ideology of irresponsibility and of face-protection as skillfully encoded in the texts.²⁹ He argues that victimization may justify the obliteration of the atrocities Japan committed during the war, while upholding national pride—a sign of masculinity. According to Barnard, the act of saving face through embracing defeat is crucial in Japan where the harmony of the group is vital, and shame and honor are the primary elements that determine cultural acceptance or rejection.³⁰ In this scenario, reluctance to admit a mistake is the key to maintaining a good self-image in the eyes of others. Instead, the materialization of the image of Japan as courageous, sacrificing and long-suffering is crucial to maintain its dignity.

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have certainly contributed to the image of postwar Japan as a peace-loving, harmless nation subjected to overwhelming victimization.³¹ Domestic knowledge of Japan’s war history has been largely mediated through various materials including films, books, guidebooks, museums and monuments, which have often encapsulated Japan’s wartime actions and experiences in a narrative of victimization. War-related popular media in postwar Japan have assisted in (re)inscribing the Japan-as-victim narrative, which is ensured particularly by victimizing women.³² The following section introduces the concept of *otome* (maiden)—a fantasized form of *shōjo*—as a potential vehicle that demonstrates the way in which feminization of the war narrative is entangled with the evocation of victim consciousness.

AFFECTING THE INSIDE/OUTSIDE OF THE NARRATIVE WORLD: DISCURSIVE SUBJECT FORMATION OF VIEWERS

Every evening many millions of people sit and experience human destinies, characters, feelings and moods of every kind with their eyes, and without the need for words.³³

Films generate an illusion endorsed by “diegetic effect” that is difficult for viewers to resist.³⁴ This effect, founded upon movements on the screen, allows viewers to experience the fictional space as their physical environment, giving them a “strong impression of reality.”³⁵ This observation, while explaining the impact of film texts on the viewer, neither reveals what elements make it difficult for film viewers to resist the diegetic effect, nor elaborates on the process or the mechanism which involves viewers in the articulation of collective memory. In discussing the formation of popular war memory through media, it is important to take into account not only the narrative representation (as a rhetorical text), but also the way the narrative permeates consciousness to create an impact among viewers, leading to the collective memory.

While the rhetorical approach to films has often concentrated on texts and contexts, discussing how they move and influence viewers in symbolic and cognitive terms, there has also been recent investigation into how rhetoric moves us at a *bodily* level. According to Mark Johnson, “a person is a certain kind of bodily organism that has a brain operating within its body, a body that is continually interacting with aspects of its environments in an ever-changing process of experience.”³⁶ Mind and body are thus not separate independent entities, but interconnected “aspects of the flow of organism-environment interactions that constitutes [bodily] experience,”³⁷ on which meanings are grounded. Our bodies literally *feel* a media text; interactions between the body and the media text, along with the viewing context, enable us to make meaning of the text.

Taking this view a step further, I attempt to use the concepts of affect and emotion in order to demonstrate the permeation process of war film texts (or narratives) among viewers, which leads to the shaping of feminized collective war memory.

Brian Massumi’s concept of affect, as an alternative perspective to the post-structuralist approach overemphasizing the discursive and representational dimensions of image reception, is useful to the present study, as it highlights its non-conscious nature.³⁸ In his view, affect is

“registered on the body before it can be engaged by the intellect,” and it adds intensity to unconscious sensory experiences.³⁹ This quality of affect suggests how cinema has come to be one of the most powerful forms of mass communication.⁴⁰ While interacting with its material surroundings, the body experiences various energies and intensities through “sense data,” including sights, sounds and tastes that produce affects.⁴¹ This view is essential to understanding the impact of bodily or sensory experiences such as film viewing.

While Massumi’s view of affect is an intriguing way of looking at the reception process of visual materials, it fails to recognize cultural and historical dimensions, which are vital to explain how the individual viewer’s reception of texts like war films is linked to the *collective* domain. These dimensions are also “crucial in collective memory, which is always produced at the intersection of the personal world of affect and larger social and historical factors.”⁴² Thus, I incorporate Sara Ahmed’s concept of affect, which emphasizes cultural and historical aspects.⁴³

What is also beneficial in Ahmed’s work on affect is the idea of inseparability of emotion from affect, in explaining the operation of linking between the individual and the collective. Unlike Massumi who defined emotion as personal and affect as pre-personal, Ahmed stresses the “sociality of emotion,” which refers to the movement of emotion that circulates between bodies in the public domain.⁴⁴ She goes on to assert that “[r]ather than locating emotion in the individual or the social, we can see that emotionality ... involves an interweaving of the personal with the social, and the affective with the mediated.”⁴⁵ This view suggests that, along with sympathetic narratives, emotion, not being self-contained, has the potential to transmit an individual’s pre-cognitive response to filmic presentation into the collective domain—a shared memory.

Taking on Ahmed’s view of affect, Rumi Sakamoto’s study of images of fallen soldiers (mainly kamikaze pilots) at Yūshūkan, the museum attached to Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, demonstrates the crucial role of affect in mobilizing the public as the national subject into patriotic history through viewing.⁴⁶ According to Sakamoto, the image of the kamikaze pilots appeals to the postwar generation of Japanese in an affective and sub-discursive mode of communication that is composed of the shrine’s rhetorical elements. Examining the trope of the tragic hero and the aesthetics of self-sacrifice presented in the museum exhibits, catalogue and so forth, she recognizes the images of kamikaze pilots as emotionally evocative enough to link to a shared memory.

Sakamoto argues that the coded kamikaze at the museum or in related materials is an “idealized image, from which historical and political details” and their violent deaths are stripped away.⁴⁷ She asserts that stories and images of war heroes need to be both glorified (fantasized) and personalized to effectively spark affective energy among viewers. These images function effectively in tandem with the narrative trope of tragic heroes and their noble deeds, which have been reiterated in various Japanese popular media.⁴⁸ According to Sakamoto, the named emotion of gratitude to the war dead directs visitors into national subjects, aligning individuals with the national body by linking them vertically with past generations, as well as horizontally with others who share such a feeling. Consequently, the viewers, constantly exposed to represented images of kamikaze pilots, are likely to be drawn strongly to those cultural codes with affective capacity, rather than to the actuality of kamikaze.⁴⁹ Although Sakamoto is not a film studies scholar, her study sheds light on the cultural process of collective memory construction through visual texts, by showing that “emotions align individuals with the nation.” Her account for the workings of “emotionality” of the text is a good reference point for my study of collective memory mediated by war films.⁵⁰

Incorporating Ahmed’s view of emotion and affect, this study asserts that affect, generated as a non-conscious phenomenon, prompts emotion circulated between viewing bodies by means of *otome* as a conduit of affect, which may lead to the construction of feminized collective war memory. The following sections, along with the rhetorical analysis, reveal the mechanism(s) with which the discourse of the A-bomb mobilizes viewers in postwar Japan through the operation of affect, by examining two specific postwar Japanese war films.

MEDIATING *OTOME* IN *THE DIARY OF YUMECHIYO*
AND *A RECORD OF LOVE AND DEATH*: THE AFFECT MECHANISM
IN HYPER-FEMINIZED VICTIMIZATION

*A-bomb Otome, Yumechiyo and Kazue: Nostalgia Tool
for Depoliticization*

The hyper-gendered category of war films can be characterized by emphasis on masculinity (“hyper-masculinity”) or by accentuated femininity (“hyper-femininity”). As mentioned above, the process of articulating and

perpetuating the collective war memory in postwar Japan is quite distinct, in that the hyper-feminization in particular is effectively intertwined with the victimization of the nation. Intentionally or unintentionally, Japanese war films uniquely serve the intertwined ideologies of “irresponsibility” and “face-protection” through hyper-feminization.⁵¹ That is, hyper-feminization of the war narrative serves to save the face of or maintain the pride of the nation.

Meanwhile, victim consciousness ensured by hyper-feminized war narratives involves the romanticization of war victims, which simplifies and depoliticizes Japan’s war experience as a whole, as well as evoking affect. One of the most effective means for the romanticization of the war or its horror is the *genbaku otome*, the A-bomb maiden, who often appears in postwar Japanese (anti-)war films. The term *otome* “traditionally refers to an unmarried girl, and it invokes the ideal of her femininity and virginity.”⁵² *Otome*, while sharing many features with the concept of *shōjo*, sounds to the contemporary Japanese public rather classic and outdated, due to the nostalgic feeling it evokes: *otome* has become aligned with the “traditional” in Japanese society, in contrast with modern (rebellious) girls.⁵³ *Otome* is therefore embodied through a typically conventional type of female character in both *The Diary of Yumechiyo* (hereafter *Yumechiyo*) and *A Record of Love and Death* (hereafter *Love and Death*).

Yumechiyo tells the story of the last six months in the life of a geisha who, having been affected by the A-bomb while still in utero, develops leukemia at the age of thirty. The film begins with the hospital scene where Yumechiyo is told that she has only six months left to live. A typical *A-bomb otome*, Yumechiyo, taking in her condition stoically, is determined to dedicate her remaining life to her profession and taking care of her protégées. Meanwhile, she falls in love with Mr. Munakata, an actor who comes to her village to perform with his troupe. Although she finds out that he is a murder suspect, Yumechiyo remains loyal to him, helping him hide from the police. While Munakata initially refuses her affections, she maintains her love for him. As soon as the two characters finally confess their love to each other, Yumechiyo’s condition dramatically deteriorates. In the last moments of her life, Yumechiyo, in her bed, surrounded by her protégées, is still sweet enough to thank everybody for having been kind to her.

Love and Death (1965) is a similarly tragic love story. One morning Kazue is almost knocked over by a motorbike driven by Yukio. The two immediately develop a relationship. Meanwhile, Mr. Iwai, his

foster father, is concerned to discover that Yukio is in love, as he suffered radiation poisoning when he was four years old, and has started showing symptoms. One day Yukio faints from anemia, and a few days later reveals his secret to Kazue, who passionately reassures him. When he is hospitalized, Kazue visits him every day to take care of him until he dies. Shortly after Yukio's death, she commits suicide to be with him forever.

Otome-ness is emphasized through different depictions of femininity in *Yumechiyo*, which are juxtaposed between the traditional figure of the heroine and some of her protégées, including one who works as a stripper, another who works as a nude model, and another who commits adultery with a married man to conceive his child. Yumechiyo, who is unmarried, constantly cares for her quasi-family (her protégées and Mr. Munakata), highlighting her purity and non-sexuality. Related to this observation is Kunimitsu Kawamura's conceptualization of the term from a gender perspective, wherein the *otome* is understood to exist only in media fantasy and to evoke nostalgia. He goes on to add that the *otome* might be only a territory of men's imagination.⁵⁴ The fantastical nature of the *otome* in *Yumechiyo* and *Love and Death* indeed appears in the imaginations of the male characters. The last scene of *Yumechiyo* is a long shot of the handcuffed Munakata, who is imagining Yumechiyo wearing a beautiful kimono and dancing to a traditional tune, against a backdrop of falling cherry blossoms. Similarly, in *Love and Death*, Kazue in a pure white dress that sways in the breeze appears in Yukio's imagination at his deathbed, as the typical *otome* figure—gently smiling at him.

Accompanying this ideologically gendered nostalgia brought about by the *otome*, the coded image of the *A-bomb otome*, in particular, functions as an effective tool to depoliticize war experiences, even undermining the effects of nuclear power. This depoliticization can be seen in the (over) glorification and romanticization of bomb-related illness and suffering.⁵⁵ The *A-bomb otome* depicted on the screen in an idealized fashion, with the historical and political details stripped away, would generate Ahmed's concept of affect, which is in turn materialized into emotion (pain and sympathy) to circulate throughout the public, linking the individual and the collective.

In both *Love and Death* and *Yumechiyo*, the mechanism of glorification works to link the beauty of conventional and fragile femininity to fatal illness—another trope of melodrama that invokes a sense of nostalgia. In one scene in *Yumechiyo*, the heroine Yumechiyo, alone in her room, is driven by an urge to take a photograph of herself before her

beauty is snatched away by leukemia; this is swiftly followed by another shot where she collapses into tears. Her fragility, represented by her tears, pure white skin, and skinny body in a simple kimono, coupled with this calm and mature woman bursting into tears, would powerfully appeal to the viewer's emotion. The absence of music further strengthens the seriousness of her condition and the solemnity of the scene.

The idealization of female beauty, attached to fragility and pureness, is constantly reinforced verbally, as in this remark by one of Yumechiyo's protégées: "Everyone comes to love [Yumechiyo]. ... Her body is becoming more translucent day by day." This "translucent whiteness" coded in the heroine's clothes in *Love and Death* too functions as a means to convey a sense of purity, affection and selfless dedication.

Furthermore, this way of glorifying the war and its suffering may neglect the heroines' subjective experiences of suffering, leaving very little space for the victims to express themselves. Yumechiyo never gets to tell her own story to Munakata, instead using all of her remaining energy to listen and make love to him until she finally collapses. On her deathbed Yumechiyo asks her friends to burn her diary—the only authentic record of her life. There is no record left of her life and her agonizing experiences caused by the war. The A-bomb maiden is without her own voice.

Japan's war memory appears to be feminized in that it primarily emphasizes victimization to save the nation's face; meanwhile, the actual mechanism of memory-making within the country operates in a rather masculine manner, harking back to Kawamura's view of the *otome* as existing only in men's imaginations.⁵⁶ Yumechiyo may be remembered by Mr. Munakata in jail; however, her actual experiences of the war will never be known by anyone. And if they happen to be revealed in any way, they will be narrated through his mouth and his imagination.

The way in which the myth of A-bomb *otome* is articulated symbolizes the popular sentiments of postwar Japan.⁵⁷ Todeschini, examining images of young female A-bomb survivors in *Yumechiyo* and *Black Rain* (1989, directed by Shōhei Imamura), suggests the intimate tie between gender perception and the portrayal of A-bomb suffering, in forming a Japanese collective memory.⁵⁸ Her discussion does not adequately reveal how the A-bomb *otome* is tied to a collective war memory beyond the text.

The permeation of affect is also considerably aided by casting. In both films, the empathy attached to suffering is aesthetically embodied through the performance of the actress Sayuri Yoshinaga. Since her debut in film in 1959, Yoshinaga has been idolized as a symbol of

feminine beauty and pureness in postwar Japan. She has been consistently ranked as one of the women most desired as a girlfriend or wife for Japanese men. For this reason, no matter what character she plays, romanticization and a sense of sympathy are easily evoked among viewers, particularly her male fans. The fandom of Yoshinaga is quite distinctive, in that her avid admirers, called “Sayurists,” dedicate their lives to watching over her growth.⁵⁹ In *Love and Death*, the character of Yoshinaga, Kazue, is nicknamed “Bambi”—the epitome of cuteness and vulnerability. She is the perfect image of the A-bomb *otome* who appeals to affect to link the personal to the public.

Yoshinaga’s on-screen acting, with her body encoded as perfect pureness, has the potential to turn something incomprehensible or complex into something explicable or simple, without logical explanation. Citing TV and radio critic Nobuo Shiga, Ishikawa states that Yoshinaga’s melancholic persona in war films, overlapped with the people’s sorrow in bombed Japan, has effectively evoked “sublimed sentimentalism” specific to Japan and has raised sympathy among her audiences in postwar Japan.⁶⁰ This sentimentalism, through simplifying the complexities of war experiences and appealing to the pre-conscious, may effectively penetrate Japanese viewers, to mobilize them toward upholding victim consciousness. Yoshinaga, with her magnetic performance and her fragile-looking body, is the ideal actress to link individual viewers to these national sentiments, by embodying the national narrative of Japan as the victim of the atomic bombing. Through film viewing, individual viewers’ sorrows become Japan’s collective or shared sorrow.

In *Yumechiyo*, Yoshinaga as the A-bomb maiden evokes empathy among the viewers and affects them through the combination of the two sides of the character she plays—pathetic victim, but also stoic heroine resistant to suffering, with “typically womanly spiritual and psychological virtues.”⁶¹ Her act of Yumechiyo potentially generates affect among viewers merely by demonstrating the spiritual strength that tirelessly serves her (quasi-)family or community as a “good daughter” or a substitute mother. Thus, in *Yumechiyo*, understanding the significance of the event—the death creeping toward Yumechiyo—is the basis of empathic emotion.

Sympathy is the major element in the film’s controlling force of viewers’ perceptions of events. In *Love and Death* the depiction of the heroine Kazue’s spiritual dedication in supporting and nurturing her boyfriend Yukio, who is suffering from leukemia, is doubtlessly a source for the invocation of affect among viewers. Here the A-bomb and its

devastating effects on the heroine are necessary tools for melodrama to maximize the impact of this scenario.

When Does the Otome Work Best with Affect?: Melodrama as a Setting for Depoliticization

A melodramatic mode or rhetoric in war films is another crucial element that allows the *otome* to fully exercise her potential of gendering, romanticizing and depoliticizing the war, which effectively permeates and consolidates shared affect. Presence explains the process through which the melodrama genre emotionally moves cinema viewers. Melodrama has been widely used as a pejorative term to denote sensationalism and sentimentality in works deemed absent of artistic merit. Yet, as he argues, the genre of melodrama can also be “a form of exciting, sensational and, above all, moving story.”⁶² Sensationalism and spontaneity indicate the potential of emotionally evocative mood to permeate the pre-conscious of viewers. Both *Yumechiyo* and *Love and Death* contain the three main factors that make melodrama work effectively: love, death and tragic drama, along with the invocation of nostalgia through the *otome*'s innocence and endurance of pain.

In *Love and Death*, there is a visually and aurally powerful scene in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park where Yukio tells Kazue about his personal experience of the A-bomb and his destiny. As much as characters are important as part of the spectacle of a film, the setting, is also significant in enticing affect that connects the viewer to the characters who draw him/her into the actual event. As Andrew Higson argues, “place becomes a signifier for the state of mind of the protagonists,” which can also “be read as spectacle, as a visually pleasurable lure to the spectator’s eye.”⁶³ This scene projects a series of symbols of “Hiroshima” around the two characters; the camera follows as Yukio and Kazue slowly walk in the park, drawing the viewers in, and then faces a monumental inscription—a (personal) outcry of grief and outrage—written by the atomic bomb survivor Sankichi Tōge who died in 1953:

Give back the fathers! Give back the mothers!
Give back the elderly!
Give back the children!
Give me back! Give back the human beings
Connected to me!

*For as long as human beings live on this earth
Give back peace
A peace that will not crumble!*⁶⁴

The scene frames the inscription against Yukio and Kazue, who is edging into him to draw out what has been bothering him, followed by a close-up of the two holding each other tightly.

The scene shifts to the two characters at the foot of the A-bomb Dome and then inside it. It is coupled with shrill, enigmatic music—a major component of the melodramatic mode, which draws the viewers into Yukio’s shattering experience of radiation exposure and continuing pain from atomic bomb disease. Yukio’s emotional recollection of the day of the dropping of the bomb reaches its climax with a close-up image of the A-bomb Dome—the symbol of Japan’s position as victim—in a low-angle shot, a technique used to accentuate the height and authority of the object. Through this visual technique, coupled with the intense music foreshadowing the suffering that Yukio and Kazue will face, the viewers are positioned not only to be reminded of the devastating aftermath of the atomic bombs that many Japanese would share, but also to experience the pain and the helplessness that the two characters are experiencing.

In viewing *Love and Death*, affect is heightened by the melodramatic mode of love and suffering. This process is enhanced by a sharp contrast in the tone before and after the onset of Yukio’s disease. About thirty minutes in, there are scenes of Yukio and Kazue dating, which take place at locations free from any sign of war or disease: a breezy beachside motorbike ride, and a picnic on the beach with conversation about favorite food, as well as romantic talk at a café with dreamy orchestral music. These scenes are markedly distinguished from the latter part of the film through a melodramatic mode. The difference in mood before and after Yukio’s confession is reinforced by a change in music; the first part uses light and swinging music played at the music store where Kazue works, while the latter part features heavy and screeching sounds. Moreover, the fact that Yukio is “contaminated” by A-bomb disease marks a stark contrast to and highlights postwar-born Kazue’s white-clad body, which remains pure and free from radiation contamination.

Personalization, a means for melodrama, is another element of accentuating the work of affect. Melodramatic war films appeal to the viewers in such a way that the bombing and its effects appear to be

natural disasters that accidentally happen to specific individuals (the *otome*). Typically, these films can dilute the political significance of issue related to war and nuclear power, while focusing on the personal aspect and the drama of the suffering heroine. They personalize radiation-related disease in order to turn the political into the personal, which may assist viewers in instinctively reacting to the text.

In the process of personalizing the atomic bombs and the war itself, melodrama again plays a crucial role. As explained above, one of the major effects of the melodrama genre is to make the political personal and also emotional. The emotional then collaborates well with affect to boost viewers' response to film texts at a pre-conscious stage. The most evident operation is manifested in the personalization of A-bomb disease; as if the A-bomb disease befell Japan, through which Yukio and Kazue are tested in their endurance and love for each other.

Both films validate that the atomic bombings are remembered as rather a personal experience of natural disaster, which ordinary people—the viewers—may share and sympathize with, through the constant intercutting of actual scenery in real time (e.g. people gathering at the Peace Park to pray), bringing the personal into the public or collective domain.

Another way of personalizing the political is observed in Yukio's confession that he is a *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivor), a carrier of radiation, to his girlfriend Kazue, in a way that he feels guilty for his disease messing up her life. This completely personalizes both his suffering and the war (or A-bomb)—a political and national experience. Yukio tells Kazue about his happiness being with her and the misery that his "guilt" will bring her. He has been asking himself,

Is it all right that you are involved with a girl? ... You are doing something you are not allowed to do... That guy is inside of me, the radiation!

Kazue, upset then affectionate, responds firmly, grabbing his arms tightly and saying: "The radiation in your body can never stop my love for you." This line perfectly personalizes and romanticizes the A-bomb effects.

The personalization of political concerns related to the A-bomb and the war above is accentuated in the scene of many people praying in front of the monument at the center of Peace Park, which is intercut with a scene at the clinic, where Yukio's foster father is confessing to Yukio's doctor that he feels guilty for the deterioration of Yukio's condition. Here, guilt, the effect of the atomic bombing on Yukio's life, is

placed on his foster father, who has been taking good care of Yukio. This melodramatic narrative serves as what Sakamoto calls a “viscerally evocative and culturally pre-organized” marker,⁶⁵ which appeals to the postwar generation of Japanese viewers as well as those who experienced the war in an affective mode of communication.

CONCLUSION

Rhetorically coded images of the A-bomb *otome* work very effectively as an emotionally evocative marker. This, along with scenes of real time events related to the A-bomb, brings about affect among postwar Japanese viewers, which bridges between their personal feelings for the characters on the screen and shared perceptions leading to the collective memory of WWII across generations.

It is ironic that the success of the A-bomb maiden narrative in foregrounding female survivors in war films has resulted in confining female characters to a passive victim role, which subsequently accentuates the notion of Japan as victim, while overshadowing its position as aggressor. Moreover, a melodramatic woman-centered war narrative does not necessarily give credit to the multiplicity of female victims’ experiences. After all, the A-bomb functions as a form of psychological discipline that contributes to the heroines’ spiritual growth, emphasizing womanly qualities, such as selflessness and self-discipline. As Crawford and Foster point out, the representation of the suffering heroine projects the interplay of the present politics of gender with the ever-shifting national discourse of war memory-making.⁶⁶

In postwar Japan, a woman-centered war film is a means of hyper-feminization practiced to trivialize female experiences and bring the viewer back to a place of nostalgia for idealized femininity. Both films discussed essentialize their *otome* heroines as ahistorical figures in order to keep feeding the viewer a steady stream of nostalgia. The representation of the heroine in effect prevents women’s specific experiences of suffering from coming out. It consolidates the cliché but dominant view that privileges noble heroines suffering quietly, and overshadows those who are bitter about their conditions.

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NOTES

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 19. During this period a Japanese tuna fishing boat was exposed to nuclear fallout on the Bikini Atoll.
 20. Ichiki, "Embracing the Victimhood: A History of A-bomb Manga in Japan," 38.
 21. See, for example, Ryūichi Narita, "Sōsetsu, Sensō to jendā" [Critical Review, War and Gender], in *Kindai nihon no bunkashi 8: Kanjō, kioku, sensō 1935–1955 (2)* [The Cultural History of Modern Japan 8: Emotion, Memory, and War in 1935–1955, vol. 2], eds. Y. Komori, N. Sakai, S. Shimazono, K. Chino, and R. Narita (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002), 1–53; Mikiyo Kanō, "Shiro no gundan 'kokubō fujinkai': Onnatachi no kusanone fashizumu" [White Corps, 'Female National Defense Group': Women's Glass-Roots Fascism], in *Onnatachi no sensō sekinin* [Women's War Responsibility], eds. Y. Okano, K. Hasegawa, S. Watanabe, and Y. Kitada (Tokyo: Tokyodō Shuppan, 2004), 3–17.
 22. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Gosh, Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity," in *Constructing Masculinity*, eds. M. Berger, B. Wallis, and S. Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 13. Gendering in the discourse of war has less to do with innate differences between genders than political intent.
 23. Hiromi Mizuno, "When Pacifist Japan Fights: Historicizing Desires in Anime," *Mechademia* 2 (2007): 104–123. Many scholars have pointed out gendered narratives of different wars; for example, Elshtain discusses WWI, and Enloe discusses the Cold War. See, Jean Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Cynthia Enloe,

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24. Spike V. Peterson, "Gendered Identities, Ideologies, and Practices in the Context of War and Militarism," in *Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspective*, eds. L. Sjoberg and S. Via (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 18.
 25. See, Gates, "Fighting the Good Fight: The Real and Moral in Contemporary Hollywood Combat Film."
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 27. John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1999).
 28. See, Christopher Barnard, *Language, Ideology and Japanese History Textbooks* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003).
 29. Barnard, *Language, Ideology and Japanese History Textbooks*.
 30. See, Crawford and Foster, *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbooks*.
 31. Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
 32. Napier, "No More Words: Barefoot Gen, Grave of the Fireflies, and 'Victim's History'," 163–165.
 33. Béla Balázs, "Visible Man," in *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory: Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, trans. R. Livingstone and ed. E. Carter (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 10.
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42. Rumi Sakamoto, "Mobilizing Affect for Collective War Memory: Kamikaze Images in Yūshūkan," *Cultural Studies* 29, no. 2 (2015): 165.
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44. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004): 8.
45. Ahmed, "Collective Feelings or, the Impressions Left by Others," 28.
46. Sakamoto, "Mobilizing Affect for Collective War Memory: Kamikaze Images in Yūshūkan," 158–184.
47. *Ibid.*, 166.
48. *Ibid.*, 167.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*, 163–164.
51. Barnard, *Language, Ideology and Japanese History Textbooks*, 120.
52. Kazumi Hasegawa, "Falling in Love with History: Japanese Girls' Otome Sexuality and Queering Historical Imagination," in *Playing with the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History*, eds. M.W. Kapell and A.B. Elliott (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 137.
53. Maya Morioka Todeschini, "'Death and the Maiden': Female Hibakusha as Cultural Heroines, and the Politics of A-bomb Memory," in *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film*, ed. M. Broderick (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 224.
54. Kunimitsu Kawamura, *Otome no yukue: Kindai josei imēji no tanjō* [Whereabouts of Otome: The Birth of Modern Female Images] (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 2003), 138.
55. Todeschini, "'Death and the Maiden': Female Hibakusha as Cultural Heroines, and the Politics of A-bomb Memory," in *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film*, ed. M. Broderick (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 235.
56. Kawamura, *Otome no yukue*, 138.
57. Todeschini, "'Death and the Maiden': Female Hibakusha as Cultural Heroines, and the Politics of A-bomb Memory."
58. *Ibid.*
59. The fandom has been phenomenal and in 2008 Victor Entertainment Corporation released a special CD collection, "Sayuri Yoshinaga's Movie Music" with 67 theme-songs of films she has starred in.
60. Ishikawa, "'Yumechiyo nikki' ni okeru genbaku, hakketsubyō, Yoshinaga Sayuri," 34–35.

61. Todeschini, "'Death and the Maiden': Female Hibakusha as Cultural Heroines, and the Politics of A-bomb Memory," 224.
62. Presence, "An Investigation of Affect in the Cinema: Spectacle and the Melodramatic Rhetoric in *Nil by Mouth*," 5.
63. Andrew Higson. "Place, Space, Spectacle: Landscape and Townscape in the 'Kitchen Sink' Film," in *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, ed. A. Higson (London: Cassell, 1996), 134.
64. This poem, written by Sankichi Tōge, was inscribed in the monument located at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. The monumental inscription was placed in 1963.
65. Sakamoto, "Mobilizing Affect for Collective War Memory Kamikaze Images in *Yūshūkan*," 159.
66. See, Crawford and Foster, *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbook*.

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Shōjo in Anime: Beyond the Object of Men's Desire

Akiko Sugawa-Shimada

INTRODUCTION: SHŌJO (GIRLS') ANIME AND MAGICAL GIRLS

Japanese animated films and TV series, generally known as anime, are popular worldwide not only among children, but also adults. Since the early 2000s when anime was greatly disseminated through illegal internet streaming sites overseas, it has been taken for granted that anime is worth being studied socioculturally and aesthetically.¹ As Rayna Denison suggests, “anime needs to be understood more broadly as a cultural phenomenon whose meanings are dependent on context.”²

I will take girls (shōjo), especially magical girls (*mahō shōjo*) in TV anime as the main topic for this chapter. Girls drew a critical attention in Cultural Studies in the 1970s. McRobbie (1978) examined the fashion magazine *Jackie* and analyzed how representations of young women in fashion magazines were connected to the constructions of identities and femininity of girl readers.³ Compared to print media, relatively less academic attention was paid to representations of girls on TV dramas, but

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Moseley (2002) first analyzed witch girls in fantasy TV and films in the USA and UK to find out how magical transformation facilitated the construction of girl viewers' femininity.

The Japanese term *shōjo* is often translated as a girl in English, but the Japanese word conveys “more specific connotation.”⁴ In Japanese pop culture, it carries the images of “female pureness, virginity, vulnerability, romanticism, and nostalgia”⁵ as well as sexuality and vulgarity. There are roughly two opposite discourses about the image of *shōjo* in Japanese pop culture; one is hyper-sexualized girls mainly consumed by adult men, and the other is idealized girls as a role model with the emphasis of purity, innocence, but having agency mainly consumed by girls.⁶ In the former, since the first domestic TV anime series aired in Japan in 1963, girl characters in anime have often been represented as vulnerable creatures who need to be protected by male protagonists; or as hyper-sexualized objects of heterosexual male desires; or as fearful beings who are, in the sense elucidated by Julia Kristeva, “abjected.”⁷ While many scholarships have studied such representations of *shōjo* in anime as objects of male desire (e.g. Saitō 2001, 2006; Galbraith 2014), representations of girls in anime appreciated and consumed by girls themselves have not yet been fully examined.⁸

Napier suggests that powerful young girls, such as the protagonists of *Sailor Moon* (1992–1997) in the 1980s and the 1990s, surely facilitated empowerment and offered alternatives to stereotypical images of Japanese girls who are submissive and obedient.⁹ As Napier argues, the *Sailor Moon* series impacted female audiences globally, subverting the stereotypical images of young female characters in anime to the extent that the sailor warriors fight against their villains by themselves. However, such powerful heroines appealing to female audiences existed in Japan long before the 1990s. One of the most popular types for girls aged around three to ten years is the *mahō shōjo* (magical girl). *Mahō shōjo* is one of the largest genres of Japanese anime. It was first featured as a lead in anime for little girls in 1966. As this genre developed, anime for teenagers and adult men also used *mahō shōjo* in very different narratives from the one used in anime for little girls. In this chapter, I will primarily explore *mahō shōjo* anime for little girls, and in order to examine the effect of representations of idealized *mahō shōjo* in anime for little girls, I will analyze some opposing images of *mahō shōjo* in anime for young adult men.¹⁰

Drawing on images of Western-style witches and witchcrafts, *mahō shōjo* in anime for girls are usually represented as fashionable cute

witches who solve children's daily problems with their magical powers. Sally in *Mahō tsukai Sarii* (Sally the Witch, 1966–1968), a princess of the Magic Kingdom, comes to the human world (Japan) to challenge Japanese gender norms in the 1960s. Meg in *Majokko Megu-chan* (Meg the Little Witch, 1974–1975), a candidate for witch queen, comes to the human world for training. She showed female sexuality as positive female power in the 1970s. Yū in *Mahō no tenshi Kuriimii Mami* (Magical Angel Creamy Mami, 1983–1984) is an ordinary girl who enjoys her adult self as a popular singer, Creamy Mami, with the use of magical power. Her representation exemplifies *kawaii* (childlike cute) femininity as female power in the 1980s.

Although these protagonists use their magical power basically to solve daily problems in their neighborhoods, the main theme was shifted to fighting and makeover with the *Bishōjo senshi Seiraa Mūn* (*Sailor Moon*) series in the 1990s. Magical transformations, makeovers, dressing up, and fighting have been emphasized in representations of magical girls, addressing strength and beauty as well as gender conflicts. In the 2010s, two different traits have been surfaced in the magical girl anime not for little girls but for teenagers and adults (both men and women): (1) the trope of *yuri* relationship,¹¹ or female passionate friendship, is effectively used to challenge gender norms associated with shōjo, namely, pureness and virginity, and (2) representations of magical “boys” as a parody of the magical girls trope.

This chapter will first attempt to classify the representations of mahō shōjo in two kinds of anime programs broadcast from the early 1960s to the early 2010s and targeted at two different age and gender groups. One is anime broadcast on Sunday morning and daytime time slots for mainly little girls. The specific mahō shōjo anime for little girls I examine are: *Sally the Witch*, *Himitsu no Akko-chan* (The Secret of Akko-chan, 1969–1970), *Meg the Little Witch*, *Magical Angel Creamy Mami*, the *Sailor Moon* series (1992–1997), and the *Purikyua* series (*Pre-cure*, since 2004) because they obtained the constant high audience rating.¹² The other is the evening or late-night mahō shōjo anime for young (male) adults, for instance, the *Mahō shōjo ririkaru Nanoha* series (Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2015); *Mahō shōjo Madoka magika* (Puella Magi Madoka Magica, 2011); the *Fate/kaleid liner Prisma Illya* series (since 2013); and *Mahō shōjo ikusei keikaku* (Magical Girl Raising Project, 2016). Focusing on magical girl anime for girls, the chapter will explore how the representations of girls in anime for little girls

interrelate with merchandizing, and how both of these aspects of anime serve to construct concepts of female identity and femininity for female audiences. Finally, by analyzing magical boys who parody mahō shōjo in *Binan kōkō chikyū bōeibu rabu!* (Handsome High School Earth Defense Club Love!, 2015 and 2016), I argue that the trope of mahō shōjo has often been parodied in the 2010s, providing a type of possible male femininity and subverting hegemonic gender norms.

TECHNOLOGY OF MAHŌ SHŌJO (MAGICAL GIRLS) IN JAPAN

In Western visual culture women who use supernatural power (magic or witchcraft) are often represented as witches and/or fairies. In particular, witches are often negatively depicted as aged and ugly evil female subordinates of the Devil in visual media. However, just as in children's films like *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and Disney's animated movies, positive representations of witches and fairies also exist, and are clearly differentiated from negative ones. Good witches are stereotypically beautiful young Caucasian women with blond hair and blue eyes (for example, Glenda, the Good Witch of the North in *The Wizard of Oz*) or well-rounded mother-like fairies (such as the Fairy Godmother in Disney's *Cinderella*, released in 1950). Bad witches are often dark-skinned ugly old women, who are to be punished and ruined at the end (a good example is Miss Almira Gulch, the Evil Witch of the East in *The Wizard of Oz* and the Evil Queen in Disney's 1937 *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*).

As the TV age gained momentum in the 1960s, negative connotations of witches in Christianity were alleviated by Western norms of female beauty (young, slim, fair-skinned, blonde, blue-eyed, and so on) in popular culture. In this trend, a hit American sitcom, *Bewitched* (ABC, 1964–1972), featured Samantha (Elizabeth Montgomery), a young, Caucasian, blonde, blue-eyed, middle-class housewife-witch. This sitcom was an instant success in the United States as well as in Japan in 1966. In 1953, when Japanese television broadcasting began, the lifestyle depicted in American dramas evoked admiration for the West among Japanese audiences. Thus, a Western-style house, a huge kitchen with a large refrigerator, and a luxury American car became symbols of wealth because they were rarely seen even in urban areas in 1960s Japan.¹³

These attractive features of the witches in *Bewitched* inspired Mitsuteru Yokoyama, the manga artist who created *Tetsujin 28-gō* (Ironman #28, aka *Gigantor*, 1956). At a project meeting, Yokoyama and the staff of

Tōei Dōga (Toei Animation Co. Ltd.) planned to produce an anime series aimed at girls, and created a girl witch protagonist named Sally inspired by Samantha.¹⁴ Since an existing TV family anime series, *Obake no Q-tarō* (Q-tarō the Ghost, 1965–1967)—depicting a comic character similar to Casper the Friendly Ghost¹⁵ and an ordinary human boy named Shōta—was very successful, *Sally the Witch* was plotted as a comedy anime, following Q-taro the Ghost's model.¹⁶ Another possible inspiration was the live-action film featuring a British nanny with supernatural powers, *Mary Poppins* (1964), which was released in Japan in 1965. Her image can be seen in the opening credits of *Sally the Witch*, in which Sally uses her magic, and children drop down from the sky with umbrellas.

EXAMPLE 1: SALLY, A WESTERN-ORIENTED CUTE WITCH PRINCESS

With different images of witches and different settings well blended, *Sally the Witch* was produced as an episodic comedy anime. Sally, aged ten, is a legitimate princess of the Magic Kingdom with pale brown hair, large blue eyes with long eyelashes, and a high-pitched voice. One day, she comes down from the sky to the human world (Japan) out of curiosity. With her magic she instantly builds a Western-style house out of a huge tree and materializes a sofa, a table, a tea set, a bed, a dressing table and other daily necessities within. Pretending to be a human girl, Sally goes to an elementary school and makes friends with Yoshiko and Sumire, both also aged ten. Although Sally adjusts to ordinary human life, she secretly uses her magical powers to solve problems and sometimes to punish those who harm her friends and neighborhood, just like a superhero.

Sally, who is both royal and magical, is one of the prototypes in the magical girl genre. She is represented as a fashionable little witch princess. Associated with Western images, her character helps to highlight the Japanese traditional femininity such as submissiveness, obedience, and self-sacrifice of her human friends. Her close friend, Yoshiko, represents just such stereotypical Japanese femininity. As a first-born daughter living with three brothers (triplets) and her father (a taxi driver), her role is to take care of them and do all the domestic chores like cooking, laundry, and cleaning, because her mother is dead. Her family rents an old one-story Japanese-style house. In addition to her father's low income, the renting one-story Japanese house represents a typical working-class lifestyle. Thus, Sally and Yoshiko are positioned in binary opposition: the

West and Japan. Although Sally often criticizes and sometimes gets perplexed about her friends' passive attitude toward male bullies, she eventually compromises with Japanese ways of harmonization, and adjusts to Japanese life.

Gender hierarchy is one of the essential issues in this series. With her magic, Sally often defeats malicious boys, probably one of the most thrilling moments for girl audiences. However, the story ends with her compromising between Japanese- and Western-sense of gender roles. In the final episode, the school is on fire. Sally ultimately sacrifices herself by magically extinguishing the fire in view of her classmates and teachers, a forbidden practice. Even her close friends now fear her, because they realize that Sally is "alien" after all. However, they ultimately understand each other and Sally leaves for her true home, the Magic Kingdom.

In the 1960s, Japan experienced rapid economic growth. Western-style *danchi* (apartment complexes) mushroomed in urban areas to provide low-income workers a small but comfortable residential space with a bathroom. A typical *danchi* apartment consists of two small bedrooms and a living room for two parents and one or two children. The size of apartments facilitated the shift of the family structure from the extended to the nuclear family.¹⁷ The division of labor between men working for a company and women taking care of domestic chores and child-rearing was established back then. In Japanese male-dominated society, the definite division of labor enhanced women's lower social position. In this socio-cultural context, the affirmative and attractive girl protagonist Sally challenged gender norms with her powerful magic. However, she never became masculine. Rather, she attempted to compromise between Japanese traditional femininity and Western femininity. Her attitude could represent how young women had to behave in the 1960s.

EXAMPLE 2: AKKO, AN ORDINARY GIRL WITH MAGICAL TRANSFORMATION POWERS

In the early 1970s another mahō shōjo anime, *The Secrets of Akko-chan* (1969–1970) featured an ordinary human girl, ten-year-old Akko, who is given magical powers by a mirror spirit in reward for a good deed. Akko is an upper middle-class Japanese girl who lives in a two-story Western-style house with white walls and a huge backyard. With her magical cosmetic compact, Akko can transform herself into anything and anybody she wants to become. It should be noted that Akko's transformations are

facilitated by a gadget associated with femininity, a cosmetic compact. Although the manga of the same title that the anime was based on features a man in black who grants magical powers to Akko, it is the beautiful female spirit of the mirror who does so in the anime.¹⁸ The change in role from a suspicious man to a fairy-like woman emphasizes the fact that femininity is passed on from women to girls.

Passing femininity from adult women to young girls, is, however, not simply a reproduction of femininity by women. Mirrors, cosmetic compacts, and transforming are closely associated with magical powers to represent femininity as power. Akko transforms herself into whoever she wants to become: for instance, the beautiful music teacher that pupils admire, the male school principal, an anonymous cat, and a Japanese princess in the eighteenth century. Her absolute magical power of transformation shows crossing borders of gender, age, and even species. Unlike Sally, who is born privileged and superior to human beings, Akko is an ordinary human girl. However, she feels superior to other human girls by the use of her magical device that allows her to possess a secret identity.

Toy merchandise tie-ins with children's anime became gradually popular in the late 1960s and started in earnest in the 1970s.¹⁹ Akko's magical compact toys too were an instant success. They were sold out so quickly that children who were unable to purchase one secretly played with their mothers' real cosmetic compacts.²⁰ For girls, playing with cosmetics at home is one of the most accessible ways to take in a sense of femininity because cosmetics are almost always connected to women. Since *The Secrets of Akko-chan*, mahō shōjo anime for girls have been frequently sponsored by toy companies, which require their products to be used by protagonists as important items in the stories. Unlike in the United States and Europe, advertisements using anime characters during the intermissions of 30-minute TV anime programs are common in Japan.²¹ This makes mahō shōjo anime for little girls look like "twenty-five-minute advertisements for toy merchandise."²²

EXAMPLE 3: MEG, THE 1970s WITCH HEROIN WITH SLIGHT SEXUALITY

When the women's liberation movement was active in 1970s Japan, an aggressive, but cute and slightly sexy witch girl appeared in mahō shōjo anime for girls. The fifteen-year-old Meg in *Meg the Little Witch* (1974–1975) is a Sally-type legitimate witch, who is sent to the human

world to receive education and become the next witch queen candidate in the Magical World. Mami, a senior witch who married a human man, is appointed as her mentor/host mother. Mami casts a spell on her own family (her husband, son, and daughter) to make them believe that Meg is one of them. Throughout the story, Meg is often depicted as an object of male sexual desire. Labi, Mami's son, for instance, often sexually harasses her and peeps her getting undressed in her room. He even takes photos of her in her underwear. In the opening credit of this anime, Chōsan, a male spy from the Magical World, gets excited when peeking at Meg's underwear with binoculars. However, she never becomes a victim of this malicious male gaze; she even counterattacks and punishes male characters who have sexually harassed her.

Another distinctive characteristic of *Meg the Little Witch* is Meg's rival, Non. Because one of them is to be selected as the next queen, Meg and Non always compete in terms of their magical skills, intelligence, attitude, and trouble-shooting abilities. Non is a cool and intelligent witch with long hair, almond-shaped eyes, and blue eye shadow, and she rides in an automobile. Although she is almost always mean to Meg, she sometimes helps her too. In one episode, when Chōsan acts maliciously to Meg, they even collaborate to confront him. This kind of rivalry/friendship between girls was typical of sport anime/dramas in the 1970s. For instance, the anime *Atakku No.1* (Attack No. 1, 1969–1971) and the TV drama *Sain wa V* (The sign is V(ictory), 1969–1970), both about female volleyball players, depict young girls constructing friendship with their teammates and opponents through hardships. However, this theme had rarely been included in magical girl anime. But as women struggled to emancipate themselves from social and gender norms, competition between witch girls could be positively represented where it helped to construct an independent and self-made girl figure in the 1970s.

EXAMPLE 4: YŪ/MAMI, A FASHIONABLE IDOL SINGER/MAGICAL GIRL

In the 1980s, the number of working women increased along with the so-called the “asset-inflated bubble economy” (the economic growth from 1986 to 1991). The Equal Employment Opportunity Law was legislated in 1985, giving women equal rights in the workplace. Women were regarded as important economically, culturally, and politically. In economic terms, young women were considered “good customers”

because the percentage of the disposable income they spent on dining out, clothes, and interior decorating was larger than that spent by young men.²³ Culturally, the heyday of female singers led to the “idol boom”—Seiko Matsuda, Akina Nakamori, Princess Princess, and Onyanko Club appealed to young people. Politically, Takako Doi became the first female leader of the Japan Social Party (JSP) in 1986, and the first ever female leader of a Japanese political party. In 1989, she led the “Madonna whirlwind” (growing public attention to female politicians), allowing female candidates to gain more seats, and JSP’s seats to outnumber the dominant Liberal Democratic Party in the fifteenth Upper House election. As a result, the 1980s was often called the “women’s era.”

In this context, Momo in *Mahō no purinsesu Minkii Momo* (Magical Princess Minky Momo, 1982) and Yū in *Mahō no tenshi Kurimii Mami* (Magical Angel Creamy Mami, 1983–1984) featured girls who could transform into their adult selves. Because they were cute, both drew much attention not only from girl audiences but also from young male viewers. Momo is a Sally type—a legitimate magical princess of the Fenalinas planet who is sent to Earth to restore people’s dreams and hopes. Her magical power is restricted to magical transformation into her adult self. Momo enjoys her secret identity, and experiences the sexuality and physical ability of an adult woman.

Similarly, nine-year-old Yū in *Magical Angel Creamy Mami* is of the Akko type. She is granted a magical power by an extraterrestrial, Pinopino of the Feather Star. The magical power activates only for transformation. As her adult self, Yū is recruited by a producer as an idol singer; as Creamy Mami, Yū instantly becomes a superstar. Like Momo, Yū enjoys her secret identity and sometimes becomes more physically powerful than Yū aged ten because she grows up to be a teenager.

Toys strongly impacted *Magical Angel Creamy Mami*. Because it was created as a Studio Pierrot original anime, unlike other productions in the 1980s, which were often adaptations of manga, one of the sponsor companies, Bandai (a toy company), brought the concept of a toy (Yū’s magic transformation stick) to the studio.²⁴ The pink, heart-shaped magical stick toy that resembles to the one Yū uses in anime became immediately popular among girl audiences.²⁵

However, Yū’s magical transformations challenge the feminine trope of a reward for good deeds given by a female fairy: Yū is granted magical power by an alien. This indicates that magical powers as a special ability to elevate a girl to a higher position are no longer associated with

feminine traits such as care and thoughtfulness. Furthermore, femininity through transformation is no longer passed from female to female, which means that femininity is not reproduced by a female mentor. What Yū learns from her magical transformations is that true femininity is not signified by beautiful physical appearance. She enjoys her adulthood temporarily, but ultimately she discovers that her real self is the most precious of all, saying “Yū is Yū,” (episode 52) in other words: I am who I am.

At the end of their stories, the magical powers of both Momo and Yū disappear. Thus, magical transformations in the 1980s served as a means for girls to express and affirm one’s self, not to perform the femininity that the society expected of women.

EXAMPLE 5: *SAILOR MOON*, FIGHTING MAGICAL GIRL/PRINCESS

The appearance of *Sailor Moon* in the early 1990s surely shifted the direction of mahō shōjo anime. Japanese mahō shōjo (magical girl) protagonists in anime are generally misunderstood by several Western scholars (including Napier 2005 and Rachovitsky 2014²⁶) as “fighting” girl warriors who change dresses through magical transformations. The other characteristics of Japanese magical girl protagonists are magical wands, tiaras, or other gadgets to exercise magical power.²⁷ However, this image of mahō shōjo as fighting girls with magical transformations has been established only in the aftermath of *Sailor Moon* when teams of powerful and cute fighters attracted girls as well as young adult men. It is partly because no other mahō shōjo anime was exported and broadcast on TV overseas prior to *Sailor Moon*. As I mentioned in the introduction, Napier (2005) suggests that *Sailor Moon* challenged Japanese traditional gender norms and showed an alternative female gender role. It is partly true in that the sailor warriors are not the protected but the protectors of the Earth. However, the characterizations of the sailor warriors are quite carefully set up not to radically threaten gender norms in Japan. They are powerful but heterosexual and visually beautiful; that is, they still maintain part of gender norms. Mamoru (Tuxedo Mask) and Usagi (Sailor Moon) were husband/prince and wife/princess in their previous life, and each girl warrior has the episodes about how they committed to love; for instance, boyish Makoto (Sailor Jupiter) and cheerful Minako (Sailor Venus) have experienced unrequited love, intelligent Ami (Sailor Mercury) has a crush on a boy who she is interested in, and psychic Rei (Sailor Mars) always chats about boys.²⁸ The emphasis on the

heterosexuality of the powerful fighting girls serves to alleviate the fear that powerful women are masculinized and threaten traditional gender norms.

The weak connection between female power and masculinization is also assured by representations of mothering in *Sailor Moon*. In *Sailor Moon R* (1993–1994), Usagi and Mamoru encounter Chibi-Usa (Sailor Chibi Moon),²⁹ who turns out to be the daughter of Neo-Queen Serenity and King Endymion, the future Usagi and Mamoru in the thirtieth century. Despite the reluctance of Usagi at first, she finally realizes that Chibi-Usa is someone that she has to rescue and look after. In the final three episodes, Chibi-Usa appears in front of Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Mask as Black Lady in her adult form due to the malicious magical power of the Black Crystal. Black Lady wears a scarlet dress, red pumps with high heels, red lipstick and a lot of makeup, representing excessive female sexuality. Although she attempts to kill Sailor Moon, Sailor Moon turns into Neo-Queen Serenity (Chibi-Usa's mother) to turn her back into a little child. Maternal love thus conquers the evil energy. Thankfully, Chibi-Usa, transformed back into a little girl, returns to Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Mask. In this scene, Chibi-Usa as a little girl descends from the night sky to Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Mask who raise their arms to her, like parents embracing their baby.

Representations of heterosexuality, marriage, reproduction, and mothering of powerful fighting girls facilitated societal acceptance. Due to this factor, representations of the sailor warriors never deviate from traditional gender norms. The story of the anime series ends up with a connotation of happy marriage of Mamoru and Usagi (the royal wedding in the afterlife), a convention of romance. However, the potentiality of positive representations of girls' power and beauty serves to highlight the assertiveness of girl heroines, corresponding to the emerging "girl power" (girls' solidarity and bonds as feminist actions) in the USA and Europe in the 1990s.³⁰

EXAMPLE 6: THE *PRE-CURE* SERIES, FEMALE SOLIDARITY, MOTHERING, AND RESURRECTION OF WITCHES

Mahō shōjo as fighting magical girls continue in the decade-long series, *Pre-cure* (pretty and cure) series (2004–present). Whereas the *Sailor Moon* series is a bildungsroman because the fourteen-year-old protagonists grow to be sixteen in the final series, overcoming the hardships they encounter,

the *Pre-cure* series covers a single year, so the protagonists never really age, and the storylines differ.³¹ The only setting that all the *Pre-cure* series share is the entitlement of Pre-cure, the legendary warrior.³²

In terms of the social context, the 2000s in Japan is often called the “gender equality era.” The legislation of the Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society in 1999 aimed to realize gender equality. “Gender-free education” was encouraged to eliminate any gender discrimination against girls in the educational system and women in the workplace and home. For instance, mixed name lists (class rosters in which all students are listed alphabetically regardless of gender) were introduced in public schools—in the previous system, boys’ names were listed before girls’ names. Takenobu (2009) criticized that this could nurture the idea that men are superior to women.³³

However, the term “gender-free” was misinterpreted as “gender-less” or “no gender,” causing public controversy. The essay magazine *Seiron*, published by rightist newspaper *Sankei Shimbun*, in 2002 featured criticism of feminism and claimed that the notion of “gender free” had to be condemned because it denied traditional femininity and masculinity (*onna rashisa to otoko rashisa*).³⁴ Therefore, the 2000s faced the social dilemma that gender equality was being promoted by a state measure, on the one hand. But, on the other hand, harsh backlash or antipathy against gender equality grew. Accordingly, in 2004, Cabinet Office of the Japanese government suggested the inappropriateness of the term “gender-free.” The Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education soon announced the abolishment of the use of “gender-free” and mixed name lists in public schools in Tokyo, followed by the board of education in other prefectures: Kanagawa in 2004 and Chiba in 2005.³⁵

In this context, the protagonists of the *Pre-cure* series struggle between the meaning of fighting and the maintenance of femininity. The first series, *Futari wa purikyua* (*The Two are Pre-cure*) broadcast in 2004 was an instant success. Its director, Daisuke Nishio, the director of *Dragon Ball* (1984–1989), attempted to include action scenes typical in boys’ anime, and thus the fourteen-year-old protagonists Nagisa (Cure Black) and Honoka (Cure White) fight against the Jaakukingu (Evil King) with their bare hands. Since they wear not the battle-effective costumes but cute dresses with a skirt, jewelry, and an elegant hair style in magical transformation, the gap between fighting style (kan-fu-like style) and feminine costumes. In a manner similar to *Sailor Moon*, heterosexuality is highlighted by Nagisa’s love for an older male friend,

Shōgo, who is Honoka's childhood friend. However, this storyline is merely supplementary. The dominant theme of *Pre-cure* is female homosociality or solidarity.³⁶ Unlike the sailor warriors, who can lean on the Masked Tuxedo, Pre-cure has no male companions to ask for help. One of the most thrilling aspects of this series is that the characters have to shake hands to exercise their magical transformations and magical energy remittance. The unification of girls is emphasized by this feature, which highlights female power without male intervention.

The hybridity of feminine and masculine traits is notable in this series. Nagisa has short hair, thick eyebrows, and dark skin, and is a cheerful, and sociable super-athlete, traits that are often associated with masculinity. But she is very passive about love, which is a feminine trait. In contrast, Honoka has long hair and fair skin, and is good at science, intelligent, and quiet, a mixture of feminine and masculine traits.

The *Pre-cure* series features various girl heroes: multiple girl heroes in a team, girls on Earth and in other worlds, girls and an enemy soldier, and so on. These are action girl heroes, but are inevitably assigned to take care of vulnerable baby-like fairies such as Chiffon in *Fresh! Pre-cure* (2009–2010), Candy in *Smile! Pre-cure* (2012–2013), and Moffrun in *Mahō tsukai purikyua!* (*Mahō Girl Pre-cure!*, 2016–2017). The baby-like creatures to be protected are primarily set for merchandizing purposes.³⁷ In Japan, weekly TV anime series usually consist of 12–13 episodes. One episode lasts thirty minutes, consisting of approximately twenty-two minutes of show and eight minutes of advertisements that often feature the same anime characters seen in the episode. Ads for toys are typically inserted between the first and the second parts of the episode, so audiences are shown, for instance, stuffed animals of Chiffon, Candy, or Moffrun taken care of by girl actors. These toys have built-in recorders and speakers. Girls who have these toys obviously are able to copy how the magical girls they see in fiction raise their baby-like creature in reality. Although some viewers are not interested in playing with these toys, I would argue that copying protagonists' mothering actions can serve to nurture a sense of femininity. In the storylines, protagonists' nurturing of the baby-like creatures serves to emphasize the maternal love of the action girl heroes.

The maternal roles given to the protagonists, as well as their decorative costumes, serve to prevent their masculinization: they are powerful but remain cute and feminine, not radically deviating from Japanese gender norms. This is typically exemplified by *Go! Princess Pre-cure*

(2014–2015), in which the not-particularly-cute protagonist, Haruka (Cure Flora), aged thirteen, trains herself to become an elegant and sophisticated “princess-like” lady at the Noble Academy. As a child, her male friend told her that she would be never able to become a princess because she was ugly. However, she could not give up her dream for becoming an elegant princess. Joined by a popular model, Kirara (Cure Twinkle), also thirteen, and president of the student council, Minami (Cure Mermaid), fourteen, and Towa, the princess of Hope Kingdom, (later she becomes Cure Scarlet), thirteen, Haruka fights against the witch of despair, Dyspear. This evil witch is characterized as a sexy adult woman who raised Towa as her daughter in order to control her. Dyspear wears black dress with red lipstick, representing an evil witch. In the narrative similar to a Disney’s animation film, *Tangled* (2010) based on *Rapunzel* of Grimm Fairy Tale, Towa realized she was raised by the witch, Dyspear, after being kidnapped from Hope Kingdom and was persuaded by Haruka and her brother to fight against her pseudo-mother.

In the battles, the more elegant dresses the Pre-cure warriors put on, the more powerful they become. The Pre-cure warriors and Towa wear evening dresses in their magical transformations by the use of the “dress-up key” and the “princess perfume.” Although these heavy, fluffy, frilly dresses are unsuitable and impractical for battle, becoming elegant—represented as the power of femininity—facilitates their triumphs over the evil witch. The heteronormative representations of the princesses and the mothering aspect seem to contribute to the resurrection of conservative gender norms. However, in *Go! Princess Pre-cure* and the other titles of this series, being feminine through dressing up and mothering are positively represented, challenging hegemonic notions of normative femininity. Mahō shōjo warriors do not have to choose either cuteness/beauty or powerfulness/independence. They can have both, although being still shackled with mothering.

In 2016, the fighting girl heroes were mixed with traditional Western-oriented witch-like magical girls. *Mahō Girl Pre-cure!* revisits the settings of the first *The Two are Pre-cure* (in which two girl protagonists activate their magical powers by shaking hands), blending them with the traits of witches. In this series a human girl, Mirai, thirteen, meets a witch apprentice, Riko, thirteen, who lives in a parallel fantasy world, the Magical World. When she is flying in Mirai’s hometown, Mirai excitedly chases her and ultimately becomes friends. Realizing that Riko is

from the Magical World, Mirai goes to the Magical School to take education with Riko to become a witch, and later in turn, Riko goes to the human's world (called the Non-Magical World) with Mirai to become Mirai's roommate and classmate. The Magical World where Riko resides is represented as a Western city, obviously inspired by the *Harry Potter* film series (2001–2011), whereas the Non-Magical World (the Earth) is represented as Japan. Western fashion is represented by the girls' school uniforms, personal clothing, and fighting costumes when they transform into Pre-cure warriors.

In a manner similar to the protagonists of *Two are Pre-cure*, Mirai (Cure Miracle) and Riko (Cure Magical) have opposite dispositions: Mirai is cheerful, optimistic, and attentive, and Riko is cool, serious, and hesitant to express her true feelings. These different girls have to shake hands to activate their magical transformations and exert magical beams. The unification represents the alliance of opposite worlds. Although friendship between girls of different ethnicities/species was already depicted in *Sally the Witch*, in that series humans never entered the magical world. However, there is no hierarchy between humans and witches in *Mahō Girl Pre-cure!* Both struggle with their inability to manage their magical techniques at school. While going back and forth between the two worlds, they eventually accept each other and are accepted by people in the different worlds: Mirai is accepted by the teachers and students of the Magical School in the Magical World, and Riko by humans in the human world.

Additionally, no heterosexual love affair is involved in *Mahō Girl Pre-cure*. Although male characters mainly cast as the evil enemy, Dokurokusy, the majority is female characters, with female friendship and solidarity being focused on. With a lack of male sexual desire, the girl protagonists are not seen as sexual objects in the narrative. Nonetheless, like most mahō shōjo anime for little girls, mothering is inevitable in *Mahō Girl Pre-cure*, too. An alive adorable teddy bear, Moffrun, serves as a baby for Mirai to take care of, and Haa-chan, a fairy baby, for Riko to look after. Moffrun and Haa-chan function as supportive advisors to the girls; however, they are so young and vulnerable that they must be protected. Although Mirai and Riko are powerful when they become Pre-cure witches, mothering and caring still serve as important factors to prevent the girls from being excessively masculine.

In sum, the charm of fighting magical girls can be attributed to the hybridity of feminine and masculine traits. They are feminine in terms

of magical transformations, dressing up, and caring and mothering, but masculine in terms of their absolute strength. This hybridity appeals not only to girl audiences but also to adult male audiences that expect mahō shōjo to be elegant, cute, and powerful, but not exceedingly masculinized.

CHALLENGING THE MAGICAL GIRL MOLD: MAGICAL GIRLS IN LATE NIGHT TV AND THEIR PARODIES

In the magical girl anime genre, multiple protagonists—that is, magical girls in a team—first appeared in *Sailor Moon*, in the 1990s. The multiple female characters easily induce fantasies of girls' love (*yuri*) where men are marginalized and even excluded.³⁸ Deborah Shamoan suggests that *yuri*, literally lily, in Japanese girls' culture in the 1920–1930s is “passionate friendship” for girls or a female homosocial fantasy to be embraced.³⁹ The *yuri* trope has been more often utilized in anime since the 2000s to depict a pure and innocent imaginary space of girls for (mainly) men to consume. Explicit *yuri* depictions surfaced already in *Sailor Moon* in the homoerotic relationship between Sailor Uranus and Sailor Neptune, but were not a major theme. However, since the 2000s, the *yuri* trope is strategically employed, especially in mahō shōjo anime for general young audiences broadcast in the time slot after midnight (from 1 a.m. to 4 a.m.). It serves to highlight female “passionate” bonds to challenge stereotypical representations of girls based on the gender norms in which mahō shōjo anime for little girls are essentially embedded.

In 1999, the Basic Law for Gender Equality was enacted, facilitating diverse legislation for gender equality. However, in reality gender equality at home, in the workplace, and at school still has a long way to go. As the number of youth who think marriage is unnecessary is increasing, the number of cases about the difficulties of love affairs has also increased.⁴⁰ The data partly shows that Japanese patriarchal ideology that men financially support their wives and children is already outdated. More people aged eighteen to thirty-nine answered that they lacked the skills to communicate with the opposite sex and felt more comfortable with the same sex friends.⁴¹ This social environment fleeing women from social pressure to marriage facilitates the creation of a homosocial space since the 2000s, the space where unmarried women are psychologically united.

One of the earliest examples of *yuri* in mahō shōjo anime as a passionate female bond is the *Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha* series (2004, 2005, 2007, 2015, 2016). The magical girl protagonists, Nanoha and Fate, first encounter as opponents and later reconcile and become close friends. Overcoming every hardship, they ultimately became close friends and belong to the Time-Space Administration Bureau. In *Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha StrikerS* (2007), they happen to rescue and raise a little girl, Vivio, suggesting to be single mothers or a lesbian couple raising a baby. In the *Fate/kaleid liner Prisma Illya* series (since 2013), explicit female sexuality is depicted through the relationships of magical girls Illya, Kuroe, and Miyu. In this anime, the *yuri* trope is somewhat comical and parodies the homosociality of magical girls, preventing the sexual implications (kissing and touching) from being too serious. Thus, *yuri* (female homosocial/homoerotic relationships) is effectively used to highlight female solidarity in 2010s magical girl anime in the time slot after midnight.

HOMURA AND MADOKA: RESCUING SHŌJO THROUGH *YURI* RELATIONSHIPS

Puella Magi Madoka Magica (2011) was one of the most popular blockbuster late-night anime featuring magical girls in the 2010s. It gripped viewers due to its complex narratives and the shocking sudden death of magical girls in the middle of the story. Although—superficially, at least—it drew on the conventional fighting magical girl trope, *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* is distinct from mahō shōjo anime for little girls, to the extent that the protagonists have to make a contract with a cat-like creature, the Incubator Kyubey (Q-bay), to gain magical powers in exchange for their lives, not a reward for the good deed.

In the latter half of the story, it turns out that “Witches,” the enemies to be destroyed, are former magical girls who have lost their hopes.⁴² This truth depresses the protagonists, illustrating the girls’ tragedy that they are destined to be adult women. At the end of the story, the protagonist Madoka, fourteen, finally contracts with Q-bay to become a magical girl, and thereby prevents all the fighting girls in history (including Jeanne d’Arc) from mutating into Witches in exchange for her existence—worse than normal death because she is extinguished even from peoples’ memories. Madoka ultimately becomes a god-like existence called “the Law of Cycles.”

Madoka's self-sacrifice, however, is quite a stereotypical practice that Japanese society has conventionally expected of girls/women. Self-sacrifice, selflessness, and altruism are considered traditional Japanese virtues influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism, but it is expected that women/mothers should exercise them more than men/fathers.⁴³ In the scene in which Madoka begins to dissolve into the universe, Madoka embraces Homura who is screaming from despair and grief as if Madoka was a mother consoling a crying newborn baby. Maternal love is effectively emphasized by Madoka who softly holds Homura, being almost naked. Motherhood and self-sacrifice are closely connected, which was often represented in the genre of *haha mono* (films about mothers) in 1950s Japan.⁴⁴

However, Madoka's idealized ending following traditional gender norms is interrogated and challenged in the film *Puella Magi Madoka Magica: The Rebellion Begins* (2013). In the film, all the protagonists (Mami, Sayaka, Kyoko, and Madoka) who died in the TV series spend a happy life with Homura. They have lost their previous memory. The girls in the magical team are fighting against Nightmares, their new enemy, born from people's negative feelings. However, their ideal life is revealed to be a falsehood created by Homura who has become a Witch. They are all confined within the Witch's/Homura's barrier. The most thrilling moment comes when Madoka, who recovers her memory as the Law of Cycle, attempts to save Homura just as she has rescued all the fighting girls and prevented them from transforming into Witches previously. At the moment when Madoka reaches for Homura, Homura grasps Madoka's arm and drags her toward herself. Homura desires to regain Madoka, which is extremely opposed to the idealized image of magical girls. Homura's attempt can be interpreted as selfish and shameful: things that magical girls are not supposed to be. Her act serves to question the idealized image of magical girls or *shōjo* in general which is associated with dreams and hope; however, these dreams and hope are not those of the *shōjo* themselves, but rather are those of society, which is predominantly man-centered.

MAGICAL “BOYS” IN A TEAM: THE SUBVERSION OF MAGICAL GIRL IMAGES

As any genre becomes established, it is natural that parodies appear. *Binan kōkō chikyū bōeibu rabu!* (*Handsome High School Earth Defense Club Love!*) series in 2015 and 2016 is a comical Sci-Fi anime about high school boys

set in Japan which parodies the traditional magical girl trope. In the story, Yumoto, En, Atsushi, Io, and Ryū have ordinary lives as students of Binan (literally, handsome boy) High School. Everything changes when they are given magical powers by a pink wombat-like extraterrestrial to defend the Earth. They transform into magical boys, “Battle Lovers,” following the module of fighting magical girls. With the power of love, the Battle Lovers defeat each weird monster that causes problems at their high school.

This parody can project how problematic the traditional representations of magical girls can be. First, magical transformation is closely associated with femininity and beauty in the magical girl trope. The more feminine and elegant the girls get, the more powerful they become, but they are prevented from becoming excessively masculine by the retention of cuteness and the inevitable maternal roles they take on. Similarly, in *Handsome High School Earth Defense Club Love!*, Yumoto and the other boys become powerful via magical transformation. They also become feminine because of their cute costumes, which feature large ribbons, fluffy shorts, and hair accessories (among other things), and magic sticks each with a different top: a red heart, a blue diamond, a green cross, a yellow bell, and a pink cone. However, their battle cries are sexually suggestive, indicating heterosexual male desire. Therefore, they remain masculine, albeit disguised as feminine.

In addition, since Yumoto's family runs a public bath, the Battle Lovers often appear naked when they gather there for meetings. Here, the boys' bodies became sexual objects to be seen, which obviously parodies scenes of some anime for young men where girls' bodies in the bath are depicted as sexual objects. However, by reversing the position of sexual objects from girls to boys, it can be projected that girls are destined to be looked at by the male gaze, and femininity is validated by man-centered gender norms. In this regard, this work provides a critical site through which heteronormative discourse is naturalized and standardized. It sheds light on how femininity and masculinity are performatively constructed, as Judith Butler suggests, in the magical girl anime genre.⁴⁵ Butler argues that “the parodic practices [...] disrupt the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame.”⁴⁶ By representations of parodies of feminine bodies of Battle Lovers, feminine masculinity seen in representations of fighting mahō shōjo in anime for little girls can offer alternatives to normative masculinity that are tightly associated with strength, responsibility, and machismo.

CONCLUSION

Since the 1960s, mahō shōjo anime primarily targeting little girls have provided hybrid representations. On the one hand, they represented ideal role models associated with Western fashionableness and sophistication. These representations often subvert conservative views of young women at home and in the workplace by challenging the conventional ways of representing shōjo. They have served to shed light on Japanese feminine traits, and/or to assert girls' self-esteem. On the other hand, the magical girls themselves are appropriated in the service of Japanese traditional gender norms by being given maternal roles and maintaining harmless, childlike cuteness.

As explored in this chapter, the Japanese term shōjo conveys images of virgin innocence, purity, and vulnerability. Fighting magical girls are adopted and/or modified. As a result, various types of magical girls have been produced. The new fighting magical girls in late night anime successfully highlight the dark sides of shōjo that the magical girl's anime aimed at little girls are unable to depict; that is, the idealization of shōjo by hegemonic male desire. Dreams and hope associated with magical girls are interrogated to re-evaluate the meaning of self-sacrifice, one of the most conventional cultural virtues connected to females. The cliché that magical girls fight for the sake of people's love, dreams, and hope is eventually (mis)represented by magical boys in the form of parody/comedy. Meanings of masculinity and femininity are converted and mixed, confusing our perception of these stereotypes.

A recent late-night anime, *Mahō shōjo ikusei keikaku (Magical Girl Raising Project)* (2016), features a magical girl warrior who is performed by a boy. In this anime, those who are invited by the cute tadpole-like creature Fab to become magical girls can transform themselves into any kind of magical girl they want to be. The results include a boy, a pregnant woman, an alcoholic housewife, and lesbian couples. The story ends in tragedy, because Fab's invitation is fake and his true intention is to enjoy seeing the participants kill each other. Although there are several feminist issues to examine here, the highlight is that the boy/magical girl, La Pucell, is immediately killed in the sixth episode after he tells the protagonist Snow White, "I will protect you." La Pucell's attitude is "inappropriate" for magical girls; the masculine remark leads to his tragic death in the female homosocial space of mahō shōjo. As La Pucell's tragic death indicates, shōjo is still shackled to femininity

(being feminine, sticking with beauty and cuteness) and power (physical strength to fight against enemies).

Japanese magical girl anime has served not only to challenge traditional gender norms, but also to negotiate with them. Although it functions as empowering for young girls, it still contains issues that shōjo have to negotiate with gender norms. This is often underlined by alternative representations of magical girls in late-night anime. These alternative representations could impact on Japanese masculinity.

NOTES

1. Susan J. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 4.
2. Rayna Denison, *Anime: A Critical Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 2.
3. As McRobbie in her book *'Jackie': An Ideology of Adolescent Femininity*, in this chapter I use femininity to mean something feminine including both physical appearances (beauty, cuteness, elegance, etc.) and behavior (obedience, submissiveness, selflessness, etc.).
4. Deborah Shamoan, *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls' Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012), 2.
5. Akiko Sugawa-Shimada, "Grotesque Cuteness of Shojo: Representations of Goth-Loli in Japanese Contemporary TV Anime," in *Japanese Animation: East Asian Perspectives*, eds. Masao Yokota and Tze-yue G. Hu (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 199–222, 199.
6. Shamoan, *Passionate Friendship*, 3.
7. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 2.
8. Fujita (1996), Masuda (2009), and Sugawa-Shimada (2013b) examined anime for girls. However, much academic attention has not been paid to girls' anime, comparing to anime for boys or adults.
9. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, 33.
10. The difference of the target audience of TV anime programs in Japan is judged by the time of broadcasting. Mahō shōjo anime for little girls are aired in the prime time or the Sunday morning slot, while the ones for teenagers and adult men are aired in the evening or the late night slot (1 a.m.–3 a.m.).
11. Intimate bonds and passionate friendship between girls are often called *yuri* (lily) in Japan; however, the meanings and connotations of *yuri* vary, depending on who defines it for what. Since "*yuri* is constantly in flux" (Friedman 2017), in this chapter I use "*yuri* relationship" for passionate friendships between girls that exclude explicit sexual depictions.

12. See, Sugawa-Shimada, *Shōjo to mahō: Garu hiirō wa ikani juyō sareta no ka* [Girls and Magic: How Have Girl Heroes Been Accepted?] (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 2013). According to Video Research, the *Pre-cure* series and the Super hero series have recorded approximately 20–30% (Animeanime.biz, 2014).
13. Sōta Setogawa, *Natsukashi no amerika TV eigashi* [A History of Old American TV Film] (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2005); See also, Shun'ya Yoshimi, *Shinbei to hanbei: sengo nihon no seijiteki muisbiki* [Pro-America and Anti-America: The Political Unconscious in Postwar Japan] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2007).
14. Mitsuteru Yokohama, *Mahōtsukai Sari* [Sally the Witch] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2004). The protagonist's name was changed from Sunny to Sally since the staff wanted to avoid misunderstanding caused by the same name as a popular car named Sunny.
15. *Casper the Friendly Ghost*, an American TV cartoon show, was broadcast in Japan from 1962–1963.
16. Toei Dōga, *Terebimanga mahōtsukai Sari kikakusho* [The Project Proposal of TV Anime Sally the Witch], Unpublished material, 1966, 4, 6.
17. Yūko Nishikawa, *Sumai to kazoku o meguru monogatari: Otoko no ie, onna no ie, seibetsu no nai heya* [Stories About Houses and Families: House for Men, House for Women, and Unisex Rooms] (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2004).
18. This manga of the same title was made by Fujio Akatsuka, who is famous for gag manga such as *Tensai Bakabon* (Bakabon the Genius, 1967–1978).
19. Marc Steinberg explores the “media mix” strategy in Japan since the 1960s, examining how the contents (narratives and characters) of TV anime, *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astroboy*, 1963–1966), were shared and consumed by broadcasting and merchandizing to construct the imaginary world of Atom in *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
20. Kiyoshi Tane, “‘Shōjo tachi no akogare’ ga tsumatta mahō shōjo anime no reimeiki,” *Otona Anime* 20 (2011): 46–47, 47.
21. Japanese TV anime series are broadcast on a weekly basis, and are usually 30 minutes long. One series commonly consists of 12 or 13 episodes in one season (three months). If they are aired by private TV stations, advertisements are inserted prior to the opening credits, in the intermission, and after the ending credits. Sponsors usually use characters' logos or characters per se for their products.
22. Kumiko Saitō, “Magic, Shōjo, and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and the Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 1 (2014): 143–164, 143.
23. Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku, “*Heisei 21nen zenkoku shōhi jittai chōsa*,” [The Survey on Nation-Wide Consumption in 2009], accessed October 1,

- 2010, <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/zensho/2009/tanshin/pdf/gaiyo.pdf>, 9.
24. Yūji Nunokawa, *Kuriimii Mami wa naze sutekki de henshin suru no ka?* [Why Does Creamy Mami Transforms Herself by Her Stick?] (Tokyo: Nikkei BP, 2013), 72.
 25. The final episode hit 20% in the viewing ratio (Nunokawa, 2013: 76). Accessories and goods based on Creamy Mami are still produced by Bandai and others, targeting women in their twenties to fifties.
 26. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, 2005. Daniel Elisha Rachovitsky, "Tracing the Japanese Gothic in Madoka Magica with Blood: The Estrangement, Abjection, and Sublime, Erasure of the Spectralised Mahō Shōjo Exemplum," *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3, no. 4 (2014): 98–112.
 27. Rachovitsky, "Tracing the Japanese Gothic," 2014, 98.
 28. The names in the English adaptation are: Usagi/Serena, Mamoru/Darien, Ami/Amy, Rei/Raye, Makoto/Lita, Minako/Mina, Chibi-Usa/Rini.
 29. The characters in *Sailor Moon* are named differently in the English version. Chibi-Usa is Rini, Usagi is Serena, Mamoru is Darien, Ami is Amy, Rei is Raye, Makoto is Lita, and Minako is Mina in English.
 30. Catharine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
 31. There are two exceptions. *Futari wa purikyua Max Heart* [The Two Are Pre-cure Max Heart, 2005–2006] is the continuation of *The Two are Pre-cure* (2004–2005). *Yes! Pre-cure 5* (2007–2008) and *Yes! Pre-cure 5 Go!* (2008–2009) also feature the same protagonists.
 32. In recent works of the *Pre-cure* series, their titles changed from warriors to "The Legendary Witch," in *Mahōtsukai Purikyua* [Mahō Girl *Pre-cure*, 2016–2017] and "The Legendary Patissier," in *Kira kira purikyua a ra mōdo* [Shining Shining *Pre-cure* a La Mode, 2017–2018]. Fighting has been no longer emphasized.
 33. Mieko Takenobu, "Yappari kowai? Jendā furii basshing," [Scary? Gender-Free Bashing], in *Shinpen nihon no feminizumu I: Ribu to feminizumu* [Japanese Feminism 1: Lib and Feminism, New Edition], eds. Masako Amano et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2009: 295–306), 300.
 34. Michiyoshi Hayashi et al., "Feminizumu hihan tokushū," [Special Issue: Criticism on Feminism] *Seiron* (September 2002): 240–279.
 35. Asahi Newspaper, "'Jendā furii' tsukaimasen, 'danjo byōdō wa suishin: Kenkyōi ga tsūchi,'" [The Board of Education Announced It Will Not Use 'Gender Free' But Improve 'Gender Equality']. March 29, 2005: 31.
 36. Sedgwick suggests that homosociality is constructed between men by the deft use of misogyny and homophobia, which serves to maintain paternalism, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

- However, homosociality can also be used to address the epistemology of same-sex intimacy, according to Sonoko Azuma, *Takarazuka, yaoi, ai no yomikae: Josei to poppyurā karuchā no shakaigaku* [Takarazuka, Yaoi, and the Replacement for Love: A Sociology of Women and Popular Culture] (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2015), 29–30.
37. Kumiko Saitō, “Magic, Shōjo, and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and the Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 1 (2014): 143–164, 144.
 38. Minori Ishida, “Sentō bishōjo to sakebi, soshite yuri,” *Eureka* (December 2014): 181–189, 186–189.
 39. Shamoon, *Passionate Friendship*, 2012, 2.
 40. Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, “White Paper: Wakamono no ishiki o saguru,” [White Paper: Examining Perceptions of the Youth], accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/wp/hakusyo/kousei/13/dl/1-02-2.pdf>, (2013), 59.
 41. Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, “White Paper,” 2013, 71. Accessed February 1, 2016.
 42. The Witches are represented as various forms in every episode, rendered in collage animation by the animation studio, Inu Curry.
 43. Kazue Sakamoto, “*Kazoku*” *imēji no tanjō: Nihon eiga ni miru “hōmu dorama” no keisei* [Shifting Images of “Family”: Constructions of “Home Drama” in Japanese Films] (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1997).
 44. Fumiaki Itakura, “Daiei ‘haha mono’ no janru keisei to sutajio shisutemu” [Constructions of ‘Mother Story’ Genre at Daiei Co. Ltd., and the Studio System], in *Kazoku no shōchō: Hōmu dorama to merodorama* [Symbols of Family: Home Drama and Melodrama], ed. Kenji Iwamoto (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2007), 101–138.
 45. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 141.
 46. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, x.

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- Spectralised Mahō Shōjo Exemplum.” *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3, no. 4 (2014): 98–112.
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PART III

Shōjo Performances



A Dream Dress for Girls: Milk, Fashion and Shōjo Identity

Masafumi Monden

A beautiful girl is lying on a maroon-colored leather sofa. In a medium-long shot, she is dressed in a white blouse with a big matching ribbon, and an above-knee-length skirt with a silhouette resembling a blooming flower. A white lace headdress adorns her immaculately curled, flowing locks. Somehow contradicting her hyperbolically girlish, rather “passive” appearance, the young woman faces us directly with a faint yet bold smile, her eyes making piecing contact with those who are viewing her in what semioticians would call a demanding, “assertive” position. This interpretation is further supported by the way she forms her left hand into the shape of a gun, a typically “masculine” gesture. The picture is of famous 20-year-old fashion model Cecil Kishimoto in a magazine-book dedicated to Japanese fashion brand Milk (2011). The juxtaposition of an eminently girlish aesthetic with an assertive, “masculine” posture visually outlines an aspect of the concept of shōjo in Japanese culture.

Shōjo literally means girl or maiden, but it frequently points to a culturally crafted concept laden with values and history. Despite the cultural significance of the concept, it has long been overlooked as a

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legitimate scholarly topic. Masuko Honda, a pioneer in Japanese girls' studies, first started publishing research on the topic in the 1980s.¹ According to Tomoko Aoyama, this situation has since been ameliorated and a boom in the study of Japanese shōjo followed after 2007.² Honda's innovative theory of the shōjo aesthetic, which she termed *hira-hira*, casts light upon sartorial items such as ribbons, frills and swinging hem skirts as quintessential to the aesthetic and image of shōjo. But with the exception of the now well-documented Japanese *Lolita* fashion, theoretical analysis of the association between shōjo and clothing and fashion is still a rarity. I believe this is a significant gap, as the image of shōjo is largely conveyed through visual cues of dress, gesture, and appearance.

Paying particular attention to Honda's groundbreaking work, my aim in this chapter is to uncover significant meanings behind shōjo fashion. I contend that fashion aesthetic is crucially intertwined with the process of crafting and sustaining the image of shōjo, and further that this aesthetic subverts the stereotypical equation of girlish (shōjo) femininity with derogatory sexualization, values denounced as weak, passive and unfavorable in many Euro-American societies. The shōjo fashion aesthetic inverts these negative traditional associations into positive and empowering ones. Consequently, shōjo fashion can serve as an alternative to the monolithic idea of women's fashion, which tends to be understood via the diametric opposition of forced sexualization and exaggerated modesty. In particular, I apply a combination of cultural studies and fashion studies in order to focus on the relationship between dress, gender, culture, and identity.

SHŌJO AESTHETICS AND HISTORY

Masuko Honda linked such sartorial items as ribbons and flounces to the concept of shōjo. For Honda, these ornaments symbolized a dreamy, imaginative, and intimate sphere embraced by young women.³ She defines the state of shōjo as the period between childhood and womanhood, in which the girl's imagination turns into a romantic space of liminality, a shōjo-scape where the "girl" can indulge in a momentary reverie unconstrained by the social trammels believed to be attached to "womanhood."⁴

Delicate and "impractical" sartorial items, which Honda calls *hira-hira* due to the way they flutter, visually manifest this dreamscape. For Honda, a fashion aesthetic of excessive lace, frills, ribbons, and the fluttering movements such garments make, together signal lightness,

delicacy, and the transient freedom ascribed to a state of liminal femininity.⁵ This idea of shōjo assigns a degree of independence to the category of adolescent girls and hence separates them from both older and younger women. Perhaps recalling its origin as a “hyper-feminine ideal” in the early 1900s,⁶ Honda’s girlish aesthetic of *hirahira* indicates that such pre-war shōjo aesthetics are still valid today.⁷

Despite the “girlish” image, what is striking about the concept of shōjo is its presumed “asexual” quality. Shōjo are often considered as asexual, “pure,” comparatively autonomous beings. This does not necessarily mean, however, that shōjo are immune from either eroticization or the objectifying (male) gaze; indeed, the opposite is often the case, for the innocent and pure image of shōjo can be read as highly sexual to some individuals.⁸ Yet, it is also true that the “asexuality” associated with shōjo can—even if subtly—subvert preconceptions regarding sexuality and gender, as “[p]erforming shōjo [can be] one active and dynamic way that Japanese women can control their sexuality.”⁹

One such example can be found in Japanese *Lolita* fashion, which is known for its hyperbolically girlish, decorative style, and appreciation of European dress forms of the early-modern and Romantic periods. Like the image of shōjo, *Lolita* fashion is generally “pre-sexual,” despite the possibility of the style veering into the sexualized.¹⁰ The decorativeness can simultaneously emphasize girlishness and draw attention away from the body of the wearer by concealing its shape, hence maybe operating against eroticization.¹¹ This is because, as Honda argues of *hirahira*, the aesthetics symbolized by decorative sartorial items signal “girlish” femininity while actually hiding a woman’s body, thereby allowing “simultaneous denial of womanhood and emphasis of femininity.”¹² This view is innovative given that fashion for young women and adolescent girls in particular tends to be understood via the dichotomy of overt sexualization and passive modesty, leading to greater difficulty in locating a place in between this decency continuum in Euro-American culture.¹³ Contributing to this is a tendency in Euro-American societies to regard girlish femininity negatively, as an unfavorable, unstable and even pathological stage of life that requires adult intervention and regulation.¹⁴

The concept of shōjo, therefore, is not only an imposed idealized construction, but also a means embraced and manipulated by girls themselves. Here we might notice some similarities between shōjo and the concept of *kawaii*, often translated as cute.¹⁵ The definition of *kawaii* is complex and too broad to be fully explored here, but a

common type of *kawaii* in fashion is a style that is “deliberately designed to make the wearer appear childlike and demure.”¹⁶ Although *shōjo* and *kawaii* are not synonymous, it is important to recognize that *shōjo* femininity is frequently materialized by *kawaii* fashion aesthetics. Indeed, fashion brand Milk, which we will examine shortly, is well known for offering romantic and girlish yet edgy styles, and it often uses the term *kawaii* when describing these designs.

Historically the image of *shōjo* has largely been crafted and conveyed through visual culture, such as magazines, illustrations, paintings, and manga.¹⁷ The fashion designer and stylist Jun’ichi Nakahara created illustrations which influenced both *shōjo* manga culture¹⁸ and fashion figures with girlish design sensibilities such as Kenzō Takada, Keita Maruyama and Isao Kaneko.¹⁹ Nakahara (1913–1983), who is especially celebrated for his illustrations and fashion designs in girls’ magazines, continuously promulgated images of elegantly dressed, ladylike young women. His ideal girls are exquisitely dressed, sophisticated young women with delicately coiffed hair, tiny ribbons, thin waists and long limbs, which were and still are an embodiment of *shōjo*.²⁰ In *shōjo* as in other styles, dress is a quintessential medium to craft and communicate the identity of the wearer.

DRESS AS CONNOTING SHŌJO IDENTITY

While some try to distinguish dress from clothes, styles from fashion, and fashion from dress, these terms are often used interchangeably. In fashion studies, one definition of dress is given by Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher:

Dress ... includes a long list of possible direct modifications of the body such as coiffed hair, colored skin, pierced ears, and scented breath, as well as an equally long list of garments, jewellery, accessories, and other categories of items added to the body as supplements.²¹

Valerie Steele defines fashion as “the cultural construction of the embodied identity ... the term fashion embraces all forms of self-fashioning—from street styles like punk and hip hop to body alterations such as tattooing and piercing.”²² Steele’s definition of fashion is very similar to Roach-Higgins and Eicher’s definition of dress, and in this chapter I will use the terms interchangeably.

Dress “embellishes the body, the materials commonly used adding a whole array of meanings to the body that would otherwise not be there.”²³ In other words, dress is considered as carrying symbolic meanings—it is a means of communication.²⁴ However, caution is required, because the meanings communicated via clothing are often “highly differentiated in terms of taste, social identity, and person’s access to the symbolic wares of a society.”²⁵ While dress is considered to carry symbolic meanings, the meanings it carries can be very subtle and complex. As Steele brilliantly articulates, they are more like music:

[T]hey are expressive in an indirect and allusive way. There is rarely a single meaning attached to each article of clothing. Instead, its meanings depend on the context—who wears it? When? Along with what other clothes? What was the history of the garment?²⁶

This means that there are certain “shared” qualities of the dress or look that evoke the qualities of “shōjo-ness” in Japanese culture, and they are most likely related to the aforementioned idea of shōjo as put forward by Honda’s girlish aesthetic of *hirahira*, including its association with flowers, frills, ribbons, and fluttering skirts. Looking more closely at the concept of shōjo in Japanese fashion culture, one might notice that references to two well-known European girlish icons have significantly influenced the image of shōjo fashion: the character of Alice portrayed in Sir John Tenniel’s famous illustrations of Lewis Carroll’s books; and romantic ballerinas.

With the first full translation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* into Japanese in 1910, Alice began her identification with the concept of shōjo in contemporary Japanese culture.²⁷ One of the arenas in which the imagery of Alice has been an enduring inspiration is the realm of fashion. For example, Atsuki Onishi (est. 1983), a fashion label popular in the 1980s, had a fashion spread in the 18 February 1985 issue of now-discontinued girls’ fashion magazine *Olive* titled “I want to be Alice in Wonderland in this dreamy season,” which featured a cotton sweater, a bustier, a shirt, a pair of skinny pants and a long flared skirt, on all of which were printed illustrations of Alice.²⁸ The October 2007 issue of *Sō-En*, one of the oldest Japanese high-fashion magazines, included a 22-page fashion spread, along with feature articles, on the theme of *Alice*. The feature story “Looking for Alice” (*Arisu o sagashite*) tells how such Japanese fashion brands as Jane Marple (est. 1985), a brand known

for its classical, romantic and upper-class young ladylike styles, derive inspirations from *Alice*, saying: “Even after 142 years since the book’s publication, Alice exists as the ideal of *shōjo*.”²⁹

Alice is symbolic of Victorian upper-class girlhood,³⁰ and the dress styles of Victorian girls seem to have inspired Japanese *shōjo* fashion aesthetics. The three virtues of *shōjo* in pre-war Japan—affection (*aijō*), chastity (*junketsu*), and aesthetic (*biteki*)³¹—arguably dovetailed with the ideals of Victorian feminine beauty: “maternal, childlike, and seductive” as well as “healthy, natural, and virtuous.”³² Hence, there was an affinity between youthful late-Victorian and Japanese *shōjo* femininities.

SHŌJO, ALICE AND VICTORIAN FEMININITY

The popular image of Alice is largely influenced by Sir John Tenniel’s famous illustrations, and Walt Disney’s subsequent animated adaptation (1951).³³ This is true in Japanese culture in the twenty-first century in such *Alice*-themed music videos as Tommy February/Heavenly’s “Wait For Me There” (2009) and manga works like Jun Mochizuki’s *Pandora Hearts* (2006–2015). Tenniel’s Alice is dressed in the fashion current at the time when the book was published: Victorian upper class, with a nod to practicality. According to Elizabeth Ewing, Alice

wears a simple dress with a simple bodice and a straight, full skirt with some rows of tucks at the hem, to allow for her growth. The dress has short puff sleeves and a tiny turn-down collar. Over it goes a pinafore, also with small sleeves, plus two pockets...and she has plain, light stockings and flat ankle-strap shoes with rather square toes...³⁴

A dress with short puff sleeves and a full skirt is visually symbolic of Alice’s *shōjo*-ness. This is particularly evident in the fact that the skirt is calf-length. Until the 1920s, the age hierarchy of upper-class women’s dress styles in Europe was largely demarcated through skirt length. Young girls wore short skirts, and length increased with the age of the wearer, with the skirts of teenage girls approaching ankle length to connote their “maturity.”³⁵ Alice’s almost “childlike” dress quality, characterized by her above-knee skirt, is clearly shared by *Alice*-inspired Japanese fashion items from brands like Jane Marple and Emily Temple Cute (est. 1999).³⁶

In a similar reference to mid-to-late Victorian girls' dresses, Peter Weir's celebrated Australian film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975, first released in Japan in 1986) depicts a group of upper-class schoolgirls in late-Victorian-period Australia and their mystifying disappearance during a picnic on St. Valentine's Day. Praised by Honda as an "eternal fable of shōjo,"³⁷ the girls in the film wear white, high-collared, vertical-silhouetted lace or frilly muslin dresses of slightly below calf-length, most of them with long locks and black stockings. When Irma, the only one of the missing schoolgirls who has returned, visits the college to bid her farewell she wears a long floral-patterned dress that reaches her toes, covered with a vivid red cape and a matching hat that decorates her neatly coiffed hair, thereby signaling her departure from the shōjo-scape.³⁸ Thus, the girlish qualities of these mid-to-late Victorian girls are emphasized by their (relatively) short "little girl" dresses and the lightness of such garments, which endorses Honda's *hirahira* aesthetic.³⁹

Like Alice, *Picnic* was and still is loved by a certain group of women in Japan due to its dreamy interior design and dresses, and its exquisite, maidenly ambience.⁴⁰ In fact, *Olive* cites *Picnic* as a source of reference for vintage Victorian style with white lace and frills when it was first released in Japan.⁴¹ Similarly, light, lacy, frilly dresses in pastel shades that resemble the muslin dresses worn by the girls in *Picnic* are still favored in Japanese fashion culture in the twenty-first century. Volume 15–6 of popular young women's fashion magazine *non-no* (2010), for instance, chose white, flowing miniskirts as the fifth most popular item for girls, and lacy, frilly white dresses with old-world charm as the most popular item for attracting boys, with the accompanying taglines describing the items as "innocent" (*seiso*), "*kawaii*" and "girlish" (*onnanoko-ppoi*).⁴² Likewise, in the January 2016 issue of the same magazine, a white, calf-length romantic dress is described as "the dress that everyone loves."⁴³ Fashion aesthetics that resemble Victorian girlish icons like Alice and the girls in *Picnic* still retain a significant appeal to girls in contemporary Japan, not only for attracting admirers but also for the preference of the wearers themselves.

Another icon that is frequently associated with shōjo fashion is the romantic ballerina. Casual fashion labels from Milk, Emily Temple Cute and Jane Marple to *Lolita* fashion brand Innocent World and more mature, high-fashion label Rekisami (est. 2007 by former ballet dancer Chika Kisada) have produced dresses and shoes that are, explicitly or implicitly, inspired by ballerina's costumes.⁴⁴ These include full,

cascading tulle skirts and ribbon shoes, like the puff-sleeved, above-knee-length tulle dress called “Tutu-donna” (Milk 2014) and the tulle ribbon shoes on which Rekisami collaborated with Australian dancewear company Bloch (2014). Historically, it is argued that the garments of the ballerina in the Romantic period referred to both girlhood and light movements.

ETHEREAL MAIDENS AND PRINCESSES: THE INSPIRATION OF ROMANTIC BALLERINAS

Our visual image of the ballerina is largely informed by the romantic tutu and ribbon pointe shoes that she wears, both of which are the products of the Romantic period (around 1832, especially since 1841), with allusions to early modern European aristocratic dresses, such as nineteenth-century dress shoes and the *chemise à la reine*.⁴⁵ The origin of this tube-like dress might be traced to the *robe à la créole*, a loose, light-weight white muslin chemise dress which was brought to France from the colony of Saint-Dominique (modern-day Haiti) during the 1770s, and was made famous by Queen Marie-Antoinette in 1783.⁴⁶ It was a juvenile summer garment with an air of simplicity and classicism, therefore reinscribing the connection to girlhood.⁴⁷ Indeed, this dress introduced “charming simplicity” to girls’ dresses in Euro-America, which was “retained for nearly half a century” until the fullness and extravagance of women’s fashion overtook girls’ fashion in the early Victorian period.⁴⁸

The perpetual appeal that ballet costumes have had for girls is described by Judith Chazin-Bennahum, who describes the nineteenth-century ballet girl as follows: “she would become an extraordinarily beautiful dream girl, an ethereal being, wearing costumes of rich fabrics and embroideries and ... would live in a gloriously romantic world.”⁴⁹ Such a romantic vision of the ballerina still remains today as “a universal sign of an appropriate style of femininity—couth and graceful, yet disciplined and regulated.”⁵⁰ While the history of ballet in Japan is relatively young (since around 1910), this highly romanticized vision of the ballerina is prevalent in its culture.

Celebrated and beloved Japanese ballerina Miyako Yoshida and teenage ballet dancer Sae Maeda both note the charm of ballet dancers’ outfits as their primary motivation for learning the art form.⁵¹ This view is further reinforced by Kyoto International Manga Museum’s recent

exhibition devoted to “ballet manga.”⁵² It underlines that the concept of ballet is almost always associated with the image of “a white tutu and *chaussons de pointe*” in Japan, thereby elucidating the significant roles ballet dresses play within the material culture of shōjo. Indeed, styles inspired by the classic ballerina were featured extensively in *Olive*,⁵³ and as recently as 2016, *non-no* featured ballerina-like cascading tulle skirts as an essential item that creates a sweet, relaxed and girlish look.⁵⁴

The opulent aura of ballet could also be related to the concept of aristocratic fantasy in Japan, namely the “princess boom,” which first became prominent in the 1950s.⁵⁵ Elsewhere, I have argued that classical ballet and the figure of the ballerina in the late 1950s and early 1960s was an ideal vehicle for young girls to participate in this princess fantasy, both as an icon of luxury, glamor and privilege, and as a “princess of democracy” who receives the jeweled crown through an open competition rather than through marriage or succession, symbolizing self-achievement and a sense of agency within the romantic frame of the shōjo-scape.⁵⁶

The ballerina represents an attainable, democratic version of the princess, and this vision has been retained in popular culture like shōjo manga. Classical ballet with its association with fairy tale narratives, tiaras, and delicate flower-like dresses could function as an obvious instrument for young people to indulge themselves in this princess fantasy.⁵⁷ Likewise, as Pat Kirkham has pointed out in her analysis of dress in Charles Crichton’s film *Dance Hall* (1950), a classical ballroom gown-like “dream dress” is symbolic of an elegant, romantic mode of femininity.⁵⁸ By wearing it, the female character and the (female) viewer alike can experience the transcendence of fairy tale-like fantasy into reality when such a mode of femininity is largely unavailable in their everyday lives. The ballet skirt and a pair of ribbon, satin pointe shoes offer a very similar effect. Balletic heroines with their gauzy, cascading skirts, are symbolic of girlish femininity, which can easily be translated into Japanese culture as a metonymy of the shōjo image.

The ballerina and shōjo are closely related not only sartorially, but also thematically. After all, many of the heroines in classical ballet repertoires, from *La Sylphide* and *The Swan Lake* through *The Nutcracker* to *Cinderella*, are innocent maidens, fairies and princesses. As Meredith Jones articulates, the fascination with fairy tales like Charles Perrault’s *The Sleeping Beauty* (*La Belle au Bois Dormant*) lies in the live embalming of a beautiful maiden whose beauty and youth, and by implication

girlish femininity, is preserved while being in a state of physical imprisonment.⁵⁹ Other characters include spirits and maidens, whose ethereal, delicate existences are technically conveyed through the lightness of gauzy ballet dresses, and who perish when their virtues are under threat (e.g. Sylphide, Giselle). Thus, the feminine figures whom the romantic ballerina embodies on the stage are, arguably, dwelling in a dreamy, imaginative space of liminality between childhood and womanhood: a *shōjo*-scape.

In the Romantic period certain female ballet dancers, while they were not immune from being sexually objectified, embodied the image of a dream woman and thereby men's appraisal of such "ethereal" dancers could be similar to an act of worship.⁶⁰ The nineteenth-century poet, writer and art critic Théophile Gautier perceived some of the qualities of ballerinas as the "modest grace, chaste reserve, and diaphanous virginity"⁶¹ of the Taglioni school.⁶² Art historian Evan Alderson writes on romantic ballerinas such as the legendary Marie Taglioni (1804–1884) that "the erotic is given and yet simultaneously denied" because "female sexual feeling is deflected toward innocence and virtue, but this virtue both invites victimization and triumphs through it."⁶³ Given cultural, contextual and historical differences, making simplistic comparisons should be avoided. However, I argue that this perception of the ballerina is remarkably similar to Honda's conceptualization of the *shōjo*, whose dress both accentuates (innocent) femininity and denies (mature) womanhood.

As we have seen, such key concepts as *kawaii*, ballerinas, and princesses tend to formulate qualities that associate with the aesthetic and conceptual image of *shōjo*. One fashion label that unites all of these is Milk, which was launched in 1970 by Hitomi and has remained an active and iconic women's fashion brand for nearly half a century.

MILK: DRESSES OF THE DREAMS OF SHŌJO

Milk's garments are edgy yet girlish, romantic and dreamy. Catalogs of the brand offer garments that are full above-calf-length skirts, or dresses in pastel shades, adorned with colorful patterns, laces, frills, and ribbons.⁶⁴ The look is completed with ankle-length frilly white socks or above-knee socks and heeled Mary Jane shoes. The ballerina and Alice seem to be favorite icons, as in addition to the Tutu-donna dress, Milk offers a frilly tulle babydoll dress called "Nightmare Tutu Dress" (2014)

and the ballet-inspired “Red Shoes Dress” (2016) as well as numerous Alice-motif items like a long-sleeved above-knee dress with playing card patterns named “Nightmare Alice Dress” (2014–2015). As early as 1973, Milk’s puff-sleeve blouse and lacy tiered skirt were styled as “being Alice in Wonderland,”⁶⁵ and its rhinestone tiara was featured as a main item in creating a ballerina princess look.⁶⁶ These garments craft a *kawaii*, shōjo “look” that resembles the beautiful designs and images of a girl Jun’ichi Nakahara has depicted in his art, which, as previously mentioned is an embodiment of shōjo.

Milk was launched with the initial concept of “dreams of shōjo” (shōjo *no yume*), and is still located in the district of Harajuku in Tokyo, now famous as one of the areas in Japan where the most colorful and innovative fashions are found. From its initial collections, the brand was known for offering *kawaii* and girlish fashion, with the old-world charm of lace and ribbons as well as ballet shoes.⁶⁷ Milk also has strong ties with Japanese female idols—another epitome of shōjo—frequently offering costumes for them, beginning with Mari Amachi in the early 1970s. Amachi is often heralded as the first female “pop idol” (*aidoru*) in the history of the contemporary Japanese music industry, and is also known as “Snow White.” The history of Milk’s association with idols continued with Amachi’s contemporary Saori Minami “teen idol” Candies, Seiko Matsuda and Kyōko Koizumi in the 1980s, through Sayumi Michishige in the twenty-first century.⁶⁸

Pop idols in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s were symbolic of a “Miss Sweet and Innocent” image, balancing both the allure of privilege (as exemplified by stardom and celebrity worship) and familiarity. Stephen Gundle writes in his book *Glamour* that in the context of an expanding commercial culture, glamor, like fashion, contained the promise, a fantasy that anyone could reach out to it.⁶⁹ Likewise, pop idols of this era endorsed the idea that “anyone can be a star,” created by such star search TV programs as *Star Tanjō* (*A Star Is Born*) or weekly music shows like *Best Ten*.⁷⁰ While this negotiation between the senses of privilege and familiarity corresponded with the essence of the princess fantasy that I have mentioned earlier, the regalia of female idols, although not completely uniform, were often described as frilly or lacy ballerina-like dresses of pastel shades, connoting innocent, shōjo femininity as well as artificiality.⁷¹

Milk has been frequented by Vivienne Westwood and was the first shop in Japan to sell Comme des Garçons, which attests to the

innovative and edgy approach Milk has, despite its hyperbolically cute and girlish image.⁷² Significantly, Milk's conception of romantic, *kawaii* shōjo fashion aesthetics also underscores an analogy between shōjo and princess, an archetypal girlish concept as we have seen. In a magazine spread dedicated to Milk and its male line Milkboy (est. 1974), Hitomi says that Milk is worn by girls who want to be princesses, and "my duty is to lead girls to have a sweet life, so they won't eat a black poisonous apple."⁷³

Here we should consider the symbolism of the princess. In contemporary Anglophone culture the concept of the princess is often derogatory due to the assumed passivity and docility ascribed to the role.⁷⁴ If the apparent compliance of the princess is due to her role as a damsel-in-distress waiting for her "knight on a white charger" to rescue and marry her, the connotation of the "princess" in our contemporary imagination of the fairy tale is only complete when it is paired with the prince. In other words, the identity of the princess is defined and emphasized through her position as the object of the romantic affection of the prince. As a result, the princess cannot exist without the prince, and hence her identity becomes dependent: a symbol of complicity and passivity.⁷⁵ This view echoes some of the widespread negative reading of women's fashion, notably that women's fashion first and foremost serves to incite the objectifying male gaze and desire. While seemingly anachronistic, this view asserts that fashion or looks that connote "femininity" are passive and unfavorable.

While there might be different readings of Hitomi's fashion philosophy, one thing that seems certain is that a degree of independence is attached to the concept of princess in contemporary Japanese culture. For example, the types of princesses in the 1950s that accompanied the "princess boom," as Jan Bardsley's studies of Miss Universe indicate, were more like "princesses of democracy," crowned "through open competition" both nationally and internationally, embodying literal and social mobility as well as international celebrity status.⁷⁶ This subtle inversion of "passivity" into individual agency is still evident in contemporary Japanese culture, where the fairy tale of *Cinderella*, which has frequently been coded as symbolic of passive femininity in Anglophone culture, is instead interpreted as "a strong message of self-transformation and individual achievement in the Japanese setting."⁷⁷

That is not to say that romance is unnecessary for those who dress in such girlish fashions. Irrespective of gender and age people dress for

different reasons at different times, sometimes for an occasion, sometimes for attracting and pleasing admirers, for their own pleasure, or for necessity.⁷⁸ Hitomi does not disregard or refute such desires.⁷⁹ But what is significant is the apparent separation of the imagination of the princess from the romantic object of the prince. For this reason, the princess and the qualities of shōjo aesthetic associated with her are given a sense of independence and autonomy. Importantly, theories articulated in fashion studies by Bonnie G. Smith and Steele have argued that rather than merely being symbolic of feminine oppression and objectification, highly “feminine” dresses (in their studies, those in nineteenth-century upper-class Europe) often reflect the choices and autonomy of the wearers.⁸⁰ Milk and its straightforward appreciation of highly shōjo and *kawaii* styles renders this argument more convincing. Milk’s dresses, and by implication the shōjo look of their wearers, do not, therefore, necessarily have to be read as symbolic of female passivity.

Indeed, the concept of *kawaii* (and by implication girly girl or shōjo) as exemplified by Hitomi is neither passive nor weak.⁸¹ It is striking that Milk integrated *kawaii* shōjo fashion aesthetics with their emphasis on sweetness without overly emphasizing sexual allure. “Milk clothes were—and continue to be—girly, romantic, and feminine but not sexual. All these elements are the base for what would later become *kawaii* culture,” writes Tiffany Godoy in her book dedicated to Japanese street fashion cultures.⁸² This point corresponds with the aforementioned traits of shōjo as highly girlish yet asexual, and shōjo fashion displaying girlish femininity yet concealing physical (and by implication sexual) womanliness. In addition, as the magazine-book dedicated to Milk in 2011 says, “sparkling girls will change the world,” which means that girls have the potential to “save” the world, as shōjo and their aesthetics have a power to make people feel happy.⁸³

Milk’s recognition and straightforward appraisal of the power of such aesthetic concepts as girlish qualities is highly significant. This is because when associated with women’s appearance, behavior and fashion, girlish cuteness faces the possibility of being deemed as endorsing asymmetrical gender relations. These views posit that women are evaluated and judged within the concept of *kawaii*, and are sexually commodified by being reduced to vulnerability, submissiveness, and immaturity.⁸⁴ Such criticism, while important, underestimates the complexity of aesthetic concepts like (girlish) beauty and cuteness. These can indeed be powerful.

THE SPARKLING AND PUISSANT PRINCESS:
SHŌJO FASHION AND EMPOWERMENT

Milk's hyperbolically shōjo fashion styles may appear to some to be endorsing a vulnerable, fragile, and passive mode of femininity. Yet those same aesthetics can also make those who prefer such styles feel comfortable, exultant, and empowered, giving them the strength to stand any affliction or unglamorous event that may occur in their everyday lives. This idea is further supported by the fact that what we wear affects how we feel and to some degree how we behave.⁸⁵ Irrespective of gender and age, dress strongly affects and influences our physical and psychological senses, notably confidence and pleasure.⁸⁶ The detachment of sexuality from shōjo fashion, then, may allow the wearer to appreciate girlish femininity without being much constrained from social trammels that are likely attached to "womanhood" or "maturity."

Arguably, Milk's fashion philosophy delineates a complex subject position of the *shōjo* in contemporary Japanese culture, subtly inhabiting the middle space of a set of continuums; fragility and vigorosness, sexualized and modest femininities, and childlike-naivety and mature womanhood. It should be noted that a range of fashion styles that evoke different kinds of shōjo images may exist on the extent to question whether or not such images are male oriented/objectified or female maneuvered. Yet, it seems clear that if we can speak at all of the shōjo fashion and concepts this chapter investigated, it subverts, even if temporarily, the stereotyped and often derogatory views assigned to girlish femininity, and instead allows young women to celebrate a sense of autonomy. In this sense, shōjo fashion as epitomized by Milk, and influenced by such romantic, maidenly figures like Alice and the ballerina, gives prominence to the power and significance of what are conventionally regarded as "girlish" or shōjo aesthetic.

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40. Bookservice.co.jp, “Interview: Yamazaki Madoka,” June 2005, Accessed January 30, 2015, http://www.bookservice.jp/layout/bs/common/html/interview/int0506_23.html.
41. *Olive*, April 18 issue (1986): 60.
42. *non-no*, vol. 15–6 (2010): 22, 48–49.
43. *non-no*, January issue (2016): 50–54.
44. Masafumi Monden, “In Praise of Sheer Perfection: Ballet, Clothing and Japanese Culture,” in *Dance and Fashion*, ed. V Steele (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 309–351.
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46. Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims: Dress at the Court of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 172, 192.

47. Peter McNeil, "The Appearance of Enlightenment: Refashioning the Elites," in *The Enlightenment World*, eds. M. Fitzpatrick, P. Jones, C. Knellwolf, and I. McCalmn (Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge, 2004), 395. Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims*, 172.
48. Ewing, *History of Children's Costume*, 94.
49. Chazin-Bennahum, *The Lure of Perfection*, 238.
50. Juliette Peers, "Ballet and Girl Culture," in *Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia Vol. 1*, eds. M. Mitchell and J. Reid-Walsh (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008), 73.
51. Miyako Yoshida, *Isshun no eien* [Moments Preserved] (Tokyo: Sekai Bunkasha, 2011), 82–83; *Asahi Weekly*, "Rōzan'ne 2i Maeda Sae ga tokkun shita igai na basho towa?" (The Unexpected Space Where Sae Maeda, the Runner-up at the Prix de Lausanne, Practiced?), February 16 (2014). Last accessed May 16, 2016, <http://dot.asahi.com/wa/2014021300066.html>.
52. Kyoto International Manga Museum, ed., *Baree manga: Eien naru utsukushisa* [Ballet Manga: Leap Above the Beauty] (Tokyo: Ōta Shuppan, 2013), 2.
53. E.g. *Olive*, May 3 issue (1986): 77–76; March 18 issue (1988): 35–41.
54. For example, February 2016: 76; May 2015, pp. 18–31, 38–43, 60–63.
55. See Masafumi Monden, "Layers of the Ethereal"; Stephen Gundle, *Glamour: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Jan Bardsley, "Girl Royalty: The 1959 Coronation of Japan's First Miss Universe," *Asian Studies Review* 32, no. 3 (2008): 375–391; Jan Bardsley, "Miss Japan on the Global Stage: The Journey of Itō Kinuko," in *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility and Labor in Japan*, eds. A. Freedman, L. Miller, and C.R. Yano (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 169–192; Michael Furmanovsky, "A Complex Fit," *Kokusai bunka kenkyū* 16 (2012): 55.
56. Monden "Layers of the Ethereal," 274–278.
57. Monden "Layers of the Ethereal," 277–278.
58. Pat Kirkham, "Dress, Dance, Dreams, and Desire: Fashion and Fantasy in Dance Hall," *Journal of Design History* 8, no. 3 (1995): 207–208.
59. Meredith Jones, *Skintight: An Anatomy of Cosmetic Surgery* (New York: Berg, 2008), 133.
60. Yukiko Takahashi, "Roman-ha baree ni okeru josei no imēji nitsuite" [Female Images in Ballet Romantique], *Gakushūin daigaku jinbunka-gaku ronshū*, 21 (2012): 192.
61. Théophile Gautier, *The Romantic Ballet as Seen by Théophile Gautier*, trans. Cyril W. Beaumont (New York: Books for Libraries, 1980 [1944]), 86.
62. Gautier, *The Romantic Ballet*, 16.
63. Evan Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology: Giselle, Act II," *Dance Chronicle* 10, no. 3 (1986): 295–296.

64. Milk, “Look Book,” last accessed January 30, 2015, <http://www.milk-web.net>.
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66. *Olive*, March 18 issue (1988): 38.
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70. Carolyn Stevens and Shuhei Hosokawa, “So Close and yet so Far: Humanizing Celebrity in Japanese Music Variety Shows, 1960–1990s,” in *Asian Media Productions*, ed. B. Moeran (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2001), 227–231.
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73. *spoon*, September, vol. 95 (2013): 29.
74. Samantha Holland, *Alternative Femininities: Body, Age and Identity* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), 58.
75. Holland, *Alternative Femininities*, 58.
76. Bardsley, “Miss Japan on the Global Stage,” 185.
77. Laura Miller, “Japan’s Cinderella Motif: Beauty Industry and Mass Culture Interpretations of a Popular Icon,” *Asian Studies Review* 32, no. 3 (2008): 393.
78. Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism*, 247; Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 186.
79. *spoon*, December, vol. 97 (2013): 31.
80. B.G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism*.
81. Godoy, *Style*, 37. Harajuku is a district in Shibuya ward in Tokyo prefecture, which has become known for youth fashion subcultures.
82. Godoy, *Style*, 38.
83. Milk, *Sparkling Girls*, 1.
84. See, for example: Reiko Koga, *Kawaii no teikoku* [The Empire of Kawaii] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2009), 206–207; Kimiko Akita, “Cuteness: The Sexual Commodification of Women in the Japanese Media,” in *Women and the Media*, eds. T. Carilli and J. Campbell (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005), 44–57.

85. Julia Twigg, *Fashion and Age: Dress, the Body and Later Life* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 22.
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Sakura ga meijiru—Unlocking the Shōjo Wardrobe: Cosplay, Manga, 2.5D Space

Emerald L. King

In the lead-up to Melbourne Supanova 2016, an Australian popular culture convention held every April since 2008, Clamwings, a guest cosplay artist¹ and judge, posted the following question on her public Facebook page: “it’s never too [late] to be a magical girl ... right?”² In preparation for her appearance at Supanova as a Cosplay Ambassador, Clamwings posted a “build log,” or album of progress pictures, on her Facebook page, which chronicled her construction of the new costume she was planning to wear to the event. Her question, regarding who can be a magical girl, stemmed from her decision to dress as a new version of CLAMP’s magical girl character Sakura, from *Kādo kyaputā Sakura* (Card Captor Sakura, 1996–2000; hereafter *Card Captor Sakura*), released to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the series. This ensemble—a pink dress trimmed with black pinstriped ribbons and stars, worn over a frothy white under-dress—is the epitome of shōjo or girlish chic: perfect

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for a young, tween magical girl. Is it possible then, for a real life cosplayer, one who may or may not be a shōjo, to portray this character?

This chapter seeks to explore how shōjo are clothed, with particular emphasis on how manga artists and writers have constructed, defined, and depicted *mahō* (magical) shōjo³ in their work. Attention will be paid to the ways in which shōjo-ness, especially magical shōjo-ness, is constructed through a character's age and/or clothing. This chapter will also look at how shōjo-ness is conveyed in fan activities linked to manga, such as cosplay and 2.5D theater productions. We will see that, as in manga source material, the pressure for the shōjo to dress in an age-appropriate manner is present in both cosplay spaces and on the stage of live action anime-inspired shows.

Clothing and costume are inherently linked to the ephemeral nature of shōjo and shōjo-ness. In an interview from 2010, manga author and illustrator Sakumi Yoshino notes that, of the key differences between shōjo manga and *shōnen* or *seinen* manga (boys' or youths' comics⁴), the most obvious is the frequency with which characters change their clothing or costumes.⁵ While a shōnen or seinen character only ever seems to gain a new set of clothes or hairstyle as he gains new powers or abilities, a shōjo manga character might be depicted in a new outfit every few frames. This is particularly visible in magical girl series in which the girl protagonists' clothing changes not only from day to day and scene to scene, but also from mundane fashion items to "magical reveal" outfits or uniforms.

This revolving closet is particularly visible in *Card Captor Sakura*, in which the eponymous protagonist regularly changes not only her fashionable street clothes but also her "battle outfits." The sheer breadth of sartorial scope of *Card Captor Sakura*, as well as other magical girl series such as Naoko Takeuchi's *Bishōjo senshi Sērā Mūn* (Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon, 1991–1997; henceforth *Sailor Moon*), and Shaft/Aniplex's *Mahō shōjo Madoka Magika* (Puella Magi Magica Madoka, 2011; henceforth *Madoka*), make these series particularly appealing source materials for cosplay practitioners. Accordingly, this chapter will focus on these three series.

DRESSING THE MAGICAL BODY

The title for this chapter is taken from the magical phrase used by Sakura throughout *Card Captor Sakura*:

Yami (Hoshi) no chikara o himeshi kagi yo. Shin no sugata o ware no mae ni shimese. Keiyaku no moto Sakura ga meijiru

(lit. “Key that hides the power of the darkness (stars), show your true form before me. I, Sakura, command you under our contract.”)

Unlike other series, such as *Sailor Moon* or *Madoka*, in which such a command phrase would unlock a transformation sequence from ordinary girl to magical heroine, Sakura is unique in that her phrase unlocks her magical power but does not otherwise change her appearance. The call for the key, which transforms into a magical wand or stick, to show its true form is somewhat poignant, given that Sakura, as a magical girl without a set magical uniform, is always in her own true form—she is Superman without the need for Clark Kent.

Sakura is supplied with numerous costumes by her best friend, Tomoyo. This element of somewhat mundane, handmade costuming (there are no helpful mice or fairy godmothers here) mixed with magic is what makes *Card Captor Sakura* a particularly alluring series to discuss in conjunction with the fandom activity of cosplay. The image of Tomoyo slaving over her sewing machine the day before an epic magical battle, trying to finish an outfit in time (something which is never actually depicted during the manga or anime), is easily interchangeable with any cosplay practitioner trying desperately to finish their costume before a fan convention or event.⁶ Indeed it is this do-it-yourself element that makes manga-related fandom activities, such as (but not limited to) cosplay, so attractive to fan practitioners.⁷

Age and aging is fraught for magical girls of all kinds. It should be noted that the mahō shōjo’s battles with magical forces are juxtaposed with her everyday struggles as she grows up and enters puberty. Even though Sakura, and indeed other magical girls such as Usagi (Serena)⁸ from *Sailor Moon*, is shown going through these pubescent struggles, she never matures. Even in flash forwards and sequels, these young women are kept young.

Aged 10–14 in *Card Captor Sakura*, Sakura is reprised as a 14-year-old in the 2003–2009 manga *Tsubasa: Rezaboa Kuronikuru* (Tsubasa: RESERVoIR CHRoNiCLE) and again in the series sequel *Tsubasa World Chronicle: Nirai Kanai-hen* (Tsubasa: WoRLD CHRoNiCLE—Nirai kanai, 2014 onwards). In 2016, CLAMP announced that they will be producing a sequel to *Card Captor Sakura* set in middle school with yet another 14-year-old Sakura.

Kādo kyaputā Sakura: Kuria kādo (*Card Captor Sakura: Clear Card*) was released as an ongoing manga in 2016, with an anime version released in early 2018. We will see that in both of the *Tsubasa* series, Sakura's aging is complicated and linked heavily to the plot. In counterpoint to Sakura's youth is the ageless "time witch" or sorceress Yūko Ishihara, from CLAMP's *xxx horikku* (xXx holic, 2003–2011) and *xxx horikku rei* (xXx holic—Return, 2014 onwards), a crossover character who also features in *Tsubasa*.

In many magical girl series, adult women are often dangerous or evil.⁹ While Sailor Moon and her fellow pretty soldiers are slender girls, many of the villains they encounter are sensual older women. Like Sakura, Usagi/Sailor Moon is shown aging from ages 14–16, going from a schoolgirl, to a child bride. Throughout *Sailor Moon* there are several brief flash forwards which show Usagi as Neo-Queen Serenity, but these visions are usually given through the eyes of a younger child: Chibi Moon, Sailor Moon's daughter from another timeline. In these sequences, Neo-Queen Serenity is a construct (mother/queen) rather than a character. Indeed, the character design of Neo-Queen Serenity is almost interchangeable with Usagi's own mother, Queen Serenity. In order to highlight the dangerous nature of the adult, female body, and the ways in which this body is showcased by costume, two figures from *Sailor Moon* are of interest here: Queen Beryl and Esmeraude.¹⁰

Queen Beryl is introduced as a Dark Kingdom (Negaverse) general in the anime and manga versions of *Sailor Moon*. Under her command, a series of monsters is sent to attack Sailor Moon, all of whom are women who appear to be in their mid to late 20s. In her anime and manga appearances, Queen Beryl's voluptuous body is clothed in a black/purple strapless gown with a low neckline that clings to every womanly curve; her red hair is barely contained by a tall crown; and her hands are tipped by long nails colored a poisonous purple. In the 2004 live action television adaptation of *Sailor Moon*, *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* (henceforth PGSM), Queen Beryl is the leader of the Dark Kingdom, not a mere general. In the live action version, prior to becoming queen, Beryl's gown is a simple grey, but upon attaining the higher rank, she wears a purple gown decorated with feathers, sporting golden filigree across the shoulders and down the intricate, plunging neckline. This is in direct contrast to the rather modest neckline of the suits worn by the Sailor *Senshi* (warriors).

Not only is Beryl an antagonist set on destroying Tokyo, in PGSM she poses a threat to the romantic relationship between Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Kamen (Tuxedo Mask). Given that this timeless love is at

the very heart of the series, Beryl's advances towards Tuxedo Kamen are for more threatening than her attacks targeting Tokyo and planet Earth. Towards the end of the season, earlier incarnations of Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Kamen are awakened—the Moon Princess and Prince Endymion of Earth. Beryl plots to make Tuxedo Kamen/Endymion her king, destroying Sailor Moon/the Moon Princess in the process. Her plan is eventually thwarted when Endymion seals her in his body and entreats Princess Sailor Moon to kill him/them with his own sword.

Queen Beryl appears only in the first story arc of the anime and manga. The arc ends with the total destruction of the Dark Kingdom, paving the way for new villains in the following series. In the second half of series two of *Sailor Moon*, *Bishōjo senshi Sērā Mūn R* (Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon R; Romance), the main antagonists are the Black Moon Clan. Esmeralde is the second member of the family to appear.¹¹ Her standard outfit is of a body hugging “little black dress,” paired with black knee high stiletto boots, a necklace made of three fist-sized cabochon emeralds strung on black pearls, and a red feather fan. Like Queen Beryl, whom Endymion tricks into a deadly embrace, Esmeralde is eventually destroyed by love,¹² whereas many other characters are healed by it. The Ayakashi Sisters, four junior members of the Black Moon Clan, mirror the four Sailor Scouts: Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Venus. Rather than being destroyed, each sister is eventually healed by Sailor Moon. During this process, their sexy wardrobe of high cut leotards, tutus, and armored breast plates—all of which reference the 1992 Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter collections of, for example, Mugler and Christian Lacroix Haute Couture—are replaced by comfortably pastel 1990s “good girl” fashions.¹³

While the Ayakashi Sisters mirror the Sailor Scouts, Wicked Lady, a teenaged Chibi Moon, becomes the dark version of Sailor Moon who, in her sheer gown of black and dark maroon, challenges Sailor Moon and Endymion's pure love with a much more sensual one. This gown was heavily inspired by Yves Saint Laurent's 1993 advertising campaign for their Opium perfume, featuring Kate Moss.¹⁴ The ad ran with tag lines such as “sheer sensuality” and “sensuality to the extreme.”¹⁵ Chibi Moon's childhood affection for her (future) father challenges Usagi/Sailor Moon from the moment the younger girl falls out of the sky, brandishing a hand gun. The antagonism between Sailor Moon and Chibi Moon, born from the similarities between the two, is exaggerated when Chibi Moon is transformed into Wicked Lady. However, as with

the Ayakashi Sisters, Wicked Lady is eventually healed and returns to her “true” form of dark blue-clad, kindergarten schoolgirl.

A MAGICAL GIRL’S WARDROBE

The main narrative arc of *Card Captor Sakura* sees Sakura and her companions hunting down a deck of cards called Clow Cards. Each card takes on a different persona—some helpful, some merely playful, and some purely malignant—and the chase for each card forms the main action in each manga chapter or anime episode. This episodic, “monster of the day,” format draws heavily from Takeuchi’s earlier *Sailor Moon*.¹⁶ Sakura’s costumes are tailor-made for each situation by Tomoyo, who draws upon the resources of her mother’s toy company in a way that almost parodies the various Qs of the Bond/007 franchise.

Each of Sakura’s battle outfits—indeed, the entirety of her wardrobe—is awash with a system of codified signs and symbolic meaning. In the manga, the very page layout with its fashion plates and full body character establishment shots is filled with “ribbons, frills or even lyrical word chains” which Masuko Honda states are “symbols of girlhood.”¹⁷ The choice of accessories and design of each outfit is carefully chosen to foreshadow the adversary in any given story. Indeed, the frilled clothing worn by young girls in CLAMP’s manga are more than just a generic trait. We will see that in these series costume is not only a marker of gender, age, and ability, but that it is also used to develop character and story. CLAMP’s costume and textile designs are constantly illustrated with self-referential motifs that point to other CLAMP series as well as highlighting character traits or linking characters together in groups.

When Sakura is hunting down the “Fly” card, which flies through the town as a giant bird, Tomoyo dresses her in an outfit decorated with wings (a standard CLAMP motif). Later, near Valentine’s Day, Tomoyo provides an outfit with a love heart theme. However, Tomoyo’s designs are not purely decorative, they are utilitarian as well. When Sakura comes up against the “Thunder” card (a lion-like creature formed of bolts of electricity) Tomoyo produces an outfit that fans have since labeled the “rubber-kitty-suit.” While fanciful in design, Tomoyo explains that she constructed the outfit, a black maid style dress with kitten ears and tail, from non-conductive materials. The rubber skirts and kitten ears provide a link between the feline nature of the Thunder’s released form, while protecting her from the card’s various lightning-based attacks.

Ever prepared, Tomoyo even brings replacement costumes, or backup gadgets. When Sakura is nearly drowned in the pursuit of the “Illusion” card, Tomoyo provides her with a new suit of clothing covered in bows and flowers, a dress which is, according to Honda’s descriptions of *hira-hira* girlhood,¹⁸ quintessentially shōjo.

Like Sakura, Usagi/Sailor Moon is a young school girl who stumbles across a magical power—in this case her distant past as the Princess of the Moon Kingdom. Sailor Moon might not gain a new costume for each villain that she faces, but her uniform, like the color-coded outfits worn by her fellow pretty soldiers, evolves and updates as she gains more power; starting as a simple parody of a school girl uniform, and eventually gaining angel wings and a tiara.

It should be noted that unlike the Sailor Scouts, Sakura does not always wear a special outfit when capturing the cards: she is shown casting spells in her school uniform, sports clothes, and street clothes. However, even in these more mundane-seeming ensembles, Sakura is a beribboned shōjo. CLAMP felt that having a girl “wear the same outfit all the time” is “pretty sad.”¹⁹ Even Sakura’s school uniform has numerous variants including winter and summer versions, an overcoat, various sports outfits, swimming costumes, as well as her cheerleading outfits which consist of both practice and performance ensembles.

DRAWING GIRLS IN BOYS’ COMICS

The artwork in *Card Captor Sakura* is whimsical with delicate shading that is as light and frothy as Sakura’s many petticoated outfits. In contrast, the artwork in the *Tsubasa* chronicles, the series in which Sakura’s character is reprised, is much darker, with stronger unbroken lines. The change in artwork is partly due to a change in genre: unlike *Card Captor Sakura*, which was published as a shōjo title, *Tsubasa* was published in *Shūkan Shōnen Magazine*, a boys’ manga title which has been in publication since the 1950s. In the same interview introduced above, Sakumi points out that the genre constraints of shōnen and seinen manga demand a less intuitive and much more rigid page layout:

Men tend to think in a precise, ‘1 comes before 2, 2 comes before 3’ sort of way. Women are different though. They can take in the entirety of a page just by looking at it [...]. The frames [of seinen manga] are separated into squares as much as possible. In shōjo manga the distribution of frames

is peculiar in that whole pages often don't have any partitions. But women readers are able to grasp the whole of an image at once.²⁰

In keeping with a more rigid layout, the artwork in boys' and youths' comics can also be crisper, more dynamic, and less dreamy than that of a shōjo series.

The page layouts that Yoshino suggests are so confusing to readers who are not used to shōjo manga go beyond mere stylistic conventions. Rather, the mix of free-floating prose and speech or thought bubbles, white space, full body illustrations of various characters, multi-layered facial close-ups, and rays of light, abstract flowers or swirls,²¹ combine to create and define the very spaces wherein the action of shōjo narratives take place. Mizuki Takahashi calls this practice "spatialization" based on the work of "canonical" manga writer Shōtarō Ishinomori. By utilizing this kind of collage-like "spatialization," shōjo manga panels no longer show simply the passage of time. Instead, the decorative elements encourage the reader to linger on the page so that rather than rushing through the manga narrative they are permitted to completely immerse themselves in the character's feelings, dreams, hopes and desires.²² These elements are reflected in everything from the clothing that characters wear to their physical design (facial features, height, build et cetera).

The *Tsubasa* narrative is multi-dimensional and jumps between several worlds in the CLAMP universe, in which characters are featured in a manner that is reminiscent of Osamu Tezuka "Star System" or Leiji Matsumoto's "Leiji-verse."²³ Not only is Sakura reprised, but she is also joined by her family and friends, such as Tomoyo, and her love interest, Syaoran.²⁴ Each separate world has its own variant of each character. Entangled with this narrative is that of *xXx holic*, which was published concurrently as a tie-in or crossover series; either could be read independently, but in order to understand the full, complex story, readers had to be familiar with both series. The change in art style and genre heralds a change in Sakura's age—she is now a young teenager—and reveals new elements to her personality and abilities. In the *Tsubasa* narrative there are actually three characters who are depicted with the *Card Captor Sakura* character design and who are all called Sakura.

For the majority of the manga series, "Sakura" refers to a clone of an original Princess Sakura who does not make her appearance until chapter 189 of *Tsubasa: RESERVoIR CHRoNiCLE*. Both of these Sakuras are 14 years old. However, in keeping with the rule that aging is detrimental

to the shōjo, one dies and the other is eventually trapped in a dream realm where she is frozen in time for seven years. The sequel, *Tsubasa: WoRLD CHRoNiCLE*, starts with Syaoran as a 23-year-old and Sakura still a teenager. *Card Captor Sakura* Sakura appears only in dreams and is eventually replaced in a twist of timelines by Clone Sakura.

The motif of a treasure hunt (the Cards in *Card Captor Sakura*) is repeated in *Tsubasa: RESERVoIR CHRoNiCLE* as Sakura and Syaoran journey through various worlds searching for her memories. These memories take the form of fluffy white feathers which, along with frequently occurring CLAMP motifs such as cherry (*sakura*) blossoms and wings, are also used throughout the *Tsubasa* narrative. These elements lend a delicate edge to the shōnen style. As in *Card Captor Sakura*, these motifs are subtly incorporated into the clothing worn by each character in order to further the storyline; *tsubasa* is Japanese for wing. This symbolism culminates when it is revealed that Princess Sakura's real name is Tsubasa, and that she shares this name with Syaoran, who has also been using a false name; together they make a complete pair of wings.

The change of genre from shōjo manga to manga shōnen dictates that, in addition to a change in line style, there is a reduction in the frequency with which characters change their costumes. Rather than one or more new outfits each story, Sakura and company only receive a new outfit when they enter a new world. For the majority of the narrative Clone/Princess Sakura stays in the same outfit of pink and white that seems to be of Arabian or Middle Eastern influence. The frothy skirts of ten-year-old Sakura have been replaced with a midriff-baring fortune teller or belly dancer outfit, decorated with golden coins and flowing veils. It is in this outfit that Sakura appears in *xXx holic*. At the beginning of the intertwined narratives of *Tsubasa* and *xXx holic* Sakura collapses and her memories/soul scatter. Syaoran breaks through the barriers to the world of *xXx holic* and begs Yūko, a powerful witch, to give him the power to restore Sakura's memories and stop her from dying.

ALWAYS-A-GIRL

Whereas Sakura is shown to age, at least partially, Yūko does not. Years prior to Princess Sakura's own embalming in time, Yūko is frozen in time by the magician Clow Reed, the same magician who created the Clow Cards in *Card Captor Sakura*. Yūko's transient state is continually referenced in the butterfly motifs that CLAMP surrounds her with.

Whether in jewelry, a textile pattern, or an obi sash on a kimono tied in the shape of a butterfly, Yūko is rarely depicted without one, even if it is just in the patterns made by the smoke from her ever-present *kiseru* pipe—an adult version of the *hirahira* strands of ribbons and lace found in *Card Captor Sakura*. In an interview given in 2006 at Anime Expo, a Californian convention held in America since 1992, CLAMP explained that the butterfly symbolizes both the soul (reminiscent of wings in *Tsubasa*) and transformation.²⁵

When we first meet Yūko, she is sprawled in a rose-patterned kimono, tied so that it reveals her long legs and décolletage (no mean feat when wearing kimono). Her height, age and curvaceous figure are the complete opposite to Sakura's short, flat-chested frame. Even their coloring are at odds: Yūko's long black hair and red eyes as opposed to (all of the) Sakura's short honey brown hair and green eyes. However, like the younger Sakura in the *Card Captor* manga, Yūko is rarely seen in the same outfit twice. The shōjo lace, ribbons and bows that Tomoyo dressed Sakura in are still present in Yūko's wardrobe, only now they denote a dangerous sensuality that was lacking from the world of *Card Captor Sakura*.

As we have seen, in *Sailor Moon* adult sensuality is something usually reserved for antagonists such as Queen Beryl or Esmeraude. Sensuality of older figures is something that is curiously absent from *Card Captor Sakura*. Sakura's mother dies before the series begins. Like *xXx holic*'s Yūko, Sakura's mother is eternally ageless, depicted only in the photos from her career as a teen model that are displayed shrine-like around the house.²⁶ Even older characters are either genderless or de-sexed in some way. Ruby Moon, a character introduced first as an antagonist in second series of both the anime and manga, is a genderless construct.²⁷ In her true form, she wears a black cheongsam-like tunic over flowing white skirts. This ensemble is further accented by a large pair of black and magenta butterfly wings that she can use to fly with. Ruby Moon chooses to use feminine pronouns, as well as to disguise herself as a school girl because women's clothing and speech is "cuter."

In *Card Captor Sakura*, the *Tsubasa* chronicles, and *xXx holic*, the aging process for women and girl characters is replaced by a gain in magical power that is again reflected in the clothing designs worn by the magical girl protagonist.

Shōjo manga, and indeed shōjo culture as a whole, has always looked to the West, especially Europe and America, for a sense of the exotic.

These far-off locales present the creators of shōjo manga with a fairy-tale-like playground in which anything is possible.²⁸ The setting of a boarding school in a foreign country or a spaceship in a science fiction world, as was common in Golden Age manga shōjo written by the *Hana no 24nen-gumi* (Magnificent 49ers or Year 24 Group²⁹), demonstrates yet another incarnation of the shōjo defined by Honda in “The Genealogy of *Hirahira*.” Honda talks of a restricted space accessible only to shōjo—a place “redolent with the imagined fragrance of hot-house freesias,” where time runs differently³⁰—a key point given how the passing of time effects both Sakura and Yūko. This is perhaps most visible in the character of Chibi Moon, who at first appears to be a young girl of 5, but is canonically 900 years old. For whatever reason, she has stopped aging in her preschooler form. It is only after her adventures as Wicked Lady, which in turn lead to her becoming a trainee Sailor Scout, that she begins to age again.

While shōjo manga in general may look to the West, the magical girl narratives of *Sailor Moon* and *Card Captor Sakura* appear to stay closer to home. *Sailor Moon* is mostly set in current day Tokyo, while *Card Captor Sakura* is set firmly in Sakura’s quintessentially Japanese school and surrounding suburbs. In these stories, the exclusive shōjo space occurs in school yards and night time streets—fighting evil by moonlight, indeed. Rather than looking to the West for all of their clothing and style influence, it seems that as characters, particularly mages, gain power, their clothing becomes increasingly “Oriental” in design.

In *Card Captor Sakura*, Sakura’s “battle outfits” drew on a wide range of inspirations, including Western-looking party dresses, kimono, and Chinese qipao or cheongsam. As Sakura is only learning how to use her magic in this series it makes sense in the lexicon of CLAMP costume that she would not always wear magical, oriental garments. Consider, in contrast, that when Syaoran makes his first appearance he is wearing his family’s traditional Chinese/Hong Kongese “mage” outfit and carrying a kung fu-style *jian* sword. He initially seems to be a much more powerful magician than Sakura, and his knowledge of the Clow Cards is much more extensive.³¹ Sakura’s increased control over her powers is reflected in the wardrobe she wears in *Tsubasa*. As noted above, Sakura exchanges her Western-style frilled dresses for a vaguely eastern outfit straight out of a movie adaptation of *1001 Arabian Nights*. This fortune teller garb is a visual expression of *Tsubasa* Sakura’s ability to see the future and

foretell dreams. Following this format, Yūko's various kimono and qipao mark her as a powerful magician. For those literate in CLAMP's costume designs, her initial costume, the rose kimono, is a sign of her magic ability. This is reinforced when her next outfit is a body hugging cheongsam. Similarly, when Clow Reed (arguably the most powerful mage across all three series as the author of the magic system in *Card Captor Sakura*, the father of a nation in *Tsubasa* and the controller of time itself in *xxxholic*) makes an appearance, he is always garbed in Chinese scholar's robes.

While Sakura is shown to age throughout *Card Captor Sakura* and *Tsubasa*, it is a process that is rigorously controlled and codified, and even restricted to some scant three/four years. Even in the pages of a shōnen comic, she is still very much clothed in shōjo finery: her fortune teller outfit is in the pinks and creams of her namesake blossom and her alternate ensembles reference the battle costumes from *Card Captor Sakura*. For Yūko, while her clothing hints at her shōjo past, without the ability to age, the Time Witch has no future. Aging poses a threat to both Sakura and Yūko; for Sakura, it spells an end to her girlhood identity—perhaps this is the root of *Tsubasa* Sakura's memory loss and collapse; while for Yūko, starting the aging process would result in an Urashima-like death. This problem of aging is one that plagues other magical girls, such as the pretty soldiers in *Sailor Moon* and their womanly antagonists. It is also something that poses a serious challenge for the actresses and cosplay practitioners who set out to portray them.

During the 6-year run of the *Sailor Moon* manga, Usagi ages from 14 to 16, staying a schoolgirl to match her *seifuku* (sailor suited) alter ego. Like Sakura and Yūko, Usagi's aging is also forcibly controlled. The 20th anniversary of the manga in 2012 saw a reissue of the comics with new covers as well as a reboot of the 1992–1997 anime, which was completely redrawn as *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn–Kurusitaru* (Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon: Crystal, 2014). At a time when every other Japanese 20-year-old comes of age,³² Sailor Moon was forced back to her 14-year-old form and re-drawn with bigger eyes, dewier lips, slimmer wrists and an all over more *moe* (affective³³) appearance.

Sailor Moon Crystal keeps the formulaic nature of the 1990s anime while aiming to be more faithful to the manga source material. The high point of each anime episode is the vanquishing of the monster of the day; a sequence that begins with Sailor Moon's transformation, and culminates with the delivery of the catch phrase: "*Tsuki ni kawatte, oshōki yo!*"

(On behalf of the moon, I will punish you!). In the 1992–1997 series, this phrase was delivered by a resolute Sailor Moon, pointing straight to the camera, and staring directly at the antagonists (and the viewing audience). In *Sailor Moon Crystal* (particularly season 1), the muscles of Sailor Moon’s hands and arms are less tense; her index finger points to the side, and her gaze, too, drifts off screen. It is apparent that in *Crystal*, Sailor Moon is more *moe* than magical girl.

Deborah Shamoan, in her work on anime spaces, points out that *moe* characters act as “lures” that draw in the audience by “enliven[ing] the story” and fanning the flames of “desire.”³⁴ Magical girl series were once aimed solely at young girls but the addition of *moe* elements has literally re-drawn the genre for a male audience.³⁵ Shamoan describes *Mahō shōjo ririkaru Nanoha* (Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha, 2009–2011) as the first *moe* magical girl, but she was quickly followed by series such as *Mahō Shōjo Madoka Magika*.³⁶ Like *Nanoha*, *Madoka* was aired as an anime which was then quickly followed by manga, novels, films and games. The “element of maturity” that Takeuchi originally brought to shōjo manga with the creation of *Sailor Moon*³⁷ has been subtly erased in the re-draw, while the small shōjo space that Honda discusses, the “beribboned room,”³⁸ has been irrevocably altered.

Indeed, *moe* series may be even harsher on their aging protagonists than other mahō shōjo series. While on the surface, the series appears to be an ordinary mahō shōjo series, Madoka questions and satirizes the magical girl genre in a vicious series of time jumps and skips that sees characters brutally murdered and driven to the brink of sanity. Madoka and her friends fight monster of the day-style witches while clothed in the frills and flourishes of young magical girls. Madoka, her pink hair in twin pigtailed tied with red ribbons, is dressed in pink with creamy white ruffled skirts. Her friends are clad in a spectrum of purple, red, yellow, and blue.³⁹ In contrast, the witches are nightmare conglomerates of torn fabric and geometric shapes. It is eventually revealed that the witches that Madoka and her companions fight against are magical girls who have grown up. Rather than simply being frozen in time as a punishment for aging, the magical girls of *Madoka Magika*—future witches and deities—are destroyed. These witches—in a cruel parody of the pathological fears that society engrains in women by setting the daughter/girl up against the mother/woman, something we have already seen in *Sailor Moon*—are cut down by their successors.⁴⁰

LIVE ACTION MAGICAL GIRLS

In addition to two separate anime adaptations, and a number of feature film movies, *Sailor Moon* also boasts a live action television adaptation, 2003s–2004s *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*, introduced above, a slew of musical stage shows from the mid 1990s to 2005s, and Japan 2.5D Musical Association shows from the mid 2000s to the present day. In keeping with the ongoing *moe*-fication of *Sailor Moon*, the 20th anniversary of the series was also commemorated by two collaborations with mail-order lingerie company Peach John released in 2014 and 2015. Both collaborations included several lines of bras and underpants as well as two different sets of “costumed” lingerie.⁴¹ Included in the first release was a Sailor Scout “cosplay” that consisted of color-coded underpants and bra, with the distinctive oversized bow, choker and sailor collar of a pretty soldier as accessories.

The Japanese language usage of “cosplay” includes not only fan costumes, but also any sort of Halloween-type fancy dress, and costumes of an adult or fetishist nature.⁴² Cosplay is inherently linked to pinup girls in Japan; *gurabia* (gravure)⁴³ idols, B-grade actresses, and pop idols will often release cosplay photo-books which flirt with soft-core pornography. Indeed, the actress in *PGSM* who portrayed Queen Beryl, Aya Sugimoto (born 1968), is one such *gurabia* idol, *tarento* and pop idol. When the 1992–1997 anime series of *Sailor Moon* drew to a close, it was replaced by *Shin Kyūti Hanī* (Shin Cutey Honey). The series was a mahō shōjo reboot of a 1970s seinen anime and manga, in which the titular Honey transforms because of science, rather than magic. It was the first series to include an onscreen transformation, mostly so as to give the audience a flash of Honey’s naked body. This transformation sequence would later become the ribbons, flowers and angel feathers of Sailor Moon’s own transformation sequences. There are two live action adaptations of *Kyūti Hanī* (*Cutey Honey*, 2004 and *Cutey Honey: The Live*, 2007) which both star *gurabia* idols.

We have already seen that the shōjo thrives inside the constructed and confined space of the small room. To return to Honda again:

[T]here comes a day when the girl realizes that she herself is a shōjo, a day she also learns she can never be a boy, a shōnen. From that time it is as if she spins a small cocoon around herself wherein to slumber and dream as a

pupa—consciously separating herself from the outer world. Here she lives life to her own time, a time that can never be lost.⁴⁴

It is my contention that both the stage of anime/manga musical live action shows, and carious cosplay spaces make up the realm of 2.5D.

The “shōjo space” as described by Honda, is a dreamlike world filled with ribbons and flowers: a place to safely enjoy “frivolous” shōjo pursuits such as reading books, manga and magazines. This space is strange mix of the liminal and the mainstream, reflecting what happens in the outside world, but also shielding the shōjo inhabitant.⁴⁵ This shōjo space can be expanded to include shōjo-related acts of fandom, such as cosplay. In this way, the shōjo space now expands to include the popular culture convention floor, the cosplay competition stage, the lens of a photographer’s camera, and the studio or staged backdrop used for cosplay photo shoots. The 2.5D stage is an equally liminal space occurring halfway between the 2D world of literary texts, manga pages, and fashion magazines and the harsh 3D reality of the “real world.”⁴⁶ *Sailor Moon*, as we have seen, can be tracked from the 2D world of manga and anime to the 3D “real” world of sexy themed lingerie and other branded merchandise.

In the same way that the writers and illustrators of manga, along with their editors and their readers, control the aging process of magical girls, the age of the actors in live action and stage adaptations of shōjo titles is also heavily policed. At the *Global Symposium on 2.5D Studies* held by Yokohama National University in February 2015, Makoto Matsuda, the director of the Japan 2.5 Dimensional Musical Association,⁴⁷ explained part of the rationale behind the casting of the shows. He pointed out that in most cases, fans wanted to see their favorite anime or manga character, not a particular actor. As long as the show’s costuming remains faithful to the source material, the musical’s troupe of actors can be continually cycled out and replaced once they reach their use-by date.

Aging is an issue not only for professional actors in musicals or working as amusement park “face characters.” It is also a huge consideration for cosplay practitioners regardless of their gender or nationality. While many women cosplay practitioners get their start as young, shōjo-age girls in their mid to late teens, it seems that, in Japan at least, many cosplay practitioners opt to “graduate” from their hobby, becoming respectable adults when they reach a certain age.⁴⁸ There are notable exceptions to this rule,⁴⁹ and trends in cosplay will continue to change as more fans engage with the hobby. Outside of Japan many cosplayers are refusing to

age gracefully, dressing as shōjo and magical girls well into their late 20s and 30s—the very issue at the heart of Clamwing’s question from the start of this chapter.

Age is an ongoing topic that features on multiple cosplay and discussion groups across the internet. The responses to this problem can generally be separated into two answers based solely on age. For younger cosplayers, those in their early 20s and younger, there is a consensus that can be best summed up by the ideal of *nakayoshi* (playing well with others): cosplayers should feel free to dress as whichever character they please regardless of their age, gender, nationality, race, height or weight. While at face value this attitude seems encompassing and welcoming it elides a climate in fandom culture where plus-sized, unconventionally attractive, or aging cosplay practitioners are routinely mocked and ridiculed on messaging boards such as 4chan or *nichaneru*. Discussions by older cosplay groups, such as Older Cosplayers New Zealand⁵⁰ seem to focus on self-regulated cosplay experiences and choices. It should be noted that cosplay practices and attitudes differ from country to country, and this is an area that needs more research.

Perhaps one way to look at performing shōjo-ness by non-shōjo—whether by cosplay practitioners who are above shōjo age, or by cross dressing crossplayers—is to compare it to the transition from shōjo manga to so-called *rediizu komikkusu* (ladies’ comics) made by manga authors and readers in the 1980s and 1990s. As the first generation of shōjo manga readers and writers grew from adolescence into adulthood, the range of manga grew to accommodate the newly developed tastes of adult readers, including concerns with issues such as marriage, family, and sex.

In her 2002 collection, *L-Bungaku Kanzen Dokuhon* (A perfect guide book for L-Literature), Minako Saitō discusses ladies’ comics under the banner of ‘*L-bungaku*’—“popular literature targeted at young (and not-so-young) women,” where “L” (*eru*⁵¹) stands for Literature, Lady, Love, and Liberation.⁵² *L-bungaku* builds on the codes of “girlhood” that were formed in the shōjo collective culture featured in media such as magazines, manga, dramas and novels and which has flourished since the 1980s. For our purposes here, *L-bungaku*, which has its roots in Japanese girls’ culture but which encompasses more adult genres and authors, is a useful frame to look at cosplayers who may no longer, if they ever did, fit the shōjo mould. There is a sense of longing and nostalgia in L products that resonates with Honda’s observation that post

shōjo there is a feeling of “once a girl” and “no longer a girl”: “like a toccata and fugue [...] the different keys of these two language registers resonate in mutual harmony.”⁵³ Indeed, in recent times, the Japanese term *reiyā* (layer) has been adopted for cosplay practitioners (as both a shortening of cosplayer and in reference to the multiple layers in a given outfit) giving us a term for L-aged former shōjo—*Layer*.⁵⁴

While the potential for shōjo to age into Ladies is helpful for those who were once a girl, it is less useful in the context of crossplayers who may never have been shōjo to begin with. The term “crossplay” builds on the spread of “cosplay” and has, to some extent, replaced earlier term such as “cross-dressing,” while emphasizing that the act is only a temporary swap—a moment of “play.”⁵⁵

A survey held by DeviantArt group Cosplay Aus in 2009 showed that amongst women cosplay practitioners there was no clear cut preference in cosplaying either male or female characters. Indeed, for many of the respondents, crossplay was simply another skill to add to their arsenal, akin to pattern drafting, draping, stage make up, wig styling or prop construction.⁵⁶ Of the respondents who presented as male, crossplay (male to female) was described as something done only for “teh lulz.” This reflects a wider trend in crossplay globally in which participants either take on the guise of the pantomime dame with unshaven legs and beardy chins, or attempt to pass convincingly in their performance of the target gender through the use of makeup and changing their body shape through binding, padding, tucking, or stuffing.

It is as the pantomime dame that crossplayers are most notorious—in the early 2000s one American crossplayer gained lasting notoriety at Anime Central, a popular cultural convention held annually in Chicago, as Sailor Bubba (a Sailor Moon variant with goatee and short yellow pigtailed wig).⁵⁷ More recently, a cosplayer at Sydney convention OZ Comic-Con in July 2014 drew attention when he attended wearing a skimpy singlet top and white underpants as a hirsute Miley Cyrus from her “Wrecking Ball” video clip.⁵⁸ In Japan itself, bearded men in school-girl uniforms, namely Lady Beard and Sailor Suit Ojiisan, have been used by Waseda-juku, a school that focuses on TOEFL preparation, to promote their English language education.⁵⁹ These sailor-suited old men have become so prevalent that in November 2016 Tokyo Comic-Con initially attempted to ban male to female crossplay at their December popular culture convention,⁶⁰ possibly to deter an onslaught of bearded men in short schoolgirl outfits.

This is not the first time that cosplay in Japan has been regulated. Indeed, cosplay, as well as other fan or subcultural activities, has always been heavily (self) regulated with an aim to avoid causing offense or embarrassment for those not directly involved in any given event. Comic Market (Comiket), arguably Japan's biggest anime and popular cultural fan event, which centers around amateur and off-brand comics, is a major site for cosplay and cosplay practitioners. Each year it releases strict guidelines for cosplay practitioners which outline what sort of costumes are acceptable, and where these costumes may be worn and when.⁶¹ These guidelines also cover cosplay photography, demarking where photos may be taken.⁶² Cosplay practitioners must not travel to and from the event in costume and must dress on site. A fairly new edition to these guidelines is the statement that photographers must ask for a cosplay practitioner's permission before taking a photo, and banning "up skirt" or "low angle" shots⁶³—the ubiquitous panty shot. Comiket has always stated that these rules exist to protect cosplayers from photographers, something that has become increasingly necessary with the advent of hordes of male photographers kneeling and squatting with their cameras thrust upwards, macro lenses erect, surrounding cosplayers in short skirts.⁶⁴

CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter shōjo-ness has been explored in the pages of the magical girl comics and on the 2.5D real world space. Confined and defined by a delicate matrix of conventions, shōjo girlhood is a liminal state in which magical girls must not age and older women are a threat to be cut down or destroyed. Rather than aging, it is through a gain in power that advancement and experience are shown, and this is often reflected in the shōjo's wardrobe. Those magical girls who dare to age are punished, either by being frozen in time, as in *Tsubasa: RESERVoIR CHRoNiCLE* and *xXx holic*, or by being eradicated by their successors, as seen in *Madoka Magica*.

Several scholars have questioned the agency and empowerment of magical girls (Minako Saitō 1998, Susan Napier 2005, Anne Allison 2006),⁶⁵ and at first glance, the harsh restrictions on aging, and the relegation to a liminal space discussed in this chapter, may seem to validate these critics. However, as Kumiko Saito points out, "the shōjo phase" has been extended almost "infinitely."⁶⁶

It is evident that the shōjo space is an amorphous one that, while demarking a set area, can shift its boundaries and content in keeping with the girls or non-girls who inhabit it.

Rather than limiting, this can be seen as a commentary—why would a powerful shōjo want to “grow-up” and exchange her frilly wardrobe and battle outfits for the dark suiting of a career woman, or the apron of a good wife/wise mother? For real-life actresses and cosplay practitioners, shōjo-ness is a transient state that can exist only within certain spaces: the stage, the convention, the photo shoot. Outside of Japan, particularly in Australia and New Zealand, travelling to and from cosplay events in costume is part of the experience. Picking up fast food or a late night meal in costume is also a long-standing tradition: part of the enjoyment of which comes from the ludicrous nature of the situation: a magical girl walks into McDonalds and orders a Happy Meal.⁶⁷ Outside of the convention space, cosplay ceases to make sense. To return to Clamwing’s question, it is never too late to become a magical girl—it is simply a matter of being in the right time and place.

NOTES

1. Throughout this chapter I am using the terms cosplayer and cosplay practitioner interchangeably to refer to those who “do” cosplay. It should also be noted that “coser” has recently gained popularity within the online cosplay community (across several languages including English). The Japanese term “layer” (*reiyā*, *reiā*) will be examined later in the chapter.
2. Clamwings’ public Facebook album “Work in Progress—Sakura (20th Anniversary),” accessed April 2016, <https://web.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1218645908165233.1073741840.874045359291958&-type=3>.
3. Throughout this chapter the terms mahō shōjo and magical girl are used interchangeably.
4. Here shōjo, and are used as genre terms rather than a certain target demographic.
5. Emerald King and Lucy Fraser, trans., “An Interview with Sakumi Yoshino,” *U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal*, no. 38 (2010): 128.
6. Cosplay practitioners are notorious for leaving constructing their costumes to the last possible minute. This has resulted in many online stores, particularly costume or wig stores, posting warnings that shoppers should allow a decent delivery time for their goods before an event. See, for

- example, Melting Mirror, “When Cosplay Takes Over,” *Melting Mirror Cosblog* (November 8, 2015), accessed September 1, 2015, <http://www.meltingmirror.ca/cosblog/when-cosplay-takes-over>.
7. Roland Kelts, *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the US* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 147.
 8. Common English language translations are given in brackets.
 9. For more on this see, for example, Kathryn Hemmann, “Short Skirts and Superpowers: The Evolution of the Beautiful Fighting Girl,” *U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal* 47 (2014): 45–72
 10. Originally Midori no Esmeraude, various translations have rendered the name Emerald, Esmerauda, and Esmeralda.
 11. Most of the antagonists throughout *Sailor Moon* are named after precious stones and metals. Interestingly, emeralds are a form of beryl.
 12. Esmeraude, in love with Prince Diamond, is tricked into becoming a monstrous dragon when she accepts a crown that she believes will unite her with the object of her affection.
 13. There is currently little English language scholarship on Takeuchi’s use of haute couture, and it is not only the Ayakashi Sisters who are clothed thusly; both Queen Serenity and New Queen Serenity’s iconic white gown borrows heavily from Dior Haute Couture from the same period. There is, however, a large body of unpublished fan research. See, for example, “Peachybeam: Sailor Moon on the Run Way,” *Silver Moon Krystal Power Kiss*, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://silvermoon424.tumblr.com/post/83857499614/peachybeam-sailor-moon-on-the-run-way-koan>; and “Fuku Fashion: Sailor Suit on a Pretty Guardian,” *Sailor Moon Fashion*, <http://fukufashion.tumblr.com>.
 14. “About Naoko Takeuchi: Fashion Inspiration,” *Miss Dream: A Sailor Moon Translation Project*, accessed January 2017, <https://missdream.org/about-naoko-takeuchi/>.
 15. “A Retrospective of Yves Saint Laurent Advertising,” *Oyster Magazine* (June 22, 2012), accessed January 10, 2017, <http://www.oystermag.com/a-retrospective-of-yves-saint-laurent-advertising>.
 16. “Monster of the day” or week was coined in 1969 by writers of the *Outer Limits*, but Sailor Moon fans have since adopted the term to the point of almost claiming ownership. See the Sailor Moon Wiki entry on Monster of the Day, <http://sailormoon.wikia.com/wiki/Monster-of-the-day>.
 17. Masuko Honda, “The Genealogy of Hirahira: Liminality and the Girl,” in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 20.
 18. Honda, “The Genealogy of Hirahira,” 20.
 19. Charles Solomon, “Four Mothers of Manga Gain American Fans with Expertise in a Variety of Visual Styles,” *The New York Times*

- (November 28, 2006), accessed November 1, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/28/arts/design/28clam.html?ex=1322370000&en=915b5385604af201ei&r=0>.
20. King and Fraser, trans., “An Interview with Sakumi Yoshino,” 126.
 21. Frederik L. Schodt, “Flowers and Dreams” in *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo, New York, and San Francisco: Kodansha International, 1984), 89–91.
 22. Mizuki Takahashi, “Opening the Closed World of *Shōjo Manga*,” in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations of the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. Mark W. MacWilliams (London and New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 126–127.
 23. In Tezuka’s “Star System,” built on an early Hollywood ideal, anime characters such as Atomu, are treated as “movie stars” taking on different roles in various series. Similarly, Matsumoto’s distinctive space pirates wander in and out of each other’s narratives reprising “same but different” roles which see the same characters become friends, lovers, siblings and adversaries almost interchangeably. For more on the Star System see “Star System,” *Tezuka Osamu.Net*, accessed March 1, 2016, http://tezukaosamu.net/en/character/star_system.html. For more on the expanded Leijiverse see “Anime/Leijiverse,” *TV Tropes*, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Anime/Leijiverse>.
 24. The spelling used here is that of the official English translations. Other transliterations include Shaoran or Shaolan.
 25. *Anime Expo 15 Cosplay 2006* “CLAMP Panel,” accessed June 2017, <http://www.phoenixanime.com/ax06/page5.htm>; Chibi Yuuto *Chibi Yuuto’s CHRoNiCLE: CLAMP News and Related Information* “CLAMP Interview—ANIME EXPO 2006 Focus Panel” (July 2006), accessed June 1, 2017, <https://chibiyuuto.com/clamp-interviews/clamp-interview-anime-expo-2006-focus-panel-july2006/>.
 26. There is a possibility to read her as a virgin/mother figure, but that is outside the scope of this chapter.
 27. Ruby Moon is by no means CLAMP’s only genderless or nonbinary character, and it is a character trait that they explore in many of their series.
 28. Schodt, “Flowers and Dreams,” 92. Two famous examples of shōjo manga set in a foreign country are Moto Hagio’s *Jūichigatsu no gimunajiumu* (The November Gymnasium, 1971) and Riyoko Ikeda’s *Berusaïyu no bara* (The Rose of Versailles, 1972–73).
 29. This influential group of women manga artist-writers were born in or around the twenty-fourth year of Shōwa (1949) and are famed for being the first to create narratives in a wide range of new genres including science fiction.
 30. Honda, “The Genealogy of Hirahira,” 20, 37.

31. Something that was emphasized when the anime was recut and dubbed for an English audience as *Cardcaptors*, in which Syaoran almost takes over duties as central protagonist.
32. Twenty is the Japanese age of majority marked by *seijin no hi* or coming of age day.
33. Deborah Shamoan, "The Superflat Space of Japanese Anime," in *Asian Cinema and the Use of Space: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Lilian Chee and Edna Lim (New York: Routledge, 2015), 96.
34. Shamoan, "The Superflat Space of Japanese Anime," 96.
35. *Ibid.*, 97.
36. *Ibid.*, 98.
37. *Ibid.*, 97.
38. Honda, "The Genealogy of Hirahira," 20, 37.
39. For more on costuming in *Madoka Magica* see Emerald King, "Tailored Translations—Translating and Transporting Cosplay Costumes Across Texts, Cultures, and Dimensions," *Signata* 7 (2016).
40. Luce Irigaray, for example, highlights the troubled nature of the mother/older woman-daughter bond, arguing that due to a sufficient lack of representation of harmonic relations between mothers and daughters in the social imaginary, young women are locked in a state of conflict with their mothers.
41. Originally posted on Bandai's official website (<http://p-bandai.jp/contents/sailormoon-pj/>) these underwear sets can be seen here: Brian Ashcraft, "The Most Realistic *Sailor Moon* Lingerie You Can Buy," *Kotaku* (November 12, 2013), <http://kotaku.com/the-most-realistic-sailor-moon-lingerie-money-can-buy-1480973920>; Brian Ashcraft, "More *Sailor Moon* Lingerie Than You Can Shake a Moon Stick At," *Kotaku* (October 9, 2014), both accessed April 1, 2016, <http://kotaku.com/more-sailor-moon-lingerie-than-you-can-shake-a-moon-sti-1632867230>.
42. Theresa Winge, "Costuming the Imagination: Origins of Anime and Manga Cosplay," *Mechademia* 1 (2006): 65.
43. Gravure, from rotogravure, is a type of intaglio printing used in early magazines. A *gurabia* idol is a magazine model along the line of a "page 3" glamour model.
44. Honda, "The Genealogy of Hirahira," 20.
45. See, for example, Rio Otomo's work on Hitomi Kanehara and the small space. Rio Otomo, "A Girl with Her Writing Machine," in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 130–142.
46. Akiko Sugawa, "Fantajī ni asobu: Pafōmansu toshite no 2.5 jigen bunka ryōiki to imajinēshon" [Playing Fantasies: Performance Regarding 2.5D and Imagination], *Eureka*, 47–5 (2015): 41–42.

47. For more on Matsuda see http://www.performingarts.jp/E/pre_interview/1511/1.html.
48. The notion of graduation is heavily entrenched in Japanese society. For a “street fashion” take on graduation see, for example, “Japanese Street Fashion: 10 Things You Need to Know in 2016,” @Tokyo Fashion, accessed November 1, 2016, <https://medium.com/@TokyoFashion/japanese-street-fashion-10-things-you-need-to-know-in-2016-59221ab241ee#.spl3lhvun>. See also Yūsuke Arai, *Gyaru to gyaru no bunka jinruigaku* [The Anthropology of Gyaru Girls and Gyaru Boys] (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2009).
49. Professional cosplayers Yaya Han and Reika are both rumoured to be in their early thirties.
50. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/539333856203499/> This group has since become private, but similar pages can be found at “CNZ: Cosplay New Zealand,” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cosplaynewzealand/> and “Melbourne Cosplay,” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MelbCosplay/>.
51. Somewhat serendipitously, the Season 5 opening song for the original animated series of *Sailor Moon* was “Sera eru” where *eru* can be translated as a cheer or battle cry.
52. Tomoko Aoyama’s and Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase’s English language summaries are used here. See, Tomoko Aoyama, “The Genealogy of the ‘Girl’ Critic Reading Girl,” in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 44; Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, “Choosing Your Family: Gender and Familial Relationships in Japanese Popular Culture,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 44, no. 4 (2011): 756
53. *Ibid.*, 20.
54. Question time, Japanese Anime Society hosted workshop on Cosplay in Australasia at Senshu University, Tokyo, February 2015.
55. King, “Cosplay, Crossplay and the Importance of Wearing the Right Underwear.”
56. This survey has since been deleted, but an overview of the results are recorded in Emerald King, “Girls Who Are Boys Who Like Girls to be Boys ...: BL and the Australian Cosplay Community,” *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 32, no. 32 (July 2013), <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue32/king.htm>.
57. See, for example, “Sailor Bubba,” accessed July 1, 2014, http://wikimoon.org/index.php?title=Sailor_Bubba. Sailor Bubba was reputedly immortalized as a “bobble-head” figurine as a cameo figure in an episode of television series *Leverage* (“The Inside Job,” Season 3, Episode 3, aired June 27, 2010—some ten years after Sailor Bubba first made his appearance).

58. Maria Lewis, "Three Pairs of Underpants, a Crop Top and a Sledgehammer: Gender-Bending Cosplayer Who's Turned Himself into Miley Gyrus (and He's Not the Only Man Dressing Like a Lady)," *Daily Mail Online* (July 11, 2014), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2687013/Dude-looks-like-lady-From-Miley-Cyrus-Pokemon-meet-gender-bending-men-cosplay-arent-ones.html#ixzz38vcK3S00> which features three Sydney cosplayers, Miley Gyrus, Zeek and Sunday Cosplay, dressed as bearded versions of Miley Cyrus, Misty from *Pokémon*, and Princess Batman.
59. See, "Finally, the Ladybeard and Sailor Suit Old Man Wrestling Match You've Been Waiting For," *Rocket News 24* (March 12, 2014), <http://en.rocketnews24.com/2014/03/12/finally-the-ladybeard-and-sailor-suit-old-man-wrestling-match-youve-been-waiting-for/>.
60. This ban was quickly overturned. For more on this see, Brian Ashcraft, "Tokyo Comic-Con Lifts Ban on Men Cosplaying as Women Characters," *Kotaku AU* (October 27, 2016), accessed November 2016, <http://www.kotaku.com.au/2016/10/tokyo-comic-con-bans-men-from-cosplaying-as-women-characters/>.
61. "Welcome to the Comic Market: Comic Market (Comiket) 87," 2014, <http://www.comiket.co.jp/info-a/TAFO/C87TAFO/C87eng.pdf>.
62. "Welcome to the Comic Market."
63. Carly Smith, "Japan's Comiket Prohibits Low-Angle Cosplay Photography," *The Escapist* (December 31, 2014), <http://www.escapistmagazine.com/news/view/139256-Comiket-Cosplay-and-Photography-Rules-Protect-Cosplayers>.
64. Casey Baseel, "Cosplay Panties Bring Photographers to Their Knees, but Maybe Not Why You'd Expect," *Rocket News 24* (March 27, 2014), <http://en.rocketnews24.com/2014/03/27/cosplay-panties-bring-photographers-to-their-knees-but-maybe-not-why-you-d-expect/>.
65. See, Minako Saitō, *Kōtten ron: Anime, tokusatsu, denki no hiroinzō* [One Woman Among Men: Heroines in Anime, Tokusatsu, and Biographies] (Tokyo: Bireiji Sentā Shuppanyoku, 1998); Susan J. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Anne Allison, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
66. Kumiko Saito, "Magic, Shōjo, and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and the Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 1 (February 2014): 158.
67. This stereotype is played up in, for example, a post-credit short in the *Avengers* film where the team of superheroes eat fast food after saving New York from an alien invasion.

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Multilayered Performers: The Takarazuka Revue as Media

Sonoko Azuma

TAKARAZUKA AND SHŌJO CULTURE

Imagine the following strange poster, one that awaits you should you travel to Japan (Fig. 11.1). It shows a couple who are snuggling, romantically close. One of the pair seems to be a man, yet wears broad eyeliner, false eyelashes and thick makeup that emphasizes the eyes in the manner of a shōjo manga. This person's partner is clearly a woman, with similar makeup and wearing a dazzling dress. What you see is an advertisement for a performance of the Takarazuka Revue.

The Takarazuka Revue (hereafter Takarazuka) is part of Japan's modern stage arts; in 2014 it welcomed its 100th anniversary. The Takarazuka's most outstanding characteristic is the fact that the performers are all women. Even the men's roles are performed by women, as distinct from kabuki, which features men as female impersonators. The fans are predominantly women, of all ages, many of whom have been ardent devotees for years.

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Fig. 11.1 Posters of Takarazuka Revue

The Takarazuka may strike Westerners as queer, because women perform in male clothing, have other women as their love interests on stage, and hold female audiences spellbound. This viewpoint can be found in Jennifer Robertson's early monograph *Takarazuka*.¹ However, in Japan, the Takarazuka is associated with girls', or *shōjo*, culture, not sexual minorities. Accordingly Makiko Yamanashi's *A History of the Takarazuka Revue* has the subtitle "Modernity, Girls' Culture, Japan Pop."² Likewise, Nobuko Anan's *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre and Visual Arts*, which also deals with the Takarazuka, is subtitled, "Performing Girls' Aesthetics."³ This viewpoint is not limited to academia but rather widespread in Japan.

What justifies this viewpoint? Before we can say that Takarazuka is a part of *shōjo* culture, we first have to define this very culture. A culture can be considered to be *shōjo* if it meets one of the following five criteria: it is a culture that *shōjo* themselves create and support; that *shōjo* love; that is offered to *shōjo*; that expresses *shōjo*; and that conveys some kind of "shōjiness" (girlishness). Does the Takarazuka meet any of these criteria? It does not appear to be created by *shōjo*. While at its outset

performed solely by girls in their teens, in the contemporary Takarazuka the performers are mainly in their 20s and 30s. Before the Pacific War female students were one of the main fan groups; however, presently fans are mainly adult women. Furthermore, in today's Takarazuka the most popular performers are those who take the male roles, and consequently the main characters are male in principle, certainly not girls. Young girls may be found among Takarazuka fans, but they are not its main supporters, nor is it mainly offered to them. Against this backdrop, the Takarazuka of the past can be regarded as a part of *shōjo*, or girls', culture, whereas the modern Takarazuka certainly cannot.

Be that as it may, the image that Takarazuka equals *shōjo* culture stubbornly persists. One reason for this persistence is the fact that Takarazuka relates to *shōjo* culture in various ways. For example, it is well-known that Osamu Tezuka received the inspiration for his famous work *Ribbon no kishi* (Princess Knight), one of Japan's early *shōjo* manga, from the Takarazuka. Also, the Takarazuka has adapted many *shōjo* manga for their stage (Fig. 11.2). One of them is Riyoko Ikeda *Berusaiyu no bara* (The Rose of Versailles), which became so popular that it now represents the Takarazuka as such (see, the bottom two flyers in the central column in Fig. 11.2).

Moreover, *shōjo*-ness is easy to find in the Takarazuka, clearly meeting the above criterion five. This is examined below by looking closely at the Takarazuka's structure. The scope of this chapter includes an analysis of the Takarazuka itself as well as data gathered from fan interviews and participant observations at both Takarazuka theaters and related events.

AN OUTLINE OF THE TAKARAZUKA: ITS HISTORY, ROLES AND FANS

The Takarazuka Revue Company, which produces the performances, has approximately 400 actors, and is currently one of the foremost theatrical companies in Japan. Takarazuka performances are held throughout the year in dedicated theaters with more than 2000 seats, located in the cities of Takarazuka in Hyōgo Prefecture and in Hibiya in Tokyo. In addition, there are performances in small theaters, national tours, and overseas tours. Each year over 1400 performances are staged. Performances include both musical plays with stories, and variety shows and musical revues consisting of singing and



Fig. 11.2 Flyers of Takarazuka performances based on original shōjo manga stories

dancing. While famous musicals produced on Broadway and so on form part of the repertoire, most performances are of original works written by directors affiliated with the Takarazuka Revue Company. Unique features of Takarazuka performances manifest in the words “love” and “dream” frequently used in the lyrics of original songs, and large-scale elaborate stagings featuring many gorgeously dressed performers in extravagant costumes.

The performers of the Takarazuka Revue are all unmarried women. They are called Takarasienne(s) (a compound formed from “Takarazuka” and “Parisienne”) and divided into *otokoyaku* (lit. male role) and *musumeyaku* (lit. young female role) impersonators.⁴ Theaters in which women play male roles exist also in China and Taiwan, but the Takarazuka is distinct in that many plays have modern settings and that

they are without exception performed by female actors. The performers of Takarazuka are assigned to five troupes, Flower Troupe (*Hana-gumi*), Moon Troupe (*Tsuki-gumi*), Snow Troupe (*Yuki-gumi*), Star Troupe (*Hoshi-gumi*), and Cosmos Troupe (*Sora-gumi*). Performances are staged by troupe, and each troupe basically consists of established otokoyaku top stars who play the leading male roles, and musumeyaku top stars who play the lovers of these leading male roles.

The founder of the Takarazuka was the famous Japanese entrepreneur Ichizō Kobayashi, the managing director of the Minō Arima Electric Tramway Company (now the Hankyū Railway). In 1913, Kobayashi got the idea, from the then-popular Mitsukoshi Department Store boys' musical band as well as other sources, to stage choral performances by girls in their teens as a special attraction for visitors to the resort facility of Takarazuka New Hot Spring (Shin-Onsen), in venues that lined his company's railway. Subsequently, the scope of performances expanded to include opera. The following year, 1914, saw the first public performances. Inspired by that success, similar theater companies appeared. The year 1927 found the Takarazuka performing Japan's first revue *Mon Paris* (*Waga Pari yo*), which became a hit. After that, starting with *Parizette* (1930), they performed successive revues created by Tetsuzō Shirai, due to which the revue format came to occupy the main part of the program.

In the 1930s when Shirai's revues became popular, a number of changes occurred which are linked to today's Takarazuka. Firstly, there was Shirai's introduction of idealized beautiful heterosexual romances to the stage. Secondly, the specialized otokoyaku was established, to which the center of popularity shifted.⁵ At the beginning of the Takarazuka, the division between male role performers and female role performers was not fixed. At the time women cutting their hair short was not acceptable, so performers who played male roles would put their long hair up under hats or appear on stage with pigtailed. Male role performers were created as a convenient answer to the fact that there were no male group members. Admitting males was also considered; however, from the mid-1920s women with bobs appeared, and in 1930 Takiko Mizunoe, a male role performer in the Tokyo Shōchiku Musical Revue, cut her hair and gained popularity, becoming known as the "beauty dressed as a man." Following this, the Takarazuka's male role performers also began cutting their hair. With this short hair as symbol and enhancement, the Takarazuka established the characteristic otokoyaku. Thirdly, there was a change in the customer base. It is assumed that the Takarazuka in the early days

had many male fans, but from the 1930s onward female fans came to surpass men.⁶ Consequently, one can conclude that the current image of the Takarazuka as a performance where “female audiences are crazy about love stories portrayed by otokoyaku,” probably began at that time. In recent years, the Takarazuka Revue has been mobilizing a base of about 2,500,000 audience members per year,⁷ which accounts for more than 10% of Japan’s stage market.⁸

One source for understanding the makeup of the fans is the readership of the Takarazuka magazines *Kageki* (Opera) and *Takarazuka GRAPH*. Officially both magazines say that they each had an average monthly print run of 100,000 copies in 2013, with a readership centered around women in their 20s to 40s, of whom 28% were company employees, 25% students, 20% housewives, and 12% temporary or part-time workers.⁹ Looking at older data, that is, the result of a questionnaire done by both magazines in 2004, the overwhelming number of respondents from both magazines put together were women, at 97.6%. The average age of respondents was 34 years old. For *Kageki* the largest age group was from 40 to 44 years old (17% of the total), while for *Takarazuka GRAPH* it was 19 years old or less and 20–24 years old (together 15.4% of the total). Looking at the total though, there was a wide range of ages for both magazines. Married respondents were 44.9%. Between January 2003 and April 2004, on average respondents attended as many as 22 Takarazuka performances, so one can infer that there are many enthusiastic fans who attended shows once or twice per month.¹⁰ Therefore, if one includes fans who attend performances several times per year, one can consider that Takarazuka fans number in the several hundred thousands.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE TAKARAZUKA

Academic research on the Takarazuka blossomed after 1990. In 1991, Toshihiro Tsuganezawa’s study was published, analyzing Kobayashi’s enterprises focused on the Takarazuka.¹¹ In addition collected volumes about the Takarazuka were released, including academic articles, critiques and essays.¹² By the end of the 1990s there also appeared monographs of Takarazuka research.¹³ In 2000, Jennifer Robertson’s by now famous monograph that examined the Takarazuka from the point of view of gender as well as prewar and wartime colonialism was translated into Japanese.¹⁴ People in Japan were impressed that the Takarazuka could be

grist for scholarship, and that an American anthropologist would devote herself to such a project. Since then, research relating to the Takarazuka has been increasing in fields such as theater and performance studies, literature, musicology, sociology, and business, both within Japan and abroad.¹⁵ Qualitative research on Takarazuka fans has also been conducted. Among others, Robertson observed fans performing imitations of the Takarazuka¹⁶; Nakamura and Matsuo conducted interview research with members of fan clubs about the appeal of otokoyaku¹⁷; and Naomi Miyamoto engaged in participant observation at Takarasienne fan clubs to reveal their system.¹⁸ In contrast, this chapter arose from a qualitative study of Takarazuka fans who do not necessarily belong to the organized fandom.

How then, is the effect of the Takarazuka stage, where only women perform, perceived in the previous studies? The most common view is that it is possible to express different genders and sexualities which cannot be expressed via the male–female binary prevalent in society due to the otokoyaku, and that this appeals to fans.¹⁹ According to quantitative research by Yumiko Kamise, Yuka Okugawa and others, the major attraction for fans is the existence of the otokoyaku. Nakamura and Matsuo maintain that the otokoyaku expresses a feminine masculinity that is suppressed in society.²⁰ Additionally, some researchers and critics argue that heterosexuality performed by an all-female cast is different from actual heterosexuality. Michie Amano takes the position that a pseudo mother–daughter relationship is established between the fans and the otokoyaku stars, in which both watch over each other, thereby projecting a heterosexual relationship onto the stage.²¹ According to Robertson, the love relationships on stage can be perceived as lesbian relationships because they are being performed between women.²² Junko Saeki takes the position that the Takarazuka provides an escape from men who chase women as sexual objects.²³ All of these opinions share the idea that the all-women cast is vital.

However, the previous research does not sufficiently consider what is going on beyond the onstage performances. The Takarazuka is not “completely inside the products put on the stage,” but “a media that represents the system of the Takarazuka Revue Company itself.”²⁴ The Takarazuka cannot be understood merely by looking at the content of the performances. When fans watch the stage performances, they are also influenced by the characteristics of Takarazuka as media.”

THE DUALITY OF THE PERFORMER ON STAGE

One aspect of the Takarazuka stage whereby stories are conveyed to the audience is the Takarasienne. Takarasiennes play many roles on stage, but there is one peculiarity to their performing. Takarazuka Revue Director Shūichirō Koike states that the Takarasiennes' way of acting is "actually 180 degrees different from the way that regular actors play roles."²⁵ He says that whenever Takarazuka otokoyaku perform men in plays, they use a specific behavioral style. That is, "they do not strive to perform flesh-and-blood humans, but cool imaginary otokoyaku, and they even refer to themselves by their stage names."²⁶ Every Takarasienne has her own fantastic stage name. For example, if the performer with the stage name Natsuki Mizu performs the role of the name of Oscar, it is not the real Natsuki Mizu, who becomes Oscar, but the "Natsuki Mizu" whom the performer creates. Furthermore, "the role is rather a filter, and what she achieves in the end may be that she is trying her best to create Natsuki Mizu." The audience is also conscious of this.²⁷ Otokoyaku actors are not simply performing roles; through their performance they try to create their own unique otokoyaku persona. This is voiced by the Takarasiennes themselves. For example, former otokoyaku Yūhi Ōzora says, "unlike actors in films and TV dramas, there is an image of the otokoyaku Yūhi Ōzora that took a long time to create, related to the roles I played on stage [...]. That imaginary person who is Yūhi Ōzora plays role X on stage."²⁸ Koike and Ōzora use otokoyaku as the example in their explanations, but this particularity of Takarazuka performance applies to the musumeyaku as well.

Takarasiennes create their otokoyaku/musumeyaku persona by mixing their individuality with the already established images of those role types. The fact that Takarazuka actors play a special type of man, the otokoyaku, and a special type of woman, the musumeyaku, as well as individual fictional characters explains how a single sex can perform both male and female roles. Takarazuka otokoyaku are not simply women performing male roles; they are performing both men as otokoyaku and individual characters. Similarly, the fact that musumeyaku are women playing female roles might suggest that they are the same as conventional actresses, but insofar as they are conscious of being women when playing the role of a woman they are different. The Takarazuka requires not only performers who have the skill to represent characters in a play, but also the skill to perform that character's gender. Accordingly, performers must specialize in either masculine or feminine roles.

Takarasiennes try to create their own otokoyaku/musumeyaku persona because the Takarazuka not only puts on plays, but also variety shows. Takarazuka director Masaya Ishida states, “in plays there are real names, stage names, and on top of those, roles,” but “in shows, they have to make do with [the stage name],” and for that reason “in the Takarazuka there is no other way but to be a star.”²⁹ Shows sometimes have a simple narrative setting, but many have none. When shows do not allow for fascinating the audiences by means of appealing roles, the stars have to use their otokoyaku/musumeyaku persona.

So, exactly what is it that the Takarasienne otokoyaku/musumeyaku try to perform under the guise of their stage names? According to Moriaki Watanabe, in representational performances like plays, in which the performers are portraying people other than themselves, the audience “are seeing the character and the performer *at the same time*”³⁰ because the people on stage are both characters in a story and actors who perform them. The performer whom the audience is watching is not the same as the performer in daily life. This becomes most clear in “pure performances” like dances and shows. There the performer produces their own body in view of the audience. The performers must construct fictional action, even if they do not play a character. Thus “the performer is not themselves,” and “creating a ‘fictional body’ becomes an essential premise.”³¹ Although obscured by the role, this “fictional body” register also exists in “representational plays” where “the audience sees *the realm of a performed existence* that is at the level of neither a real-life person nor a character.”³² We may regard the otokoyaku/musumeyaku that the Takarasiennes (in the guise of their stage names) create, as a “fictional body” located “between the dimension of ‘character roles’ and the dimension of ‘actors as ordinary people.’”³³

The fictional body is most important to the Takarazuka. According to Watanabe, “the modern realistic acting method” includes the belief that “actors should completely disappear beneath the outward appearance of the character or the mask.”³⁴ Accordingly, all actors must try as much as possible not to make the audience aware of their “fictional bodies.” In this regard, the Takarazuka has exactly the opposite aim. Rather than creating a fictional body in order to perform roles, it is vital to show the audience one’s fictional body through roles. The Takarazuka stage is characterized by the highlighting of these fictional bodies that modern theater seeks to hide beneath roles.

Let us consider the “fictional body” found in the Takarazuka from a different perspective. Gō Itō (2005) has pointed out that manga characters have actually two overlapping characteristics: *kyarakutā* (character) and *kyara*. The first are what is generally being called character (i.e., dramatis personae), closely integrated into a specific narrative.³⁵ The latter, *kyara*, is an autonomous entity that can be recognized across different works. According to Itō, manga characters “are initially *kyara*, which come to represent *kyarakutā*.”³⁶ Kentarō Takekuma assumes that this *kyara/kyarakutā* relationship is close to the relationship between actor and role, and Hiroki Azuma agrees, stating “basically the distinction between *kyarakutā* and *kyara* is simply whether it comes into existence only inside the work or outside.” Thus “[actor] Harrison Ford himself, of course, exists through various works. In other words, his is an existence that is established outside works. This corresponds to *kyara*.”³⁷ An actor who, as Takekuma and Azuma say, corresponds to *kyara* may be regarded as a performer with a “fictional body” which theater audiences equate with the role, not as a performer who is an “ordinary person.” The persona of the otokoyaku/musumeyaku that Takarasiennes play together with their roles, are of such an autonomous and transverse nature; they have a *kyara*-like quality. Thus, the stage names that the Takarasiennes choose for themselves are not simply pseudonyms used instead of their real names, but represent a unique image of otokoyaku/musumeyaku as *kyara*.

Accordingly, the Takarasiennes have a dual nature on stage. They are both the characters in the play, and the autonomous and transtextual otokoyaku/musumeyaku known by their stage names. We may call the former “the role-name existence,” and the latter “the stage-name existence.” While the former is what the Takarasiennes show on stage, the latter is the image of the performer. Even in shows that do not tell a story, the Takarasiennes try to show a “bright and passionate,” “adult-like and stylish presence” through singing and dancing, a presence applicable to any setting. They are performing in every moment, in plays as well as shows and beyond. In other words, while performing plays, the appearance of the Takarasiennes is completely the role-name existence, and only through performing roles (including the “dancing man” role in shows) can the Takarasiennes make manifest their stage-name existence. Fans cannot witness this manifestation directly, but must retroactively create it in their imagination. The manifestation of the stage-name

existence is not revealed tangibly on stage; rather it resides in the image created by both the Takarasiennes and their fans through the role-name existence.

Those engaged in the Takarazuka are aware of the distinction between role-name existence and stage-name existence. At the same time though, the Takarazuka's scripts are adjusted to each actor's unique characteristics, with the exception of repeat performances and overseas musicals. Both role-name existence and stage-name existence are continuously created.

THE DUALITY OF THE PERFORMER BEHIND THE STAGE

Takarasiennes who appear on stage have a dual existence, represented by a distinct role name and stage name. This kind of duality can be found backstage as well. The Takarazuka Revue Company provides abundant information about the stars' offstage lives to fans. The Takarazuka operates its own media, such as the previously mentioned two monthly magazines and the CS broadcast channel *Takarazuka Sky Stage*. Via both specialized media and more general theatrical magazines, Takarazuka fans get to see what the Takarasiennes are like when they are not on stage, what goes on in rehearsal, and how they spend their private time. In addition, fans can meet the Takarasiennes in the flesh by participating in special meet and greet events with the stars, and by watching them come and go at the stage door.

Still, what is shown of the Takarasiennes' offstage life is limited to specific aspects. In the Takarazuka world, an unwritten set of rules called the "violet (*sumire*) code" (the violet being the symbol flower of the Takarazuka) limits information concerning the troupe members and the performances, and descriptions of what the Takarasiennes say and do, to protect their image as "fairies who sell dreams" and of the Takarazuka itself as a place of "modesty, fairness and grace," the Takarazuka motto. The violet code is "the minimum rule for stage and interview" and "means that rather than making secrets, you just don't talk about certain topics."³⁸ The kind of information and talk about the Takarasiennes that the violet code regulates include mainly topics that are considered "unbecoming" such as salary, gossip, sex, for example, bust-waist-hip sizes, and love stories.

Some aspects of the Takarasiennes' offstage lives are open to the fans, and some are closed. The way that names are handled symbolizes this.

As described above, all performers of the Takarazuka Revue have stage names. However, fans use a star's "nickname" when referring to them. These nicknames are used within the Takarazuka world when insiders speak to each other. They are made public, and also appear in Takarazuka publications and CS broadcasts. Many of these nicknames are based on stage names or real names; however, full real names are never revealed while the performer is active in the Takarazuka.

Naturally, all celebrities choose what to reveal and what to keep private. What is unique about the Takarazuka though, is that this very choice is not kept hidden from the fans. The fans themselves well-know that the violet code regulates what information is revealed. This is already obvious from the basic fact that ages and real names are not made public. By manipulating the information about the Takarasiennes that is publicized, the Takarazuka is able to create a persona for the performer, one that differs from the real person. Apparently, the fans want this. According to Kenko Kawasaki, the Takarasiennes "are not just performing a role on stage, [...] they are expected to perform an 'I' as a Takarasienne."³⁹ In the offstage persona, the Takarasienne's being a mere member of society is being repressed in favor of the appealing image of "I as a Takarasienne." The fans realize this, yet enjoy it all-the-more. In this way, backstage the Takarasiennes have one face they show to the fans, and one face they keep hidden. The former is their "nickname existence," so to speak, and the latter their "real-name existence."

THE TAKARASIENNE'S FOUR-LAYERED STRUCTURE

From the fan's viewpoint, the Takarasienne appears to have four overlapping layers of existence, consisting of her role-name existence, her stage-name existence, her nickname existence, and her real-name existence (see Fig. 11.3). Each layer is classified according to whether it is internal or external to the work, onstage or offstage, made public to the fans or not. However, these layers are not unrelated; rather, a continuity exists between them. In the Takarasienne we find an interconnected multilayered structure.

To the audience, the role-name existence is connected to the tale being performed on stage. Similarly, each member of the audience has, to a greater or lesser extent, an image and some kind of story for each of the Takarasienne's four layers in mind. The stage-name existence connotes the performer's special qualities and past roles, as well as the

		internal to the work ↑ external to the work ↓	role-name existence
	on stage ↑ off-stage ↓		stage-name existence
public ↑ not public ↓			nickname existence
			real-name existence

Fig. 11.3 The Takarasienne's Four-Layered Structure

general images of otokoyaku/musumeyaku. The nickname existence is associated with their character as introduced by the media, and other offstage information. Should an audience member imagine a Takarasienne's struggle, such thoughts would concern the real-name existence.

The respective images of each of a Takarasienne's layers will be invoked by the fan depending on circumstances, and will influence how the stage performance is received. Consequently, when we consider the Takarazuka as reflected in the fan's eye, it is important to pay attention to not only the onstage but also the offstage Takarasiennes as they are presented to the fans through media, in conjunction with the work being staged.

THE SHŌJO-NESS OF THE TAKARAZUKA

Both the onstage and offstage world relate to the Takarazuka's shōjo-ness. First let us look at the stage performances. As starkly highlighted by examples of shōjo manga being adapted for the stage, such as *The Rose of Versailles*, the Takarazuka shares certain elements with other parts of shōjo culture. A Takarazuka fan I interviewed said, "It's like a fairytale prince and princess." On the Takarazuka stage, a dream world is created, one that is often presented to and longed for by shōjo, featuring romantic love stories with a kind and gentle handsome nobleman and a princess who wears beautiful dresses and lives in a splendid castle. For better or worse, many people have the impression that the Takarazuka overflows with "girlishness," that is, an ambience that shōjo find especially appealing. The commonalities between Takarazuka and shōjo culture do not stop at these surface elements. For example, the male roles in Takarazuka represent women's ideal men expressed by women themselves, and these "men" have much in common with the male characters that women

authors have created in shōjo manga. The Takarazuka reveals dreams that women have nurtured since they were girls.

We also need to look at the backstage world, which may just be one more stage of the Takarazuka itself. Affiliated with the Takarazuka Revue Company is a training facility called the Takarazuka Music School; all performers must first graduate from this school before they can start performing. Due to this, the Takarazuka Revue Company appears to exhibit “a prolonged school life.”⁴⁰ School terms are frequently used. For example, performers are “students,” and retirement is called “graduation.” Thus, the Takarazuka Revue Company can be seen as a girls-only school.

This girls-school-like establishment often stages stories that depict relations between girls. Students of girls’ schools, separated from boys of their generation as they are, need not have a romance with the opposite sex, something which is usually imposed on them. In this environment, it is permitted to place the greatest emphasis on the bonds between girls themselves. For this reason, the interrelations of female students can be foregrounded in stories that take place in girls’ schools.

The atmosphere of the girls’ schools in such stories carries over to the field of the nickname existence in the Takarazuka world. As previously stated, Takarazuka performers must retire if they marry, and while working in Takarazuka, there is no talk of members’ love life. Relations with the opposite sex is an aspect that belongs to the real-name existence, but in their nickname existence the Takarasiennes are construed as women without heterosexuality. The Takarazuka’s “school life” aspect is not just an extension of the simple form of a school, but also includes the quality of a continued quarantine from relationships with the opposite sex.

To be sure, not all works performed by the Takarazuka are imbued with such intense “girliness.” Whatever the work though, the fact that it is performed by Takarasiennes, “students” of the “girls’ school” that is the Takarazuka, makes it possible to see the bestowal of shōjo-ness on the Takarazuka. The unique phenomenon of the shōjo, neither female child nor young woman, emerged in Japan in the early twentieth century with the spreading of secondary education for female students.⁴¹ Middle school girls were the original model. From this vantage point, the Takarasiennes, the so-called “students,” are eternal shōjo, even if they exceed 60 (and there are in fact several Takarasiennes of that age). The Takarazuka is a place where eternal shōjo perform the kind of stories that come from shōjo manga, and perhaps part of the fans’ experience is

being transported back to their own shōjo days when they watch these performances. The stage and the seats of the Takarazuka theater can be seen as a place where shōjo assemble, regardless of age (and perhaps even gender). The Takarazuka is a good “stage” for thinking about a shōjo-ness that is not restricted by age.

This chapter is a summary of a part of my book *Takarazuka, yaoi, ai no yomikae: Josei to popyurā karuchā no shakaigaku* [Takarazuka, Yaoi, and the Replacement of Love: A Sociology of Women and Popular Culture, Shinyōsha 2015] with the addition of a discussion of shōjo-ness.

NOTES

1. Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
2. Makiko Yamanashi, *A History of the Takarazuka Revue Since 1914: Modernity, Girls' Culture, Japan Pop* (Kent: Global Oriental, 2012).
3. Nobuko Anan, *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre and Visual Arts: Performing Girls' Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
4. Musumeyaku is sometimes referred to as *onnayaku* (female role), and a distinction is sometimes made between the two. In this chapter, musumeyaku is used for all the Takarazuka performers who specialize in female roles.
5. See Natsuko Tokutomi, “‘Otokoyaku’ no tōjō” [The Advent of the ‘Male Role’], in *Bungei bessatsu ‘tokushū’ Takarazuka* [Bungei Separate Volume: ‘Special Issue’ Takarazuka] (Tokyo: Kawade shobō, 1998, 170–173), and Kenko Kawasaki, *Takarazuka: shōhishakai no supekutakuru* [Takarazuka: A Spectacle of Consumer Society] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999).
6. See Toshihiro Tsuganezawa, “Taishō, Shōwa senzenki no sōgō geijutsu zasshi ‘Kageki’” [The Magazine of Composite Art, *Kageki* (1918–1940), in the Taishō and Prewar Shōwa Eras]. In *Fukkokuuban Kageki shippitsusha sakuin kaisetsu* [Reprinted Edition of *Kageki* (1918–1940): Author Index and Annotation], 1–24. Tokyo: Yūshōdō Shoten, 1999, Kenko Kawasaki, *Takarazuka to iu yūtopia* [The Utopia Called Takarazuka] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005), and Mayuko Hakamada, “‘Shōjo ni yoru’ kageki kara ‘shōjo no tame no’ kageki e” [From Revue by Girls to Revue for Girls], in *Kindai Nihon no ongaku bunka to Takarazuka* [The Music Culture in Modern Japan and Takarazuka], eds. Toshihiro Tsuganezawa and Kumi Kondō (Tokyo: Sekai Shisōsha, 2006), 41–63.

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Sounds and Sighs: “Voice Porn” for Women

Minori Ishida

A man falls in love through his eyes, a woman through her ears.

The first sentence of Woodrow Wyatt’s 1981 column “The Ears Have It” is widely known outside its original context as an aphorism about the difference in how men and women experience sensuality.¹ At present, neurologists are conducting experiments trying to confirm its validity by showing subjects images that hint at or explicitly illustrate opposite-sex sexual relations, and measuring their brains’ responses.² Of course, since contemporary scientists know that stimulation in the brain cannot be reduced to just a physiological phenomenon, when they evaluate their experimental results they are trying as much as possible to take into account changes in the brain as gender issues formed by social, cultural, and historical factors.

Despite the methodological differences, neurologists’ experiments and this chapter share the same concerns. This is because the subject of this

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chapter is a genre of pornography featuring male voices performing sexual love aimed at female listeners: Boys Love CDs (BLCs) which aurally narrate stories of eroticism between men, and *Situation CDs*, in which male voices perform a variety of situations based on heterosexuality and the listener is the partner. They include explicit sexual scenes that are not even a step away from hardcore *adult videos*, intended to arouse sexual excitement in the consumer, and more than meet the requirements to be called pornography. Therefore, in this chapter, I call this audio content *voice porn*.

In contemporary Japan both underage girls—since the purchase of these CDs is not restricted by age, juveniles as defined by the Child Welfare Act (that is to say, those who are under eighteen years of age) can legally listen to them—and adult women enjoy the men’s voices these media provide.

This fact shows that the concept of girl (shōjo) in women’s popular culture is becoming a mere façade. Of course, girls are minor and school-aged females. However, paying attention to the fact that, like adult women, girls are also receptive to voice porn confirms that the two states that should be legally mutually exclusive actually overlap. Interestingly, Situation CDs are usually labeled as intended for *otome* (lit. maidens). Furthermore, the name of the CD and game information site for women to which this chapter refers is “OTOMEX” (<http://otomex.net/>), which is named after *otome*. Of course, *otome* is a category that includes girl. However, *otome* is different from girl, a classification by interests and tastes. For example, Novala Takemoto, author of works related to *otome* such as an essay collection, *Soreinu: Tadashii Otome ni Naru Tame ni* (Soleilnuit: For Becoming a Proper Young Lady, 1998), and a novel *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (Kamikaze Girls, 2002), is known as a charismatic leader of *otome* culture. But Takemoto is neither a girl nor a woman. He is an adult man. This is the same as the way that as a matter of course fans of BL are grouped together as *fujoshi* (lit. rotten girls) regardless of the differences in their ages and social positions. In contemporary Japan, one of the predominant domains in which classification based on interests and tastes materializes more than that based on age and social position is female popular culture. Even in this sense, voice porn, which is supported by both *fujoshi* and *otome*, is a cultural phenomenon worthy of serious consideration.

In pornography, voice porn is fairly novel. This is because, as pornography is produced in countless varieties of visual media like paintings,

illustrations, photos, films, manga, and animation, sexual stimulation is mainly provided to the consumer visually. Therefore, when pornography is discussed the questions have always been about matters of seeing and being seen, and of showing. For example, Catherine A. MacKinnon, who condemns pornography, claims that women are being eternally raped by men who watch the spectacle of women being violated which is captured by cameras and disseminated around the world in photographs and films.³ And Linda Williams observes that pornography has developed along with scientific practice—in other words, the evolution of film technique and the study of bodily reality—and has commented that hardcore movies, which relentlessly try to visualize the bodily experience of the moment of the mystery that is orgasm, are the genre of “maximum visibility.”⁴ Also, it is not only the real bodies exhibited in shot images like photographs and films that enter into the discussion of pornography and visibility. Regarding manga, which is the medium of drawn bodies, Naoko Mori assiduously studies the representations in *Ladies Comics* and BL manga, which are hardcore manga aimed at women, and clarifies how the characters’ pleasure is presented for the gaze of the readers.⁵

Within pornography, most of which is centered around visuality, voice porn, which deals with hearing, is extremely unique. Of course, there exist a number of 18+ *bishōjo gēmu* (literally, beautiful girl games) featuring the voices of female actors aimed at male players. However, as pornography aimed at men, even considered from the point of view of the large number of productions and consumers, adult videos showing women’s naked bodies are nevertheless overwhelmingly common, and voice porn aimed at men is merely an offshoot. On the other hand, in the very small-scale women’s pornography market, voice porn is recognized as a field in line with *Ladies Comics* and BL manga. In addition, as will be explained in detail later, in fact voice porn aimed at women is by no means a new genre, having a history of at least a quarter century.

Women listening carefully to the voices of men can be seen as verification of Wyatt’s aphorism. But in order to ascertain the reason for the establishment of voice porn for women, it is necessary to go back further than Wyatt’s remark. In what way is voice porn constructed historically, socially, and culturally? First I will try to unravel the various factors that brought the genre into existence, and compare its characteristics to various related areas. Next, by analyzing and describing how men’s voices are received by listeners, I consider the reasons why voices are enjoyed as pornography for women and how this is taking hold, and try to reconsider the relationship between voices and porn.

THE RISE OF VOICE PORN: THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ANIME

Voice porn, whether male homosexual or heterosexual, means stories about erotic scenes featuring men's voices aimed at female listeners. It has another special feature too. On the packaging and websites of these products are male characters in a great variety of poses drawn in the style of manga or anime, but photographic images of the male voice actors that are the sources of those voices are absent. Sometimes scenes of recording sessions and actors' comments are included in the leaflets of the CDs, but even then the characters are the main focus. However, we must not forget that the male actors, who do not show themselves, make their merely drawn characters into vivid beings suitable for pornography. Voices that come from the real bodies breathe life into the drawn bodies of characters in voice porn. This function of voices is the same as in anime.

In contemporary Japanese popular culture, the bodies drawn in manga and anime are customarily referred to as "two-dimensional," distinguishing them from real bodies. This classification is clear at a glance, because the difference between bodies drawn on a surface and the form of bodies living in the real world is represented as a difference in perspective. However, in the case of anime the circumstances are different from manga, and they are a little more complicated. This is because in anime the characters drawn on a surface are supplied with a voice that comes from a real body. Even if just the voice changes, one feels that the character's identity has completely changed, so that the voice emanating from the "three-dimensional" body strongly guarantees the individuality of the "two-dimensional" body. Therefore, characters in anime are made profound by the voices that real bodies produce—not to the extent that we can call them "three-dimensional," but an existence between "two-dimensional" and "three-dimensional"; they transition into "2.5-dimensional beings," as it were. In other words, the voices in anime are a means as important as movement to animate "two-dimensional" bodies.

Voice porn, too, owes much to the power of these voices, as has been demonstrated in anime. In fact, most of the genre's performers are male voice actors who work mostly in anime. Thus, very interestingly, the relationship between voice porn and anime can be traced back to the same root.

In 1988, *JUNE* (first published 1978), the girls' magazine specializing in erotic stories between males, launched "Cassette *JUNE*," an audio drama series on tape.⁶ The first work was *Tsuzumigafuchi*, an

adaptation of the novel *Tsuzumigafuchi* by Ryōko Mita, published in *JUNE* (Fig. 12.1). Compared to contemporary voice porn the erotic representations in the work are very restrained. However, in that women are the intended audience, and that it uses men’s voices to narrate erotic love, the vocal drama *Tsuzumigafuchi* should be considered the origin of voice porn. For *Tsuzumigafuchi*, those chosen for the leading roles had both ability and popularity: anime voice actors Yūji Mitsuya and Hiroataka Suzuoki. On the packaging of the cassette tape is only a simple drawing of the protagonists by Kotomi Shinoda, but it stands to reason that, through the persuasive power of Mitsuya and Suzuoki’s performance, the characters of the courageous youth who suffered through misfortune, and his classmate who should have kept his feelings hidden and been his protector, rose up in the minds of the listeners. As a result, *Tsuzumigafuchi* became a hit that sold over 10,000 copies.⁷

Then-chief editor of *JUNE* and original proponent of “Cassette *JUNE*” Toshihiko Sagawa explains why he chose audio drama works: “That female readers’ tastes were extremely picky was one of the reasons. For example, they would say things like ‘this picture is disagreeable, or old, or ripped off from so-and-so. It’s better for the models to be non-Japanese; if they’re Japanese it’s terrible’ ... So, I chose ‘voice.’”⁸

Certainly, if characters are expressed only through voice, no one knows exactly what their physical appearances are like, so it does not become a problem. Furthermore, the two leading actors in *Tsuzumigafuchi* had established star personas as voice actors. The two were already known as star anime characters (Mitsuya as Marg from the 1981–1982 series *Six God Combination Godmars*; Suzuoki as the young officer Bright Noa from the 1979–2006 *Mobile Suit Gundam* series); that breathed vitality into the youths in *Tsuzumigafuchi*, and helped each listener to imagine them as she liked. In this way, up to the present, voice porn has coexisted with anime, and the two have developed and accumulated the function of voices, by sharing voice actors.

DIFFERENCE FROM ANIME

So far we have confirmed that voice porn is related to anime, but at the same time we cannot ignore the definite differences between the two. In voice porn, there is a tacit understanding that the voice actors who breathe life into the male characters must be male. On the other hand, in anime there is no requirement for the sexes of voice actors and characters



Fig. 12.1 Jacket image of Cassette *JUNE*, *Tsuzumigafuchi*

to coincide. Far from being unusual for a female actor to perform a boy character, since 1963, when Mari Shimizu played the protagonist in Japan's first serialized TV anime *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astro Boy*), boy characters have been one of the domains of female voice actors. In addition, there also exist female voice actors like Megumi Ogata who have gained popularity by playing both boys and young males.

An example of female voice actors' transgression of gender boundaries in anime is *Kaze to ki no uta* (*The Poem of Wind and Trees*), directed by Yoshikazu Yasuhiko, which was released in OVA format a year before the beginning of "Cassette *JUNE*," in 1987. In shōjo (girls') manga, which had a very conservative attitude toward sex and gender, the original manga *Kaze to ki no uta* (1976–1984) by Keiko Takemiya, a love story between boys that did not omit depictions of sexual relations, is a very revolutionary work. From the *shōnen'ai* (lit. boys' love) boom this work created was also launched the magazine *JUNE*, which specialized in eroticism between men.⁹ Therefore, *Kaze to ki no uta* must be one of the roots of BL and BLCD, but in the anime adaptation two female voice actors were cast as boy protagonists. Noriko Ohara plays Serge and Yūko Sasaki plays Gilbert. In addition to them, the young man Rosemarine, a supporting role, is also played by a female voice actor, Ryōko Sakakibara. Thus, the cast of the anime *Kaze to ki no uta* adopted the code of female voice actors playing young males.

IN THE SHADOW OF ADULT VIDEOS

Unlike in anime, which is free from the conformity of actors' and characters' sexes, listeners have exclusively requested and welcomed male performers in voice porn since *Tsuzumigafuchi*. Nevertheless, their bodies are concealed in the shadows of the characters, and are visually absent. If the basis of pornography is to show bodies that experience sexual arousal, voice porn, which extracts from men's bodies the voices that perform the erotic scenes, deviates daringly from this standard, and is positioned at the opposite extreme from adult videos, which without exception show women's bodies in the act. However, interestingly, both emerged in the same era.

In the 1980s, as video cassette recorders spread in most homes, a new market formed. In 1988, when *Tsuzumigafuchi* was first sold, the number of rental video shops increased explosively, and sales of video tapes also grew rapidly.¹⁰ It was adult video that supported the rise of this emerging market. In adult video sex scenes, women's bodies appeared differently from in existing porn films and gave the audience a feeling of being part of the action. And it can be said that graphic depictions of women's bodies experiencing orgasm are, to borrow the words of Linda Williams, the realization of the "maximum visibility" achieved by the new recording technology called video. In contrast, although voice porn,

like adult video, requires the participation of real bodies, it has persisted in visually suppressing their performing bodies. This visual absence has been maintained to the present day, throughout changes in media from cassettes to CDs and even apps on smart phones.

CAMOUFLAGE

But why has voice porn become established as a genre aimed at women? First of all, it is no simple matter for women to obtain pornography in Japan. For a woman setting foot in pornographic settings made for men, places like porn theaters and adult corners in video rental shops or bookstores, is itself an action that requires considerable resolution. Naoko Mori points out that Ladies Comics and BL manga have succeeded in breaking down the wall between women and pornography. In fact it is not just pornography: in bookstores too, manga shelves are clearly separated between those aimed at men and those aimed at women, with Ladies Comics' and BL comics' cover illustrations and formats using the same styles as those of other comics like *shōjo* manga, so buying them becomes comparatively easy.¹¹

Mori's sharp point also applies to voice porn. In that case, even if the place of purchase is changed to an anime specialty shop, the sales area is still zoned by gender in the same way as a bookstore. In addition, since anime/manga-style men's bodies are drawn on the packages, voice porn becomes located next to other CDs and various character goods. Therefore, for those who do not have enough literacy to decipher the code of drawn bodies, in contrast to adult video packages which clearly depict sexual acts and nude female bodies photographically, it is not evident whether voice porn products include sexual content or not.

Moreover, we must not forget that voice porn permits listeners more "camouflage" than does manga. Unlike manga, whose contents are revealed merely by turning the pages, one cannot confirm the content of sound recordings without playing them back. Also, once one puts on earphones it becomes difficult for others to perceive what one is listening to. In addition, from Walkmans in the past to smart phones now, using portable devices for playback not only increases the completeness of camouflage, but has the advantage of making it possible to enjoy voice porn wherever one likes, such as in bed.

For women, who are socially and culturally required to be uninterested in porn—or at least are required to pretend to be—voice porn is

easy to obtain and easy to handle. In this case, what sort of things are the men's voices that women are straining to hear?

ELLIPSIS AS THE CLIMAX

As a direct physical experience, the men's voices that are delivered to the ears of voice porn listeners can indicate the limit of visual stimulation. The human eye does not work well if it does not have distance from the object it observes. However, auditory stimuli leap over the distance required by vision, and burst right into the listener's ears. If we consider that eardrums are not on the body's exterior but on its interior, it is not an exaggeration to say that auditory stimuli are close to touch. The effect of this auditory stimulus is further amplified if one uses earphones, which are instruments of camouflage. Therefore, for listeners to say things like "it's extremely sexy. Even in an unimportant conversation scene to say 'my hips seem to be melting' or 'the breathing hits me right in my lower body'" would not be an exaggeration.¹²

However, overly subjective candid impressions are insufficient to describe the unique power of the voices in voice porn. This is because, as mentioned previously, in voice porn, as in anime—to which it owes much—voices breathe life into characters. Therefore, from this, I will try to describe as objectively as possible the listening experience of voice porn, which is direct and therefore subjective. The most suitable thing for this purpose is not CDs, which comprise only sound, but games that show the players the words that the voices perform along with drawings of the characters. Although they are accompanied by images and text, the voices play the principle roles.

First, the interfaces adopted by many BL games are noteworthy. In a window appear the background and the standing figure of a character in a standing pose (called *tachi-e*). Then, when an important event occurs—such as sexual acts in 18+ games—the scene switches to images which do not differentiate between character and background (called *ichimai-e*).¹³

Based on this description one might think that images play a large role, but in fact they do not. Although in *tachi-e* images appearance changes, it is rare even for main characters to have more than ten different expressions. Furthermore, as the name "standing pictures" suggests, the characters often stand almost immobile. It is the same for the *ichimai-e*. Devices to change things like facial expressions and bodies are available, but in terms of visual expression, compared to anime, which

are moving images, or manga, which relates diverse movements through panel layouts, BL games are much more limited.

To cover the meagerness and inconvenience of such a representation, below the window appear text and voices. The text consists of characters' lines and depictions of their feelings, as well as explanations of the situation. If it was just images and text it would be like an illustrated book in which one can choose the ending, but when one adds voices it becomes something totally different from a novel.

While running their eyes over the images and text, players listen to voices. And then they experience a small surprise. The voices continually betray expectations. The gap between reading silently to oneself and voice actors' performances establishes that a voice is much more than just a means to convey words. The strength and weakness of the sound; the way one pauses; the way one breathes. The voice is not merely a container; it changes constantly; it is a distinctive thing that freely expands and contracts. And the true value of a distinctive voice is shown in the frequent use of "..." (ellipses).

The following case, in which ellipses account for nearly half of the dialogue, is an exchange between the main characters of the 18+BL game *Kichiku megane* (Spray, 2007), humble salesman Katsuya Saeki, and the head of his parent company Takanori Midō (Fig. 12.2).

Midō: "..... About the matter of the shipping error the other day ..."

Saeki: ".....t!" (.....っ!)

Ellipses are no more than the absence of a letter, but they are nevertheless not silent: there is always a sound in them. In the above example, in the ellipsis at the beginning of Midō's line is a breath that will produce his words, and at the end there is an awkwardly fading reverberation. And the line of Saeki, who is afraid of Midō, is not just "..... t!" (.....っ!), but the sound of a sudden indrawn breath (いっっ)—at least, that is how it sounded to me.

In addition, there are many lines that consist entirely of ellipses: "....." But in this case too what is missing is only words that cannot be represented by letters, and in fact to the ears of the players are transmitted reverberations tinged with various nuances like surprise or grief.

Thus, in sex scenes ellipses demonstrate its presence to the maximum. The following is the line of Midō, when penetrated by Saeki:



Fig. 12.2 Jacket image of BLCD, *Kichiku megane*

“..... Ha ..., a, k Ku” (.....は...、あ.....、っ.....く).

This is a line that can no longer be called speech, but when the player reads this, the reverberation of a panting man's body bursts into her eardrums.

The voice compensates for the paucity of visual representation. However, in this case, the voice does more than just compensate (although BLCDs only comprise sound, they are so sensual). Rather, it takes advantage of the paucity of visual representation and as a result pushes forward the functionality of the voice that we usually fail to hear.

THE SENSUALITY OF FORMLESS FLESH

Voices hit the eardrum not as words but as sound itself. More than imagination, this is a dynamic, visceral experience, and the true form of the sensuality offered by voice porn. The nature of this sensuality differs from the sensuality given through visual stimulation. It is, if you will, the sensuality of naked yet invisible flesh. Although the owner of the voice is visually absent, he is undeniably there. His flesh manipulates his own voice, making pure sound reverberate, and without using vision as an intermediary, leaps into the eardrums of the listener. If we think of sound as a physical vibration, it is nothing less than physical contact with the flesh that emits the voice.

Roland Barthes spoke of the “grain of the voice” (*le grain de voix*) referring to the sound produced before the word:

[T]he breath, the gutturals, the fleshiness of the lips, a whole presence of the human muzzle (that the voice, that writing, be as fresh, supple, lubricated, delicately granular and vibrant as an animal's muzzle), to succeed in shifting the signified a great distance and in throwing, so to speak, the anonymous body of the actor into my ear: it granulates, it crackles, it caresses, it grates, it cuts, it comes: that is bliss.¹⁴

It is as if Barthes was describing the key point of voice porn. There was no reason for him to know about contemporary Japan's voice porn, but his view in *The Pleasure of the Text* is exceedingly close to a description of voice porn.

That said, Barthes' description needs one amendment. This is because in voice porn the “anonymous body of the actor” does not exist. Certainly, with regard to 18+BL games, voice actors often make use of

a different name than they normally use. For example, the voice actors who played the previously analyzed Midō and Saeki both used different names. However, enthusiastic listeners can identify an established actor by his voice. The voices' owners also manipulate their sound, and although their own bodies remain visually absent, they are building up their own personas. The sound bursting into eardrums is not from anonymous flesh, but rather from flesh into which a signature has been placed. Thus, in harmony with anime, voice porn, while appropriating male voice actors and their performances, reveals a sensuality of voices distinct from anime. Voice porn is the thing that enables listeners to savor the bodies of real men in the gap between absence and presence.

THE REGULATION OF DESIRE BY NEW SOUND TECHNOLOGY

A quarter century has already passed since *Tsuzumigafuchi* was first offered for sale. In that time sound media has changed greatly, from CDs to all sorts of applications. So, what about recording technology?

Since around the year 2010, voice porn that has adopted binaural recording has increased. The voice actors whisper, sigh, and in some cases pant into the ears of the head of a dummy made to resemble that of a human with microphones embedded exactly in the position of the eardrums. Thanks to the stereophonic sound achieved thereby, the listener can hear the voice from the position of the dummy head. In this way the listener's experience takes on more of a sense of reality, and the functionality of the voice is greatly strengthened.

Interestingly, this new technology activates Situation CDs, the most recent subgenre of voice porn. Furthermore, the number of new BLCD works produced annually was a record 289 in 2008, after which it suddenly decreased to 108 in the year 2013. As for Situation CDs, starting with the *Hitsuji de oyasumi* (Counting Sheep) series (honeybee), launched in 2007, the number of new productions is growing steadily. In 2015, 512 were released. Speaking of BLCD in 2015, from the fact that it stopped at 135 titles we can surmise that Situation CDs have become the mainstay of voice porn.¹⁵

In this chapter, I have analyzed both of these as voice porn. This is because—regarding arguments about seeing and hearing, items aimed at men and women—Situation CDs are also audio media aimed at women, which welcome the same male voice actors. However, binaural recording that can fix the position of the listener in the auditory space again

highlights the difference between the two. Needless to say, in Situation CDs, in which listeners are called by various second person pronouns like *kimi* and *omae* (both meaning “you”) and are addressed directly by the owners of the voices, binaural recording creates a more adapted sound.

BLCDs, no matter how directly the listener feels the sensuality of the voices, only narrate the stories limited between characters. Therefore, the listener can hear the voices from any point in the acoustic space. The openness of BLCDs permits the listener to do as she pleases, and because they do not force the bodies of the listener into the narrative space, she can enjoy the entire world of the story; in other words BLCDs resemble narrative cinema which offers a god’s eye view to spectators.

However, by addressing the listener directly, Situation CDs make the listeners and the owners of the voices conjoin one another. And, as if to make doubly sure, binaural recording clearly indicates the position of the listener in the acoustic space. For example in the *Ikizukai shiriizu* (Respiration Series, 2012–, Apple Forest), which uses binaural recording as a special feature, male voice actors play pairs like company superiors and inferiors, club associates, or idol group members, and have conversations that interpose the listener. Hence the feeling of being held on both sides of one’s body is linked with being unable to move. As a result, instead of actively listening to the voices that are performing the situation, the listener is thrown into the situation that the voices are performing, and tossed about.

Certainly, Situation CDs, which extract the maximum immediacy/directness of voices through binaural recording, are one result of voice porn, which has been devised in a social environment in which women cannot easily enjoy pornography. Innovations in acoustic technology which strengthen the sensuality of voices affirm the desires of listeners. Yet at the same time, regarding the fixing of the listener’s body in the acoustic space, there may also be a downside: if women’s bodies remain merely passive and the diversity of their desires is not affirmed, voice porn will also center the performance of sex around gender, and will remain embedded in gender inequality between active male and passive female.

How will voice porn for women, which came to exist in a unique way in one corner of the vast domain of pornography, change in the future? To observe this trend is an occupation that is connected to the very large issues of women and pornography, and technology.

NOTES

1. Woodrow Wyatt, “The Ears Have It,” in *To the Point* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 107.
2. Turhan Canli and John D.E. Gabrieli, “Imaging Gender Differences in Sexual Arousal,” in *Nature Neuroscience* 7, no. 4 (April 2004): 325–326.
3. Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Only Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3–5.
4. Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”* (California: University of California Press, 1989), 49.
5. Naoko Mori, *Onna wa poruno o yomu: Josei no seiyoku to feminizumu* [Women Read Porn: Women’s Libido and Feminism] (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2010), Chapter 4.
6. After *Tsuzumigafuchi* “Cassette JUNE” released *SF gekiai roman ai no kusabi* (1989), *Takumi-kun shirūzu: Soshite harukaze ni sasayaite* (1989), *Mae suisenka* (1990), and *Higyaku no kōya* (1992). All the works were adopted from the novels published in the magazine *JUNE*. From the early to the mid-1990s, other companies also expanded into voice dramas, and from the latter half of the 1990s yearly releases of new works increased by about 50 on average. Once we get to the 2000s yearly releases of new works increased year on year until they hit their peak of 289 in the year 2008. Note that in this chapter information on the number of BLCD products is taken from the “BLCD Wiki,” accessed August 24, 2015. <http://blcd.wikiwiki.jp/>.
7. Toshihiko Sagawa, “Interview: *Bungaku to goraku no aida o ittari, kitari*” [Going Back and Forth Between Literature and Entertainment] in Minori Ishida, *Hisoyakana kyōiku: Yaoi, bōizurabu no zenshi* [Secret Education: The Prehistory of Yaoi and Boys’ Love] (Kyoto: Rakuho Shuppan, 2008), 347.
8. *Ibid.*, 346.
9. Please see, Ishida, *Hisoyakana kyōiku: Yaoi, bōizurabu no zenshi* [Secret Education: The Prehistory of Yaoi and Boys’ Love] (Kyoto: Rakuho Shuppan, 2008) about the process of the mechanism, which have developed male-male love stories that were created and enjoyed by women.
10. It shows that the number of rental video shops that joined the Japan Video Software Association (JVA) increased from 4748 in December 1987 to 10,067 a year later in December 1988, and furthermore more than doubled from the original number to 11056 a year after that in December 1989, and proceeds from video software sales also increased from about 184.7 billion yen in 1987 to about 208.2 billion yen in 1988, and about 237.3 billion yen in 1989. Japan Video Software Association,

- “JVA Rental System Change in Number of Participating Merchants,” accessed August 24, 2015, <http://www.jva-net.or.jp/report/joining-shop.pdf>. JVA, “Japan Video Software Association 40 Years of Progress,” accessed September 1, 2016, <http://jva-net.or.jp/history/#page=7>.
11. Mori, 196–198.
 12. Listeners’ candid opinions for each title are posted on “BLCD Wiki.” The cited post is gathered from the BLCD *Kichiku megane: Megane sōchaku-ban* (2007), derived from the BL game *Kichiku megane*, accessed August 24, 2015, <http://blcd.wikiwiki.jp/?cmd=read&page=%B5%B4%C3%DC%B4%E3%B6%C0%20%A5%C9%A5%E9%A5%DECD%20%A1%DD%B4%E3%B6%C0%C1%F5%C3%E5%C8%D7%A1%DD&word=2007%C7%AF>.
 13. In regard to games, age limits are based on review by industry associations. Home video games are examined and managed by CERO (Computer Entertainment Rating Organization) and 18+ computer games by EOCs (Ethics Organization of Computer Software). In girls’ games aimed at women with themes of heterosexual love, men’s voices are also a feature attraction. However, in 18+ girls’ games in the category of pornography which feature sex scenes, according to the database on the site OTOMEX (<http://otomex.net/game>), an information site about games and CDs aimed at women, from *Hoshi no Ōjo* (Mirai), launched in 2003, to *Yoshiwara Higanbana* (Maria Crown), launched in 2015, there were only 77. In addition, including early titles without voices, from *Escape* (Adel), launched in 2002, to *Taishō Mebiusline: Teito Bibōroku* (LOVEDELIVERY), launched in 2015, there were 228 18+ BL games. I would like to discuss the significant scarcity of 18+ girls’ games another time.
 14. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 67.
 15. Estimated from the “OTOMEX” CD database (<http://otomex.net/cd>) and “BLCD Wiki.” It should be noted that in the “OTOMEX” CD database, Situation CDs are included with “drama CDs aimed at otome.” The same site has a unique classification of “recommended for over 18 years old” for works with extreme sexual content. In 2015 there were 165 works classified this way. However, there are several works that are not classified as “recommended for over 18 years old” which still contain extreme sexual contents. In addition, there is no age restriction on purchases, whether of items “recommended for over 18 years old” or not; accessed August 24, 2015. <http://otomex.net/cd>.

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PART IV

Shōjo Fans



From Shōjo to *Bangya(ru)*: Women and Visual *Kei*

Adrienne Renee Johnson

Men in makeup, corsets, and high-heels; women in skirts and slippers head-banging as enthusiastically as any metalhead, and venues that waft of shampoo and perfume rather than sweat and beer. Within this chapter, I explore the links between shōjo and the Japanese music genre/subculture of Visual *Kei*—a flamboyant, dramatic genre consumed primarily by women. After a brief introduction of Visual *Kei* and the theory I employ, I demonstrate how Visual *Kei* is linked to aesthetic trends in Japanese women's/shōjo culture (particularly idealized masculinities), arguing that this link is vital and should be involved in future analysis of both Visual *Kei* and its fans' practices. I do this by demonstrating what Visual *Kei* potentially offers to its shōjo-esque fan base, drawing from a combination of physical and virtual¹ ethnographic research and close analysis of

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social media discourse, and place this within academic literature on both Japanese women and the media they consume. Ultimately, I situate Visual *Kei* within wider *shōjo* culture and practice, demonstrating one possible location for the *shōjo* within the contemporary Japanese music scene.

VISUAL MUSIC AND SHIFTING MASCULINITIES

The birth of the Japanese music genre and related cultural phenomena known as Visual *Kei* (*vijuaru kei*, visual type)—or Visual Rock²—is commonly dated to the late 1980s³ and the major debut of two pioneering bands in particular: BUCK-TICK and X-JAPAN (formerly X).⁴ While numerous performers and movements are attributed as inspirations to the genre,⁵ Visual *Kei* itself combines a unique selection of performative and aesthetic traits: extravagant costuming, highly stylized hair and makeup, a focus on “iconoclastic aesthetics,” the creation of “atmosphere” within music and performances,⁶ and arguably ambiguous or even deliberately conflicting gender presentation by its performers.

Although the music of Visual *Kei* is “highly eclectic,” making the genre difficult to define in terms of sound⁷—partially due to its development around a locus of aesthetic instead of music⁸—the main corpus is primarily reminiscent of “rock,”⁹ a genre typically considered the domain of strictly male performers *and* fans in the West¹⁰ and, until the 1980s, Japan as well. While musically similar to bands from masculine-dominated genres, such as metal, Visual *Kei* differs significantly in performance aesthetic, target demographic, and concert (or *live*) attendees, in that its audience is predominantly women.

Visual *Kei* has experienced fluctuations in popularity since its inception. After a late 1990s’ “boom” reflected in the yearly “single” ranking charts between 1997 and 2000, when Visual *Kei* bands ranked in the top ten each year,¹¹ it began to decline in popularity from the early 2000s. A mild resurrection came with the birth of the “New Generation” of Visual Rock¹² or “Neo” Visual *Kei*,¹³ both terms (roughly) applied to bands formed or popular after 2000.¹⁴ Today, Visual *Kei* maintains relevancy as both a music genre and a subculture, following Paul Hodgkinson’s definition,¹⁵ with bands performing along a spectrum of popularity: from sold-out concert halls by L’arc~en~Ciel and Acid Black Cherry to “indies” band performances in small venues known as *live* houses, with audiences ranging between ten and 200 guests.

As noted above, one main difference between Visual *Kei* and Western rock and metal is the composition of its fan base. Although performers

of the genre are largely men, drawing some deserved criticism,¹⁶ the vast majority of its contemporary, visible fans are women.¹⁷ Of these women, the most devoted identify as *bangya(ru)* (hereafter *bangya*): a pre-gendered contraction of the words “band” and “girl.”¹⁸ In her popular autobiographical manga, self-identified *bangya* Menma Kani points to the large presence of these “wildly enthusiastic” women fans as a defining factor of Visual *Kei*.¹⁹

This connection between women and Visual *Kei* is not coincidental, but rather an essential factor of the subculture’s existence. Indeed, the *bangya* audience is so significant that Visual *Kei* would likely not survive without its support. Furthermore, in light of this predominantly female audience, the construction and performance of masculinities by performers deserves particular consideration, as these masculinities²⁰ (or their images) are produced primarily for female consumption, and in turn endorsed (perhaps even validated) by female consumers.

This resonates strongly with the non-hegemonic aspects of these Visual *Kei* masculinities, such as (self-)beautification and performed homoeroticism, which are similar to aspects exhibited by (images of) men in other forms of Japanese media primarily consumed by and aimed toward women and, more specifically, *shōjo*: women who exist in the liminal space between childhood and adulthood.²¹

While the masculinities performed in Visual *Kei* are already somewhat disruptive due to their reliance on women’s consumption, they also demonstrate the shift of “contemporary modes of masculinity in Japan ... away from the most straightforward examples of modern hegemonic masculinity.”²² Hegemonic masculinity, according to R.W. Connell, is “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees ... the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.”²³ Connell reminds scholars that hegemonic masculinity never exists within a vacuum, but rather is situated among “multiple” masculinities.²⁴ Demetrakis Demetriou argues, as cited in Connell and Messerschmidt, that these multiple masculinities are policed by a further “internal hegemony” which dictates the “social ascendancy” of one group of men (namely, the group following hegemonic norms as prescribed by their geographical, cultural, and historical locality) above all others.²⁵ While there are masculinities that conflict with or outright combat the hegemonic norm, these remain subordinated to that norm until such time that they may lead to “adjustments” in hegemonic

masculinity as prompted by their “challenges” to it.²⁶ That is, aspects of these subordinated masculinities may be “appropriated” by hegemonic masculinity when they appear “to be pragmatically useful for continued domination”²⁷—specifically, over women.

The masculinities described below, therefore, may not hold any tenable position of power under the current Japanese hegemonic gender order, where “the hegemonic cultural ideal of the man as husband, father, and provider ... is still firmly entrenched, and continues to exert a powerful influence on the lives of *all* men.”²⁸ They are instead part of the “numerous different masculinities” which emerged into public visibility in the wake of the rupture between “the middle-class, white collar, work-defined ‘salaryman’” and his position as representative of Japanese masculinity in post-bubble society.²⁹ They further demonstrate shifts in “imaginings of Japanese masculinity,”³⁰ and how masculinities aimed specifically at women’s consumption affect wider practices: Takako Inoue, for example, points to the contemporary prevalence of young men with dyed hair, piercings, and broader beauty consciousness as having directly stemmed from Visual *Kei* aesthetics.³¹

Indeed, the relationship between broader desirable masculinities and those found within women’s media in contemporary Japan demonstrates possible media effects on this shift away from hegemonic norms of masculinity, exhibiting the power of women, particularly the traditionally non-(re)productive *shōjo*,³² to create desirable masculinity according to their own tastes through their consumption of media imagery. After all, “there exists a two-way relationship between women and the market,”³³ and while Lise Skov and Brian Moeran amend that this is not an equal relationship, women consumers “are never ... totally powerless in their responses to, or uses of, media images.”³⁴

This power through consumption is particularly relevant in media genres produced for wider reception, such as popular music, which remain “ostensibly male domains” of production.³⁵ Given currently visible parallels between the (desirable) traits of masculinities grounded in woman-oriented popular media (such as attention to personal grooming and emotional sensitivity) and what has come to be considered as “desirable” or “attractive” masculinity in broader discourse—with beautifully coifed, romantic idols acting as exemplars of male attractiveness and advertisements for men’s aesthetic treatments widely visible in metropolises such as Tokyo and Osaka—women’s consumption certainly appears less “powerless.” Indeed, it could be argued that through consuming

and perpetuating these constructions of idealized masculinity that conflict with images such as the salaryman, women are gradually chipping away at the current hegemonic gender order, regardless of their status as producers.

SITUATING VISUAL *KEI* WITHIN JAPANESE WOMEN'S AND SHŌJO CULTURE

Visual *Kei*, in its present subcultural form, tends to be “feminized”³⁶ within general discourse for two reasons: firstly, because the musical genre is predominantly consumed by women, and secondly, because of its distinguishing “feminine” traits of makeup and beautification. This “feminization” shares distinct commonalities with other forms of women’s/shōjo popular culture. Although customary thinking generally recognizes (band)men as the “producers,”³⁷ the productive power of the desires and patronage of women fans—the shōjo-esque *bangya*—has significantly impacted the development of Visual *Kei*. The following section situates Visual *Kei* and its gender and aesthetic performances within Japanese women’s and shōjo popular culture in the form of manga and male idols, and further within the broader aesthetic trends the consumers of these media have influenced with their desires.

The link between Visual *Kei* and shōjo manga aesthetics is perhaps the most apparent, with Kōji Nanba matter-of-factly pointing to shōjo manga’s influence on the genre’s evolution.³⁸ In *Vijuaru kei no jidai*, Naoko Murota examines this connection in depth, also focusing on the aesthetically and thematically shōjo-reminiscent *dōjinshi* or fan-comic culture surrounding Visual *Kei* band Malice Mizer, a highly influential band popular in the mid-to-late 1990s known for their gothic theatricality.³⁹ Carolyn Stevens further ties Malice Mizer’s “flamboyant French style” to Riyoko Ikeda’s classic shōjo manga *The Rose of Versailles* (*Berusaïyu no Bara*).⁴⁰ Tōru Mitsui’s analysis of glam bands in Japan even links Western glam aesthetics back to this manga,⁴¹ which doubly connects Visual *Kei* to this shōjo aesthetic through the genre’s ties to glam rock.⁴²

Perhaps most importantly, this association is referenced by performers. For example, Murota quotes Malice Mizer’s guitarist and leader Mana⁴³ stating his intention to perform three-dimensional shōjo manga.⁴⁴ Although similar sentiment may not be as explicitly stated by other contemporary performers, Malice Mizer’s influence on the development

of Visual *Kei* along with undeniable aesthetic commonalities tie shōjo manga inextricably to the genre/subculture as a whole.

The shōjo manga aesthetic discussed here is primarily that of the *bishōnen* or “beautiful boy.” Laura Miller refers to Gackt, a widely recognizable Visual *Kei* performer (and former vocalist of Malice Mizer), for example, as a “living ... specimen of *bishōnen*,”⁴⁵ relating his “baroque, androgynous indeterminacy”⁴⁶ too to *The Rose of Versailles*.⁴⁷ Visual *Kei* performers in general predominantly style themselves in a manner that fits within this *bishōnen* aesthetic, often easily described as “lithe, androgynous, and sexually ambiguous.”⁴⁸

Miller explicitly situates Visual *Kei* among “cultural productions from [shōjo] culture,” stating that performers “have all stepped out of the pages of [shōjo] comics onto the music stage, providing living manifestations of readers’ fantasy men,”⁴⁹ echoing Mana’s intentions. Even if all Visual *Kei* performers do not consciously recognize their dependence on shōjo manga traditions, it is unlikely Visual *Kei*’s specific aesthetic developed separately from these traditions, and it potentially explains why Visual *Kei* is a Japan-specific phenomenon (albeit now consumed worldwide).

Visual *Kei* is further linked to shōjo culture through the shōjo-derived and propagated genre of boys’ love (hereafter BL). BL works typically portray men in “same-sex romantic or sexual relationships” and are directed at a primarily female audience.⁵⁰ This link was perhaps most visible in the 1990s and early 2000s, when Visual *Kei* photo shoots in popular music magazines often showed band members in deliberately sexually ambiguous positions. In the mainstream publication *Rockin’ On Japan* in 1991, for example, BUCK-TICK vocalist Atsushi Sakurai is shown pinning X-JAPAN’s beautified drummer and leader YOSHIKI to a chaise lounge.⁵¹ Today, band members still perform specifically homoerotic “fan service” in media directed at *bangya*, such as music/promotional videos, SNS accounts, and *live* performances themselves. This can take the form of playful, flirty banter or physical interactions including touching, hugging, and kissing, carried out regardless of actual sexual orientation.

While it is difficult to assign sexuality to a stage persona, statistics and rumor indicate many performers tend toward heterosexuality. Regardless, this BL-esque content is enthusiastically consumed by fans: for example, an often circulated, regular “relatable thought,” on a *bangya*-aimed Twitter account states that band members’

“signs of gayness” (*homokke*) inspire a response of genuine, burning passion (*moeru*).⁵²

A recent episode from my ethnographic research confirms *bangya*'s “burning passion” for this shōjo-rooted performance. After an informant's favorite drummer became a temporary support musician for another Visual *Kei* band in mid-to-late 2015, she began to “chase” this second band, determined to take in every performance. During his tenure within this band, the drummer took part in the recent trend of “*cheki*” sales: small, instant photographs taken backstage before a performance and sold (generally at random for 500 yen⁵³ each) as limited-time goods.⁵⁴ As *cheki* were not in his former band's repertoire, my informant saw this as a golden opportunity, spending large amounts of money on *cheki* at every performance. While *cheki* with the drummer alone were enthusiastically greeted, the most obvious excitement came from intimate “two-shots” of the drummer with the bassist—who, according to their respective Twitter accounts, had become very close during the band's recent touring. Her favorite (immediately shared around with other fans) depicted the two men leaning close and making a heart shape with their combined hands. She gushed frequently about how they acted just like “boyfriends,” and how this was “confirmed” when speaking to them after a performance. After mentioning their “friendly” *cheki*, the drummer apparently chuckled, looking at the bassist, and said it was because they were so “lovey-dovey”⁵⁵—a story worthy of BL that she retold ecstatically on numerous occasions.

Performers often explicitly enact or reference this shōjo-oriented homoeroticism within Visual *Kei*, regardless of their private lives. Ao Sakurai, self-identified gay man⁵⁶ and leader of bands cali≠gari and LAB. THE BASEMENT, unambiguously referred to *bangya*'s enthusiasm for these performances, shouting “You all love boys' love, right?!” during an MC session at cali≠gari's May 17, 2014 performance in Osaka. Sometimes performers even layer these BL-esque performances with hints of possible “reality” beneath, perhaps in order to fuel fan fantasies or to keep the “mystery” in place. Vocalist Danchō of NoGoD, for example, scolded a bandmate attempting to fix his mussed hairdo on stage in Kobe in August 2014, saying into the microphone “everyone's looking, so you can't flirt with me like that!” (“*Minna miteru kara, icha icha shicha dame da yo!*”).

With such widespread inspiration from and explicit links to shōjo and shōjo-derived manga, Visual *Kei* is situated within a distinctly Japanese,

woman-oriented media context. My research supports Miller's⁵⁷ statement that Visual *Kei* aesthetics, like many alternative expressions of masculinity in late Shōwa and Heisei Japan, can be linked directly back to an aesthetic originally put forth by women's popular culture via shōjo and shōjo-inspired manga.

Modern Japanese male idols are another example of embodied shōjo-aesthetic, as much "living bishōnen," as Miller suggests Visual *Kei* performers are.⁵⁸ While their carefully arranged hair and perfectly made-up faces are reminiscent of two-dimensional images, their positions as idealized "fictions/fantasies"⁵⁹ in the eyes of women fans bring them even closer to that shōjo manga-esque ideal—not so much "real" men as idealized characters to both fawn over and willfully position in one's mind in any number of situations, from sex object⁶⁰ to homoerotic fantasy.⁶¹ Ultimately, idols are men making their livelihood by presenting their bodies for female consumption, demonstrating "a shift toward greater emphasis on male bodies as sexual objects in popular media."⁶² Fabienne Darling-Wolf discusses at length how the bodies of idols—specifically members of the group SMAP—are positioned for consumption as sexual objects by fans, referencing nude photo spreads in women's magazines and sexually suggestive (clothing minimal) scenes in popular dramas starring Takuya Kimura.⁶³

Idols are, however, much closer to the hegemonic norm than Visual *Kei* performers. Indeed, Inoue asserts that (former) SMAP member Takuya Kimura's mild form of androgyny is the furthest most Japanese men are willing to venture from normative masculinity,⁶⁴ demonstrating the significant gap between idol masculinity and Visual *Kei*'s subversive gender performances. Stevens similarly refers to the inability of Visual *Kei*'s "harder sound and outrageous image" to "crack the more conservative mainstream market,"⁶⁵ where idols thrive. Nevertheless, idols remain linked to Visual *Kei* through their performance of shōjo-aesthetic inspired masculinities for a predominantly female audience. While music performed by male idols seems the antithesis of that produced within Visual *Kei*, their performed *masculinities* are linked back to the same bishōnen proto-masculinity—simply a less extreme and more generally palatable relative of Visual *Kei*'s "iconoclastic" masculinities.

Shōjo manga-esque androgyny and gender-bending typical of Visual *Kei* also occurs among idols, with members of popular boy bands dressing in ambiguously feminine clothing or deliberately cross-dressing for both humorous effect (such as SMAP member Shingo Katori's character

“Shingo Mama”) and erotic titillation.⁶⁶ Darling-Wolf specifically refers to the two “members most clearly constructed as sex-objects—Kimura and Katori” as being the “most clearly androgynous.”⁶⁷ Similar to masculinities in both Visual *Kei* and shōjo manga, idols perform modes of masculinity that are both attractive and notably separate from strict hegemonic gender binaries.

There also exists a commonality between the supposed fantasized “availability” of both idols and Visual *Kei* performers in relation to fans. Kazumi Nagaike argues that idols are consumed as “androgynous shōnen,” hiding any potential real-life romantic involvement in order to maintain their “transcendent” shōnen image.⁶⁸ This arguably connects to what Lucy Glasspool terms idols’ “theoretical romantic availability,”⁶⁹ again reminiscent of shōjo manga characters rather than real human beings. My own research shows that Visual *Kei* performers similarly obscure romantic involvements: for example, L’arc~en~Ciel and VAMPS frontman Hyde’s wife and child, like Takuya Kimura’s,⁷⁰ are rarely discussed. Performers’ partners or dating habits are generally invisible in SNS accounts, which instead show playful flirting suggestive of romance between male band members—a form of (woman-)idealized homoeroticism that ties back to both idols⁷¹ and BL narratives. While being ostensibly acknowledged by *bangya*, even indie performers’ romantic involvements are often relegated to rumor sites and message boards. My above informant, for example, understands that her favorite drummer is married, but this fact is simply not relevant to her fannish consumption and enjoyment. Although I have not confirmed⁷² that this lack of heterosexual romantic discussion is an effort to maintain “theoretical romantic availability,” the deliberate avoidance of any such discussion suggests another link between these two disparate worlds, and would benefit from further research.

Recent trends in everyday Japanese men’s personal beautification such as eyebrow grooming⁷³ also demonstrate the above-mentioned shift away from hegemonic masculinity in general physical aesthetics. While more obviously gendered physical markers such as noticeable makeup or high heels are still not widely employed, average Japanese men are incorporating aspects traditionally relegated to “femininity” into their bodily expression, reminiscent of Visual *Kei* performers. While Visual *Kei*’s transgressive, often cross-gender performance has not yet permeated broader mainstream aesthetic, the possibilities of cross-gender presentation and androgyny should briefly be taken into consideration due to the broader implementation of these “feminine” aspects. In relation to

Western heavy metal, Robert Walser states that “[a]ndrogyny offers male performers ... the chance to play with color, movement, flamboyance, and artifice, which can be a tremendous relief from the rigidity expected of them as men.”⁷⁴ In the Japanese context, Yumiko Iida argues that this “employment of feminine aesthetics and strategies ... provides [men] with a means to refute silently imposed ideological assignments and cultural expectations” to maintain and “reproduce” gendered hegemony.⁷⁵ Within *Visual Kei*, this is carried out by both performers *and bangya*, whose fannish consumption embodies this refutation.

While *Visual Kei*’s “assertion of non-conventional masculine identities”⁷⁶ may be extreme, even these recent, fashionable masculinities practiced by stylish, heterosexual young men are reminiscent of the *shōjo*-aesthetic, tied to idols and even aspects of *Visual Kei* itself, as noted by Inoue above. The widespread acceptance throughout contemporary Japanese society of this shift in masculinities further creates a receptive climate for *Visual Kei*’s perseverance, and even its evolution. As men’s beautification becomes more widespread, *Visual Kei* must either fade into the “norm” or add new elements of non-normative, “iconoclastic”⁷⁷ expressions of gender and self—potentially offering, over time, ever broadening possibilities of gendered expression back into wider society. Although Inoue suggests that skirts and makeup are likely forever barred to the average Japanese man,⁷⁸ it may yet be premature to say that *Visual Kei*’s influence on wider aesthetic trends has ended.

Considering the arguments above, I believe locating *Visual Kei* and its particular constructions of gender within the specifically Japanese context of women’s/*shōjo* media is vital. Further, I argue that *Visual Kei* as it exists today could not have developed outside of this context of *shōjo*-oriented aesthetics and well-established conceptions of non-hegemonic masculinities as available for and even geared toward women’s consumption.

THE “BURST” OF HEGEMONIC GENDER IDEALS

It is worth reiterating the particular social climate in which *Visual Kei* developed. With BUCK-TICK’s major debut in 1987 and X-JAPAN’s in 1989, followed by the genre’s increasing popularity throughout the 1990s, *Visual Kei* as a musical phenomenon correlates with the shift from “bubble” economy prosperity to post-bubble insecurity and ensuing shifts in gender discourse.⁷⁹ These economic changes rattled firmly

seated notions of the salaryman as a hegemonic ideal, demonstrating the impossibilities (or increasing unlikelihood) of achieving the social security that position once entailed.⁸⁰ Women, to some extent, were able to take advantage of this instability, using “new technologies of beauty” to take control of their own appearances, both “jettisoning expected behavior and gendered norms” and “challeng[ing] ... mainstream models of desirable femininity.”⁸¹ Their “challenge” was further extended into their choice of male romantic partners. As such, women exchanged poorly-groomed men⁸² for the more androgynous figures offered by the media. This is visible in both the initial popularity of Visual *Kei* and the ubiquitous presence of male idols embodying this real-life bishōnen sensibility.

However, it appears that the alternatives offered by Visual *Kei* were ultimately *too* alternative for the general public, likely contributing to the genre’s fade from the spotlight. Relegation to subcultural status does not, however, rob Visual *Kei* and its women-supported gender expression of their importance. Numerous fans and performers still find value in this subculture, which offers more than alternative forms of masculinity. *Bangya*, in particular, can appreciate Visual *Kei* as a gendered safety zone, where restrictive heteronormative ideals can be ignored, at least temporarily. While *bangya* may or may not be concerned with their models of femininity being “desirable,” they *are* actively pursuing lifestyles that conflict with hegemonic femininity. Intentionally or not, they are challenging heteronormative ideals by refusing to base their lives around positions as wives or mothers, and could be seen as embracing the liminal, non-(re)productive position of the shōjo.

The following discussion is based upon my approximately four years of extensive physical and virtual⁸³ ethnographic research and discourse analysis⁸⁴ within Visual *Kei* subculture, and more specifically among *bangya*. Due to the private aspects of this subculture, where pseudonyms are common even between friends, I have elected to primarily employ the informal method of intercept interview⁸⁵ at this point, interwoven with participant observation and generally held in more intimate gatherings (such as meals before or after *lives*) either one-on-one or in small groups.

THE *BANGYA*’S PERSPECTIVE—A SAFELY GENDERED HAVEN

I do not believe it coincidental that women who identify as *bangya* overlap in many ways with the figure of the shōjo. The shōjo represents “a conflicting set of ideas and anxieties about gender, sexuality,

consumption, education, and Japanese culture,” and was originally “threatening” to the hegemony “because she was outside the family system,” inhabiting a “liminal space between the close supervision of her parents and that of her husband after marriage.”⁸⁶ This “liminal space” between childhood and adulthood,⁸⁷ the latter often implicated by marriage in the Japanese context,⁸⁸ appears to be widely represented among *bangya*. This is not just in the many teenage and early twenties *bangya* but also in the many older *bangya* who remain unmarried (or apparently so), sometimes still living with parents despite full-time employment, extending indefinitely their “freedom from future obligations as a [hegemonic] woman.”⁸⁹ The wide age range of *bangya* resonates with Jennifer Robertson’s use of *gyaru* in relation to older shōjo⁹⁰ (possibly echoed in the full term *bangyaru*), although the *bangya* demographic expands beyond age limits implied by both terms.

While these older *bangya* may be dismissed by society as so-called “parasite singles” (a derogatory term I use grudgingly⁹¹) or similarly unflattering epithets, within *bangya* subculture, they reign supreme. These shōjo-esque women can dedicate the most time and money to their fandom due to eschewing other commitments, and through their patronage help decide what flourishes and what fades away. *Bangya* subculture may indeed be a paradise for older shōjo, where their desires are catered to and their surroundings are comfortable, due to their permeation by like-minded women and separation from societal pressure pushing them toward women’s “social adulthood” of “marriage and motherhood.”⁹² The economic freedom provided by their shōjo-esque status is especially important, since participation in Visual *Kei* fandom requires significant economic investment. Purchasing a band’s recordings (often multiple copies to participate in promotional “in-store” events with performers) is just the beginning, with tickets to *lives* country-wide (often several times per month, plus subsequent transportation and accommodation), band goods, and various other expenses all significantly impacting a *bangya*’s budget.

Although Visual *Kei* performers are mainly men, they are men reminiscent of the characters of shōjo manga—rather than the “person” it is both the onstage and offstage (social media) “performance persona”⁹³ that is the object of consumption. Furthermore, these men never demand domesticity: despite their masculinity, the *bangya* is not forced into a traditionally complementary role to serve their dominance. At a *live*, a *bangya* is not mother, nor wife, nor daughter: she is herself, and

acting on personal desires. More importantly, the men on stage are the main, if not only, masculine presence. Constituting only a tiny minority of the *live* audience,⁹⁴ men cannot exert their dominance over *bangya*, creating a rare space where women are both the majority and the default. *Bangya* are therefore at liberty to break free of outside expectations, including those that would render them passive or docile. Their wild and otherwise “aggressive” activity comes to represent an escape that can be indulged while maintaining a personal sense of safety. After attending a non-Visual *Kei live* in Kawasaki in December 2015 with a group of informants who were supporting the bassist from an inactive Visual *Kei* band, I commented on this, saying how the “wall of death” observed within the audience was both frightening and nothing like what I had experienced before. An informant laughed, saying “of course; they’re not *bangya*!”

This idea of safety was first brought to my attention at a two-day Awoi *live* in June 2014 in Osaka. I noticed a remarkably small number of men participating: fewer than ten each night in crowds of more than 200. As the second night progressed, the fans got wilder and wilder as the band’s performance intensified with each song. Awoi *lives* regularly incorporated head-banging and other forms of metal-esque movement, including a type of moshing sometimes known as *abareru* (to act violently) where a large group, usually the front portion of the audience, rushes back and forth in time to pre-determined phrases within a song, bouncing off one another while waving their hands in the air.

Despite the apparent mayhem, there was no discernible panic or fear—the atmosphere was invigorating, with broad smiles visible all around. Even the most forceful head-banging, done in a deep squat while holding onto a wall or friend for support, was conducted in a controlled, personal space. *Bangya* who fell while moshing were immediately helped up by those around them. Many *bangya* also removed their shoes before the *live* to facilitate participation, a decision I first dismissed as self-neglect (surely inviting broken toes) but later reinterpreted as a gesture of trust within the Visual *Kei live*. Furthermore, it represents concern for fellow *bangya*, and I have found that slipper-clad or stocking feet are commonplace at *lives* where moshing is expected. This is in harsh contrast to moshing in metal contexts, where violence and aggression are emphasized,⁹⁵ and heavy boots seem the ideal footwear. Provided that everyone followed the unspoken “rules” of the *live* space—rules which are almost sacred to *bangya*—there was no risk of serious injury.

The fear and guardedness that tend to hound women in a patriarchal society dissipate within a Visual *Kei live*.

Although certain aspects of fan activity among *bangya* might seem daunting to outsiders⁹⁶ and cliquish behavior is not unheard of, *bangya* tend to be well-mannered within the *live* space. Examples of this include most *bangya*'s tendency to apologize during or after performances for unintended collisions and a general respect for space claimed by others, such as when a *bangya* watches her neighbor's spot when she runs to the restroom. While there are *bangya* willing to take advantage of the setting to act selfishly (to move closer to the band, for example), they are generally frowned upon and certainly complained about, sometimes by performers themselves but especially by *bangya* veterans. Informants have stated that there are bands or performers they avoid entirely due to their fans' poor manners, and criticism of poor fan behavior is commonplace on both *bangya* and performer SNS accounts. This serves as a reminder of the *bangya*'s power within Visual *Kei*—be it for good or bad. “That’s how Visual *Kei* is,” an informant remarked, somewhat resignedly; “it’s more the fans than the music or anything else that decide everything.”

In a number of recent group events, I have further observed *bangya*'s control over or “production” of the *live* space. At the CRUSH OF MODE event in Osaka (August 2014), for example, veteran *bangya* searched out fans of less popular bands in order to fill the front row or *saizen* with excited fans for each group's performance. At the 2014 Vijutokke! Festtoko! event in Nagoya, I first witnessed the more typical level of this kind of organization. When asking if the *saizen* for the last band's performance was full, an informant was directed to a woman who took down fans' names in a notebook for their desired positions. This behavior is commonplace, as further research has demonstrated. Fans who enter a venue first tend to manage the *saizen* according to band—with one steady fan or *jōren* (“regular customer”) acting as a band's *shikiri* (literally “partition” or “boundary”) and responsible for their *saizen* for an extended tenure⁹⁷—or individually—with each *bangya* in the *saizen* waiting for fans of other bands to approach and ask for her spot during their performance before the *live* begins.⁹⁸

It must be noted that due to my age and original entry point into the subculture, my ethnographic experience is skewed toward bands with older fan bases—my experience with younger bands and fans generally limited to group events—and this behavior I have observed may be due to a kind of equilibrium achieved through a maturity of both the

performers and their fans. This suggests a necessary complication of the *bangya* identity, as do the myriad of social and environmental factors that individualize fans' experiences. It is also worth noting that these manners may have some background in hegemonic feminine socialization, where women are taught to be "caring" and "unimposing." However, as these actions still *do* result in a safe space for women, they should not be dismissed because of their potential origin.

Although the possibility of a feminist interpretation of Visual *Kei* has been dismissed due to the dearth of women performers, this only considers half of the subculture. The Western punk subculture was originally lauded for its female performers and assertion that anyone could play music (even hard, dirty, unfeminine music).⁹⁹ However, this feminist slant was specifically translated through performers, whereas women fans had much more difficulty asserting their place within the otherwise heavily masculinized subculture.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, this power available to women punks is perhaps somewhat limiting, as it might be difficult to hold down multiple identities within the feminine spectrum while simultaneously busting norms with their musical punk careers. *Bangya*, however, on top of experiencing safety and comfort within their subculture, maintain outside identities, indeed often working to hide their *bangya* side from outsiders—protective of an identity misunderstood at best and derided at worst. They are thus free to pursue their non-hegemonic, potentially liberating passions while simultaneously maintaining a degree of social security. While this "hidden" disregard of societal norms may seem escapist and ineffective at enacting change, its ultimate societal effect as visible in media, academia, and basic norms of behavior—while perhaps slow-acting—is meaningful. Furthermore, and just as importantly, this subculture serves as a vital outlet for these women, who find pleasure, meaning, and perhaps even "liberation" through their *bangya* activity—situated in the "dream" position of the *shōjo* between the two increasingly repressive poles of masculine productivity and feminine reproductivity¹⁰¹—all things that may be otherwise lacking in their lives within the precarious reality of contemporary Japanese society.¹⁰²

THE SHŌJO IN MUSIC

In this chapter, I have situated Visual *Kei* within Japanese women's/*shōjo* popular culture, demonstrating commonalities in aesthetic and gender expression. The *bishōnen* of *shōjo* manga are created and

consumed by women, with their images entirely dependent upon women's desires. Visual *Kei* performers, however, are living, often ostensibly *male* individuals, who possess agency and the ability to create and manage their own self-images. While undoubtedly in part playing the same economic game as male idols, conforming themselves to shōjo-esque fantasy imagery in order to succeed commercially, Visual *Kei*'s characteristic gender constructions and any possible hegemonic disruptions that emerge from this capitalistic system should not be pessimistically dismissed due to commercial motivation.¹⁰³ Furthermore, these performers do *choose* to pursue their careers in a medium predominantly supported, propagated, and even inspired by women and their media. Japanese musicians find commercial success outside of Visual *Kei*, and run far less risk of ridicule and stigma there. Visual *Kei*, then, appears to offer something to the performers themselves, meaning that these woman-oriented, woman-supported, non-normative representations of gender are being adopted by men for their own reasons, offering challenges to gender hegemony from the other side of the patriarchal gender binary divide.¹⁰⁴

I also demonstrated what the subculture of Visual *Kei* potentially offers to its shōjo-esque *bangya* fan base, and how it is in many ways controlled by them. Although Visual *Kei* may no longer be the cultural phenomenon it was in the 1990s, it remains a thriving subculture into which women all over Japan pour time, money, and devotion on a remarkable scale, ignoring or outright defying hegemonic norms of femininity through their participation. Despite performers being predominantly men or male-identifying, women are far from powerless, and in fact wield significant influence over the subculture, regardless of (or perhaps even due to) the fact that a substantial number of *bangya* exist within the liminal, traditionally non-(re)productive space of the shōjo.

Situated within the field of Japanese women's and shōjo culture, Visual *Kei* offers a deliberate blurring (even dismissal) of the strict delineations created by patriarchal gender binaries for performers and fans alike. Both *bangya* and performers demonstrate their ambivalence toward hegemonic norms, and subsequently propose their own alternatives which result in a disruption of the dominance of Japanese gender hegemony. Furthermore, the *live* offers *bangya* a space in which they can be free, if only temporarily, from outside societal (male) pressures—a spatial embodiment of shōjo liminality. While Hodkinson¹⁰⁵ rightly severs the link between subculture and counter-hegemonic resistance, this should not render subcultural participants' actions meaningless.

Visual *Kei* performers and *bangya* enact and propagate non-normative, shōjo-reminiscent expressions of gender, and in doing so find identity, belonging, and pleasure outside the hegemonic order. The shōjo, while perhaps not a producer in the traditional sense, is firmly situated within Japan's music scene through Visual *Kei*.

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NOTES

1. See, Christine Hine, *Virtual Ethnography* (London: Sage, 2000); Christine Hine, “Towards Ethnography of Television on the Internet: A Mobile Strategy for Exploring Mundane Interpretive Activities,” *Media, Culture and Society* 33, no. 4 (2011): 567–582.
2. Takako Inoue, “Vijuaru kei to jendā” [Visual Kei and Gender], in *Vijuaru kei no jūdai: Rokku, keshō, jendā* [The Age of Visual Kei: Rock, Makeup, Gender], eds. Takako Inoue et al. (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2003), 12.
3. Tatsuya Dejima, “Di(s)ctionary dai 13 kai—VISUAL-KEI” [Di(s)ctionary Number 13—VISUAL-KEI], *Bounce*, April 25, 2007, accessed February 15, 2017, <http://web.archive.org/web/20070930153851/http://www.bounce.com/article/article.php/3419/>.
4. Carolyn S. Stevens, *Japanese Popular Music: Culture, Authenticity and Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 56–57.
5. Yasunori Kashiwagi, “Poppu karuchā toshite no vijuaru kei no rekishi” [The History of Visual Kei as Pop Culture], *Chiba keizai daigaku tanki daigaku-bu kenkyū kiyō* [Bulletin of Chiba Keizai College] 7 (2011): 89–90.
6. Mira Malick, “In Tune with the Times: Effort, Entrepreneurship and Eigyou” (Paper Presented at the Sophia University Graduate School of Global Studies Symposium and Workshop Series 2015 “Neoliberalism in Motion—Consolidation and Divergence: Sociological Perspectives on Neoliberalism’s Global Presence,” Tokyo, Japan, December 20, 2015); Mira Malick, “Bad Boys, Good Sons: Music as Leisure and Labour in Japan,” (Paper Presented at the International Symposium “Contemporary Japan: Families in Transition,” Tokyo, Japan, January 23, 2016).
7. Malick, “In Tune”; Malick, “Bad Boys.”

8. Tak Ohama, “[Zenpen: taidan] V(Vijuaru) kei rokku no rekishi sōkatsu & matome! X JAPAN,LUNA SEA,L’Arc~en~Ciel kara SHAZNA, Dir En Grey wo tate,,V kei ōgoshō ongaku raitā to moto SHOXX hēshūchō ga kataru [[First Part: Dialogue] A Recap & Summary of the History of Visual Kei Rock! From X JAPAN,LUNA SEA,L’Arc~en~Ciel to SHAZNA, Dir En Grey... A Leading Visual Kei Music Writer and Former SHOXX Editor-in-Chief Talk],” *Myuu*, June 26, 2015, accessed February 15, 2017, <http://myuu.jp/?p=1395>.
9. Inoue, “Vijuaru kei to jendā,” 28.
10. See, Inoue, “Vijuaru kei to jendā.”; Takako Inoue, “Kakuchō sareta otoko no bigaku—X o megutte” [Extended Men’s Aesthetics—About X], in *Vijuaru kei no jidai: Rokku, keshō, jendā* [The Age of Visual Kei: Rock, Makeup, Gender], eds. Takako Inoue et al. (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2003), 113–161; Mimi Schippers, *Rockin’ Out of the Box: Gender Maneuvering in Alternative Hard Rock* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).
11. http://entamedata.web.fc2.com/music/hit_music1997.html; http://entamedata.web.fc2.com/music/hit_music1998.html; http://entamedata.web.fc2.com/music/hit_music1999.html; http://entamedata.web.fc2.com/music/hit_music2000.html.
12. Takako Inoue et al., *Vijuaru kei no jidai: Rokku, keshō, jendā* [The Age of Visual Kei: Rock, Makeup, Gender] (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2003), 276.
13. Kashiwagi, “Vijuaru kei no rekishi.”
14. Ibid.
15. Paul Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), 29–33.
16. See, Inoue, “Otoko no bigaku”; “Constructing Male Aesthetics in Rock and Makeup: Gender Strategies by Musicians and Fans of Visual Rock in Japan,” in *Gender and Modernity: Perspectives from Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Yoko Hayami, Yumiko Tokita-Tanabe, and Akio Tanabe (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2003), 189–217.
17. This chapter is limited by binary gender terminology. Although it is unclear how many non-binary identifying fans Visual Kei has, I was limited to my own observations and the outward gender presentation of the fans I encountered. This gender binary is also referenced within fandom terminology, where women and men are separated into *bangya(ru)* and *bangya(ru)-o* (a contraction of “*bangya(ru)*” and “man,” *otoko*).
18. Menma Kani, *Bangyaru-chan no nichijō* [Days of BanGal] (Tokyo: Enter Brain, 2012), 6, 16.

19. Ibid., 7.
20. Within this chapter I use the term “masculinities” to describe performers’ gender performance; however, based on further research, it appears that at times binary terminology is perhaps also inappropriate for performers.
21. Helen Kilpatrick, “Envisioning the Shōjo Aesthetic in Miyazawa Kenji’s ‘The Twin Stars’ and ‘Night of the Milky Way Railway,’” *Portal: Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 9, no. 3 (2012): 3, 10.
22. Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall, “Introduction: Interrogating Men and Masculinities,” in *Recreating Japanese Men*, eds. Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 10.
23. R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 77.
24. Ibid.
25. Demetrakis Z. Demetriou, “Connell’s Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique,” *Theory and Society* 30, no. 3 (2001): 337–361, quoted in R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 844.
26. Ibid., 835.
27. Demetriou, “A Critique,” quoted in Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity,” 844.
28. Romit Dasgupta, “Salarymen Doing Straight: Heterosexual Men and the Dynamics of Gender Conformity,” in *Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan*, eds. Mark McLelland and Romit Dasgupta (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 168, emphasis original.
29. Romit Dasgupta, “The ‘Lost Decade’ of the 1990s and Shifting Masculinities in Japan,” *Culture, Society & Masculinity* 1, no. 1 (2009): 80.
30. Ibid.
31. Inoue, “Vijuaru kei to jendā,” 35.
32. Sharalyn Orbaugh, “Shōjo,” in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Japanese Culture*, ed. Sandra Buckley (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 458–459.
33. Lise Skov and Brian Moeran, “Introduction: Hiding in the Light: From Oshin to Yoshimoto Banana,” in *Women, Media, and Consumption in Japan*, eds. Lise Skov and Brian Moeran (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995), 6.
34. Ibid.
35. Miller, *Beauty Up*, 152.
36. Malick, “In Tune.”
37. Ibid.
38. Kōji Nanba, “Yūsu sabukaruchā no gurōbarizēshon” [The Globalization of Youth Subculture], *Kansai gakuin daigaku shakaigaku-bu kiyō*

- [Kwansei Gakuin University Sociology Department Bulletin] 104 (2014): 91.
39. Naoko Murota, “Shōjo tachi no ibasho sagashi—Vijuaru rokku to shōjo manga” [Girls’ Searching for a Place to Belong—Visual Rock and Shōjo Manga], in *Vijuaru kei no jidai: Rokku, kesbō, jendā* [The Age of Visual Kei: Rock, Makeup, Gender], eds. Takako Inoue et al. (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2003), 165–205.
 40. Stevens, *Japanese Popular Music*, 58.
 41. Tōru Mitsui, “Japan in Japan: Notes on an Aspect of the Popular Music Record Industry in Japan,” *Popular Music* 3 (1983): 113.
 42. Inoue, “Vijuaru kei to jendā,” 39–40. Artists such as YOSHIKI, BUCK-TICK’s Sakurai Atsushi, and MUCC’s Miya, for example, have all referenced glam superstar David Bowie’s influence.
 43. Mana is most well-known in the guise of his cross-dressed stage persona.
 44. Murota, “Shōjo tachi no ibasho,” 190.
 45. Miller, *Beauty Up*, 153.
 46. This reference is now somewhat dated. Gackt’s current (2017) image tends more toward a “macho” aesthetic that is popular with men as much as with women—a shift which deserves more attention at a later date. His “break” as a member of Malice Mizer, however, still makes his presence here meaningful.
 47. Ibid.
 48. James Welker, “Lilies of the Margin: Beautiful Boys and Queer Female Identity in Japan,” in *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities*, eds. Fran Martin et al. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 46.
 49. Miller, *Beauty Up*, 152.
 50. James Welker, “A Brief History of Shōnen’Ai, Yaoi, and Boys Love,” in *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan*, eds. Mark McLelland et al. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 42; see also, Mark McLelland et al., eds., *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015).
 51. Inoue, “Constructing Male Aesthetics,” 203.
 52. “*Men no homokke wa sunao ni moeru*,” https://twitter.com/VANGYAruru_bot/status/838144122154201088; For my translation of *moeru*, I reference Patrick W. Galbraith, “Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan,” *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 5 (2009), accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.japancestudies.org.uk/articles/2009/Galbraith.html>.
 53. Approximately 4.36 USD at the time of writing.
 54. Malick, “In Tune.”

55. “*Rabu rabu ssu kara.*”
56. Kaori Kasai, “Rooftop intabyuu—Sakurai Ao (LAB.THE BASEMENT) X Nezaki Kazuei (Usagi-Usagi) X Aie (the God and Death Stars) [Rooftop Interview],” *Rooftop*, January 6, 2013, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://rooftop.cc/interview/130106000110.php>.
57. *Beauty Up*, 152–153.
58. *Ibid.*, 153.
59. Kazumi Nagaike, “Johnny’s Idols as Icons: Female Desires to Fantasize and Consume Male Idol Images,” in *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture*, eds. Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 104.
60. Fabienne Darling-Wolf, “SMAP, Sex, and Masculinity: Constructing the Perfect Female Fantasy in Japanese Popular Music,” *Popular Music and Society* 27, no. 3 (2004): 360–361, 367.
61. Lucy Glasspool, “From Boys Next Door to Boy’s Love: Gender Performance in Japanese Male Idol Media,” in *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture*, eds. Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 123–127.
62. Fabienne Darling-Wolf, “Women and New Men: Negotiating Masculinity in the Japanese Media,” *The Communication Review* 7, no. 3 (2004): 288.
63. Darling-Wolf, “SMAP, Sex, and Masculinity,” 359–361.
64. Inoue, “Vijuaru kei to jendā,” 36.
65. Stevens, *Japanese Popular Music*, 56–57.
66. Darling-Wolf, “SMAP, Sex, and Masculinity,” 360–361; Stevens, *Japanese Popular Music*, 55.
67. Darling-Wolf, “SMAP, Sex, and Masculinity,” 360.
68. Nagaike, “Johnny’s Idols as Icons,” 103–106.
69. Glasspool, “Boys Next Door,” 122.
70. Nagaike, “Johnny’s Idols,” 106.
71. Glasspool, “Boys Next Door,” 122.
72. Fans who hold romantic aspirations toward performers generally do not make these desires obvious to an ethnographer.
73. Miller, *Beauty Up*, 142.
74. Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 133.
75. Yumiko Iida, “Beyond the ‘Feminization of Masculinity’: Transforming a Patriarchy with the ‘Feminine’ in Contemporary Japanese Youth Culture,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (2005): 57.
76. *Ibid.*
77. Malick, “In Tune”; Malick, “Bad Boys.”
78. Inoue, “Vijuaru kei to jendā,” 35–36.
79. Dasgupta, “The ‘Lost Decade’,” 80.

80. David H. Slater and Patrick W. Galbraith, "Re-narrating Social Class and Masculinity in Neoliberal Japan: An Examination of the Media Coverage of the 'Akihabara Incident' of 2008," *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 7 (2011), accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2011/SlaterGalbraith.html>.
81. Miller, *Beauty Up*, 38.
82. Romit Dasgupta, "Globalisation and the Bodily Performance of 'Cool' and 'Uncool' Masculinities in Japan," *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 23 (2010), accessed April 30, 2016, <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue23/dasgupta.htm>.
83. See, Hine, *Virtual Ethnography*.
84. *Ibid.*, 53, 122, 142–143.
85. David Gudelunas, "There's an App for That: The Uses and Gratifications of Online Social Networks for Gay Men," *Sexuality & Culture* 16, no. 4 (2012): 353.
86. Sarah Frederick, "Not That Innocent: Yoshiya Nobuko's Good Girls," in *Bad Girls of Japan*, eds. Laura Miller and Jan Bardsley (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 67.
87. Indeed, one informant referred to her waning *bangya* passions as "becoming an adult."
88. Nancy Rosenberger, "Rethinking Emerging Adulthood in Japan: Perspectives from Long-Term Single Women," *Child Development Perspectives* 1, no. 2 (2007): 92–93.
89. Kumiko Saito, "Magic, Shōjo, and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and the Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 1 (2014): 161.
90. Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 65.
91. See, Matthew Taylor, "Strategies of Dissociation: A Mimetic Dimension to Social Problems in Japan," *Anthropoetics* 12, no. 1 (2006), <http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap1201/taylor.htm>.
92. Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 63.
93. Philip Auslander, "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 14, no. 1 (2004): 6.
94. While men may constitute a significant portion of the wider Visual *Kei* fan base, they are noticeably absent from *lives*, where *bangya* prevail.
95. Jonathan Gruzelier, "Moshpit Menace and Masculine Mayhem," in *Oh Boy! Masculinities in Popular Music*, ed. Freya Jarmen-Ivens (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 61.
96. This is according to a concert guide on English-language Visual *Kei* site *JaMe*: <http://www.jame-world.com/us/articles-72145-visual-kei-concert-etiquette-a-beginner-s-guide.html>. In my experience, Visual *Kei*

- live* manners are learnable through observation, although new fans may oftentimes be frustrated by the unique system.
97. The *JaMe* article also references this system.
 98. While this system of organization may not be unique to Visual *Kei*, it does demonstrate the control exhibited by fans within the subculture, problematizing analysis that limits “power” to the production of music.
 99. See, Lauraine Leblanc, *Pretty in Punk: Girls’ Gender Resistance in a Boys’ Subculture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999).
 100. *Ibid.*
 101. Saito, “Magic, Shōjo, and Metamorphosis,” 158.
 102. See, Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).
 103. Furthermore, the consequential level of hegemonically subversive desires on the part of *bangya* that this implies deserves consideration.
 104. Iida, “Feminization of Masculinity,” 63.
 105. Hodkinson, *Goth*, 29.

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Shōjo Fantasies of Inhabiting Cool Japan: Reimagining Fukuoka Through Shōjo and Otome Ideals with Cosplay Tourism

Craig Norris

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades the global popularity of Japanese entertainment such as anime, manga, pop music and cosplay has formed a significant part of defining the country's cultural and national identity, as typified by Douglas McGray's *Japan's Gross National Cool*¹ and Anthony Faiola's *Japan's Empire of Cool*² in the Western popular press. The relationship between popular culture and national identity was formalized within Japan through the government-sponsored, nation-branding initiative Cool Japan.³ The Cool Japan campaign continues to serve various agendas, one being to leverage the global popularity of Japanese entertainment for commercial interests, such as increasing tourism to Japan. However, various concerns have been raised around the lack of understanding and depth coming out of these top-down initiatives,⁴

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many of which lack genuine grassroots or entertainer support,⁵ with Koichi Iwabuchi⁶ criticizing many of the efforts so far as being “superficial and nationalistic observations that people outside Japan are rejoicing in Japanese media culture.” Additional concerns focus on the perpetuation of simplistic stereotypes for an international audience and the silencing of more diverse voices and experiences which do not fit into this branding narrative.⁷

This chapter discusses the website *asianbeat*⁸ as an example of a government-sponsored, youth-oriented website promoting a Cool Japan-type narrative which integrates ideas of a unique Japanese-ness with popular culture and fandom. Using the example of *asianbeat*'s travel articles that feature well-known Asian cosplayers, I argue that the *asianbeat* website is an example of integrating tourism and popular culture through appropriating the voice of the grassroots, celebrity–fan as an authenticator and advocator. This case study examines the ways in which the notion of youthful femininity (*shōjo*, or *otome*) is configured through the cosplayer's performance of “fan identity” in the context of a carefully constructed travel feature on a news and entertainment website. *Asianbeat*'s travel features, then, provide an example of the intersection of ideas of Japanese-ness, marketing strategies and popular culture through the representation of youthful girlhood often associated with *shōjo* and *otome* ideals. The relationship between these is significant as it reveals the ways in which popular narratives and ideals can be used to create an invitational strategy promoting a location, such as Fukuoka, as ideologically and emotionally attuned to a particular Japanese popular culture, such as *shōjo* manga or cosplay.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF YOUTHFUL FEMALE IDENTITY

The construction and representation of female identity within Japanese popular culture can be explored through a number of different terms and levels of analysis—as a text, a consumer group, a producer and so on. While these approaches are intertwined within the patterns of representations I am exploring, the focus of this chapter is on the configuration and articulation of youthful female identities, variously defined as *shōjo* or *otome*, within a series of *asianbeat* travel articles using well-known Asian cosplayers. This chapter, then, examines the representation of youthful female identity at a textual level as framed by the online news and entertainment website *asianbeat*, rather than the actual lived

experience of belonging to a particular shōjo or otome fan community or the role of female creators in producing shōjo entertainment.

The two main terms used in this article, shōjo and otome, each have a cultural specificity and history within Japan, as well as particular usages outside of Japan. In exploring how *asianbeat*'s travel articles work to present tourism to Fukuoka in relation to ideas of shōjo and otome, I build on previous research in the field of cultural studies and media studies which have explored the cultural specificity, history and circulation of shōjo categories within Japan and overseas.⁹ Research on the production and consumption of shōjo manga has been particularly influential in establishing the history and development of shōjo as a classification and aesthetic. As Lamerichs¹⁰ observes, the analysis of shōjo manga often addresses one, or all, of three key themes: the construction of girlhood from the Meiji period onwards; media literacy, in particular the development and codifying of particular shōjo aesthetics and motifs; and inclusivity in terms of the portrayal of non-heterosexual identities, such as same-sex romances in boys' love manga. One could add to this final theme shōjo manga's history of portraying controversial themes such as "gender-related discrimination, homosexuality, rape and violence"¹¹ as pioneered by manga authors such as *The Magnificent 49ers* during the 1970s¹² and continuing today.¹³

While the term shōjo has a relatively recent history as a gender category to refer to girls and young women its usage has reflected, and contributed to, various contrasting trends in gender identity and social expectations surrounding girlhood in modern Japan. First used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the context of Japan's emerging modern education system,¹⁴ shōjo was the gendered classification for girls, with boys labeled shōnen, and encapsulated the socially conservative education and training girls received on their way to become ideal citizens and women, such as mothers and housewives.

From the postwar era on the term shōjo has also been defined as a target audience and demographic for specific media, such as shōjo manga (manga aimed at a young female readership) with an aesthetic defined as "distinctive decorative and expressive artwork, along with stories that emphasize the inner feelings of the characters."¹⁵ These aesthetics have been traced back to prewar fashion illustrations and girls' magazines with their idealized depiction of girlhood and femininity.¹⁶ Shōjo manga has since become associated with a diversity of meanings and associations as it has responded to, and been instrumental in, changing ideas of

femininity and gender roles in Japan. Today, representations of girlhood exist cross a spectrum of values and ideals, from portraying naïve and cute shōjo identities to “competing representations of more emancipated, active and independent young women”¹⁷ as pioneered by the work of *The Magnificent 49ers* in the late 1960s and 1970s¹⁸ and continued today through the experimentation and innovation of artists such as Kiriko Nananan.¹⁹ Shōjo manga has reflected significant socio-cultural shifts in gender identity and girlhood in Japan from reflecting lifestyles within today’s consumer capitalism to same-sex relationships and non-heterosexual identities.²⁰

While research focusing on the production and consumption of shōjo manga has been influential in understanding the representation and construction of “girl culture” and femininity, of particular relevance to this chapter is recent work which has explored the recent rise and revival of otome culture.²¹ The term otome predates shōjo and can be traced as far back to the late eight-century poetry collection *Man’yōshū*.²² Today, it is considered an old-fashioned and out-dated term associated with antiquated ideals of femininity and virginity,²³ as such it is usually translated into English as “maiden.” Tomoko Aoyama,²⁴ concisely explains the difference between these terms as: “*shōjo* [are] free and arrogant, unlike meek and dutiful musume (daughter) or pure and innocent otome (maiden).” Emily Wakeling²⁵ extends this contrast, arguing “‘Daughter’ and ‘maiden’ both suggest the presence of a male authority in determining the girl’s identity, while the concept of the shōjo has neither of these connections.” However, as Kazumi Hasegawa²⁶ shows, more conservative and old-fashioned term has experienced a revival recently in the form of otome dating games.

Since the early 1990s there has been a significant rise in the popularity of dating simulation games aimed at girls and women. These games typically feature female protagonists courting and interacting with a range of male characters, and this focus on mostly heterosexual relationships within “old-fashioned” romantic narratives and gender-roles has led to this genre being labeled otome. Hasegawa²⁷ explored how this community of female gamers “describe their interest, sexuality and aesthetic” in these old-fashioned narratives and gender identities in a way which suggests a revival of “conventional ideas of femininity or girl-ness and heterosexual narratives.”

While Hasegawa’s research is focused on video games, I argue a similar discourse drawing upon old-fashioned representations of the

unmarried, pure and youthful woman symbolized by the otome can be seen in many of the *asianbeat* travel narratives. As I will show through my analysis of “AZA MIYUKO’s ‘Doki-Doki (exciting)’ Fukuoka Story!”,²⁸ the emphasis on the cosplayer as a performer adopting alternative identities to improvise and discover a sense of belonging in a location, including that of the otome in the traditional Japanese garden. In a second *asianbeat* travel profile—“A Romantic Fukuoka Date with Xiao Xiao Bai”²⁹—the more participatory “dating narrative” of the otome game genre is suggested. Here, the travel feature focuses on the Chinese cosplayer Xiao Xiao Bai as he visits various romantically themed locations and local dating spots cosplaying as a bishōnen (beautiful boy) characters similar to those depicted in otome games. While the *asianbeat* articles don’t explicitly use the terms shōjo or otome, my analysis will show these links are clearly informing the overall narrative and aesthetics being presented. In analyzing the construction of female identity within the *asianbeat* articles, my aim is not to achieve an essentializing notion of shōjo or otome as revealed in an online popular news site. Instead, my analysis provides an example of how ideas of “being” shōjo or otome are used by an online news and entertainment site to convey “appealing” and “aspirational” tourism.

Approaching *asianbeat*’s travel articles in this way focuses attention on the way the writers, editors and photographers have attempted to establish a relationship with these ideas of shōjo and otome discourses and practices with Fukuoka through the performance of Asian cosplayers at various tourist locations. For the purpose of this analysis I am examining how *asianbeat* attempts to “fix” what it is to be a shōjo or otome in their cosplay travel features and how this seeks to capitalize on current trends within these categories. Specifically, the current revival of the otome as a pure and chaste “maiden,” and shōjo as a more contemporary and modern “girlish” identity evoking a range of associations from a “more emancipated, active and independent young women”³⁰ to ideas of “individual fulfillment, decadence, consumption and play.”³¹ Ultimately, these *asianbeat* travel articles should be seen as part of the ongoing and hegemonic process and struggle to determine the meaning of popular culture (in this case, current trends around cosplay, and the shōjo and otome categories) and its global circulation (that is, the role of Fukuoka and its unique history of being central to the flows of culture between Japan and its Asian Neighbours³²).

THE *ASIANBEAT* COSPLAYER TRAVEL ARTICLES

The magazine-style news and entertainment website *asianbeat* was established in 2005, and is focused on promoting Japan's Fukuoka Prefecture through interviews, information pieces, profiles, maps and advice pieces which connect Fukuoka to a variety of popular culture topics, including fashion, music, anime, games and cosplay. While this structure is typical of many news and information websites, *asianbeat* attempts to combine popular culture, cultural diplomacy and flows of commerce to present Fukuoka as a central location for this flow of culture and exchanging of ideas and shared affinities.

As the site states:

Youth culture, such as manga, anime, fashion and pop music is not just known in Japan, but is popular among young people throughout asia (sic). It also helps develop a shared sense of culture throughout the continent and deepens mutual bonds of understanding between the Asian youth, who are leaders of tomorrow.³³

Asianbeat's utopic focus is specifically aimed at Japan's closer regional neighbors, with articles and web material translated from Japanese into Korean, Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Bahasa Indonesia and English. Language barriers and a non-Japanese reader's sense of distance and alienation are presented as overcome through online convenience and shared fandom. *Asianbeat* expresses the global popularity of Japanese popular culture as generating a mutual affinity which can escape the boundaries of communication and divisions of the past. The purpose of *asianbeat* is to:

develop friendship-based exchanges with other regions throughout Asia, and with the aim of working towards creating a form of youth culture in which people can communicate with one another irrespective of various language barriers.³⁴

My case study will focus on *asianbeat's* travel feature "AZA MIYUKO's 'Doki-Doki (exciting)' Fukuoka Story!"³⁵ (written in 2014) as a key example of this shared Japanese popular culture within Asia through its discourse of youthful femininity associated with the *shōjo* and *otome* identities.

Miyuko Aza's *Fukuoka Story* is the earliest of the *asianbeat* cosplayer sightseeing features, and one which established this co-option of a fan-advocacy mode of address. As of the time of writing there have been two other cosplayer travel features that profile the experiences of popular

Asian cosplayers visiting Fukuoka and surrounding areas in Kyushu. “A Romantic Fukuoka Date with Xiao Xiao Bai”³⁶ features Chinese cosplayer Xiao Xiao Bai visiting various dating spots and romantic locations cosplaying well-known *bishōnen* type characters, and “Mon and Stay’s ‘Full-on’ Fukuoka Trip—From the latest hotspots to traditional culture”³⁷ features the Taiwanese cosplaying pair Mon and Stay, who offer enthusiastic endorsements of Fukuoka’s shopping, cultural sightseeing and culinary delights.

Each sightseeing feature is centered around the narrative of a popular Asian cosplayer demonstrating and enacting the relationship between a service, location or activity in Fukuoka and Cool Japan. For example, “AZA MIYUKO’s ‘Doki-Doki (exciting)’ Fukuoka Story!” follows the sightseeing of Korean cosplayer Miyuko Aza, an established cosplayer with a large fan following across social media and the worldcosplay.net community, as she transforms into various appropriate otome (for example, attired in the “graceful” *yukata* in a Japanese garden) and shōjo (such as being dressed in school uniform-type cosplay in the “Having Fun at the Game Center!”³⁸ feature) identities. The commercial logic for these travel features is easy enough to see—the hope that documenting the experiences of a well-known cosplayer will bring Fukuoka to the attention of their sizeable following of fans, the expectation being that the cosplayer’s voice and carefully composed photos in popular locations will act as an authenticator and advocator of Fukuoka’s Cool Japan-type credentials in a way that a top-down corporate voice may be unable to achieve.³⁹ This chapter explores the appropriation of this fan voice and image. For example, the way the language of appraising, explaining and contextualizing popular culture, as it is used within fan communities, is put in the service of promoting and legitimizing Fukuoka as a Cool Japan destination. Given that Aza’s *Fukuoka Story* was the first of these cosplayer-focused travel features, appearing in 2014, with Xiao Xiao Bai’s and Mon and Stay’s appearing two years later in 2016, it has established the formula which *asianbeat* has endeavored to grow and expand.

ENTERING THE SHŌJO GENRE

The *asianbeat* cosplayer profiles are an example of promotional travel narratives that attempt to popularize a location through a connection with a movie, television series or other popular culture text. Examples include travel campaigns for New Zealand as a destination for *Lord of the Rings* fans,⁴⁰ the United Kingdom and the *Harry Potter* franchise,⁴¹

and Transylvania and *Dracula*.⁴² A dominant discourse within the commercial and fan travel narratives to these locations is that of “inhabiting the world”⁴³ depicted in these fictions and “fantasies of ‘entering’ into the cult text.”⁴⁴ However, rather than being focused on a specific single media property or franchise like *Lord of the Rings* and New Zealand, the *asianbeat* sightseeing profiles draw upon the ideals and sensibilities of a broader popular culture imagining of shōjo or otome identities. “AZA MIYUKO’s ‘Doki-Doki (exciting)’ Fukuoka Story!” presents Fukuoka as *the* shōjo destination. This is demonstrated and authenticated by Miyuko Aza as a well-known cosplayer, performing narratives and idealized shōjo and otome identities, to construct Fukuoka as a location to experience deeply felt emotional affects and identity transformations.

For example, the deeply felt emotional discourses often associated with shōjo manga⁴⁵ are referenced in the use of the Japanese onomatopoeic term *doki-doki* in the title “AZA MIYUKO’s ‘Doki-Doki (exciting)’ Fukuoka Story!” *Doki-doki* is commonly used in manga to indicate the sound of a character’s heart beating due to a strongly felt emotion, such as a dramatic romantic encounter or suspenseful moment. Using this term, and relegating the translation to brackets, also emphasizes the Japanese-ness of the experience and reinforces the idea that the reason to visit Fukuoka is to experience and immerse oneself in the source of the Japanese pop culture enjoyed overseas. “Fukuoka Story” is divided into five popular culture locations which Aza visits and interacts with: participating in a Fukuoka cosplay event, having fun at the game center, “The Graceful Yukata!” (at a Japanese garden), “Lacy Lolita Fashion Transformation!” (at a fashion store and café), and “Taking in the Cuisine of Fukuoka!” (at the street food stalls). Aza’s experience at each location draws upon a well-rehearsed set of idyllic shōjo imagery through which Fukuoka is transformed as a site of deep emotional experience and shared cultural affinity.

In the “Graceful Yukata!” entry, for example, Aza explains that a highlight of her visit to Fukuoka was her visit to a traditional Japanese garden and her transformation into an otome:

My heart fluttered as I entered the traditional Japanese garden, just like the ones I had seen on Japanese TV. The sounds of the wind in the trees and the insects in the grass as well as the wind itself all came together beautifully. The atmosphere was wonderful.⁴⁶

Aza's "heart fluttering" entrance into the idyllic Japanese garden "just like the ones ... seen on Japanese TV" expresses the pleasure of Hills' "entering into the cult text."⁴⁷ This idyllic entrance into the cult text of the idyllic Japanese garden is accomplished through Aza's transformation into the otome by wearing a traditional Japanese yukata, an informal kimono worn by women and men.

I got to try out a yukata! I've always had a deep interest in traditional clothes. I used to look at pictures of Japanese kimonos and yukatas and think "I'd like to wear that just once."⁴⁸

These experiences provide entry into the idyllic traditional garden as portrayed on Japanese television, and wear the yukata as presented in fashion magazines. The "Graceful Yukata" article connects the fantasy of Cool Japan with the reality of Fukuoka's sights and sounds by presenting photographs of Aza in yukata carefully composed in graceful, ladylike poses surrounded by greenery and the bamboo fences, tatami mats and shōji screens of the garden buildings. These photos combined with her *doki-doki* "heart fluttering" experience present Aza as harmoniously transformed by the garden and clothing into the ideal otome surrounded by nature in full bloom.

In focusing on the beauty of the yukata and the sights and sounds of a Japanese garden in full bloom, "Graceful Yukata" is drawing upon a well-established motif within Japanese art and literature of transposing the beauty and fragility of nature in bloom onto the youthful female figure. A common example is the brief but colorful blossoming of the sakura flower, "whose fragile blossoms burst forth in spring, representing in Japanese culture (amongst many other things) transient youthful beauty."⁴⁹ There is a long tradition in literature of representing the "romance and charm" of the young female character through nature, such as the otome depicted in the eleventh-century *Tale of Genji*. Popular television dramas and films in Japan continue to present the traditional ideal of the otome as "pure," "innocent" and "naive" today.⁵⁰

Asianbeat's "Fukuoka Story" reimagines the Japanese garden through a visit by popular cosplayer Aza as an entry point into the fantasy of the idealized otome as portrayed in many Japanese TV shows and fashion magazines. While this certainly draws upon the well-established conventions of traditional, old-fashioned femininity, and could be argued

to reduce youthful femininity into the object of the male gaze, there is a discourse of pleasure and appropriation occurring within Aza's adoption of the otome identity as represented in various media, and a sense of discovery and improvisation within the performance which speaks to the pleasures of cosplay. Aza's discussion of the care with which she deliberated on the perfect yukata to purchase contrasts with the apparent passivity and objectification which may characterize the photographs which feature in this section. The discourse around the traditional garden and attire in "Graceful Yukata" is loaded with a range of active and aspirational, but also passive and conservative tensions. The commercial travel narrative presents this as the site of today's commodity culture promoting fantasies of freedom, individuality and transformation through consumption,⁵¹ while Aza's words demonstrate the fan's ability to trace the flow and circulation of images and narratives across multiple mediums and appropriate them for their own use and needs.⁵²

LACY LOLITA FASHION TRANSFORMATION!

The articulation and performance of shōjo identity within Aza's "Fukuoka Story" calls forth a variety of ideas and representation of "being" shōjo or otome. In representing youthful femininity in the "Lacy Lolita Fashion Transformation!" entry, being a shōjo is configured around the performance of two contrasting identities—a cute and playful *Shiro* (white) Lolita versus an independent and empowered Gothic Lolita. By positioning the Shiro and Gothic Lolita performances as contrasting and reflective acts narrated by Aza, the *asianbeat* article is drawing upon an inward-looking act to confront emotions and feelings. An act which appears to mimic the "emotional interiority" seen as a defining feature of manga established in the 1970s and 80s. Kinko Ito argues that shōjo manga typically emphasize "the psychology and emotion of female characters and their development as human beings."⁵³ Deborah Shamon suggests that such a focus on the character's "emotional interiority"⁵⁴ can be understood as a reflection of, and response to, the anxieties facing many shōjo readers. These anxieties can be seen in the numerous "coming of age" narratives, particularly "girls' anxieties revolving around adolescence,"⁵⁵ featured in many shōjo manga.

The research being referred to in this section draws upon shōjo manga of the 1970s–1980s, while it is unlikely that many of these manga titles are being consumed by the young people to whom the website

is addressed (most of the manga referred to are not available in Asian translations), nevertheless the Japanese editors and writers of the *asian-beat* article can be assumed to have some familiarity with these ideas and the period of shōjo manga. In addition, Jennifer Prough⁵⁶ argues that the expressing of “emotions, inner thoughts and feelings, memories, and musings” the female manga creators of this period were known for, have continued into today, claiming “whatever the genre (comedy or drama) and whatever the setting (Japanese school life, ancient China or outer space), human relations and matters of the heart remain at the core of shōjo manga.” Rough points out that the focus on human relations, intimacy and emotionally engaging narratives are also used by overseas shōjo manga publishers such as VIZ media to define this genre.⁵⁷

As Mizuki Takahashi argues, shōjo manga “create complex stories that address the psychological development of teenage girls, and invite them to become emotionally involved in the narrative.”⁵⁸ The genre’s emphasis on “emotional interiority” and the “psychological development of teenage girls”⁵⁹ from adolescence into adulthood is not unique to shōjo manga, drawing upon a rich artistic and literary history from prewar women’s magazines, novels, poetry and fashion illustrations.⁶⁰ Scholars have suggested that the idealized image of the cute and youthful shōjo figure on the cusp of womanhood is frequently anchored in nostalgic images of playful and “free” youthful femininity, especially as portrayed in the work of Banana Yoshimoto.⁶¹ Other examples include the figure of the “naive and cute” shōjo teen, which is seen to offer an emotional anchor back to childhood and youth, particularly for older women.⁶² These shōjo characters represent a “rejection of (and an escape from) an unappealing traditional adult gender role that they were soon to inhabit.”⁶³ Takahashi⁶⁴ argues they reflect “girls’ anxieties revolving around adolescence,” particularly concerns around the “fear of becoming an adult” and the “abandonment of youthful dreams and willingness to lead an ordinary life.”

While the cute shōjo is associated with ideas of nostalgia and freedom from adult responsibilities, she is not necessarily vulnerable or passive. Hinton⁶⁵ suggests that the character of the “‘ordinary’ naive and cute shōjo with typical ‘teen’ interests (school friends, boys, fashion)” can become a figure that challenges “traditional ideas about gender, identity and sexuality.” Hinton⁶⁶ points to the example of the *mahō* shōjo (magical girl), who “discovers she has (an often female-specific) special power which she must use to battle against evil; and hence becomes an action heroine which upsets the traditional gender expectations.”

Although the naive and cute girl embodies a particularly long tradition of representing femininity in popular culture, there are other alternative representations, such as figures of powerful and assertive girls frequently presented in the work of well-known animators such as Hayao Miyazaki.⁶⁷ In a way, Aza's "Fukuoka Story" extends this iconography of the cute yet empowered shōjo, to present Fukuoka as a real-world, physical site in which to inhabit and explore a transformative type of shōjo identity linked to the coming of age/adolescent anxieties and related "emotional interiority" and "psychological development" tropes popularized in shōjo fiction.

For example, "Lacy Lolita Fashion Transformation!" features Aza costumed in two Lolita fashion ensembles: *Shiro* (white) Lolita and Gothic Lolita. Lolita is a fashion originating in Japan which draws heavily upon Victorian and Edwardian clothing styles incorporating knee-length dresses, petticoats, long socks and accessories such as parasols and fans, with a liberal layering of elaborate lace and ribbon. There are various subcultures within Lolita, with the *Shiro* and Gothic styles worn by Aza representing two contrasting designs. The white and light, pastel colors often incorporated into the *Shiro* style convey the sweet, innocent, pure and cute tropes of the kawaii shōjo figure, while the black of Gothic Lolita conveys a more somber and austere figure. In terms of shōjo narratives, Aza's experience of wearing these two distinctly different Lolita styles in Fukuoka is presented as a type of coming of age anxiety around the transition from girlhood to womanhood.

This is done explicitly in Aza's description of her *Shiro* and Gothic Lolita identity transformations. Of the *Shiro* Lolita ensemble, provided by the appropriately named store Metamorphose Fukuoka, Aza says:

It felt like I was a princess! I was all excited over how everyone was going to tell me "You look just like a doll." With a cute bag and a lace parasol I'm glad I tried this outfit out, it was fun!⁶⁸

This doll-like, cute princess identity is contrasted against her description of the "little scary" but "cool" Gothic Lolita style:

It felt like I was a queen! Compared to the first white lolita dress where I felt like a princess, this time I felt stronger, like, my awareness was a little different. For me, wearing gothic lolita fashion was an amazing experience.⁶⁹

This contrast between the cute doll-like princess of *Shiro* Lolita and the stronger, scary, but cool, queen of the Gothic Lolita style clearly draws upon the “psychological development” trope of the shōjo “coming of age” narrative: in this case, from the cute princess to strong queen. Or, from another perspective, just as the magical girl sub-genre celebrates the ordinary shōjo girl discovering her special power, Aza too can become the strong, assertive and empowered shōjo through the “cute” yet austere style of the Gothic Lolita. Significantly, Aza enthusiastically embraces this Gothic Lolita identity, which she describes as giving her the courage to publicly wear the outfit while “snapping some shots on the street,”⁷⁰ exclaiming that “so many people in the street noticed me, and it was something I had never done in Korea, I felt shy but it was fun.” In emphasizing the pleasures of a “stronger,” “queen”-like identity which empowered her public performance, the article is appealing to the image of the shōjo figure as an “emancipated, active and independent young women”⁷¹ who can playfully inhabit and explore this transformation.

Ultimately, as “Lacy Lolita Fashion Transformation!” also serves to promote Fukuoka, this empowerment is located in the “fan friendly” setting of Fukuoka. For Aza, overcoming the vulnerability of performing such a spectacular shōjo subcultural identity as the Gothic Lolita queen in public was possible due to the welcoming and supportive environment of Fukuoka. Aza explains that Fukuoka provides the perfect place to explore the Lolita fashion style due to its strong local Lolita community:

The Japan Lolita Association has offices based in Fukuoka and their president Misako Aoki works tirelessly to spread the word of Lolita Fashion around the world. ... That’s why this time I tried out some lolita fashion too!⁷²

By emphasizing the fan-community credentials of Fukuoka’s Lolita scene the article presents it as a fan-friendly place with a well-established, proactive and supportive fan community “working tirelessly to spread the word.” This also reinforces one of Japan’s more recent tourist narratives as a “fan-friendly,” popular-culture paradise espoused in the Cool Japan tourism campaign. In this way, Fukuoka is attempting to present itself as an “affinity space.”⁷³ For Gee, an affinity space is one where a diversity of people are unified by a mutual interest to pool their knowledge and skills to assist and support each other. Gee uses this idea to demonstrate

how shared interests in popular culture, such as video games, can drive and motivate significant knowledge and identity development. Jenkins et al.⁷⁴ argue that an affinity space is a type of “participatory culture” where participants not only draw upon their interests, but do so in a way that is active and collaborative and deeply networked. Indeed, Aza points out that one of the highlights of her trip was meeting other cosplayers in Fukuoka and sharing a mutual, enthusiastic embrace of Japanese pop culture.

For Aza, Fukuoka’s Lolita affinity space offered her the security and acceptance to perform her fan identity publicly in a way not available in Korea:

Actually, there aren’t that many people in Korea who wear lolita clothes. Well, some people do, but not many; whereas in Japan it is accepted as a fashion and cultural movement, right? You could call it a “dream”: I always thought it was so cool!⁷⁵

The “dream” is defined around the acceptance and normality of such a spectacular subculture as Lolita. Consequently, Aza’s ability to overcome her hesitation of publicly owning this Lolita identity presents Fukuoka as a welcoming and supportive place where *shōjo* identities, which may be absent or discouraged back home, can be performed and enjoyed.

Given the dominance of the cute young girl motif and its established role in Japanese popular culture, it is significant that “Fukuoka Story” depicts a Korean cosplayer engaging with both its cute and empowering form in “Lacy Lolita Fashion Transformation!” Indeed, this focus on the well-traveled, “fan-celebrity” Korean cosplayer performing the liminal cute *shōjo* identity and gender roles associated with it enables this travel piece to resignify “cute” femininity as an empowering opportunity for foreign visitors rather than as wishful nostalgia. In this way, tourism is presented as a fan’s privilege which empowers and is welcomed, or at least understood, by the progressive, fan-friendly Fukuoka community.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, the Japanese government has targeted a range of popular culture interests and fan communities in relation to tourism, most clearly through its Cool Japan initiative. In the context of the increasing hype around brand nationalism and cultural diplomacy linked to popular

culture, it is perhaps no surprise that Fukuoka has begun to explicitly target overseas fan communities to raise awareness of various tourist destinations in the city and outlying regions, for example, by featuring well-known cosplayers from within overseas fan communities to lend a grassroots authenticity and advocacy to their tourism message in addition to presenting a broader shōjo affinity space. Of significance here is the aim to present an online, fan-oriented message which speaks directly to a specific community of fans.

As discussed, these invitational strategies are more than simple advertisements, but attempt to integrate various businesses, cultural locations and services in Fukuoka within a shōjo and otome story world. Here, the distinctive properties of various stores and sightseeing locations are redefined as extensions of a transformative shōjo identity. Examples such as “AZA MIYUKO’S ‘Doki-Doki (exciting)’ Fukuoka Story” thus represent a conceptualization of shōjo and otome identities from outside of the community. Such moves may further establish and legitimize certain forms of fandom and popular culture, but also bring into question the type of reification of fan agency being presented.

NOTES

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13. Antononoka.
14. Mizuki Takahashi, "Opening the Closed World of Shojo Manga," in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. Mark W. MacWilliams (Armonk, 2008).
15. Ibid., 114.
16. Ibid., Shmoon.
17. Perry R. Hinton, "The Cultural Construction of the Girl 'Teen': A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Feminine Adolescence Portrayed in Popular Culture," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 45, no. 3 (2016): 241.
18. Erica Friedman, "On Defining Yuri," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 24 (2017).
19. Shmoon.
20. For a recent exploration of these themes see the edited volume by Masami Toku, *International Perspectives on Shojo and Shojo Manga: The Influence of Girl Culture* (Routledge, 2015).
21. Kazumi Hasegawa, "Falling in Love with History: Japanese Girls' Otome Sexuality and Queering Historical Imagination," in *Playing with the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History*, eds. Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and Andrew B.R. Elliott (Bloomsbury, 2013), 135.
22. Noah S. Brannen, "Ancient Japanese Songs from The Kinkafu Collection," *Monumenta Nipponica* 23, no. 3/4 (1968).
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24. Tomoko Aoyama, "Transgendering Shojo Shosetsu: Girls' Inter-text/Sex-uality," in *Genders, Transgenders and Sexuality in Japan*, eds. Mark McLelland and Romit Dasgupta (London: Routledge, 2005), 49–64, 53.

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26. Hasegawa.
27. *Ibid.*, 138.
28. Fukuoka Prefectural Government and Asia Youth Culture Center, “AZA MIYUKO’S ‘Doki-Doki (Exciting)’ Fukuoka Story,” *asianbeat* (2014), accessed April 7, 2017, http://asianbeat.com/en/feature/issue_cosplay/aza/.
29. “A Romantic Fukuoka Date with Xiao Xiao Bai,” (2016), accessed April 7, 2017, <http://asianbeat.com/en/feature/shiro/>.
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31. Sharon Kinsella, “Cuties in Japan,” in *Women, Media, and Consumption in Japan*, eds. Brian Moeran and Lise Skov (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995), 244.
32. Fukuoka is the capital city of the Fukuoka Prefecture situated on the Japanese island of Kyūshū. Fukuoka and other key areas in Kyūshū have long provided significant trading ports between Japan and the world and become centres of cultural exchange and the movement of people. For further information on this history see, Geoffrey C. Gunn, “*Nihon-Machi*: Japanese Diasporic Communities of Southeast Asia,” in *History Without Borders: The Making of an Asian World Region, 1000–1800*, 211–236 (Hong Kong University Press, 2011); Louis M. Cullen, *A History of Japan, 1582–1941: Internal and External Worlds* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). Fukoka’s role as a convenient destination for trade, cultural exchange and the movement of people continues today, particularly between South Korea and Japan, as seen in recent news articles such as “South Korea and Japan May Bicker, but Busan and Fukuoka Get on Fine,” *The Economist* (2017), accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.economist.com/news/asia/21718504-shared-history-lots-trade-and-odd-dispute-about-stolen-statues-south-korea-and-japan-may>.
33. “About Asianbeat,” *asianbeat*, accessed April 7, 2017, http://asianbeat.com/en/ab_about.html.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Fukuoka Prefectural Government and Asia Youth Culture Center, “AZA MIYUKO’S ‘Doki-Doki (Exciting)’ Fukuoka Story,” *asianbeat* (2014), accessed April 7, 2017, http://asianbeat.com/en/feature/issue_cosplay/aza/.
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37. “Mon and Stay’s ‘Full-on’ Fukuoka Trip—From the Latest Hotspots to Traditional Culture,” *asianbeat* (2016), accessed April 7, 2017, <http://asianbeat.com/en/feature/marugoto/>.

38. "Having Fun at the Game Center!" *asianbeat* (2014), accessed April 7, 2017, http://asianbeat.com/en/feature/issue_cosplay/aza/gamecenter/.
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53. Ito, 42.
54. Shamoan, 144.
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56. Jennifer Prough, "Shōjo Manga in Japan and Abroad," in *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Toni Johnson-Woods (New York: Continuum, 2010), 93–106, 95.
57. Ibid., 103.
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70. Ibid.
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CHAPTER 15

Seeking an Alternative: “Male” Shōjo Fans Since the 1970s

Patrick W. Galbraith

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on male engagement with shōjo (for girls) manga and shōjo (girl) characters in manga and anime in Japan from the 1970s to the early 1980s.¹ It is well-known that shōjo manga underwent a renaissance in the 1970s, when female artists such as Moto Hagio, Keiko Takemiya and Yumiko Ōshima began to experiment with speculative fiction, poetics, the grammar of comics, depictions of psychological conflict and sexuality.² What is less known is that men were also attracted to works by these and other female artists in the 1970s. The existence, let alone motivation, of male shōjo fans seems sketchy at best. When mention is made of them, their attraction to shōjo is often understood as the crudest of desire to “deflower” and “dominate” girls.³ Discussion of male shōjo fans often comes along with a critique of *lolicon*, or the “Lolita complex,” which conjures up mental images of creepy older

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men lusting after little girls. Some critics present *lolicon* as part of the “normalization of a wide range of pedophilic and misogynistic ideas” and “men’s sexual abuse and objectification of girls.”⁴ To stop its circulation and harm, one is told to consider refusing to translate associated manga and perhaps even burning it. Indeed, *lolicon* has become a keyword in global criticism of media and material from Japan.⁵

If, however, one can avoid thinking about *lolicon* in the familiar terms of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955) and Russell Trainer’s *The Lolita Complex* (1966), and instead attempt to understand the word as it was used among manga and anime fans in Japan from the 1970s to the early 1980s, an often obscure phenomenon begins to come into focus.⁶ Consider that Akira Akagi, a manga critic and editor, connects *lolicon* to not sexual desire for little girls, but rather a desire for “cuteness” (*kawai-rashisa*) and “girl-ness” (*shōjo-sei*) in manga and anime.⁷ Further, as articulated by Kaoru Nagayama, a manga critic and editor, the stance is not “I like girls,” but rather “I like cute things.”⁸ As Nagayama sees it, “the ‘cute’ movement” (*“kawaii” undō*) came out of growing up with weekly manga magazines and television anime, which gave rise to a desire for cartoon characters. Akagi, Nagayama and other Japanese critics argue that *lolicon* refers to a desire for “manga-like” (*manga-ppoi*) or “anime-like” (*anime-ppoi*) characters, for “cuteness” (*kawai-rashisa*), “roundness” (*maru-kkosa*) and the “two-dimensional” (*nijigen*) as opposed to “real.” The orientation of the cute movement in the 1970s and early 1980s, of *lolicon*, was not toward the girl per se, but rather the *shōjo*, or girl character, and the *bishōjo*, or cute girl character.⁹

This chapter will add to the story of the cute movement the dynamic of men consuming *shōjo* manga and *shōjo* characters in manga and anime, which is a phenomenon of crossing gender/genre lines. If, as manga critic and editor Hisashi Fujita suggests, “‘cute’=shōjo manga-like,” then it is clear from the proliferation of cute in manga and anime that the boundaries between *shōjo* and genres for men—between female and male, child and adult—are increasingly blurred.¹⁰ Indeed, the *bishōjo* or cute girl character emerged out of responses to and appropriations of *shōjo* manga and characters, and developed in collaborations between male and female artists across gender/genre lines. The mixed participation of the cute movement, and the ambiguous gender identities and sexuality of participants, not only disrupts simple stories about *lolicon* and men desiring to deflower and dominate girls, but also raises the

possibility of men seeking an alternative to hegemonic forms of masculinity and media and finding it in shōjo manga and characters.¹¹

“MALE” READERS OF SHŌJO MANGA: THEORY

Kimio Itō, a pioneer of Men’s Studies, notes that, despite massive social and economic changes that have led to more opportunities for women and evolving relations between the sexes, expectations for men in Japan remain stubbornly rigid.¹² To a certain extent, Itō’s concern stems from his own struggle with masculinity, which dates back to at least the early 1970s. At the time, Itō was a student at Kyoto University involved in the movement against the political arrangement that made Japan accomplice to the United States and its wars in Asia. Itō found himself uncomfortable with not only his adult male role models—the company man, professor and bureaucrat—but also with the machismo of others in the movement, who wore military-inspired garb and engaged in sometimes violent standoffs with authorities on the street.

During this time, Itō began to read shōjo manga. In his essay “When a ‘Male’ Reads Shōjo Manga,” Itō recalls those days:

I began to seriously read shōjo manga at the beginning of the 1970s, right in the middle of the aftermath of the explosion of counterculture and in the continuing wave of political youth rebellion. [...] In that period, I was reading the manga magazine *Shōjo Margaret* every week as well as the supplementary edition of *Shōjo Friend* and the magazines *Nakayoshi*, *Ribon*, and I bought every monthly I could lay my hands on, my favorite being the supplementary edition of *Seventeen*.¹³

Itō ties his intense attraction to shōjo manga with growing discomfort with masculinity:

In the last phase of the countercultural wave, when I was feeling a kind of alienation from the so-called male culture, shōjo manga offered me the opportunity to reconsider masculinity and to critically review the present situation of gender. [...] My encounter with shōjo manga has been of great importance to me. I suppose it has brought about one of the starting points for my research into masculinity.¹⁴

In shōjo manga, specifically stories about male–male romance, a subgenre called “boys’ love” pioneered by Moto Hagio and Keiko Takemiya, Itō gained access to what he describes as a “minority” view:

Having always been put into the margins, the minority is forced to face itself. To be excluded from the mainstream generates various feelings of alienation and discrimination. The majority though does not become aware of its own majority-ness, unless something extraordinary happens. [...] In a certain sense it is through the circuit of *shōjo* manga that I have been able to reflect upon male-dominated society from a male point of view. Above all, it was of great importance to me that the development of *shōjo* manga at the beginning of the 1970s started with boys' love stories, because the marginal male/homosexual perspective (as opposed to the heterosexual majority of society) turned my eyes to the indifference of the social majority hidden in gender and sexuality.¹⁵

The minority or marginal view of *shōjo* manga allowed Itō to get outside of the majority or mainstream view of “heterosexual male.” He was thus able to not only critique hegemonic masculinity, but also think differently as a man. Through *shōjo* manga, Itō came to think about and problematize his own position. It is for this reason that Itō puts “male” into scare quotes when he describes himself as a reader of *shōjo* manga.

What Itō describes in his engagements with *shōjo* manga is remarkably similar to what others describe as a survival strategy of queer youth. In her essay “Queer and Now,” Eve Sedgwick notes that many queer young people share the memory of attaching to cultural objects that did not match up with the dominant codes available to them. “We needed for there to be sites where the meanings didn’t line up tidily with each other,” Sedgwick explains, “and we learned to invest in those sites with fascination and love.”¹⁶ Sedgwick is astute in appreciating that these objects, which “became a prime resource for survival,”¹⁷ can be drawn from media and material culture, even supposedly low forms such as comics and cartoons. It seems clear that *shōjo* manga was part of the survival strategy of queer men—and women¹⁸—in Japan, who felt alienated by hegemonic masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality. Like so many others in a similar position in Japan, Itō did not, and does not, identify as gay, but rather as a queer person attracted to *shōjo* manga, which did not match up with the dominant codes of masculinity available to him. This is even more striking given Itō’s attraction to boys’ love manga, which features romance between “male” characters who do not identify as gay.¹⁹ Through such material, Itō gained access to an “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender,

of anyone’s sexuality, aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically.”²⁰ This is in part what Itō means when he refers to a minority or marginal view, as opposed to a majority or mainstream one, which allowed him to question his position and no longer signify monolithically as “male.”²¹

Later in the decade, Itō witnessed other men reading the works of A-ko Mutsu, who did not have the literary or artistic credentials of Hagio and Takemiya, but rather produced “girly” (*otome-chikku*) romance manga.²² As was the case with Itō empathizing with boys’ love manga, we can see among A-ko Mutsu fans a desire for a minority or marginal view, or men empathizing with shōjo to get out of the majority/masculine view. For Itō, in both cases, the interest in shōjo “started from a small sense of discomfort towards the contemporaneous male-dominated society.”²³ In a personal interview, Itō expanded on this to speculate that the turn toward shōjo manga was part of a larger turn toward girls’ culture and cuteness in Japan in the 1970s.²⁴ “In some sense,” Itō explains, shōjo fans “managed to preserve their own space, by enjoying the commodified world through their own point of view, or by manipulating the commodified objects of consumption and adopting them to their own needs.”²⁵ Attracted to shōjo manga, men began to consume across gender/genre lines. They also began producing their own shōjo manga, or rather bishōjo manga, in dialogue with shōjo manga and collaboration with female artists. This is the story of “male” shōjo fans seeking an alternative since the 1970s.²⁶

“MALE” READERS OF SHŌJO MANGA: THE COMIC MARKET

Teruo Harada (aka Takanaka Shimotsuki) was a student at Wakō University in the early 1970s. He was born the same year as Kimio Itō, 1951, and, like Itō, was a reader of shōjo manga. This was not entirely odd at the time, given that the early 1970s was marked by a renaissance in shōjo manga led by innovators such as Moto Hagio, Keiko Takemiya and Yumiko Ōshima. “In the early 1970s when these female artists were working,” Harada recalls, “even male fans got caught up in the boom, and each artist had fan clubs across the country.”²⁷ Critics recall that anyone who was a manga fan read shōjo manga in the 1970s.²⁸ For his part, however, Harada was at first unaware of this larger phenomenon when he encountered Hagio’s work in *COM* magazine in 1971.

Harada writes evocatively of the moment when “a university student on the verge of adulthood, who knew nothing of the ‘shōjo mind’ [*shōjo no shinsei*], was ensnared by it.”²⁹ Following this encounter, Harada—again, like Itō—became fanatical in his pursuit of what seemed at the time to be a singular interest. He bought *Bessatsu Shōjo Comic* and other magazines where Hagio published, and sought out her work at new and used bookstores. It was at this time, reading *Bessatsu Shōjo Comic*, that Harada first saw Hagio’s *11 gatsu no gimunajiumu* (November Gymnasium, 1971), a pioneering work in the shōjo manga subgenre of boys’ love. Harada recalls being “overcome with emotion.”³⁰ He was hooked, completely absorbed in shōjo manga and drawn into the world of shōjo.

It was not until the following year, in July 1972, that Harada discovered he was not alone. He recalls the happenings of one fateful night at the First Japan Manga Festival, which he spent in the company of fellow manga fans:

A bunch of manga fans were in the same room talking and the topic turned to Moto Hagio’s works. As soon as it did, men began to reveal that they, too, were Hagio fans. I did the same, and things got very lively. One man showed me a massive collection of Hagio works that he had cut out of magazines. I was truly surprised to meet fans who were passionate to that degree. It was the first time that I met Shintarō Matsuda, who I learned was a Hagio fan just like me, and I ended up promising him that we would make our own fan club.³¹

Harada’s Moto Hagio fan club, Friends of Moto, connected him not only with Matsuda and his club in Fukuoka, but also with others across the country. Among these people were Y-jō, representative of the Postwar Shōjo Manga History Research Group, and Yoshihiro Yonezawa, who came from Kumamoto to Tokyo to attend Meiji University. In 1973, Harada published his first fanzine, which was dedicated to Hagio and connected him with even more fans. Against the backdrop of Hagio’s *Poe no ichizoku* (The Poe Family, 1972–1976) earning her a larger following of female fans, at the Second Japan Manga Festival in August 1973, Harada recalls spending the night at a hotel where he and others held a “meeting for men only to discuss shōjo manga.”³² In November 1973, Harada and his friends published a special issue of the fanzine *Ichamon* devoted to shōjo manga. Interest in shōjo manga was growing, as can be deduced from the fact that an event called the Shōjo Manga Festival was held in Yokohama the following year.

His passion showing no signs of waning, Harada continued to pursue his love of shōjo manga, which yielded spectacular results. To begin, inspired by the extremely limited animation techniques used in *Golgo 13*, in 1973, Harada began to float the idea of producing an animated version of Hagio's *11 gatsu no gimunajiumu*. This would be a “fan letter in visual form.”³³ To complete it, Harada enlisted the help of the Wakō University manga club and tapped into the network of fans to which he was connected through his fan club and its publications. The completed animation, which comprised 400 drawings and ran for forty-five minutes, was screened in Shibuya in 1974. In no time, universities and high schools were requesting screenings, and Harada was happy to oblige.³⁴ The following year, in April 1975, Harada joined with Yoshihiro Yonezawa, Jun Aniwa and others to form the circle Meikyū (Labyrinth), which produced a legendary fanzine focusing on manga criticism, and heavily emphasizing shōjo manga.³⁵ Yonezawa, for example, used materials collected by contacts such as Y-jō to write articles on shōjo manga history, which would later be collected together and published as the book *Sengo shōjo manga shi* (Postwar Shōjo Manga History, 1980). Others turned a critical lens on themes such as light and darkness in Hagio's works, and Harada contributed a parody of *Poe no ichizoku*.

Among the most important occurrences in 1975 was the founding of the Comic Market, with Harada acting as representative (something like a leader) and other members of Meikyū playing crucial roles. Today, the Comic Market is the world's largest gathering for self-published manga artists and their fans, but, in 1975, it was a small affair that drew around 700 people. Significantly, but perhaps not surprisingly given the roles of Harada and other members of Meikyū, the Comic Market was biased toward shōjo manga and its fans. To put it another way, the Comic Market was part of what Harada calls the “shōjo manga movement” (*shōjo manga mūbumento*) sweeping Japan.³⁶ Consider that the only manga magazine where the organizers advertised the Comic Market was *Bessatsu Shōjo Comic*, which published work by Hagio and was a favorite of Harada.³⁷ About ninety percent of attendees at the first Comic Market were women from junior-high to high-school age.³⁸ In a survey of favorite manga artists, attendees chose Hagio as number one, followed by Keiko Takemiya, Osamu Tezuka and Yumiko Ōshima.³⁹ No wonder, then, that girls and women cried out in joy when the animated *11 gatsu no gimunajiumu* was screened and lined up to buy Meikyū's fanzine, which was a special issue devoted to Hagio. By Harada's own estimation,

the first Comic Market almost appeared to be a “Moto Hagio fan festival.”⁴⁰ Among the girls and women dominating the event were Harada and other “male” shōjo fans, who organized the Comic Market to socialize and share their interests.

When the second Comic Market was held in 1976, the event was still attended primarily by young women drawn to circles focusing on shōjo manga, for example, Hagio fan clubs.⁴¹ The title of Meikyū’s fanzine was *To Moto Hagio With Love*. There was also a special exhibition of works by Fumiko Okada, a female artist whose unique style had been featured in *COM* magazine. As late as 1979, the last year that Harada served as representative of the Comic Market, Meikyū’s fanzine was still focusing on shōjo manga.⁴² It was, after all, their genre, the thing that brought and held them together. If, as Kimio Itō suggests, the manipulation of commodities allows for the production of “space,”⁴³ then Harada and his circle manipulated shōjo manga—producing fanzines, criticism, parodies and a visual fan letter—and produced a shared space, a space for sharing, which was the Comic Market.⁴⁴ This space would go on to support “manipulating the commodified objects of consumption and adopting them to [... meet one’s] own needs.”⁴⁵ One clear example of this dynamic is the appropriation and use of shōjo manga and characters to explore and express sexual alternatives.

“MALE” READERS OF SHŌJO MANGA: *LOLICON*

Writing of 1979, the last year of his tenure as representative of the Comic Market, Teruo Harada notes the appearance of *lolicon*, or “manga works that take shōjo as sexual objects.”⁴⁶ While this may seem like a shocking and unexpected connection, Yoshihiro Yonezawa, who would take over as representative of the Comic Market, recalls that the word *lolicon* was already in use among shōjo manga fans earlier in the decade.⁴⁷ There is evidence to support Yonezawa’s claim. Consider, for example, that the first appearance in manga of the words “Lolita complex,” which would be combined into the Japanese portmanteau *lolicon*, was in the magazine *Bessatsu Margaret*, a monthly shōjo magazine. In the June 1974 issue, in a work titled *Kyabetsu batake de tsumazuite* (Stumbling Upon a Cabbage Field), which is a parody of *Alice in Wonderland*, a male character describes Lewis Carroll as a man with a “Lolita complex,” or someone with the “strange character of liking only small children.” One suspects that the young girls whom *Bessatsu Margaret* ostensibly

targeted were not interested in seeing a male character gush about another man’s infatuation with little girls like Alice, which makes the inclusion of this reference all the more interesting. With the knowledge that men were reading manga magazines such as *Bessatsu Margaret* in the 1970s,⁴⁸ it appears that Shinji Wada, the author of the work and a male shōjo artist, was sharing an inside joke with his male shōjo readers.

In discussing the rise of *lolicon* at the Comic Market in 1979, Harada mentions *Shibēru* (Cybele, 1979–1981), which is a fanzine series as legendary as Meikyū’s own. In the pages of *Shibēru*, one finds parodies and commentaries celebrating shōjo produced by men. In the first issue, one work in particular stands out, which is a parody of *Little Red Riding Hood* featuring a cute, cartoony girl character and her sexual encounters with various animals in the woods. Although drawing under a pen name, the man behind this work is Hideo Azuma, one of the most influential manga artists of the 1970s.

Born in 1950, one year after Moto Hagio and one year before Harada and Kimio Itō, Azuma was “among the earliest male artists responding to shōjo manga.”⁴⁹ Beyond publishing work in shōjo manga magazines,⁵⁰ by his own estimation, Azuma’s work shares with shōjo manga a “lack of reality” (*riariti no nasa*).⁵¹ Clearly, Azuma did not want to draw in the “realistic” style of *gekiga*, or the countercultural comics that were popular among adolescent boys and young men from the 1960s to the 1970s. Despite being the dominant form of adult comics in Japan at the time, *gekiga*’s influence is notably absent from Azuma’s works. Instead of sharp angles, dark cross-hatching and gritty lines, there is roundness, softness and clean line work. As he recalls, Azuma’s style comes from combining the squat and round character bodies of Osamu Tezuka’s manga with the round and emotive faces of shōjo manga, which resulted in an image that he found to be thoroughly erotic.⁵² Responding to manga intended for children and girls—to Tezuka manga and shōjo manga, as opposed to *gekiga*, which was intended for adult men—Azuma developed a style across gender/genre lines.⁵³ The result was the bishōjo, or cute girl character, and a form of eroticism based on manga-like, cartoony or cute characters.

In producing bishōjo manga and pursuing “cute eroticism” (*kawaii ero*), Azuma was seeking an alternative to what was considered appropriate for men. Like Hagio, Azuma tends to reimagine male–female relations in order to get out of normative gender roles, reproductive maturity and dominant ideals of the family.⁵⁴ In works from the 1970s leading up to the fanzine *Shibēru*, Azuma mixed his interest in science

fiction, fairytales and the absurd with bishōjo characters and cute eroticism. In *Futari to gonin* (The Two of Us and Five People, 1974–1976), for example, the protagonist cannot tell which of the members of a family is the girl that he is attracted to and wants to have sex with, because they all—men and women, young and old—look exactly alike to him. When the protagonist finally does identify the girl, he cannot consummate the relationship and instead runs away. In *Futari to gonin*, men exist in a world of infinitely deferred climax and dispersed cute eroticism. Seeming to parody men whenever he draws them, Azuma would just as soon not draw them at all, and expresses a desire to “erase himself,” which leaves a world of cute eroticism without male intervention.⁵⁵

Things are taken further in Azuma’s contribution to *Shibēru*, which does include sex scenes, but in them the human male is replaced by silly little animals that seem only to tickle the girl with their tiny members. The story ends with a wolf trying—unsuccessfully—to sexually assault the girl and, in the process, breaking his giant, erect penis in half. The panting and howling wolf-man is nothing if not pathetic, and Azuma ends the story abruptly with a joke about his own failure to push any further and finish the piece. Gone is the “heroic” male inserter,⁵⁶ who was a staple of power fantasy in adult gekiga, which was undergoing a boom in the late 1970s—precisely when Azuma published in *Shibēru*. To rephrase, Azuma, drawing inspiration across gender/genre lines—appropriating, parodying and sexualizing works and styles for children and girls, which were neither intended for adult men nor to be sexual—produced an alternative to the hegemonic masculine imaginary.

It is said that many of those who participated in the production of *Shibēru* wanted to be shōjo manga artists,⁵⁷ but this was not the case for Azuma, who was producing a parody of shōjo manga and characters and exposing an eroticism that had been “taboo” and “unspeakable.”⁵⁸ “I wanted friends,” Azuma recalls. “I thought that there absolutely must be others who like this sort of thing somewhere.”⁵⁹ The contributors to *Shibēru*, who were coming out as *lolicon* while gathering in cafés and sharing drawings of cute, cartoony girl characters,⁶⁰ produced a fanzine to share their interests at the Comic Market, which was a space founded by male shōjo fans in order to socialize and share interests. Faced with the overwhelming presence of girls and women at the Comic Market, and the dominance of fanzines by and for girls and women focusing on sexual and romantic relationships between boy characters, Azuma and his friends were opening up space for boys and men.⁶¹ If imagined interactions with,

between and as boy characters provided girls and women with space to more flexibly play with gender and sexuality,⁶² Azuma raised the possibility of something similar for boys and men. This is what Harada saw in *lolicon* fanzines such as *Shibēru*, which he describes as “a pure apparatus for the pursuit of pleasure that can only exist as manga.”⁶³ Even as Azuma was responding to shōjo manga in his bishōjo manga, *lolicon* fanzines were responding to fanzines by and for girls and women.⁶⁴

Azuma’s work was a departure from the norm and inspired criticism from gekiga artists as well as fans,⁶⁵ but that did not stop men from lining up at the Comic Market to buy a copy of *Shibēru* in 1979. While Azuma might not have been entirely serious about sexualizing shōjo characters, the popularity of his work spoke to a growing number of men who found cute and cartoony characters to be sexually attractive. Indeed, also in 1979, the young heroine of *Rupan sansei: Kariosutoro no shiro* (Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro, 1979), an animated film directed by Hayao Miyazaki, inspired her own genre of fanzines. Notable for their “fairytale” or “girly” aesthetic, “Clarisse magazines” reinforced the growing interest in shōjo characters.⁶⁶ The simultaneous arrival of *Shibēru* and Clarisse magazines laid the groundwork for parodying shōjo manga and characters and elaborating cute eroticism, which ushered in the “*lolicon boom*” (*rorikon būmu*) in the early 1980s.

While all of this was going on, shōjo manga continued to attract male readers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In a personal interview, manga and anime critic Gō Sasakibara recalled reading introductions to shōjo manga (of the kind Meikyū had been publishing in fanzines) in sci-fi and anime specialty magazines from around 1977 or 1978.⁶⁷ He started reading works from the publisher Haksensha, and magazines such as *Hana to yume*, *LaLa* and *Shōjo Comic*. In the interview, Sasakibara elaborated on the emergence of a new kind of male shōjo fan at the time:

There were basically two ways to get into shōjo manga. With artists such as Moto Hagio and Ōshima Yumiko, people were saying, “Shōjo manga is better than stuff for boys,” so you could get into it as a manga fan. You might praise a work for being technically superior, or as an excellent form of manga expression, or maybe as just good science fiction. Separate from this critical praise, others were attracted to shōjo manga because it was shōjo manga, which they liked. So, they got into it not from a critical perspective, but rather as something that moved them, or touched them in a deeply personal way. For people like this, it wasn’t just about science

fiction, but also love comedies. There were many artists popular as creators of love comedies. To speak personally, I was into Kyōko Hikawa. From the time that I was a senior in high school to my first year of college, my favorite manga artist was Kyōko Hikawa. She produced extremely cute love comedies.

As Sasakibara remembers it, men such as himself sought in shōjo manga “a media to enjoy being moved by characters” (*moe o tanoshimu tame no media*). From here, it is easy to see why so many people—from organizers of the Comic Market to creators to cultural critics—locate in Lum, a bishōjo character and the star of Rumiko Takahashi’s *Urusei yatsura* (Those Obnoxious Aliens, 1978–1987), “the origin of *moe*,” or affection for fictional characters.⁶⁸ Even as Sasakibara was crossing gender/genre lines in his attraction to shōjo manga, Takahashi, a female artist, was producing bishōjo manga and love comedy for male readers.

If male shōjo fans at times seem to place themselves in close proximity to the intended female readership,⁶⁹ then Eiji Ōtsuka does so much more explicitly.⁷⁰ Born in 1958, Ōtsuka is a manga writer, critic and editor who describes himself as growing up with girls, or as “their male classmate, the boy sitting next to them during their shōjo years.”⁷¹ If Kimio Itō recalls reading *Ribon*,⁷² a shōjo manga magazine intended for young girls, and seeing men reading A-ko Mutsu’s works, which were made popular by *Ribon*,⁷³ then Ōtsuka speaks as one of those men. In the late 1970s, following the renaissance of shōjo manga, stories in *Ribon* improved to the point that women as old as university age were reading the magazine. Artists such as Mutsu, famous for her “girly” style and focus on everyday life and romance, moved to the fore in producing promotional material for *Ribon*. It was at this time that Ōtsuka became an avid reader, along with other men who offered the magazine their “strange support.”⁷⁴ A fan of Mutsu and Yumiko Tabuchi, Ōtsuka went as far as to send letters to them and brag about receiving a response.⁷⁵

Just as university students gained attention at the end of the 1960s for reading *Shōnen Magazine*, which did much to popularize gekiga, Ōtsuka and others, inheritors of the quiet revolution of male shōjo fans, gained attention at the end of the 1970s for reading *Ribon*, which was described by the media as part of the phenomenon of “male university students reading shōjo manga.” Indeed, in the August 1978 issue of *Ribon*, there appears an advert for next month’s promotional giveaway, which is a bag emblazoned with a design by A-ko Mutsu. The catch copy reads:

“Whether it be elementary school kids or University of Tokyo students, this high fashion sense bag is sure to be the perfect fit.”⁷⁶ The catch copy is responding to reports of students from the University of Tokyo, who were into shōjo manga, forming a fan club. Although Ōtsuka was not affiliated with the University of Tokyo at the time, he does count himself among the larger population of “troubled university students” (*komari-mono no daigakusei*) who were into shōjo manga at the end of the 1970s.

The *lolicon* boom has its roots in male shōjo fans in the 1970s, who established the alternative space of the Comic Market, where Hideo Azuma and others released fanzines featuring shōjo characters. This continued with growing interest in girly or cutesy shōjo manga for younger readers, as well as interest in shōjo characters in anime. It is unwise to attempt to disassociate the *lolicon* boom from shōjo manga, as the links are too substantial to ignore. Hisashi Fujita explains:

The *lolicon* style is something with a strong influence from shōjo manga. During lean years when they were not selling well, more than a few female manga artists passed through this genre. It is only relatively recently that female manga artists have become active in comic magazines targeting male readers, but the exception to this rule is *lolicon*, where many female manga artists started out. This is because this genre in particular sought out shōjo manga images.⁷⁷

Not only were female manga artists drawing for men, but also male manga artists who had learned to draw for shōjo magazines were transitioning into producing work for men. For example, Hikaru Yuzuki, the male artist behind *Minna agechau* (Give It All, 1982–1987), an erotic comedy serialized in a young adult manga magazine called *Young Jump*, got his start publishing in *Ribon*.⁷⁸ While the anime adaptation of *Minna agechau* was famously called “Japanese pornography” when imported to the United States,⁷⁹ it is characterized by an unmistakably cute, shōjo manga aesthetic. This is not an accident, because essentially Yuzuki took shōjo manga and sexed it up, much as Azuma had done before, but what was once reserved for niche magazines and fanzines was now possible in mainstream manga magazines.

Perhaps an even better example of the connection between *lolicon* and shōjo manga is Aki Uchiyama. A popular manga artist in the early 1980s, Uchiyama is often called “the King of *Lolicon*,” because his work became so emblematic of the *lolicon* boom. In a personal interview, Uchiyama explained his professional debut:

I started drawing when I was a university student. I was in the manga club, and was producing fanzines. I was a fan of Hideo Azuma, who really influenced my work. [...] There was a guy in the manga club who was drawing shōjo manga. He said, “I’m going to submit something, so why don’t you submit, too?” I wasn’t particularly interested in shōjo manga, but I wanted my work to be published and shōjo manga magazines accept a lot of reader submissions. So I drew shōjo manga and submitted it to *Ribon*, which is a pretty famous shōjo manga magazine. They rejected my submission. I had put a lot of work into it and didn’t want the manuscript to go to waste. I started to think of places where I could resubmit. At the time, publishing companies could make money selling a variety of niche magazines. Of course, sex sells, and that was what most niche magazines were dealing in. So, I added some pages of nudity and resubmitted my manuscript to a niche magazine [*Gekkan Out*], which accepted it. I submitted similar manuscripts to other magazines, all of which were accepted. Then publishers started coming to me with requests.⁸⁰

It is hard not to see how Uchiyama plots into the history of male shōjo fans: a young man inspired by Azuma and producing fanzines is approached by a male friend from university interested in shōjo manga, who convinces him to submit work to *Ribon*, a shōjo manga magazine with a strong male readership⁸¹; when rejected, the young man adds sex to his shōjo manga and sends it to a niche magazine, where he finds a passionate fan base that supports his professional debut. The growing influence of these fans and visibility of media targeting them fed into what became known as the *lolicon* boom.

In high demand in the early 1980s, Uchiyama published not only in *Remon pīpuru* (Lemon People), established in 1982 as the first specialty magazine dedicated to what it called “*lolicon* comics” (*rorikon komikku*), but also in mainstream manga magazines. For example, Uchiyama’s *Andoro torio* (Andro Trio, 1982) appeared in *Shōnen Champion* alongside Osamu Tezuka’s *Puraimu rōzu* (Prime Rose, 1982–1983), which speaks to increasing demand for, and decreasing resistance to, *lolicon* comics, shōjo manga for men and bishōjo manga. To put it another way, Tezuka, called the God of Manga, was publishing in the same magazine as Uchiyama, called the King of *Lolicon*. The distance between mainstream and niche was collapsing. Indeed, not only did Uchiyama publish in *Shōnen Champion*, but he also published a parody of the same work in *Remon pīpuru*.

In the early 1980s, *lolicon* was anything but a minor phenomenon. At the time, television anime such as *Mahō no purinsesu Minkī Momo* (Magical Princess Minky Momo, 1982–1983) had fan clubs comprised of primarily university- and working-age men.⁸² Well-known companies such as Enix produced games with titles like *Rorīta shindorōmu* (Lolita Syndrome, 1983). When Wonder Kids produced the first pornographic anime series in Japan, they gave it the title *Rorīta anime* (Lolita Anime, 1984–1985). Trying to cash in on the phenomenon, Nikkatsu responded by producing its own pornographic anime series, also called *Rorīta anime* (1984–1985). By this time, Uchiyama was producing over 160 pages of manga each month and had become such a brand name that Nikkatsu paid to simply use his name in their anime series. Despite stories about it in *Gekkan Out*, *Animec* and *Animage*, the *lolicon* boom is one of the lesser-known chapters in the history of manga, anime and fans in Japan. What *lolicon* meant then is often buried under the baggage of what “Lolita complex” means to critics now. To explain the meaning of *lolicon*, and return it to the larger narrative of male shōjo fans from the 1970s to the early 1980s, we now turn to open the pages of *Manga burikko*.

“MALE” READERS OF SHŌJO MANGA: *MANGA BURIKKO*

Manga burikko was first published in November 1982, which is to say in the thick of the *lolicon* boom. Indeed, it is often remembered as a *lolicon* magazine,⁸³ which was established to compete with the already successful *Remon pīpuru*. What, however, is meant in the description of *Manga burikko* as a *lolicon* magazine? In the beginning, it looked more like an adult gekiga magazine carrying gag strips and pornographic comics. The cover image of the first issue was drawn by Shinbō Minami, best known for illustrated essays; in the front pages were photographs of nude women; works inside included four-panel strips by Haruo Takahashi and adult gekiga (read: realistically drawn, pornographic comics) by the likes of Takashi Ishii, Rui Hachū and Shigeru Tomita. In other words, initially, *Manga burikko* appeared to be a gekiga magazine for adults, which bore no significant similarities to *Remon pīpuru*.

Manga burikko transformed into what might be called a *lolicon* magazine only later, or more specifically in 1983. At the time, *Manga burikko* was in practice run by two editors, Katsuhiko Ogata and Eiji Ōtsuka,

who worked at the magazine part-time. Recall that Ōtsuka was a male shōjo fan, who, as a university student, was reading *Ribon* and praising the “girly” manga of A-ko Mutsu and Yumiko Tabuchi. Beginning in early 1983, Ōtsuka began to exercise more editorial control over *Manga burikko*, and would soon be for all intents and purposes its chief editor.⁸⁴ The transformation that took place in *Manga burikko*’s content, which is to say the shift that associated it with *lolicon*, occurred primarily as a result of Ōtsuka’s increased editorial control. The nature of this shift, or the direction in which Ōtsuka pushed *Manga burikko*, was toward “shōjo manga for boys.”⁸⁵ In the May 1983 issue, a new cute or shōjo manga aesthetic was apparent in the cover art drawn by Kei Taniguchi, and the subtitle of the magazine was, “Bishōjo comic magazine for dreaming boys.” This does seem to suggest shōjo manga for boys—“dreaming” conjures up images of the starry-eyed girls drawn in, and to, shōjo manga—or bishōjo manga, as innovated by Azuma and others. While sales had been lagging for months, the May 1983 issue of *Manga burikko* sold out, because it successfully tapped into the energy of the ongoing *lolicon* boom.⁸⁶

The following issue, June 1983, again featured cover art by Kei Taniguchi, and the content was devoted primarily to celebrating the works of Aki Uchiyama, which clearly aligned *Manga burikko* with *lolicon*. Significantly, there was also a contribution by Kyōko Okazaki, a female artist who would go on to earn critical acclaim for her shōjo manga. Indeed, in addition to Okazaki, coming months saw contributions from female artists such as Yumi Shirakura and Erica Sakurazawa, which reflected Ōtsuka’s interest in shōjo manga and desire to promote shōjo artists in the magazine. In general, after May 1983, *Manga burikko*’s cover art was drawn by Taniguchi and moved increasingly toward a cute or shōjo manga aesthetic until November and December 1983, when the covers were drawn by Apo in a style obviously inspired by shōjo manga. The subtitle of the magazine also changed to “Two-dimensional idol comic magazine for boys” (October 1983) and, finally, “Totally bishōjo manga” (November 1983). As these subtitles suggest, gravure photography, nude or otherwise, disappeared from the pages of *Manga burikko*, as did more realistic, explicit and violent drawings of sex. In the pages of *Manga burikko* as it transitioned to become a flagship of the genre, *lolicon* appears as a departure from photographs of actual girls and women and from realistically drawn, pornographic gekiga and a move toward “soft,” “light” or “cute” eroticism in the unrealistic

style of shōjo manga.⁸⁷ (Recall that a perceived “lack of reality” in shōjo manga and Azuma’s bishōjo manga laid the groundwork for *lolicon*. After rejecting the realism of gravure photography and adult gekiga, Azuma also pioneered presenting bishōjo characters as “two-dimensional idols” by, for example, releasing *Myā-chan kan’nō shashin shū* [Myā-chan’s Erotic Photo Album, 1981], a book of drawings of the lead of his *Sukurappu gakuen* [Scrap School, 1981–1983] as a pinup girl. A transformation similar to that of *Manga burikko* also occurred in *Remon pīpuru*.⁸⁸)

The transformation of *Manga burikko* under Eiji Ōtsuka raises important points about male shōjo fans and *lolicon*. First, and most obviously, the bishōjo characters in *Manga burikko* were clearly differentiated from the “real thing,” “reality” and “realism.” Not only did the content of the magazine move away from gravure photography, but also adult gekiga. At the risk of redundancy, let us repeat that *lolicon* appears to be about cute girl characters—manga and anime girls—rather than flesh-and-blood girls and women.⁸⁹ This redundancy is built into the title of the magazine, *Manga burikko*, which means “comic fake girl/child,” and is reinforced by subtitles such as “two-dimensional idol comic magazine.” Second, depictions of explicit sex and sexual violence decreased in *Manga burikko* as it rose to become a flagship *lolicon* magazine. Third, the bishōjo characters in *Manga burikko* were not fetish objects drawn solely by and for men, but rather were the culmination of movement across gender/genre lines—of men consuming and then producing shōjo manga, women drawing for men and the emergence of a space of fluid and hybrid expression. It is not a coincidence that Ōtsuka, in his historical breakdown of manga, places *Manga burikko* in the lineage of *Ribon*, or that he places female artists such as Okazaki not only in the shōjo manga renaissance but also the *lolicon* boom, which he clearly sees as connected.⁹⁰ Indeed, when Ōtsuka took control of *Manga burikko* in 1983, the phenomenon of men reading shōjo manga was still prominent enough to be a topic of social, media and critical commentary.⁹¹ To put it simply, the shōjo manga and cute movements,⁹² which are deeply related, led to, undergirded and impacted the *lolicon* boom.

The influence of shōjo manga is apparent in *Manga burikko* beyond the cute aesthetic and focus on cute girl characters. Consider that “cat ears” (*nekomimi*), often associated with the fetishism of male fans of manga and anime,⁹³ and which appear on characters frequently throughout *Manga burikko*, were perhaps first seen in the shōjo manga of female

artist Yumiko Ōshima in the 1970s.⁹⁴ The pages of *Manga burikko* are filled with such references. For example, Ai Nakata, a female manga artist, drew parodies of works by not only Ōshima, but also Moto Hagio and Keiko Takemiya. Nakata was recruited by Ōtsuka for *Manga burikko* with the assumption that readers knew shōjo manga and would get the jokes.⁹⁵ Considering that only about fifteen percent of *Manga burikko* readers identified as female—a number that, while low, undermines the stereotype of *lolicon* as something exclusive to men—the assumption was that the remaining eighty-five percent—male or otherwise—were also shōjo fans.⁹⁶ These were the manga fans that Ōtsuka was targeting with *Manga burikko*, and he did so by soliciting work from a female artist parodying canonical shōjo manga of the 1970s. While Nakata indulged in sexual parody and turned boy characters into bishōjo, her work is, stylistically, shōjo manga. Nakata and women like her were producing “shōjo manga for boys,” which is precisely what Ōtsuka wanted for *Manga burikko*.

That said, rigid distinctions between “female” or “male” artists drawing in “female” or “male” styles for “female” or “male” readers quickly come undone in *Manga burikko*. Alongside women drawing for the magazine appeared artists whose names sound like those of women—Shinobu Hiromori, Akane Sawaki—but who might also be men. Other artists used gender-neutral, cute names such as Maneki Neko and Apo. The more one investigates these artists, the less clear it becomes what gender/sex we are talking about. Apo, for example, is a pen name used by Akira Kagami, who is male, but also drew as Eiko Yamada, female. If we follow their story, Apo is the younger brother of Kagami, but draws in a style influenced by shōjo manga.⁹⁷ It was Apo who drew shōjo manga covers for *Manga burikko*’s November and December 1983 issues, for example. While we may know that Apo’s imaginary character is “male” (Kagami’s little brother), it is significantly harder to grasp the gender/sex of someone like Hiromori, who does not make that information public and also publishes under the names Nonki Miyasu and Lolicon Maker. The gender/sex of the imaginary characters attached to those pen names is, like Hiromori’s own, uncertain.

Even when gender/sex can be determined, the imaginary identifications of artists in specific works are murky at best. Consider, for example, Miki Hayasaka, who turns out to be a male artist. In his contribution to the August 1983 issue of *Manga burikko*, Hayasaka used four color pages and four black-and-white pages to introduce a cute girl character

named Moe Takanezawa. The drawings were presented as photographs, some even bearing the material markings of film straight from a camera. In a panel on the third page, Takanezawa’s older sister was introduced as a female manga artist in charge of shooting Moe for this spread in *Manga burikko*. The drawings on the page are the “photographs” that the older sister took of Moe, who is posing as an idol. The older sister calls Moe cute, but the gaze is presented as feminine and familial. Where is Hayasaka? In drawing what the older sister saw through the camera’s viewfinder, Hayasaka is not just drawing a cute girl in a cute style inspired by shōjo manga, but he is also visualizing Moe from the viewpoint of a girl—that is, Hayasaka as the female manga artist and older sister. This cross-gender/sex identification is striking, but not entirely unexpected. We have seen that Kimio Itō, Teruo Harada and Eiji Ōtsuka, in various ways and to varying degrees, present themselves as identifying with shōjo. If adult gekiga represented a masculine or majority view of gender/sex, then the bishōjo manga produced by Hayasaka and others in *Manga burikko* represented a feminine or minority view. This is nothing as naïve as saying that Hayasaka was, really, a girl—any more than it is saying that Kimio Itō, as revealed in his engagements with boys’ love manga, was, really, gay—but rather that bishōjo manga allowed for an opening into a mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances when gender/sex no longer signifies monolithically. This is what it means to say that Hayasaka was a “male” shōjo artist, just as Itō was a “male” shōjo reader. Gender/sex begins to blur in the shared space of shōjo. It would be a pity to reduce this imaginative seeking of an alternative with, through and as shōjo to “pornography,” or to dismiss it as *lolicon* “perversion.”⁹⁸

Even the most explicit of drawn pornography that sexualizes and imagines sex with shōjo is not as straightforward or irredeemable as it is often made out to be.⁹⁹ Many manga critics note the complexity of male engagement with shōjo characters. As is the case with boys’ love manga, the majority of these approaches propose that the fictional character is “open” and invites broad and diverse reader identifications, or, more specifically, that men imaginatively become shōjo and share in their depictions of pleasure.¹⁰⁰ Kaoru Nagayama exemplifies this when he refers to the shōjo as a “virtual body” (*vācharu na shintai*) for producers and consumers of manga.¹⁰¹ Others suggest that facing depictions of sexual violence leads to working through one’s position and responsibility as a sexual actor.¹⁰² In any case, because the sex is imagined and involves

no human body in the depicted sex acts, there is no direct or immediate harm. On the contrary, as with girls and women and violent sex in Ladies Comics and boys' love manga and fanzines, imaginatively working through sex and sexuality can do a great deal of good for people.¹⁰³ In *Manga burikko* and beyond, we can see that, with “male” shōjo fans, we are dealing with something more than “a straightforward male-looking-at-female pornography.”¹⁰⁴ Crossing gender/genre lines, men consume and produce shōjo media and appropriate the shōjo form—just as girls and women do with media for boys and men—to express sexuality with, through and as characters.

CONCLUSION

From the Comic Market to *Manga burikko*, this chapter has shown that “male” shōjo fans were a significant presence in the history of manga and anime in Japan from the 1970s to the early 1980s. Indeed, whether used to describe the male shōjo manga readers who founded the Comic Market or as a label for the male bishōjo manga readers who were attracted to the fictional cute girl characters featured in *Manga burikko*, the history of “otaku” is deeply intertwined with the history of “male” shōjo fans.¹⁰⁵ Further, in the sense that it was used to refer to the desire for cute girl characters appearing in manga and anime, *lolicon* was certainly not limited to a handful of perverts by the early 1980s. During the *lolicon* boom, Aki Uchiyama published alongside Osamu Tezuka in a mainstream manga magazine, even as Hideo Azuma's *Shibēru* series was published alongside fanzines devoted to the heroine of Hayao Miyazaki's *Rupan sansei: Kariosutoro no shiro*.

The inclusion of Miyazaki, who is perhaps Japan's most beloved living animator, in this history of “male” shōjo fans might be upsetting for some, but his distance from *lolicon* is not as great as we might imagine. Consider *Puchi appuru pai* (Petit Apple Pie, 1982–1987), which was an anthology series edited by Eiji Ōtsuka and featuring artists such as Yumi Shirakura, Akira Kagami and Miki Hayasaka, who also published in *Manga burikko*. Although it never included explicit pornography, *Puchi appuru pai* is remembered as a *lolicon* series. Running for sixteen volumes, it both predated the transformation of *Manga burikko* and outlived that magazine; it continued long after the *lolicon* boom had ended. Indeed, focusing too much on the term *Lolicon* limits our understanding of the larger cultural moment of which both Miyazaki and Ōtsuka

were part. Described as “shōjo manga for boys,”¹⁰⁶ *Puchi appuru pai* included contributions by male shōjo artist Shinji Wada, who is credited with introducing the term Lolita complex to manga in 1974, and Hideo Azuma, who pioneered bishōjo manga in the 1970s. Part of the larger cultural moment when men turned to shōjo manga and cuteness in the 1970s and early 1980s, *Puchi appuru pai* demonstrates the broad appeal of bishōjo characters, which is too often obscured by insisting on more limiting (and pathologizing) discourse about “lolicon.” The publisher of *Puchi appuru pai* was Animage Comics, owned by Tokuma Shoten, which also published Miyazaki’s *Kaze no tani no Nausicaä* (Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, 1982–1994) in its *Animage* magazine. In the early 1980s, *Animage* attracted readers by publishing covers featuring Miyazaki’s Nausicaä, a *bishōjo* character that was beloved by fans. In *Animage* character rankings, readers regularly voted Nausicaä to the top. To a certain extent, *Animage*, which promoted and profited from affective relations between fans and fictional cute girl characters, was also a “two-dimensional idol comic magazine,” albeit it is less direct than *Puchi appuru pai* or *Manga burikko* in this regard.

This is why it is especially telling that, in an interview published in the June 1982 issue of *Animage* magazine, Miyazaki confessed to falling in love with an anime girl in the past.¹⁰⁷ This was a moment of coming out and solidarity. However, in response to reports of the *lolicon* boom and a cult following among men attracted to his character Clarisse, Miyazaki stated that he hates *lolicon*. In this interview, we can see Miyazaki as a “male” shōjo fan, as well as his rejection of *lolicon*, which belies complex connections. The following year, in April 1983, Miyazaki offered a more nuanced statement. Commenting on two short films by the Waseda University Animation Club, both focusing on shōjo characters, Miyazaki began by stating that he could not reject such work. This is because, he admitted, “I am also one of these filmmakers.”¹⁰⁸ With this established, Miyazaki explained why men—himself included, apparently—seem to fixate on shōjo characters:

At a certain period in life—that unbalanced time of transformation from boyhood to youth—young males with a certain tendency start to see a sacred symbolism in stories about girls. [...] Their repressed feelings are too deep to be dismissed by insisting that they just have a Lolita complex or that resolving it in role-playing games is perfectly fine. This type of youth begins to feed the girl within himself. The girl is part of him, and a

projection of himself. [...] These girls express nostalgia for a self that was free of the detritus of life. The girl is not living outside of him; she is the very self that he has nurtured inside himself.¹⁰⁹

In that Miyazaki juxtaposes the interior girl with the exterior masculine and adult world, his is an eloquent statement on shōjo fandom. This girl, nurtured in one's self, could very well open up the minority view described by "male" shōjo fans such as Kimio Itō.¹¹⁰ Miyazaki's words could also apply to many so-called *lolicon* artists, who, like Miyazaki himself in the early 1980s, focused on shōjo characters. It is easy to side with angry Miyazaki and hate *lolicon*, and hard to side with empathetic Miyazaki and try to understand the complexity of "male" engagement with shōjo characters. But that is precisely what is necessary if we are to get beyond biased criticism that accepts *Animage* but not *Puchi appuru pai* or *Manga burikko*, Miyazaki's shōjo but not Azuma's or Hayasaka's bishōjo, "good" manga and anime but not "bad" manga and anime. We desperately need alternatives to such criticism, which is as unfair as it is untenable.

NOTES

1. The analysis is based on interviews, oral and written histories and critical secondary sources published in Japanese and English. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
2. Matthew Thorn, "Shōjo Manga—Something for Girls," *Japan Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2001): 43–50; C.J. (Shige) Suzuki, "Envisioning Alternative Communities Through a Popular Medium: Speculative Imagination in Hagio Moto's Girls' Comics," *International Journal of Comic Art* 13, no. 2 (2011): 57–74; Deborah Shamoon, *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls' Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 101–136.
3. If "shōjo culture is notable for its rejection of anything excessively masculine" (Vera Mackie, "Reading Lolita in Japan," in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley [London: Routledge, 2010], 194), and if the shōjo is "a vision of alternative forms of sociality and alternative kinds of affective relationships that are not bound by the structures of the heteronormative nuclear family" (Mackie, "Reading Lolita in Japan," 198), then there is no reason to assume that this appeals exclusively to girls and women. Feminist thinker Chizuko Ueno, for example, links the desire of shōjo to defer becoming adults with the desire of shōjo-oriented men (Chizuko Ueno, "Rorikon to yaoui-zoku ni mirai wa aru ka!? 90 nendai no sekkusu reboryūshon"

- [Do *Lolicon* and the *Yaoi* Tribe Have a Future!? The Sexual Revolution of the 1990s], in *Otaku no hon* [The Book of Otaku], ed. Shinji Ishii [Tokyo: JICC Shuppankyoku, 1989], 131–132). It is not entirely helpful to propose a dualism between the “male, stuck in an immature sexuality that sees its object as the defloration of the innocent Lolita figure, and the Lolita who desperately tries to hang on to this innocence” (Mackie, “Reading Lolita in Japan,” 200). For a discussion of men identifying with fictional girl characters in complex and contradictory ways, see, Sharon Kinsella, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 121–124, 137–138; Sharon Kinsella, “Minstrelized Girls: Male Performers of Japan’s Lolita Complex,” *Japan Forum*, 18, no. 1 (2006): 65–87.
4. Caroline Norma, “Catharine MacKinnon in Japanese: Toward a Radical Feminist Theory of Translation,” in *Multiple Translation Communities in Contemporary Japan*, eds. Beverley Curran, Nana Sato-Rossberg, and Kikuko Tanabe (London: Routledge, 2015), 85.
 5. See, for example, Jake Adelstein and Angela Erika Kubo, “Japan’s Kiddie Porn Empire: Bye-Bye?” *The Daily Beast* (June 3, 2014), <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/03/japan-s-kiddie-porn-empire-bye-bye.html>.
 6. Thinking in terms of *Lolita* and *The Lolita Complex* can be misleading in Japan. Researcher Perry R. Hinton points out that “Lolita” has specific meanings in Japan that differ from the legacy of *Lolita* (Perry R. Hinton, “The Cultural Context and the Interpretation of Japanese ‘Lolita Complex’ Style Anime,” *Intercultural Communication Studies* 23, no. 2 [2014]: 54). Given the particular status of the shōjo in media and material culture, Hinton suggests that *lolicon* might better be translated as “shoujo [sic] complex” (Hinton, “Cultural Context,” 59). Among fans of manga and anime, *lolicon* is associated with “a Peter Pan complex rather than a Lolita complex” (Hinton, “Cultural Context,” 62; for more, see Patrick W. Galbraith, “‘Otaku’ Research and Anxiety About Failed Men,” in *Debating Otaku in Contemporary Japan: Historical Perspectives and New Horizons*, eds. Patrick W. Galbraith, Thiam Huat Kam, and Björn-Ole Kamm [London: Bloomsbury, 2015], 21–34). With this in mind, Hinton argues that “the term ‘Lolita complex’ is an inappropriate rendering of rorikon [*lolicon*] given the Western popular representation of Lolita” (Hinton, “Cultural Context,” 65).
 7. Akira Akagi, “Bishōjo shōkōgun: Rorikon to iu yokubō” [The Bishōjo Syndrome: The Desire Called *Lolicon*], *New Feminism Review* 3 (1993): 230–231. For an English-language discussion, see, Setsu Shigematsu, “Dimensions of Desire: Sex, Fantasy, and Fetish in Japanese Comics,”

- in *Themes in Asian Cartooning: Cute, Cheap, Mad, and Sexy*, ed. John A. Lent (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 129–132.
8. Kaoru Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga sutadīzu: “Kairaku sōchi” toshite no manga nyūmon* [Erotic Manga Studies, Expanded Edition: An Introduction to Manga as a “Pleasure Apparatus”] (Tokyo: Chikuma Bunko, 2014), 83.
 9. Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 87.
 10. Hisashi Fujita, “Kira kira omeme no hanran: Bōdāresu-ka suru shōjo manga to shōnen manga” [An Inundation of Sparkling Eyes: The Disappearing Border Between Manga for Girls and Boys], in *Otaku no hon* [The Book of Otaku], ed. Shinji Ishii (Tokyo: JICC Shuppanyoku, 1989), 127.
 11. On the topic of *lolicon* specifically, Ueno writes, “This word, ‘cute,’ is key. The boys who draw such cute pictures also want to be part of the ‘cute’ world of shōjo. They find it to be too much to be a man. To go a little further, aren’t they thinking, ‘I don’t want to become a man?’” (Ueno, “Rorikon to yaoi-zoku,” 131–132). It is worth noting that Akira Akagi, writing in an issue of *New Feminism Review* that also published work by Ueno, makes very similar points about *lolicon* (Akagi, “Bishōjo shōkōgun”).
 12. Kimio Itō, “An Introduction to Men’s Studies,” trans. Noriko Hagiwara, in *Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan*, eds. Mark McLelland and Romit Dasgupta (London: Routledge, 2005), 149–151.
 13. Kimio Itō, “When a ‘Male’ Reads Shōjo Manga,” trans. Toshio Miyake, in *Comics Worlds and the World of Comics: Toward Scholarship on a Global Scale*, ed. Jaqueline Berndt (Kyoto: International Manga Research Center, 2010), 171–172.
 14. Itō, “‘Male’ Reads,” 175–176.
 15. Itō, “‘Male’ Reads,” 176.
 16. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 3.
 17. Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 3.
 18. Suzuki, “Envisioning Alternative Communities,” 59–61.
 19. Neil K. Akatsuka, “Uttering the Absurd, Revaluing the Abject: Femininity and the Disavowal of Homosexuality in Transnational Boys’ Love Manga,” in *Boys’ Love Manga: Essays on the Sexual Ambiguity and Cross-Cultural Fandom of the Genre*, eds. Antonia Levi, Mark McHarry, and Dru Pagliassotti (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), 167.
 20. Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 8.
 21. While Kimio Itō remembers being largely alone, this was clearly not the case. In a self-published book, sociologist Taimatsu Yoshimoto reports interviewing men who read so-called “boys’ love” manga.

The following are among their responses: “BL [boys’ love manga] was salvation for me. And I think that it would be the same for a lot of men in contemporary Japan”; “BL/*yaoi* [fanzines focusing on boys’ love] was a tool that my generation (I was born in 1970) could use to liberate ourselves from the pretense that we were tough guys”; “A competitive principle such as ‘men have to win’ affects men’s psyche quite effectively. I felt so burdened by such ideas. I was really saved by [the magazine] *JUNE* and by *yaoi*, which offered me a new perspective on accepting [myself] being a passive man”; “I started getting the idea that men can enjoy specific texts, like *yaoi*, that were originally made by and for women, in order to live with less stress and psychological pressure” (translated in Kazumi Nagaïke, “Do Heterosexual Men Dream of Homosexual Men? BL *Fudanshi* and Discourse on Male Feminization,” in *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture and Community in Japan*, eds. Mark McLelland, Kazumi Nagaïke, Katsuhiko Suganuma, and James Welker [Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015], 193–194). There is strong resonance between these responses and Itō’s experience.

22. Patrick W. Galbraith, *The Moe Manifesto: An Insider’s Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime and Gaming* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle, 2014), 27–28.
23. Itō, “‘Male’ Reads,” 177.
24. Galbraith, *The Moe Manifesto*, 28–29.
25. Itō, “‘Male’ Reads,” 174.
26. This story is not an altogether unfamiliar one. In his writing on early anime fans in the United States, science and technology studies scholar Lawrence Eng highlights a similar phenomenon among “reluctant insiders,” who felt alienated by their inclusion into hegemonic categories and sought alternatives, difference or to become marginal (Lawrence Eng, “Strategies of Engagement: Discovering, Defining, and Describing Otaku Culture in the United States,” in *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*, eds. Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Izumi Tsuji [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012], 100). This resonates with Itō’s description of men seeking an alternative in shōjo manga, which provided a minority or marginal view to reluctant insiders of hegemonic masculinity as they moved across gender/genre lines.
27. Takanaka Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto no sōseiki* [Genesis of the Comic Market] (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Shuppan, 2008), 12.
28. Kentarō Takekuma explains: “One of the things that you cannot overlook when talking about manga at this time is that, after all, ‘men started reading shōjo manga.’ The 1970s were more than anything the era of shōjo manga. At the time, a man who identified as a manga fan,

but didn't read shōjo manga, was basically considered to be unqualified" (quoted in Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 56). Nagayama elaborates: "For men who identified as manga fans, works by the Magnificent 49ers were an absolute must, but if you were a real fanatic, then you would get into Fumiko Okada, who published in *COM*; Yumiko Asuka; Minori Kimura; Masako Yashiro, a precursor of the Magnificent 49ers; or, even beyond that, Hideko Mizuno, the great mother of contemporary shōjo manga who was also a member of the Tokiwasō group and whose *Fire!* (1969) earned her many male fans in the 1970s; the more decorative Toshie Kihara; Yūko Kishi; A-ko Mutsu, known for her 'girly love comedy' and 'preppy manga'; Yumiko Tabuchi; there were even some who went all the way to Mariko Iwadata and the like" (Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 233–234). Note that Okada appears in Harada's story, and Mutsu, who we have already met in Kimio Itō's story, will appear again in Eiji Ōtsuka's story.

29. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 45.
30. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 46.
31. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 62.
32. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 68.
33. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 92.
34. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 20, 97.
35. Although there is insufficient space in this chapter to pursue these connections, Meikyū counts among its supporters Toshihiko Sagawa, the founder of *JUNE*, a specialty magazine for boys' love manga, and its members Kōji Kawamoto, the founder of *Peke*, a specialty magazine where Hideo Azuma published bishōjo manga. Further, Eiji Ōtsuka, under the pen name Ēji Ōtsuka, submitted to the reader response column of Meikyū's fanzines, which were mainly focused on shōjo manga. For more, see Yoshihiro Yonezawa, "Komiketto: Sekai saidai no manga no saiten" [The Comic Market: The World's Largest Manga Festival], in *Otaku no hon* [The Book of Otaku], ed. Shinji Ishii (Tokyo: JICC Shuppankyoku, 1989), 79.
36. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 16.
37. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 11; for later advertisement placements, see, Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 155.
38. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 18.
39. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 12.
40. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 13; see also, Yonezawa, "Komiketto," 78; Hiroaki Tamagawa, "Comic Market as Space for Self-Expression in Otaku Culture," in *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*, eds. Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Izumi Tsuji (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 115.

41. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 157.
42. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 178–179.
43. Itō, “‘Male’ Reads,” 174.
44. Fujita, “Kira kira omeme,” 130; Yonezawa, “Komiketto,” 88; Kinsella, *Adult Manga*, 136.
45. Itō, “‘Male’ Reads,” 174.
46. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 178.
47. He discusses this in the March 1982 issue of *Gekkan Out*.
48. For example, Itō, “‘Male’ Reads,” 171–172.
49. Gō Sasakibara, “Kizu tsukeru sei, dankai no sedai kara otaku sedai e: Gyarugē-teki sekushariti no kigen” [The Sex That Injures, from Babyboomers to the Otaku Generation: The Origin of Girl Game Sexuality], in *Shingenjitsu Vol. 2* [New Reality, Volume 2], ed. Eiji Ōtsuka (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2003), 120.
50. For example, in the same year that he contributed to *Shibēru*, Azuma published *Tobe tobe donkī* (Soar Donkey, 1979) in *Gekkan Princess*, a shōjo manga magazine (Hideo Azuma and Tomoko Yamada, “Azuma Hideo 2 man 5 sen ji rongu intabyū” [Long Interview with Hideo Azuma], in *Azuma Hideo: Bishōjo, SF, fujōri, soshite shissō* [Hideo Azuma: *Bishōjo*, Science Fiction, Absurdity and Disappearance], eds. Tōru Nishiguchi and Yūko Anazawa [Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2011], 32). Such were his connections, real or imagined, with shōjo manga that Azuma is discussed in a chapter of Osamu Hashimoto’s *Hanasaku otome-tachi no kinpiragobō* (The Blooming Maidens’ Stewed Roots, 1979–1981), which is a foundational contribution to critical perspectives on the genre (Hideo Azuma and Naoki Yamamoto, “Risupekuto taidan” [Respect Dialogue], in *Azuma Hideo: Bishōjo, SF, fujōri, soshite shissō* [Hideo Azuma: *Bishōjo*, Science Fiction, Absurdity and Disappearance], eds. Tōru Nishiguchi and Yūko Anazawa [Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2011], 148–149).
51. Azuma and Yamada, “Azuma Hideo,” 30.
52. Azuma and Yamada, “Azuma Hideo,” 30–31.
53. Fujita, “Kira kira omeme,” 127.
54. Suzuki, “Envisioning Alternative Communities,” 59–60; Sasakibara, “Kizu tsukeru sei,” 120.
55. Azuma and Yamada, “Azuma Hideo,” 35–36; see also, Ariko Tsuchimoto, “Rorikon, nijikon, ningyō-ai: Kakū no bishōjo ni taku saretā kyōdō gensō” [*Lolicon*, Two-Dimensional Complex, Doll Love: The Collective Fantasy of Fictional *Bishōjo*], in *Otaku no hon* [The Book of Otaku], ed. Shinji Ishii (Tokyo: JICC Shuppanyoku, 1989), 110.
56. Akagi, “Bishōjo shōkōgun,” 231–232.
57. This is discussed in the April 1981 issue of *Animec*.

58. These quotes come from a dialogue between Hideo Azuma and Yoshihiro Yonezawa that was published in *Gekkan Out* in March 1982.
59. Azuma and Yamamoto, “Risupekuto taidan,” 141.
60. Ka’ichirō Morikawa, “Azuma Hideo wa ika ni shite ‘otaku bunka no so’ ni natta ka” [How Did Hideo Azuma Become the “Ancestor of Otaku Culture?”], in *Azuma Hideo: Bishōjo, SF, fujōri, sosbite shissō* [Hideo Azuma: *Bishōjo*, Science Fiction, Absurdity and Disappearance], eds. Tōru Morikawa and Yūko Anazawa (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2011), 184.
61. Azuma and Yamada, “Azuma Hideo,” 32.
62. Yukari Fujimoto, “The Evolution of BL as ‘Playing with Gender:’ Viewing the Genesis and Development of BL from a Contemporary Perspective,” in *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture and Community in Japan*, eds. Mark McLelland, Kazumi Nagaike, Katsuhiko Suganuma, and James Welker (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 76–92.
63. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 179. This resonates with the discourse about boys’ love manga and *yaoi* fanzines as “pure fantasy” (Patrick W. Galbraith, “*Moe* Talk: Affective Communication Among Female Fans of *Yaoi* in Japan,” in *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture and Community in Japan*, eds. Mark McLelland, Kazumi Nagaike, Katsuhiko Suganuma, and James Welker [Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015], 153–168).
64. Sasakiyara, “Kizu tsukeru sei,” 118–119; Taimatsu Yoshimoto, *Otaku no kigen* [The Origin of Otaku] (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 2009), 81–83; Yasushi Takatsuki, *Rorikon: Nihon no shōjo shikōshatachi to sono sekai* [*Lolicon: Japan’s Shōjo Lovers and Their World*] (Tokyo: Basilico, 2010), 105–111; Morikawa, “Azuma Hideo,” 181–182.
65. Kentarō Takekuma, “Otaku no dai-ichi sedai no jiko bunseki: Akumade kojīn-teki na tachiba kara” [Self-Analysis of the First Generation of Otaku: From an Entirely Personal Standpoint], in *Mōjō genron F-kai* [Net Discourse Final Version], ed. Hiroki Azuma (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2003), 107. See also Hideo Azuma’s comments in a dialogue with Yoshihiro Yonezawa published in the March 1982 issue of *Gekkan Out*.
66. Takatsuki, *Rorikon*, 102.
67. Personal interview (August 31, 2014).
68. Patrick W. Galbraith, *The Otaku Encyclopedia: An Insider’s Guide to the Subculture of Cool Japan* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2009), 46–48, 74–77; Galbraith, *The Moe Manifesto*, 175–176.
69. For example, Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 20.
70. Eiji Ōtsuka, *Kasō genjitsu bihyō: Shōhi shakai wa owaranai* [Critique of Virtual Reality: Consumer Society is Endless] (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1992), 46.

71. Eiji Ōtsuka, *Tasogaredoki ni mitsuketa mono: “Ribon” no furoku to sono jidai* [Found in the Twilight: *Ribon* Premiums and Their Era] (Tokyo: Ōta Shuppan, 1991), 31.
72. Itō, “‘Male’ Reads,” 171–172.
73. Galbraith, *The Moe Manifesto*, 27–28.
74. Ōtsuka, *Tasogaredoki*, 221.
75. Ōtsuka, *Tasogaredoki*, 222.
76. Ōtsuka, *Tasogaredoki*, 221.
77. Fujita, “Kira kira omeme,” 129.
78. Fujita, “Kira kira omeme,” 129.
79. Right Stuf, “History of Anime in the U.S., Part 2,” RightStuf.com (1998), <http://www.rightstuf.com/site/main/animeResources/usHistory/part2/index.html>.
80. Personal interview (July 5, 2011). Uchiyama was not alone in idolizing Azuma, who was at the center of a booming, cult-like fandom in the early 1980s (Sasakibara, “Kizu tsukeru sei,” 122). This interest in Azuma was part of the larger *lolicon* boom.
81. In addition to his attempt to publish in *Ribon*, it is worth noting that Uchiyama at times drew images resembling those of A-ko Mutsu, whose star rose in that very same magazine. Using a pen name, Uchiyama drew, for example, “Omutsu ga haita Shinderera” (Cinderella in a Diaper, 1981), which, despite the content, appears uncannily like work by Mutsu (Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 234). Note that Uchiyama’s parody of *Cinderella* resonates with Wada’s *Alice in Wonderland* and Azuma’s *Little Red Riding Hood*, as well as the appropriation of shōjo manga and characters more generally.
82. Galbraith, *The Moe Manifesto*, 46–63.
83. For example, Sharon Kinsella, “Japanese Subculture in the 1990s: *Otaku* and the Amateur *Manga* Movement,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): 311.
84. Tomomi Yamanaka, “‘Otaku’ tanjō: ‘Manga burikko’ no gensetsurikigaku o chūshin ni” [The Birth of “Otaku:” Centering on Discourse Analysis of *Manga burikko*], *Kokugo kenkyū* [Japanese Language Research] 27 (2009): 23–25.
85. Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 235.
86. Eiji Ōtsuka, “*Otaku*” no seishin shi: 1980 nendai ron [Intellectual History of “Otaku:” On the 1980s] (Tokyo: Kodansha Gendai Shinsho, 2004), 26–27, 47–49.
87. Although there is insufficient space in this chapter to pursue the issue, shōjo and bishōjo manga and the *lolicon* boom are not entirely disconnected from adult gekiga. The inclusion of female artists drawing shōjo manga in *COM* magazine influenced adult gekiga (Nagayama, *Zōho ero*

- manga*, 36). Female artists such as Fumiko Takano submitted (unattributed or under pen names) work to pornographic or “vending machine” manga magazines before becoming famous, and the presence of such shōjo-influenced art would not have escaped the notice of adult gekiga artists (Nagayama, personal interview, September 15, 2014). One well-known story has it that Fumio Nakajima, known for his adult *gekiga*, lived in the same apartment complex as Ryōko Yamagishi, a member of the Magnificent 49ers, which Kaoru Nagayama interprets as these young artists occupying a “shared battlefield” (Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 57–58). During this decade, Nakajima took on shōjo influences and became an influential *lolicon* artist (Nagayama, personal interview, September 15, 2014), whose work was featured in *Manga burikko* and *Lolita Anime*. Even Uchiyama, the “King of *Lolicon*,” drew fleshy, physically present bodies in a style reminiscent of adult gekiga. This is not to say that Uchiyama was not also influenced by shōjo manga—he clearly was (Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 233–235)—but rather to draw attention to connections that undermine simple binaries. Boundaries between male and female, youth and adult and shōjo and gekiga were becoming fluid at this time.
88. While *Remon pīpuru*, which marked a significant departure from adult gekiga to a “cute style” (*kawai-rashii egara*), originally included sections of glossy photos of so-called “shōjo models,” it later transitioned to primarily manga. This preference for an unreal, cute or manga aesthetic, along with a move away from the “real thing,” is an important aspect of *lolicon*, which was repeated in the pages of *Manga burikko* (Galbraith, “‘Otaku’ Research,” 24–26).
 89. Ueno, “Rorikon to yaoi-zoku,” 134; Akagi, “Bishōjo shōkōgun,” 230–231; Shigematsu, “Dimensions of Desire,” 129–132; Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 129–130; Galbraith, “‘Otaku’ Research,” 24–30.
 90. Ōtsuka, *Tasogaredoki*, 236.
 91. It is telling that manga translator and historian Frederik L. Schodt, in his first English-language introduction to manga, which was written in the early 1980s, notes that, “many grown men have recently confessed that they love to read comics created especially for girls” (Frederik L. Schodt, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* [Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983], 17). For Schodt, “males, bored with overworked action and sex themes in boys’ and men’s comics magazines, have found themselves attracted to the girls’ comic magazines they used to scorn. Some read girls’ comics in order to learn how women think. Others find the emphasis on emotion and psychology refreshing” (Schodt, *Manga!* 103–105). By Schodt’s estimation, the increasing emphasis on relationships and romance, and increasing size of eyes, in manga generally demonstrates the influence of shōjo manga. Sociologist Sharon Kinsella

- aply refers to this as the “universalization of girls’ culture,” which has become a cause of concern: “hordes of teenage Japanese boys [...] who adore girls’ manga, or who fetishize images of young girls from afar in their own boys’-girls’ manga, have been met with shock and incomprehension” (Kinsella, “Japanese Subculture,” 316). Note the collapse of gender/genre boundaries in the neat phrase “boys’-girls’ manga.”
92. Shimotsuki, *Komikku māketto*, 16; Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 83.
 93. Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 42–47.
 94. Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 61–62.
 95. Nagayama, personal interview (September 15, 2014). More broadly, Nagayama states with absolute confidence that, “There is no doubt that fans of *lolicon* manga basically all read shōjo manga.” For more on Eiji Ōtsuka’s recruitment of Nakata, see <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%B8%AD%E7%94%B0%E9%9B%85%E5%96%9C>.
 96. These readership estimates come from survey results published in *Manga burikko* in its November 1983 issue, which show that 80% of readers are male, 15% are female and five percent are undisclosed.
 97. Nagayama, *Zōho ero manga*, 234–235.
 98. The example of Miki Hayasaka speaks to the blurred positionality of “male” shōjo artists more broadly. In a personal interview (May 5, 2018), Masayuki Noguchi, better known as Aki Uchiyama, explained that his pen name came from an editor that found his art style to be “feminine” (*josei-teki*). According to Uchiyama, the editor decided to call him “Aki,” because “it would be interesting to have adult comics drawn by a woman.” The name Aki, then, was intentionally chosen to make Uchiyama appear to be a woman, or at least to suggest the possibility, which some would pick up on from his art style. As the pen name caught on, Uchiyama became almost entirely dissociated from the identity “Masayuki Noguchi.” Even today, Uchiyama stated, many are unsure of his assigned sex and gender identity and just assume that he is a woman. In a particularly memorable vignette, Uchiyama recalled a shōjo manga artist looking at his drawings and insisting, despite evidence to the contrary, that they simply could not have originated from a man. As Uchiyama sees it, this marks the beginning of blurred lines between “male” and “female” creators drawing in exclusively “male” or “female” styles, which is an ambiguity that is characteristic of contemporary manga and anime.
 99. Such is the bias against *lolicon* that it is possible for manga and sexuality scholar Kazumi Nagaike to write an entire article on the complexity of female fans’ engagements with boy characters, but then, in a footnote, close off that possibility for male fans: “The analytical features of

yaoi [=boys' love manga] and *rorikon* [=lolicon] should be explored separately. *Rorikon* does not involve people fantasizing about themselves as the opposite sex; rather, it is a straightforward male-looking-at-female pornography" (Kazumi Nagaike, "Perverse Sexualities, Pervasive Desires: Representations of Female Fantasies and *Yaoi Manga* as Pornography Directed at Women," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 25 [2003]: 100). As we have seen, there is nothing straightforward about *lolicon*, which may in fact involve men fantasizing about themselves as the opposite sex. Indeed, many have compared *yaoi* and *lolicon* and argued that they should be considered together (Ueno, "Rorikon to yaoi-zoku," 133; Kinsella, *Adult Manga*, 124; Matthew Thorn, "Girls and Women Getting Out of Hand: The Pleasure and Politics of Japan's Amateur Comics Community," in *Fanning the Flames: Fans and Consumer Culture in Contemporary Japan*, ed. William Kelly [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004], 183).

100. Tsuchimoto, "Rorikon," 109–110; Akagi, "Bishōjo shōkōgun," 232; Shigematsu, "Dimensions of Desire," 129–132; Kinsella, *Adult Manga*, 122. In a personal interview (March 19, 2010), Gō Itō explained as follows: "Readers do not need to empathize with the rapist, because they are projecting themselves on the girls who are in horrible situations. It is an abstract desire and does not necessarily connect to real desires. This is something I was told by a *lolicon* artist, but he said that he is the girl who is raped in his manga."
101. Kaoru Nagayama, "Sekushuariti no hen'yō" [Changes in Sexuality], in *Mōjō genron F-kai* [Net Discourse Final Version], ed. Hiroki Azuma (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2003), 52.
102. Sakibara, "Kizu tsukeru sei," 110.
103. Shigematsu, "Dimensions of Desire," 143; Sharalyn Orbaugh, "Girls Reading *Harry Potter*, Girls Writing Desire: Amateur Manga and Shōjo Reading Practices," in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, eds. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley (London: Routledge, 2010), 181.
104. Nagaike, "Perverse Sexualities," 100.
105. According to Hisashi Fujita (aka Toshihiko Sagawa), male shōjo fans such as Teruo Harada and the Meikyū circle "sought friends who shared their interests and became the early 'otaku'" (Fujita, "Kira kira omeme," 130). See also Galbraith, "'Otaku' Research," 24–30.
106. Kaoru Nagayama, personal interview (September 15, 2014).
107. See also, Hayao Miyazaki, *Starting Point: 1979–1996*, trans. Beth Cary and Frederik L. Schodt (San Francisco, CA: Viz Media, 2009), 19, 70.
108. Miyazaki, *Starting Point*, 131.
109. Miyazaki, *Starting Point*, 130–131.
110. Itō, "'Male' Reads," 176.

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