

Erotic Comics in Japan

Asian Visual Cultures

This series focuses on visual cultures that are produced, distributed and consumed in Asia and by Asian communities worldwide. Visual cultures have been implicated in creative policies of the state and in global cultural networks (such as the art world, film festivals and the Internet), particularly since the emergence of digital technologies. Asia is home to some of the major film, television and video industries in the world, while Asian contemporary artists are selling their works for record prices at the international art markets. Visual communication and innovation are also thriving in transnational networks and communities at the grass-roots level. Asian Visual Cultures seeks to explore how the texts and contexts of Asian visual cultures shape, express and negotiate new forms of creativity, subjectivity and cultural politics. It specifically aims to probe into the political, commercial and digital contexts in which visual cultures emerge and circulate, and to trace the potential of these cultures for political or social critique. It welcomes scholarly monographs and edited volumes in English by both established and early-career researchers.

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Erotic Comics in Japan

An Introduction to Eromanga

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Cover image: A sample from Nakata Aki's *Pure Pink Diary* (Junjō momoiro nikki, published by Yukkusha in 1991). The artist recalls encountering eroticism in childrens manga. She would later work in *eromanga* magazines.

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Table of Contents

Translators' Introduction: <i>Eromanga</i> in the Global Now	13
<i>Eromanga</i> , Japan and Translation	13
A Roadmap to Regulation and Resistance	18
The Manga Industry, Diversity and Eroticism	23
Positioning <i>Eromanga</i> in Debates about Pornography	28
Toward an Expanded <i>Eromanga</i> Studies	34
Introduction: The Invisible Realm	39
Part 1 A History of <i>Eromanga</i>	
Memes Spread	45
1 The Gene Pool of Manga and <i>Gekiga</i>	49
The 1940s to the 1950s: The Genome King, Tezuka Osamu	49
<i>Gekiga</i> as a Counter Response	53
The 1960s: <i>Garo</i> , <i>COM</i> and <i>Gekiga</i> for Young Men	54
Shameless Boys Manga	56
The Early 1970s: Beginning with Ishii Takashi and Sakaki Masaru	59
2 The Rise and Fall of Third-Rate <i>Gekiga</i> and the Eve of <i>Bishōjo</i>-Style <i>Eromanga</i>	63
The Mid-1970s: The Third-Rate <i>Gekiga</i> Boom	63
The Magnificent 49ers and the Golden Age of <i>Shōjo</i> Manga	68
The Source of Erotic Comedy is Love Comedy, Darling!	73
The Alternative Circuit called <i>Dōjinshi</i>	77
The End of the 1970s: The Decline of Third-Rate <i>Gekiga</i> and Arrival of <i>Bishōjo</i>	81
3 <i>Bishōjo</i>-Style <i>Eromanga</i> Takes the Stage	85
The First Half of the 1980s: The Revolutionary Outbreak of <i>Lolicon</i>	85
Early <i>Lolicon</i> Manga	90
The Second Half of the 1980s: Two Key Figures	91
The Golden Age of <i>Eromanga</i>	94
The First Half of the 1990s: The Winter Years of <i>Eromanga</i>	95

The Second Half of the 1990s: The Adult Comics Label and Bubble Period	99
<i>Shota</i> and the Rise of Female Artists	100
The Wave of Refinement and High-End Style	103
New Expressions and Recurring Expressions	104
The Age of “ <i>Moe</i> ”	105
The 2000s: Permeation, Diffusion and Waning Fortunes	109

Part 2 The Various Forms of Love and Sex

Subdividing Desire	115
4 <i>Lolicon</i> Manga	117
Introduction	117
What is <i>Lolicon</i> Manga?	117
Early <i>Lolicon</i> Manga	120
The Additional Line by the Name of Sin	121
The Excuse is for the Sake of the Reader	123
Fiction is Fiction	124
The Pleasure of Sin	127
Inner Demons	128
I am I	131
The World of Children	132
<i>Lolicon</i> Manga Once More	134
5 Big Breasts and Manga	137
Introduction	137
From <i>Lolicon</i> to Baby-Faced and Big-Breasted	137
Breasts, Symbolic from the Start: <i>Thumping Heart, Ms. Minako!</i>	139
The Big-Breasted of Big-Breasted: <i>Blue Eyes</i>	141
Big Breasts and Added Value	144
The Expression of Big Breasts	147
6 Little Sisters and Incest	151
Introduction	151
If There is Love, Even Close Relatives Cannot Stop It	152
Ideal Mothers, Real Mothers and Slutty Mothers in Law	157
Without Love and Without Morals	159
Sweet Role-Play with an Imaginary Little Sister	162

7	Disgrace and Training	169
	Introduction	169
	Disgrace, <i>Gekiga</i> and Neo- <i>Gekiga</i>	171
	Resentment and Communication	173
	Rape Fantasies	176
	Training and Brainwashing	179
	Brutes and Vulnerability	183
8	Love Stories	187
	Introduction	187
	A Genealogy of Romantic <i>Eromanga</i>	188
	Girly Style and the Lum Type	191
	Pure Love Love	196
	Conservative Romantic Values	199
	The Abyss of Love	201
9	Sadomasochism and Sexual Minorities	203
	Introduction	203
	Sadomasochism and the Performing Body	204
	Sadomasochism, Absolute Devotion to the System	208
	Desire Deviating from the Sexual Organs and Polymorphous Perversity	210
10	Gender Mayhem	215
	Introduction	215
	“Shemales:” The Meaning of Breasts and a Penis	221
	“Shemales” and Related Territory	222
	Real Male Sexual Organs and Fantasy Female Sexual Organs	224
	<i>Shota</i> , or Autoeroticism	228

Part 3 Addition to the Expanded Edition (2014)

<i>Eromanga</i> in the Twenty-First Century	237
Deterioration of the Market and Restructuring of the Industry	237
Maneuvers Surrounding “Non-Existent Youth”	240
Youth Become the Focal Point of Regulating Expression	249
Is the Internet the Enemy of <i>Eromanga</i> ?	254
Diversifying Representations and Desires	260

Conclusion: Permeation, Diffusion and What Comes After	267
Pornography Without Sex	267
Afterword (2006)	273
Afterword to the Expanded Edition (2014)	274

Index of Artists and Individuals	285
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List of Images

Image 1	A sample from Nagai's <i>Violence Jack</i> . This is eroticism in manga-style drawing.	59
Image 2	A sample from Ishii's <i>Angel Guts</i> . This is <i>gekiga</i> -style drawing treading into the erotic.	61
Image 3	Cover of the January 1978 issue of <i>Manga Erogenica</i> . There was a boom in magazines like this in the 1970s.	66
Image 4	A sample from Takemiya Keiko's <i>The Song of Wind and Trees</i> (Kaze to ki no uta, published by Shōgakukan from 1976). This <i>shōjo</i> manga features sex between male characters.	70
Image 5	A sample of Takahashi's <i>Urusei Yatsura</i> . Featured is Lum, an iconic <i>bishōjo</i> or cute girl character.	74
Image 6	Cover of the February 1982 issue of <i>Comic Lemon People</i> . This was the first commercial <i>lolicon</i> manga magazine.	86
Image 7	Cover of Kamimura's <i>Oh No! Ms. Luna</i> (Ikenai! Runa-sensei, published by Kōdansha from 1986). The artist got caught up in debates about harmful manga in the 1990s.	97
Image 8	A sample of Unite Sōji's <i>Prima Materia</i> (Purima materia, published by Fujimi Shuppan in 1999). Working across categories of content, female artists like her brought new memes to <i>eromanga</i> in the 1990s.	101
Image 9	A sample of Wanyan's "Mayu and Chisato." The protagonist is dressed as a girl and involved in public groping play. Note the depiction of an adult penis, and how the heroine toys with him.	126
Image 10	A sample of Machida's <i>Naked at the Graduation Ceremony</i> . The artist struggles with destructive desires,	

	even as the complexity of his characters has attracted female readers.	130
Image 11	A sample of Watanabe's <i>Thumping Heart, Ms. Minako!</i> Note the combination of baby-faced and big-breasted.	140
Image 12	A sample of Nishimaki's <i>Blue Eyes</i> . Note how increasingly large breasts are drawn.	142
Image 13	A sample of Kotoyoshi's <i>Breast Play</i> . The breasts become the focus of sexual activity, which de-centers genital pleasure.	146
Image 14	A sample of Makafushigi's <i>Hina Labyrinth</i> . The work depicts an insatiable desire, which begins with a forbidden relationship.	156
Image 15	A sample of RaTe's <i>Incest + 1</i> . A big sister introduces her little brother as her boyfriend.	161
Image 16	A sample of Takarada's <i>Sister's Heart</i> . This is a representative "little sister work."	164
Image 17	A sample of Kino's "Fever Application." Note the bald principal, who is a collection of nasty traits.	174
Image 18	A sample of Uziga's <i>Poisonous Bizarre Picture Book</i> . The hideous cruelty is difficult to look at, as our imagination and body respond to the pain.	185
Image 19	A sample of Uchiyama's "Cinderella in a Diaper." The work shows clear influence from <i>shōjo</i> manga.	189
Image 20	A sample of Kagami's <i>Dream Fitter</i> . During the <i>lolicon</i> boom, Ōtsuka Eiji envisioned " <i>shōjo</i> manga for boys," which is clearly realized here.	193
Image 21	A sample of Tanaka's <i>Helpless Darling</i> (Itaike na dārin, published by Fujimi Shuppan in 1999). The artist depicts the heroine seen from a first-person perspective and looking at the reader.	198
Image 22	A sample of Shiromi's <i>Naburikko: FraKctured Red</i> . The work explores the master-slave relation of sadomasochism.	207
Image 23	A sample of Onibara's <i>Queen and Slave</i> . The heroine tells the story of her fall, and the reader both gazes at and empathizes with her.	209
Image 24	A sample of Momoyama's <i>Sheep Faint in Pain</i> . The ideas of torture have become the object, irrespective of sex.	211
Image 25	A sample of Kitamimaki's "The Human Ranch." The work invites the reader to identify with the "shemale."	220

- Image 26 A sample of Yonekura's *Pink Sniper*. The protagonist, dressed up in a girls uniform, has vaginal intercourse with a dominant younger classmate while a dominant female teacher straps on a dildo and inserts it in his ass. 229
- Image 27 A sample of Akio's "Tamamimi." The boys touch each other's ears. Note the similarity between them. 232
- Image 28 Cover of Matsuyama's *My Wife is an Elementary Student*. The work was singled out during the debates about "unhealthy publications." 245
- Image 29 Cover of Hiiragi's *Boy Housemaid Curo*. Note the cute boy in female clothing. By this point, male characters are objects of desire in *eromanga*. 261
- Image 30 A sample of Barasui's *Strawberry Marshmallow*. The older female character responds to one of the girls, who wears a cat-eared hat and adopts anime-style cat speak. 269

Note on Japanese Names and Words

In this book, Japanese names are generally written surname first, as is the custom in Japanese, unless the person publishes under, is known by or prefers the reverse order. In the case of artists, especially those whose work circulates in English translation, we have elected their preferred names and romanization; be aware that this introduces inconsistencies in romanization of names among artists. The same standard applies to publications and organizations with official or preferred English names and romanization. Japanese words are transliterated according to the modified Hepburn system. For this reason, macrons appear over some long vowels; however, for words commonly published without macrons in English (for example, Tokyo), we follow the convention of omitting them. Other small changes have been made to aid pronunciation. In text quoted from English-language sources, translation of Japanese names and words may differ.



Translators' Introduction: *Eromanga* in the Global Now

Eromanga, Japan and Translation

In the summer of 2014, a swarm of international journalists descended on Akihabara, a neighborhood in Tokyo known for its concentration of stores selling manga (comics), anime (cartoons) and related media and material. For over a decade, they and others had filed breathless reports about the global spread and influence of Japanese popular culture, especially manga and anime, which fueled hype about “Cool Japan.” In the process, Akihabara, where manga/anime stores are more densely clustered and visible than anywhere else in the world, had become a symbolic site for Cool Japan and tourist destination (Galbraith 2019). The journalists, however, were not in Akihabara to talk about Cool Japan. On the contrary, they came to report on manga and anime as something that Japan ought to be ashamed of. In Akihabara, which metonymically stood for Japan, they found examples of comics and cartoons featuring youthful-looking characters engaged in explicit sex, or what appeared to them to be “child pornography” (Adelstein and Kubo 2014; Ripley et al 2014; Fawcett 2014). The keyword was “*lolicon*,” or work associated with the “Lolita complex.” There was nothing new in responding to manga and anime this way, which reflects a relatively stable international discourse about “the Japanese Lolita complex” (Saitō 2011: 6) and Japan as a “dangerous (potentially pedophilic) ‘other’” (Hinton 2014: 65), but this coverage was notable for the intensity of its collective moral outrage.

The journalists were reporting on the Japanese government’s decision to revise child pornography laws, namely to ban possession (production and distribution were already illegal). This seemed to align Japan with international standards, but lawmakers notably did not include fictional forms in their definition of child pornography. If increased concern about the safety of children led to stances against pornography and abuse from the late 1970s on (Rubin 2011: 168, 218), then this had taken the form of an ongoing and open-ended campaign by the 2010s. In hopes of stamping out the scourge of child pornography and abuse, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom have all moved to make illegal both real and fictional forms (McLelland 2016: 11). In the United Kingdom, changes to the law have at least in part been a reaction to the spread of manga and anime (Eiland 2009: 400-401), and the first successful prosecution for possession

of offending media and material from Japan came in 2014 (Lightfoot 2014). That Japan, under close scrutiny, did not act against such content earned condemnation from reporters, who seemed overwhelmed with concern for children as they encountered manga and anime. Walking through the streets of Akihabara, a reporter for CNN, a global news provider, could not help but wonder if “cartoons might be fueling the darkest desires of criminals” (Ripley et al 2014). It did not matter that manga historian and translator Frederik L. Schodt had pointed out in response to a Japanese debate about the imagined harm of manga decades before that there does not seem to be a significant statistical relation between the relatively high profile of sexual and violent comics and low occurrence of sexual and violent crimes in Japan (Schodt 1996: 49-53), which had also been said about pornography (Diamond and Uchiyama 1999: 11). It did not matter that Japanese politicians told reporters again in 2014 that, on the issue of sexuality and violence in cartoons, “It has not been scientifically validated that it even indirectly causes damage” (Adelstein and Kubo 2014), or that Japanese activists echoed “there’s no scientific evidence” (Ripley et al 2014). To infuriated critics, this sounded like a defense of perverts, pedophiles and potential predators.¹

While manga/anime fans online relished lampooning these journalists, who did not know much about the Japanese comics and cartoons they held up to critique, one might be forgiven for asking where they were supposed to turn for more information.² There were no books specifically focusing on pornographic comics and cartoons in Japan. Not in English, anyway.³ If they had accessed the Japanese-language literature, the journalists might have seen that in the spring of 2014, just months before the explosion of discourse in international news media, a book called *Eromanga Studies*,

1 Critics attribute the low crime rate to underreporting, which render numbers suspect. For example, a 2015 government survey found that more than two thirds of rape and sexual assault victims in Japan never told anyone what happened to them, and only four percent reported the incident to police; by comparison, the U.S. Justice Department found that same year that almost 33 percent of rape and sexual assault crimes in the United States were reported (Mori and Oda 2018). The statistical relationship between manga/anime and crime can also be highly contested in Japan (for example, Cather 2012: 262-267).

2 The CNN journalist mentioned above, for example, presented a horror manga title as “child porn,” and fans quickly pounced on his obvious mistake (Cabrera 2014).

3 We mean this in the sense of a book on the Japanese pornographic comics and cartoons perceived to be by and for men, which is the content most often under debate. There is a monograph devoted to “ladies comics,” including pornographic content for women. Fittingly enough, that book ends its introductory chapter by noting that “the sex and violence [sic] content popular among Japanese adults may not be as acceptable to the American population. Such material could create political debate in the years to come” (Ito 2010: 31).

Expanded Edition: An Introduction to Manga as a "Pleasure Apparatus" (Zōho eromanga sutadiizu: "Kairaku sōchi" toshite no manga nyūmon) had been published. As the name implies, it was an expanded edition of a landmark work introducing *eromanga*, or "erotic manga," pornographic comics, which are often also labeled "adult" (*adaruto*, *seijin muke* or *seinen*) and "restricted to readers age 18 and older" (*jūhachi kin*). In *Eromanga Studies*, the journalists would find surprising facts about the world's most robust market for pornographic comics. In just the first few pages, they would read that, as early as the 1970s, over 80 *eromanga* magazines were published a month; that although debate over pornography is often framed as an us versus them issue divided along gender lines, since the 1990s, some magazines have had the majority of their contributions coming from female artists; that many celebrated manga artists have experience in the industry; that there are numerous genres, subgenres and styles that allow for some of the freest and most unique expressions of sexuality in any medium; that freedom of expression and diversity encourage innovation, which feeds into manga, anime and media overall.

Although the title is different, the book you are reading is an English translation of *Eromanga Studies* (hereafter *Eromanga*). The original Japanese text was written by Nagayama Kaoru (aka Nagayama Kaworu, aka Fukumoto Yoshihiro, born in Osaka in 1954), who is an influential critic and activist in Japan. One could also describe him as a scholar of popular culture and a "popular scholar," but this requires some unpacking. Indeed, to reach not only those journalists, but also a wide range of readers unfamiliar with *eromanga*, including researchers and educators who could be in dialogue with this aspect of Japanese visual culture, in addition to the language, we feel it is necessary to translate some of the context of Nagayama's work. We will do so in three ways in this introduction: first, explaining the relationship between popular and academic publication in Japan; second, positioning this book in past and present international debates about pornography, manga and harm, with reference to academic and English-language literature; and third, mapping the general industry and visual culture of manga, the place of eroticism in it and how regulation has impacted manga, eroticism and those writing on these topics and advocating against increased regulation. Rather than rigid separation and progression from one to the next, these three lines are interwoven in this introduction.

To begin, *Eromanga* does not follow conventions familiar to many academics reading and writing in English. The style is casual, citations do not appear for every assertion and engagement with texts might be described as empirical rather than strictly theoretical. There is no methodology section.

The perspective is of a contemporary witness and insider exploring media and material and opening it up to others. The author also adopts an approach that has been called “life studies,” or opening the self and one’s inner thoughts and feelings to interrogation (Morioka 2017: 174-176), in this case in relation to the *eromanga* under discussion. It at times sounds like phenomenology, but is not named as such. While this may seem strange to academic audiences, it makes the writing and its insights extremely accessible. This is not an accident, as Nagayama was originally writing in the format of an inexpensive paperback book intended for general audiences. However, rather than “unacademic,” this and similar content is more accurately described as scholarship published outside the academy and in another form. This form is also adopted by Japanese academics, who “have a much more fluid relationship with the popular press and mass culture” (Ivy 1989: 26) than many other parts of the world. Even as academics approach popular writing, the opposite is also true, with popular writers approaching academics. The result is that Japanese publishing is “not so strictly divided between academic and trade publications” (Abel and Kono 2009: xix), and professionals, practitioners and public intellectuals mingle.

In contrast to the publishing industry making academic texts into mass artifacts or academics writing for general audiences or taking on popular topics, the case of Nagayama and *Eromanga* follows a more common pattern in Japan. Before celebrated academics such as Azuma Hiroki overturned the status quo by addressing manga and anime in the 2000s (Abel and Kono 2009: xx), almost all work on such media and material was written by industry insiders and critics with minimal or no connection to universities. One of Azuma’s primary interlocutors, Ōtsuka Eiji, for example, was mostly known for editing subcultural magazines, developing marketing theory and penning stories for manga, anime and games, but that did not mean he was not also “one of the most important writers on fan cultures” and “anime and manga subcultures in Japan” (Steinberg 2010: 99). For its part, broadly, manga studies was conducted as “criticism” (*hyōron*) by those “out of power” (*zaiya*), or without academic positions. Furthermore, just as elite academics tended to avoid popular culture (Abel and Kono 2009: xxiii), manga scholars tended to avoid pornographic content. The extremely vigorous manga market in Japan is divided by gender and age, with strong stylistic and thematic differences refined and reproduced through core publishers, magazines and editorial boards. Most of the Japanese critical writing on manga focuses on publications categorized as for “boys” (*shōnen manga*), “girls” (*shōjo manga*), “young men” (*seinen manga*) and “women” (*josei manga*), as opposed to categories such as “adult” (*seijin muke manga*) and “ladies” (*redisu komikkusu*), which include

explicit depictions of sex. With increasing crossover of artists, readers and imagery, however, it is ever more difficult to quarantine and ignore *eromanga*. Even as much of manga looks erotic to confused journalists and concerned citizens, we know very little about *eromanga* as such.

This was the critical gap that Nagayama addressed when his book was originally published in 2006, and there remains a gap in general understanding outside Japan and in the English-language literature that this translation addresses now. By Azuma's estimation, a preference for work by elite academics means that few Japanese experts on popular culture have been translated into English and academic contexts beyond Japan (Azuma 2009: ix-x). To rephrase somewhat, that these experts are outside the academy and producing different forms of scholarship discourages translation. While Azuma's credentials as an elite academic and use of continental philosophy make the translation of his popular scholarship more acceptable, though the relaxed style still "may make academics uneasy" (Abel and Kono 2009: xx), the bulk of work in Japanese on manga, anime and related media and material continues to be overlooked. This is all the more so when it comes to work on pornographic content. The result is not only hindered communication between scholars, as Azuma rightly asserts, but also hindered understanding of vast swaths of visual culture.

Fittingly enough, Azuma in part inspired Nagayama to write *Eromanga*, even as the English translation of Azuma's book *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* (Dōbutsu-ka suru posutomodan: Otaku kara mita Nihon shakai, 2001) paved the way for Nagayama's own.⁴ By the early 2000s, Nagayama had already been working as an editor and critic in the industry for decades – for example, reviewing pornographic comics for publications coming out of the infamous Coremagazine Co., Ltd. It was through interactions with this material and its producers and consumers that Nagayama honed his critical perspectives and positions, but it was interactions with Azuma and his circle that pushed him further. At the start of the decade, Azuma was organizing discussions of psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki's groundbreaking *Beautiful Fighting Girl* (Sentō bishōjo no seishin bunseki, 2000), and these discussions connected and motivated a whole cohort of popular scholars.⁵ When Azuma edited these discussions into the collection *Net Discourse Final Version: Postmodern, Otaku, Sexuality* (Mōjō genron F-kai: Posutomodan, otaku, sekushuariti, 2003), it included a contribution from Nagayama. That original essay grew into the book-length manuscript *Eromanga*.

4 The English-language translation is Azuma 2009.

5 For an English-language translation, see Saitō 2011.

Even compared to Azuma, who is as likely to be seen at his Genron Café as on any university campus, Nagayama works in a space beyond the academy, where he has become a notable activist. From 2007, Nagayama and close collaborators have produced *Manga Ronsoh*, or “manga debates,” a series published outside academic and conventional commercial channels. Each volume contains articles and interviews on issues facing manga and related media and material, especially issues of freedom of expression. Into volume 22 by December 2019, no publication series has done more to shine a light on and promote debates of manga. Nagayama appears at various events to collect information for *Manga Ronsoh*, and also sells copies in person at various events, including the Comic Market, perhaps the world’s largest fan gathering with a record 750,000 attendees in December 2019. Most of those participating are manga/anime fans, many producing their own publications featuring manga/anime characters engaged in explicit sex, and lines form for the latest volume of *Manga Ronsoh*.⁶ Behind a table and stacks of printed books fans find Nagayama, who is happy to talk about recent manga debates in Japan and overseas. These interactions continue on social media, as do the manga debates. If anthropologist Didier Fassin urges academics to work in non-academic forms and forums as part of a project of “popular translation” (Fassin 2013: 635-639), then translating Nagayama’s popular scholarship may conversely broaden discussion in the academy and connect it to ongoing manga debates in Japan and around the world.

A Roadmap to Regulation and Resistance

Working on *Manga Ronsoh* clearly impacted Nagayama, who, when given the opportunity to produce an expanded edition of *Eromanga* in 2014, chose to add an extensive discussion of Bill 156, which was a revision of the Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance Regarding the Healthy Development of Youths. After decades of debate about manga, and an intense period of concern about “harmful manga” (*yūgai manga*) in the 1990s, Bill 156 staged a dramatic confrontation between advocates of child welfare and freedom of expression. Generally, the revision expanded the powers of government

6 The Comic Market has long maintained one of the most strident positions in support of freedom of expression of any organization in Japan, basically allowing anything insofar as it is not a copy of someone else’s work and minimally masks genitals. Because artists are in most cases not motivated by profit, and do not have to be concerned with reaching a mainstream or mass audience, they can do things that are impossible in commercial publications, which leads to extreme depictions of sex and violence involving manga/anime characters.

actors to identify “unhealthy publications” (*fukenzen tosho*) and have them zoned out of public spaces where children might be exposed; specifically, it allowed these actors to include manga, anime and games depicting unhealthy sex. Responding to the bill’s discussion of “non-existent youth” (*hijitsuzai seishōnen*) – language seeming to suggest, on the one hand, that fictional characters ought to be treated like actual young people, and, on the other hand, that young people need to be protected from fictional sex acts – a coalition of artists, publishers, lawyers, academics and fans opposed the revision, which was successfully blocked in 2010, but pressed through later that year. The example of Bill 156 is remarkable because while the outright banning of depictions of fictional sex acts involving underage characters has elsewhere proceeded without much discussion (Johnson 2006: 392), the mere zoning of such material was fiercely debated in Japan. Furthermore, as Nagayama elaborates in the section added to *Eromanga*, Bill 156 exposed lingering assumptions and emerging alliances in ongoing manga debates.

Many Japanese drawn to political action by Bill 156 shared concerns about its possible effects on manga and visual culture broadly. It may seem reasonable enough for the revised Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance Regarding the Healthy Development of Youths to be used to limit the circulation of publications such as *Little Sister Paradise 2: More Older Brother and Little Sister Everyday Fuck Fest* (Imōto paradaisu 2: Onii-chan to go nin no imōto no motto ecchi shimakuri na mainichi, 2014), which it did to much fanfare in 2014 (Anime News Network 2014a), but this high-profile move was not the only one underway. Soon after the revision passed, for example, newly sensitized retailers sent out memos asking staff to remove potentially problematic publications from shelves, which in one instance included volumes of *Berserk* (Beruseruku, 1989-) and *Vagabond* (Bagabondo, 1998-), two of the most acclaimed manga series of recent memory (Fujimoto 2011: 30). Newly sensitized editors decided not to risk publishing manga that might run afoul of regulators, for example *Aiko’s Little Mā* (Aiko no Mā-chan, 2014-), in which female artist Yamamoto Arisa depicts a young girl’s conversations with her body from puberty (Anime News Network 2014b). Needless to say, perhaps, but *Aiko’s Little Mā* is no more pornographic than *Berserk* and *Vagabond*, but measures were taken against them amid concern about the consequences of being deemed “unhealthy.”

For their part, newly empowered regulators have shown just how ambiguous and subjective such identifications can be. As Nagayama documents in *Manga Ronsoh*, when authorities announced their monthly list of unhealthy publications in July 2017, of five manga titles – a number higher than usual to begin with – only one was what is usually thought of as erotic material

for boys and men; another was categorized as “teen love,” or racy adolescent romance; and the majority, a total of three, were “boys love,” which is content primarily by and for women that focuses on relationships between male characters (Nagayama 2017a: 50). This trend was confirmed at the end of the year, when Nagayama found that, over the course of the preceding 12 months, a total of 29 manga were identified as “unhealthy,” with boys love titles accounting for a whopping 16 (Nagayama 2017b: 52).⁷ There is of course nothing criminal about boys love – which appeals not only to its target demographic of heterosexual women in Japan, but also men both gay and straight, lesbians and queer folk (McLelland et al 2015) – but it was still identified as “unhealthy,” if not harmful, and regulated as such. This had already happened earlier outside of Tokyo with demands that boys love publications be removed from a public library in Osaka (McLelland 2015: 257-260), which they were, only to be returned when feminists and free speech advocates asked how boys love was “unhealthy” (Fujimoto 2011: 30-31). Then as now, many suspected that someone simply did not like the material and did not want young people to have access to it. Activists worry about allowing majorities, concerned citizens and authorities to dictate morals and taste.⁸ Looking back at the lessons of history, they see that the push against “harmful manga” in the 1990s started with sex and violence in works for boys and men, then quickly expanded to ladies comics, girls

7 In this report, Nagayama helpfully analyzes every one of the 29 titles and explains the logic behind identifying them as “unhealthy.” Before doing so, he highlights something often missed: “Almost all *eromanga* for men are labeled as adult comics and are thus outside of the purview of youth ordinances. What is being targeted is light eroticism (*raito ero*)” (Nagayama 2017b: 52). With this in mind, of the 29 titles identified between December 2016 and November 2017, a total of 11 can be categorized as eroticism for men, with the remaining 18 being eroticism for women, including 16 boys love titles, one teen love title and one ladies comic. Nagayama argues that one reason boys love is so overrepresented is because of its inclusion of explicit sexual depictions, but tendency not to label these works “adult comics.” While many maintain that this is a good thing, because it makes the works accessible to young people, women and minorities outside of the narrower distribution network of “adult comics,” Nagayama predicts that boys love will soon follow *eromanga* and split into explicit publications that are labeled and zoned and more general releases with light eroticism.

8 For his part, Ishihara Shintarō, who was governor of Tokyo during the debates about Bill 156, did not instill a great deal of confidence. At a press conference on December 17, 2010, asked to explain the necessity of revision to the ordinance, Ishihara snapped: “There are after all perverts in the world. Unfortunate people with messed up DNA. People like that, with thoughts like that... Well, feeling ecstasy from reading and writing this stuff is fine, after all. But I don't think that it would be allowed in Western society. Japan is too open. After all, it's abnormal, right?” The transcript has been removed from the government's website, but is still available at: <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/harumi-s_2005/e/fd37cd702fd9abo84a215dc38e1ed280> [Last accessed on April 2, 2020].

comics and beyond to any content that someone thought for whatever reason might be “harmful” (Nagaoka 2010: 233-238).⁹

Given its use to target sexual expression in manga for women, young people and minorities, one begins to grasp why there was such a broad coalition of voices against Bill 156 in 2010. While it may seem obvious that underage sex in manga such as *Little Sister Paradise 2* is unhealthy and ought to be zoned, if not banned, many in Japan resisted increased regulation, which they perceived as a power grab (McLelland 2011: 355). Boys love artists such as Takemiya Keiko and girls and ladies comic artists such as Satonaka Machiko stood alongside boys comic artists known for sex and violence such as Nagai Gō, and even Chiba Tetsuya, an artist revered for producing socially and politically conscious comics in the late 1960s and early 1970s, opposed increased regulation. In Chiba's case, he took this public stance despite personally disliking and criticizing content along the lines of *Little Sister Paradise 2* (Fawcett 2014). So too did Fujimoto Yukari, a professor at Meiji University and feminist manga critic, who shares many perspectives and positions with Nagayama (Galbraith 2017: 9-11). In *Eromanga*, one might see points of intersection with Fujimoto's influential work on comics for girls and women, which allow readers to “play sex/uality” (Fujimoto 1998: 196). Indeed, Nagayama and Fujimoto appear together at many events, and have mutual concerns about challenges to freedom of expression in manga. As Nagayama has demonstrated for years in *Manga Ronsoh*, it is rarely as simple as standing with women and children against content that is “unhealthy” or “harmful.”

In addition to the more recent debates about child pornography laws and healthy youth ordinances being used to regulate manga and related media and material, there is another, deeper history of legal conflict in Japan. It begins with Article 21 of the Constitution of Japan, promulgated in 1946, which states that, “No censorship shall be maintained.” This strong stance on freedom of expression, a response to so-called “thought policing” by Japanese authorities in the lead up to the Second World War, is moderated by Article 175 of the Penal Code of Japan, which deals with obscenity. While the definition of obscenity is vague, rulings by Japanese courts have in practice located it in exposed genitals (Allison 2000: 160-164; also Cather 2012). Although this definition of obscenity is not clearly codified, the

9 Journalist Nagaoka Yoshiyuki recounts a particularly bizarre example when, in 2000, Ōshima Yoshihisa, a politician with a leading role in closed-door discussions of regulation at the time, suggested that scenes of violence in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) might negatively influence children, hence characterizing it as part of a “harmful environment” (Nagaoka 2010: 222-223).

result is that, to avoid trouble with the law, all pornography in Japan bears the conspicuous mark of censorship in the form of some sort of covering or blurring of reproductive organs. Because the rules are not explicit, this covering ranges from complete masking to the barest of cosmetic work, which tests uncertain waters; when called out with a warning or slapped down with a fine, there is typically a reactionary industry-wide move toward masking, until someone ventures out again and the cycle continues (Kimi 2017a: 280-320). Struggles persist in Japan over the use of Article 175 to police sexual expression, which impacts art both high and low, by and for both men and women, even as this also inspires creative ways to depict sex without relying on genitals or their full visibility.

Since the turn of the new millennium, there have been a number of milestones, starting with the Shōbunkan Trial, which began with the arrest of an *eromanga* artist, his editor and their publisher in 2002. Rather than accepting the obscenity charge, the publisher challenged it all the way to the Supreme Court of Japan in 2007, which ended the case with a guilty verdict, a hefty fine and a ban of the *eromanga* in question. In her thorough review of the Shōbunkan Trial, literary scholar Kirsten Cather highlights that the apparent age of characters involved in sex acts was not a marked reason for the verdict (Cather 2012: 269). Despite explicitly depicting the brutal gang rape of a highschool girl, for example, the *eromanga* was not described as child pornography or argued to be obscene on those grounds, as it might have been in the United States. Instead, the relatively unrestrained exposure of genitals, realistically drawn, was found to be obscene regardless of the content of the depicted sex act. This seemed to confirm the precedent of court decisions that – insofar as no one is harmed in the production of cartoon images, there is insufficient evidence that they cause harm and genitals are sufficiently covered – in Japan, manga, anime and games can legally feature imaginary sex acts that could be deemed obscene in other jurisdictions.¹⁰

Another milestone came in July 2014, when Igarashi Megumi was arrested for distributing digital data of a scan of her vagina (Osaki 2014). Better known as “Rokudenashiko,” Igarashi produces art using her vagina, which is a way to underscore and undo taboos around female anatomy. Igarashi’s

10 Some speculate the definition of obscenity in Japan may eventually be stretched to include depictions of underage sex, which would be similar to the situation in the United States. Here Cather is prescient, noting that the judges in the Shōbunkan Trial introduced “international laws and norms concerning child pornography,” which “suggests both whence this verdict came and where obscenity trials might head in the future” (Cather 2012: 255). It was unorthodox for the judges to introduce evidence, and the ages of characters in the offending manga did not officially impact the verdict, but pointedly mentioning international laws is indeed telling.

arrest disgusted international Japan watchers, feminists and art critics, who saw authorities impinging on her right to freedom of expression. Often unacknowledged in all this, however, were her connections to the ongoing manga debates in Japan. It should not escape our attention that Igarashi's legal representative was Yamaguchi Takashi, who also served as lead council for the defense in the Shōbunkan Trial. He is an active volunteer at the Comic Market and friend of Nagayama, who he often appears with at events. When some critics – including a number of prominent feminists in Japan – were distancing themselves from Igarashi, in the summer of 2017, publication of her manga about art, activism and freedom of expression resumed in the pages of *Manga Ronsoh*. For those who would like to see a bright and bold line between the *eromanga* found legally obscene in the Shōbunkan Trial and Igarashi's "vagina art," this proximity may be troubling, but it is part of the reality of a shared terrain of struggle in contemporary Japan.

With this in mind, it is perhaps not so puzzling that, when called as a witness for the defense in the Shōbunkan Trial, feminist scholar Fujimoto stood against censorship of manga, even pornographic content that was graphic, violent and frankly offensive. The other way around, considering the waves of global support for Igarashi and her vagina art in 2014, it is somewhat surprising that few outside of Japan seemed to care when Yamamoto's manga about Aiko's "Little Mā" – that is, her *manko*, or vagina – was canceled by its publisher that same year for fear of it being labeled "unhealthy." One cannot help but notice that Igarashi was arrested in 2014, the very same year that revision of Japanese laws concerning child pornography sparked worldwide outrage for not taking a stronger stance against artists producing offensive work. (Apparently the means of regulation employed in the case of *Little Sister Paradise 2*, which splashed over into the cancellation of Yamamoto's manga, was not enough.) It is hard not to see the growing regulatory momentum in Japan, as well as the schizophrenic response from critics abroad. At the risk of redundancy, we state again that, when considering freedom of expression and art – including manga, *ero* or otherwise – things are not as simple as taking a stand with women and children against harmful content.

The Manga Industry, Diversity and Eroticism

If the diversity and complexity of *eromanga* in Japan is often smoothed over by denouncing it unitarily as "harmful," then this might be because the diversity and complexity of manga in Japan is often underappreciated. Not only is manga produced by and for men, women and others, young

and old and everyone in between, but it is produced on a truly remarkable scale. While a shrinking population – spurred by low rates of birth and immigration – difficulty transitioning to digital distribution and competition from entertainment on networked devices have contributed to declining sales, at the high point in the mid-1990s, an estimated 40 percent of all publications in Japan were manga; the most popular magazine, *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, alone circulated between five and six million copies; and anime series based on hit manga such as *Dragon Ball* (Doragon bōru, 1986-) became ratings machines and cultural touch stones for generations of fans (Schodt 1996: 19, 88, 306). Beyond these flagship publications and manga/anime franchises with mass appeal are more narrowly targeted, intimate and challenging stories and styles.

Although the manga market is divided into gender and age categories such as “boys” (*shōnen manga*), “girls” (*shōjo manga*), “young men” (*seinen manga*) and “women” (*josei manga*), and this content is categorized as distinct from *eromanga* or manga for “adults” (*seijin muke manga*), sociologist Sharon Kinsella is correct that sex and violence have “not been as strongly compartmentalized in postwar Japan as [...] in postwar America or Britain” (Kinsella 2000: 46). Themes and depictions that may strike readers outside Japan as very mature appear in manga categorized as for boys and girls, for example. There is also nothing stopping boys and girls from reaching for publications categorized as for older readers, with the exception of age-restricted *eromanga*. This flies in the face of the deep-rooted notion that children should be shielded from mature content, which had a devastating effect on comics in North America. In the early 1950s, it is estimated that between 80 and 100 million comic books circulated a week in the United States; a multitude of genres catered to the young and the not-so-young, men and women (Hajdu 2008: 5). However, in his provocatively titled *Seduction of the Innocent*, originally published in 1954 amid concern about juvenile delinquency and crime, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham summarized the position that comic books should be treated as an issue of “public welfare” or a “public-health hazard” and hence, for the safety and wellbeing of children, regulated to avoid “social harm” (Wertham 2004: 330, 334-335).¹¹ If this sounds familiar, it is no doubt because Wertham anticipates many of the

11 More specifically, Wertham argues for “the protection of children against temptation, seduction and unfair punishment after they have succumbed” (Wertham 2004: 329). The critique of violence is more often mentioned, but Wertham was also concerned about young people reading sexual comics and becoming perverts and/or prey for perverts (Wertham 2004: 118, 173-193, 326). A full page of his book is devoted to arguing for connections between comics and child prostitution, where, “Evidently comic books prepare the little girls well” (Wertham 2004:

anxieties surrounding manga today, for example “harmful potentialities” in a “harmful environment” (Wertham 2004: 118). But if Wertham and his allies were successful in getting publishers in the United States to establish the Comics Code, which cut objectionable content – “All scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism” (Hajdu 2008: 291-292) – from what was to be a medium for children, such was not the case in Japan.

From Tezuka Osamu introducing themes and ideas from novels, film and theater into his manga for children, which started a postwar revolution in Japanese comics, there has been a constant struggle to expand the horizons of the medium. As early as 1949, some of Tezuka’s manga was already being deemed inappropriately mature for children (McCarthy 2009: 91), but he pressed on, drawing more readers and artists to the medium and establishing it as a compelling and crucial form of mass culture before television. By adapting his own popular manga into Japan’s first weekly televised anime series in 1963, which included marketing tie-ups and toys, Tezuka created synergy between comics, cartoons based on them and merchandise featuring characters; the model was quickly copied (Steinberg 2012: 40-41). Meanwhile, inspired by Tezuka but feeling that he was not mature enough, a new wave of comics artists challenged him in the 1960s with their alternative *gekiga* or “dramatic pictures,” which pushed boundaries with gritty sociopolitical commentary and spectacular violence that appealed to young adults. Even as Tokyo’s youth ordinances can be traced back to this moment and fears about manga and crime (Nagaoka 2010: 118-136), artists and publishers did not bend to pressure. If what was prohibited by the Comics Code in the United States made its way into “underground comix” in the 1960s, then *gekiga* at that same time was not only embraced as counter culture, but also proliferated rapidly, opened new markets and potentials for expression and was folded back into the mainstream by the late 1960s and early 1970s. In that decade, comics for boys and girls tested the limits of sexual expression. Almost as if to represent this history, resistance to Bill 156 in 2010 brought together artists known for *gekiga* and taboo-busting comics for boys and girls, namely Chiba Tetsuya, Nagai Gō and Satonaka Machiko and Takemiya Keiko. Further confusing those who see comics as for children and distinct from mature content is the cartoony, cute style that spread from Tezuka and manga for boys and girls to become the industry standard, irrespective of serious stories and depictions of violence and sex.

186-187). It is astonishing how close this is to claims made about manga today (see, for example, stories of manga being used to groom children in Ripley et al 2014).

Often unmentioned in this history of the expansion of manga expression is *eromanga*. Manga historian and translator Frederik L. Schodt highlights that niche magazines that sold copies by including risqué content provided artists space and creative autonomy and thus became “incubators of idiosyncratic talent” (Schodt 1996: 283). In *Eromanga*, Nagayama shows how this scene enriched manga and visual culture overall from the 1970s into the 2010s. This of course occurs through adaptations of *eromanga*, but also the crossover of artists into categories of manga targeting boys, girls, young men, women and more. For example, *Food Wars! Shokugeki no Soma*, serialized in boys manga juggernaut *Weekly Shōnen Jump* from 2012 to 2019, features art by Saeki Shun, who professionally debuted drawing comics for adults – that is, comics categorized as “adult” (*seijin muke manga*). The magazine also publishes work such as *To Love Ru* (2006-2009), which includes scenes directly employing *eromanga* innovations such as “naughty tentacles” (Kimi 2017a: 174). Small wonder, then, that *Weekly Shōnen Jump* appeals to not only the boys it ostensibly targets, but also adults, who make up the majority of readers (Hodgkins 2019). Furthermore, series focused on attractive male characters, particularly sports and adventure franchises, draw in female readers, who are now a key demographic for *Weekly Shōnen Jump* and similar magazines (Bauwens-Sugimoto 2016: 114-118). At the Comic Market, where over half of those coming to buy and sell fanzines are women (Comic Market Preparations Committee 2008: 21), the genre designation “Jump” is all but synonymous with pairing favorite male characters in romantic and sexual relationships. The desires of these fans are reflected in the pages of commercial magazines that cater to them, even as these magazines increasingly adopt affective and erotic styles from fanworks and fans debut and work as professional artists. That all of this is occurring in and around a single manga magazine for boys, and in ways that directly interact with and relate to eroticism, throws into stark relief Kinsella’s point about compartmentalization. Adult content, let alone eroticism, is nowhere near as circumscribed as category and market distinctions suggest.

The diversity of manga expression, including *eromanga*, snaps into focus when we consider female artists and readers. For example, Clamp, an all-female group, started out producing fanzines featuring popular characters from *Weekly Shōnen Jump*. While these fanworks were primarily for female readers, after their professional debut, Clamp created erotically charged manga/anime franchises such as *Chobits* (Chobittsu, 2000-2002), which appealed to men. Similarly, as Nagayama explains in *Eromanga*, female artists such as Yonekura Kengo produce both boys love works and pornographic comics for men. Many female artists show up in the pages of this book, but

readers unfamiliar with *eromanga* may still be surprised that Nagayama's experience leads him to estimate that around 30 percent of the artists producing this work are women. If we include artists in categories that are erotic and even explicit, but principally target women and are typically not counted as *eromanga*, then the number is much higher. And, as suggested by pennames such as Unite Sōji, Kudara Naizō and Morizono Milk, it is not always clear that the artist is in fact a woman. Artists can appear male or female, both or neither, and it seldom matters to publishers and readers because the basic standard, as Nagayama relays, is that anyone who can produce work that is erotic is welcome. Inclusivity, fluidity and freedom of expression attract a wide range of artists to *eromanga*. These aspects also attract a diverse readership, which of course includes women (Kimi 2017a: 363-371); Nagayama draws attention to artists such as Machida Hiraku, whose signing events are attended by an equal number of women. In this way, the common perception that *eromanga* is solely male fantasy begins to shift. Indeed, Nagayama locates the origins of contemporary *eromanga* in crossover, or artists and readers crossing gendered lines. By the end of Nagayama's analysis, in the span it takes to get from *The Rapeman* (The reipuman, 1985-1992) to *Anal Justice* (Anaru jasutisu, 1997-2002), one is left with a head-spinning sense of gender mayhem.

If *eromanga* is still largely ignored in scholarly discussions of manga, then some have argued it is akin to "dark matter" (Kimi 2017a: 7), or the missing mass that is necessary for us to understand how things work. That said, for the most part, *eromanga* remains, as Nagayama puts it, "invisible" and "unseen." Rather than seeing the content, we more often simply hear that it is objectionable and obscene. The invisibility is reinforced by increased regulation, which pushes *eromanga* out of the light and out of focus. The artists and their contributions, historical and contemporary, are seldom acknowledged, let alone celebrated. The *eromanga* booms of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s are not officially included in the oft-rehearsed story of the expansion of manga expression, and we know few names associated with them. These men and women do not have a seat at the table, even when they really should be there. There is no representative of the content stereotypically thought of as *eromanga* in the anti-regulation alliance of Chiba, Satonaka, Nagai and Takemiya that came together in 2010. Today, those interested in Japanese visual culture and freedom of expression perhaps know Igarashi Megumi or "Rokudenashiko," but not Suwa Yūji or "Beauty Hair." This is the structural silence that Nagayama attempts to disrupt with *Eromanga*, which turns the lens toward and zooms in on these other artists and their work. Doing so opens *eromanga* to interrogation, even as it calls our assumptions into question.

Positioning *Eromanga* in Debates about Pornography

There is much to consider about the relative openness of sex and violence in manga in Japan, which is increasingly at odds with other parts of the world. Writing at a time of heightened concern about manga and harm in the 1990s, Schodt considers again what he earlier described as “the Japanese tolerance of fantasy” and “unique dichotomy between fantasy and reality” (Schodt 1983: 137). If before he noted that Japanese manga readers seem “very much at home in their medium” (Schodt 1983: 132), he now adds that, “The gap between fantasy and reality in Japan is enormous, and for that very reason readers of manga may actually be better at making a distinction between the two than readers in other nations” (Schodt 1996: 51). Here Schodt means the gap between the relative order and safety of Japan and the chaos and danger of manga worlds, but there is more. Growing up with the distinctly cartoony characters and worlds of manga and anime – which are separate and distinct enough from realism based on approximation of the natural world that some critics posit the existence of “manga/anime-like realism” (Ōtsuka 2003: 24) – one learns to understand them, or develops media literacy about fiction in relation to reality. Beyond manga and Japan, writing on role-playing games in the United States, scholar of religion Joseph P. Laycock cites studies that suggest that sustained engagement with fantasy helps people learn to distinguish it from reality (Laycock 2015: 289-290). Some studies also indicate that people who fantasize are generally more aware of the implications of violence and less likely to act out (Laycock 2015: 193). If violence is taboo even in the context of fantasy, Laycock argues, then people will be unable to make sense of it (Laycock 2015: 190). The same can be said about sex, and in fact has been in discussions of manga in Japan (Galbraith 2017: 9-11).

In *Eromanga*, Nagayama takes this further by advancing an implicit ethical principle, which is that it is better to acknowledge and work through fantasies in the open with others than to deny them or, worse, project them onto a deviant and dangerous “other.”¹² In many ways, he shares the opinion of psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki, who, after years of personal and professional interaction with manga/anime fans with the most active of fantasy sex

12 On sex and violence in pornography, feminist legal philosopher Drucilla Cornell argues that “an individual viewer can potentially learn a great deal about his/her sexuality, and society’s construction of sex and gender, precisely by having to confront it so directly” (Cornell 1995: 155). Literary critic and social theorist Michael Warner also advocates for an ethics that begins with an “acknowledgement of all that is most abject and least reputable in oneself,” namely the indignity of sex, which allows for a “special kind of sociability” (Warner 2000: 35).

lives, argues for “the right to be perverts [... in] the imaginary” and “ethics in a dissociated life lived with self-awareness” (Saitō 2011: 31, 172). This is a strong stance indeed, and a difficult one to maintain when faced with some forms of manga sex and violence, however ethical those imagining them may be in their self-awareness and separation of manga/anime fiction from reality. As one progresses through the pages of *Eromanga*, the content can become difficult to tolerate, let alone try to understand. When confronting these images, it may help to remember that no one is being harmed in the drawings. They are, as American underground comix artist Robert Crumb clarifies, “just lines on paper” (quoted in Cashwell 2014: 123). Or, as Neil Gaiman, an English author celebrated for his work in comics, put it more recently on one of the most pressing and thorny issues of our time, “Child porn is a crime and an evil. Manga are lines on paper.”¹³ The imaginary sex and violence is just that, imaginary. If it were real, it would be a crime, but it is not real and thus is not a crime. At least not in Japan. Not yet.

Rather than taking for granted that this is a problem, we might inquire, “Is this a problem?” And, if so, “Why?” The argument that immediately comes to mind is that representations of sexual violence, be they fictional or real, reflect and reinforce a culture of sexual violence. This takes us back to debates about pornography that swept North America and other parts of the world in the 1970s and 1980s (Williams 1989: 15-29). Issues surrounding pornography divided feminists and pitted them against one another in a series of intense and bruising battles that collectively came to be known as “the sex wars,” which inform present “culture wars,” for example over sexual objectification and violence in comics and games. It is important to note that anti-porn feminists were addressing sexual violence in a structure of unequal relations of power between men and women. Stated most provocatively by feminist lawyer Catharine A. MacKinnon, the equation is, “Man fucks woman; subject verb object” (MacKinnon 1982: 541). Here sex is something done to women, if not violence plain and simple. In unequal relations of power, it does not make sense to talk about consent as something freely given;

13 This statement came in the form of a tweet in response to a Swedish court deciding in 2012 not to punish a translator for possession of manga that might be deemed child pornography. See: <<https://twitter.com/neilhimsself/status/213707804651962370>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020]. This was not the first time that Gaiman had spoken out on related issues. In 2008, responding to an Australian court expanding the definition of “person” to include fictional characters to punish a man for producing pornographic art of underage siblings Bart and Lisa Simpson, Gaiman wrote on his blog, “I think it’s nonsensical in every way that it could possibly be nonsensical. The Simpsons characters aren’t real people. They definitely aren’t real children.” See: <<http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2008/12/word-person-included-fictional-or.html>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

in the relation of master and slave, saying the latter has a choice obfuscates structure entirely. For MacKinnon, pornography reveals the truth of sex under patriarchy as “eroticized domination” and the “forcible violation of women” (MacKinnon 1997: 168). Pornography is also said to be part of “rape culture,” or a culture where sexual violence is normalized. In the oft-cited formulation, “Pornography is the theory, and rape the practice” (Robin Morgan, quoted in Williams 1989: 16). There are discussions to be had here, and Nagayama engages in them by taking on MacKinnon and machismo in Japan in *Eromanga*, but it is important to account for correctives to an optic that can be limited to seeing “men versus women” (Halley 2006: 4-6).¹⁴

Such an optic misses other forms of sexual oppression and alliance. Responding to the sex wars in an essay originally published in 1984, anthropologist Gayle S. Rubin develops a theory of sex, power and politics independent of forms of feminism that see in binary and totalizing formations (Rubin 2011: 180). While assigned sex and gender can and do impact power relations and politics, a feminist critique of men dominating women cannot adequately explain oppression of sexual minorities. It also cannot fully articulate how anti-porn feminists, who advocated for government and legal action, were “playing into the hands of the right wing and its reactionary agenda” (Rubin 2011: 274) in the 1980s. Rubin argues that sex is “organized into systems of power, which reward and encourage some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others” (Rubin 2011: 180). Stated schematically, sex can be “good” or “bad,” with the “good” promoted and the “bad” policed (Rubin 2011: 146-154). There need not be any real threat posed by “bad” sex, because the line between “good” and “bad,” and the threat posed by the “bad,” are “imaginary” (Rubin 2011: 151). In many cases, Rubin continues, anti-porn feminists aligning themselves against “bad” sex can mean “police abuse and bureaucratic harassment for women and men who have done nothing wrong but express unfashionable desires, create illicit imagery, or engage in disreputable occupations” (Rubin 2011: 273). The result is “new forms of legal and social abuse” (Rubin 2011: 273), even when the crime is imaginary.

While pornography may represent “bad” sex, Rubin contends that, “The content of the image produced, whether or not it is sexual, and whether or not it is violent or distasteful to the viewer, is irrelevant” (Rubin 2011: 268).

14 Be aware that Nagayama agrees with MacKinnon’s fundamental point about structural inequality and violence. See the discussion of MacKinnon’s frequent collaborator Andrea Dworkin in Chapter 7, especially Footnote 11. For his response to MacKinnon specifically, see Footnote 1 in Chapter 9.

For Rubin, the only concern is if someone is coerced, abused or harmed in the production of the image. In Rubin's case, the discussion is of photography and film where sexual violence might be represented, but is staged and performed and not necessarily a record of abuse. She cautions critics not to confuse representation for reality and allow distaste for the content to drive criticism regardless of the reality of production. This is all the more germane when discussing *eromanga*, which involve humans in the imagining of sex acts, but not the acts themselves; however violent and distasteful the sex depicted, no one is harmed in the production of these images. Thus feminist psychoanalytic thinker Setsu Shigematsu, considering forms of *eromanga* featuring underage characters, argues that, "The use and potential abuse of girls in the *production* of pornography and their sexual molestation is a serious problem that must not be displaced onto or reduced to an issue of 'pornographic content'" (Shigematsu 1999: 138). It is entirely possible to be against actual abuse without being against content that depicts abuse. Beyond moralizing over "bad" sex, for Rubin, Shigematsu and others in this vein, the only ethical concern is "whether a person's sexual deviancy is demonstrably harmful" (Bering 2013: 166). If "benign sexual variation" (Rubin 2011: 154) meant for Rubin things such as sadomasochistic fantasy and play among consenting adults, then the imaginary sex of *eromanga* producers and consumers might be another case in point. To this Nagayama adds that working through fantasies in the open with others can be beneficial for individuals and society.

So it is that Yamada Kumiko, representing the Women's Institute of Contemporary Media Culture, rejects a United Nations' proposal to "ban the sale of manga and video games depicting sexual violence" with "an absolute no" (Yamada 2016). Not only is manga expression "not a violation of any real person's human rights," Yamada argues, not only are women themselves producers and consumers of manga depicting sexual violence, but "to ban expression and commerce unilaterally based on feelings of whether or not something is unpleasant, or viewpoints on what should be moral, is a practice not to be condoned" (Yamada 2016).¹⁵ The sentiment is echoed by

15 Underscoring the many women producing and consuming manga of all kinds in Japan, Yamada states that, "Manga is a field where women have put in hard work and effort to cut forward paths and cultivate a place of their own" (Yamada 2016). She points out that critically acclaimed boys love works by Takemiya Keiko and Yoshida Akemi contain depictions of sexual violence and could very well be banned under the United Nations' proposal. The proposed ban would limit the ability of female artists to freely and fully express themselves, which decreases the overall variety and complexity of the manga market, pushes producers and consumers away and "narrows the career possibilities of Japan's women" (Yamada 2016). The United Nations'

Nagayama in *Eromanga* and his discussion of liberal ideals, which are not always easy to maintain in the face of frankly offensive content. Ultimately, Nagayama's position is that fighting for these ideals leads to greater freedom for all, including, as Yamada puts it, "greater freedom and rights for women" (Yamada 2016) as producers and consumers of manga, *ero* or otherwise. Yamada's "absolute no" to increased regulation of depictions of sexual violence caught activists across the globe off guard. This is even more so in the case of similar Japanese responses to calls from a United Nations' envoy to "ban extreme child manga porn" (Kato 2016), which confused and infuriated those seeing this as an obvious and necessary step toward a safer world.

If the issue is not use and abuse in the production of pornographic images, then it shifts to the more contentious claim that they inspire use and abuse, which is to say concern about media effects. The danger here is legal mutation and overreach, where protecting potential victims means taking action against potential criminals before there is a crime, or policing the potential for crime. In the process, imagining certain things, and producing and consuming certain images, becomes criminal. In her response to the sex wars, writing a decade after Rubin and two before Yamada, cultural critic Laura Kipnis asks, "What kind of a society sends its citizens to prison for their fantasies?" (Kipnis 1996: 3). The question is rhetorical, as she goes on to discuss the case of Daniel DePew, a man sentenced to 35 years in prison for sexual fantasies about "a crime that never happened" (Kipnis 1996: 4). To be more specific, the victim was "a fictional, nonexistent child" (Kipnis 1996: 12), which DePew imagined abusing. So, what kind of a society? One like DePew's own, the United States. Or the United Kingdom, Australia or Canada. Given that anxiety about imaginary sex, violence and crime has been building in North America and other parts of the world for decades, those paying attention might have predicted the arrest of DePew for "thought crimes" (Kipnis 1996: x) in the United States in the 1990s.¹⁶ Seeing that artists in Japan continue to produce *eromanga* that crosses all kinds of lines, they

proposal is thus, as she sees it, anti-woman. "There is nothing to be gained from regulating fictional sexual violence," Yamada states, and Rubin adds that there is much to lose in regulating sexual expression (Rubin 2011: 273-275). Encouraging respect for local norms and standards, Yamada concludes that regulation should be limited to "zoning and circulation only. We should not ban any manga that depicts 'unpleasant expressions' under content guidelines that enforce moral standards unilaterally on society" (Yamada 2016).

16 When it comes to policing "bad" sex, in the 1980s, Rubin warned that authorities would target "victimless crimes" committed by "strangers and weirdos [...] real and imagined" (Rubin 2011: 165, 184-185). Further back, in the 1970s, philosopher Michel Foucault argued that sex would become a "roaming danger" or "omnipresent phantom," a threat to be managed in relation to children and other "high-risk populations" (Foucault 1988: 276, 281).

might even have predicted the arrest of Christopher Handley in the United States in the 2000s. For importing *eromanga* from Japan, this Iowa man was charged with possessing “drawings of children being sexually abused” (Anime News Network 2008). While not 35 years, Handley was sentenced to six months in prison and ordered into a treatment program during another three years of supervised release and five years of probation (Anime News Network 2010).

The tricky thing is that the cartoon images in question are offensive, but asking whether producing or possessing them ought to be criminal seems to many to be a defense of not only a pervert, but also a presumed pedophile and potential predator. One is compelled to stand against him and the material; failure to do so means standing against children. There is little room for discussion, in fact no room at all, because there are only two accepted positions, which are “good” and “bad.” The title of Kipnis’ book, *Bound and Gagged*, refers in part to the poverty of discourse on pornography in the United States at the time, which for two decades before her publication had been treated as harmful to women, hate speech, something to be regulated out of existence if possible; during the sex wars, one was either for or against pornography, for or against the sexual violence it reflected and inspired, for or against women, which severely limited discussion of the texts and nuanced positions (Williams 1989: 22-26). As a critic who saw issues of freedom of expression, socioeconomic class and politics in *Hustler* and other offensive material (Kipnis 1996: 122-206), perhaps Kipnis herself felt bound and gagged. Although advocacy against pornography has little ground in a world where porn is ubiquitous and easily accessible online, we can say almost the exact same things that Kipnis did about the scarcity of critical thought when it comes to *eromanga* today. Her reservations about putting fantasy on trial and the expansion of surveillance and authority over imaginary sex and crime are more relevant than ever.

With all of this in mind, we share Kipnis’ view that it is necessary to maintain “a sanctioned space for fantasy” (Kipnis 1996: 163). Given the importance of her words, we feel it appropriate to cite Kipnis at length here:

There’s zero discussion of pornography as an expressive medium in the positive sense – the only expressing it’s presumed to do is of misogyny or social decay. That it might have more complicated social agendas, or that future historians of the genre might generate interesting insights about pornography’s relation to this particular historical and social moment – these are radically unthought thoughts. One reason for this lacuna is a certain intellectual prejudice against taking porn seriously

at all. Those who take porn seriously are its opponents, who have little interesting to say on the subject: not only don't they seem to have spent much time actually looking at it, but even worse, they seem universally overcome by a leaden, stultifying literalness, apparently never having heard of metaphor, irony, a symbol – even fantasy seems too challenging a concept. I've proposed that pornography is both a legitimate form of culture and a fictional, fantastical, even allegorical realm; it neither simply reflects the real world nor is it some hypnotizing call to action. The world of pornography is mythological and hyperbolic, peopled by characters. It doesn't and never will exist, but it does – and this is part of its politics – insist on a sanctioned space for fantasy. (Kipnis 1996: 163)

For academics, researchers and critics, three insights immediately demand attention: one, there is a great deal more complexity to pornography than is usually acknowledged; two, there is much to be learned from pornography; and three, there is a stigma that keeps us from doing so. For activists, there is an even more significant revelation: Insisting on a space for fantasy, for its freedom and autonomy, is an issue of politics. As Kipnis sees it, there must be space for “the anarchy of the imagination” (Kipnis 1996: 203). This is because, she elucidates, “the freedom to fantasize different futures, and different possibilities for individual, bodily, and collective fulfillment, is a crucial political space” (Kipnis 1996: 203). Now, this may seem obvious to those familiar with the academic field of porn studies, but reread the above sentences replacing the word pornography with *eromanga*. The struggle over fantasy and imagination has not ended. In opposition to the politics of what media and sexuality scholar Mark McLelland calls the “juridification of the imagination” (McLelland 2012: 473), or expansion and densification of law surrounding the imagination, there is a politics in insisting on the freedom of imagination. Against the backdrop of moral outrage over certain forms of manga and anime generally and *eromanga* specifically, this begins by recognizing, as McLelland does, “that apparently unobjectionable ‘child protection’ legislation, when handled badly, has serious ramifications for adult communication [...] *even when that communication involves fantasy alone*” (McLelland 2005: 75).

Toward an Expanded *Eromanga* Studies

In contrast to the boys love manga that McLelland discusses, which is being approached in sophisticated ways outside Japan, as are ladies comics

(Shigematsu 1999; Shamoon 2004; Ito 2010), there are few extended analyses of *eromanga* targeting men and the discourse is relatively stable. “That *ero manga* are misogynistic is undeniable,” writes anthropologist Anne Allison. “That they embed and thereby foster an ideology of gender chauvinism and crude masochism is also irrefutable” (Allison 2000: 78). Although originally written in 1996, the assessment remains basically unchanged today.¹⁷ Despite Allison pushing back on anti-porn feminism, her conclusions on *eromanga* are not far off. Looking at feminist work on pornography in the new millennium (Williams 2004; Attwood 2010; Taormino et al 2013), one is struck by how limited the discussion of *eromanga* really is. In Japan, Nagayama identifies a general “erotic barrier” (*ero no kabe*), which is surely also a factor elsewhere in the world, but it does not explain the contrastive difference between work on boys love and ladies comics and *eromanga*. To be blunt, it seems that there is specific resistance to *eromanga* targeting men. When assumed to speak to not only violent sexual desires and perversion, but also predatory sexual desires and pedophilia, such *eromanga* is simply beyond the pale for researchers. The material demands moral condemnation, not study, and anyone who breaks ranks here is deemed to have suspect interests. And so the silence on *eromanga* continues. This is a problem, because it is the material associated with men that is most often brought up in assessments of risk and the need for increased regulation of *eromanga* and manga and anime more broadly. Now more than ever, we need to have a serious discussion. We firmly believe that this begins by knowing what *eromanga* is, which is to say knowing what we are talking about when we engage in discussion, let alone critique from an assumed position of authority, be it moral or academic.

Getting beyond this specific erotic barrier starts with realizing that the most viscerally upsetting content identified as *lolicon* is just a tiny fraction of what is going on. Imagining that it is all *lolicon* manga – or worse, child abuse material produced by and for abusers – creates an almost insurmountable barrier to seeing the diversity of works, people and perspectives involved. If Fujimoto shows how girls and women explore sexuality in manga (Fujimoto 1998), and Yamada adds that they have worked to cultivate in manga “a place of their own” (Yamada 2016), then recall that around 30 percent of the artists behind *eromanga* are women; there are also other female-dominated categories of content. Restricting *eromanga* impacts these people and their work, too. Like feminist legal philosopher Drucilla Cornell, many in Japan are opposed to laws that would limit pornographic content or sexual expression

17 For a notable and early exception, see Buckley 1991.

and for “unleashing the feminine imaginary” (Cornell 1995: 98-99). “There are many other imaginaries,” Cornell writes, “and it is the very best of liberalism that would insist that they flourish” (Cornell 1995: 104).¹⁸ In Japan, unleashing the feminine imaginary has occurred as part of the flourishing of imaginaries in manga, *ero* and otherwise. If, as Shigematsu argues, manga open “alternative sites and different dimensions of what is typically conceived of as sex and sexuality,” and its global circulation can expand the “possible imaginary” (Shigematsu 1999: 127-128), then the question is what imaginary is possible today? Let us be clear: As it currently exists in Japan, manga is perhaps the freest medium of expression, at the heart of one of the freest visual cultures, on the planet. It is worth trying to understand what such freedom means, and we might want to think carefully before deciding on limits. Now more than ever, we need to consider the politics of imagination, or, to borrow a turn of phrase from one of Nagayama’s interlocutors, “freedom of imagination/creation” (*sōzō no jiyū*).¹⁹

For all the diversity in its pages, *Eromanga* is only a small sample and general introduction to pornographic comics in Japan. For a more thoroughly historical perspective, one might turn to Yonezawa Yoshihiro’s *Postwar Eromanga History* (Sengo eromanga shi, 2010); for more on content targeting women and a female perspective, one might turn to Mori Naoko’s *Women Read Porn: Female Sexual Desires and Feminism* (Onna wa poruno o yomu: Josei no seiyoku to feminizumu, 2010); for the voices of artists and a creator-centric perspective, one might turn to Kimi Rito’s *The Eromanga Scene* (Eromanga no genba, 2016). There have been numerous books since Nagayama’s original publication in 2006, but none offer as thematically consistent and concise an overview of *eromanga* associated with men. Granted, this is only part of the story, but we have to start somewhere. Where better than a book that presents the most controversial content in as simple and straightforward a way as possible? Precisely because the core of the text was written before the intensification of the manga debates in

18 Cornell goes on to clarify: “My argument is only that no one should be an enforced viewer of the degree that these images do infringe on some women’s imaginary domain” (Cornell 1995: 104). She advocates zoning, but not limiting imagination as such: “There is evidence that societies and communities in which there is sexual tolerance, in which the proliferation of sexual imaginaries are encouraged, are safer places for women” (Cornell 1995: 153).

19 This comes from an interview with Sugino Nao conducted by Patrick W. Galbraith on March 16, 2015. The Japanese word for imagination, *sōzō*, is also a homonym for creation. The difference is understood from the characters used in writing and context in spoken conversation. In this case, Sugino was intentionally using the homonym to mean both imagination and creation, which he argues should be free. Nagayama often crosses paths with Sugino, who represents the Institute of Contents Culture and organized against Bill 156.

which Nagayama would become involved, *Eromanga* defends this content as rarely as it judges it. In these pages, Nagayama just explores *eromanga* as part of the range of imagination and creation that make up manga generally. Such an introduction is invaluable to the discussion of comics, freedom of imagination/creation and their potential and limits.

In a troubling testament to regulatory momentum in Japan, in April 2018, the *Asahi Shimbun* reported that Kimi Rito's *A History of Eromanga Expression* (*Eromanga hyōgen shi*, 2017) was among those identified under a local ordinance as a publication that "might interfere with the healthy development of young people" (Katō 2018). It is worth noting that Kimi is close to Nagayama, who often shares table space with him at the Comic Market; as detailed in the afterword to the expanded edition of *Eromanga*, Kimi assisted Nagayama in understanding newer material, and the older man anticipates him carrying the study of *eromanga* into the future. In many ways, Kimi's book is a spiritual successor to *Eromanga* (albeit closer to fan vernacular), which makes it all the more poignant that it would run afoul of regulators. Perhaps it is true that even contextualization and critical discussion of pornographic comics is too much for some, but it is more likely that "ero" in the title of Kimi's book simply caught the attention of screeners, who found in it visual citations of *eromanga* pushing the legal limits of expression over the years. To their eyes, the study of *eromanga* appeared not only pornographic, but also "unhealthy." It is hard to imagine a more fitting example of the erotic barrier or "erotophobia" (Warner 2000: 23), which serves to discourage further questions, research and open and informed discussion. Out of sight and out of mind, as they say, and not for the better in terms of critical thinking.

It is thus with tremendous excitement that we offer this translation of *Eromanga* through Amsterdam University Press and its Asian Visual Cultures Series. Sharing its goal to "probe into the political, commercial and digital contexts in which visual cultures emerge and circulate, and to trace the potential of these cultures for political or social critique," we intend for this book to support debates of manga and related media and material and push them in new directions. The decision to allow the inclusion of images from *eromanga*, as Nagayama did in his original publication, is one that we find especially heartening. To have a productive discussion, we need to know what we are talking about, which is increasingly difficult as images disappear from the pages of books and history (Galbraith 2016). We should acknowledge here that many images from the original publication could not be reproduced by even a university press, because, as our editor warned, the book could be "banned in a number of countries." Although Japan continues

to stand out for the comparatively large size and high visibility of its market for pornographic comics, *eromanga* have seen declining sales of physical copies due to issues of regulation and distribution (Kimi 2017b: 114; also Yano 2016).²⁰ Meanwhile, as *eromanga* circulate online through official and unofficial channels, calls for increased regulation become louder internationally. This is not limited to sites of local reception, but also extends to demands that Japan do something, which is impacting government actors and creators in ways that should give us pause. Personally, professionally and politically, we have much to gain from thinking about *eromanga* and its challenges. *Eromanga* is not the final word. Rather, in the spirit of Nagayama's original work, and with a nod to its original title, we hope this book will encourage readers to embark on their own *eromanga* studies.

20 Using trade paperbacks as an indicator for the industry, Kimi highlights that only 569 distinct titles (not including anthologies) were released in 2017, with the most prolific publisher putting out 64 and even popular artists hurting for sales (Kimi 2017b: 114). In terms of distribution, in 2019, 7-Eleven and Lawson announced that they would be joining other chains of convenience stores in Japan in refusing to sell adult magazines (Sankei News 2019).

Introduction: The Invisible Realm

Many facts about *eromanga*, or erotic manga, are surprisingly not well known.¹ For example, the fact that over 80 magazines a month were mass-produced during the boom of so-called “third-rate *gekiga*,” or erotic *gekiga*, in the 1970s.² Or that over 100 new trade paperbacks were released onto the market each month during the boom of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* in the 1980s.³ That since the mid-1990s the number of female artists has increased, and over half the contributors to some *eromanga* magazines are women.⁴ That *eromanga* encompasses endless genres and subgenres.⁵ That countless art styles are competing for supremacy.⁶ That many popular manga artists have experience producing *eromanga*.⁷ That *eromanga* magazines have been a platform for publishing avant-garde and experimental work. That it is one of the epicenters of “*moe*.”⁸ That it vividly reflects disruptions of machismo

1 *Eromanga* is manga that contains erotic elements. However, all manga works contain erotic elements in some form, and the spectrum of what one takes as erotic differs depending on the reader. If we define it narrowly at the outset, then erotic manga is work depicting an erotic or sexual theme, or work in which eroticism or sex occupies an important position.

2 Translators' note (TN): *Gekiga* refers to a style of comics produced in Japan from the late 1950s, which is notable for its gritty aesthetic, social and political consciousness and focus on “reality.” One might think here of Will Eisner’s “graphic novels,” so named to distance mature work from “comic books,” but Eisner adopted the term in 1978, while *gekiga* was coined by Tatsumi Yoshihiro to differentiate his mature work from “manga” in 1957. *Gekiga* tends toward sharp angles, rough linework and dark crosshatching that also make it visually distinct from the industry standard of cartoony and cute manga. For more, see Chapters 1 and 2.

3 TN: *Bishōjo* literally means beautiful girl, but is more accurately translated as cute girl, because the style and characters in question draw on the cuteness of Tezuka Osamu’s work, manga for girls and anime. For more, see Chapters 2 and 3.

4 TN: On the whole, Nagayama estimates that around 30 percent of artists working in the *eromanga* industry are women.

5 Love stories, romantic comedies, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, horror, action, comedy, parody, historical drama, war stories – all of these and more exist in *eromanga*. It is faster to ask what exists in general manga magazines but not *eromanga*.

6 The styles of manga for children, boys, girls and young adults; the styles of *gekiga*, anime and games; and indeed all imaginable styles have been folded into *eromanga*.

7 For example, Nōjō Junichi, Nakajima Fumio, Yamamoto Naoki, Miyasu Nonki, Amamiya Jun, Yui Toshiki, Hirano Kōta, Amazume Ryūta, Kaishaku, Morishige, Oh!Great, Okama, Fumizuki Kō, Tannōji Kitsune, Fujiwara Kamui, Okazaki Kyōko, Shirakura Yumi, Utatane Hiroyuki, Sano Takashi, Yamada Shūtarō, Amatsu Sae, Ditama Bow, Hanamigawa Kyūtarō and Saku Yukizō. Once one starts to list up the names, there is no end to it. The number is even greater when we include artists who use pennames when producing *eromanga*.

8 TN: *Moe* is an affective response to fictional characters. It is also used to refer to styles and characters intended to trigger an affective response. See Chapter 3 of Galbraith 2019.

and heterosexism. That it expresses any kind of eroticism and sexuality that one can think of.⁹ That *eromanga* is connected by open pipelines to zines, boys love manga and general manga magazines.¹⁰ In short, that the content categorized as *eromanga* is broader, deeper and far more intriguing than readers who have never encountered it might anticipate. I do not intend to push readers with absolutely no interest, but to those who identify as manga enthusiasts, those who had the curiosity to pick up this book and of course those whose inquisitiveness extends to eroticism in all its diversity, to those readers I declare that you are missing out by not knowing *eromanga*.

Why has this content been overlooked until now? A number of reasons come to mind. For starters, in the massive manga industry, which accounts for nearly half the printed publications in Japan, *eromanga* is of modest scale. Mid- and small-sized publishers are the majority, and the average print run for a trade paperback, while still large, is only 10,000 copies. Popular artists might get a print run of 50,000.¹¹ *Eromanga* titles cannot be sold at every bookstore in the country, as are mainstream manga. If they do make it in, their place on the shelf is limited, and the cycle of receiving new books and returning them to publishers as unsold is short. To be sure to get a copy, one must follow information about new releases and order them online or go to a manga specialty store in a large city. Further, historical developments have systematically made *eromanga* difficult to see. Since an episode of bashing at the beginning of the 1990s, the “adult comics label” (*seinen komikku māku*) was introduced as a form of self-regulation by the industry, and independent segmenting of displays was later strengthened by ordinances, which had the compulsory force of law.¹² In recent years, shelf space at bookstores

9 There is countless variation in even just the coupling of men and women. We find equal relations in love, male and female dominance; lovers, married couples, student and teacher, master and servant, adult and child, children themselves, elderly people; and more. Any combination that you can think of is being tried. When we go beyond the category of “male and female pair / normal,” there is group sex; incest (big brother and little sister, big sister and little brother, mother and son, father and daughter); *lolicon*; homosexuality; boys love; sadomasochism; scatology; cross-dressing; costume play; myriad forms of fetishism; *moe*; and more. The diversity of *eromanga* almost reads like the entries of a popular sexology book, or a scene of polymorphous perversity, a profusion of flowers in bloom, spreading before one’s eyes.

10 TN: Boys love manga focuses on romantic and sexual relationships between male characters. In Japan, it is produced primarily by and for heterosexual women, and has achieved astonishing commercial visibility and critical acclaim. For more, see McLelland et al 2015.

11 For example, Ikoma Ippei sells an average of 50,000 copies, and in total has surpassed one million copies.

12 TN: See Chapter 2 in Schodt 1996 and Chapter 5 in Kinsella 2000.

has diminished even more, and one can expect now that major chains of convenience stores do not carry manga with an adult comics label.

While scale of publication and regulation of distribution do limit exposure and understanding of *eromanga*, an even more serious issue is the resistance I call “the erotic barrier” (*ero no kabe*). Is it not the case that, above and beyond challenges posed by its relatively small scale (compounded by regulation), manga researchers and critics have not reflected more on *eromanga* because of the erotic barrier inside of them? Examples include thinking that erotic forms of expression are deficient and dirty; they are not something that we should discuss, and there is really no value in discussing them; I do not want to touch, let alone evaluate them, and cannot stand them; they are horrible, cannot be shown to children and are embarrassing; they are a blight on humanity. At the core of this barrier is a negative response to the erotic.¹³ The erotic barrier allows for concealing all that has to do with sex, for suppressing and privileging it. Before this barrier, people suspend their decision-making faculties and turn away. We are dealing with an illogical taboo on the erotic.

As someone working on *eromanga*, I should probably state my objection to such prejudice and discrimination. I might start by pointing out that the word “*eromanga*” is often used pejoratively. But such an approach would not eliminate the erotic barrier, which exists in even the hearts of readers who enjoy *eromanga*, artists in the industry, editors and critics. In the same way, I am certainly not completely free of prejudice. Moreover, paradoxically, taboo is one reason for the existence of *eromanga*. Why is there an erotic barrier? It is not pointless to consider why we cannot remain calm when faced with “sex and eroticism.” However, we will not easily obtain an answer, and just because we have one does not mean that we can tear down the erotic barrier. No one can do such a thing. What we can do is measure the height of the barrier, find a foothold and start to climb it. I want people, even those with a resistance to *eromanga* or prejudice against it, to gaze upon the realm of eroticism that stretches out beyond the barrier. This book is a survey of that realm, which has been largely invisible. It is also an invitation to cross the border to it and explore what lies beyond.

13 TN: Anthropologist Gayle S. Rubin refers to this as “sex negativity,” and illustrates the imaginary line separating “good” and “bad” sex as a wall or barrier (Rubin 2011: 148-154).



Part 1

A History of Eromanga



Memos Spread

The history of *eromanga* is not a single, straight line. There is influence from the “outside,” even as *eromanga* influence manga in general, which then feeds back into and is reflected in *eromanga*. Now is not the time of so-called “third-rate *gekiga*,” which are much more associated with the 1970s, but those works live on. *Lolicon* manga is no longer mainstream, but as a subgenre it still has a stable fanbase. I have no intention of insisting that I have written the one true history of *eromanga*. While grasping the large trends from a macro perspective, I zoom in to a micro perspective as necessary. I also have no intention of telling grand stories about epoch-making artists and works, for example how Moriyama Tō’s *The Sexual Education of a Good Kid* (*Yoi ko no seikyōiku*, published by Shōbunkan in 1985) redrew the map of *eromanga* in Japan. Certainly Moriyama Tō (aka Yamamoto Naoki) is an important artist in the history of contemporary manga, and his influence is perhaps on par with Tezuka Osamu and Ōtomo Katsuhiro, but that does not mean that *eromanga* artists all belong to his school. The history of *eromanga* is multilayered. Even if one style usurps another in the mainstream, the unseated style is not eradicated. Reduced in scale, the style remains. In other words, the number of styles increases as long as history continues. Old styles experience new booms, and styles that resemble old ones appear as something new. This is also the case with the sex appearing in *eromanga*.

In this book, I focus on contemporary *eromanga*, which is dominated by what is called the otaku or *bishōjo* style. This style first appeared in the early 1980s, and I would like to observe closely the confluences that contributed to it then and since. Just about everything flows into contemporary *eromanga*: imagination and imitation, tradition and insurrection, general trends and divergences, interruption and discovery. Unimaginable strata have built up beneath the surface of contemporary *eromanga*. It is no exaggeration to say that the history of *eromanga* began when mankind drew antelope and buffalo on cave walls by the light of burning tallow: the pleasure of drawing; the pleasure of expressing; the pleasure of showing; the pleasure of conveying excitement, awe and Eros to others (Hogben 1949). That said, we would probably never reach contemporary *eromanga* if we started from the Cave of Altamira. The history of drawing is one facet of the history of culture, and the history of culture is one facet of history itself. In a single drawing, we see not only artistic technique, but also the influence and reflection of the time of its production, including cultural background, politics, society, religion, thought, industrial technology and more. It is

therefore easy enough to write an entire book on a single image, which happens in the field of art history, but I have another approach.

Moving forward, I would like readers to keep in mind Richard Dawkins' concept of "memes" (Dawkins 1976), or cultural genes.¹ There is much more to say than space allows, but we can take meme to mean simply the fundamental unit of cultural transmission. Dramatically stated, the memes in *eromanga* began at the Cave of Altamira and accumulated in the cultural gene pool over 30,000 years. Such a leap blurs the ground beneath, so let us focus on Japan and the second half of the twentieth century. When we gaze into the gene pool of contemporary *eromanga*, the following emerge as categories of content with a strong influence: manga for children (*jidō manga*), boys (*shōnen manga*), girls (*shōjo manga*) and young men (*seinen manga*); *gekiga* for young men (*seinen gekiga*); and so-called "third-rate *gekiga*" (*sanryū gekiga*). However, with just this, which is dependent on the distinctions of commercial magazines and their target demographics, the origins of many *eromanga* genes remain unclear. If we change our angle, we can see memes coming from different distribution channels, namely zines and independent publishing (*dōjinshi*). There are also memes coming from different media, most evidently animation, electronic games and the internet. Other sources of memes include photography, film, literature, music, news and more, but these are not as crucial, and I will only touch on them briefly in places.

When considering the gene pool of *eromanga*, one should note that the transmission of memes is not limited to the unidirectional. The gene pool of *eromanga* overlaps with that of manga generally, as well as that of culture on the whole. At the same time that *eromanga* is constantly taking in memes, it is simultaneously continuing to supply new memes. Since the establishment of *eromanga*, the number of memes it has provided (including transformed memes) has expanded, and because of that it helped the gene pool of manga overall become rich and plentiful. The influence is mutual and reciprocal. To take this even further, the transmission of cultural genes is not limited to the form of simple "influence," and it does not flow from upstream to downstream like a river. There is no single spring from which it flows, and one could probably say that every place is its source. Memes are "mis-delivered" (*gohai*), to borrow an expression from Azuma Hiroki (Azuma 1998). The genetic code is misread, reproduced, rearranged; linkages

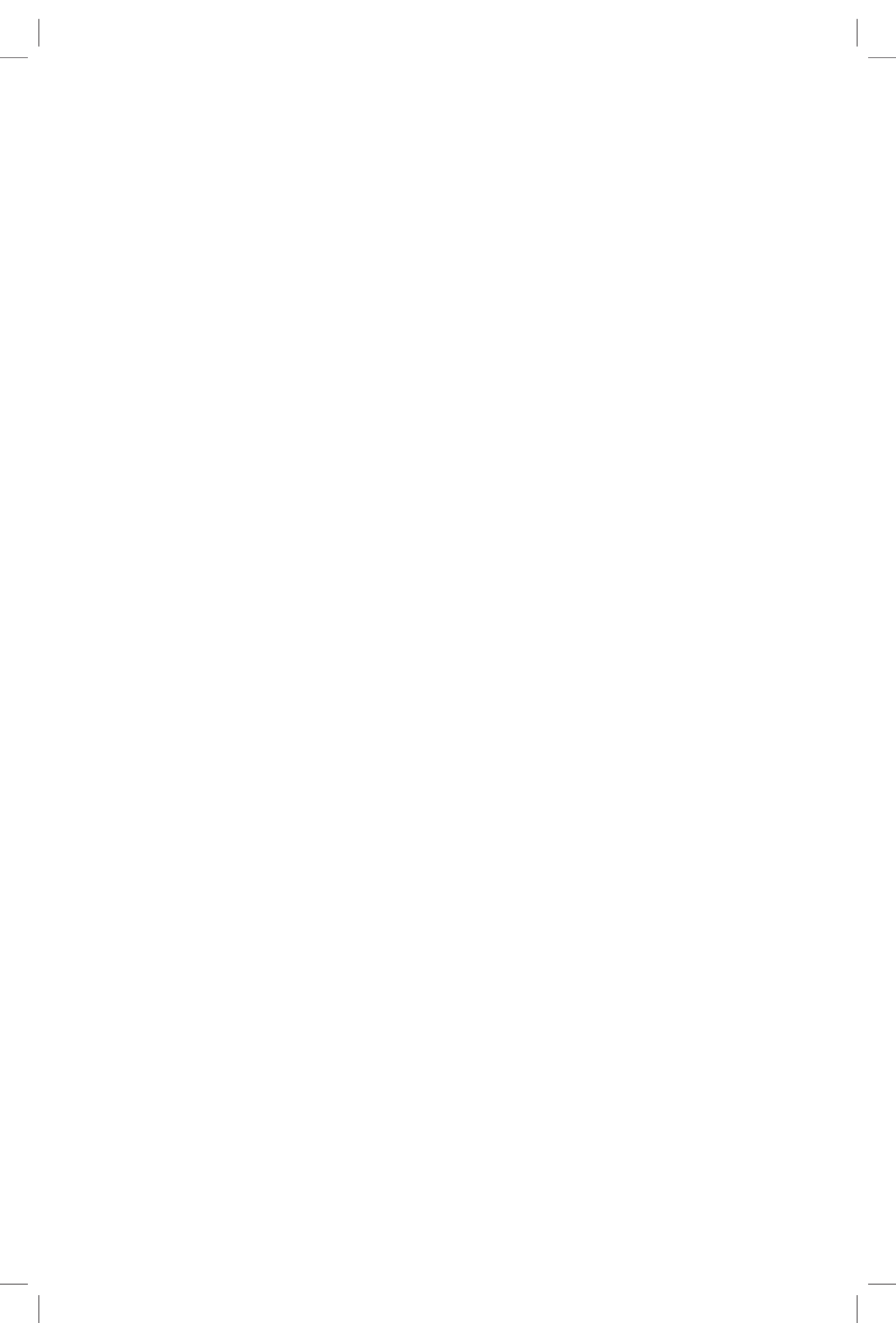
1 TN: *The Selfish Gene* popularized the gene-centered view of evolution. In this book, Dawkins defined the meme as a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation and replication. The meme, like the gene, is a replicator.

are formed, groupings, and then the genes are mis-delivered again. A good example of this is Machida Hiraku's work, which was in the first place drawn for a *lolicon* magazine and for the practical use of male readers, but resonated with female readers.² It might appear that a serious misreading is occurring, but we can also say that the code embedded in Machida Hiraku's *lolicon* work was correctly decoded by female readers. Furthermore, while we can explain the transmission of genes in a roughly chronological order, it is possible to skip intermediate steps. For example, reading Tezuka Osamu's work, one has direct access to the memes there, which can be taken in. The erotic Tezuka parody in Tanaka Keiichi's *Divine Punishment* (Shinbatsu, published by Iisuto Puresu in 2002) simultaneously directly takes in memes from the original work and, through the technique of parody, throws the eroticism that exists in Tezuka's work itself into relief. The moment *Divine Punishment* was published, the work of Tanaka Keiichi also became an object of reference, and the memes of his work flowed back into the gene pool.

With the metaphors of genes, the gene pool and genetic code in our mental toolbox, new perspectives open up. For example, when the cute ribbons and frills of the childhood friends seen in the girls manga of yesteryear were introduced into *eromanga*, they immediately stimulated men as a fetish. Returning to girls manga, we can "misread" (*godoku*) these things as erotic expression. One can further "decode" (*kaidoku*) old girls manga by saying that the sexual restraint in them erupted in excessive ornamentality.³ Such talk may seem outrageous to some, but all artistic expression is multifaceted and exceeds the will of creators. As long as they are alive, creators are impacted by the times and social milieu, and we bring our consciousness to producing and reading texts. We do not need to consider every possible reading, but it is important to set aside notions of a correct reading. The realm of *eromanga* into which we are about to embark is at times a wild place where common sense has no currency.

2 Half of the fans attending Machida Hiraku's signing events are female readers.

3 To get at this discussion, I would like to include a chapter on the theme of "sexual repression and manga expression," but it will have to be left for another time.



1 The Gene Pool of Manga and *Gekiga*

The 1940s to the 1950s: The Genome King, Tezuka Osamu

Setting an extremely loose definition of *eromanga* as sequential art including erotic expression, one can probably trace its history back to the old generation of racy manga for adults represented by Shimizu Kon, Kojima Koo and Sugiura Yukio. From the bottom of the *eromanga* gene pool, one might be able to dredge up the meme of the amorous female water imp from Shimizu Kon's *Kappa Paradise* (*Kappa tengoku*, 1953-1958). Personally, I want to talk about Shimizu Kon's water imp manga as erotic, which I found it to be early in life, but this work is entirely unrelated to contemporary *eromanga*. If I searched, I think I could find an *eromanga* artist who started drawing after being impacted by Shimizu Kon's water imps – but, then again, there is probably no such person. Even granted the long shot that they do exist, their work would have basically no relation to contemporary *eromanga*.

In terms of influence on future generations of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, the name that cannot be ignored is after all Tezuka Osamu. Now, I am wary of contributing to the deification of this man, the legend of the so-called “God of Manga,” which has it that Tezuka was the first at anything and everything. I know that the origin of contemporary *eromanga* is not one man, and focusing too much on him can be misleading. However, when it comes to eroticism, what Tezuka did is just too massive to overlook. There can be no mistake that, even now, this is an enormous legacy.

While he had produced work already, Tezuka's real national debut was *New Treasure Island* (Shin takarajima, story by Sakai Shichima) in 1947. Given the state of Japan following the Second World War, it is shocking that this manga sold 400,000 copies, which made it a smash hit. Interestingly, that same year, Yamakawa Sōji's *Boy King* (Shōnen ōja), a made-in-Japan Tarzan picture book, is recorded as being a bestseller at 500,000 copies. On the one hand is a new style of manga that announced the arrival of a new era, and on the other a tale of adventure in unexplored regions, which reflects the last rays of light of prewar boys culture, as well as illusions of empire and the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere.” One can see here that the years leading up to and following 1950 were a watershed between the old and new.

The story of Tezuka's career after this has been told so many times that it need not be repeated here, but picture books reached their peak with Yamakawa's *Kenya Boy* (Shōnen keniya, 1951-1955) and that genetic line was broken for a time. Appearing later, *gekiga* narrowly inherited

these memes, which were broadly revived by Miyazaki Hayao, who as a manga artist should be understood as a pseudo classicist (Nagayama 2005). There are objections and differing opinions, but from here Tezuka's steady advance begins. In short, Tezuka and those substantially influenced by him – Ishimori Shōtarō (aka Ishinomori Shōtarō), Akatsuka Fujio, Fujiko Fujio, Mizuno Hideko and others that lived and worked in the Tokiwa-sō apartments – flourished in magazines such as *Boys* (Shōnen, published by Kōbunsha from 1946) and *Manga Boys* (Manga shōnen, published by Gakudōsha from 1947) and they went on to shape what would become standard manga for children.

There is a tendency to think that manga for children is unrelated to eroticism, but such is not the case. Erotic feelings exist in children even from infancy to pre-adolescence. Sexual desires exist before their localization in genitals. It is a time of sensitivity to “pleasure / displeasure.” Unsurprisingly, children pick up erotic signals from manga and subconsciously select based on them. Taking in a large amount of memes from Walt Disney, Tezuka's drawings are old-school anime drawings. Genes from Tagawa Suihō and Ōshiro Noboru are also an important part of the story, but more significant is what happened after. The anime drawing style of Tezuka's manga for children was continuously passed down until finally, in the 1980s, it became the mainstream in *eromanga*. Generations raised on Tezuka's manga became *eromanga* artists and produced Tezuka-style *eromanga*, which is obvious if one thinks about it.

Compared to other manga artists of the day, early rivals such as Fukui Eiichi and even the Tokiwa-sō line of what could be called his followers, Tezuka's work stood out for its eroticism. While he was alive and being worshipped for his humanism, it was taboo to discuss the sexual side of Tezuka's manga, but for children who grew up in Japan from the mid-1950s into the 1960s, who remember being moved by the female cross-dressing of *Captain Ken* (Kyaputen Ken, 1960-1961), or the erotic feeling of the torture scene in *The White Pilot* (Shiroi pairotto, 1961-1962) but not knowing about sadomasochism or having the words to describe it, or the sexual excitement of seeing the androgynous *Princess Knight* (Ribon no kishi, 1953-1956, 1963-1966) in her tights – for those children, it was a matter of fact that “Tezuka's manga is erotic.” At the time, Tezuka had not yet produced *Rally Up Mankind!* (Ningen domo atsumare, 1967-1968), which depicts the persecution and insurrection of asexual humans; *The Song of Apollo* (Aporo no uta, 1970), which is directly about love and sex; *Marvelous Melmo* (Fushigi na Merumo, 1970-1972), which was intended to be a form of sex education; or *MW* (Mū, 1976-1978), which is a whirlwind of homosexuality, sensual murder and

conspiracy.¹ Even before all that, Tezuka's manga was erotic. Psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki speaks of the eroticism of Tezuka's work in the following way:

As Taniyama Hiroko aptly pointed out concerning *Astro Boy* (Tetsuwan Atomu, 1952-1968), the loveliness of Tezuka's characters is to a large extent based on an extremely "erotic," in other words sexual, attraction. The introduction of the erotic is done so offhandedly, and because of that is so polymorphously perverse, that the frequently mentioned tendency toward androgyny and the confusion of gender identity is just the start. Pedophilia, homosexuality, transvestism, fetishism – much of the appeal of Tezuka's manga comes from these things. Again, this was done so offhandedly, and because of that was so alluring. Like Taniyama, I too could not bear to watch Tezuka's anime with my parents, because I was afraid that they would see through my sexual desires. (Saitō 1999)

Interestingly, the numerous "perversions" (*tōsaku*) that Saitō lists also appear in contemporary *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* as a whole. While one can also see them in the third-rate *gekiga* that were the prior step to *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, the range and volume was far smaller. I do not mean to take the common denominator of polymorphous perversity (*takei tōsaku*) as grounds to argue vehemently that Tezuka is the father of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. What is important is that multiple forms of erotic memes were already provided in Tezuka's manga.

Did these memes originate with Tezuka? This is correct if the discussion is limited to postwar childrens manga, but, deliberately going further back, one can see that there are also erotic memes embedded in the Disney animation and Takarazuka Revue that Tezuka continued to love throughout his life. Reportedly, Walt Disney abhorred sexual depictions, but was that really the case? If, as Saitō suggests, Tezuka was "offhanded" (*muzōsa*) in introducing sexual elements, then Disney was careful. This is especially clear when looking at early animated films, or what are called Disney classics. The most famous example, in fact legend, is that the pixie Tinker Bell, who appears in *Peter Pan* (1953), had proportions based on the data of sex symbol Marilyn Monroe.² From even just this point, one can assume that at the very least

1 *Marvelous Melmo* first appeared under the title *Mama'a-chan*, but the name "Mama'a" was already registered and the series was renamed starting in October 1971.

2 TN: Archival evidence suggests that the actual model was Margaret Kerry, not Monroe, who was at the time not yet the sex symbol that she would become. However, Nagayama's point stands given that Tinker Bell was designed to have "sex appeal to charm the viewer" and that Kerry, who was then known for her "beautiful legs," got the part by modeling the pixie "standing

Disney fully understood the eye-catching character of erotic designs and inserted them without hesitation in the service of increasing box office receipts.

Tinker Bell is just the tip of the iceberg. Close viewers will notice that Disney classics cleverly use sexual symbols and erotic signaling, and choose source material allowing for images that stimulate the unconscious.³ Both *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) include the motif of necrophilia, and in *Pinocchio* (1940), the cost of the embarrassing act of lying is having one's nose grow like a penis. The freakishly shaped baby *Dumbo* (1941) falls into a drunken stupor and sees a herd of pink elephants, which along with *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) is a precursor of psychedelic movies.⁴ In addition, there is that discomfotingly smooth full animation, which traced live-action film. Setting aside how aware Disney was of it all, his emotional films – which through overly smooth movement bestowed an excessive sense of vitality that extended to not only characters, but even plants – were in and of themselves erotic. In English, “animation” brings to mind “animate,” or “to give life,” and Disney classics are an ideal way to get a sense for what that means. It is not strange to think that all this, like subliminal imagery, stimulates and pleases viewers. In his admiration for Disney, what Tezuka attempted to do in manga, even more than “cinematic expression,” might be recreating animation on paper with cartoony and cute, anime-style drawings. This still-imaged, anime-style manga would later feed back into Tezuka's limited animation. A creator drawing anime-like manga came to produce manga-like anime.⁵

The other source of Tezuka's erotic genes, the Takarazuka Revue, does not require as much explanation.⁶ Following from the Revue's exclusive use of female performers in stage productions are the androgyny of women dressed as men, gender confusion and overly decorative costumes in Tezuka's manga. Focusing on androgyny, the existence of Mitchy, the heroine of his early work *Metropolis* (*Metoroporisu*, 1949), is noteworthy. S/he is an

on a hand mirror sizing up her hips” (see <<https://www.snopes.com/disney/films/tinkerbell.asp>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020]).

3 Despite the watchful eye of The Walt Disney Company, among the strictest in a country known for its hard line on intellectual property rights, even now an internet search reveals erotic parody illustrations of the March Hare and Mad Hatter having sex with *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), orgies involving *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and more. Sexualized versions of Snow White's costume are sold in adult stores.

4 Seeing pink elephants is a euphemism for hallucinations brought on by drink or drugs.

5 TN: For a discussion of how Tezuka dealt with movement in his manga and anime, as well as eroticism, see Steinberg 2012 and Chapter 3 of Galbraith 2019.

6 TN: For more on this form of theater, see Robertson 1998.

androgynous robot that can change sex with the push of a button. Bearing in mind Tezuka's unique "star system," whereby the same characters were cast in different roles throughout his body of work, it appears that Mitchy debuted in the role of a girl in *Doctor Mars* (Kasei hakase, 1947), which would mean that their true form is female, but things are not so simple. After *Metropolis*, Mitchy's role was succeeded by the psychologically androgynous Prince/ss Sapphire (*Princess Knight*), and Mitchy served as the model for the eponymous character *Astro Boy*, an iconic hero originally planned to be a girl robot and maintaining indicators of this such as extended eyelashes. To top it all off, Mitchy plays the girl-boy robot's mother.

It is probably not the case that Tezuka set out to embed erotic genetic code into his manga, and we should not forget the systemic restraints of the times and society in which he lived. The taboo that one cannot draw sex in childrens manga clearly existed. During the "movement against harmful publications" (*akusho tsuihō undō*) from the mid-1950s into the 1960s, even "healthy" Tezuka manga was labeled vulgar by parent-teacher associations and progressive intellectuals. However, I simply cannot believe that the codification of sexual elements in his work was to avoid censure. During the movement against harmful publications, manga was vulgar just for being manga, and the virtuous authorities did not feel the need to scrutinize content. In fact, Tezuka did not suddenly or drastically change his manga at this time. The examples here show that he was introducing erotic genetic code from the start, long before the movement against harmful publications, and the way he did it remained the same. First and foremost, Tezuka was drawing what he wanted to draw. He honestly expressed a polymorphous perversity. There is no calculation to it. It is, as Saitō Tamaki puts it, "offhand," and, seen with contemporary eyes, open. Beginning with the Tokiwa-sō group, there existed many Tezuka followers, but it is fair to say that there were no successors to his eroticism in the early era of childrens manga. Rather, Tezuka-like erotic memes ended up being propagated atavistically.

Gekiga as a Counter Response

From the 1950s on, the "Tezuka is the God of Manga" era continued, and his work became the de facto standard. However, as a standard becomes fixed, there are styles that fall out of favor or are left behind, as well as artists and readers who reject that standard. Such was the case in Japan, where *gekiga* appeared in the 1950s as a sort of anti-Tezuka style, or a non-Tezuka style. Founded by Tatsumi Yoshihiro, Saitō Takao, Satō Masaaki and others, the

“Gekiga Workshop” (*gekiga kōbō*) group was the cradle of the movement. *Gekiga* was born from the world of “rental manga” (*kashihon manga*), or manga rented from stores, which targeted older readers than childrens manga. Until recently, readers of rental manga had been thought to be members of the “young blue-collar class,” but research demonstrates significant overlap with readers of childrens manga. That is, alongside older readers, children were also getting into *gekiga*. In any age, children are insatiable.

Featuring characters with elongated proportions, sharp lines, a rough touch, frequent use of visual effects and contrastive shading, the claim that *gekiga* was more “realistic” (*riaru*) requires more consideration than it is often given. At the very least, however, the arrival of *gekiga* established “a new style of manga that is not for kids.” *Gekiga* expressed what the Tezuka school of childrens manga would or could not, succeeded in opening up new markets and had an effect on future generations. Naturally, as an extension of this, we get comics as adult entertainment. The 1950s saw the appearance of magazines that brought together manga, true stories and nude models, and these magazines were attacked as “vulgar weeklies” (*teizoku shūkanshi*). Examples include *Saturday Manga* (Doyō manga, published by Doyō Tsūshinsha from 1956), *Weekly Manga Times* (Shūkan manga Times, published by Hōbunsha from 1956) and *Manga Paradise* (Manga tengoku, published by Geibunsha from 1960). In terms of eroticism, the “vulgar weeklies” of this time could probably be said to be distant relatives of the erotic *gekiga* magazines that would come later. However, there is almost no relation of direct influence. In contemporary *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, it is hard to find even traces of the cultural genes of the “vulgar weeklies.” There is of course value in them, but mostly for historians and antique collectors. During the later *gekiga* boom, the three magazines mentioned above would tenaciously hang on by transforming into *gekiga* magazines.

The 1960s: *Garo*, *COM* and *Gekiga* for Young Men

Entering the 1960s, the market for “manga that adults read” pioneered by *gekiga* expanded even further. Whether as entertainment or a way to express the “irresistible force of passions inside” (Kure 1990) of young people who experienced the defeat of the movement against the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan in 1960, *gekiga* rose to prominence. In 1964, *Monthly Manga Garo* (Gekkan manga garo, published by Seirindō), better known simply as *Garo*, was established as a magazine to publish Shirato Sanpei’s *The Legend of Kamui* (Kamui

den). Becoming an alternative to mainstream manga magazines and their commercialism, *Garo* provided a platform for creative geniuses such as Mizuki Shigeru, Tsuge Yoshiharu and Ikegami Ryōichi, who had all worked in rental manga. It also introduced the world to unique artists such as Tsuge Tadao, Sasaki Maki, Hayashi Seiichi, Abe Shinichi, Suzuki Ōji, Furukawa Masuzō (who would later found the company Mandarake) and Kawasaki Yukio, as well as some who went on to work in “third-rate *gekiga*” focusing on eroticism such as Okudaira Ira, Hiraguchi Hiromi and Hisauchi Michio.

In 1966, Tezuka founded *COM* (published by Mushi Puro Shōji), which was a magazine to publish his *Phoenix* (Hi no tori), but one that also concentrated its efforts on publishing experimental works, organizing the national manga fandom and discovering new talent. Taking Tezuka’s famously competitive spirit into account, it is possible to map this as an orthodox manga response to the *gekiga*-style *Garo*. Given that *gekiga* was born as a counter to Tezuka, this was something like a counter of a counter. That said, among the manga artists that *COM* introduced to the world, a large number in fact draw in the *gekiga* style. Examples include Miyaya Kazuhiko; Nōjō Junichi, who went through erotic *gekiga* to become the master of mahjong *gekiga*; and Aoyagi Yūsuke, who at times drew *gekiga* focusing on sadomasochism, but debuted with a depiction of the everyday gloom of a young pedophile, which seems in hindsight almost like a premonition of the “Miyazaki Incident.”⁷ In charge of looking after the burgeoning number of manga fans drawn to the magazine was Tōge Akane, also known as *gekiga* artist Masaki Mori (of *Lullaby of a Guy Out of Bounds* [Hamidashi yarō no komori uta, 1969-1970] fame), whose assistants Kishi Motonori (later president of Shōbunkan), Miyanishi Keizō, Nakajima Fumio and Fukushima Masami would debut as popular producers of *gekiga* for young men and third-rate *gekiga*.

Crucially, *Garo* and *COM* were both magazines that did not gender readership. Unlike mainstream manga magazines that in practice targeted boys or girls, *shōnen* or *shōjo*, these two left that undetermined. This was especially apparent in *COM*, which provided a platform for the socially aware Kimura Minori and Yashiro Masako, who influenced “the Magnificent 49ers” (*hana no nijūyonnen gumi*) group that would revolutionize *shōjo* manga. Unique artists such as Okada Fumiko and Takemiya Keiko debuted in its pages. All said, *COM* left a footprint in the history of *shōjo* manga in Japan that cannot be ignored. In the transmission of cultural genes leading to contemporary *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, this gender-free aspect of *COM* was ahead of its time,

7 TN: Miyazaki Tsutomu was arrested in 1989 for molesting and murdering four girls between the ages of four and seven. For more, see Chapter 4 of Kinsella 2000.

and the magazine provided an opportunity for male readers of manga (and those who wanted to become manga artists) to encounter *shōjo* manga. One could say that this laid the foundation for the later mass adoption of *shōjo* manga memes in *eromanga*.

In the mid-1960s, magazines such as *Manga Action* (Manga akushon, published by Futabasha from 1967), *Young Comic* (Yangu komikku, published by Shōnen Gahōsha from 1967), *Weekly Manga Entertainment* (Shūkan manga goraku, published by Nihon Bungeisha from 1964), *Big Comic* (Biggu komikku, published by Shōgakukan from 1968), *Play Comic* (Purei komikku, published by Akita Shoten from 1968) and more were founded one after another and the so-called “*gekiga* boom” (*gekiga būmu*) approached its peak.⁸ One could say that this was when *gekiga*, which overlapped with Nikkatsu’s brand of action films as “delinquent culture” (*furyō bunka*), transformed into content read by university students and members of the young white-collar working class.

With the *Young Comic* triumvirate of Miyaya Kazuhiko, Masaki Mori and Kamimura Kazuo leading, *gekiga* began to boldly step into the territory of sex. However, these men were absolutely not called “erotic *gekiga* artists,” which is still the case today. What they were doing was too “artistic,” “literary” and “socially aware” to be called erotic *gekiga*; if the kind of *gekiga* that fully embraced the erotic was dubbed “third-rate,” then this earlier work was more “elevated.” Artists of the day whose drawings could be called erotic *gekiga* include Kasama Shirō, who debuted in 1958 in *Saturday Manga* and was active in *Manga Paradise* and *Manga Action*; Muku Yōji, who produced illustrations for magazines focusing on sadomasochism; and Utagawa Taiga, who published in *Weekly Manga Entertainment* and elsewhere. Unfortunately, their cultural genes are all but absent from the pool of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. While granting exceptions such as Minor Boy, in whose touch one can sense Muku Yōji, these early examples of eroticism in *gekiga* belong to an older, past era.

Shameless Boys Manga

Looking back at history from the position of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, the influence of the eroticism of the Tokiwa-sō group directly under Tezuka does not hold a candle to him. Of course, there was eroticism in the work

8 *Weekly Manga Entertainment* (Shūkan manga goraku) was originally published under the title *Manga Entertainment Reader* (Manga goraku dokuhon).

of the Tokiwa-sō group and that generation of manga artists. They followed in Tezuka's footsteps and adopted the form of manga he popularized, which meant inheriting as a standard the eroticism of animated movement and lines in and of themselves. In the early days of the series, Ishi(no)mori Shōtarō's *Cyborg 009* (Saibōgu 009, 1964-1981) was clearly Tezuka style, and I loved the character Françoise Arnoul, even as the adorable-ness of Shimamura Joe happily hitching a ride on the roof of a bullet train made my heart throb. Ishimori's characters were plenty erotic back then, but he did not exceed the Tezuka standard. Although he did step in the direction of sex appeal in later manga such as *009-1* (1967-1974), which targeted older readers, his eroticism stayed within the bounds of common sense.⁹

More important than individual artists is that those working with and in the wake of Tezuka collectively flooded the market with manga. A generation grew up with manga. For the first time, comics surrounded children for as long as they could remember, which had unexpectedly far-reaching repercussions. For example, in her manga *Pure Pink Diary* (Junjō momoiro nikki, 1991), Nakata Aki recalls the erotic shock of encountering a torture scene in Yokoyama Mitsuteru's *Kagemaru of Iga* (Iga no Kagemaru, 1961-1966) in her childhood:

I'll never forget. It was 1961, *Shōnen Sunday* issue 26. In a small candy store, for the first time in my life, I saw a torture scene!! Of course, I was at an age that I hadn't the slightest idea about "SM bondage." But I intuitively knew! I knew it was so dirty!!

The experience made an impression on Nakata, who would go on to publish in *Manga Burikko* (more on this magazine later). Independent of authorial intent, eroticism springs forth and new genes are accumulated in the pool. Examples of this phenomenon can be seen here and there. Take Fujiko Fujio's childrens manga such as *Doraemon* (1969-1996), which has an enormous fan base that includes many readers who say it was their first experience of eroticism.

In terms of individual artists, Nagai Gō, who came after the Tokiwa-sō generation, is important when thinking about *eromanga*. Debuting in 1967, Nagai's big break came the following year with the start of serialization of *Shameless School* (Harenchi gakuen) in *Weekly Shōnen Jump* (Shūkan shōnen

9 Rather than Ishimori's mainstream works, *Jun* (1967-1971) – which was serialized in *COM* as something of a diversion for him, a "visual poem in manga" (*manga ni yoru eizō shi*) – stimulated Okada Fumiko and, through her, Takano Fumiko and the new wave. In this way, one could probably say that Ishimori had a distant influence on *eromanga* from the 1980s on.

janpu, published by Shūeisha). Boys magazines are a platform with many restrictions, but Nagai's works pushed the limits of violence and eroticism. It would be somewhat of an exaggeration to say that Nagai traumatized many young male readers and sowed the seeds that would a decade or so later blossom as *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, but his impact cannot be underestimated. Many of the artists producing *eromanga* in the 1980s came from the "Gō-chan generation," and it is an undeniable fact that they grew up sucking in Nagai Gō's genes like dry sponges.

With excuses that it was done in the name of "humor" and "sex appeal," Nagai's works are teeming with sadomasochism, homosexuality, androgyny, amputees, cross-dressing, nudism, sexual torture and fetishism. Although he emerged as an assistant of Ishimori Shōtarō, in terms of polymorphous perversity, he is closer to the master's master, Tezuka Osamu. This is similar to the case of Takemiya Keiko, who, while being strongly influenced by Ishimori, took the androgyny and homosexuality seen in Tezuka's work and further deepened them. Particularly concerning these two, one can say that Tezuka's erotic genes manifest through atavism.¹⁰

However, the polymorphous perversity of Nagai's work has a fairly different meaning to it compared to Tezuka's work. In contrast to Tezuka scattering eroticism around offhandedly, Nagai was always self-aware. In his early comedy pieces, he stepped into erotic humor that was quite risqué, and pressed on in *Violence Jack* (Baiorensu Jakku, 1973-1974) and *Devilman* (Debiruman, 1972-1973), where sex and violence are taken to the extreme. He enjoyed walking the tightrope, testing what the readers took as sexual and how far he could go before parent-teacher associations came calling. Perhaps we could describe it as circling around and around the edge of taboo territory, lunging toward it, but stopping just before?

For Nagai to maintain his trickster footing, legend has it that his managing editor at the time would not allow him to engage in womanizing. If he knew the reality of sexual relationships, his powers of delusion (*mōsōryoku*) might be limited. Similarly, sex is not allowed in boys magazines, but sexual delusions run wild. In boys magazines, erotic fantasy is oriented toward the

10 Here I picked up the atavism of skipping a generation between Tezuka, Ishimori and those after, but something similar occurs with Tezuka, Akatsuka and those after. In other words, Tezuka genes reappear in former Akatsuka assistants Torii Kazuyoshi and the scatology of his *Doctor Toilet* (Toiretto hakase, 1970-1977) and Furuya Mitsutoshi and the gynophobia and sadomasochism of his *No Good Dad* (Dame oyaji, 1970-1982). However, Akatsuka's studio, Fujio Productions, was "gag comics only," and those coming out of it could not escape the fortress of erotic humor. What is so remarkable about Nagai Gō is that he entered through erotic humor, but then brought multiple forms of eroticism into serious works.

Image 1 A sample from Nagai's *Violence Jack*. This is eroticism in manga-style drawing.



sexy (*ecchi*), not sex (*sekkusu*). Sealing sexual intercourse at the last possible point, the erotic fantasy of everything else gets raised. There is no sex, but everything is sexy. This technique of stopping just before and increasing dispersed sexiness would come to be permanently passed down as one of the basics of erotic comedy in boys magazines. The boys who grew up reading Nagai Gō would reproduce what he accomplished in mainstream manga in their *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, but also draw the sex – the sexual intercourse, in full – that he did not.¹¹

The Early 1970s: Beginning with Ishii Takashi and Sakaki Masaru

The real ancestors of contemporary *eromanga*, those with a direct line to extant forms, appear in the 1970s. After this, *gekiga* transitions to “third-rate

¹¹ In *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, Kamitō Masaki is a representative example of Nagai Gō's many devotees.

gekiga,” or distinctly erotic *gekiga*, and then “*lolicon manga*,” which is to say early *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. This is the broad arc that occurred in manga history, but also just the story told as a chronological sequence. If one asks the extent of genes passed down from, for example, Ishii Takashi to contemporary *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, it is close to zero. Rather, what is important is the fertile ground cultivated during the transition from *gekiga* to third-rate *gekiga* – in other words, the establishment of an infrastructure supporting the opening of markets venturing into sexual expression and the liberalization of sexual expression in manga. Without this fertile ground, it is certain that the emergence of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* would have come much later.

Now, the second great defeat of the protest movement against the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan in 1970 (things were in fact already settled by 1969) cast a long shadow over the spirits of young people at the time. For those who unfortunately fell into the generation that experienced defeat in both 1960 and 1970, this was doubly so. Just as defeat in the Second World War gave birth to a postwar generation of cynics and nihilists, so too did the two-time defeat of the protest movement.¹² The 1970s were an era when the *gekiga* magazines that had appeared one after another from the middle of the previous decade became established and prosperous. Naturally, erotic expression also further advanced.

In *Young Comic*, Miyaya Kazuhiko published *Record of Sexual Consumption* (Seishokuki, 1970), Kamimura Kazuo's representative work *The Age of Cohabitation* (Dōsei jidai, 1972) began its serialization in *Manga Action* and the veteran Satō Masaaki's immoral epic *The Star of David* (Dabide no hoshi, 1971) commenced in *Manga Paradise*. Then, in 1973, *Manga Erotopia* (published by KK Besuto Serāzu, then Wani Magajinsha) hit shelves. *Manga Erotopia* is often called the “first erotic *gekiga* magazine,” but seen with contemporary eyes, it appears more like “a *gekiga* magazine fairly inclined toward the erotic.” Looking at the list of contributors, there is significant overlap with other *gekiga* magazines targeting young men. Seeing the names Kamimura Kazuo, Hirano Jin, Masaoka Toshiya, Kō Shintarō, Hara Taira, Shinohara Tooru, Tanioka Yasuji and Kawaguchi Kaiji is enough to make

12 Cynical nihilism would later become something often discussed as a defining characteristic of the first generation of “otaku,” but in fact this is the shared spiritual landscape of a generation of youth that started from defeat and arrived in the present. “Grand narratives” always betray the young. Does it not appear that, from defeat in the Second World War to the bursting of the bubble economy, the theme on endless repeat has been “believe in nothing?”

Image 2 A sample from Ishii's *Angel Guts*. This is *gekiga*-style drawing treading into the erotic.



one ask, “What about this is erotic?” The distinctly *ero* artists are Sawada Ryūji, Ken Tsukikage and so on. Amidst all of this, what really draws attention is *The Rapist Monk* (Nyohambō, 1974, original work by Takizawa Kai) by Fukushima Masami, who made a comeback a few years ago. It is a long-form, picaresque work overflowing with eroticism, violence and grotesquery. Reprinted in the 1990s and available digitally, it is a work that I recommend seeking out.

If Fukushima is an isolated peak towering over the *gekiga* world, then another important figure is Sakaki Masaru, whose erotic *gekiga* realism appealed to the baser instincts of horny readers and inspired countless imitators. To just come out and say it, Sakaki’s style became a template for the third-rate *gekiga* that came after the *gekiga* boom. Following from this, it makes perfect sense that Sakaki’s work, which can currently be read in reprints, in some ways looks cliché. Another groundbreaking artist, Ishii Takashi, appeared in *Young Comic*. His debut was 1970’s *Incident Gekiga* (Jiken gekiga, published by Geibunsha), but his national break after all followed his appearance in *Young Comic*. A reader of *Young Comic* at the time, I did not know Ishii’s work from before. To a boy in the countryside frantically reading *COM*, heralded as “for the manga elite,” Ishii’s work was no more than the sound of distant thunder heard from the far reaches of the world of adults. However, Ishii’s *Angel Guts* (Tenshi no harawata, 1972) in *Young Comic* sprang to prominence and became a blockbuster with not only readers, but also peers in the industry, editors and intellectuals.

How amazing was the response? Enough that the table of contents of *New Criticism Special Issue: The World of Ishii Takashi* (Bessatsu shinhyō: Ishii Takashi no sekai, published by Shinhyōsha in 1979) includes Konaka Yōtarō, Tsuzuki Michio, Matsuda Masao, Akasegawa Genpei, Dan Oniroku, Sone Chūsei, Satō Tadao, Hashimoto Osamu and Jissōji Akio, who were not “manga people,” but rather “prominent intellectuals.” What was so great about Ishii Takashi? To be honest, as a latecomer to his work, I do not personally get it. This is because the depth discussed in *New Criticism Special Issue: The World of Ishii Takashi* is to me and generations after not something new and shocking. Perhaps the interesting thing about Ishii’s work is not the depictions of sex or the extremity of the sadomasochism, but rather that, despite the intensity of acts, they do not give readers pornographic catharsis. The point here is not story or a return to words such as “love” and “heart.” His work could be said to capture the reality of an everyday that includes sex, a common one on the outskirts. Surely Ishii provided many intellectuals with material for multifaceted readings.

2 The Rise and Fall of Third-Rate *Gekiga* and the Eve of *Bishōjo*-Style *Eromanga*

The Mid-1970s: The Third-Rate *Gekiga* Boom

In the mid-1970s, medium, small and micro publishers seeing the *gekiga* magazine boom out the corner of their eyes estimated that they could make bank and all at once jumped on the bandwagon. *Gekiga* and manga magazines produced on low budgets had proven to turn a profit, and these publishers were sure the same would be true for them. Of course, from the perspective of large publishers, the profits were modest, but, as the saying goes, small profits and quick returns. The situation was not unlike selling caramels, where even if the package changes, the content is basically the same, but a single company producing a number of *gekiga* magazines would definitely make money. As a way of distributing risk and avoiding getting locked into an investment, they spun off separate companies or placed orders to subcontracting editorial production companies.

One after another, new magazines were established. In 1975 alone, a year that would later be dubbed the surge, *Manga Dynamite* (Manga *dainamaito*, published by Tatsumi Shuppan), *Manga Idol* (Manga *aidoru*, published by Tatsumi Shuppan), *Manga Popo* (Manga *popo*, published by Meibunsha), *Manga Great Pleasure* (Manga *daikairaku*, published by Remonsha), *Manga Banban* (Manga *banban*, published by Remonsha), another *Manga Great Pleasure* (Manga *daietsurakugō*, published by Kasakura Shuppansha), *Manga Utopia* (Manga *yūtopia*, published by Kasakura Shuppansha), *Manga Erojenika* (Manga *erojenika*, published by Kaichōsha), *Gekiga Jack* (Gekiga *jakku*, published by Taiyō Shobō), *Gekiga Erotic Humor* (Gekiga *enshōgō*, published by Seibunsha), *Manga Giant* (Manga *jaianto*, published by Tōen Shobō), *Manga Refresh* (Manga *sukatto*, published by Tōkyō Sanseisha), *Manga Bump* (Manga *banpu*, published by Tōkyō Sanseisha), *Gekiga Pleasure* (Gekiga *etsurakugō*, published by San Shuppan) and *Manga Love & Love* (Manga *rabu ando rabu*, published by Seibun Shinsha) appeared.

This was the beginning of the so-called third-rate *gekiga* boom. Reflecting on the moment in 1979, one critic writes:

In terms of monthly publications, there are about 50 to 60 so-called third-rate *gekiga*, or erotic *gekiga*, magazines. We should not be surprised by that number, which refers only to primary magazines. There are cases

of special editions of primary magazines, supplementary issues, special editions of supplementary issues and more. Altogether, the number is probably 80 to 100 magazines a month. Given that each magazine is said to move between 50,000 and 200,000 copies, this means that at least five million of them are circulating in the city. (Unknown 1979)

This data comes from 1979, that is, the heyday of third-rate *gekiga*.

At about the same time as the third-rate *gekiga* boom, also booming were vending-machine magazines and “*bini-bon*,” or pornographic magazines sold in plastic wrap. Initially, magazine vending machines carried general-interest weeklies, manga and photo journals, but profits were anemic and differentiation from traditional storefront distribution was difficult. There was no reason for someone to go out of their way to purchase a magazine through a vending machine when they could purchase that same magazine at a station kiosk or bookstore. Enter vending-machine magazines, which were produced and published for exclusive distribution there. While vending-machine magazines were not carried through the existing channels of book and magazine distributors, in exchange their circulation costs were kept low, which allowed even micro publishers to enter the market with ease. Furthermore, it was par for the course that a single company would put out many magazines.

Perhaps for that very reason, a single chief editor would serve double duty as both cameraman and writer, all while editing a number of magazines. What they could not handle would be assigned to outside talent. Small profits and quick returns was the name of the game, as was mass production of inferior goods; what could be reused elsewhere was reused, and products came together on an assembly line; the results were slapdash. The people involved were all youngsters just starting out their careers, but they had something that large publishers did not: freedom. Such a thing is largely an illusion, but outside talent, who were not receiving enough pay to listen to complaints, certainly had a fair amount of leeway. Furthermore, in this kind of work, which is to fill pages and get the magazine out, whether one tries to rush it or do something experimental is not the issue. The pages just needed to be filled, no matter what, and content was assembled and released without much of a filter. From all this emerged *X-Magazine* (*X magajin*, published by Erushii Kikaku from 1978), a super avant-garde erotic magazine edited by Takasugi Dan, and also his *Jam* (published by Erushii Kikaku from 1979), which became infamous for publishing the results of rooting through the trashcan at beloved idol Yamaguchi Momoe’s home.

Third-rate *gekiga* magazines were also sold in vending machines. Among them was *Gekiga Alice* (*Gekiga arisu*, published by Arisu Shuppan from 1977), which was not only one of the big three third-rate *gekiga* magazines, but also a vending-machine exclusive unavailable in stores. Distributed through adult stores, *bini-bon* were not directly related to *eromanga*, but there was exchange in terms of capital, editors and cameramen. In addition, publishers founded on funds earned with *bini-bon* would later become active sources of *eromanga* in the 1980s.

The ironclad rule of all erotic media in the mid-1970s was, “As long as it’s erotic, you can do whatever you want.” This was also true in third-rate *gekiga* magazines. If the *gekiga* that came before was intended to be “dramatic pictures,” then, in contrast, third-rate *gekiga* was clearly intended to be “erotic.” Indeed, the work was positioned not as first-rate *gekiga*, or even a midway compromise of second-rate, but explicitly third-rate, which freed it of all pretense. Under the alibi of the erotic, third-rate *gekiga* secured its freedom, absurdity and vanguard character.

The big three of third-rate *gekiga* – *Gekiga Alice*, edited by Kamewada Takeshi; *Manga Erogonica*, edited by Takatori Ei; and *Manga Great Pleasure*, edited by Kotani Tetsu – did not stand out for the intensity of erotic expression alone. The three chief editors each had their own approach. They were scrappy, enjoyed a good party and had a refreshing sensitivity to what was interesting. These men did not have in the slightest the commonly held outcast consciousness. They appeared on television, debated one another and actually came to blows.¹ As if to drive away the gloom of the failed protests of 1970, they ranted and roared. The pathos of young *gekiga* artists was also deep, and people with strong personality – Dirty Matsumoto, Nakajima Fumio, Shimizu Osamu, Agata Ui, Miyanishi Keizō, Otamashakushi, Hachū Rui, Fukuhara Hidemi (aka Fukuhara Gōken), Muraso Shunichi, Mamiya Seiji, Tomita Shigeru, Tsuchiya Shingo, Maeda Toshio, Iida Kōichirō, Inoue Hideki and Yamada Nora – each pounded their own sense of eroticism onto the page. Looking back from the present, these were the last throes of the postwar babyboomers and protest generation.

Twenty years later, responding to my statement that, “Back then, everyone had a lot of personality,” Dirty Matsumoto said, “Well, unlike today, there weren’t models to copy.” It was an elegantly simple response. At the time, I found it convincing, but readers who have come to this point in the book will no doubt notice that “models” (*otehon*) were in fact all over the place. If one had wanted to rip off Ishii Takashi or Sakaki Masaru, then they certainly could have

1 For example, playwright Ryūzanji Shō punched professional wrestling critic Itasaka Gō.

Image 3 Cover of the January 1978 issue of *Manga Erojenica*. There was a boom in magazines like this in the 1970s.



done so. In fact, there were many imitators. The artists who made an impression, however, were drawing images and worlds that could be distinguished as their own at a glance. This may sound coldblooded, but the artists and works that have not lived on in memory were just not of the same quality.

Among those remembered, take Dirty Matsumoto. From his fetishism of ballet tights, leotards and point shoes to his transplanting male and female genitals and full-body suspension with needle and thread, there is a torrent of amazing ideas and violence. Or Miyanishi Keizō, whose sharp, detailed depictions are like etching inspired by Hans Bellmer, combining degeneracy, aesthetics and homosexuality. Called the “lemon sex school” (*remon sekkusu ha*), Nakajima Fumio’s work featured an increasingly refined, and realistic, girl figure. In contrast, Muraso Shunichi’s fantasy horror seems to be in a genealogy of lyrical girl art going back all the way to Takehisa Yumeji in the early twentieth century. The vulgar realism of Otamashakushi and his groping *gekiga*. What can only be described as the height of nonsense in Fukuhara Hidemi. There lay what was to me hidden treasure, and it shined radiantly.

Further coloring and enriching the world of third-rate *gekiga* were young artists of the *Garo* line. Among them, the ones who made an impression on me include Okudaira Ira, whose stateless techno pop came early to the manga world; Hiraguchi Hiromi, who presented rawness that reeked of violence and mad resentment; and the eccentric genius Hisauchi Michio, who used flat lines to create a variety show parody talking about everything from highbrow gay taste to exhibitionism from late nineteenth century Europe to the present. These three were my personal favorites. In addition were those best described as editors’ “wildcards,” the non-erotic creators. In other words, Ishikawa Jun, Igarashi Mikio and Ishii Hisaichi, who were big names in their own right drawing cutting-edge gags.

Just imagine it. There was erotic *gekiga*, which was devoted to basically sex and getting readers off. There was the work of artists with personality, who drew in a mighty push various inclinations that at the time were considered sexual perversions. And there was cutting-edge humor. How could you not be interested? Entering the gate of third-rate *gekiga*, after completing the initial goal of masturbation, one could next go to small rooms bursting with bewitching illusion and finally be sent off with a laugh and smile. A theme park of eroticism.

Here I must stress that the big three of third-rate *gekiga* – *Gekiga Alice*, *Manga Erogenica* and *Manga Great Pleasure* – were no more than the tip of the iceberg. The big three received a great deal of mass media exposure, but there were also scores of other erotic *gekiga* magazines that were not in the limelight. Their editors performed daily tasks with envy and a warped sense of pride that it was in fact they who supported the majority of eroticism. To put it bluntly, the big three were erotic *gekiga* magazines that could be accepted by even the intelligentsia, and everything else was “erotic *gekiga*

for practical use,” which was associated with enthusiasts and blue-collar workers. In that it serves as a corrective to biased visibility, *Contemporary Eromanga* (Gendai eromanga, published by Issuisha in 1998), written by Shioyama Yoshiaki, chief editor of one of the magazines for “practical use,” is a book of tremendous value. It contains the names of many erotic *gekiga* artists that I, as a half-baked intellectual reader back then, had never seen or heard before. It is not about which is authentic and which is fake. Precisely because the big three existed, an era was established, and because of the broad base formed by what was their “other,” the big three came to exist as such.

The Magnificent 49ers and the Golden Age of *Shōjo* Manga

Slightly before the explosion of third-rate *gekiga*, a tidal shift was occurring in the world of *shōjo* manga, or girls comics. This was the rise of the so-called “Magnificent 49ers,” or artists born around 1949, who revolutionized *shōjo* manga in the 1970s.² Critic Takekuma Kentarō succinctly describes the situation back then as follows:

One of the things that you cannot overlook when talking about manga at this time is that “men started reading *shōjo* manga.” The 1970s were more than anything the era of *shōjo* manga. Back then, a man who identified as a manga fan, but didn’t read *shōjo* manga, was basically considered to be unqualified. (Takekuma 2005)

In fact, this was a period when I too was regularly reading *shōjo* manga. If one liked manga, reading Hagio Moto was par for the course. To digress a little, way back, some friends and I went to Aramata Hiroshi’s house to hang out, where the conversation turned to *shōjo* manga. I said, “I like Hagio Moto and Takemiya Keiko,” to which Aramata retorted, “That’s the norm for liking manga, right?” Grinning, he continued, “If you like *shōjo* manga, then

² In addition to its core members being born around the same year, some of them also gathered at the Ōizumi Salon, which was like another Tokiwa-sō, but populated by young female artists. Those most often included are Hagio Moto, Takemiya Keiko, Ōshima Yumiko and Yamagishi Ryōko, but others are Kihara Toshie, Kimura Minori, Yamada Mineko and Sasaya Nanae(ko). One might also consider their juniors such as Itō Aiko, Satō Shio, Nachi Misako, Sakata Yasuko and Kai Yukiko. Also born around 1949 are Okada Fumiko, Ichijō Yukari, Satonaka Machiko and Yamato Waki.

Kihara Toshie. You have to read Doji-sama!”³ This was around 1980, before Aramata’s break with *The Tale of the Imperial Capital* (Teito monogatari, published by Kadokawa in 1985).⁴

Of course, when it comes to liking manga, third-rate *gekiga* artists and editors were on equal footing with fans. For example, during a period when he lived in an apartment, Nakajima Fumio recalls picking up and lovingly reading the *shōjo* manga magazines thrown out on trash day by a woman living upstairs. One day, the woman appeared in front of Nakajima’s door and handed him a bundle of *shōjo* manga magazines, saying, “You are welcome to these, if you like.” With even just that, you might say it is a nice story, but with the punch line that the woman was in fact Yamagishi Ryōko, one of the Magnificent 49ers, it becomes much more. It is a great story, reaching almost the status of legend. Even though their content was different – Nakajima producing erotic *gekiga*, and Yamagishi *shōjo* manga – in the sense of pioneering the new future of manga, one can say these two stood on the same battlefield in their younger days.

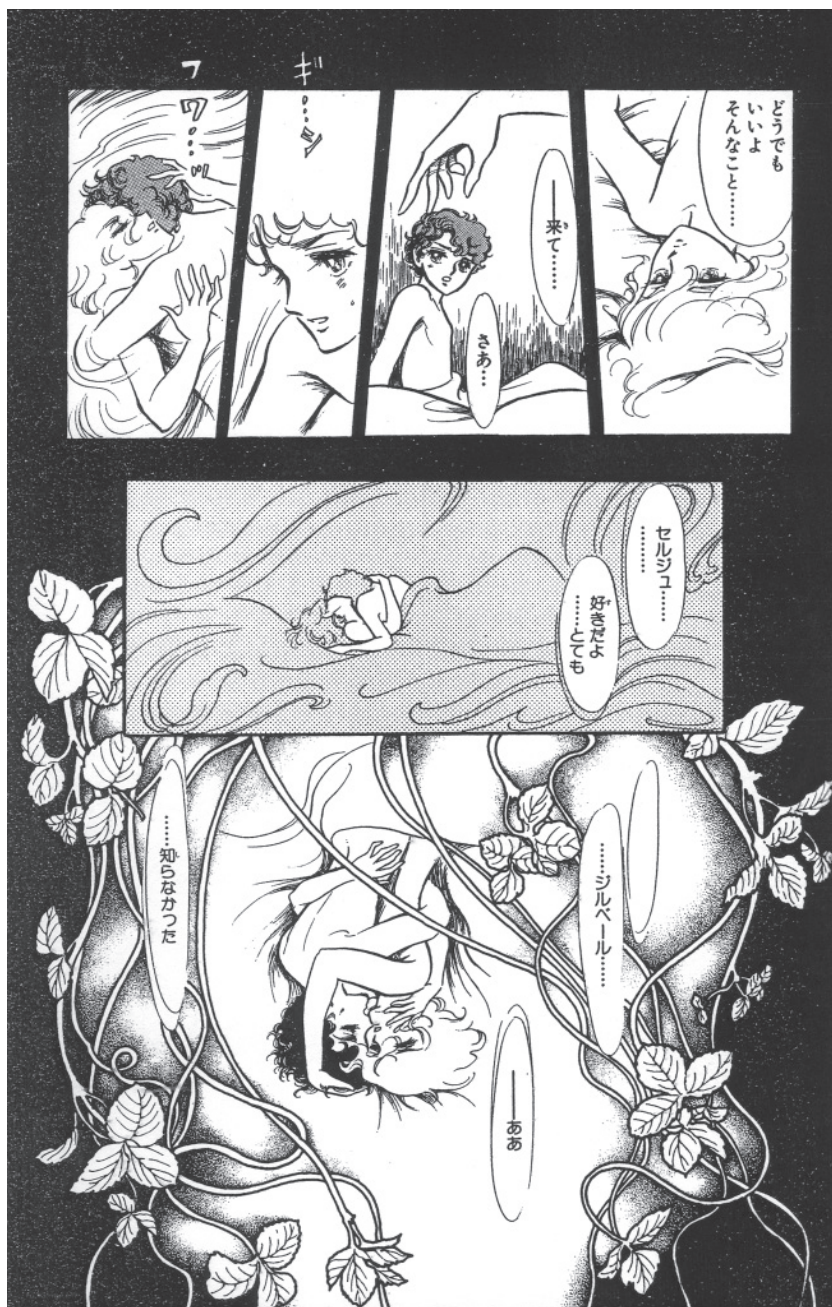
Among third-rate *gekiga* artists, it was not simply that many read and enjoyed *shōjo* manga, but that many also actively took in the genes of *shōjo* manga. The reason for this was because, when it came to depictions of the psychology of characters, expressions of romantic feelings, picture-plane processing, fashion and more, *shōjo* manga had been at it longer. Furthermore, in terms of the beauty and charm of female characters, the standard *gekiga* style could not contend. Is it not the business of eroticism to draw women attractively? So it was that erotic *gekiga* artists turned to *shōjo* manga. When observed through these lenses, one can clearly see *shōjo* manga genes in female characters drawn by Shimizu Osamu, Dirty Matsumoto and others associated with third-rate *gekiga*.

However, in terms of receiving *shōjo* manga genes, *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* was by far more ravenous than third-rate *gekiga*. In *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, attractive characters are for the most part dominated by “cuteness” (*kawai-rashisa*). There exist “beautiful” (*utsukushii*), “erotic” (*iroppoi*) and “sexy” (*sekushii*) memes in *gekiga*, but not cute. Cute memes were reserved for content perceived to be for children, and, narrowing the focus to girl characters, *shōjo* manga proved to be a treasure trove. The cute memes found in *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* do include things transmitted from boys manga and

3 TN: “Doji-sama” was a nickname for Kihara.

4 Aramata was a manga boy who wanted to be a *shōjo* manga artist. One can glimpse a piece of that professional-grade ability (passable even today) in *Manga and Life* (Manga to jinsei, published by Shūeisha Bunko in 1994).

Image 4 A sample from Takemiya Keiko's *The Song of Wind and Trees* (*Kaze to ki no uta*, published by Shōgakukan from 1976). This *shōjo* manga features sex between male characters.



manga for younger children, but those have deeper roots in *shōjo* manga. Moreover, if one goes even further back, they arrive at Tezuka Osamu. To get to the heart of the matter, the cute genes born of Tezuka were better preserved in *shōjo* manga, refined there and then fed back into content for boys and men in the 1970s.

Important in connections between *eromanga* and the age of the Magnificent 49ers is that these women explored expressions of love and sex beyond those of traditional *shōjo* manga. Much of this occurred in the motif of male homosexuality, which was at the time called “*shōnen ai*” (boys love). Later, in the forum of the magazine *June* (published by San Shuppan from 1978), author and critic Nakajima Azusa (aka Kurimoto Kaoru) and others established the standard of “expressions of male homosexuality as fantasy for women.” This is one of the starting points of what would later be called *yaoi* and boys love (*bōizu rabu*). Even as *shōnen ai*, *June*, *tanbi*, *yaoi* and boys love were words marking a sanctuary for women, a unique culture developed and matured precisely because they were closed off. Before long reaching critical mass, it crossed the borders of marginal culture to impact the mainstream in a big way.

Why did *shōjo* manga artists choose the motif of male homosexuality? It is possible to see this as a convenient way to get around the sex taboo in *shōjo* manga, because what was depicted was homosexuality among men that had no direct relation to the artists and readers, who were women and girls. However, if this was just substituting the sex of men and women, or a voyeuristic interest in homosexuality, or something at the level of a fannish narcissism that takes what is minor to be good, then certainly *shōnen ai*, *June*, *tanbi*, *yaoi* and boys love would not have become so massive or come to occupy such an important space in women’s culture. Even as they admired as if gazing upon the romantic drama of beautiful men in Takarazuka (women playing men and women) or kabuki (men playing men and women) theater, at the same time, these women and girls learned to project themselves onto characters, transgressing the boundaries of sex in fantasy and enjoying sexual fantasy as fantasy.⁵ The “*yaoi*-like pleasure” (*yaoi-teki kairaku*) that women discovered did not stop when they put their manga down. They found new joy in reading into and out of original works (manga, novels, films, anime, television dramas, actual sports teams) – what might be called “*yaoi* reading” (*yaoi-yomi*) – and de- and re-constructing

5 Concerning the Magnificent 49ers and their orientation toward *shōnen ai*, the influence of Masuyama Norie, who was a leader in the Ōizumi Salon and Takemiya Keiko’s writing partner, was huge (Masuyama and Sano 1996).

them as their own “derivative works” (*niji sōsaku*), which included parody, pastiche and the use of established characters.⁶ The public position is that derivative works are a form of respect and homage, but the pleasure of producing a derivative work – in other words, the excitement of reading into and out of the original text, intentionally misreading and dismantling it – is also important.

We should not negatively assess this phenomenon as avoiding real sex by turning to depictions of male homosexuality with no direct relation to the women and girls producing and consuming them. What we should take notice of is that, even if it started as a convenience, artists and readers stepped into sexual expression, made contact with it, and in so doing the allergy or phobia toward sexual expression eased dramatically. Who would have predicted that the sexual and cultural revolution that started with the Magnificent 49ers, *shōnen ai* and *June* would become an unstoppable tide that led to the rise of *yaoi* fanzines and a move from underground to overground with a slew of commercial magazines dedicated to boys love in the 1990s? Even the gods of manga could not have imagined that this tide would contribute to a situation where, from the 1990s on, a large number of female artists crossed over into *eromanga* for men.⁷

In addition to what has already been discussed, *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* inherits many other genes from *shōjo* manga. Depictions of interiority and introspective themes are examples, as are the ribbons, frills, lace, tulle and various costumes that have become fetishized. Take “cat ears” (*nekomimi*), which are to this day an important “*moe* element” (*moe yōso*) in manga/anime character design, but actually originated with Suwano Chibi-neko, the heroine of Magnificent 49er Ōshima Yumiko’s *The Star of Cottonland* (*Wata no kuni hoshi*, published in *LaLa* magazine from 1978).⁸ Structurally, the love stories that became prominent in *eromanga* from the 1980s resemble

6 TN: In case it is not clear, Nagayama is discussing the phenomenon of women and girls reading relations of male-male romance and sex into and out of “original works,” which include both media forms (for example, films) and reality (for example, sports teams).

7 Concerning *shōnen ai*, *June*, *tanbi*, *yaoi* and boys love, two must-read texts are Sakakibara 1998 and Nakajima 1998. Rather than to get an overview, from the deviation between the positions of these two authors, one can catch a glimpse of the complexity and abundance of the world of *shōnen ai*, *June*, *tanbi*, *yaoi* and boys love. Here the focus is on manga, but I will point out that there is also a strong current of *tanbi* novels and short stories, which take Kurimoto Kaoru and, further back, Mori Mari as their godmothers.

8 Earlier, we met Nakata Aki, the young girl who encountered the torture scene in *Kagemaru of Iga* and got excited. She later became a manga artist and drew *Pink Triangle* (*Momoiro sankaku*, published by Byakuya Shobō in 1984), a masterpiece of erotic parody that takes *The Star of Cottonland* and other *shōjo* manga works of the Magnificent 49ers as its motif. (The title itself

shōjo manga love comedies. (This is also true of boys manga.) The only difference is whether the goal is sex or not. If female artists that acquired sexual expression through *shōjo* manga, *yaoi*, boys love and ladies comics started to enter the territory of *eromanga* for men from the 1980s, and that crossover intensified in the 1990s, then there was even more injection of *shōjo* manga genes.⁹ All of this challenges the preconceived notion that “*eromanga* is by male artists and for male readers.”

The Source of Erotic Comedy is Love Comedy, Darling!

On the other hand, what was happening with boys manga? What happened after the polymorphous eroticism of Nagai Gō? Of course, I understand the importance of Yamagami Tatsuhiko's *Brat Cop* (Gaki deka, published in *Shōnen Champion* from 1974) and Kamogawa Tsubame's *Macaroni Spinach* (Makaroni hōrensō, published in *Shōnen Champion* from 1977). If one is speaking of manga history, then a few pages should probably be set aside to discuss them. There is no mistake that both of their memes are in the gene pool of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. However, they did not have enough influence to affect *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* on the whole.

The primary place of honor here belongs to Takahashi Rumiko. For seasoned readers of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, this is already common sense. First appearing in *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* (Shūkan shōnen sandē, published by Shōgakukan) in 1978, Takahashi's *Urusei Yatsura* (Those Obnoxious Aliens) not only excelled as love comedy on a base of slapstick science fiction, but also went all out with sexiness.¹⁰ In the first place, love comedies use the relationality of men and women as their engine. As an extension of the slam-bang of lovers' quarrels, though it would absolutely never be

is a parody of Hagio Moto's *The Silver Triangle* [Gin no sankaku, published in *SF Magajin* from 1980.] She also drew boys love and wrote novels.

⁹ A full discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter, but I should add that some male artists active in third-rate *gekiga* later used female names and worked in ladies comics, which pushed sexual expression even further.

¹⁰ *Urusei Yatsura* was serialized for roughly a decade (1978-1987) in *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* and adapted into an anime that aired for five years (1981-1986). There were also six theatrically released animated films, most famously *Beautiful Dreamer* (1984). Directed by Oshii Mamoru and taking as its theme the “endless school festival (or summer vacation),” this film is a masterpiece that cuts deep in its critique of otaku. It was probably also a critique of the original work, which stretched on and on. Come to think of it, maybe the *Urusei Yatsura* type repeated over and over again in *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* of the 1980s reflects the unconscious desires of the first generation of otaku, who refused to let the festival or summer end.

Image 5 A sample of Takahashi's *Urusei Yatsura*. Featured is Lum, an iconic *bishōjo* or cute girl character.



drawn, was sex. Moreover, Lum, the main heroine, has proportions like Tinker Bell and a tiger-skin bikini as her default costume. Other female characters also have bizarre or fetish costumes. There is a *bishōjo*, or cute girl character, who dresses as a man (the character Fujinami Ryūnosuke), a white-smocked doctor who is also a shrine maiden (Sakura), a Lolita (Ran) and more.¹¹ Gloriously polymorphous.

Even more important here is that Takahashi created one of the templates of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. In the decades of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* since, just how many *Urusei Yatsura*-type works have there been? The pattern is that, from another world – space, an alternate dimension, the bottom of the sea, the future or past, underground or super-high society, the world of fantasy, heaven or hell, from beyond – comes a girl with unusual powers – an alien, time-traveler, android, fairy, goddess, angel, demon, vampire, punk or gangster or gambler, genius, therianthrope, ghost, multi-millionaire, princess, maid – who pushes her way into the protagonist’s home, settles in like a wife and jerks the protagonist around, even as she is also jerked around by him. Befitting the moniker “female Doraemon,” this is extremely convenient fantasy for male readers, and it works well for a series; as long as one holds the basic pattern of the cheating protagonist and heroine from another world who loves him, the story moves along by just inserting rival characters.¹² For creating collections of serial short stories, this is indeed a handy format.

For example, a cute girl in costume comes crashing through the roof and ceiling of an apartment. “Soooorry! My dimensional transporter ran out of energy and I fell.” Saying this absurd thing, she pulls down the protagonist’s pants. “Please share some of your energy with me!” She pushes him over, and off we go. Here the creator can add that sex is necessary to replenish “orgone energy,” or suffice it to say that seminal fluids are a “highly concentrated energy source.” In fact, even if you skip the explanation, those with some experience reading *eromanga* will call up appropriate reasoning from their mental database and subconsciously fill in the blanks. After replenishing her energy, the dimensional traveler can exit the scene by this time crashing through the wall. “That was awesome...” Says the protagonist, basking in the afterglow. Behind him, the reader sees the apartment landlord standing there

11 TN: There is also a strongly teased incest relationship between big brother and little sister (Tobimaro and Asuka, if not the mirrored Shūtarō and Ryōko).

12 TN: A beloved manga/anime franchise, *Doraemon* tells the story of an eponymous robotic cat who comes from the future to assist a bullied and underachieving boy. The robot produces fantastic devices to solve problems, which often backfire to comedic effect. A hit with children, who no doubt wanted a Doraemon of their own, the story is wish fulfillment in classic form.

in sheer exasperation and about to explode. This works fine as a punch line, and it can be followed by a final panel to end the page reading, “As to what happened after...” Turn to the final page in the short story: “In fact, she’s still here.” “My dimensional transfer engine broke this time, tee hee!” In the style of Tsuge Yoshiharu’s “Mr. Lee’s House” (Ri-san ikka, published in *Garo* in 1967), leaving it open-ended like this makes later continuation possible, depending on support from readers. There are reasons to be dissatisfied with what might appear to be a half-baked approach, but from this are also born masterpieces and choice articles, so we cannot be too dismissive. I will leave the concrete examples for the chapters in Part 2, but suffice it to say there are many notable works in this vein.

It does not stand out as much as the type of science fiction love comedy that Takahashi Rumiko established, but similarly providing basic genetic material to contemporary *eromanga* is the form of love comedy that boomed in boys magazines from the late 1970s. This boom, which started with Yanagisawa Kimio’s *Tonda Couple* (Tonda kappuru, published in *Shūkan Shōnen Magajin* from 1978), was both indirectly and directly influenced by *shōjo* manga of the golden age of the 1970s. This of course includes the Magnificent 49ers discussed earlier, but also Mutsu A-ko, Iwadata Mariko and Tabuchi Yumiko, who were active primarily in *Ribon* (published by Shūeisha) and created so-called “girly” (*otomecchiku*) love comedy and memes that gushed into the pool of boys manga. Never mind genes, Adachi Mitsuru, who had drawn extensively for *shōjo* manga magazines, entered into the fray of boys magazines with *Miyuki* (published in *Shōnen Biggu Komikku* from 1980), which established its own subgenre.¹³ In this same stream is Yuzuki Hikaru, who had been drawing racy comedies such as *My First Time* (Boku no shotaiken, published in *Māgaretto* from 1975) in *shōjo* magazines and moved to magazines targeting young men with *Give It All* (Minna agechau, published in *Shūkan Yangu Janpu* from 1982).¹⁴

13 TN: Nagayama does not say precisely what he means here, but *Miyuki* is the story of a young man who meets and begins dating a slightly younger girl who turns out to be his stepsister, which leads to a struggle between familial and romantic feelings. Most likely, Nagayama is suggesting that this manga, Adachi’s first to be made into an anime series, established the subgenre of little sister love. In any case, it helped popularize it.

14 TN: It is worth noting here that *My First Time*, published in a *shōjo* manga magazine, tells of a boy who attempts suicide thinking that the girl he likes does not reciprocate his feelings, only to awake in a girl’s body, discover that the girl s/he was interested in is also interested in her and try to work out their relationship as same-sex, different-gender lovers. This demonstrates the extent to which sex/gender issues were making their way into *shōjo* manga at the time, but *Give It All* has been described as more or less “light pornography.” Important here is that Yuzuki did this in the style of *shōjo* manga.

Perhaps needless to say, but sex itself was still forbidden in both general boys magazines and *shōjo* magazines. It did not matter if it was serious, or love comedy, or a pure love story, or racy comedy, sex itself was taboo and creators working in these magazines had to stop just before crossing the line. They had to limit themselves to intimation.¹⁵ Despite the fact that there is no such constraint in *eromanga*, it is interesting that the categories of love comedy and love story appear much the same as they do in general magazines. If one facet of this is readers who wanted to see what came next in manga for boys and girls becoming artists and drawing the sexual intercourse that was there taboo, then one might also describe the vitality of forms used over and over again.

The Alternative Circuit called *Dōjinshi*

In the mid-1970s, also crucial was the first Comic Market in 1975. Of course the scale was incredibly small compared to the present, but it is interesting that the founding of the convention synchronizes beautifully with the surge year of third-rate *gekiga*.¹⁶ The existence of the Comic Market, which is often abbreviated as “Comiket” or “Comike,” would change the very structure of the manga world. A keyword here is *dōjinshi*, or material published and distributed outside of the established circuits of commercial presses, magazines and bookstores. In the form of handwritten coterie magazines, *dōjinshi* existed from the time of the Tokiwa-sō generation. They also existed later as platforms for manga circles, student research groups and clubs scattered around the country to publish work and study diligently the work of others.

The advent of direct sales events such as the Comic Market became an opportunity for *dōjinshi*, which had until then been distributed only to members of the circle and those close to them, to take on the character of indies publishing. If there is a market, namely *dōjinshi* direct sales events,

15 For example, overlapping with the time of the Magnificent 49ers and *shōjo* manga discussed earlier, in “Green Carnation” (Guriin kânēshon, published in *Gekkan Sebuntin* in 1976), Yamagishi Ryōko condensed a “bed scene” – that is, a sex scene – to the single sound effect of “creak” (*gishi*). This was right at the limit of what was acceptable then.

16 TN: When it was first held, the Comic Market drew about 700 people to buy from 32 groups selling. Held twice a year in winter and summer over the course of several days each time, the Comic Market today draws well over half a million people buying from 35,000 groups selling, which makes it the largest event of its kind in the world. For more details in English, see the official website at: <http://www.comiket.co.jp/index_e.html> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

then both sellers and buyers can use it. Selling *dōjinshi*, the circle collects production capital. That is, it becomes possible to raise funds for the next issue. Naturally, the *dōjinshi* that had until then been part of the sphere of amateur hobbyists and a platform of practice for manga artists in training did not disappear, but something else was also happening. The value of *dōjinshi* as products was on the rise yearly, and their later emerged “amateur artists” who could make a living with earnings from direct sales events – get together the down payment for an apartment, even. In time, there also appeared freelance editors (*dōjin* editors), who could not draw manga or write novels themselves and were committed to only editorial duties. Like a sort of mini commercial press, these editors would request work from artists, pay them and publish magazines for distribution and sale at events.¹⁷ As this became increasingly common, to put it in somewhat extreme terms, one could survive as a manga artist in the *dōjinshi* market without even once working for what is traditionally thought of as a commercial magazine. For even established professional artists, *dōjinshi* became an attractive medium to not only create without the restrictions of commercial magazines, but also earn cash income.¹⁸ In the world of *dōjinshi*, there is less emphasis on high and low, and things can appear as if upside down. In fact, there are artists who say that their main occupation is *dōjinshi*, and that they publish in commercial magazines to advertise their work and sell more *dōjinshi*. At present, the word *dōjinshi* has lost all substantive meaning, and it is probably more accurate to call them independently produced books.

Now, let us consider the genes that the Comic Market and *dōjinshi* added to *eromanga* from 1975 to the early 1980s. For starters, they contributed almost nothing to third-rate *gekiga*. While the time of their appearance basically coincides, compared to the big bang of third-rate *gekiga*, the first Comic Market was an extremely modest affair. The period of exponential expansion of the Comic Market did not come until the 1980s, by which point the third-rate *gekiga* boom was over. Recalling that Comic Market representative Yonezawa Yoshihiro was involved with third-rate *gekiga* magazines, and that *dōjinshi* artists producing *lolicon* works made their professional debuts in third-rate *gekiga* magazines in the final days of those publications, it is not the case that third-rate *gekiga* and *dōjinshi* are completely unrelated, but interaction

17 There are even freelance editors who use the network acquired with *dōjinshi* as assets to start editorial production companies and get involved with more traditional commercial magazines.

18 Bookstores specializing in manga popped up soon after direct sales events and started carrying *dōjinshi*. In the late 1990s, rumor has it that an artist who made 200 million yen annually working for commercial boys manga magazines published *dōjinshi* at a cost of five million yen, sold 55 million yen worth of product and blew five million yen on an after party.

was limited. Examining only the aspect of trends, perfectly synchronizing with the Comic Market are, one, the establishment of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* in 1982, and two, the *yaoi* style of male-male coupling that exploded like a bomb with *dōjinshi* devoted to the characters of *Captain Tsubasa* (Kyaputen Tsubasa, published by Shūeisha from 1981) in 1985.

In the background of all this, as Iwata Tsuguo of the Comic Market Preparation Committee highlights, were rapid strides made in *dōjinshi* publishing from the late 1970s into the early 1980s, which allowed for achieving quality on par with commercial magazines, and moreover ushered in an era of competition to keep prices down (Iwata 2005). In a rapidly growing market, it is an obvious result that the “inside jokes” of the early period of *dōjinshi* abruptly transformed into “sellable products.” Immediate assets here were eroticism and parody. It is uncertain when erotic parody *dōjinshi*, or parody that added erotic expression, initially appeared, but there were already such works associated with *lolicon* in the late 1970s. Of course, they did not lean toward eroticism and parody just to make money. More than that, they prioritized the fun of drawing eroticism and parody that had been generally prohibited. There were surely some knitted foreheads and raised eyebrows among them, but, for young artists, there was pleasure in breaching taboos and disrupting authority. Furthermore, the thrill of customizing someone else’s characters as one likes, adding eroticism and humor, is something distinct from creating an original work.

There are various debates about parody *dōjinshi* appropriating widely recognized characters created by other people. In most cases, however, the original creator and copyright holder gives tacit consent or ignores derivative works.¹⁹ A big part of this is likely that parody *dōjinshi* do not financially

19 It is not the case, however, that there is no trouble. In the early days of *lolicon* manga (the beginning of the 1980s), Makimura Miki (aka El Bondage) and others boldly drew *Urusei Yatsura* parodies for commercial magazines, which resulted in complaints and protests from large publishers. Legality aside, there was an unwritten rule that such things could not be done so blatantly. Demonstrating the fallout of complaints, there exist two types of trade paperback from Makimura’s early career, namely the original version with the offending material and revised version with it removed. In another example, at a time when *Captain Tsubasa* was creating a boom in *yaoi*, editors at *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, which serialized the original work, called out the “pornographic sham” (*poruno magai*) of *dōjinshi* that made up about 80 percent of all the derivative works. An exceptionally confrontational message from the editors was published in issue number nine of 1987, and there they blasted *dōjinshi* and asked for voluntary restraint. That said, examples of legal action against *dōjinshi* are limited to cases such as the “Pokemon Incident” (*Pokemon dōjinshi jiken*) of 1999. In this instance, Kyoto police arrested a *dōjinshi* artist residing in Fukuoka Prefecture on suspicion of copyright infringement, but it gave the impression of being mostly for show. If the offended had been a manga artist or publisher, as opposed to the Nintendo corporation, it likely never would have gone so far.

damage the original creator and copyright holder. Parody *dōjinshi* are not the same as fake brand products. Readers know that these works are parody, or rather buy them precisely because they are parody of original works and characters they recognize. Depending on the content and success or failure of parody, there are instances of incurring the wrath of the original creator and fans of the original work. However, not taking action has become something of a virtue. In the case of manga, original creators and copyright holders themselves often produce *dōjinshi* that are parodies of the works of others – in addition to parodies of their own works – so there is a sense that everyone is in on it and no one can cast stones.

It is rare that original creators and copyright holders publically give the official go-ahead to parody *dōjinshi*, but it is now common sense in the manga, anime and game industries that parody *dōjinshi* are a barometer of popularity. If one goes to the Comic Market, it is quick and easy to gauge which manga series in a given commercial magazine are gaining traction with readers, which anime are finding an audience and which games are reaching players. In fact, rather than attempt to shut down fan works, it is not unusual today to draw manga for commercial magazines and produce anime and games with the calculation that parody *dōjinshi* will be made. From the commercial *eromanga* side, erotic parody *dōjinshi* were like a farm for digging up creative talent, a place to try things that were not in commercial magazines and an antenna to catch trends. Naturally, there were also cases of large publishers fishing for newcomers, but *eromanga* publishers and editorial production companies were faster and more diligent about speculation. For large publishers, rather than taking a chance, it was more efficient to scout talent after artists had practiced their skills in *eromanga* and become more developed. An older type of editor only saw erotic *dōjinshi* artists and *eromanga* artists as resources for producing erotic comedy, but this thinking is less pronounced among more recent editors.

Interestingly, many manga artists continue to draw *dōjinshi* even after making their professional debuts. In fact, there is even an inversion phenomenon, where artists working in commercial magazines and with no prior experience with *dōjinshi* suddenly enter the *dōjinshi* world. At the Comic Market, *eromanga* czar Dirty Matsumoto and veteran *shōjo* manga artist Shibata Masahiro sit at tables next to people young enough to be their children, and all of them are peddling *dōjinshi*.²⁰ At the risk of

20 Known for *Wolf Girl Ran* (Ōkami shōjo Ran, published in *Bessatsu Māgaretto* from 1975) and *Sarai* (published in *Yanqu Kingu* from 1998), Shibata Masahiro presides over the circle Panic House (Kyōkōsha). Their *dōjinshi* series *Red Eye* (from 1997) is a work featuring characters in

repetition, *dōjinshi* are not a substrate below commercial manga. Rather, it is another, alternative manga world. While overlapping and intersecting a great deal with commercial manga, it has at the same time continued to exist as another world.

The End of the 1970s: The Decline of Third-Rate *Gekiga* and Arrival of *Bishōjo*

Like the principle that all living things must die, the age of decline came in due time to third-rate *gekiga*, which peaked in the mid- and late 1970s. There are a number of reasons for the decline. First off, the number of magazines had reached the point of oversaturation. To secure the amount of work necessary to fill all those pages, standards could not be maintained and quality plummeted. Popular artists were taking on – or made to take on – impossible workloads, and some are said to have produced as many as 300 pages a month. If editors could not make it work with even that, they secured the necessary number of pages by publishing mediocre work of the sort that would not have made the cut before, or stopgap work from newcomers, or old work by popular artists. With this going on, it is really no wonder that readers moved on.

Another reason for the decline was a wave of regulation. Consider the following list:

- 1 1976: The Tokyo Regional Women's Organization begins a movement to stop the sale of vending-machine magazines.
- 2 1977: The Youth Affairs Administration conducts a youth awareness survey related to vending machines.
- 3 1978: The problem of “pornographic magazine vending machines” is discussed by the House of Representatives Educational Subcommittee.
- 4 1978: Under Article 175 of the Penal Code of Japan, the November issue of *Manga Erogenica* is charged with “distribution of obscene drawings.”
- 5 1979: *Supplementary Utopia: Seductive Lips* (*Bessatsu yūtopia: Kuchibiru no yūwaku*, published by Kasakura Shuppansha) is similarly charged.

maid outfits, but is of the same high quality that fans have come to expect of Shibata. Invited by Hagiwara Kazushi, a former assistant of Dirty Mastumoto and known for *Bastard!!* (published in *Weekly Shōnen Jump* from 1988), Shibata apparently decided to participate in the Comic Market after encountering a young girl who “was drawing work more radical than my own,” which came as a shock.

- 6 1980: The National Congress of Parents and Teachers Associations begins a petition demanding regulation of “harmful publications” in vending machines and legislation that bans the sale of “obscene publications” to youth.
- 7 1980: Crackdown on all *bini-bon*. The managing director of Haga Shoten is arrested.

There is a theory that the response to *Manga Erogenica* came because the chief editor provoked authorities in an appearance on the late-night television show *nPM*. That is certainly possible, but looking at the train of events before and after, it appears self-evident that someone would have been made an example of sooner or later. The goal of managing authorities and the pro-regulation camp was to rub out guerilla publications such as vending-machine magazines and *bini-bon*. Vending-machine magazines did not immediately go extinct, but the ebb of the tide came quickly. As I recall, vending-machine magazines persevered into the mid-1980s, but when the vending machines that carried them were driven off of main streets and drastically decreased, publishing for distribution there lost its appeal. This was a huge blow for vending-machine exclusives, as well as third-rate *gekiga* magazines that depended on vending machines as part of their distribution channels.

Something else that should be kept in mind is that, from the start, third-rate *gekiga* publishing was not a business looking to the future. From the beginning, it was a means for small and micro publishers to acquire fast cash and live through the day. It was not at the level of grand vision, sparking a publishing revolution or strategic maneuvering. To put it simply, it was just a matter of making magazines at reduced cost by using manga artists who charged little for their work and editors paid minimum rates for their services. *Gekiga* magazines had meager advertising revenue. They were basically disposable reading. No one was thinking that they could make more money later by publishing trade paperbacks. Even if they had been, many did not have company accounts, and most did not have the reserves to put out trade paperbacks.

There were probably many other factors contributing to the decline. Rather than debate which of them dealt the mortal wound, more important is that a mixture of everything did the trick. Furthermore, looking back, we can see that the next era of *eromanga* – in other words, the “age of *bishōjo*” – had already begun inside of erotic *gekiga*. Be that as it may, erotic *gekiga* did not completely disappear. Even if the big three magazines and style connected to them declined, manga readers moved on and things scaled back

overall, the survivors had a niche. In any age, there exist customers who need inexpensive erotic material. In contrast to *gekiga* that appealed to fans and intellectuals, “practical use” works continued to have a place. Into the 2000s, *Manga Bon* (first published by Shōnen Gahōsha, then Daitosha), *Manga Utopia* (Manga yūtopia, published by Kasakura Shuppansha) and *Manga Lawrence* (Manga rōrensu, published by Sōgō Tosho) held on tenaciously and earned profits over long periods. Naturally, the artists have also lived on.

Not just lived on, but seemingly overnight experienced a revival, which has allowed them to publish new books and reprints, drive fans wild and fluster feckless critics without a clue as to why this is happening now. Particularly famous in this vein is Ken Tsukikage, who enjoyed a boom of interest in his work in the late 1990s. Like raging billows, at a pace that would make one think there was a magazine called *Monthly Ken Tsukikage*, his works were published. In the wake of this renewed interest, Ken Tsukikage appeared in *Play Comic* (Purei komikku, published by Akita Shoten), a well-established *gekiga* magazine, and even towed it along as a banner contributor. Known for his cold sadomasochism, the introduction of computer graphics allowed Mamiya Seiji to raise that level even more; he, too, began releasing books almost every month. Speaking of people with strong personality, Oga Tomoyoshi, who boasts enduring popularity for his combination of Hōjō Tsukasa-like images and thorough vulgarity, once again drew attention during a boom of interest in mature women. Manga fans who until then did not know the toxic brew called Oga Tomoyoshi were hammered to hell. Even bizarre erotic artist Hayami Jun was recovered and instantly idolized by manga readers with offbeat tastes. Although not such a hit, Nemuri Taiyō released a trade paperback in Spain, drove the big-breast lovers of the Iberian Peninsula into a fever and has constantly been publishing *eromanga* featuring mature women with Tōen Shobō. Whether critics and intellectuals praise it or not, what lives on lives on.²¹

21 The revival of third-rate *gekiga* occurred from the end of the 1990s into the early 2000s, but afterward was curbed by the bankruptcy of central publishers involved. When this book was originally published in 2006, *Manga Utopia* was still alive, but that ceased to be the case in 2009.



3 *Bishōjo*-Style *Eromanga* Takes the Stage

The First Half of the 1980s: The Revolutionary Outbreak of *Lolicon*

Heralded as the first *lolicon* manga magazine, *Comic Lemon People* (Komikku remon piipuru, published by Amatoriasha) marked a major turning point. The date indicated on the first issue is February 1982, which is much later than it actually hit store shelves at the end of 1981, but in any case this was the beginning of what is commonly called the “*lolicon* manga boom” (*rorikon manga būmu*). From *gekiga* style to manga/anime style, third-rate *gekiga* to *lolicon* manga. The paradigm shift progressed at a speed faster than anyone had anticipated. In the background one can see the larger flow of time, or the heave of cultural history.

Particularly characteristic is the restoration of fragility, or its revaluation (Matsuoka 1995). Fragility refers to something easily breakable, delicate, small, immature, weak, incomplete, fragmentary, lovely, misshapen, sick, short-lived and so on. In many cultures, it is something cherished and held in contrast to the masculine ideal, or machismo. Even if the culture of fragility was comparatively minor, it was certainly not particular, or particularly fragile itself. Even under the militaristic and repressive culture of prewar and wartime Japan, fragility lived on in amusement for “women and children.” Following the defeat of the Empire of Japan in the Second World War, macho values began to crumble. With the weakening of the prewar and wartime regime, as if it was already historically inevitable, fragility began to proliferate. Before anyone knew it, “fancy goods” represented by Sanrio’s Hello Kitty had saturated the culture of “women and children;” the word “cute” (*kawaii*) swallowed up “beautiful,” “appealing,” “great” and “excellent;” and all of this started to overflow from the domain of “women and children” (Shimamura 1991).

The upper age limit for readers and viewers of manga and anime, ostensibly forms of culture for children, was pushed higher and higher. With a cynical, bitter laugh, the baby-boomer generation’s protest fighters, who suffered crushing defeat in 1970, became gung-ho company men – corporate warriors – worked like draft animals and made Japan richer and richer. The editors and artists who led third-rate *gekiga* were also baby-boomer warriors. Machismo suppressed fragility. However, that pressure gradually eased. Following the baby-boomer generation came “the interstitial generation”

Image 6 Cover of the February 1982 issue of *Comic Lemon People*. This was the first commercial lolicon manga magazine.



(*hazama no sedai*) or “apathetic generation” (*shirake no sedai*), which did not make it to the protests of the late 1960s that ended in 1970. Moreover, insofar as they had witnessed their seniors’ brilliant turn from protest fighters to corporate warriors and subsequent decline, members of this generation were thoroughly fed up with machismo. Finally, when we reach “the otaku and new breed generation” (*otaku to shinjinrui no sedai*) below them, machismo was a joke, material for parody.

“I like cute things.” That is what the arrival of *Lemon People* specifically, and the rise of culture associated with women and children and revaluation of fragility generally, announced. So-called “otaku” and members of the “new breed” were part of a generation when, from the time they were born, weekly manga magazines and television anime were just there, normally. For them, Sanrio characters and other cute consumables were everywhere. They were the first bunch to profess a love for cuteness without hesitation. To cut a long story short, these men and women came to have disposable income in the heady economy of the early 1980s; they were children of the slogan “consumption is a virtue.” It is not a coincidence that *Mono Magazine* (Mono magajin, published by Wārudo Foto Puresu), which stoked men’s material desires, and *Olive* (Oriibu, published by Heibon Shuppan), which stimulated women’s cute style, were both established the same year as *Lemon People* in 1982. It is simply that the time had come.

The *lolicon* boom was already underway before *Lemon People* and manga in the world of photography and graphic journalism magazines. A keyword here was “*shōjo*,” or girl, and more concretely photo albums of “*shōjo* nudes.” Pioneering examples include Kenmochi Kazuo’s *Nymphet: Myth of the 12-Year-Old* (Nimfetto 12-sai no shinwa, published by Nōberu Shobō in 1969) and Sawatari Hajime’s *Shōjo Alice* (Shōjo arisu, published by Kawade Shobō Shinsha in 1973), but the eye of the storm was Kiyooka Sumiko. Starting with the nude photo album *Sacred Shōjo: Nymph in the Bloom of Life* (Sei-shōjo: Nymph in the Bloom of Life, published by Fuji Āto Shuppan in 1977), she held exhibitions at department stores across the country and published one book after another. In the fateful year 1982, Kiyooka commenced with *Monthly Petit Tomato* (Gekkan puchi tomato, published by KK Dainamikku Serāzu), which remains a legend for selling like gangbusters to white-collar workers at station kiosks. The perspective of (primarily men) viewing *shōjo* nudes bounced between the poles of appreciating the beauty of fragile girls and treating them as a substitute for mature adult nudes.¹ We can roughly say

1 Around 1980, Ishikawa Yōji, Kondō Masayoshi and others were also publishing *shōjo* nudes in graphic journalism magazines. Cheap *shōjo* photo albums were released one after another.

that, in the former, they took on Sawatari's otaku-like gaze, and in the latter Kiyooka's baby-boomer-like gaze. Of course, the boom of *shōjo* photography did not in any straightforward way lay the groundwork for the *lolicon* manga revolution. However, it serves as evidence that the preference for cute girls started to become prominent amid the commercialism of the time.

A large swell was building in fandom, too. With a core in science fiction, the fandom of the day had spread to manga, anime, film, photography, theater, literature and art. For example, in the December 1980 issue of anime magazine *Monthly Out* (Gekkan out, published by Minori Shobō), the first installment of Yonezawa Yoshihiro's serialized column "Manga Modernology for Perverts" (Byōki no hito no tame no manga kōgengaku) takes up the topic of "the Lolita Complex" (*roriita kompurekkusu*). There he touches on not only early forms of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, or works featuring cute girl characters and called then *lolicon* manga, but also Mutsu A-ko's girly love comedy *shōjo* manga, Takahashi Rumiko's *Urusei Yatsura* and Yamamoto Takao's *shōjo* photo album *Little Pretenders: Little Prudes* (Ritoru puritendā: Chiisa na osumashiya-san, published by Mirion Shuppan in 1979). Anime magazine *Animec* (published by Rapōto) after all sticks to what it knows in a feature for its April 1981 issue. Titled "L is for Lolita" ("Ro" wa roriita no "ro"), the piece brings together cute girl characters from anime. Top billing is given to Clarisse from Miyazaki Hayao's *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* (Rupan sansei: Kariosutoro no shiro, 1979), and *dōjinshi* are also brought to the table. On the manga side, for its October 1981 issue, *Fusion Product* (Fyūjon purodakuto, published by Fyūjon Purodakuto) put together its own, "Feature: Lolita, or How I Came to Abandon Normal Romance and

Famous photographers such as Araki Nobuyoshi were also shooting *shōjo* nudes, sometimes with very young models. It is not the case that the population of pedophiles dramatically increased leading up to or following this moment. The consumer base for *shōjo* nudes was for the most part composed of normal adults, as can be seen from a reader survey in the final issue of the magazine *Hey! Buddy* (Hei! Badii, published by Byakuya Shobō from 1980) in November 1985. In Japan, legal interpretations of obscenity have fixated on reproductive organs, which cannot be exposed. The *lolicon* boom occurred in an era when "hair nudes," or nudes of women mature enough to have pubic hair, were not allowed. Producers of *shōjo* nudes ran with hairless vaginas because the authorities did not see them as "reproductive organs," which placed them outside the target of regulation. Particularly interesting in all this is the existence of fragile perspectives like the one found in Aoyama Shizuo, whose monochrome city photography attempts to capture the everyday reality and organic loveliness of girls. (See for example *Shōjo Days, Vol. 1* [Shōjo-tachi no hibi e 1], published by Asuka Shinsha in 2005.) Incidentally, the event that drove *Hey! Buddy* to end publication was the "Moppet Trial" (*mopetto saiban*), where a merchant attempted to import and sell a foreign graphic journalism magazine that contained underage nudes, clashed with customs and forced the legal decision that the vaginas of even very young girls be recognized and treated as reproductive organs.

Love Cute Girls” (Tokushū: Roriita aruiwa ikanishite watashi wa seijō na renai o hōki shi bishōjo o ai suru ni itatta ka).

As a good example of the honeymoon of science fiction, anime and *lolicon*, one can turn to the Japan Science Fiction Convention held in 1981. Also known as Daicon III, marking it as the third of its kind held in Osaka, this convention is renowned for the premiere of the “Daicon III Opening Animation,” which was produced by members of the group that would later form anime production studio Gainax. Among the core organizers of the convention were Okada Toshio – later known as the “otaking,” or otaku king – and Takeda Yasuhiro, who would both serve terms as head of Gainax. Born from the “room to talk about science-fiction manga” (*SF manga o kataru heya*), where Tezuka Osamu, Murakami Tomohiko, Kō Shintarō and Ishikawa Jun were joined by Azuma Hideo, the standard bearer of *lolicon* manga, the “Daicon III Opening Animation” might even be called the origin of *bishōjo* anime. Centering on the adventure of a manga/anime-style cute girl character who became an idol, the “Daicon III Opening Animation” involved Anno Hideaki, who would become a legend as director of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (Shinseiki Evangerion, televised anime from 1995); Yamaga Hiroyuki, who directed the animated film *Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honnêamise* (Ōritsu uchūgun: Oneamisuru no tsubasa, 1987); and Akai Takami, an illustrator and game creator known for the *Princess Maker* (Purinsesu mēkā, from 1991) series. The fandom of the day was not a den of pedophiles or anything of the sort. From the reevaluation of fragility surfaced a preference for *bishōjo*, or cute girls. This is something that happened simultaneously all over, including in manga and anime.

In the world of *dōjinshi* too, with the threshold being 1980, what were called “*lolicon* fanzines” (*lolicon fanjin*) proliferated. According to Hara Maruta’s article “What Are *Lolicon* Fanzines? Their Past, Present and Future” (*Lolicon fanjin towa nani ka? Sono kako, genzai, mirai*), which was published in the October 1981 issue of *Fusion Product*, it had by that time expanded to dozens of works. Particularly popular among them were the *Cybele* (Shibēru, from 1979) series, which prominently featured work by Azuma Hideo; *Doll Princess* (Ningyō hime, from 1980), headed by Senno Knife; and *Little Girl Love* (Yōjo shikō, earlier first volume unknown, but records from volume two in 1981), primarily prose by Hirukogami Ken. Many of the contributors became artists and editors for early *lolicon* manga magazines.

Looking back from a contemporary perspective, we can situate *lolicon* manga as a movement to restore Tezuka-style manga drawing. Given that many of the *lolicon* manga artists of the day were also working for third-rate *gekiga* magazines, the banner of “anti-*gekiga*” was not held high, but the main

point is that they wanted to read erotic manga featuring manga/anime-like drawing. “Manga/anime-like drawing” (*manga/anime-ppoi e*), as in Tezuka-style manga drawing, which is characteristically “cute.” If one considers that the icon of this “cute” movement (“*kawaii*” *undō*) was the *bishōjo*, or cute girl, and that “*bishōjo* = Lolita” in the parlance of the day, then it is easy to understand. It was not necessarily that the *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* in question was what we might now associate with “*lolicon*,” but this was the buzzword and name of the boom. It is not so different from the theme for a school festival, except that behind the early otaku who supported and expanded on the “*lolicon* festival” was the otaku generation. The otaku generation became university students and working adults, and the market grew exponentially along with their increasing disposable income. So began the age of the endless school festival, with manga and anime of all types in abundance and *lolicon* referring to a specific subcategory of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. In the first half of the 1980s, however, it was all just called *lolicon* manga.

Early *Lolicon* Manga

As can be gleaned from the example of *Daicon III*, early *lolicon* manga rose along with fandom and shares its science-fiction orientation. This first wave of *lolicon*, again as seen in “*Daicon III* Opening Animation,” often brought together “mecha and *bishōjo*.” Put simply, this was just mixing the things that fans liked, but the result was more than the sum of its parts. The loveliness of the *bishōjo* flattered the mecha, the mecha’s rough edges and inhumanity further accentuated the softness and vitality of the *bishōjo* and the combination took the world by storm. If one thinks about it, from this point, the importance of mood, character, design and setting over narrative – what would later be connected to discussions of “*moe*” – was already established. More than the depiction of sex, the eroticism of *lolicon* manga of the day was largely carried by fetishism for the cuteness of characters, body type, action and movement, costume, situation and so on. While there is plenty to talk about concerning the sharp character modeling in Aran Rei’s work, Taniguchi Kei’s deeply nuanced girl image and the broken appeal of characters in Makimura Miki’s (aka *El Bondage’s*) anime parody, covering genitals and depictions of sex did not become targets of controversy back then.

Now then, what about Uchiyama Aki, the most successful *lolicon* manga artist? Before doing his better-known work for *Lemon People*, Uchiyama debuted under the name Noguchi Masayuki in 1979. As Noguchi, his first trade paperback was *It’s Tough, Julie* (Tsurai ze Jurii, original work by

Yamasaki Jūzō, published by Futabasha in 1981), which is about an aging amateur baseball player whose wife leaves him and their daughter. It is a comedy, but from the cover, where the daughter appears as a little girl in a miniskirt with her panties fully exposed – the spitting image of an Uchiyama character – one gets that he was who he was from the start. In 1982, as Uchiyama, he began serializing *Andro Trio* (Andoro torio), which features a very young female android in a diaper and her various sexualized adventures. Appearing in *Weekly Shōnen Champion* (published by Akita Shoten), which is not a *lolicon* magazine, but rather a manga magazine for boys, *Andro Trio* impressed a significant sexual trauma on the youth of the time. However, the core of Uchiyama's work was not “sexual intercourse between men and women,” but rather the fetishism of diapers, young girls' panties and urination for which he would come to be known.

Gone is the pathos of third-rate *gekiga*. In its place is an artificial body, deodorized and without the smell of sweat, a “character” (*kyara*) shaded as if on animation celluloid. Rather than manga, it might be better to take this as part of a “media mix” (*media mikkusu*), or the comicization of an erotic anime that exists in the mind of the creator, but not in reality.² The same can be said of Nakajima Fumio, Muraso Shunichi and others coming out of third-rate *gekiga*, but in *lolicon* manga, what was important was that it was happening with *shōjo*, or girls, specifically *bishōjo*, cute girls. Concrete sex acts were just one of numerous forms of eroticism. These works were collectively called *lolicon* manga because the heroines were *shōjo*, there were erotic scenes and perhaps they were serialized in “*lolicon* manga magazines.” It was really only after the boom had ended that there appeared *lolicon* manga that seemed like the real deal, or as if drawn with the driving force of a pedophilic desire for very young girls.

The Second Half of the 1980s: Two Key Figures

In commercial magazines, the substantive *lolicon* manga boom lasted only two years between 1982 and 1984, but the iconography of the manga/anime-style cute girl character was handed down in its same form. The reason the

2 Representative of “mecha and *bishōjo*” are Morino Usagi, Aran Rei, Hariken Ryū and Kazuna Kei, but Kazuna Kei and Konoma Kazuho would later realize their imaginary media mix by serving as character designers for the pornographic anime *Cream Lemon Part 3: Science Fiction Superdimensional Legend Rall* (Kuriimu remon part 3: SF chōjigen densetsu Raru, released by Sōeishinsha in 1984).

lolicon manga boom ended is simply that there were not any true pedophiles among the creators and readers of the content. Even if at the very least they felt that girls before the onset of secondary sexual characteristics were “cute,” the overwhelming majority did not take them as objects of sexual desire. They had no attachment to *lolicon* per se, and so moved on as the shock of the festival opened up new venues for diverse content. During the period of *lolicon* manga’s decline, two key figures appeared.

The first was Ōtsuka Eiji, who was a young editor at the time. In the early 1980s, Ōtsuka assumed the position of chief editor of *Manga Burikko* (published by Byakuya Shobō from 1982), which was founded as a *gekiga* magazine and struggled with sales and turning a profit. Under Ōtsuka, from May 1983, *Manga Burikko* was revamped into what he described as a “*bishōjo* manga magazine.” This may well be the beginning of referring to contemporary *eromanga* as “*bishōjo* manga.” The awesomeness of Ōtsuka is that, while maintaining the public position that it was to the end *eromanga*, he promoted the “new wave revolution” (*nyū wēv kakumei*). Many manga artists debuted or had their big break in *Manga Burikko* – including Fujiwara Kamui, Okazaki Kyōko, Hiromori Shinobu (aka Miyasu Nonki), Kagami Akira (aka Apo) and Shirakura Yumi – and many of them went on to be active in general manga magazines. As a freelancer, parallel to his work on *Manga Burikko*, Ōtsuka was also involved in editing the anthology series *Petit Apple Pie* (Puchi appuru pai, published by Tokuma Shoten from 1982), which shared a basically overlapping list of contributors, but cut out explicit eroticism. Reaching more mainstream audiences, Ōtsuka sold not only his contributing artists, but also a new manga sensibility. (In the late 1990s, Ōtsuka’s strategy of dividing work with shared roots into adult and non-adult versions to be sold simultaneously would recur in the form of large companies and capital decoupling “*moe*” and “masturbation” material. This issue will be discussed more in depth later.) Also, in *Manga Burikko*, Takekuma Kentarō and Nakamori Akio lent their powerful pens to columns. Famously, in 1983, Nakamori’s teasing of fans and manga readers caused controversy, led to debate with Ōtsuka and popularized the word “otaku” as slang.³

After Ōtsuka stepped down as editor, *Manga Burikko* was taken over by Saitō Ōko (aka Saitō Reiko, aka O-ko), went through a renewal and finally

3 TN: Like many other writers, Nagayama recognizes the debates surrounding the meaning of “otaku,” which he typically writes in the hiragana script of Japanese. At the end of this sentence, however, he has written it in both hiragana and katakana, which reflects a common distinction between Nakamori’s use and later use. For more, see the introduction to Galbraith et al 2015. There are also chapters in the volume covering *Manga Burikko* and Ōtsuka.

shaped an era as *Manga Hot Milk* (Manga hotto miruku, published by Byakuya Shobō from 1986). The refined sense and path laid out by Ōtsuka, along with the batch of creators that he raised, spun off from the world of *eromanga* and expanded into the territory of general manga magazines. With Ōtsuka's departure from the world of *eromanga*, one might say that the history of *eromanga* as movement – from third-rate *gekiga* to *lolicon* manga and finally the new wave – had approached its end. That said, Ōtsuka's legacy – in other words, the “cute,” “not dirty,” “fashionable,” “advanced” style – went on to influence *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* in the form of “high-end style” and “*moe*,” which will be discussed later in the chapter.

If one takes Ōtsuka as representative of the producer-like editors who were running the “movement,” then the other key figure of Moriyama Tō (aka Tōyama Mori, aka Yamamoto Naoki) was the creator who more than any other captured the zeitgeist of the post third-rate *gekiga* and post baby-boomer generation. There was no other creator who expressed to the extent that Moriyama did the sense of fatigue and feeling of powerlessness, the cynicism and nihilism and anarchism, the incredulity and animosity toward existing values and reality of the generation that would be called “otaku” and the “new breed.” This generation came after the apathetic one that witnessed the transformation of boomers and protesters into corporate warriors; this generation came after that one that experienced defeat before they ever even entered the battle. In Moriyama's work, the pathos of the old generations is thoroughly eliminated. There is no heroism, machismo or dignity. Even when intense sex acts are drawn, there is no driving force behind them – no love, no desire. Such things are nothing more than a target to make fun of, a detestable humanism. There is only to violate and be violated, to kill and be killed. In Moriyama Tō's world, humans are disposables.

That world is buried in a dark, deep despair, colored by savage humor and cynical laughter. For example, in “Prelude to Demacoova: Soft Version” (Purorōgu demakōva soft version, in *Rough & Ready* [Rafu & redi], published by Tsukasa Shobō in 1986), tragedy unfolds against the background music of the Tokens' upbeat “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” (1961). A group of highschool girls who have come to the Amazon jungle on a fieldtrip are captured by a tribe of cannibals, raped, killed and eaten. “With girls, there is nothing to throw away, right?” So say the cannibals as they thoroughly use their victims up to the hair and bare bones, like something out of the glory days of the whaling industry. In some situations, Moriyama's trenchant cynicism took the form of basically nonsensical gags. It was as though he even sneered at the expressive form of manga itself – no, if anything, at himself as a manga

artist. Although it has in contemporary work been further refined, this anarchist style of Moriyama was after all cool in its day.

The one who supported the creative activities of Moriyama by founding the magazine *Comic Penguin Club* (Komikku penguin kurabu, published by Tatsumi Shuppan from 1986) was Miyamoto Masao, president of Comic House, the largest editorial production company in the *eromanga* industry. Along with *Manga Hot Milk*, *Comic Penguin Club* was a platform for a cohort of creators with strong voices and visions. These two magazines were pillars of the golden age of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* in the second half of the 1980s.

The Golden Age of *Eromanga*

Eromanga had expanded by leaps and bounds. *Lolicon* manga was effective as a catalyst, but, thankfully, hidebound *lolicon* fundamentalists were essentially not part of the picture. Originally, “*lolicon*” was nothing more than the “theme of the festival.” When the festival ends, the floats go into the storehouse. The *lolicon* manga boom lasted for two years at most before dying down. Be that as it may, *lolicon* did its job well. It drew the attention of manga readers and presented the potential of new *eromanga*.

Everything under the sun can grow if the number of magazines, creators and readers increases. Most readers were not committed to *lolicon* and simply rode the next wave as if there was nothing to it. The diversification of choices that had already begun from the *lolicon* boom progressed even further. If there was the fashionable and deodorized new wave, then there were also artists with strong voices and visions, represented by Moriyama Tō. If one was after some lighthearted fun, then there was the thoughtlessly cheerful love comedy represented by Watanabe Wataru, which was in the process of becoming mainstream. In terms of design, anything and everything was on display. There were works that looked like *gekiga*, childrens manga, boys manga, *shōjo* manga, *bande dessinée* (French comics) via Ōtomo Katsuhiro and Fujiwara Kamui, anime and more. Every style that existed in the world of manga also existed in *eromanga*. One could say that the range of readers broadened, and one could probably also say that readers with a broad dynamic range increased.

When thinking about the history of *eromanga*, it is crucial to remember that, once born, a mode, style, theme, motif, taste or inclination will never disappear, although there will be ebb and flow. No matter how the times may change, stereotypical *lolicon* manga exists as always, and cheerful love comedy is here to stay. With each passing year, *eromanga* diversifies and

segments; its width and depth advance; there is crossing, border crossing, penetration and diffusion; and the repetition of this has formed a fertile soil. But life is not so easy. The climb upward does not continue indefinitely. Once a peak is reached, next comes the decent. This might be inevitable, but in the case of *eromanga*, it was nearly crushed to death before the peak, leaving only a tiny shred of hope. Under a long shadow cast by a case of serial abductions and murders of little girls that occurred from 1988 to 1989, “the winter years” (*fuyu no jidai*) came to *eromanga* at the end of the 1980s and lasted into the beginning of the 1990s.⁴

The First Half of the 1990s: The Winter Years of *Eromanga*

The crackdown against manga in the early 1990s was the largest of its kind in the postwar period. Propelled by mass media, members of the public and private sectors came together to stamp out not only *eromanga*, but also erotic expression in manga on the whole. The impetus is thought to have been a citizens group in Wakayama Prefecture, which complained to the police about letting erotic manga for youth run wild. In a democratic society, the will of the people is first. Especially when it comes to the politics of expression and speech, a sufficient reason is necessary for authorities to step in.

Asking to what extent the movement against “harmful manga” represented the popular will gets us nowhere. What matters is that authorities were given a reason to step in. This was aided by liberals and those on the left, who until this point had rallied for defending freedom of expression, breaking down based on new understandings of “the commoditization of sex”

4 News reports after the arrest of Miyazaki Tsutomu as the perpetrator of these heinous crimes showed images of his bedroom full of videotapes and manga, which shocked the nation. The look into his bedroom provided a major pretext for prejudice and discrimination against “otaku,” as well as regulation of media (horror films, manga, anime and later games). It has long been known in certain circles that the images of Miyazaki’s bedroom were purposefully suggestive, but this was confirmed in an article titled “What in the World is Going On?” (Ittai dō natteiru no ka), which was published on the blog *The Fighting Yomiuri Weekly Editorial Department* (Kakutō suru yomiuri uiikurii henshūbu) on November 12, 2005. In the article, Kimura Tōru, the first reporter from the *Yomiuri* group to enter Miyazaki’s bedroom, looks back at the event. He testifies that crews from private television stations moved *A Young Wife’s Fresh Panties* (Wakaoku-sama no nama shitagi, published by Wani Magajinsha in 1989), an erotic *gekiga*, from its original hard-to-see location to one where it stood out to viewers. This revelation caused controversy in the blogosphere. The article was later removed from the site, and the site itself closed down, making access, let alone proper referencing, difficult.

and “female discrimination.” Among them appeared academics advocating theories such as “there are manga that should be defended and manga that it is fine to not defend,” which have lasting effects to this day. Amid this uproar, the *Asahi Shimbun*’s editorial “There Are Too Many Impoverished Manga” (Mazushii manga ga ōsugiru) was surely the finishing blow.⁵ Published on September 4, 1990, in the *Asahi Shimbun*, a prestigious national newspaper that was thought to be comparatively liberal, it essentially gave the green light to eliminate “vulgar *eromanga*.”

Afterward, going through a process that gets one fed up just recalling it, what would become the “adult comics label” (*seinen komikku māku*) was worked up as a compromise.⁶ With this, *eromanga* was explicitly established as self-regulated content. It is my opinion that it was not manga that was impoverished, but rather the thinking of people who purported to be progressive intellectuals and liberals, even as they failed to sincerely consider the concepts of “expression” and “freedom.” Even if something is a personally distasteful expression, whether professing displeasure or not, at the very least we must not lend a hand to its elimination. As long as one bears the name liberal, I believe that this is the minimum understanding, but it appears that things are completely different in our country.

What activists actually pointed their fingers at was not *eromanga* narrowly defined (they were likely unaware of its existence in the first

5 The editorial overflows with prejudice and ignorance toward manga and erotic expression. For example, touching on an exhibition of Tezuka Osamu’s work, the author of the editorial writes, “Humor, humanity and a philosophy of concern about the future of civilization. There was much there to learn anew. If only younger artists had inherited a little more of this idealism and creativity, the criticism of ‘manga destroying the nation’ would probably never have erupted.” This is truly dismaying. The author is writing without even recognizing the historical fact that Tezuka’s works were once on the firing line of the movement against harmful publications in 1955, when he was branded an “enemy of children” (*kodomo-tachi no teki*). The editorial does warn that “just because there are vulgar manga does not mean that we should have regulation by laws and ordinances,” but the message of its title was taken at face value by those advocating for increased regulation. It might be that the *Asahi Shimbun*’s founding and sponsoring of the Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize (from 1997) was to a certain extent an apology to the manga world. Back then, I pressed Yonezawa Yoshihiro, who was on the selection committee for the prize, by asking, “Are you going to work with *Asahi* after what they did?” Introducing my book in a column in the *Asahi Shimbun* on November 1, 2006, Ogawa Bii writes, “The movement against harmful manga’ began in the 1990s with that editorial, which criticized manga taking up erotic material as ‘vulgar’ and ‘impoverished.’” Although written by an outside author, publishing these words may have been an indirect way of admitting the past mistake.

6 TN: The “adult” here is *seinen*, but not the homonymous word marking *gekiga* or manga for young men. This *seinen* has a different Chinese character for “*sei*,” which makes it mean “adult” in the sense of “age of majority.” To avoid confusing the homonymous words, the label is sometimes called the *seijin komikku māku*. It went into full effect around 1996.

Image 7 Cover of Kamimura's *Oh No! Ms. Luna* (*Ikenai! Runa-sensei*, published by Kōdansha from 1986). The artist got caught up in debates about harmful manga in the 1990s.



place), but rather the family of erotic love comedies found in boys manga magazines. Bearing the brunt of the attack were Kamimura Sumiko and Yūjin (aka U-Jin). Important to note here is that it was not eroticism with a *gekiga* touch, but rather manga drawings that became an issue. The two artists and their works are far from *gekiga* realism and readily recognizable as in manga's vein of cartoony and cute. More specifically, Kamimura's designs are those of school workbooks and boys manga, and the base of Yūjin's style is Eguchi Hisashi – in other words, they are on the path that extends from manga through the new wave to “*moe*.” Both Kamimura and Yūjin would later reissue their problematized works with the adult comics label on them.

The people calling for stronger regulation criticized “eroticism in boys magazines that children read,” but were they perhaps not really more concerned about “eroticism in the same style as childrens manga?” When thought about this way, *eromanga* narrowly defined – which draws sex in the style of not only boys manga but also *shōjo* manga, “abnormal” acts involving anime-esque designs of the kind favored by young children and more – is absolutely outrageous. After the personnel in charge of eroticism at mainstream magazines took their licks, it was obvious that the target would shift to “something far worse.” By this point, everyone had stopped thinking about just how many kids might be reading *eromanga*, which printed in short runs and appealed primarily to manga fans. The expression as such was now the problem.

During the crackdown, *eromanga* publishers with minimal capital reserves took a catastrophic blow. At the time, part of my job was checking all the new releases of *eromanga* trade paperbacks, which decreased from what had been around 20 a month to between zero and 12. With even just a simple calculation, one can estimate that 1.2 billion yen – 1,000 yen per book times 10,000 copies times 20 releases times six months – worth of distribution was stopped. (In terms of royalties, 120 million yen.) In spite of this, because magazines could continue publication by thoroughly suppressing depictions of eroticism, most people made it through without starving to death or turning to suicide.⁷ However, for creators who had finally achieved a certain standard of living with royalties from sales of their trade paperbacks, these were truly the winter years. It is said that among them were those who could not pay their gas bills and, in the middle of winter, were forced to make do without hot water, let alone a heater.

7 While it has been said that the cause of a particular creator's suicide was this major crackdown, the information is still unconfirmed.

The Second Half of the 1990s: The Adult Comics Label and Bubble Period

Big groups together took the lead on the adult comics label, and smaller groups accepted it, but in fact no major publishers put out “adult comics” from the end of the 1990s on. While there were exceptions, the rate of putting the label on manga that might require it was very nearly 100 percent. With major publishers refraining from explicit sexual depictions and smaller publishers putting the label on *eromanga* and thus placing them beyond the reach of those concerned about youth, a stable and secure peace was brokered. (That is, until the Shōbunkan Incident and obscenity trial in the 2000s.) With their audience clearly indicated to be adults, smaller publishers were relieved of restraints. The tendency at the time was for major publishers to be tame concerning eroticism and smaller publishers to be extreme. (Granted, the criteria by which things are judged to be extreme are subjective and vague, but the tendency was toward direct and vivid depictions.) With the crackdown, the political landscape shifted dramatically. The voice of proponents of increased regulation – with civic associations, community groups and the police at the center – gained strength, and, the other way around, liberals and opponents of increased regulation crumbled like brittle.

However, ironically, regulation produced a business of scarcity. After the arrival of the adult comics label, the small publishing companies that one would expect to be beleaguered businesswise suddenly dove headlong into a bubble period. No one knew when the next crackdown would come. That sense of impending crisis spurred readers to consume. The number of trade paperbacks published per month, which before the regulation had been around 20, recovered to that level in no time at all. In fact, there were soon over 50 a month and, at the peak, it crossed the 100 mark. Surprisingly, the publishing blitz of over 1,000 new trade paperbacks a year basically continued full steam throughout the second half of the 1990s. Rather than people buying now because it might not be here later, the numbers suggest there were more readers buying more *eromanga* in a market that could sustain itself at this scale. Bearing the adult comics label, *eromanga* had arguably been accepted by manga readers. (Occupying a floor in manga specialty shops, but still.) In this sense, the second half of the 1990s was a period of stabilization and influx. An increase in volume does not necessarily mean an improvement in quality. However, according to Theodore Sturgeon’s law that 90 percent of everything is crap, overall growth meant that the absolute number corresponding to the remaining 10 percent of quality increased. Inevitably, the map of the *eromanga* world was redrawn.

Shota and the Rise of Female Artists

In the mid-1990s, the *eromanga* bubble made some editors and artists nervous. Even as elderly editors worried that they would not last much longer and searched for the next generation, younger editors and artists felt trapped by the prospect of doing more of the same. Their motivations may have differed, but they longed for a new epoch to follow the shift from third-rate *gekiga* to *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. To start from the conclusion, there was no manifestation of the “next,” but there were many attempts. New memes were introduced; some stuck, and some did not stop at the *eromanga* world and went on to become widespread.

To begin, it is worth noting that anthologies devoted to “*shota*,” or a taste for cute boys, went through a mini boom in the mid-1990s. It is not that works depicting homosexuality and boys love did not exist – they did, from before the age of third-rate *gekiga* – but this is the earliest example of them being established as a subcategory of *eromanga* for men. Cracks were appearing in the facade of *eromanga* as something depicting men and women having sex. Of course, *shota* did not spontaneously emerge and become popular. There is a history to the lax constitution of an industry where “anything is fine as long as it’s erotic,” which existed from the age of third-rate *gekiga* at least and allowed it to become a receptacle for polymorphous eroticism. Drawing various forms of sex and eroticism was accepted, and drawing the “perverse” (*hentai*) to spice things up had become admirable. Speaking of direct relations of influence, the success of Byakuya Shobō and Ōtō Shobō in releasing anthologies devoted to the “bizarre” (*bizāru*) – sadomasochism, body modification, hard Lolita, cute boys dressed as girls, big breasts – in the 1990s is probably a precedent for the *shota* boom.

Another reason that *shota*, originally associated with *yaoi* or boys love manga for women, was able to appear in work for men was that many of the small publishing companies involved in *eromanga* were simultaneously putting out boys love manga magazines and *dōjinshi* anthologies for women.⁸ Even if such was not the case, there was still exchange with the “for women side” when collaborating with subcontracted editorial production companies and freelance editors, which meant that publishers were not starting from zero. Human resources could be gathered from both the *yaoi* / boys love side and the *bishōjo* side. As an added bonus,

8 TN: Alongside the so-called “gay boom,” boys love manga underwent a major surge of mainstream, commercial publication in the 1990s (Mizoguchi 2003).

Image 8 A sample of Unite Sōji's *Prima Materia* (Purima materia, published by Fujimi Shuppan in 1999). Working across categories of content, female artists like her brought new memes to *eromanga* in the 1990s.



structurally speaking, because *shota* was not *bishōjo*, it was not under as strict of surveillance and could get away without the adult comics label.⁹ This meant fewer limits to circulation, more exposure and potentially greater profits. The works could be sold to both women and men. It might be tempting to talk about *shota* as leaning toward the *bishōjo* side or *yaoi* / boys love side, but segmenting this content as for men or for women is not how business is always done.

A significant outcome of the *shota* boom was spurring on of the phenomenon of more and more female artists working in *eromanga* since 1990. Thus did female artists who would carry the next generation appear one after another from publishers Tsukasa Shobō, Ōtō Shobō and Core Magazine. More than simply the *shota* boom providing an opportunity, a bigger factor was the recognition by editors and readers of these women's talents and techniques for expressing sex and eroticism, whether they were working primarily in commercial magazines or *dōjinshi*. Gone were the days when *shōjo* manga artists – concrete sexual depictions sealed away – had to express it all with the single sound of a bed creaking. (This actually happened in Yamagishi Ryōko's "Green Carnation" [1976].)

Like the industry itself, *eromanga* readers were from the start fairly laidback. Put bluntly, the thinking in this world was, "As long as you can draw something erotic, it's irrelevant if you're a man, or a woman, or an alien." If a female artist used a male penname or something gender neutral, or used their being a woman as a sales point or not, was all a matter of individual artists' self-production and promotion. Interestingly, it was male artists using female pennames who tended to highlight "being a woman."¹⁰ Female artists and the *shōjo* manga and *yaoi* / boys love memes that they carried with them permeated and spread throughout *eromanga*. This resulted in boundaries becoming more and more vague. While it was always somewhat of a crude simplification, by the second half of the 1990s, it made increasingly less sense to talk about *eromanga* as "by and for men."¹¹

9 After 2010, designation of boys love works as harmful or unhealthy took root. From this point on, these works have consistently been designated this way, which indicates that regulators intend to tighten their grip on content perceived to be by and for women.

10 There are even artists who set up women as their substitutes at *dōjinshi* direct sales events. In the past, an artist made his female partner appear on a television show in his place, which would have been fine if it stopped there, but he earned the scorn of the industry when he criticized the fact that she was an *eromanga* artist.

11 TN: Remember that in principle Nagayama is not including boys love, ladies comics or other erotic manga produced primarily by and for women in the category of "*eromanga*."

The Wave of Refinement and High-End Style

The huge number of female artists crossing over into *eromanga* had a considerable impact in the mid- to late 1990s. With the infusion of the latest *shōjo* memes, *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* became more and more lovely, deodorized and refined. At the same time, there was the permeation of computer-graphic techniques, which Yui Toshiki took the initiative in introducing; the spread of the internet; and reciprocal influence through exchange with the adjacent game and anime industries.¹² As these strands intertwined, the style of *eromanga* changed greatly.

Rather, to be precise, *eromanga* again played a role in the larger trend of refinement of visuals in otaku media. In the *dōjinshi* world, a cohort of artists with a strong design sense, represented by Choko and Sharp, drew attention. In 1994, MediaWorks, which would before long become a stronghold of otaku media, established *Monthly Comic Dengeki Daiōh* (Gekkan komikku dengeki daiō). That same year, the manga arm of Wanimagazine Co., Ltd., which stands in the intermediary range between *eromanga* and general magazines, established *Comic Kairakuten*. This high-sense publication featured work by Murata Range. In the *eromanga* magazine *Comic A-UN* (published by Hitto Shuppansha from 1996), young creators published works overflowing with fresh designs colored by a taste for games and a feel for language.

Amid all this, Sarashina Shūichirō, who was at the time a young editor at Core Magazine, dubbed the work of a cohort of budding manga artists with an advanced sense the “high-end style,” which developed into the “high-end debates” (*haiendo ronsō*). On the one hand, this was a recurrence of the bygone new wave movement in *eromanga* led by Ōtsuka Eiji, but, on the other hand, it also had the face of a new intergenerational conflict. Unfortunately, “high-end style” misfired as a “movement,” unable to fully present the significance held by its keyword. Nevertheless, the debates symbolized the refinement of taste in *eromanga*, its increasingly sophisticated quality and the coming to the fore of a younger generation.

12 For example, the game key visual artist Misakura Nankotsu, who produced hits in the *eromanga* world with *Full Body Super Satisfaction* (Gotai choo manzoku, published by Ōtō Shobō in 2001) and *Hikikomori Hygiene* (Hikikomori kenkōhō, published by Koa Magajin in 2003), is probably representative. Shocking then were his overwhelming game drawings, which were not limited by the layouts and grammar of traditional manga, and the inundation of mysterious “Misakura language.”

New Expressions and Recurring Expressions

Refinement and change occurred in more than the style of drawings. In terms of manga grammar, for example, some artists ignored the classic flow of panels – in other words, laying things out by page and guiding the gaze from the top right down to the bottom left – and instead made the entirety of two-page spreads express single moments (or very short periods of time). In other cases, even when there was a division of panels, it was not meant to express the flow of time, because each panel was a detail of something happening at the same time, or depictions of the same moment from different angles. It is perhaps easier to grasp if one imagines that the multiple screens or windows of computer/console games were transplanted onto the printed page. I have in the past called this “multi-screen baroque” (*maruchi sukuriin barokku*), but of course the works I was discussing were not using this technique throughout. Story development progresses through a classic panel layout until a sex scene – especially when there are more than two characters involved – when pages switch to multi-screen baroque. The heavy use of multi-screen baroque in Shiwasuno Okina’s *Shining Musume* (Shainingu musume, published by Hitto Shuppansha from 1997) series makes it a brilliant representative. It is an expressive technique that might feel odd, depending on the reader, but an obvious development for the gamer generation and something it accommodates easily.

In addition to this, many other changes at the level of expression are noteworthy. For example, Okamoto Fujio brought the mode of the “gravure comic” (*gurabia komikku*), where extremely eye-catching illustrations are lined up sequentially like photos of pinup girls, to commercial magazines. This was originally optimized for *dōjinshi* direct sales events, where readers stand at a table, quickly skim through sample copies and decide whether or not to make a purchase right then and there. Speaking of *dōjinshi*, the method of sampling established characters and elements, which existed from before in the form of anime parody, became mainstream. (At the time of the boom surrounding anime series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, characters with the same hairstyle as the heroine Ayanami Rei appeared one after another in *eromanga*.)

However, in the second half of the 1990s, perhaps the biggest tidal force was the extremification of expression in “neo-gekiga.” “Extreme” is a vague concept, but in the context of a discussion of *eromanga* in Japan in the 1990s, it refers to the prominence of depictions of sexual organs that are at the very limit of legal acceptability, self-regulation that is close to almost no covering of those sexual organs, forms of violent sex and *gekiga*-like drawing. Running

out front of this hard line were *Comic Muga* (Komikku muga, published by Ōtō Shobō from 1997) and *Comic Mujin* (Komikku mujin, published by Tiiiai Netto from 1999), the latter being a spin-off started by the same editorial department. Many editorial departments followed in their footsteps and rushed to keep up. The point was not just to be extreme, but to show it all and with as much impact and intensity as possible. For readers with the goal of masturbation – “getting off” (*nuki*) – these works had plenty of appeal. The spread of the neo-*gekiga* style laid bare all the more a contradiction that *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* had carried with it since the age of *lolicon* manga, specifically competition between “*moe*” and “masturbation” material.

The Age of “*Moe*”

In contrast to masturbation material and “getting off” (*nuki*), then, what does “*moe*” mean? The word *moe* began to be whispered in corners of the otaku world in the mid-1990s. This was around the time that the *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* market approached its zennith. Although the first examples of the use of *moe* date back to the early 1980s, it is probably reasonable to focus on anime fans in semi-closed communities (primarily online bulletin boards) from 1993 to 1995, and to take this as basically the starting point.¹³ In other words, *moe* can be traced back to male anime fans talking about female anime characters. *Moe* means loving an anime character that exists in a fictional work as if it were an actually existing idol and worshipping it as such.¹⁴ It is also a desire to select and extract a character from a work, turn it from a character into a “chara” (*kyara*), and personalize and possess it.¹⁵ This is so-called “character *moe*.”

The style of consumption itself existed from before the term *moe*. If we take its origin to be around 1995, then a decade before, around 1985, there was a huge boom in *yaoi* and *dōjinshi* dedicated to the characters of *Captain Tsubasa*. Earlier still, the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s was the start of the “age of *bishōjo*,” including the birth of *lolicon* manga. One

13 TN: In this Nagayama follows Morikawa Kaichirō. See Chapter 3 of Galbraith 2019.

14 Anime characters are the primary object of early affection here, but one possible etymology ties *moe* to the voice actress Nagasaki Moe. Even as they are flesh-and-blood humans, voice actresses and actors can also be consumed as “characters.”

15 The disaggregation of “character” and “chara” proposed by Itō Gō is fertile (Itō 2005). For Itō, “character” (*kyarakutā*) is an existence inside a work, and “chara” (*kyara*) is something that exists autonomously even if detached from a work. Intended as a theory of manga representation, this can be expanded to discuss reception and reading, as well as marketing strategies.

can probably find earlier examples of anime parody, but I would like to flag the convening of the first Comic Market – the event that would become the hotbed for this activity – in 1975 as a major historical watershed. This was the year that the system of reproduction and commoditization of characters separated from works, which had until then been primarily in the hands of those on the producer side, was released to countless individuals on the consumer side.¹⁶

Appearing 20 years after the Comic Market, the word *moe* took on the meaning of “cute” (*kawaii*), which had permeated Japanese culture as an adjective for the attractive and adorable. Making it a verb and giving it otaku inflections, *moe* spread in a flash. From character *moe* it splintered into a response to costumes (maid outfits, gothic-lolita fashion, shrine maiden attire, various kinds of uniforms), hairstyles (pigtails, cowlick), accessories and articles of clothing (glasses, socks, ribbons), physical characteristics (slender, big or small breasts, cat ears, tails, elf ears) and other various aspects of outward appearance. At the same time that these “*moe* elements” (*moe yōso*) were a metonymy indicating character traits, they simultaneously were fetishized and valued independently of their role in shorthand characterization. Beyond just visual expression, *moe* elements also include settings such as occupation, position, social standing, personality, one’s circumstances, family relationships, use of language and more. If there are cases where *moe* elements are the common denominator of multiple characters, then there are also cases of citation from places unrelated to specific characters. It is a situation where memes of unknown origin wash ashore and are registered before one even realizes it. The other way around, as Azuma Hiroki points out, it is possible to gather fragmented and dispersed *moe* elements and compose a character such as Dejiko (aka Di Gi Charat).¹⁷ Following Azuma, this appears to be “database consumption,” or characters broken down and registered as elements (Azuma 2003).

16 There is a long history to the business model of commoditizing characters, or existences inside of works, as “chara.” Even before Tezuka, there existed innumerable character commodities derived from manga and anime. One could probably say that the Hollywood star system that Tezuka took a cue from is a system that segmented and commoditized flesh-and-blood actors and actresses such as Shirley Temple and their characters. Moreover, there are also characters like Hello Kitty that start as commodities or mascots without an original work or story to be removed from; they begin as “chara,” and only later appear in media as “characters.” As an aside, Hello Kitty debuted in 1974, which is to say during the rise of cute in Japan.

17 The mascot character of Gamers, a chain of stores that specialize in manga, anime and related media and material, Dejiko first appeared in 1998. [TN: For more on Dejiko and her construction from *moe* elements, see Azuma 2009: 39-42.]

What *moe* meant in the 1990s does not necessarily correspond with contemporary “*moe*,” which permeated and dispersed as a buzzword indicating an otaku-like love, attachment or desire. Nevertheless, originally, *moe* was a word conveying that one was favorably disposed to something, or was having a positive response to it. Beyond this, the meaning is largely ambiguous. If there are 100 people, then there will be 100 people’s nuance of *moe*. Speaking from personal experience, *moe* seems to be a soft fetishism and feeling close to love. However, even if one grants that the meaning of the words *moe* and “like” (*suki*) are equivalent – as Izumi Nōyuki (aka Izumi Nobuyuki) demonstrates in the opening of *An Introductory Theory of Moe* (Moe no iriguchi ron, 2005) – I think that in a precise sense it is impossible to substitute one for the other.¹⁸

Why is *moe* used instead of like or love? Without considering this question, we cannot approach the core of the phenomenon. If there are people who use *moe* as a straightforward expression of love, then there are conversely also those who use it in response to objects that they have absolutely no interest in. Between them is gentle gradation, but where the one uttering *moe* stands is left to self-reporting. Accepting the utterance of *moe* without probing the feelings behind it is a matter of implicit understanding among otaku. The minimum rule is to respect one another’s likes and tastes and not tread on the interior of others more than is necessary. To put it frankly, using *moe* is a declaration of intention – specifically, that one wants to talk, but does not want to get hurt. To talk about “like” and “love,” but keep it vague. *Moe* is a euphemistic expression that, while indicating the object, is deftly made to hold the connotation that in fact it might not be the actual object. Moreover, I am responding to that object (or something), but the feelings behind that response are unknown and should not be interrogated. The object and my orientation toward it thus declared, we can interact. Using *moe* is not “coming out,” as some have argued, but rather a way to smoothly carry on the game of human relations without full exposure.

Eroticism is also part of *moe*, but a smokescreen is thrown over desire, which is made ambiguous and effaced. There appears to be a nebulous taboo and phobia against sex (sexual desire, eroticism and the expression of them). In this *moe* conspicuously resembles fans turning characters into idols and tuning out sex during the *lolicon* manga boom. Over 99 percent of *lolicon* manga readers were not pedophiles, but rather young people who liked “cute things.” *Lolicon* was a flag raised for the purpose of drawing

18 For Izumi Nōyuki’s full essay, see: <<http://www1.kcn.ne.jp/~iz-/man/entero1.htm>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

participation in the “festival.” Readers at the time rejected third-rate *gekiga* and welcomed *lolicon* manga and its cute designs. Avoidance of real and graphic sexual expression and eroticism played a big part. At any rate, it was a time when letters of protest from readers – “Please don’t do such horrible things to her!” – would pour in if artists inserted hard sexual depictions. Back then, there were those who shot back that such complaints were silly regarding *eromanga*, but with the “cute taste” (*kawaii shikō*) that would later come to be called “*moe*,” depictions of sexual intercourse and sexual organs are not necessarily required. The sexual elements are skillfully hidden by and in the “cute memes.” Paradoxically speaking, it is precisely because of the concealment and suppression that these works are erotic. Be that as it may, readers are not monolithic. There are various kinds of readers now, just as there were then: readers who like *gekiga*, but tolerate manga drawings; “getting-off” readers who seek hard sexual depictions irrespective of the style; readers who put getting off on the back burner, as long as the work is cute. *Bishōjo*-style *eromanga* built on a complementary relationship between *moe* and masturbation material. That this continued from the early 1980s into the 1990s – with censorship edging in – is perhaps in and of itself a miracle.

Following the establishment of *moe* as otaku lingo and its mainstreaming, the balance of things started to go mad. In the 1990s, the great depression of the Heisei Period was tightening purse strings, but manga, anime and related media and material were more abundant than ever. Works featuring *moe* elements meant to trigger a response, most notably attractive characters and designs, were becoming dominant. The blitz of MediaWorks, which simultaneously established five magazines in the *Dengeki* line in the spring of 1993, was particularly important, but the rise of *moe* was beyond any single company. One might say that otaku culture in its entirety underwent a “*moe*-fication.” Conversely, it seems that the essence of otaku culture was always *moe*, which was finally given a name as it took over the mainstream.¹⁹

To be frank, the situation was such that the erotic content sought by many otaku readers could be obtained without the perceived impurity of “genitals” and “sex acts.” That is, content other than *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* contained the eroticism associated with *moe* without becoming explicit. In that case, there was no need for readers interested in *moe* to insist on *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. The subsequent shift in *eromanga* toward hard material for the purpose of masturbation was likely in part a strategy to

19 TN: For more on the connection between “otaku” and affection for manga/anime characters, which connects the *lolicon* boom and *moe*, see Chapter 2 in Galbraith 2019.

supplement *lost moe* readers with readers interested in getting off. Explicit sex is, after all, something that *eromanga* can do that other content cannot. The recalibration of *eromanga* as something for getting off did in fact increase revenue during the bubble in the 1990s. Despite what may seem simple in its service to “getting off,” *eromanga* in this vein are nonetheless wide ranging. There are practical use works that are thoroughly discardable, but also works that emphasize story and interiority, while still providing masturbation material for readers with intense sexual depictions. Remarkable artists are here to be discovered. However, *moe* readers have increasingly come to avoid *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, which now incorporates the intensity of *gekiga* and *neo-gekiga*.

The late 1990s was also a time when regulation of manga gained momentum, slowly but surely. In the fallout of the Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway being pinned on the otaku generation in 1995, Japan being criticized at the First World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm in 1996, an incident of serial stabbings of children in Kobe being reported to have been influenced by manga in 1997 and more, in 1998, the ruling political party presented an outline of the proposed “Act on Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protection of Children” (hereafter “Child Pornography Law”), which included pictorial expression. The move to enshrine in law the regulation of pictorial and manga expression by piggybacking on the high legislative ideal of protecting the human rights of children drew criticism from many in Japan. When the bill was passed into national law in 1999, pictorial expression was excluded. For the time being, regulation of manga expression was brought to a halt, but a supplementary provision stipulated that the law would be revisited three years after it went into effect. With an eye on that, the offense and defense carried over into the 2000s.

The 2000s: Permeation, Diffusion and Waning Fortunes

The new millennium began with three proposed bills concerning the regulation of media – “The Basic Law Against a Harmful Social Environment for Young People,” “The Personal Information Protection Law” and “The Human Rights Protection Law” – appearing in rapid succession. All were suspicious bills in the sense that they, like “The Child Pornography Law” before, attempted to push through media regulation and regulation of expression in the name of good causes that are difficult to complain about or criticize. With these examples at hand and revisiting “The Child Pornography Law” on

the horizon, a group of volunteers composed of manga artists, readers and critics established the Animation, Manga and Interactive Game Network (Renrakumō AMI) mailing list. In 2001, they campaigned against regulation of pictorial and manga expression at the Second World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children convened in Yokohama.

While revising “The Child Pornography Law” to include pictorial expression was avoided, regulation was becoming stricter at the level of local government ordinances, which as a matter of practice shut magazines with the adult comics label out of most public spaces and convenience stores. Even when properly labeled and zoned, *eromanga* had a target on them. The Shōbunkan Incident in 2002 marked the first time that Article 175 of the Penal Code of Japan was applied to manga in the courts. Going all the way to the Supreme Court of Japan and ending in a guilty verdict, the case demonstrated that *eromanga* with the adult comics label were not immune to charges of obscenity, which here meant failing to adequately cover drawn genitals.²⁰

Eromanga publications were summarily shoved into the ghetto where they would not stand out. If one commits thoroughly to providing material for getting off, reduces covering of genitals and depends on hard depictions of sex – as the artist charged in the Shōbunkan Incident did, for example – then Article 175 stands in the way. Many general retailers and major chains of convenience stores shut the work out if it has the adult comics label on it. Without the label, one risks being called out as a harmful or unhealthy publication according to local ordinances, which makes selling anywhere difficult. On top of that, *moe* has moved outside the sphere of *eromanga*. These harsh conditions persist into the present with no exit in sight.²¹ The winds of depression blow ceaselessly; publishing hiatuses and discontinuations occur one after another; publishers go bust, or transfer their controlling interest to others. Editors are on the defensive, more conservative than in the 1990s and sticking to precedents. There is a strong tendency to avoid risk. Even if editors and creators want to try something new, standing in their way is the wall of decision-making in the sales and marketing department, and further along in the distribution company.

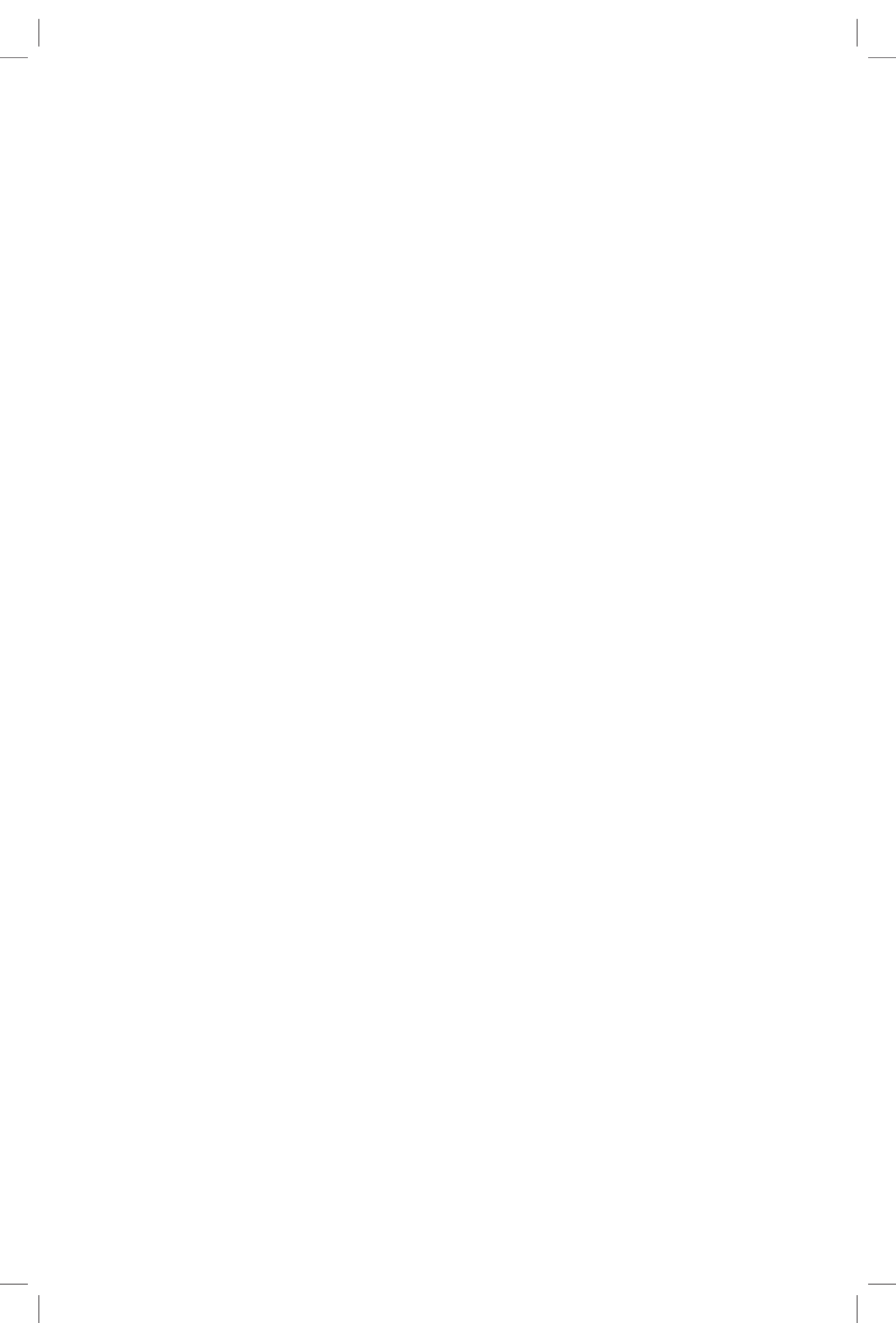
20 TN: While this was ultimately the crux of the court’s decision, much more was in fact involved. See Chapter 8 of Cather 2012.

21 For detailed records, issues and information related to these regulations and others like them, see Nagayama and Hiruma 2007 and Nagayama and Hiruma 2009. More still can be found in *Manga Ronsoh*, a series of books that I have been involved in independently publishing since 2010. As a source of information on historical discussions surrounding regulation of manga expression, a must-read title is Nagaoka 2010.

Be that as it may, it does not mean that there were no new endeavors in publishing and expression in the early 2000s. For example, in the Core Magazine group one sees a fusion of “*moe*” and “getting off,” which very well might be described as “extreme otaku style.” We also cannot overlook the development of *Comic LO* (published by Akane Shinsha from 2002) as a *lolicon* manga magazine trying to win over *moe* readers with cutting-edge style in its pages and a tasteful binding of those pages. Moreover, the *shota* line, which seemed to have gone extinct at the end of the last century, sprung back to life and underwent a revival. The coupling of cute boys and older women, as well as works featuring cherry boys, has contributed to the establishment of passive male characters. There is no shortage of creators and works deserving of consideration. None of this, however, has been enough to bring about a tidal shift or wave. More than sparking a boom, this rather appears to be a movement to gain firm control of niches by refining and purifying interests and tastes.

The past appeal of *eromanga* as a wild and singular artistic field has diminished. Based on the permeation and diffusion of *eromanga*, there has been a proliferation of channels. Works that once could only have been published in *eromanga* magazines now have a wider range of options in boys manga magazines; manga magazines targeting young men; *shōjo* manga magazines; boys love magazines; fan, maniac and otaku magazines; and more. *Eromanga* has expanded possibilities beyond itself. It is not at all necessary to remain faithful to *eromanga* in the narrow sense. In fact, rather than the market for *eromanga* magazines cleaved out by the adult comics label, many of the artists who supported the golden age in the 1980s are now active in manga magazines geared toward older readers but not age restricted. Taking gender and sexuality as a theme is becoming less taboo in every category of manga (although struggles with regulation continue).

Caught in this current, one can easily predict where *eromanga* with the adult comics label will end up. As its overall scale shrinks little by little, there will be on the one hand those who put their energy into works focusing on hard depictions of sex, and on the other hand the continued advance toward becoming niche and fan-oriented of those who target limited readers only. Of course, there is no doubt that notable creators and works will appear in *eromanga*, as they always have. They will continue to attract attention from passionate readers of manga. However, if the question is whether or not *eromanga* can reclaim the freshness of the golden age or the growth and profits of the bubble period, then I suspect that the answer is no. Instead, it is probably safe to anticipate that eroticism will be spread thinly and broadly across the entire manga world.



Part 2

The Various Forms of Love and Sex



Subdividing Desire

To boil water, one needs a heat source, water and a container. Simple enough. Nevertheless, even if limited to just containers, countless commodities surround us. A two-liter, aluminum kettle is probably sufficient for the majority of one's needs, but there are also big kettles to make large quantities of barley tea and Nambu ironware that might be used over an open hearth. There are kettles with copper coils wrapped around their base to improve thermal efficiency, and kettles with bird miniatures attached to their spouts that chirp when the water is boiling. Such is the diversity that material quality, capacity and design all differ in any type of kettle.

One could probably say this about almost all commodities, too. They branch out from an original form, become segmented, deviate, revert, try various permeations and combinations, become multi-functional or, the other way around, narrow and focus their functions. Before you know it, we are surrounded by endless variation. Desire generates commodities and commodities generate desire, and the circular dance goes on and on indefinitely.

Eromanga has also given birth to commodities or works corresponding to just about every conceivable desire. This begins with third-rate *gekiga* and expands explosively in *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, or what was in the early days called *lolicon* manga. Such is the range and diversity of *eromanga* that it appears almost a mirror reflecting our polymorphous desires. Here I divide the various forms of desire seen in *eromanga* into a total of seven chapters, which cover *lolicon*, big breasts, little sisters and incest, disgrace and training, love stories, sadomasochism and sexual minorities and gender mayhem.¹

1 The divisions here do not correspond to the marketing categories of *eromanga*. Such content categories are just a commercial invention to commoditize forms of desire that propagate anarchically. If there are omissions in the categories, then there are also inconsistencies. For example, if a character appears that is a girl with big breasts and is also someone's little sister, depending on which of these is emphasized, the character and work she appears in would be put into a completely different category. In Yamamoto Johanne's "Lolita Wife" (Rori-zuma, in *Love Spectacle* [Rabū supekutakuru], published by Ōzora Shuppan in 2005), the heroine is a 40-year-old newlywed wife, but her small build and baby face mean that she looks from any angle like a gradeschool student. She wears glasses and leggings, works a part-time job as a waitress at a costume café and has an impish personality. This character setting itself is critical and "meta" (or referential of conventions), and it is pointless to argue over categories when things get this layered and complex. My approach is to identify and explore the desires that constitute and cut across all the categories of *eromanga*.



4 *Lolicon* Manga

Introduction

Let us begin by reconfirming that there are at least two perspectives or points of view when we confront creative works, including *eromanga*. The first perspective is that of the voyeur or god who sees all. As an observer outside the work, the reader knows things up to and encompassing what characters in the work have yet to notice. It is a privileged perspective. The second perspective is that of the characters, which the reader simulates through self-projection. Note that self-projection is not necessarily fixed or static. Given that self-projection can apply to characters beyond the protagonist, plural points of view are included in this second perspective. Importantly, the perspectives of voyeur god outside the text and self-projected as characters in the text exist simultaneously in the act of reading. One is not stuck in a perspective, and is not stuck with the point of view of one character; the reader's perspective wavers between characters, switches and occurs with multiple characters as the difference in concentration changes by the second. I state this here because critics of the *lolicon* manga we are about to discuss are typically stuck solely on "what is drawn on the page," which completely overlooks "how is it read."

What is *Lolicon* Manga?

Understood by the letter, *lolicon* manga is manga marked by the theme of the "Lolita complex."¹ "Lolita complex" is a phrase born from Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* (1955) and Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation by the same name (1962). Roughly speaking, in those works, it is a man's desire for a coquettish girl. In Japan, the general sense is probably something along the lines of, "Not pedophilia as such, but rather a (primarily) male desire that entails feeling love and lust more strongly for underage girls than mature women."² The term *lolicon* is also used to refer to people associated with

1 TN: Pronounced in Japanese, "Lolita complex" becomes "*roriita konpurekkusu*," which is abbreviated "*rorikon*." In English, *lolicon* has emerged as the preferred way to write this word, which we follow throughout the book.

2 TN: Here Nagayama writes the word "pedophilia" as the Japanese transliteration *pedofiria*, which he then glosses with the Japanese word *shōniseiai*. Note that both of these are linguistically distinct from what is being discussed as the "Lolita complex."

this desire. Of course there probably exist pedophiles among the devoted readers of *lolicon* manga, but there is not a significant difference between this ratio and that of pedophiles in the total population. If anything, when one defines “pedophile” as someone who feels sexual arousal for children, then I suspect the ratio is lower among *lolicon* manga readers than the total population.

This is because the “Lolita” drawn in manga is a fictional character. The character exists in the form of manga. A manga girl is not a substitute for a real girl. This is not to say that people who love fictional characters are nonexistent, but rather that these characters are not stand-ins for real things. Loving a fictional character means loving fiction as such. Now then, in girl characters (*shōjo kyara*) as objects of desire, there are two elements. The first is the icon of girl, or the iconography indicated by *shōjo*, and the second is the idea of girl, or the aggregate of concepts framed by the word “*shōjo*.” Important here is that, for the reader, the beginning is the icon. The idea becomes self-evident by deciphering the icon, or using one’s imagination to “fill in the blanks” (*nōnai hokan*) and then deciphering the role of the icon in the manga work.³

Here let us define “*lolicon* manga” as including the idea, or else the discussion will become confusing. In that case, the standard is the age setting of the heroine. One needs to be cautious, because even today a work with a heroine under 18 years of age is likely to be automatically registered as *lolicon* manga in society at large, but, for manga readers, this distinction would mean the girl character is younger than middle-school-aged, and for fanatics she would be younger than grade-school-aged. Fanatics would also probably want to include “prior to the first menstrual period” as an absolute requirement, and more pedophilic readers would probably say “the zone is kindergarteners,” but, in this more general discussion of *eromanga*, I want to

3 It is also possible to dismantle this basic structure. In some cases, the icon will betray the reader’s deciphering. There are many creators who enjoy this sort of meta-play. For example, say that events turn when a “police officer” comes flying onto the scene just as a “gradeschool girl” and “adult man” are about to have sex on “the street.” However, in fact the “gradeschool girl” might be a male university student with a small build engaging in costume play, or cosplay; the “adult man” might be his little sister, who has a large frame and is in drag; “the street” might be a backdrop in a “love hotel” where people go to hook up; and the “police officer” might be another cosplayer who mistook his room and came barging in. How would a reader encountering such a revelation respond to it? If the reader emphasizes the idea, then they will probably say, “It’s not *lolicon* manga.” However, to a reader placing the emphasis on the icon, “It’s all good if the character is cute.” Be that as it may, readers who emphasize the idea might also be fine if they decide to ignore the revelation, intentionally misread and fill in the blanks with their imagination.

define *lolicon* manga as works with a heroine younger than a middleschool student.

As stated in previous chapters, *lolicon* manga was at first “material” (*neta*), or something topical to discuss and share.⁴ Why, then, did the iconography of girls become such captivating material? Certainly, part of the truth lies in seeing girl characters as a “more powerless existence” that even powerless men could dominate and possess, or creatures born of the fantasies of self-serving men. However, if the discussion stops there, we are left with a superficial view that only supposes the perspectives of “gods eye” and “self-projection onto mature male characters.” Our perspectives do not stop there. We consciously and unconsciously read manga with plural perspectives, and our brains automatically and continuously fill in the blanks of movement and detail in the sequential art. Furthermore, our visual perception picks up fetishism in the iconography; selects necessary information from our mental archive, which is stuffed with experience and knowledge; fills in the blanks of time and narrative; and weaves together a new fantasy. The character is in the first place no more than a form drawn on paper. There is no sexual difference in the true sense. It is merely a matter of allocating attributes via the shape of chests and genitals. Therefore, through intentional misreading, it is easy to create a completely different situation and story from the same drawing or drawings.

At the same time that the icon of girl was a sexual object, it was also simultaneously a vessel of conscious and unconscious self-projection. If one side is the more readily graspable desire of objectification and possession – I want to love a cute girl character / to hold her / to violate her / to abuse her – then the other side is the hidden desire of identification – I want to become a cute girl / to be loved / to be held / to be violated / to be abused.⁵ A surprisingly large number of people show an adverse reaction to discussions touching on gender this way, but the desire to assimilate with the girl character is an extension of the desire to possess her. Moreover, although

4 With the popularity of characters such as Clarisse from *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* and Lana from *Future Boy Conan* (Mirai shōnen Konan, 1978) – both directed by Miyazaki Hayao – the fandom surrounding anime, science fiction and manga started the festival. Because it was a world of self-reporting, or informal and unquestioned assertions, when someone announced, “I’m a *lolicon*!” others responded, “Me, too! Me, too!” (Aspects of this are shared with the *moe* boom that started from the late 1990s.) The reason that *lolicon* manga is able to endure even after the festival ended is because the desires of readers are polymorphous. Like other desires, pedophilic desire is included in the chip set of every reader. In the case of pedophiles, the tragedy is that desires one would expect to be polymorphous become fixated on one object.

5 TN: This approaches the reading of fantasy in Shigematsu 1999.

there is some overlap with actual transsexuals, the desire to assimilate with the girl character is not about complete fusion. Much of what becomes our gender is acquired. Even self-assuredly male readers are no more than humans compelled to “costume as men” (*dansō*) based on the prescriptive social norm that a human with a penis and testicles basically must do so. Manga is a space where one is no longer so compelled, and may even be invited to don different costumes and be drawn into differently attributed bodies.⁶

Early *Lolicon* Manga

In the beginning, it was all called *lolicon* manga. When talking about *lolicon* manga, the first name to mention is Azuma Hideo, who made a comeback with his *Disappearance Diary* (*Shissō nikki*, published by Iisuto Puresu) in 2005. In the 1970s, what was groundbreaking about Azuma was his taking the absurdist and literary expression that until then *gekiga* artists such as Tsuge Yoshiharu and Miyaya Kazuhiko had specialized in, and the more explicit eroticism that third-rate *gekiga* had a monopoly on, and drawing them in the cute and cartoony style of childrens manga. Back then, that alone had a shattering alienation effect. His work is legible as “erotic parody of childrens manga,” or more explicit eroticism in the form of Tezuka manga.

The segmentation of desire was already underway from this time, and by the *lolicon* boom, it was to the extent that it almost seemed like there were as many segments as there were artists. This can be seen with even just a cursory glance at the lineup of *Lemon People* and *Manga Burikko* in the early 1980s: Azuma Hideo, associated with science fiction, mystery, absurdity, anime, parody and childrens manga; Senno Knife, associated with horror, doll love, Terayama Shūji and *shōjo* manga; Uchiyama Aki, associated with sadomasochism, fetishism, sentimentality, fantasy and parody; Hariken Ryū, associated with science fiction, fighting and special effects; Muraso Shunichi, associated with aestheticism and fantasy; Taniguchi Kei, associated with literature, aestheticism and comedy; Morino Usagi and Kazuna Kei, both associated with science fiction and mecha; Apo (aka Kagami Akira), associated with science fiction and romance; Gotō Kasumi, associated

6 Once I asked the *gekiga* artist Dirty Matsumoto, “Do you self-project when drawing female characters?” The matter was laughed away at the time, but a few days later he contacted me to make a correction. “I noticed when actually putting pen to paper,” Matsumoto said, “but I do empathize with the women I draw!” This is a story that one hears often, but when manga artists draw the expressions of characters, their own expressions naturally mimic them.

with love comedy; Nakamori Ai, associated with comedy; Nishiaki Gurin, associated with the fairytale-esque; Yoriu Mushi, associated with science fiction; Hayasaka Miki, associated with comedy and romance; Fujiwara Kamui, associated with science fiction, comedy and the new wave; and so on. While biased towards science fiction, comedy and romance, there is little consistency between the attributes of each individual creator.

Early *lolicon* manga was recognized as such simply because *bishōjo*, or cute girl characters, appeared, regardless of whatever else artists were doing. More than eroticism, top priority was given to “cute girl characters” (*kawaii shōjo kyara*). Eroticism was primarily handled by artists with experience in third-rate *gekiga* – Uchiyama, Muraso, Nakajima Fumio – but, even in their work, explicit depictions of sexual acts were suppressed. Seen with contemporary eyes, currently available manga magazines for young men appear much more sexual than early *lolicon* manga. What readers demanded was in fact not *eromanga* brimming with sex scenes, but rather cute and naughty manga – so much so that, back then, complaints would come in response to rape or hardcore scenes. (“Please don’t do such horrible things to her!”) Fundamentally, the Tezuka memes of “cute” and “eroticism” were at the core of early *lolicon* manga. “Sex” was just one element in service of “cute eroticism” (*kawaii erotishizumu*).

If one was looking for sex, there was already third-rate *gekiga* in the 1970s. However, as it turned out, third-rate *gekiga* could not become the standard of the post-babyboomer, post-protest generation. The reason is because, to put it simply, *gekiga* was not manga. It did not feature anime-like drawings. It was not cute. The generation born in the 1960s, which would later come to be called “otaku,” did not become the kind of “adults” or “men” aroused by the eroticism of *gekiga*. They sought something floating hazily, bitter-sweetly, lovingly around sex, not sex itself. One might even call this a sort of neoteny (paedomorphosis) in *eromanga*. This means adding sexual stimulation while retaining features of Tezuka manga and anime drawings – in other words, “infantile form.” It becomes perverse expression, but the arrival of early *lolicon* manga could probably also be said to have locked in “the age of adults reading manga,” in the truest sense.

The Additional Line by the Name of Sin

Now, after the boom in the early 1980s, *lolicon* manga meant not all works featuring cute girl characters, but specifically those with heroines younger than middleschool-aged. When looking at this *lolicon* manga, things become

easier to understand when we draw an additional line by the name of “sin” (*tsumi*).⁷ Even in the early days, *lolicon* manga started from purposely drawing and reading something “wrong” (*ikenai koto*) and going through the motions of being “a *lolicon*” (*rorikon-mono*). One can probably see that avoidance of explicit sex back then stemmed from a “consciousness of sin.” Can this not also be said of every form of pornographic expression? As long as sex and eroticism continue to be considered taboo, they will forever be haunted by a consciousness of sin, but this is perhaps especially true for *lolicon* manga. No matter how liberated sexual expression becomes, *lolicon* manga can still be read as “stories of sin.” This is all the more so when the issue is not just drawing eroticism in infantile form, but foregrounding sex and eroticism in stories involving young characters.

Of course, fiction is fiction. In *eromanga*, even if romantic feelings blossom between an adult man and a girl who is under the age of 13, a child; even if it reaches sex acts forbidden by law in reality; even if a nymphomaniac girl cruises for guys and hooks up with them one after another; even if a heinous rapist attacks a nursery school bus; in all this and more in *eromanga*, fiction is still fiction.⁸ All that matters is if it excels or not creatively and commercially. Even if what is on the page is fiction, however, those drawing and reading these works cannot cut them off and keep them separated completely from reality. Interacting with fiction, we remain conscious of reality. Moreover, we have ethics on a different dimension than the law. There are times when I get shivers down my spine and think, “Is it really all right for me, as a person, to recommend to others a manga where such terrible things are done to such a small child?”

What one feels to be horrible or inexcusable is a matter of values, but there are things to take into consideration here. Even compared to other *eromanga*, the *lolicon* subcategory involves elements – violation of virginity and innocence, sexual discrimination, abuse of the weak – that many readers strongly oppose. A further complication is pressure from the public. When discussing *lolicon* works, there is a risk of inviting scorn and statements such as, “Aren’t those drawing and reading this stuff dangerous?” There are even those in the same industry who criticize *lolicon* by saying, “As a human being, I can’t accept it.” Discrimination exists even among fellow *eromanga* artists. There is ignorance in any group of people, but just stating this does

7 TN: This could alternatively be translated as “crime,” but what Nagayama is getting at here is something beyond the law associated with that particular word.

8 In the scenario of romance between an adult man and girl below the age of 13, sex, even with consent, is a crime of rape in current Japanese law. Fiction, however, is a different matter.

not mean that we do not have to deal with it. In spite of everything, *lolicon* manga will not disappear. After the major crackdown at the beginning of the 1990s, it was low key for a time, but revived again. For all the “taboo” and “resistance,” there is that much more catharsis.

The Excuse is for the Sake of the Reader

Surfacing as soon as one draws the additional line called sin are works in the excuse group. Works of this kind attempt to avoid or alleviate the consciousness of sin by preparing excuses or justifications that are not really excuses at all. Here, too, are invoked the well-worn excuses of rapists: “At the very least there was love on my side;” “Because she also felt good in the end, it was ultimately consensual sex.” As is to be expected, excuses this blatant lack persuasive power and thus are on the decline, but probably will not disappear entirely. The world is not composed of only the transcendent spiritual nobility who can say cast aside your flawed thinking and see the truth revealed. If there is a need for an excuse on the reader side, then creators will respond to it. “It’s mutual love, so...” “She came on to me, so...” “It’s consensual, so...” “It’s compensated dating, so...” “She’s a slut, so...” And so on, on and on and on. Even if it absolutely is not all right legally, the excuse gives one the feeling of being in the clear somehow. The noble class president might say, “I think that’s cowardly.” Perhaps, but having an excuse puts the reader at ease.

Take, for example, Wada Erika’s “Little Sayaka’s Reserved Seat” (*Sayakachan no yoyakuseki*, in *Alice Hunting* [Arisu-gari], published by KK Kosumikku in 1997). During the crisis time of *lolicon* manga in the early 1990s, Wada was a high-profile target, and she fought a lone battle. In “Little Sayaka’s Reserved Seat,” the physically weak Sayaka visits her medical doctor, who is very fond of her. In fact, he is a *lolicon*. Visiting for a checkup just before the doctor is set to move away, Sayaka is injected with an aphrodisiac in the buttocks. Firmly caressing her genitals, the doctor proceeds to take the girl’s virginity and slowly guide her to pleasure, all the while murmuring self-serving lines such as, “I want to hold you in this moment in my heart, Sayaka...” If this happened in the real world, drugging a girl below the age of 13 and forcing sex on her would result in the maximum sentence for rape. Surprisingly, however, this doctor is only conscious of his sin or crime at the level of, “I did something bad to her...” Moreover, even this modest consciousness of sin is completely relieved by a letter reading in part, “You were really naughty back then, doctor, but I’ve recently started to ache for it. [...] From your loving Sayaka.”

Considering the circumstances of the winter years of *eromanga* in the background of this work, one cannot help but wonder about the conclusion “all’s well that ends well.” It comes off as a little tone deaf, and self-serving, surely. Knowing this, however, does not change that some readers require such fantasy. Even if it does not wipe clean the consciousness of sin, they want to find redemption in the girl feeling even a little good, feeling even the slightest love and finding happiness. That said, it is hard to maintain a sense of reality in works with developments that provide this degree of salvation to men.

When things become a little cleverer, men’s sense of responsibility is lightened from the start. In short, the excuse is that responsibility does not lie with me alone. That is, “There is a problem legally, but I have a partner in crime and we both agreed to the relationship.” If one can secure that excuse, then the logic goes, “My partner wants to be held, so it’s okay if I don’t do anything awful.” Thus, a massive number of young women with issues – they are poor, have an overly strong sense of curiosity, love sex, are infatuated with their brothers and so on – have appeared in *lolicon* manga. Opportunism and taking advantage of others, yes, but the excuse works if the reader wants it.

For example, take works by Kinoshita Rei, which gained popularity in the mid-1990s. Specifically, let us look at *Heisei Nymph Lover Second* (Heisei ninfu rabaa ni, published by Ōtō Shobō in 2001), which is a collection of short stories. The girls who appear in its pages are shouldered with a need to be held by adult men. There is no out-and-out coercion on the part of these men. At most there is a little seduction and transfer of money. Interestingly, the interiority of these men is mostly opaque. They are always positioned to take whatever is on the table. Despite being timid, they devour girls when given a chance. There do tentatively appear to be feelings of “love,” but in almost all cases priority is given to “desire.” These are stereotypical, “normally” philandering men. It must be so for the reader to settle down. After all, in cases like this, the male character is an extension of the reader’s penis. As a penis, the character conveniently gets with the girl, whether in the form of romance or sex. The penis has no guilt. It is always the girl who wants to be held.

Fiction is Fiction

Contrasting with the girl character as a straightforward victim is the figure of the young woman as a mystery incompressible to male readers. In line

with past types, one finds “the girl of my dreams” and “the imp.” Flashing their innocent, coquettish and evil charm, these girls attract and ruin men. They are the closest to the picture of Lolita painted by Nabokov. Many artists follow him in their drawings. This, too, can probably be seen as a device for relieving the consciousness of sin among creators and readers, but it does not stop there.

For example, let us examine the girl characters appearing in Wanyan Aguda’s *Round Shell: Gradeschooler Bookbag* (Round Shell: Randoseru, published by Akane Shinsha in 2004). There is something impenetrable about these girls, who are small in stature, but also consummate hellcats when it comes to corrupting men. In “Mayu and Chisato,” which is included in this collection of Wanyan’s work, the heroine, Mayu, is in an elevator absorbed in the act of masturbation. (She is doing it in public for the thrill.) Enter the protagonist, Chisato, a boy in short pants. Unflustered and unbothered, Mayu continues to masturbate. “Do you want to watch?” She says, seducing Chisato. “It’s okay.” Excited to be seen, Mayu reaches climax while pissing herself. First-time readers will probably be surprised by what is on the page, but this is just the introduction. Pulling Chisato’s erect penis from his shorts, Mayu performs fellatio. Finally, she straddles him, and they have sex with her on top. In the follow-up chapter, the play of these immoral gradeschoolers escalates further. Made to costume as a girl, Chisato engages in molester play with Mayu on the train, where the two end up having sex.

Worth noting here is that, in contrast to Mayu’s genitals, which are those of a young girl, Chisato is drawn to have a penis that is on par with the shape and size of a sexually mature adult. And this is despite the fact that Chisato is a cute boy who looks like a girl. There are a number of possible interpretations. One could say that the artist is aiming for a visual effect, a sort of dissonance. A challenge to depicting sex between children might also be at work. One could probably also see it as male readers concentrating their identity in the penis. Whatever the case may be, the combination of cute body and sturdy penis is imaginative. It is manifestly not a substitute for something that exists in reality. By self-projecting onto the virtual body called Chisato, readers are for the first time able to play with Mayu, the virtual girl. And Mayu is not shouldering the sex role of the young girl who becomes whatever men want. She is active, and powerfully stimulates male readers’ desires to be passive and to be destroyed. In this case, self-projecting onto a female character is unnecessary for masochistic fantasy. Giving themselves over to Chisato, male readers can consign their bodies to the calamitous, narcotic sexual fantasy.

The Pleasure of Sin

Appearing in *lolicon* manga, “young girls of convenience” and “imps” are just some types dwelling in the imaginary of creators and readers. The forms differ, but they are projections of male desire. What, then, can be said of works that treat girl characters as things to be violated irrespective of will? When it comes to “hard” and “brutal” *lolicon* manga, the primary emphasis is placed on taboo violation. The greater the consciousness of sin, the greater the pleasure of (virtually) committing it. Accordingly, in such works, in almost all cases men are absolute evil and girls are pitiable victims who are abused and trampled upon. Here one does not find the convenient interactivity that Kinoshita Rei sets up between men and girls. In fact, there is complete disconnection between them. To these girls, men become nothing more than an embodiment of sinister violence invading from the outside. They are monsters without mercy and hearing no pleas for it. To the extent that these girls are unrealistic, they are also meek, weak, submissive and pitiable.

One could probably read this as a straightforward manifestation of the misogyny lurking in men, but if the question is if it is just that, then the answer must be no. This is not something limited to *lolicon* manga, but, interestingly, in works that take up the motif of rape, men are almost never shown to be deriving pleasure from the act. When such scenes do appear, they are usually playing on stereotypes.⁹ Ultimately, the focus is on the victim, not the rapist. The focus is on her and her experience. The man is just violence, the attack, that which breaks and destroys. By breaking things, their fragility is affirmed and adored. This is not necessarily the same thing as sex, but it does appear in this type of *eromanga*. There is

9 This is something that could be said of all male-oriented pornography depicting couplings of men and women, but male pleasure is often not depicted beyond visible ejaculation. It is women who show pleasure with flushed cheeks, heavy breathing and immodest expressions. An important aspect at work here is the consciousness that, “Male-oriented *eromanga* (and adult videos) are enjoyed by men and men self-project onto male characters. The more concretely the male figure is drawn, the more difficult it will be for male readers to self-project. Even in actual sex, the ‘self’ having sex is invisible. We should express male pleasure indirectly through the response of women.” There is some truth to this, but is that all? Is there not also the possibility of self-projecting onto the female character? It is probably more fruitful to think of this in other contexts such as “the desire of men to become women” (*dansei no josei-ka ganbō*) and crossing the borders of sexual difference in pleasure. Furthermore, in the field of adult videos in the mid-1980s, director Yoyogi Tadashi was already depicting male pleasure. His experiments extended all the way to channeling and hypnotism. While sometimes described as strange, Yoyogi’s work is extremely provocative when considering sex and pleasure.

cherishing the girl, or *shōjo*, as something fragile; the sadism of destroying that; and the masochistic pleasure of giving one's self over to the character taking her absurd abuse. Sadism and masochism are two sides of the same coin. Existing simultaneously are the "me" who abuses and the "me" who is abused. At the same time that the poor girl is an object of affection, she is also the "poor me who should be loved."

From early *lolicon* manga right down to the present, artists such as Bangaichi Mitsugu and Shin Tsuguru have pursued the motif of the "poor girl" and continued to maintain that position. In their works, rape functions as one more form of victimization that emphasizes pitiability. This pattern escalates all the way to the extreme. For example, *Fūsen Club* pounds out an overwhelmingly macho and physical image. Around the time of "School Occupation" (*Gakkō senryō*, in *Trampled* [Jūrin], published by Ōtō Shobō in 1998), Morishige demonstrated absurdity, nihilism and downright bad taste. In *Pet Panties* (*Orikō pantsu*, published by Fox Shuppan in 2001), Gorgeous Takarada coolly breaks the body and mind of a girl. As the name of his work suggests, Morishige draws the terror of a military unit – members of which one cannot help but think just want to rape girls – occupying a school. Seeming to predict the Ikeda Elementary School massacre in Japan and the Beslan school siege by Chechen forces, Morishige steps into some very dicey territory. By depicting – without any sense of guilt – a wise and vice-filled teacher who dispassionately dominates and humiliates his student, Gorgeous Takarada constructs an eccentric, theatrical world that forces one to reflect on authority and the inhumane nature of "educating" and "disciplining" others.

This just goes to show that there are times when thorough commitment to "evil" can throw deeper meanings into relief. The further one runs down the line of the brute, the more things deviate into a contest of inhumanity. What is the most horrible thing that comes to mind? How far can you push it beyond the limit? In this way, violent urges, destructive desires and cruel depictions take center stage. The young girl as victim becomes nothing more than a prop for raising the level of cruelty. In a later chapter I will return to this brutish line and discuss it in more depth, but for now suffice it to say that it is common to transition to another phase the moment a threshold is overcome.

Inner Demons

The consciousness of sin in *lolicon* manga is composed of two levels of guilt. The first is the guilt of having desires for young girls, and the second is

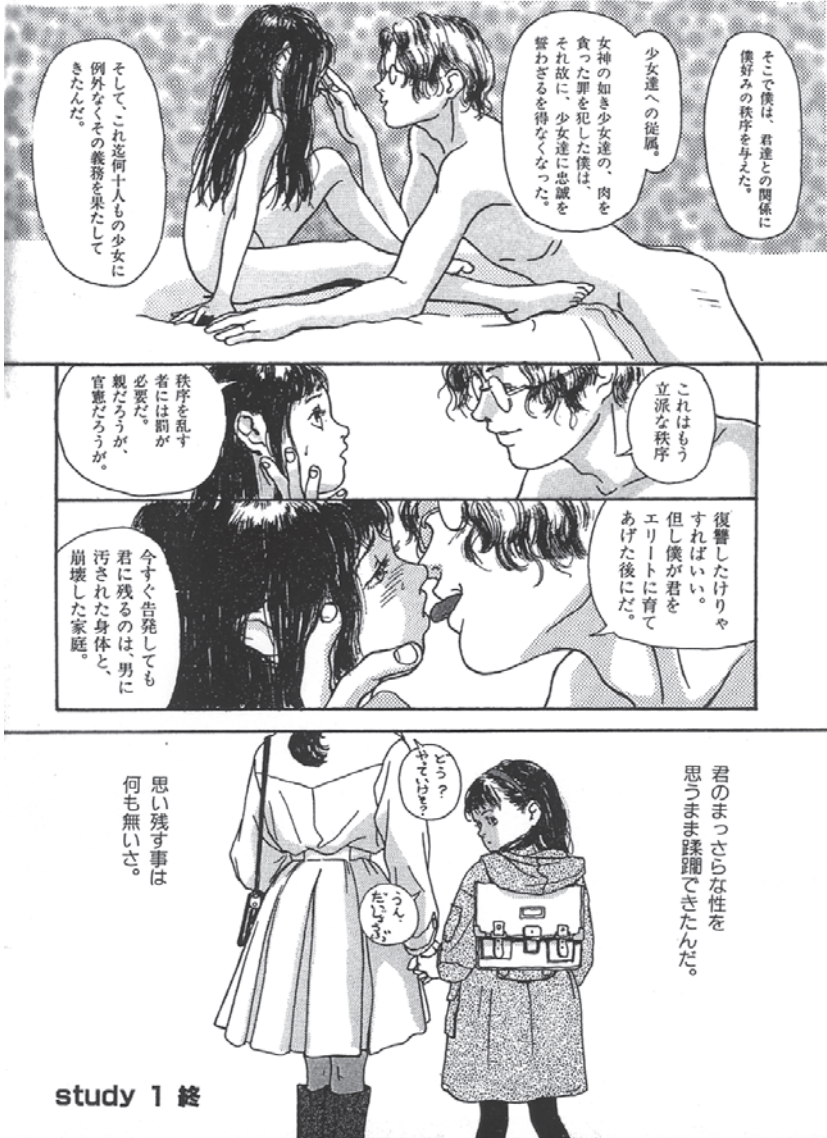
the guilt of expressing and reveling in those desires. As stated earlier, the vast majority of creators and readers of *lolicon* manga are not pedophiles. Furthermore, *eromanga* is not a simple substitute or stand-in for reality. If that is the case, we probably should consider the rationality of having a consciousness of sin. Why do we feel guilty? Is it instinct? Is the system forcing it? The answer eludes us. Nevertheless, there is a way of thinking that has it that all forms of desire are prepared in advance in the human brain. The only difference is if they manifest or not. If this is correct, then our consciousness of sin might be an inhibition system for stopping the manifestation of desires that have deviated from the goal of preservation of the species.¹⁰ This system, along with social feedback, may encourage a consciousness of sin among creators and readers of *lolicon* manga, regardless of whether they are pedophiles or not.

Among *lolicon* manga artists, there are those who acknowledge in themselves the existence of pedophilic desires that should be deterred. They face off against their inner demons. One of these artists is Machida Hiraku, who debuted not in general *eromanga* magazines, but rather *lolicon* magazines targeting a niche readership that likely includes some pedophiles. Judging from his place of origin, one could probably call Machida a dyed-in-the-wool *lolicon* manga artist. Rather than appearing like manga, the nude girls that Machida draws are more “real” like *gekiga*. They have bodily proportions that even *lolicon* fanatics accept. However, since his first work, *Naked at the Graduation Ceremony* (*Sotsugyō shiki wa hadaka de*, published by Issuisha in 1997), it has been a constant with Machida that he does not pander to *lolicon* and pedophile readers. He does not drug them with words of affirmation. Jokingly, Machida says, “I can’t forgive those who just go and do what I’m struggling not to do.” In short, he draws pedophilic desire as an absolute evil or damnable sickness that is to be struggled with.

In terms of its structure as a work about a vice-filled teacher, Machida’s *Naked at the Graduation Ceremony* shares much with Gorgeous Takarada’s *Pet Panties*, which was produced later. The protagonist is Naitō, an elite personal tutor contracted to help kids pass the grueling exams required to advance to famous schools. After making his new student drink a muscle-relaxing agent and blocking her resistance, Naitō stoically rapes her. Dozens of students have fallen prey to him by this point. He is accustomed to robbing girls of their freedom, as well as stripping and violating them. After being raped, the student this time says, “I’m going to tell on you. To my mom... And the

¹⁰ This is not limited to pedophilia, but let us stick to the subject at hand. [TN: For those interested in knowing more about this way of thinking, see Bering 2013.]

Image 10 A sample of Machida's *Naked at the Graduation Ceremony*. The artist struggles with destructive desires, even as the complexity of his characters has attracted female readers.



police, too.” To his sobbing and muttering victim, Naitō responds, “It’s fine if you want revenge. But do it after I’ve raised you to be an elite. If you press charges right now, you’ll be left with only a body that has been defiled and a broken home. [...] I’ve trampled your virgin sexuality. I regret nothing.”

For Naitō, raping a girl is like a game of walking through a minefield. If the victim is not of the mind to follow Naitō’s logic, it means destruction for him. That said, the second the girls exchange silence for future authority, they are bound to Naitō in a relation of criminal accomplice. Such a contract is deceitful, and could be read as merely an adult’s swindle, but consider that Naitō has handed his victim the switch to a bomb to blow it all up – his own death warrant. This is not a stopgap measure. If the girl is unable to pass the exam and advance in school with Naitō’s instruction, if her animosity and contempt reach a critical limit, everything comes crashing down in an instant. It is a competition until the graduation ceremony. Be that as it may, important here is not Naitō’s existence playing with annihilation, but the situation where the ultimate decision is entrusted to the victim. All the possibilities of that decision are exhibited in the eyes of the girl. In *lolicon* and *eromanga* works about disgracing and dominating others more generally, the creation of characters that are not just dolls to be violated deserves special attention. Precisely because his works are more than that, Machida has earned the support of women, who are typically not assumed to be among his readers.

I am I

There are other creators who face reality from different angles than Machida. A case in point is EB110SS. The *lolicon* manga that this artist draws are always set in the mundane world of everyday events. The short stories are interesting, but serialized works are even more so. The desire that the author wants to discuss comes out in fine form. For example, the “Child Fee Series” (Kodomo ryōkin shiriizu, in *Naughty Girl Panties* [ESP: Ecchi na shōjo pantsu], published by Mediakkusu in 2005) kicks off with a young man who works in an adult entertainment shop moving into an apartment complex housing primarily backstreet sexworkers.¹¹ There he meets a young girl who

11 The “Child Fee Series” is something of a remake of the early work *Come Come Hibari House* (Kamu kamu hibari-sō, published by Mediakkusu in 2002), which depicts the strange relationship between a protagonist who gets easily caught up in situations and a dodgy father and daughter self-producing and starring in incestuous porn videos.

has come from Southeast Asia and is selling her body, but if this is not some Shangri-La for people with a Lolita complex, then it is also not a hellish bordello. Following a mother who earns a living as a sexworker, the girl is doing the same. Needless to say that this is legitimate sexual exploitation in cruel circumstances that contradict the spirit of child welfare, but, to the mother and daughter, it is “work.” The consciousness of being party to sin or crime is faint. What is occurring is just a little home ejaculation business. The structure resembles small business prior to the industrial revolution, when one could not avoid integrating children as labor power. It is the world of *Chie the Brat* (Jarinko Chie, published by Futabasha from 1978), but with a different line of work.

Even the carefree protagonist is not unaware of the reality of poverty in Asia that forces young girls and women to leave home and earn money through sexwork, and the reality of sexual exploitation and abuse of children. However, he neither takes heroic action nor agonizes like a member of the intelligentsia. While knowing his sin, he still likes the girl. As a customer, he purchases sex from her. As a man, he falls for her. If there is no excuse smeared with the consciousness of sin here, then there is also no pleasure in taboo violation. There is also no escape in fantasy or gags. And it is not limited to the primary girl. The protagonist likes girls. He wants to hold them, whatever the cost. If the legal system defines that as a crime, if morality condemns the acts as inhuman, then so be it. Sellers and buyers come together on this point. They do not resist or argue back against outside pressure. This manner of maintaining distance is realistic. The system as a system, and morality as morality, should do what needs to be done. However, I am I. While the artistic style is nonchalant and broad, the work is in fact run through with an anarchism tinged with individualism. When encountering works such as this one, I am blown away that even classic subcategories of *eromanga* like *lolicon* still have room for original viewpoints.

The World of Children

If an adult appears in *lolicon* manga, it is hard to avoid the smell of sin that comes wafting in. In the case of *Round Shell* (introduced earlier in this chapter), Wanyan Aguda produces a “pseudo-adult” (*giji-seijin*) by drawing the boy’s penis larger. However, if one is not as talented an artist as Wanyan, this technique can result in something that looks grotesque or silly. Things move along more quickly if one instead straightforwardly draws both characters as children. Romance aside, sex between children is

of course taboo. Children, however, do not know such things. Given that they are basically innocent (or ignorant), if the consciousness that “children’s sex is a sin or crime” is not imprinted, then they just do things. Even with the imprinting, the consciousness that “romance is virtue” after all trumps “sin.”

Take for example Tanuma Yūichirō’s *Season*, a masterpiece published in two volumes (by Koa Magajin in 1997 and 1998). It is a long-form work centered on love and sex between fellow gradeschool students. One might describe it as *Melody* (the 1971 film directed by Waris Hussein), but venturing into the terrain of sex. The setting is the Kinki region of Japan in the mid-1970s, around the time of the so-called “supercar boom.” The reader is gently and heart-rendingly enveloped in scenes clinging with nostalgia and the sound of a soft western dialect. Even children can fall in love and have sex. Seen with adult eyes, the actions appear immature, ignorant and immoral, but for their immaturity and ignorance – if not also for being forbidden – they are all the more compelling and thrilling than love and sex between adults.

Given that the heroine is a girl in gradeschool, the work can be read from the gods-eye perspective as *lolicon* manga, but there is more to it than such a label might suggest. Rather than *lolicon* manga, this is more a work about dreaming of a once and bygone Arcadia, an idealized golden age of childhood. However, Tanuma does not let this end as sweet fantasy. In hope that readers will seek this work out, I will not go into further detail here, but people inevitably grow up and become adults. The bitter conclusion of being cast out of the world of children, as well as later developments drawn in the afterword added to the trade paperback, will surely bring a tear to the eye of the reader. We were all children at some point. By taking up issues of romance among children with poetic imagination, and furthermore actually depicting that romance, Tanuma overcame the generic perspectives of *lolicon* manga and *eromanga*.

While Tanuma’s artistry stands out, depicting sex between children is not at all uncommon in *eromanga*. Many creators draw sex between children and middleschool students as frankly voyeuristic *lolicon* manga. If there are mediocre works, then there are also excellent ones. Amid all this, I would like to bring attention to Hoshino Fūta. In contrast to Tanuma, who draws the body and soul of adolescence in the style of boys manga, Hoshino draws *eromanga* in the style of childrens manga. In fact, his art would not feel out of place if published in an educational school magazine from Shōgakukan. Collections of his work have titles like *Good Friends* (Nakayoshi-chan, published by Koa Magajin in 2003), which are in the spirit of childrens manga. Drawings by Hoshino are not game style, or anime style,

or even the popular, strongly character-design-oriented *moe* style. They are the drawings of classically cute and cartoony childrens manga, and come bundled with memes inherited from Tezuka and Fujiko Fujio.

Although Hoshino also draws sex between adults and children, more notable in his work are children getting naughty with one another. Depicted here are things such as flipping up the skirt of a classmate and playing doctor. Ultimately, “sex” (*ecchi*) is an extension of that naughtiness. In contrast to the characters in Tanuma’s *Season*, who sooner or later will become adults – in fact, their grown-up forms are shown in the afterword to the trade paperback – Hoshino’s characters do not age. The children drawn by Tanuma bear the fate of becoming adults, middle-aged men and women, elderly and finally dying. The characters drawn by Hoshino, however, are eternal children. In this way, from the gods-eye perspective, the reader gazes voyeuristically at children’s sex. It is of course also possible to self-project, but the vessels are not children contiguous with adults like the ones in *Season*, but rather eternal “children” living in Neverland. They are crystallizations of nostalgia and regressive fantasies. (“I don’t want to grow up.”) One might even describe them as a sort of idealized, virtual memory, child-attributed characters of a past the never was and always will be. Naturally, this is not an issue of who is the superior creator between Tanuma and Hoshino. The point is that, even in works depicting sex between children, there is a great deal of variation.¹²

Lolicon Manga Once More

Entering the twenty-first century, *lolicon* manga recovered its momentum once more. Particularly after the establishment of the specialty magazine *Comic LO* (published by Akane Shinsha from 2002), a small boom occurred at the start of the new millennium. In addition to veterans and mainstays, newcomers with a contemporary and refined artistic style appeared one after another. Against the backdrop of increasing and strengthening regulation, how in the world can we account for this vibrant activity? “Let’s draw, publish

12 Although it is not *eromanga*, worth considering here is Sasō Akira’s *A Child’s Child* (*Kodomo no kodomo*, published by Futabasha from 2004), which is a long-form work depicting a gradeschool girl’s pregnancy and childbirth. It sheds light on the circumstances surrounding contemporary youth and issues in education, but the focus is the thoroughly life-sized (at least as far as readers can accept), actual children. This goes to show that there are also ways to tackle this theme in a form that is not erotic, a problem piece or an objection.

and buy while we still can.” Such a sense of urgency was undeniably part of it, but this alone does not provide a sufficient explanation.

The population of pedophiles did not suddenly increase and start churning out and supporting *lolicon* manga. That population probably also did not decrease. Pedophiles were never the primary producers and consumers of *lolicon* manga. The market would not have been sustainable, let alone experienced another boom, if *lolicon* manga catered only to pedophiles as a substitute for photographs and film. More manga artists and readers had come to *lolicon*, and their consciousness about it seems to have changed. Much of the baggage and posturing of early intellectual fans has dropped away.

Naturally, taboo and a consciousness of sin are alive and kicking even today. Judging from his artistic style, for example, Yamato Akira has reverted back to the final days of third-rate *gekiga* and the beginning of *lolicon* manga. He draws a melancholy prewar and wartime world. Meanwhile, Miura Yasuto celebrates a hopeless romance between a half-broken robot girl and a lonely boy set in a retro-futuristic, run-down, rust-colored world. With a refined, illustrator-like style, Wang-Pac saturates the page with the depressed world and feelings of girls. To put it somewhat provocatively, these are creators who feel familiar to first generation “otaku,” the 1970s and those with a literary bent – the kind of creators critics tend to prefer.

There are also veteran artists who continue to maintain their popularity. Among them are Araki Akira, who continues to draw squishy and soft (so-called “*puni puni*”) girls; Āru Koga (aka R-Koga), who leaves the scent of *lolicon* manga from the 1980s; and Nishi Iori, who, while drawing the disgrace and humiliation of young girls, points a blade of incisive irony toward contemporary education. Among mainstays, the energetic activity of Ogawa Kanran, whose contrast between *gekiga* men and manga girls is characteristic, stands out.

It can be difficult to see the big picture for the number of talented artists in the field, but, as a large trend, we can identify an emphasis on icon over idea. Another important point is the heavy impact of *moe* from the late 1990s on. Having already touched on *moe* in Chapter 3, and planning to write on it in more detail in the conclusion, I will stop here at identifying it as a keyword. I should, however, mention a few intersections with *lolicon* manga specifically. In the works of Nendo and Kunitsu Takeshi (aka Shima Takehito), for example, young girls have head-to-body proportions that approach those of stuffed toys and small animals. These are not substitutes or stand-ins for any real girl, but rather exist independently as “small and lovable” characters. In these *bishōjo*, the cute matters more than the girl,

and what we are looking at are to the end characters. Because the characters are fiction, no matter how preposterous or offensive things get, it is simply interesting or stimulating material. Indeed, it is precisely because fiction is distinguished from reality as fiction that one can experience *moe*.¹³ For many readers today, a consciousness of sin is not necessarily part of enjoying fiction.

13 TN: In this sentence, *moe* appears as a verb and is conjugated to indicate possibility (*moe-rareru*). A more direct translation might be “able to *moe*,” where *moe* is an affective response to fictional characters. Although Nagayama does not use this precise definition of *moe*, he strongly suggests it when writing about responding to “fiction as fiction” (*kyokō o kyokō toshite*). This approach to fiction as fiction is neither uniquely Japanese nor uniquely contemporary. For a deep history and look at modern forms of media literacy, see Saler 2012.

5 Big Breasts and Manga

Introduction

Why are so many men attracted to women's breasts? Maybe it is because breasts are symbolic of femininity and maternity (the capacity to accept others, fertility and so on). Or the clearest symbol indicating "woman." Or because the breast was the direct object of infantile oral desire. Because men basically have a "mother complex" (*mazakon*), a thing for their mothers. Or because it is biologically so. Because there is some unknown program for liking breasts encoded in the Y chromosome. Or because we are still living with the distorted view that women with big breasts are weak in the head and so easy to manage. Or because there is cultural or social pressure at work that says men must love breasts. From idle gossip at bars to straight-laced talks at academic conferences, various takes and theories have been put forth. There are merits and demerits to each, but in all honesty, one is left thinking, "You could say that, but..." If not everything can be explained by biology, then the answer also does not lie in cultural factors alone. At present, the most acceptable approach is probably something along the lines of, "Men's attraction to breasts is the result of physiology and psychology. Biological initial settings and sociocultural norms contributed in complex ways." Seeing the swarm of overly enormous breasts that have overrun not only contemporary *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, but also the worlds of manga and anime, the questions just keep on mounting. Why breasts, and why so much interest in them?

From *Lolicon* to Baby-Faced and Big-Breasted

"Big breasts" (*kyonyū*) are now the default standard of *eromanga*. The influence of "breast men" (*oppai seijin*) extends to even general manga magazines. As in the case of Matsuyama Seiji's *Eiken* (published by Akita Shoten from 2001), manga with big breasts as their gimmick are steaming up boys magazines. In contemporary *eromanga*, drawing big-breasted characters is the norm. The ones drawing average-sized breasts have become the minority. It is a time when one can sense the emotional attachments, calculations and interests of those creators persisting with flat-chested characters. To eyes that have become accustomed to big breasts, certainly "small breasts" (*hinnyū*) appear fresh. Suppressing the symbol of femininity can serve to emphasize a unisex eroticism.

Despite big breasts being the current default, it is important to remember that it was not always like this through the ages. There was a fair amount of exaggeration in the time of third-rate *gekiga*, but nothing to the extent of today.¹ It is uncertain when big breasts became the standard, but if we take the beginning to be the “baby-faced and big-breasted” (*dōgan kyonyū*) boom, then we can trace it back to the mid-1980s. This would place it very close to the *lolicon* boom, even overlapping with its tail end in 1984. Indeed, as a boom, *lolicon* manga was surprisingly short lived. Although “*lolicon* manga” stuck as a label, on the page, the essence rapidly shifted from “girl character” to “baby-faced and big-breasted character.” The result was a sort of disconnect in perception. In the *eromanga* industry and among *eromanga* readers, “*bishōjo* style” and “*bishōjo* comics” – influenced by Ōtsuka Eiji, who directed people toward “*bishōjo* manga” – became mainstream naming. In contrast, outside the industry and among non-readers, “*lolicon* manga” has long been the label, irrespective of the actual situation.²

This pivotal move from *lolicon* to baby-faced and big-breasted character was inevitable. Excluding a very small number of creators and readers, it was not necessary for the girl character to be young. Almost all male readers sought a mature female figure, hence the *lolicon* boom ended. However, this did not mean that they returned to *gekiga*-like maturity and realism. To the end, they sought cute and cartoony “manga drawings,” which inherited Tezuka memes. The baby-faced and big-breasted boom was the maturation of the *bishōjo* body, which remained that of a cute girl character. There is not that much of a leap between *lolicon* manga and baby-faced and big-breasted manga. This is because the meme of big breasts was already in the gene pool. Recall the proportions of Tinker Bell and how Disney memes flowed into Tezuka and childrens manga.

That said, however, big breasts do not become evident in the line from Disney to Tezuka. Rather, breasts come to the fore in the works of two big stars of the *lolicon* boom, Miyazaki Hayao and Takahashi Rumiko.³

1 Big breasts have also spread in more recent erotic *gekiga*.

2 There is a fair bit of discrepancy between what Ōtsuka Eiji called *bishōjo* manga and what in *eromanga* are known as *bishōjo* comics. In the 1980s, Ōtsuka aspired to “something like *shōjo* manga that men could also read.” In cases where people from the pro-regulation camp refer to otaku-style erotic content on the whole as “*lolicon* manga,” “*lolicon* anime” and “*lolicon* games,” one senses a blatant politics. In addition to lumping everything together as *lolicon*, is there not also an intentional blurring of *lolicon* with pedophilia and potential sex crimes?

3 TN: Aligning Miyazaki and Takahashi with the *lolicon* boom will no doubt puzzle some readers, but what Nagayama means here is that the cute girl characters created by these two artists attracted and invigorated fans in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Affected by cute girl

The heroine of Takahashi's *Urusei Yatsura* (manga from 1978, anime from 1981), Lum, inherited the genes of Tinker Bell – and, moreover, her default appearance was that buxom body in a bikini. In Miyazaki's *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* (1979), the heroine, Clarisse, is a cute girl, but also has an ample bosom. In his later and even more popular work, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (Kaze no tani no Naushika, manga published by Tokuma Shoten from 1982, animated film in 1984), the eponymous heroine's mature breasts were widely commented on. We ought to trace the maturation of the *bishōjo* body and model of baby-faced and big-breasted back to these characters.

A Lolita from the neck up and glamour girl from the shoulders down, the baby-faced and big-breasted character is a hybrid that is only possible in the symbolic expression of manga. No matter how much computer-graphic technology advances, the more realism is pressed, the more grotesque a caricature it becomes. The solution is to pursue not realism, but rather a manga aesthetic. While securing loveliness and fragility with the face, it is grafted onto the mature body of a woman with which one could have sex. It is, as it were, “a Lolita with which sex is all right.” Women's breasts are burdened with significance: At the same time that they are a symbol of femininity, maternity, productivity, fertility, protection and love, they are simultaneously haunted by illusions of physicality, weak-mindedness, excessive femininity, lasciviousness and more. In the case of *eromanga*, no matter how baby-faced the character, if she is big-breasted, then the “taboo” and “sin” of *lolicon* manga is wiped out. Thus “baby-faced and big-breasted,” which is also the safe bet of *lolicon*, went on to permeate the *eromanga* world as a whole.

Breasts, Symbolic from the Start: *Thumping Heart, Ms. Minako!*

When it comes to the representative of early baby-faced and big-breasted manga, anyone other than Watanabe Wataru is simply out of the question. His best-known work, *Thumping Heart, Ms. Minako!* (Dokkin Minako-sensei, published by Byakuya Shobō from 1987), gathered ceaseless support from fervent fans even after its original run in the 1980s, which led to new material appearing after the year 2000. Counting from her first appearance, decades have passed, but Ms. Minako still has impressively big breasts. Continuing

characters and producing their own material in response to them, these fans were part of the larger *lolicon* boom in Japan. For more, see Chapters 1, 2 and 3 in Galbraith 2019.

Image 11 A sample of Watanabe's *Thumping Heart, Ms. Minako!* Note the combination of baby-faced and big-breasted.



a series – consistently, unwaveringly carrying on the same craft, with the same character and taste – is not as easy as it sounds. Of course, the drawing undoubtedly improved and the depiction of sexual organs became more explicit in keeping with the times. Fundamentally, however, Watanabe did not budge in the slightest.

What allowed Watanabe to do this in practice was his composing the character of symbolic parts. (At the time, there was not a convenient turn of phrase such as “*moe* elements,” but they are what is under discussion here.) Drawn with thick, bold lines, the eyes, nose, mouth, hairstyle and other parts are like those of an anime character. They do not lose their shape in any major way. This can also be said of the breasts, which are close to perfect circles and appear almost as if drafted with a compass. On those beach ball shapes are placed firmly erect nipples, which are like air valves, or perhaps bolts. Breasts like these are impossible in reality. Just what in the world is going on with gravity here?

With its exaggerated proportions and flat shading, this nude figure looks more like a rubber sex doll or vinyl figurine than a copy of a real woman's body. The breasts are prominently positioned and made symbolic. To the eyes of adults with sexual experience, it probably appears to be an extremely artificial model, but consider something else. Seen through the mental warp of adolescence, we grasp that these “round, big, elastic breasts” are the illusory breasts of secondary sexual development, which have been put on paper. The story is basically an endless erotic comedy of the sort found in boys magazines. Like so many of those, *Thumping Heart, Ms. Minako!* is set in a school. It shares the same roots as *Oh No! Ms. Luna* (Ikenai! Runa-sensei, published by Kōdansha from 1986) by Kamimura Sumiko, who later tasted the bitter hardship of being a lightning rod for angry charges in the 1990s. In other words, *Thumping Heart, Ms. Minako!* is cheerful and pleasant to the point of carefree abandon, and sexy to boot – just the sort of thing to stimulate a sense of nostalgia in men who were once boys. From the time of his debut, Watanabe Wataru might have already been nostalgic for the manga generation.

The Big-Breasted of Big-Breasted: *Blue Eyes*

Even with the historical trend of becoming baby-faced and big-breasted, there did not appear in *eromanga* a distinct subcategory of content called “baby-faced and big-breasted manga.” This is because, in contrast to *lolicon* manga, which suggests a narrative in the name itself, “baby-faced and big-breasted” is no more than attributes of the heroine. It does not reach a thematic character with which artists and readers can wrestle. However, there did emerge works specializing in big-breasted characters.

In the background of this was the diversification and segmentation of *eromanga*, which was a necessity due to the expanding scale of the industry and market. However, another factor was the D-cup boom in adult videos

Image 12 A sample of Nishimaki's *Blue Eyes*. Note how increasingly large breasts are drawn.



and “pink films,” which takes as its originator model and actress Nakamura Kyōko. In effect from the mid-1980s, this boom impacted even general magazines. Add to all this the existence of Western nude gravure magazines. In particular, *Bachelor* (Bacherā, published by Dia Shuppan from 1977) was an important source of nude photos of foreign models with big breasts and

information related to them. Originally, there was little demand for Western content like this in Japan, and one cannot say that it was influential in the D-cup boom. However, in giving a glimpse of a world of not just “healthy, big-breasted nudes,” but also “plumpers” (heavy and voluptuous bodies) and more, these Western magazines would go on to connect to Kitamimaki Kei’s manga, for example.

The boom in manga featuring big-breasted characters began around the time that the anthology *D-Cup Collection* (D kappu korekushon, published by Byakuya Shobō in 1988) hit shelves. It approached its peak leading up to the crackdown on *eromanga* in 1991. To put it simply, the boom ended because big breasts had become ubiquitous and taken for granted. Readers wanted big breasts, but they were not “maniacs obsessed with boobs.” Once big breasts became pervasive, only those with considerable fixations needed to produce and consume content based solely on chest size.

Amid all this was Nishimaki Tohru, who pursued big breasts until it hurt. Debuting in *D-Cup Collection*, Nishimaki continued to draw big-breasted manga after, which resulted in his representative work, *Blue Eyes* (published by Hitto Shuppansha). Since the first volume was released in 1996, Nishimaki began at a pace of one new volume of the serialized story every two years, but then accelerated to once a year to reach a total of nine volumes.⁴ The protagonist of the story is Hibino Tatsuya, who is reunited with his childhood friend Misono Maria. The heroine of the story, Maria has a Japanese father and British mother, which led to her studying abroad before returning to Japan. As children, she and Tatsuya promised that they would have sex when they both turned 16 years old. Not only does Maria remember the promise, but she also intends to fulfill it. The story does not end there, however. Instead, after they reunite, characters every bit as big-breasted as Maria appear one after another: It begins with Tatsuya’s middle school classmate Mizuno Lisa, who seduces him; he then meets Cecilia, Maria’s mother; crosses over to England and encounters Maria’s cousin Claire; Alice, the maid; and Sera, Claire’s mother. In this way, Tatsuya flits around, ascends to heaven with big-breasted women and constructs a harem. The story is no more than setup or seasoning for sex. In order to link the sex scenes together like skewered dumplings, there are story developments, but there just as well might not be.⁵ The summer vacation arc that began in volume three had still not ended

4 TN: This figure is from 2006, when Nagayama originally published his book.

5 This reference to skewered dumplings is inspired by Takekuma Kentarō (in *Even a Monkey Can Draw Manga* [Saru demo kakeru manga kyōshitsu], published by Shōgakukan in 1989), who compares erotic comedy in manga for young men to “conveyor-belt sushi” (*kaiten-zushi*) and

by the time Nishimaki reached volume eight, by which the reader can easily guess how densely packed those pages are with summer sex.

Naturally, all the female characters that appear have big breasts. How big? Beach ball size is par for the course, but that is only the beginning. By the time we reach Claire, the breasts are so incredibly enormous that they have surpassed the limit of what could even theoretically be held up by a bra. It is to the extent that their bellies look bulged out when clothed. Imagine a figure with a stomach that is more or less that of a pregnant woman in the third trimester. Many are probably thinking that these breasts are way too big, whatever the circumstances, but there actually was a woman with breasts so big that they surpassed reason and common sense. That was Titanic Tina, the British model who also appeared in *Bachelor*. A quick search on the internet should provide some images of her. No doubt the first thing one notices is her breast size, which is simply unbelievable. According to rumor back then, her bust size was two meters. It was enough to make other models with massive breasts – even those measuring over a meter – look like children in comparison. As is to be expected of breasts this size, gravity takes its toll and they sag, but that too is out of this world, because they reach down far enough to hide the belly button. Judging from the real degree of sag, it is likely that Titanic Tina is the base of the super big-breasted *bishōjo* that Nishimaki Tohru draws. As can be gathered from the fact that the female characters he draws in *Blue Eyes* all – with the exception of one – have blond hair and blue eyes, Nishimaki has a distinct orientation toward the West.⁶ Moreover, interestingly, this made-in-Japan “Western,” big-breasted manga was even published in the United States, home of the skin magazines that inspired many artists. It just goes to show that there are no national borders for breast men.

Big Breasts and Added Value

As previously stated, it is hard to establish big breasts as a distinct subcategory of *eromanga*. Big-breasted characters are now the standard. Artists

battles in boys manga to “skewered dumplings” (*kushi-dango*). In boys manga, battles are lined up like dumplings on a skewer; inflation occurs as increasingly powerful enemies appear one after another. In the case of *eromanga*, if we are talking about erotic comedy, then Takekuma’s conveyor-belt sushi metaphor applies as is, but inflation can also occur, depending on the work. As female characters appear one after another, *Blue Eyes* displays a tendency toward breast inflation.

6 TN: For what it is worth, Titanic Tina (aka Christina Jane Small) also had blond hair and blue eyes. Given that the heroine of *Blue Eyes*, Maria, shares these traits, as well as the British connection, it is hard to entirely discount the influence.

such as Nishimaki have made a name for themselves by drawing breasts above the default size. That said, few creators make their only sales point big breasts. The breasts drawn by Chatarō are big and beautiful, but the greatest appeals of his work are the clever constructs and attractive characters. Another drawer of extraordinary super breasts is Azuki Kurenai, but here the emphasis is on the slutiness of the main character and intensity of sex. The loose feeling of Zeronomono's breasts, which makes one think that they are rubber ice packs or independent soft-bodied creatures, is amazing, but he did not acquire popularity with that alone. The same applies to Mille-feuille, Tenchūmaru, Erotica Heaven, Shiromi Kazuhisa, Drill Murata, Maturino Naginata, Mikoshiro Nagitō, Jamming, Aura Seiji, Kawamoto Hiroshi, Newmen, Lazyclub, Yamamoto Yoshifumi, Heaven-11, Kira Hiroyoshi, Yukiyanagi, Point Takashi, Twilight, Umino Sachi, Mocchii, Yūri Ai – there is no end to it once you start giving names, but all of them and many more besides.

Big breasts plus disgracing, big breasts plus sadomasochism, big breasts plus narrativity and emotional impact, big breasts plus comedy, and so on and so on. All of these are *eromanga* works with added value. (It does not really matter which of the terms is the added value.) Of course, there is still a fetishistic gaze toward breasts. However, it is probably impossible to win readers over with just that unless the creator's personal gusto is incredibly strong, or that creator has skill enough to drive the work with solely big-breast fetishism. When things go in that direction, the work tends to lose its general appeal and become a short-run product intended for fanatics. For example, even as the plumper line – represented by Shiroy Gunpan, who narrowed down a taste for chubby women among big-breasted characters – is supported by fervent fans, it faces an uphill battle on the commercial side.⁷

Despite limitations and challenges, works focusing on big breasts do exist. A good example here is Kotoyoshi Yumisuke's *Breast Play* (Shokunyū, published by Koa Magajin in 2002). This long-form work tells the story of a married woman with explosively big breasts, who falls into a trap set by a rival lover. Abducted and confined in a "breast rape mansion" by "breast rape masters," the woman's breasts are thoroughly tormented. The narrative

7 Fanatics probably would not describe a character as a plumper unless she reaches a body type like the one in Hachū Rui's erotic *gekiga*, but the stoutly built Miss Piggy, as well as the nude women in Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' *The Turkish Bath* (1862-1863), might also be counted as plumpers. In contemporary *eromanga*, Honjō Hiroshi and Pa-Ja are among those drawing plumpers.

Image 13 A sample of Kotoyoshi's *Breast Play*. The breasts become the focus of sexual activity, which de-centers genital pleasure.



framework itself is that of sexual blackmail and training. Even after the heroine is released from the mansion, she is subjected to another round of training, and then another. Pushed both physically and mentally, the woman's masochism is forced into blossom, whether she likes it or not. It is very standard for this narrative framework (more in the chapter on disgrace and training), but the work is nevertheless a splendid mix of realism and the unexpected; there are shrewd developments, excellent drawings honed by practice in general magazines and skillful psychological depictions. However, the highlight of the work is the breasts, which are massaged thoroughly, clenched tightly, have mother's milk squeezed from them by a machine used for dairy cows, bound with string and manipulated. What is important here is the form of the gigantic, rugby-ball-like breasts, which shake and shiver, flush and swell with the indecent sexual torture. It is probably not overstating things to say that everything else is window dressing.

The objective of the breast rape masters is for the woman to fall into degeneracy and become a slutty sex slave, but the criterion for if she falls or not is the single point of "whether or not she seeks the penis herself." To be more specific, she must desire the penis to be inserted in her vagina. This objective thus structures all sex scenes. There are a series of abuses over the course of the work. Although it is not just the breasts that are targeted – the clitoris and anus are, too – vaginal intercourse with the heroine is nil. Like

the heroine, readers focus their attention on her breasts. While agonizing as things endlessly stop just before beginning, the tension builds. This is not an accident. It is a thoroughly calculated experiment in the art of “not going all the way with the heroine” and “arousing the readers.” In the case of *Breast Play*, it is not that vaginal intercourse is nonexistent, because there are scenes where the heroine is shown already fallen women being violated and wailing with glee in order to increase her desire to join them. The work focuses on big breasts and sex revolves around them, but *Breast Play* rises above content for a niche readership to become something of general interest. The effort put into dismantling preconceived notions here is absolutely not wasted. For as common as it has become to rush toward genital depictions that have as little covering as is legally acceptable, works like this make me think that we may want to support *eromanga* that does not rely solely on reproductive organs.

The Expression of Big Breasts

I once wrote that, “Breasts are easier to draw than butts, because of the difference in musculature.” To this a manga artist acquaintance replied, “Are you trying to make an enemy of the big-breast faction?” This story of getting a smack down is just shoptalk, but I do believe that breasts are easier to make into symbols than butts. The flabby breasts drawn by Hayabusa Shingo are breasts, and Watanabe Wataru’s beach ball-like breasts are also breasts. Whether shaped like artillery shells that defy gravity or too heavy and sagging like gigantic ice packs, even if the areola is drawn to be the size of one’s palm, the reader knows that breasts are breasts.

When looking at *eromanga* as a whole, one understands how creative artists have gotten with depictions of breasts, how much they have expanded and how the genealogical tree has branched. One also begins to see the significance attributed to breasts. As an extension of the maternity symbolized by big breasts comes mother-son incest like Miyabi Tsuzuru’s *Erotic Heart Mother* (Enbo, published by Tsukasa Shobō in 1998).⁸ If the fullness of the big breasts diffuses to the whole body, we end up with the plumper works of Honjō Hiroshi, Shiroy Gunpan and others. Throw in a penis and we have Kitamimaki Kei’s works featuring big-breasted and hung “shemales.”⁹

8 TN: This is the most common English translation, but the anime adaptation has the translated title *Taboo Charming Mother*. A complete collection of the manga was published in 2003.

9 “Shemales” became a notable presence in the American pornographic scene in the 1980s. The term refers to an androgynous or hermaphrodite-like existence. This is most often determined by

Works featuring characters with small breasts can be seen as a reversal of big breasts. On a base of environmental issues, Yōkihi demonstrated the flexibility of sex/gender by inflating boys' breasts. Drawing super big breasts that filled up an entire room, Horihone Saizō transcended the erotic and grotesque to reach the meaningless (or pure nonsense). Then there is Grace, who used the topic of mad cow disease to draw a manga masterpiece wherein "big breast disease" turns the women of the world big breasted one after another. (The punch line properly adheres to the material, too.)

With big breasts everywhere in *eromanga*, depictions of them shaking during sex scenes have steadily evolved. The basic is vertical shaking, but horizontal oscillation and diagonal swaying have also been added in. The degree of shaking has also intensified from magnitude one to eight and above. Aiming to show a size large enough to shake independently, acrobatic techniques that make the breasts shake alternately side-to-side – techniques that are impossible in even adult videos featuring trained professionals – have been developed. Expressions where nipples become belt shaped – flowing like the headlights of a car captured at slow shutter speed – have emerged as well. It goes as far as supernatural techniques that result in the eruption of breast fluid, which is unthinkable even during pregnancy or with hormone irregularity.

Among all those that I have seen, however, the most excessive breast shaking appears in the work of Nemuri Taiyō. A *gekiga*-style artist as opposed to a manga-style one, Nemuri draws breasts shaking so intensely up and down that the nipples in the residual images link together to form a circle. He has gone so far as to develop an erratic shaking that combines left-right movement with up-down movement. This absolutely does not look like the shaking of breasts. There is no mistaking that people seeing it for the

outward appearance: their bodies (breasts, buttocks, body hair) are reconstructed (via hormone therapy and cosmetic surgery) to look like women, except for the penis, which is retained. If there are cases of removing the balls, then there are also cases of them being left with the penis. Internally (as in internal organs) and chromosomally, they are male. Psychologically, they are varied. Some have "gender identity disorder;" some are pre-operation (in a state before surgery to completely change their sex), male-to-female transsexuals; some are engaging in what they perceive as cross-dressing; some have an interest in body modification; and so on. Their sexual orientations are also diverse, ranging from heterosexual and homosexual to bisexual and beyond. Sulka, a "shemale" who represented American hardcore movies and had a following in Japan, fell into the pre-operation category, because she ultimately underwent a full sex change. Furthermore, "gay" indicates homosexuality. Being a "shemale" does not necessarily mean that someone is gay. Even if they appear in pornographic films as a "shemale" and have sex with male stars, in the case of them having gender identity disorder and being a woman on the inside, what might look like a homosexual act is for the person herself straight sex between a man and woman.

first time will puzzle over the image and think, “What in the world is that wiggly trace, which looks like a ribbon drawn in front of the chest?” It is by this point breaking through the erotic to become surreal.

With the becoming big breasted of *eromanga*, sexual acts and techniques impossible in *lolicon* manga are now possible. The breasts are licked, slurped, sucked, bitten, grasped, massaged, fondled, pressed down, held up, rubbed against the cheek, grappled with, shaken, pulled and stretched, squeezed and bound, spanked and slapped, beaten and punched. The penis can be squeezed in the cleavage between the breasts and rubbed off, which is a so-called “titty fuck” (*paizuri*). That can occur simultaneously with fellatio. There can be piercings – of the nipples, for example – and attaching chains to them. From the mother complex to sadomasochism, breasts supplely embrace various forms of desire.

The men appearing in *eromanga* thoroughly love breasts. They fool around with breasts and, in the worst scenarios, destroy them. Why are they so spellbound by breasts? Surely, they have other things to do, right? Is it that they want to symbolically possess the ample bosom that they lack? There is no consensus on whether or not possessing and dominating are male instinct, or second nature, or if that is a load of crock. However, it is a fact that many men have been taught that these are instinct. “The epitome of possession is becoming one with the object.” Such thoughts come to mind when seeing the male characters grappling with breasts in *eromanga*. There are surely many issues with straightforwardly applying this to *eromanga* expression and readers, but is it not plausible at the level of deep psyche? In fact, among male manga artists, there are those who self-project onto female characters when drawing them, activate the “self as woman” (*josei toshite no jibun*) in their minds and simulate pleasure as women.

Let us avoid the obvious retort that there is simply no way that men can understand women’s pleasures. The reasoning behind this critique is that male readers do not understand the bodily sensations of women, or what it is really like to be in a woman’s body. Is the result that empathy is out of the question? The argument is essentially the same as people pointing to boys love manga by and for women and saying, “It is highly dubious that women understand male homosexuality.” If we start saying such things, it leads to asking if we all lack the ability to empathize in the first place.

We are neither telepaths nor empaths. We are not practicing “channeling sex.” We do, however, know our own bodily sensations. Men also know the feeling of skin, mucous membranes, the lips of the mouth, the anus and sex organs. For their entire lives, men and women are heavily showered by “pleasure expressions” (*kairaku hyōgen*) in all forms of media. We are

therefore able to conduct simulations almost unconsciously. Reading manga is in part another act of receiving the memes of pleasure expressions. The reader decodes the depictions of pleasure and takes in the memes. Even if the reader cannot fully understand the bodily sensations of the opposite sex as it exists in reality, they can sufficiently understand the pleasure of characters in the work. The body responds to it.¹⁰

What is so wrong with self-projecting onto big-breasted *bishōjo*, even if it is only when reading manga? Although the hierarchy is beginning to crumble, in androcentric or male-dominated society, men are still haunted by responsibilities and expectations placed on them as “men.” Included in the responsibilities of those positioned as dominant and superior is making women feel good during sex. This sort of sexual power and prowess is part of machismo. The directive is to be manly, to act like a man, to become a manly man. This is how men have come to be raised. What do we make of those who remain men, but in their imagination shift to the side of those being made to feel good – that is, women? There might be aspects to this resembling transvestism and transexuality, but we should not conflate it with the desire to wear women’s clothes or become a woman in any simple way. From the perspective of people dealing with gender identity disorder, this probably seems like the convenient, wild fantasy of self-serving men. However, wild fantasy is fantasy, which is self-serving and convenient to begin with. This fantasy of a body that feels good connects to the rise of “shemales” in *eromanga*, which will be discussed in the chapter on gender mayhem.

10 TN: For more on bodily feeling with characters, see Ortega-Brena 2009.

6 Little Sisters and Incest

Introduction

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, one of the most popular keywords in *eromanga* was “little sister” (*imōto*). What came to be known as little sister works depict romance between older brothers and their younger sisters. Naturally, as *eromanga*, they also include sex, and can thus be positioned within the larger subcategory of incest.¹ This is ultimately a personal impression, because I have not conducted proper statistical data gathering and analysis, but it seems that there is more material focusing on little sisters than all the other forms of incest combined. Little sister works stand out in a significant way. Other than big brothers and little sisters, there are many works devoted to big sisters and little brothers, as well as mothers and sons. Following these are fathers and daughters, aunts and nephews and uncles and nieces. Although big and little sisters and aunts and nieces exist as combinations, it is often the case that they appear in scenes of group sex.² In the incest subcategory of *eromanga* for men, pairings of fathers and sons, uncles and nephews and big and little brothers are very rare.³ In this chapter, I would like to consider how the classic taboo of incest is taken up in *eromanga*, as well as address the question, “Why all the little sisters?”⁴

1 TN: In Japanese, the word “incest” (*kinshinsōkan*) includes Chinese characters that suggest illicit sex (*sōkan*), but Nagayama intentionally subverts this by also and alternatively writing the term “close relative romance” (*kinshinrenai*). For the sake of clarity, given that the subversive mirroring of the terms in Japanese does not play well in English, we have decided to drop the doubling unless it is necessary for understanding the meaning of the sentence.

2 Group sex does not really warrant its own chapter, but *eromanga* artists actively draw scenes that include more than two people. These go from three people – in other words, a threesome (or “3P” *sanpi*) – all the way to mass orgies. Many group sex scenes involve incest.

3 TN: This is in fact no longer the case, as cute, cross-dressing brothers and sons do have sex with big brothers and fathers in contemporary *eromanga*. Indeed, Nagayama has since pointed the phenomenon out, but we have nonetheless left this statement as he wrote it in 2006.

4 The range differs based on ethnic group, religion, nation and region, but various moralities and laws restrict marriage between overly close blood relatives. In Japan, the restriction is in effect up to the third degree of kinship. Legally, marriage between male and female cousins is acceptable. Furthermore, in Japan, the law concerns the institution of marriage. Incestuous sex acts as such are not banned.

If There is Love, Even Close Relatives Cannot Stop It

How do you feel about incest? The most common answer is surely, “It’s gross.” We can probably describe this as an almost physiological disgust. Interestingly, the reaction tends to be more prevalent and stronger among those who actually have siblings. The second they hear the word incest, a familiar blood relative comes to mind. There are even manga artists who assert that, “From the perspective of someone with a real little sister, little sister works are incomprehensible!” I myself am an only child, which means that it would be impossible to carry out a relationship with a sister related by blood. For me, that is in the realm of fantasy, pure and simple.

Well then, how about your mother? She is an individual you were originally one with. For men, she is the first member of the opposite sex encountered in life. One cannot say that there are absolutely zero erotic feelings. The belief bandied about is that all men have a “mother complex,” but treading (into your own interiority) beyond that is tough. Listening to Kotani Mari speak about the mother-child relationship and male otaku at an event related to the net discourse project, I suffered a light panic attack.⁵ “Something,” which I had dismissed as “nothing,” welled up from the depths of memory. Not what can be defined as a wish to commit incest, but “something,” accompanied by a more unfathomable feeling.

The physiological reaction to incest is primarily cultural rules that have become ingrained. These rules – be they religious taboos, communal norms or legal regulations – are meant to maintain social and national order by restricting blood relations to clarify the hierarchy and allocation of inheritance and other rights, and further avoid genetic problems from close marriages and ensure the continuation of the family line.⁶ Nevertheless, research in the field of biology has apparently discovered genes to avoid inbreeding, which suggests that our physiological disgust for incest – as well as other sexual taboos, and even the black box of “instinct” – might be attributed to genetic-level “design.”⁷

5 TN: A feminist critic known for her work on science fiction, Kotani Mari participated in discussions organized by Azuma Hiroki in the early 2000s, which brought her into conversation with Nagayama. The speech he is referring to was later published as Kotani 2003.

6 In the premodern period, these rules were probably based on experience.

7 Glossing the work of Ursula Goodenough, a biologist, Deborah Blum points out, “The broccoli plant [...] has 50 different kinds of genes for avoiding ‘mating’ with a too-similar broccoli” (Blum 1998: 12). Is this rooted in the design principle that, as Blum puts it, “The less alike a couple’s genes are, the more variability, the greater the ability to respond to genetic injury, and the less likely that defective genes will be inherited” (Blum 1998: 10)?

Whatever the design concept of the gods may be, humans are a perverse and contrary existence. The more forbidden something is, the more curious we become. Setting aside people who actually violate taboos, at the very least those peeking at the world of taboo trespass in fiction will not be struck by lightning for it. Tales of incest are a safe option to passively observe, voyeuristically gaze upon and easily simulate taboo violation. For all but those with direct experience, they do not hit too close to home.

Tales of incest can be traced back to myths and sacred texts. These examples might not be fiction in the modern sense, but the memes born from them flow into fiction. In theater, there are examples beginning from Greek tragedies, as well as the notable John Ford play *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (likely first performed between 1629 and 1633). This post-Elizabethan work was adapted into the film *Addio Fratello Crudele* (1971). Speaking of film, there is also Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Edipo Re* (1967), which takes the Oedipal drama as its base. When it comes to literature in Japan, one might point to Yumeno Kyūsaku's *Hell in a Bottle* (Binzume no jigoku, 1928) and Kurahashi Yumiko's *Divine Maiden* (Seishōjo, 1965). In manga, old examples include Tezuka Osamu's *Ayako* (published by Daitosha from 1973) and Kamimura Kazuo's *The Diabolic Man* (Akuma no yō na aitsu, published by Kōdansha in 1975; original story by Aku Yū). In *shōjo* manga specifically, Yamagishi Ryōko's *Emperor of the Land of the Rising Sun* (Hi izuru tokoro no tenshi, published by Hakusensha from 1980) is famous. Other than these, Hikochi Sakuya's *Forgive Us God* (Kami-sama yurushite, published by BSP in 1999), Yoshida Motoi's *Koi Kaze* (Love Wind, published by Kōdansha from 2002) and Aoki Kotomi's *Secret Sweethearts* (Boku wa imōto ni koi o suru, published by Shōgakukan from 2003) have all attracted mainstream attention.

On the adult side of things, literature featuring incest and stepmothers has been standard fare from long ago. In early erotic *gekiga*, which was in part the manga version of erotic literature, depicting incest was an option.⁸ From the *lolicon* boom all the way to contemporary *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, many artists draw incest as a matter of course. Take for example Moriyama Tō, who created an epoch in *eromanga*. In his near-future, science-fiction *eromanga* work *Penguin in Bondage* (Toraware penguin, published by Tatsumi Shuppan in 1986), the protagonists are a big sister and little brother in an

8 Speaking of incest works in third-rate *gekiga*, Dirty Matsumoto's "The Flesh Illusion" (Genshi no nikutai, in *Blood Dance* [Chi no butō], published by Kubo Shoten in 1987) is explosive. In the work, a cute girl and boy, who are big sister and little brother, are kidnapped. After having their genitals cross-transplanted, the two are forced to have sexual intercourse. The setup is elaborate, to say the least.

incestuous relationship. (They are in fact clones, meaning zero degrees of kinship separation.) In the world of *dōjinshi*, or self-published works, Mibuno Kakashi's incest line was famous. (His work was even published commercially in trade paperback form.) From early on, Hiryū Ran was also drawing works featuring various incestuous combinations.

Up to this point has been a discussion of the obvious, but we now move to how incest has been depicted in *eromanga*. To start, things click faster if the reader understands that the sum total of memes concerning incest depicted in mythology, theater, literature, film and more has flowed into *eromanga*. In other words, the tragedy of classically forbidden lovers, incest occurring as part of corruption, the human conflict of falling for a blood relative and more. Artists adopt almost all the patterns. The difference from other content is that *eromanga* ultimately pursues eroticism and a pornographic character. That is, even when depicting the tragic love of a naïve young couple or domestic abuse and rape by a crazy father, it has to be erotic. Whatever the artist's awareness of issues and feelings may be, the manga still has to be erotic. Naturally, there is nothing wrong with depth as sequential art, attention to human depictions, reflection on incest based on personal speculation, doubt about taboo and so on. In the incest subcategory, as in *eromanga* more generally, the ironclad rule is anything goes as long as it is erotic.

As an example, consider Hiryū Ran's *Eden* (published by Fujimi Shuppan in 2004). One of the foremost figures producing incest works, Hiryū's *Eden* depicts a relationship between a brother and sister. The little sister fancies her big brother, and this has been building over time. She had an embarrassing experience of peeing herself at the park as a child. As everyone laughed and called the child dirty, her brother stepped in. "I'm so dirty," she said, sobbing bitterly. "I can't go home anymore..." "You're fine," her brother responded, trying to talk her down. "I'm telling you that you're not dirty!" As proof he did not think that she was dirty, the boy licked his little sister's genitals, which were wet with urine. Hampered by the memory and having approached adolescence in the present, the little sister has been overly conscious of her brother and contrarily distant with him. One day, however, she encounters a molester on the train, loses control and pees herself again. The one who rescues her from this emergency is once more her big brother. Thus, the bittersweet drama of childhood is re-enacted. The two come together at last and rush into sex that is both gentle and intense.

In terms of structure, the pattern of past trauma, distortion and healing is a well-worn one. It still works even if "incontinence" is replaced by "rape," and "childhood friend" can replace "brother." However, "a child pissing

her pants,” which to the eyes of others is a silly little thing, and “a kind big brother” – that set stages the little sister character’s optimal amount of warped feelings and lovability. Her trauma healed, the little sister finds solace, expressions of which are impressive indeed. In the end, thinking of his little sister’s future, the brother decides to pretend that nothing happened between them. To this, she proudly declares, “I won’t give you up, big brother, not even to god!” Sex changing someone’s inner state is another stereotypical pattern. Equally stereotypical is the message that even taboo and norms of decency are powerless before love. This is already a “model” (*kata*), a standard form of movement or posture.

This placing of love above all else, which manifests in the idea that, “We can overcome even relations of blood if we have love,” is more than simply *eromanga* cliché. It is much older than that – extremely old indeed – and probably also something close to the consciousness of readers. In the case of Japan, rather than assertive and complete denial of incest, are there not more people who give it passive and partial affirmation?⁹ A number of factors have contributed to this, including lax legal restriction of close marriages, the tradition of allowing marriage among siblings with different mothers in the imperial family and aristocracy prior to the Nara Period (710-794), the thin or diluted religious atmosphere compared to other countries and so on.

Be that as it may, the border between love and desire is ambiguous. In Makafushigi’s *Hina Labyrinth* (*Hina meikyū*, published by Hitto Shuppansha in 2002), for example, Takumi, 17, feels intense sexual desire for his little sister, Hinako, 11. Alongside thinking she is cute, he unmistakably also harbors the desire to have sex with her. Aroused by Hinako’s disheveled sleeping form, Takumi gently licks her genitals. Holding himself back, even as he monologues that, “I want to put it in Hinako,” Takumi presses his penis against his little sister’s groin and ejaculates. In his mind plays an endless loop of conflict: “I want to do it with my sister, but can’t because she’s my sister.” Pretending to sleep, Hinako finally discovers this act of domestic molestation, which had been repeated nightly for some time. Instead of getting angry, however, Hinako grabs Takumi’s penis and responds: “If it’s with you, big brother, I can do it.” The second Takumi starts to insert his penis, he feels pleasure: “Hinako’s privates are spreading... It’s so hot inside!” Simultaneously, self-restraint kicks in: “Is this OK!? Is it OK to

9 I think that it was in *Hey, Wanna Try Something?!* (*Nē taiken shinai*, published by Takarajimasha in 1982), which is a report of sexual experiences, but I remember reading an intense incest episode that author Naitō Ryō encountered while gathering data. To be honest, I felt, “Isn’t it fine, as long as they don’t produce any children? They seem to love each other.”

Image 14 A sample of Makafushigi's *Hina Labyrinth*. The work depicts an insatiable desire, which begins with a forbidden relationship.



dirty these pretty privates? She's your little sister!"¹⁰ Believe it or not, his solution is to just insert it in her anus instead. This becomes the trigger for Hinako to start soliciting anal sex. Thus does Takumi enter a second stage of the endless loop: "I want to insert it in my sister's vagina, but can't because she's my sister."

He can never be released from the hunger and the thirst, eternally. The young woman Takumi starts dating at school is also named Hinako. At a loss, he phones an escort service, which leads to meeting the call girl "Hinako of Moming Musume" (professional name). Takumi has sexual intercourse

¹⁰ The technique of paralleling the competing monologues across three closely spaced frames is quite effective at conveying his conflict and confusion.

with all of these Hinakos, but his thirst remains unquenched. Sex with girlfriend Hinako increases in intensity. They do it on campus, in the pool changing rooms – everywhere, regardless of time or place. They engage in shaving play, exhibitionist play, and escalate to anal sex. Moreover, Takumi is continuing to repeatedly have anal sex with his little sister the entire time. One seldom finds a work that so comically, richly and moreover painfully depicts the madly exacerbated sexual desire of adolescence, and beyond that the “eternal thirst” (*eien no kawaki*), or the fact that our desires will never be satisfied.¹¹

Ideal Mothers, Real Mothers and Slutty Mothers in Law

Even allowing for partial affirmation, however passive, when it is between siblings, the hurdle suddenly gets much higher when we are talking about incest between mothers and sons and fathers and daughters. Particularly in the case of male manga artists, when depicting the relationship of mother and son, they likely cannot avoid thinking about themselves and their own relations, whether they like it or not. Obviously, male readers also cannot just wave it away as someone else’s problem, which has nothing to do with them. Personally, even just thinking about simulating an erotic relationship with my own mother is unsettling.

Perhaps because of that sense of apprehension and danger, there are not as many works centering on mothers and sons as one might anticipate. Furthermore, when they are drawn, it is common for the mother figure to be an idealized character that is young, beautiful and kind.¹² Whether harboring romantic feelings or getting twisted up and forcing themselves on her, it is indeed easy to see that the men in *eromanga* want to have sex with the “ideal mother” (*risō no hahaoya*).

An exception might be the “real mother” (*riaru na hahaoya*), or more realistic one, drawn by Rumoi Jun in the title work of his collection *I Wanna Put It In Mama* (Mama ni iretai, published by Ōtō Shobō in 2003). This still

11 TN: One could further point out that this mad escalation of desire and multiplication of partners is a metaphor for *eromanga* itself. The reader is also lost in *Hina Labyrinth*, wants to have sex with the heroine but cannot. From this work, they go on to the next, and the next. And so the endless loop continues, even as the *eromanga* at hand highlights the eternal thirst.

12 I am speaking primarily about manga here. In contemporary erotic *gekiga*, works focusing on “mature women” (*jukujo*) have become independent as a subcategory with their own specialty magazines. Interestingly, the mother figures there all have age-appropriate appearances. In many cases, they are deliberately drawn to look physically older.

young woman is divorced, has uncontrollable sexual desire, indulges in masturbation on a daily basis and takes it out on her kid when she is stressed or irritated. She manages a mother-and-son household and does her best, but is a lonely woman. On the other hand, her son, who is in gradeschool, has caught a glimpse of his masturbating mother, which seared the idea into his brain. Even when at school, the boy ditches class and pleasures himself. Then, one day, he gets naked and finally enters the scene of his mother's masturbation, eyes welling with tears.

Like two unsatisfied people licking each other's wounds – lacking both a husband and father – it is a closed system of mother and son. A closed system that is downright unbearable, one where if there is no lukewarm relief, there is also no catharsis. Even if we grant that the mother has attained a “surrogate husband” in her son, his lack is not filled. “This is a sad story...” That I think so reveals the influence of a deeply rooted “family illusion” (*kazoku gensō*), or the notion that, “The minimal conditions of family are a father (husband) and mother (wife) with a child.”¹³ Consideration of family values this way might be taking things beyond reading, but Rumoi Jun's body of work is full of superb entries that force one to think about various things.

It is interesting, however, that depictions of the mother figure in *eromanga* are not limited to idealism (including debauchery that overturns the ideal) and realism. The mother in Tanaka Ekisu's (aka Tanaka-Ex's) *Immature Mama* (Osana mama, published by Heiwa Shuppan in 2003), for example, bursts through the ideal and real to become a *moe* character. As the title suggests, her facial features and body type are immature – to the extent that she appears younger than her son. This is a figure only conceivable as an exception in reality, but it is the strength of manga to depict it nonchalantly. Moreover, her personality is childish and lovable, always demanding attention and affection.

From the perspective of men's self-indulgent desire, she is probably close to the ideal figure of the lover. She is, however, a mother – the mother of the protagonist, to be precise. As an adolescent but also her son, the boy has fallen into a fairly conflicted state of mind. Just then, his mother, who has been neglected by her husband and drowned her sorrow in drink, jumps on him. Getting shamelessly horny – recklessly, indiscriminately sexual – when drunk is another ideal setting for men's self-indulgent desire. The son, too, loses to his desire, against all better judgment. Never mind the “ideal mother,” when things get to this point, we are looking at the “ideal girlfriend being

13 This family illusion directly connects to a discriminatory consciousness, including feelings of sympathy, toward single-parent households.

nearby,” an exemplar of male opportunism. The eponymous character of *Immature Mama* is arguably not a mother figure. Rather, the attribute of “mother” functions here as a *moe* element, or an element in the character design of this “cute mama.”

If one wants to enjoy mother-son incest from an even safer position, there is also the method of setting up a “surrogate mother” in relationships with a “mother in law” (*gibo*). This can be the woman one’s divorced or widowed father marries, the mother of one’s spouse or anyone else not related by blood but positioned as a mother by law. Insofar as there is no blood relation with this woman, the feelings of hesitancy or resistance diminish, but the positioning otherwise remains much the same. If the setup is something along the lines of, “My father got remarried to a younger woman,” then there need not be much difference in age. She is a young, beautiful woman, but also the character’s “mother.”

As a representative work in this vein, one can give Miyabi Tsuzuru’s *Erotic Heart Mother* (Enbo, published by Tsukasa Shobō from 1998). This long-form, picaresque work centers on a highschooler who burns for his father’s new wife. Hiding his identity, he harasses the woman with erotic calls, sends her a vibrator, introduces phone sex and takes advantage of this, that and every other technique to turn his stepmother into a carnal slave. This extends further to the woman’s sister, now the boy’s aunt in law, who also falls into his clutches. Although the incest theme is not as strong, because the relationship is one of law rather than blood, the early stages when the heroine endeavors to become the boy’s mother do set quite a tone. In the second half, the naughty pleasure and thrill of disciplining and debauched play behind the back of the husband (father) becomes stronger, with the emphasis on the parent-child relationship receding to the point that it is little more than an explanation for why the two are under the same roof. The eroticism rises without stopping for a moment. After all, *Erotic Heart Mother* is a masterpiece.

Without Love and Without Morals

No matter how much love exists, there can be no publicly open and out incest. Even in Japan, as loose and lax as it may be, incest is by no means something with a bright and cheerful image. Well, then, what happens without love? The result of abandoning love and morals and depicting a dark world is Yamada Tahichi’s *Ryo* (published by Hitto Shuppansha in 1999). A long-form work, it is the story of Ryo, the younger brother of a highschool-aged girl who he

sees abused every day. In this nightmarish spectacle, after the death of Ryo and his sister's mother, their father rapes the girl, places her in bondage and torments her like an insane person. Although Ryo trusted his big sister alone, she in time sexually assaults him. What is more, when Ryo, brooding about the situation, turns to a female teacher for help, the father and sister violate her, too; Ryo himself is also forced to have sex with her.

All of this, it turns out, is some sort of emotional education from the father. Before long, Ryo starts to develop into a demonic human being that, like his father, "Seeks to obtain pleasure until he loses what is important." The second half centers on Ryo and his many atrocious acts, but also includes flashbacks to the boyhood years of his father, who had been in exactly the same situation as his son. It is a vivid picture of the chain of misfortune, suggesting how the victim of abuse can later become the victimizer. In an open-ended state, without salvation or damnation, the story draws to a close. Here incest is a rite of passage for the purpose of a normal person transitioning into something else. It is no more than a passing point for sinking to the depths of corruption and perversion.

What about the incest in Akiba Nagi(to)'s *Lost Innocent World* (Sora no inosento, published by Koa Magajin from 1997), a work boasting cult-like popularity? Taken in by a broken household composed only of women, the boy protagonist is sexually assaulted by an aunt fixated on him and a sadistic older cousin. In the process, his body and mind are engraved with the pleasure of masochistic passivity. Stuck in a pleasure pit and harboring devoted feelings for his innocent younger cousin – Sora, the heroine – the boy is trapped and unable to escape. The story thus rushes toward ruin. In this chilling, long-form work, it is almost as if the self-destructive, blocked space of groups such as Aum Shinrikyō and the United Red Army has manifested in a family. One could also describe it as a work symbolizing the era of introspection, which started with the animated television series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*.

Both *Ryo* and *Lost Innocent World* are works depicting darkness by the name of home. We do not know the truth of the homes of other people in reality. It is exposed only when an incident occurs. Seen from the outside, the homes of *Ryo* and *Lost Innocent World* are both ordinary and happy.

Even as its world is similarly without morals, RaTe's *Incest + 1* (published by Tsukasa Shobō in 1998) is a 180-degree turn in terms of brightness. As the curtain opens, the work begins with some dodgy narration: "We go to a girls school, so it's common to be a lesbian." At this school, however, is a girl named Kyōko, who wants a man. Her best friend, Kasumi, responds, "Want me to introduce my boyfriend?" Kyōko does meet the boyfriend, who turns

Image 15 A sample of RaTe's *Incest + 1*. A big sister introduces her little brother as her boyfriend.



out to be a cute younger boy – with his pants off and penis hanging out, no less. Moreover, as Kasumi explains, “This is my boyfriend and little brother, Kazumi.” This might be a surprising confession, but Kyōko instead gives a brain-melting response: “I see! So Kasumi’s doing incest. You go, girl!” After the three engage in oral sex, the conversation goes as follows: “Now, on to the real deal.” “Yeah! Sex, sex!” “Kyōko’s a virgin... But her pussy is already wet, so it’s OK to just put it in, right?” “Yeah, I masturbate a lot, so I don’t think that it will hurt...” Without seeming to care about what is going on, or rather while carrying on an utterly moronic conversation, the sex turns into a threesome, which includes sister-brother incest.

His style is also extreme in a way, but more germane to the discussion at hand is RaTe’s approach to incest. Incest – which one would expect to be a “grossly immoral corruption,” if not a “great sin in revolt against laws established by the gods” – is passed over with a, “You go, girl!” In the blink of an eye, the taboo against coupling between close relatives – a taboo passed down diligently by humans – as well as the perverted feelings when going against it, are demolished. In terms of being destructive of values, there is nothing as powerful as this approach. The stronger the established values that “incest is dark,” the greater the destructive force of *Incest + 1*. Not only does the work not seem to know or care about those values, but the incest also occurs with a smile.

Sweet Role-Play with an Imaginary Little Sister

In this final section, I would like to return to where we started and discuss the subcategory of “little sister works.” This particular naming spread from the late 1990s, but it has actually become extremely broad in application. In general, when used as an adjective in Japan, “little sister” refers to that which is “little sister-ish,” “cute” and “Lolita-like,” as in “little sister idols,” “little sister fashion” and so on. In *eromanga*, it indicates works depicting incestuous relationships between big brothers and little sisters, but nuances of the general usage are also included. If we follow this provisional definition, then a number of works already introduced are little sister works, including Hiriyū Ran’s *Eden* and Makafushigi’s *Hina Labyrinth*. This is only the beginning, however: There is also the title piece in Hinden Burugu’s (aka Hindenburg’s) *Sibling Love* (*Kyōdai ai*, published by Shōbunkan in 2002), where things heat up as a big brother consoles his little sister, who has broken up with her boyfriend; Kino Hitoshi’s “Be My Angel” (in *Incest* [Kinshinsōkan], published by Koa Magajin in 2004), which is dense with

scenes of big brother and little sister sex; and more.¹⁴ While the writing and artistic styles clearly differ, all might be described as “little sister works.”

Nevertheless, it is also a fact that there is a subtle gap between “big brother and little sister incest” and “little sister works.” Conveying this difference can be difficult, because we are laboring without clear definitions, but some things can be said for certain. In works since the late 1990s, when *moe* had become shared language among otaku and *eromanga* readers, many *moe* elements were included in character designs and “little sister” heroines became objects of shared *moe* response. “Little sister works,” then, are distinguished by their focus on the little sister as *moe* character. The character type is more important to defining the work than the sex acts.

What readers respond to as *moe* is not the little sister as a substitute for, or representation of, an actual body or person, but rather a “character” playing the role of “little sister.” “Big brother” is also no more than a “role” (*yakuwari*). Reading *eromanga*, one performs characters named big brother and little sister in an imaginary theater. Or, if one prefers a different metaphor, it is like a role-playing game. The counter argument is: “Doesn’t appreciation of all creative fiction work in a similar way? People project and role-play. What’s the difference here?” Certainly, the counter argument is absolutely correct that manga is not unique, but let me also respond that contemporary *eromanga*’s edge lies in the refinement of role-play. It is impossible at present to rigorously demonstrate, but suffice it to say for now that this is the sensation I grasp and am working with.

Is it not the case that manga readers are more self-aware in their stance toward creative fiction? Previously, “youth who cannot distinguish between reality and fiction” became a stock phrase and pet expression in criticism of “otaku,” but was not the truth rather the opposite? Otaku readers know that more pleasure can be gained if reality and fiction are explicitly separated. To be precise, reality and fiction always have an unseen connection; reality is uncertain, and there is reality in fiction, too. Taking all this into account, otaku readers understand that deliberately positioning fiction as something distinct is safer and more comfortable.¹⁵ For better or worse, we are neither as innocent nor as pure as past audiences shooting at the screen in movie

14 The title “Be My Angel” might be homage to “Be My Baby” (Bi mai baby, 1984), which is the first episode of the *Cream Lemon* (Kuriimu remon) series of pornographic animation. “Be My Baby” tells the story of an incestuous relationship between a big brother and little sister, and was popular enough to spawn a series within the series focusing on the little sister character, Ami.

15 TN: The implicit argument here is one of media literacy, or those growing up with and surrounded by fiction, media and screens understanding them better. For more about “otaku” and nuanced understandings of fiction and reality, see Saitō 2011.

Image 16 A sample of Takarada's *Sister's Heart*. This is a representative "little sister work."



theaters. If so, then all we can do is thoroughly take pleasure in fiction as fiction, right?¹⁶

In this spirit, one might call Gorgeous Takarada's *Sister's Heart* (Imōto gokoro, published by Koa Magajin in 2005) exquisite. This is because the long-form work takes up material outrageous enough to make the reader want to cry out at least 10 times, "No way!" For one thing, although the big brother rapes his beloved little sister, this is for her in fact the realization of a dream, which leads to the mutually infatuated couple fully enjoying a lovey-dovey, saccharine sweet sex life. Judging from this synopsis, one might well think that this is a cliché and asinine work. It could be dismissed as opportunism that critically lacks reality. Yet, when actually reading it, one is compelled to continue. Perhaps mediocre material depends on the creator preparing it, but *Sister's Heart* is very well made.

16 TN: Here again is that key phrase "fiction as fiction" (*kyokō o kyokō toshite*), which appeared earlier in the book in the discussion of *moe*. See Saler 2012.

In Takarada's capable hands, the fiction is elevated to a representative little sister work.

The little sister, Chinami, is a cute, guileless, sweet, wholehearted and admirable character, but at times reveals her jealous side. She reflects on her devotion to her big brother – “Am I weird?” – but possesses a fundamentally positive personality. The big brother, Kōichirō, is at first glance cool and cerebral, an adult and arrogant, but in fact is the type that self-deprecatingly and irresolutely stew. He is self-centered and dense. In contrast to Chinami, who is the “ideal little sister character,” Kōichirō is on the inside a commonplace “bad person” (*dame ningen*), even if his outer appearance is above average. Indeed, Kōichirō's uselessness and incompetence are brilliant in a way. At the point that he rapes his little sister, Kōichirō is already bad to the point of being beyond saving, and his weakness when reflecting on the act is just amazing. In the first place, this guy's consciousness toward his little sister is on a pathetic level: “Without asking, I thought to myself, ‘She at least is on my side.’”¹⁷ It is a dualism of friend and foe, inside and outside, where even allies are treated as objects. Nevertheless, this pouring out of the interior encourages empathy. He is aware of the problem and regrets thinking about Chinami this way. Even if Kōichirō opportunistically gets lovey-dovey with his little sister, there is reassurance in some respects.

Loved by his little sister and a sympathetic figure for readers, Kōichirō even has an odd but understanding classmate named Zubayama. Just how blessed is he? Somehow almost omniscient, Zubayama notices Chinami and Kōichirō's feelings and even gives them confirmation. “Isn't it only a problem when it comes time to have kids? Even normal couples aren't having sex to make babies, you know.” Before these lines, Zubayama makes another important point, which touches on Riron, who hangs around Kōichirō at school. A self-proclaimed “campus little sister,” Riron is crass, unusually high strung and boyish. “The words ‘little sister’ probably mean someone like Riron,” Zubayama explains, comparing her to Chinami, who he knows and calls by a nickname. “Chii-chan is different.” Through Zubayama, Takarada is proclaiming to readers that Chinami is not a “little sister,” but rather a “little sister character.” She is a certain type, and different from Riron.

17 TN: The gloss used for the big brother's line clarifies his thinking. What is translated here as “on my side” is written as *mikata*, or “ally,” in Chinese characters, but glossed as *mono*, or “thing,” in Japanese. In other words, the brother thought the sister was his and raped her when he misinterpreted her suggestion that she liked someone as a betrayal.

With a great deal of scrupulousness, Takarada always divides “outside” and “inside.” Take the school, for example. It is a private institution that enrolls students at an early age and moves them all the way through highschool; transfer students are rare enough to be called “outsiders.” For Chinami, the reputation that outsiders are rough has become embedded, and Riron is an outsider, too. There is also inside the home, the closet where Chinami masturbates, the acoustic insulation box for music practice where she has sex with Kōichirō and so on. Feelings of pleasure and comfort on the “inside” are emphasized and made to synchronize with the inward orientation of readers.

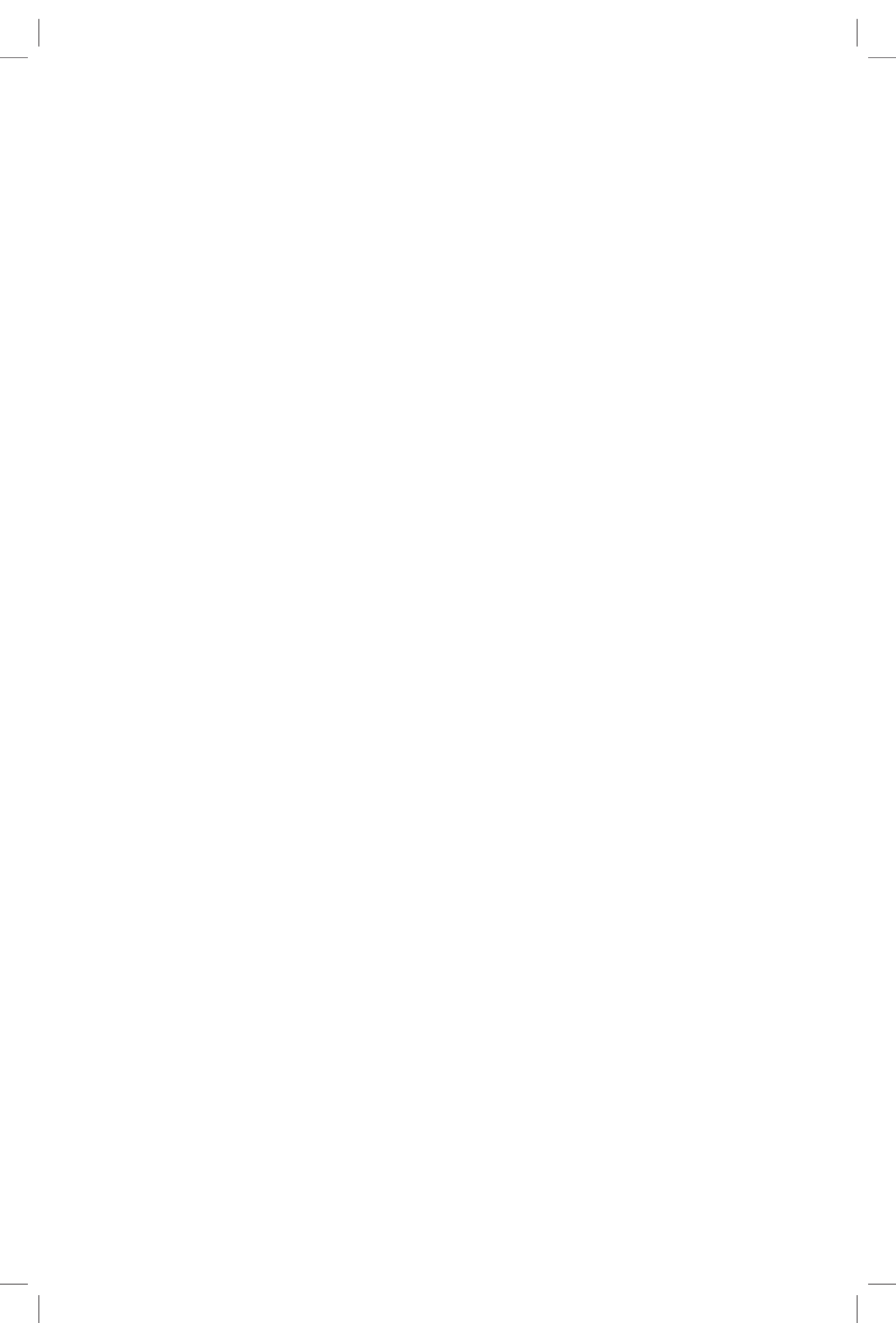
The phrase “imaginary little sister” (*nōnai imōto*) can also be deciphered along with little sister works, to which it is related.¹⁸ Even if one does not have a little sister in reality, they can have a little sister if she is imaginary. She is imaginary, so it is fine to customize this little sister to be one’s own. “Outsiders” will not come inside and disrupt the relationship. Indeed, is there not a double meaning to the title *Sister’s Heart* – that is, “little sister’s heart” (*imōto no kokoro*) and “little sister of the heart” (*kokoro no imōto*)? Considering this, one can probably read *Sister’s Heart* as an *eromanga* that is simultaneously an imaginary little sister specification sheet. I expect that there are readers who also take it that way.¹⁹ When things get to this point, “little sister” becomes no more than an attribute of one’s imaginary girlfriend. Incest, which is in reality a serious issue, also transforms. Given that one’s imaginary girlfriend is in “little sister form,” this inevitably makes it “incest,” but that is all there is to it.

Manga artists are attuned to the situation and respond in their works. For example, in Sena Yōtarō’s *Sister Round!?* (Maru imo, published by Fujimi Shuppan in 2005), a “big brother” who is also a pliant cute boy is made sport of, toyed with and sexually assaulted by his “little sisters,” each a different type. Here it is the little sisters who actively and assertively overcome the hurdle of incest. Appearing one after another, the new and novel little

18 In the end, because the imaginary little sister is “oneself,” this is also an extremely autoerotic structure. This might be intrinsic to imagining something.

19 Similar to every imaginary existence, the imaginary little sister is made up of a bundle of memes. Through memes supplied from the outside, she is updated in real time. If the imaginary little sister is “oneself,” then this too is a bundle of memes continuously updated. As glossed by John Horgan, the modern mystic Susan Blackmore argues that, “what we think of as a conscious self is really a collection of memes. [...] The individual self ‘is just a bunch of memes sustained by the information-processing system in the brain’” (Horgan 2003: 114-115). When considered with biologist Rudolph Schoenheimer’s theory of “dynamic equilibrium,” this is extremely stimulating (see Fukuoka 2004).

sisters – including “big sister type little sisters,” who look older than their “big brother” – surely mark the counterstrike of the imaginary little sisters. This meta-work becomes a parody that overturns little sister works, erotic comedy and the coupling of older women and *shota* (young boys, typically cute) all at once. Tenacious readers, however, put to practical use those parts included for practical use. Such is the world of *eromanga*.



7 Disgrace and Training

Introduction

There are probably more than a few people who assume that *eromanga* means first and foremost “disgrace” (*ryōjoku*), as in sexual disgrace, assault or rape. The precise details are unclear, because statistics remain unavailable, but, practically speaking, works that could be categorized this way certainly do stand out. However, compared to the old days, “pure disgrace material” (*jun ryōjoku neta*) narrowly focused on the theme is not particularly abundant. The abundance is in works with disgrace-like elements – in other words, works that include depictions of “sex acts coercively performed by one without the explicit consent of another.” If there are works that, when read to the end, reveal that the sex acts in question were consensual, then there are also cases where the character the reader thought was the victim actually ordered the “perpetrator” or “assailant” to do it. Stories complicate the acts immensely. Furthermore, from around 1990, works where women disgrace men – to put it in the jargon of adult videos, “reverse rape” (*gyaku reipu*) – have been on a rapid rise. The pattern of a horny and hot female teacher doing a reluctant male student is already a staple. These days, it is only the old geezers who stubbornly cling to the simple-minded notion that “men are stronger and more active than women.” Likewise, it is only out-of-touch haters who denounce all of *eromanga* as “rape manga.”

Be that as it may, whether referring to a theme, motif or just the visuals, why are there so many “disgrace works” in *eromanga*? As one possible answer, we can raise the issue of efficiency. By incorporating disgrace, artists can easily build a dramatic story with eye-catching scenes of intense sex in the basic format of 16 to 20 pages. Rather than depicting warm and peaceful sex in a bland everyday world, artists can throw a fastball straight at readers. This is a brutally honest way of explaining things, but often times that is just how it goes with reality. Everywhere one finds editors who, in meetings with manga artists, assign a quota: “Please insert erotic scenes in 15 of the 20 pages.” Although the numerical values in this example are entirely hypothetical, it does not change the fact that it is very common for editors to ask for many erotic pages in *eromanga*.

This is not, however, all that there is to it. On the subject of many *eromanga* including disgrace-like elements, and more specifically rape, one can think of various contributing factors. Depictions of rape might be seen as stimulating the instinct to transmit one’s genes to the next generation.

In fantasy, it is a convenient device for instantly shortcutting the process to reach the sex act, which requires time and effort in reality. Resistance and overcoming it can serve to intensify the depiction. Of course, there are probably also ambivalent feelings toward the opposite sex, as well as machismo, at work. More broadly speaking, disgrace works could be an outlet for the dark side of human desire.

Whatever the case may be, whether one self-projects onto the “doing side” or “being done side” (*youtu gawa / yarareru gawa*), depictions of sexual activity involving coercive power stimulate something fundamental in humans. At times, disgrace works evoke fiery responses. It is a well-known fact that the brunt of *eromanga* bashing is always born by works associated with *lolicon* and rape.

It would not be far off to call Miyawaki Shintarō and Aisaki Keiko's *The Rapeman* (The reipuman, published by Riidosha in 1987) the original example of pure disgrace material. The protagonist is a humble highschool teacher, but secretly works as a rape contractor. In sum, the story of fighting fire with fire is like a rapist version of *Deadly Instigator* (Hissatsu shikakenin, television show from 1972) or *Golgo 13* (Gorugo 13, published by Shōgakukan from 1968), the legendary *gekiga* series about a skilled gun for hire. The intriguing thing about this work is that it uses the extraordinary and ruthless act of rape to appeal to readers, but also simultaneously draws out the oppression and contradictions of patriarchal society through the actual situations of the “wicked women” who are punished. For this reason, no matter how transcendent the techniques the protagonist uses to complete his missions, there is little catharsis. One is instead left with a dark and sticky mess in the dregs.

This was absolutely not a simple manga glorifying rape through a macho superman, but that is how it was treated in protests by women's groups, which pushed it out of print.¹ Of course, I am not saying that if a manga does glorify rape then it makes perfect sense that it be protested. Nevertheless, I do not intend to react in a kneejerk way without knowing the full details of the protest movement. The specter of machismo still roams. In a society where gender oppression is strong, the subject of rape remains powerfully potent, even dangerous, whether the work in question is mediocre or not.

1 Perhaps the reason it proceeded so quickly from protest to going out of print was because the work was serialized in *Leed Comic* (Riido komikku, published by Riidosha from 1971), a general manga magazine for young men? In 1999, *The Rapeman* was reprinted by Cybele Press (Shubēru Shuppan), a subsidiary of Leed Publishing Co. Ltd. that went bankrupt a few years later. The right to freedom of expression protects protest, but the legitimacy of that protest is significantly damaged when connected to demands to take things out of print. Such demands not only suppress expression as such, but they also hinder future discussion and debate.

Disgrace, *Gekiga* and Neo-*Gekiga*

In the era of third-rate *gekiga* and before, from hard rape to erotic comedy where characters push for sex, disgrace works held sway. Entering the era of *lolicon*, naughty manga in the form of love comedy came to the fore and depictions of hard rape relatively decreased in number. For otaku, cuteness was primary, and they did not want hard sexual works, let alone abuse of characters. It was a time when those seeking hard sexual works could find them in third-rate *gekiga*, which lived on, albeit in a phase of decline.

In the second half of the 1980s, when third-rate *gekiga* had dropped out of the struggle for leadership, as *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* expanded the market, the hard line made a comeback. It was not a bad strategy. By taking in third-rate *gekiga* refugees of the past generation and pulling in a new generation of readers oriented toward “getting off” (*nuki*), publishers could sharpen their competitive edge against different magazines in the same industry. At the same time, it became possible to differentiate *eromanga* from other content, which had tread – step by step – into sexual expression.

After the crackdown on “harmful manga,” something unexpected happened in the first half of the 1990s. In order to avoid regulatory interference from outside, *eromanga* publishers introduced the “adult comics label” (*seinen komikku māku*, also shortened to *seinen māku*), which was a form of self-regulation. This yellow, elliptical mark functioned like a magical talisman to ward off authorities. It meant the content was for adults, and thus not subject to restrictions on publications for general audiences that might include children. By slapping it on works, one could avoid de facto “post-publication censorship / book banning” according to youth ordinances, even if the manga in question was extreme and alterations covering genitals quite lax. So it was that, with the appearance of the adult comics label, the extremity ratcheted up.

The flipside of what came to be known as the adult label bubble was the major recession of the Heisei Period (1989-2019), which reduced the disposable income of readers. Rather than simply not buying *eromanga*, however, with the worsening of the economy, the industry transitioned to a time when commodities sold in order of their practical utility and immediate effectiveness. In other words, a time when extreme and easy to understand works – ones that hit closer to home, harder and faster – sold better.

An interesting phenomenon occurred here. Within *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, which inherited the memes of Tezuka and manga/anime drawing, there was a trend of shifting in a *gekiga*-like direction. “*Gekiga*-like” here means a sharp touch, bold angles and heavy use of flow lines (effect lines,

speed lines and so on). On the base of accumulated manga/anime drawing memes, simultaneously recycling once discarded *gekiga* memes and taking in memes from the *bande dessinée* and American comics brought into general magazines at the time, a new cluster was formed.² Given similarities and differences to what came before, this cluster can be called “neo-*gekiga*.”³

There are many important artists to mention in this cluster, beginning with Ikoma Ippei, a pioneering figure who consciously crossed the *gekiga* and *bishōjo* styles.⁴ Producing parody *dōjinshi* of super *gekiga* in the vein of Kajiwara Ikki under a different artist name, Yamada Tahichi worked in a commercial *bishōjo* magazine drawing erotic comedy in the style of anime.⁵ Through this confluence, Yamada arrived at a style that is melancholy and black. In what could truly be called a hybrid of otaku and *gekiga* works, Kino Hitoshi draws *bishōjo* characters in a style similar to the manga/anime drawing of Tomimoto Tatsuya, but also middle-aged male characters that might appear in *gekiga*. The list goes on: Amazume Ryūta, who is active in even general magazines; Kanō Hasumi, who has a baroque feel and also works as a boys love artist; Snowberry, who forcibly introduces *gekiga*-like expression into manga drawing and forms a unique world; Beauty Hair; Persona; The Seiji; Oyster; and more.

As one offers names, the boundary gets gradually more and more vague, but what is important here is that from the mid-1990s, many of these new-style creators went on to open up a “hard line that sells” (*ureru hādo senro*). In this line are drawn extreme depictions of sex; zoom-ins on genitals, which have only minimal alterations to cover them and are basically exposed (hence risking violation of obscenity law); and internal illustrations, where readers can see through the body and inside the vagina as it is penetrated by the penis. Obviously, the subject matter in this line centers on the intense, including rape, captivity and training, incest and more.

2 *Bande dessinée* refers to Franco-Belgian comics. In Japan, Mœbius (aka Jean Giraud) has been very influential. *Bande dessinée* genes were introduced via the new wave and directly impacted artists such as Ōtomo Katsuhiro and Fujiwara Kamui. They were also introduced via Itahashi Shūhō (aka Syufo), whose work shares traits with American comics as well.

3 Neo-*gekiga* and third-rate *gekiga* have common elements, but a distinction should be made. In the same way the shark is a fish that appears similar to the mammalian dolphin, we should see this as the result of forms approaching one another in the pursuit of function. In terms of content, returning to third-rate *gekiga* after reading intense neo-*gekiga* works, the difference is enough for one to think the former almost tame by comparison.

4 For his part, Ikoma Ippei calls it “half-*gekiga*” (*han-gekiga*).

5 For his *dōjinshi* and commercial works, Yamada Tahichi uses different pennames.

Resentment and Communication

If one were to peel off a layer of our cerebral cortex, they would find there a reptilian brain. On an eternal loop, it plays simple programming: desire for sustenance, sex and survival. Considering this, one could come around to thinking that there might be some small grain of truth in the all-too-idiotic insight – spouted with a straight face – that “depictions of rape are the art of man’s animal nature.” Things are a lot more complicated, however. Even as we aspire to love and peace, certainly humans also laugh at the misfortune of others, exult betrayal, make a habit of deception, steal when presented with the opportunity, violate, destroy, kill, pursue only personal survival and pleasure and at times take pleasure in even self-destruction. These tensions apply to humanity, not just men. In short, we are not demons, but we are also not angels.

In *eromanga*, we see that pushing and being pushed are both part of pleasure. There is commonly a difference in power, which is brought to the foreground in disgrace works. Without the coercive power to force an unwilling partner, the disgracing cannot happen. In addition to physical violence and threats of it, here we see mobilized everything from blackmail and hypnosis to drugs and authority.

For example, the protagonist of Kino Hitoshi’s short-form masterpiece “Fever Application” (Binetsu shigan, in *Uniform Girls* [Seifuku shōjo], published by Koa Magajin in 2000) is a bald principal who uses an aphrodisiac to prey on female students one after another. Things kick off without delay. From page one, the bald principal is having the bespectacled student council president perform fellatio and saying, “Who’d have thought you’d be such a fast learner when it comes to handling cock?” On the second page, as it is revealed that the honors student fell to this state thanks to a potent aphrodisiac, penetration begins. “You’re soaking wet, huh?” “See that? The tip is in.” “Look, look! It’s all going in.” By page three, the uniformed girl is ready to climax. “The student council president, who always makes a fool of me! She’s shaking her ass and crying now! Awesome! These drugs are awesome!” Page four shows the title of the piece and a full-body drawing introducing Mikimoto, the heroine of the story and the bald principal’s next target. The heroine is passionately kissing her boyfriend on page five, but it is revealed that the couple has not gone all the way yet on page six. On that same page, she is called to the principal’s office via school intercom. The young woman is then tricked into drinking a heavy dose of the aphrodisiac and disgraced by the bald principal over the course of many pages.

Although a short-form work, one surely sees that it is infused with various elements. Among these, the bald principal is particularly noteworthy. This

Image 17 A sample of Kino's "Fever Application." Note the bald principal, who is a collection of nasty traits.



is a stereotypical perverted middle-aged man character, which appears to be molded entirely from attributes of types unpopular with the opposite sex (so-called "*himote*"). Not only is he bald, but also fat, middle-aged, vulgar and lecherous. While there is a generational gap between the bald principal and younger readers, he turns out to be a fitting character for projecting their mood. In other words, the resentment deep inside of readers: "There is no way that someone like me will ever be loved by a cute girl anyway;" "I'm a bad person anyway;" "I'm a virgin anyway;" "I'm ugly anyway;" "My communication skills are lacking anyway." Even as he possesses the highest authority in the school, the bald principal elicits contempt from the female students. Employing standard measures, romance and sex seem impossible. He is a nasty character, but also a projection of the nasty self. In contrast, Mikimoto is young, beautiful, lovable and pure. She has a boyfriend. She appears to have been brought up well and has excellent grades. Resplendent with the radiance of youth, she is not an existence that the bald principal can reach. If so, then it is just a matter of pulling her down. If one cannot forge a romantic relationship as "person and person," then it is just a matter of destroying humanity, debasing the other to a thing made of flesh, possessing that thing and further destroying it. Setting out from resentment, it arrives at rape by way of misogyny.

At the same time that disgrace works respond to the direct sexual desires of readers, they also simultaneously become a receptacle for their resentment. At the point of origin of resentment is something deeper than sexual desire: a craving to “love and be loved.” At stake here is recognition as “a person” (*hito*) in the relationship between “me and you,” which is the smallest unit of society. If one goes on to boil it down to the limit, it becomes a scream: “I am a person!” It makes no difference if readers with a strong sense of resentment are in reality rejected by society or not. Resentment is called up by the occurrence of a fantasy in the person’s own head that, “I have been utterly rejected by the world.” At the root is incomplete communication, but the social pressure demanding such skill itself contributes to incubating resentment. Cause and effect are thus tied together and entangled.

Sexual desire is certainly important to understanding these expressions, but, when observed from the vantage point of communication, other things surface vividly. A good example is “love rape” (*ai no reipu*), which is not uncommon in *eromanga*.⁶ Unable to skillfully convey feelings of love, or unable to confirm whether or not they have been conveyed, these feelings go berserk and the genitals are used as tools to attempt direct dialogue. Interpersonal gunboat diplomacy, if you will. The pattern is the same as the hot-blooded teacher punching a bad-boy student to the ground while yelling, “Can’t you hear what the hell I’m saying to you?”⁷ The trick with love rape is that, even if dialogue fails in sex and does not continue after, at least immediate sexual desires can be satisfied. Yet, in these works of *eromanga*, there do appear rapists who persistently seek dialogue. Perhaps we could describe them as “stalker rapists?” Alongside sexual desire is a desire for communication, which is also recognition as a person in the relationship between you and I.

In Kojiki Ōji’s long-form work *Clover* (Kurōbā, published by Koa Magajin in 2003), the heroine succumbs to the pathetic pleas of a perverted young man, takes a risk and is pressured into sex. Filmed and blackmailed into a relationship, she is haunted by the man’s escalating demands and perverse pleasures. Nevertheless, although it is aberrant, the heroine is taken in by the

6 TN: For more on the concept of “love rape,” which is actually quite common in *shōjo* manga subcategories such as boys love, see Fujimoto 1998.

7 In a way, corporal punishment and military invasion are also types of disgracing and deeply traumatic. The prevalence of whipping and spanking in Victorian pornography is attributable to corporal punishment in public schools. Exercises of military force are rape at the level of nations and people. Is trauma from such rape not a big part of territorial disputes with China and South Korea, the problem of politicians visiting Yasukuni Shrine and ambivalence toward the United States of America in Japan?

all-too-straightforward man's love and obsession. Before long, she accepts his existence and ultimately goes on to forge a position as something like a surrogate mother. The work thus presents a story of romance that starts with stalking and rape. It is meaningless to retort that, "Such a thing would never happen in reality." Rather than whether it is possible, should we not be considering that such fantasy is being spun, and what is being spun out in it? The true appeal of *Clover* lies in its overturning and reversal of "attacker" (*seme*) and "receiver" (*uke*).⁸ The man who attacks receives love and is changed by it. The man who disgraced the girl is forgiven and saved in a fantasy that is somehow similar to stories of religious salvation. In *eromanga* focusing on disgrace, this is a rare pattern, but the point of seeking the maternal in women could probably be described as extremely classical.

Rape Fantasies

Discourse surrounding the reality of rape underscores the existence of "rape myths" (*reipu no shinwa*). For example: "Women are always waiting for it;" "Even if she resists at first, she'll become submissive if you just do it;" "It might be rape in the beginning, but it becomes consensual sex if she starts feeling it;" "Rape is impossible if women seriously fight back;" and so on. These are absurd myths, but the ability to make one think that they could be true is how myths function. On the other hand, fiction is enjoying myth as myth.⁹ There is criticism against this that, "Pornography prepares us for rape," but arguments ignoring reader literacy and the diverse reception of expressive works are ineffectual at best. If there is something to take away from the theory that "porn leads to rape," it is that rape myths become a criticism of the society of male privilege itself as it continues its prolonged life into the present.

Here I would like to focus on the desires at the bottom of rape myths. All the myths provided in the previous paragraph suggest an odd desire for communication and need for approval. It is as if there is, or should be, a tacit agreement (including retrospective approval) to rape on the side of the one raped. This is not unrelated to the culture of male-dominated society, which grasps the union of male and female reproductive organs as "an invasion of the vagina by the penis." As Andrea Dworkin puts it in

8 TN: *Seme* and *uke* are keywords popularized by fans of boys love manga, which again suggests parallels in terms of power differentials and "love rape."

9 TN: For more on this distinction and modern approaches to myth as myth or a form of creative fiction, see Chapters 4 and 5 in Saler 2012.

Intercourse (1987), sexual relationships are all sexual discrimination and all sex is rape.¹⁰ It is difficult to say that this radical point is wrong in a society where machismo still holds sway.¹¹ As long as the image of a wound (vagina) cut and torn by a knife (penis) persists, many men are unable to cast aside their guilty conscience concerning sex, and many women continue to feel that sex is an offensive and insulting act. The result is the formation of a nebulous consensus between both that, “Sex and eroticism are bad.” While awash in eroticism in everything from entertainment to advertisements and news – to say nothing of porn – a bizarre neo-Victorian culture of erotic avoidance is also constructed. Meanwhile, since from around the middle of the twentieth century, machismo culture has been in a steady process of collapse. It is not so strange that from all this is born the figure of the rapist with a desire for communication and need for approval.¹²

For their part, *eromanga* readers approach depictions of rape as fantasy through and through. It is off base to criticize romance that starts with rape, love rape and so on as unrealistic. One does not determine the value of an expressive work based on such things.

If one were to raise work of note in this field, Tsukino Jōgi’s *b37°C* (Flat 37 Degrees Celsius, published by Koa Magajin in 2002) and *b38°C: Loveberry Twins* (published by Koa Magajin in 2004) seem most appropriate. The long-form work is divided into two parts, which follow interconnected characters in a shared narrative. To begin, structurally, *b37°C* is “the story of a man using a woman’s weaknesses to enslave her.” The setting is a coed school. A female honors student named Kagidō has been turned into a “slave” by a perverted boy, Nanase, who secretly photographed her masturbating in the nurse’s office and used this material to blackmail her. This is cliché framing that we have seen drawn many hundreds – no, perhaps even thousands – of times in the past.

Where Tsukino Jōgi demonstrates his talent is in thoroughly establishing the two characters. For her part, Kagidō is not a docile and obedient sex slave.¹³ She is obliged to do as Nanase says, because he has dirt on her. She

10 TN: For her part, Dworkin rejects this oft-repeated gloss of her work. Although no page number is provided in the original text, Nagayama is likely referring to Dworkin’s line that, “*Violation* is a synonym for intercourse” (Dworkin 1987: 154).

11 There is nothing incorrect in thinking that, “In a society of male privilege, the power structure itself prepares us for rape.”

12 This is also in accordance with Tamaki Nozomu’s statement that, “Heroic heroes cannot maintain their reality anymore.”

13 TN: Following the character Nanase in the work, Nagayama refers to Kagidō with the honorific suffix “-san,” which suggests a degree of deference and respect.

follows orders in sex play, but it is not as if Kagidō is subservient in ordinary life. Instead, she hurls verbal abuse at her supposed “master” Nanase every time. In some instances, she even turns to physical abuse. As this suggests, Nanase is not a macho man, but rather a boy with an interest in the humanities and one who does things at his own pace. Outside of sex play, Kagidō has free range. Without applying pressure head on, Nanase slowly pulls her in. Rather than a rapist, Nanase looks the spitting image of Mephistopheles, a demon tempter, or even a teacher. With his penetrating gaze and somehow androgynous mien, Nanase might be one of the characters that inherited the memes of Kaworu, the loving boy angel from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Not macho, but rather intelligent, cynical and peculiar, Nanase is effective as a character for the primary self-projection of male readers today. Rather than master and slave, the relationship between Nanase and Kagidō appears almost like that of a pair of stand-up comedians, or a “straight man” (*tsukkomī*) and “funny man” (*boke*) duo, but in this case a married couple where it is not always clear which one is which.

Nevertheless, on its own, *b37°C* still fits into the framework of conventional disgrace and domination. Although Tsukino Jōgi, who has a reputation for faces, depicts Kagidō’s pleasure to the point of excess, Nanase’s pleasure is invisible. This is something often said, but here too one can see the perversion of domination in that “the dominator serves the dominated and takes pleasure in seeing their pleasure.” Certainly, Nanase is the dominator, but this seems to mean something like dominated, in that he works for the pleasure of his partner. One gleans a hint of this from Nanase’s line that, “Hate and love are the same thing,” which is a relativism like that of the Three Witches of *Macbeth* (1603-1607).¹⁴ This is the truth that the top or “attacker” (*seme*) is actually also the bottom or “receiver” (*uke*). As a proxy of readers with a gods-eye perspective, Nanase is a smooth operator performing his duties. As long as he is unbudging, the omniscient reader can enjoy everything from a safe position.

In the second part, *b38°C: Loveberry Twins*, the structure is seriously shaken up. Here the character for the primary self-projection of male readers is Mizuhara, who is an underclassman of the couple of Nanase and Kagidō. A cute boy who is timid and kind, Mizuhara is small in stature, but also possesses a big penis. This combination of elements attracts twin sisters Megumi and Itsuki, who have turned him into their sex toy. Seduced by the whispers of Nanase, who again appears as Mephistopheles, Mizuhara decides to take decisive action and turn the tables.

14 TN: Exact details are not given, but perhaps Nagayama means the witches' line from Act 1 that, “Fair is foul, and foul is fair.”

In contrast to the first part, where Nanase's psychology is never discussed, Mizuhara is shown struggling in a muddy swamp of self-loathing. Even as he regains lost territory with his big penis and passion, greedily devours pleasure and becomes the master of his own tiny harem, Mizuhara is indecisive, conflicted and thinks he might be the absolute worst.¹⁵ Amid the inversion of "attacker / receiver," Megumi and Itsuki are also confused. They are jealous of each other, and things develop into a heated negotiation of love and sex. Into all of this Nanase and Kagidō descend like *dei ex machina*. They demonstrate an intense session of sex, Nanase's inner thoughts are spoken and, in the process, a philosophy of love is expounded. The act of disgracing another – whether one's partner is a woman or a man – is not something to be forgiven. However, giving this much reality to fantasy, it is also possible to provide deep meditations to readers.

Training and Brainwashing

One of the most notable things about rape fantasy is the illusion that, "Through sex, the body and mind change dramatically." If an unskilled creator compresses it into a few pages, this process of change turns into a laughable story about "the virgin excited by her rape." It is precisely this laughable story, however, that is the basic structure of all rape fantasy. In disgrace works, one might even say that it is always the case that most of the effort is poured into depicting the transformation of the "receiver." "Changing and being changed" is the pleasure of "dominating and being dominated, possessing and being possessed, by an exercise of coercive power."¹⁶

Important here is the process, which often includes training. The stereotypical timeline of long-form works focused on disgrace and training is as follows:

- 1 Rape: "Attacker" assaults "receiver."
- 2 Submission (1): "Receiver" experiences pleasure.

15 TN: It is also worth noting that Mizuhara's pleasure is shown, with close ups on the face, as he is abused and filmed at the beginning of the work. Parallels with Kagidō in the previous work, the exposure of male pleasure and its questioning are all significant developments to consider.

16 TN: For a complementary discussion of coercion and change in manga and anime, see Orbaugh 2019. For a discussion of how consent can conversely be used to abuse women, in this case through contracts in the adult video industry in Japan, see Takeyama 2020. In that chapter, note the fantasy of the autonomous subject in equal standing before the law, which erases the uneven relations of power that are foregrounded and explored in *eromanga*.

- 3 Bondage: With threats and sustained rape (or play, practice), sexual feelings develop.
- 4 Submission (2): “Receiver” becomes a prisoner of subordinate pleasure.
- 5 Dependency: “Receiver” comes to depend on “attacker” and threats become unnecessary.

With this as the foundation, adding in various rearrangements and twists, any number of new disgrace works and fantasies can be created. Not surprisingly, depictions of rape and training become the biggest highlight, and how to present the “dramatic change” that occurs in the process the challenge.

Well then, what changes and how? To begin, accompanying the use of coercive power, the relationality of the characters changes from an initial neutral value to the relationship of “attacker / receiver.” Depending on story development, it goes on to change into a Stockholm syndrome relationship of sympathy or collusion, a romantic relationship, a codependent relationship and so on. Simultaneously with these changes in the interpersonal relationship, the receiver also dramatically changes. The receiver is first stricken with shock, terror, horror, hatred, rage, shame and anguish, but before long these shift to carnal pleasure. While bewildered by the ambivalent responses of mind and body, they surrender to the physical sensations. Awakening to “the joy of being violated,” or becoming aware of the masochism inside, they accept it all.

Today, acknowledging that women have “rape desires” (*gōkan ganbō*) might be seen as affirming rape myths, which leads to getting a good thrashing quick as a wink. This is somewhat odd, because it treats as inconceivable everything from the extreme rape fantasies of ladies comics – content produced primarily by and for women – to Anaïs Nin’s statements.¹⁷ In this resistance and refusal, the perspective separating reality and fantasy does not exist. People who enjoy being raped in reality are no doubt overwhelmingly a minority, but people who enjoy masochistic fantasy – “I want to be taken by force,” “I want to get completely messed up” – are not entirely exceptional. Treating this as inconceivable might be seen as “politics,” but it is politics that totally underestimates humans.

Applying not only to sexual experience, humans desire something to become an opportunity for them to dramatically change. From another angle, humans anticipate and fear that someone or something will dramatically change them. On the front side, disgrace and training fantasies

17 TN: For English-language analysis of rape fantasy in ladies comics, see Shigematsu 1999.

are “stories of the ‘attacker’ altering the ‘receiver’ to their liking,” but progressing on the backside are tales of transformation where “I change into a new me.”

When scrutinizing transformation tales, the subject is almost always the receiver. In discussions of reading and reception, it has been stated that men self-project onto female characters, which probably also applies here.¹⁸ This is because the viewpoint of the receiver – who is changed and changes – is more dynamic and dramatic than the viewpoint of the omniscient voyeur, as well as the viewpoint of the male attacker. The structure is close to the drama of mysticism. Living in the illusion of an ordinary world, a member of the masses (= the receiver) encounters some master, monk or mage (= the attacker), through whose guidance they enter the world of mysteries (= disgrace); with ritual practice and discipline (= training), the person awakens. Casting off the restraints of oppression, the shell of the false self is smashed, and the true self rises to the surface. In this sense, disgrace and training fantasies are stories of self-awakening.

Against this backdrop, Sanbun Kyōden repeatedly depicts the terror of being changed. Structurally, Sanbun's disgrace and training fantasies are identical to those drawn by other artists. He does not, however, innocently celebrate awakening. Is this really “awakening” (*kakusei*)? Is it not “brainwashing” (*sennō*)? In *Sein* (Zain, published by Koa Magajin in 1999), the heroine is Seijō Setsuko, a reporter who is abducted by a human-trafficking organization. In order to protect the lives of her husband and child, Setsuko is forced to become the lover of a male dog. Chillingly, what occurs is not simply coerced bestiality. Through the use of mind control, Setsuko's character or person is altered so that she loves the male dog in all sincerity. Stripping off the mattress from the bed in her cell, Setsuko uses her nails to scratch a note on the surface beneath and tell her future self that she is being forcibly changed.

The true dread of this work is that, along with the terror of brainwashing, its pleasure is also simultaneously kept in sight. Perhaps people get brainwashed because it feels good? So the work seems to suggest. If one treads further to say even more, are we not also brainwashed by others (the nation-state, corporations, media)? Do we not go along with politicians, advertisers and the rest because it feels good? In the final stages of the story, the whole thing is indicated to be part of a conspiracy by a certain nation in Asia, which raises the specter of an attack (disgrace or rape) against the

18 TN: For a classic example of horror and the “final girl,” see Clover 1992. This approach has also been used in discussions of pornographic anime in Japan. See Chapter 4 in Napier 2001.

Japanese state and Japanese society. The multi-layered structure, which invites deep reading and misreading, is extremely political.¹⁹

We have mostly considered change of the mind or heart up to this point, but more dramatic, even as drawing, is body modification. This covers a lot of ground: piercing of ears, nose, lips, tongue, cheeks, navel, nipples, genitals and more; tattooing; scarification; implantation; amputation of fingers, toes or limbs; genital cutting, be it off or open; breast enlargement and reduction; sex change operations, complete or partial; and various other forms of cosmetic surgery.²⁰ In the body modification subcategory of *eromanga*, the art of making the body into material and the pageantry of variant forms, masochism and desire for self-injury chaotically come together.

Given overlap with sadomasochism (discussed in a later chapter), I will here stop at lightly touching on the subject, but body modification has captivated *eromanga* artists from the early days. By the end of the 1980s, Betsuyaku Shō's illusory masterpiece "Nurse" (Nāsu, in *Bizarre Collection Volume 1* [Bizāru korekushon vol. 1], published by Byakuya Shobō in 1989) had already been released. Afterward, many artists came to depict body modification in the contexts of training, sadomasochism, science fiction and fantasy. The *eromanga* world is thus teeming with works that fanatics commemorate: There is Kono Donto's (aka Konodonto's, aka Conodonts') science-fiction work *Slave Warrior Maya* (Dorei senshi Maya, originally published by KK Kosumikku in 1989, then Kubo Shoten in 2005), which questions identity; Shinozaki Rei's *I Can't Love Anyone Anymore* (Mō daremo aisenai, originally published by Taiyō Tosho in 1992, then as *I Can't Love Anyone Anymore REMIX* by Akane Shinsha in 1996), which also drew attention as a self-searching manga post *Neon Genesis Evangelion*; Shiroy Gunpan's corpus depicting masochism in its most extreme forms; Makita Aoi's many works fixating on male/female bodies with big penises and big breasts; Keno Yantarō's *Oh! My Dog* (published by Sanwa Shuppan in 2002), which depicts animalizing alteration; dark fantasy such as Horihone Saizō's *Meat Market* (Onikuyasan, published by Sanwa Shuppan in 2001); and so on.

19 This is not the only time Sanbun Kyōden has gotten political. For example, in his *dōjinshi* work *ID* (ID: Ido, later included in the trade paperback *10 After*, published by Koa Magajin in 1996), Sanbun depicts the disgracing and brainwashing of a female resistance fighter captured by a secret imperial organization. The depiction of her fall to swearing loyalty to the empire is robust and detailed.

20 Scarification includes "cutting," or cutting and peeling skin to leave a design in scar tissue, and "branding," or using heated metal to burn a design into the flesh. Implantation, or simply implants, refers to embedding stainless steel or silicon under the skin. There are also cases where threaded parts are implanted and partially exposed so that horns and so on can be mounted.

When it comes to nipples and genitals, piercing is now standard in works devoted to disgrace, training and sadomasochism. By introducing this and other forms of body modification, one could say that disgrace and training fantasy expanded the variation of “change beyond the point of recovery.” Thankfully, no matter how much we self-project onto the victims, we do not get injured by the fantasy.²¹

Brutes and Vulnerability

Among disgrace works, there is a subset narrowing the focus to just hate and the urge to destroy, unrelated to communicative aspirations or romantic feelings. The keyword here is “brutes” (*kichiku*). In these works, men are not only tops or “attackers” (*seme*), but also brutes.

There are various compounding factors here. To begin, in male-dominated society, men assume a dominating sex role. There is an underlying sense that no matter what men do to women, who assume a dominated sex role, they will be forgiven. Men alone are fully human, while women are at best something like honorary whites in apartheid. To this day there are people, both men and women, who think that men are superior to women. Even in romantic love, it is thought to be normal and good for men to take the initiative and be active while women are passive. However, as this premodern consciousness becomes less and less valid with the passing of years, there is irritation and fear on the side of men. The sense of crisis that comes with not knowing when vested interests will be lost, as well as the premonition of a loss of authority and power, are tied to misogyny and discrimination. In the process of the collapse of machismo, it is not necessarily being a “bitch,” but rather being a woman that “provokes violence.”²²

In fantasy, this is accelerated and amplified. Some extreme examples are found in works by Goblin, who tirelessly repeats disgrace by big penises and

21 In short, “I want to eat sugar. I do not want to become sugar.” (This quote is a variation of one attributed to Ramakrishna.)

22 TN: The phrase translated here as bitch is actually more offensive in the original Japanese, where it reads something like “uppity cunt” (*namaiki na kuso ama*). Needless to say, Nagayama is not endorsing this view of women, but rather channeling and expressing the misogyny he describes in this paragraph. However, in order to avoid unnecessary offense, the language has been toned down. The phrase translated here as “provokes violence” is somewhat more confusing, but Nagayama writes that being a woman as such tinges one with “vulnerability = a violence provoking character” (*varunerabiriti = bōryoku yūhatsu sei*). For more on the connection of vulnerability and a violence provoking character, see Ngai 2005.

insertion of foreign objects.²³ The heroines of these works are never treated as human. The attackers insert into them as if they are simply living holes that feel better than masturbation. Like nasty brats who insert the central stalk of a dry rice plant into the anus of a frog and inflate its stomach, the attackers shove into the women's vaginas – one after another – everything from bats to the roots of potted plants to the posts of signboards. Speaking of extreme, the cult works that came after Yaoichō Narimasu's *Keep Out!* (published by Ōtō Shobō in 1993) are also ferocious and terrifying. One would probably be fine saying that there is not really any story. Bound into painfully flexed postures, the female characters are raped, have huge amounts of semen pumped into their vaginas, are impregnated and have thick, long needles inserted locally and deeply. This sexual torture is repeated, over and over again, dispassionately. The existence of the attacker is diluted as much as possible; single-mindedly, the penis or needle is smashed into the receiver.

The sensation of reading these works resembles dissecting dolls on a computer. Hanging over the flat acts of destruction are the endless pleas of the victims: "Please forgive me... Ah... I'll get pregnant... I'll die..." There is an intoxicating feeling, almost like listening to minimalist music. When things get to this point, rather than *eromanga*, it might be better to describe this as a drug in the form of manga. In *eromanga* featuring brutes, salvation is off the table. Whether the receiver changes or not makes exactly zero difference to the attackers drawn by Goblin and Yaoichō Narimasu. Even if a change does occur in the receiver, it is only used to make the next disgrace or destruction all the more effective. That, or the change itself is sneered at and attacked. If body modification is added, there is no turning back and no recovery.

How do readers understand such brutish disgrace works? Without papering over or whitewashing them, we must recognize the fact that there are dark desires in us. Even if they are disguised and suppressed, those dark

23 Also known as Goblin Moriguchi, Koburin and other pennames, Goblin is a veteran artist. With his popularity long flagging, Goblin thought that his last work would be *Screw!* (Buchikome, published by Issuisha in 1999), but this turned out to be a hit. He has many trade paperbacks, including *Dripping Juices* (Shiru mamire, published by Tiiiai Netto in 2003), to his name. For a good deal of time now, Goblin has continued to subject his heroines to such cruelty that one thinks, "It becomes a gag when taken this far." In his early masterpiece "That's Freedom" (Sore wa jiyū, in *Suddenly Stupid* [Ikinari baka], published by Issuisha in 1988), Goblin focuses on a yakuza gang boss' daughter, who is kidnapped, confined and disgraced, but this is only the beginning. The girl is then sold off, injected with addictive drugs, pimped out to clients, loses her sight and hearing and teeth, is tattooed and filmed, and so on. Although she is finally rescued after a year, the boss' daughter has already contracted HIV and is on death's door. In this hellish manga, there is no salvation.

Image 18 A sample of Uziga's *Poisonous Bizarre Picture Book*. The hideous cruelty is difficult to look at, as our imagination and body respond to the pain.



desires exist. The brutes appearing in these works indulge in depravity as our surrogates. From a position of absolute safety, we simulate and enjoy “evil” (*aku*). If one asks if that is really all there is to it, however, then the answer is no. The human mind is much more complicated and much stranger. When reading brutish disgrace fantasy in *eromanga*, what we feel is not

just the pleasure of an evil that smashes through and is in the first place impossible in reality, but also an unmistakable horror and disgust. We are supposed to be in a position of absolute safety, so why feel this way? For one thing, there is horror and disgust in response to oneself – that is, the realization of a monster inside taking pleasure in such evil. Furthermore, our antenna of imagination picks up feelings on the side of the receiver, whether we like it or not. In such a position, subjected to this, how would I feel? If one possesses enough imagination to read manga at all, then they probably cannot help but imagine things – even when they do not want to imagine them.

Consider for example Uziga Waita's (aka Ujiga Waita's, aka Y-ta's) *Poisonous Bizarre Picture Book* (Doku doku ryōki zukan, published by Ōtō Shobō in 2000), which depicts limb amputation, over-the-top modification of the body and finally its destruction. The disturbing sensation of seeing these images is not just dark enjoyment and catharsis as the victimizer, but also the anguish of the heroine being hurt, which one's own body is resonating with at a cellular level. Consider also Kakinomoto Utamaro's *Lamentations of Collapse* (Hōkai no dōkoku, published by Ōtō Shobō in 2001), where the heroine is gang raped by tens of thousands of people. Shown no mercy, even when her heart stops, the heroine is resuscitated only to be raped again. Defying all logic and common sense, this wild fantasy cannot be fully grasped by observing from the detached position of the voyeur with the viewpoint of the gods. One might further make a provocative argument that, in brutish disgrace fantasy, the mirror of the heroine also reflects our inner impulses toward self-destruction, self-injury, self-mutilation and suicide.

8 Love Stories

Introduction

Eromanga are not all about loveless sex and disgrace. In fact, romantic love is as much a pillar as disgrace in *eromanga*. According to the classic mind-body dualism, “Romantic stories are concerned with matters of the heart, and sexual stories the body.” Certainly, many stories focus on one and not the other. People can have sex without love, and love each other without sex. If there are sexless love stories, then there are also *eromanga* that are only about physical sex.

However, the line between mind and body is quite ambiguous. Hormones come into play. We communicate with others by nonverbal means, for example through chemical reactions that take a different route. The concentration of substances in our brain fluctuates. Do our feelings switch on subconsciously? Or, if our body is the hardware, does it drag along the heart as software? The more love we feel, the more sexual desire increases, and feelings of love can intensify when we have sex. The heart, invisible from the outside, expresses itself through the body in sex.

Can there be any material better suited to manga expression? Indeed, after Ishii Takashi, romantic love was getting more and more attention in the era of third-rate *gekiga*. It assumed an even more prominent place in *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. That said, this does not mean that there is a defined category for “romance.” There is the love comedy format, and there is a group of works that can be classified as love stories or stories about romantic love, but romance is overflowing in other *eromanga* as well.

For example, in a previous chapter I introduced Tanuma Yūichirō’s *Season*, which is a powerful work that follows the unfolding and fate of an innocent (in both the sense of ignorant and pure) romance that starts during puberty. I also introduced Tsukino Jōgi’s *b38°C: Loveberry Twins*, which boldly explores the borderless connection between love and possession. *Eromanga* have spoken of many different kinds of love. If there is pure and tragic love, there are also reflections on love itself. If there are cases where opportunistic fantasies take priority, then there are also stories where the characters go through a painful journey of self-discovery.

In Ikoma Ippei’s *Caster Ayako* (*Kyasutā Ayako*, published by Heiwa Shuppan from 2003), we encounter a twisted middle-aged man who feels he can only have love by tying it down with a contract. In Yamamoto Johanne’s (aka Yamamoto Yohane’s) *Love Spectacle* (*Rabu supekutaru*, published by Ōzora

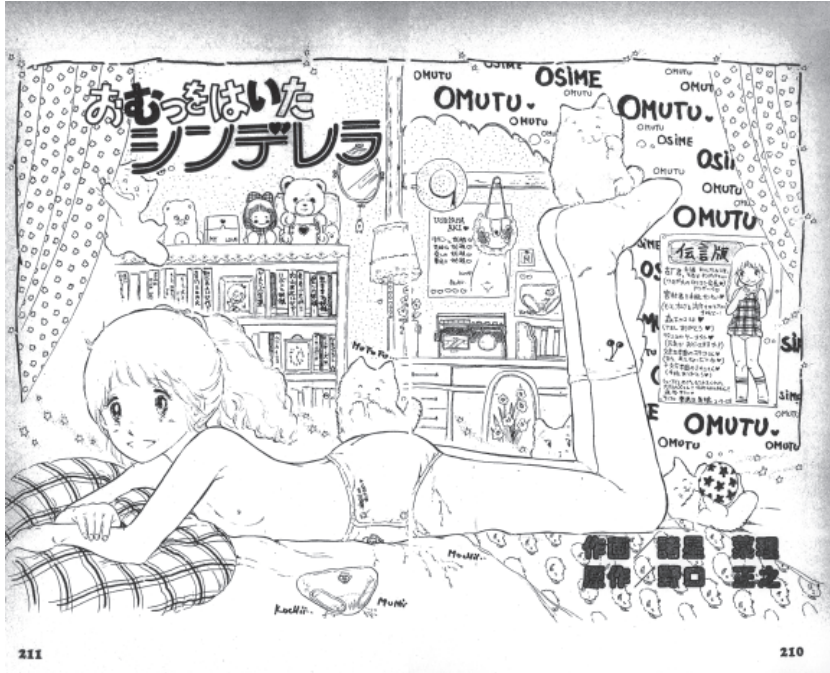
Shuppan in 2005), the subtle sides of love and abuse are depicted through various actions that stop right before turning into domestic violence. In Shiwasuno Okina's bestselling series *Shining Musume* (Shainingu musume, published by Hitto Shuppansha from 2001), a group of nationally popular idols who attract the devil are raped by legions of fans, but we can "misread" it as a love story rather than a standard disgrace work. In such a reading, what happens to the idols is the devil's love, and if we push further and say that the devil, who controls the narrative, is actually a reflection of the collective unconscious of the fans, then we see a vivid depiction of the complicit relationship between fans and the idol industry. On the one hand are the fans, who are starved for love and consume in pursuit of it, and on the other is the idol industry, which fans the flames and exploits them.

It appears that hard *eromanga* to get off with are also brimming over with creators' ideals, thoughts and fantasies concerning love. I have already mentioned disgrace works presenting characters with a desire for communication and recognition as a person in relation to another, and expressions such as "love rape." Actually, even in the previously discussed subcategory of brutish disgrace works, where the existence of the rapist as such is made invisible, if we dived deep, deep down, we would probably find a form of warped and murky "love," which lets off a sweet, rotten stench. If desperation is the reverse side of hope, then maybe hate needs love as a soil to grow.

A Genealogy of Romantic *Eromanga*

In *eromanga*, love in myriad form churns as in a whirlpool. There is love of love, the basic boy-meets-girl story, the love of childhood friends, tempestuous love that reaches madness and delusion, tragic love, unrequited love, happy love and marriage, the itinerancy of a love like that of Casanova and so on. It was only after Ishii Takashi that *eromanga* artists first started to depict romance in a serious sense, rather than as a way to spice up sex scenes. Coming out of third-rate *gekiga*, depictions of romance became an important trend in *lolicon* manga. Far beyond just third-rate *gekiga*, romantic genes flowed in from a variety of content, which included *gekiga*, boys manga, *shōjo* manga and more. When talking about influence on depictions of romantic love in *eromanga*, it is very important to keep in mind what happened in general manga magazines for boys and girls from the 1970s to the early 1980s. Speaking to this point is "A Boy Meets A Girl," a special examining the love comedy boom published in the March 1982 issue of the magazine *Fusion Product* (Fyūjon purodakuto). In that special one finds the names

Image 19 A sample of Uchiyama's "Cinderella in a Diaper." The work shows clear influence from *shōjo* manga.



Adachi Mitsuru, Yanagisawa Kimio, Takahashi Rumiko and many other artists known for their work in boys manga and *shōjo* manga.¹

Needless to say, but the largest amount of memes came from *shōjo* manga, which are intended for girls and young women and quite often focus on romantic love stories. The growing significance of *shōjo* manga and its crossover readership from the 1970s on contributed to this flow of memes into *eromanga*. A highschool student back then, Takekuma Kentarō recalls being shocked by “the fact that an older man, who looked just like Gandhi, was in the classroom gleefully and unabashedly drawing pictures in the style of [*shōjo* manga artist] Tabuchi Yumiko” (Takekuma 2005). By then, *shōjo* manga had already entered the realm of pre-otaku hobbies, tastes and cultivation. For men who identified as manga fans,

¹ A forerunner of romantic love stories in boys manga, *Love and Truth* (Ai to makoto, story by Kajiwara Ikki and art by Nagayasu Takumi) was serialized in *Weekly Shōnen Magazine* from 1973. Recall that the debut of *Lemon People*, the first commercial *lolicon* magazine, was not until February 1982.

works by Hagio Moto, Takemiya Keiko and other Magnificent 49ers were an absolute must, but if you were a real fanatic, then you would get into Okada Fumiko, who published in *COM*; Asuka Yumiko; Kimura Minori; Yashiro Masako, a precursor of the Magnificent 49ers; or, even beyond that, Mizuno Hideko, the great mother of contemporary *shōjo* manga who was also a member of the Tokiwa-sō group and whose *Fire!* (Faiyā, published by Asahi Sonorama from 1969) earned her many male fans in the 1970s; the more decorative Kihara Toshie; Kishi Yūko; Mutsu A-ko, known for her “girly love comedy” and “preppy manga;” Tabuchi Yumiko; there were even some who went all the way to Iwadata Mariko and the like.² There was clearly influence, too. The story of how Uchiyama Aki perfectly copied the style of Mutsu A-ko to draw “Cinderella in a Diaper” (Omutsu o haita Shinderera, published in the October 1981 issue of *Fusion Product*) is infamous.³

From these examples, it seems that love stories were directly introduced to *eromanga* from *shōjo* manga, but they were also introduced from boys manga. Now, it is true, as Takekuma Kentarō points out, that “girly love comedy” manga paved the way for the love comedy boom in boys manga magazines. If we look at male-oriented content as a whole, however, the genealogical tree is mixed. There are frequent occurrences of conscious propagation in the form of influence, imitation and reference, but also at the same time memes spread unconsciously. Perhaps the hurdles were surprisingly low, but, taking Uchiyama Aki as an example, he moved from manga magazines for young men to third-rate *gekiga* magazines to boys magazines to *lolicon* magazines over a short period. Furthermore, he at times drew for several of these simultaneously. Similarly, Hiromori Shinobu (aka Miyasu Nonki) also moved from *lolicon* magazines to boys magazines, where he became popular with naughty comedies set in school. For their part, Yuzuki Hikaru and Adachi Mitsuru – both men, and known for their work in boys magazines – were originally *shōjo* manga artists. A driving force of cross-pollination and hybridization was Ōtsuka Eiji, who as an editor wanted to promote “*shōjo* manga for boys.” Appearing often in magazines and collections edited by Ōtsuka, Apo (aka Kagami Akira) adopted an “I novel” approach when he created *Wine Color Story* (Wain karā monogatari,

2 Personally, this is how it was for me, too. If I had been any more into them, I might have become indistinguishable from female readers of *shōjo* manga.

3 The original story is credited to Noguchi Masayuki, which is Uchiyama Aki’s given name, and the art to Moroboshi Sairi. Despite this, there are touches to the work that reveal the artist to be Uchiyama, who is using yet another penname. In fact, Uchiyama was an expert at copying.

published by Byakuya Shobō in 1984).⁴ Parodies of *shōjo* manga emerged in *eromanga* magazines and *dōjinshi*. Works with Takahashi Rumiko's taste for science fiction, love comedy and *bishōjo* or cute girls showed up one after another.⁵ Even as the media focused on the fact that female readership of the boys manga magazine *Weekly Shōnen Jump* was increasing, this was the very period that romantic love stories and love comedy (including erotic comedy) became a powerful force across the lines of commercial distinctions in content.

What started the *eromanga* bubble of the 1990s were hard disgrace works, but there were also a number of developments related to love stories. For one, the decade saw the appearance of Yōkihi, a rare artistic talent who explores adolescence and love and sexuality that are new and flexible. Furthermore, because Unite Sōji, Yonekura Kengo, Kudara Naizō and other female artists continuously advanced into the *eromanga* industry, an avalanche of fresh romantic memes came crashing in from *shōjo* manga and its subcategory of boys love.⁶ On top of all this was the trend of emphasizing introspection following *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, which was important because it further deepened reflections on love and the relationship between self and other.⁷

Girly Style and the Lum Type

Heartwarming feelings and adorableness came from girly love comedy and spread thinly and widely throughout *eromanga* as a whole. That said, the

4 We could also describe it as for those in the know. A pioneering story that came before is Miyaya Kazuhiko's *Like a Rolling Stone* (Raiku a rōringu sutōn, serialized in *COM* in 1969, published by Furiisutairu in 2017).

5 A popular artist from the mid-1980s known for *eromanga* featuring big-breasted characters, Watanabe Wataru's drawings bear a family resemblance to those of Takahashi Rumiko. He, too, produced love comedy set in the school.

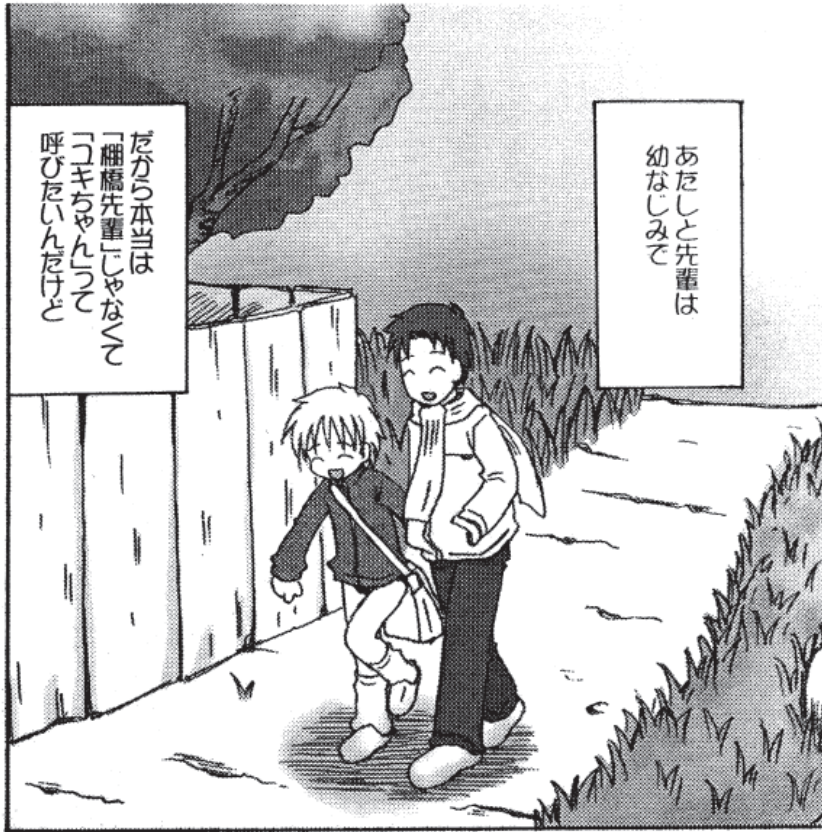
6 Possessing many pennames, Unite Sōji is broadly active in *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, *shōjo* manga, boys love and *dōjinshi*. For their part, Yonekura Kengo and Kudara Naizō also work across numerous categories of content.

7 The animated series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* had a huge impact on the worlds of *dōjinshi* and *eromanga*. *Eromanga* had an extremely high affinity with *Evangelion* in terms of: one, character design; two, narrative focus on mental states, struggle with and search for self, relationships between self and other, relationships with the world; and three, an open ending and fragmentation. This is clearly more than just superficial citation, for example characters with a hairstyle modeled after Ayanami Rei. (Along these lines, I recall that one magazine ran a campaign called "find Ayanami.") Not being too concerned with overall completion, dividing stories into units and creating works premised on the imaginary database of the reader had already begun in *eromanga* and *dōjinshi*, which paved the way for manga and anime generally.

person who proved that girliness is still effective, or is effective because of its roots, is Kagami Fumio (aka Kagami Fumiwo). Her style is the rough touch of comedy *shōjo* manga. The drawings speak to shared genes, which connect artists from Mutsu A-ko to Sakura Momoko: “This was drawn in the margins of a notebook, and it doesn’t really appear very skillful, but it’s cute.” If one converted the character the reader is meant to see the world through into a girl, Kagami Fumio’s work would not feel out of place in one of the recent *shōjo* manga magazines that allow some sex. Be that as it may, the framing is ultimately that of *eromanga* targeting men. As such, the object of romantic desire is the female character, while the male character is the stand-in for readers. If this were Mutsu A-ko, the coupling would be of “the cute, shy and withdrawn I” and “kind and good guy boyfriend,” but in the case of Kagami it becomes “the sort of a loser but deep down good guy I” and “lovable and virtuous girlfriend.” He suits her in the former, and she suits him in the latter. The female and male roles are swapped, but the couples overlap in that both bring together “a relatable I balancing ugly and beautiful sides” and “not a perfect ideal type partner, but someone who works with me and is within reach.” Girly love comedy is thus reborn as *eromanga*.

Just looking at the titles of Kagami’s trade paperbacks over the years, one probably would not think that they are *eromanga* bearing the adult comics label. These are titles such as *Girl Friend Songs* (published by Heiwa Shuppan in 1997), *Girl* (Onna no ko, published by Heiwa Shuppan in 2001), *So Cute* (Kawaii ne, published by Heiwa Shuppan in 2002), *I Love You* (Daisuki, published by Heiwa Shuppan in 2002), *Song of the Apple* (Ringo no uta, published by Heiwa Shuppan in 2003) and *Dream Fitter* (published by Heiwa Shuppan in 2004). Her first serialized, long-form work, *The Hard Core* (published by Heiwa Shuppan in 2004), is the only one really suggesting that it is pornographic. The content, however, is just like Kagami’s other work. Itself quite cute, this is a love story featuring a quiet girl who has a hard time communicating and a boy who allows others to take advantage of him. The heroine strongly wishes that she could go back to her childhood, when she was able to express herself freely, and her body transforms into that of a young girl. Able to express herself again, the girl actively guides her boyfriend into sex, which for the reader appears like a *lolicon* scene. Thereafter, every time she wishes it strongly enough, the heroine changes shape. The story develops with added slapstick comedy and science fiction. The fact that the heroine is able to incorporate *moe* elements by changing into a Lolita, a character with cat ears or one wearing a cheongsam is an important sales point, but the story goes further. Rather than ending as an excuse to parade a list of *moe* elements, the story interestingly uses

Image 20 A sample of Kagami's *Dream Fitter*. During the *lolicon* boom, Ôtsuka Eiji envisioned "shōjo manga for boys," which is clearly realized here.



the shape shifting to express the heroine's inner feelings. When a rival appears and she gets jealous, not wanting anyone to take her boyfriend, the heroine's hair turns into a gigantic hand that snatches him up. Whenever she feels like she cannot look her boyfriend in the face, but still wants to be with him, she becomes a small elf and observes from the shadows. The heroine confronts the dual challenges of an inability to communicate on the one hand, and being different from the humans around her on the other. Overcoming those challenges gives this work its themes of "loving each other" and "mutual trust."

While the introduction of science fiction and fantasy elements stands out in Kagami's *The Hard Core*, this has been apparent in *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* from the *lolicon* manga boom on. The most common pattern is to insert otherworldly characters into the form of love comedy associated with boys

manga magazines. This tends to be a bawdier form than the love comedy of *shōjo* manga magazines. For reference, think of Takahashi Rumiko's *Urusei Yatsura*, but the invasion of otherworldly beings does not stop with the alien Lum. From science fiction come more characters from other planets, from other worlds and from the future, as well as immortals, characters with super powers, cyborgs and androids. From fantasy come characters who are demons, witches, magical girls, angels, goddesses, therianthropes, fairies and vampires. Apart from that, there are female ninja from hidden lands, queens from distant lands and fighters and martial artists taken from games. Riding the wave of the proliferation of personal computers, the women of the manga artist group Clamp gave readers romance with a *bishōjo*-shaped computer in *Chobits* (Chobittsu, published by Kōdansha from 2000). The ghost in the figurine appeared, as did the heroine of Mizuki Hitoshi's *Electronic Fairy Epoko* (*Denshi no yōsei Epoko-chan*, published by Sanwa Shuppan in 2003), who is the spirit of a Cassette Vision, a console released by Epoch in the early 1980s, which makes for a heroine that is incomprehensible to all but gaming otaku. A classic in this vein is Ebifly's catgirl comedy *Meet in Your Dream* (*Yume de aetara*, published by Fujimi Shuppan from 1992, then by Sōryūsha from 1999).⁸ In the story, a stray cat takes on the form of a cute girl with cat ears to repay the man who saved her. She enters into a contract for one night with the protagonist, but for some reason ends up unable to return to a cat, and thus unfolds a situational comedy.

This kind of love comedy is funny because of the mismatch between the otherworldly character and everyday life, and spectacle is often created through her strange powers. Whether they are superpowered or not, these female characters are new to our everyday life; they are hopeless when it comes to acting normal. In need of the protagonist's protection (or support) because of this fish-out-of-water setting, a relationship between protector and protected is formed, which is often the precursor to romance. The emphasis is that "I am the only one in the whole world who can protect her." These heroines combine the attractiveness of *Urusei Yatsura's* Lum, the convenience of *Doraemon* and nuisance of *Little Ghost Q-Taro* (*Obake no Q-Tarō*, 1964-1973), with the ratio of these characteristics forming their

8 The cat-eared *bishōjo* is the standard among standards of otaku fare. Already a classic now, one of the most memorable is Makafushigi's heroine in *I'm a Cat* (*Neko ja neko ja*, published by Taiyō Tōsho from 1992, then K. K. Comic in 1997). Coming out of *shōjo* manga, the original example of the cat-eared girl is Suwano Chibi-neko from Ōshima Yumiko's *The Star of Cottonland* (*Wata no kuni hoshi*, published by Hakusensha from 1978). Chibi-neko was also the first to wear "loose socks," which became part of schoolgirl fashion in Japan in the 1990s.

individuality. Character setting is the bread and butter of this kind of love comedy. If done well, the character can carry the story by herself.

All that remains is setting up the male protagonist, who is the primary character for reader self-projection, and his relationship with the heroine. In most cases, the character setting for the protagonist is close to neutral. In *Meet in Your Dream*, he is a freelance illustrator, but not a very popular one. He is into “survival games,” or weekend warrior stuff; living as if in an endless school festival, he is your run-of-the-mill otaku. His wit is above average, however, and, while not strong, he is willing to put everything on the line for his girlfriend. In short, things cannot be too far removed from the everyday reality of the reader. This is because the protagonist has been given the most outstanding of superpower in the world of the work, which is that “he is loved by the heroine.”⁹ This is *eromanga*, so it is all the better that he is a pervert. Also good is having a “cute side,” or positive traits that make the reader somehow want to root for him. Perhaps he is trying really hard, or has something that he is unwilling to bend on or surrender – these are fine for the purposes at hand. Even lines that come off like an unfaithful man’s shifty excuses – “I can’t lie to myself” – are acceptable if they are spoken by a protagonist with positive traits who has undergone inner struggle.

There certainly is a clear pattern, but love comedy (including erotic comedy) is not as narrow as this may seem to imply. While they may appear similar on the surface, if there are mediocre works that are obviously mere routine, then there are also superb, well-made works that thoroughly stick to the format. As an example of the latter, consider Mitamori Tatsuya’s *Saracool* (Sarakūru, published by KK Kosumikku from 1999). In this work, a magical girl named Sara suddenly shows up at the apartment of our protagonist, Harumaki. It is indeed employing some very common, well-established tropes, even in just this setup. Due to meta-reading, things have not been easy for creators in the new millennium. It is a time when readers might think that “Being formulaic is part of the material,” and respond to a work like this one by saying, “Well, well! A magical girl suddenly appearing in someone’s life in this day and age?” While the setting and developments are standard, both of the primary characters are well realized. The depictions of Harumaki’s concern and introspection are effective. We can also see depth

9 If we clear away the smoke of Casanova-like pleasure, where the protagonist saves his true love, the heroine, for last so that he can sample the supporting characters, the core of male-oriented love comedy is a pseudo-experience of being loved by the opposite sex. From love comedy, “the self as an existence that is loved” makes its way to male-oriented *shota* works, which focus on cute boy characters, as well as works that partner them with older women.

in Sara's characterization. As the story unfolds, Harumaki's lamentable past becomes clear, we learn that Sara's original world faces extinction and connections between all this and the couple's love in crisis are deftly made. While the plot becomes more complicated, it proceeds without going overboard; individual happiness and rebuilding the world are strongly linked, and the story unfolds into an epic drama. When things come this far, there is a risk of sex scenes turning into extras, but here sex is not cut off from the story. In other words, as manga and as *eromanga*, the work is outstanding. Even within classical love comedy, there is still a lot that can be done.

Pure Love Love

When discussing love stories and romance in *eromanga*, one of the first artists who come to mind is probably Tanaka Yutaka. His general name recognition is high due to the success of *Ai-Ren* (published by Hakusensha from 1999), which is a long-form work of science fiction. Against the backdrop of a twilight Earth, a boy facing death experiences moments with a reprogrammed artificial girl. *Ai-Ren* is a work that makes readers think about many things, for example issues of human life and death and love and possession. This is a masterpiece that is deeply moving in its purity, but one that also has a message. Even when producing content other than *eromanga*, whatever Tanaka draws is always recognizable as one in the same.

Despite the greatness of *Ai-Ren*, when Tanaka Yutaka debuted, he too was another pen behind mediocre love comedy works. For example, when a boy is together with a girl, he frantically suppresses his desire and, even as his brain swirls with wild delusions, he endures. In the end, however, the heroine provokes the protagonist into action, saying, "Girls are waiting for it, too!" It is the kind of stereotypical line and way of thinking one finds in stereotypical love comedy. These were manga that could have been drawn by anyone, not necessarily Tanaka, but it was after all him. So, what happened between this early career work and the Tanaka of today? Whatever the catalyst, one day, he started spinning a short story devoted thoroughly to "love." Since then he has made many more, and the stories are varied, but Tanaka does not stray from the basic form: A boy and girl couple encounters obstacles (opposition from parents, mutual misunderstandings, financial difficulties, diverging career paths and so on), but are undeterred, foster their love and have sex. The message is clear: "Live in love." One could add: "Look life and love in the face;" "Live and love as much as you can." These are golden rules that many of us would be embarrassed to bring up nowadays,

but Tanaka continues to sing their virtues without wavering or slacking. If it were just a one-time thing, we might see it as a sales gimmick, but such is not the case. No, Tanaka Yutaka draws love stories with a conviction that resembles faith. There is no other way to see it.

More than just story development, Tanaka's manga are like this in and of themselves. Surprisingly, there are rarely characters other than the protagonist and heroine – the boy and girl, he and she – in his short stories. When other characters are present, they tend to be in functional roles like staff at a Japanese inn, their importance is minor and some appear simply to deliver a line. If there are intense love stories, then there are also soft lovey-dovey stories, but ultimately what they all have in common is being a two-person play set in a closed room. They are taking shelter from the rain in a condemned house, are in an open-air bath or an apartment. While the couple's subsequent entanglement and lovemaking is sometimes so softcore that the manga gets published without the adult comics label, the works are still erotic. The girls are drawn with a gentle touch, cherishingly, lovingly.

Particularly skillful is Tanaka's dealing with first-person images. In sex scenes, the viewpoint of the protagonist often overlaps with that of the reader. The reader sees what he sees in his position, if not body. The heroine is viewed through the eyes of the protagonist. When he holds her, she is in your arms. It is a situation where my eyes see only you. The technique itself is nothing new, having existed in film since before Tezuka, but the perspective that Tanaka draws is instead closer to that of a video camera. The technique here approaches that of pornography's "Gonzo shot" (*hamedori*). The cameraman is also the male actor, who films from his position having sex. Shots center on the expressions of the actress, her swaying breasts or the couple's conjoined genitals (digitally blurred in the case of Japan). Of course, because this is something that needs to sell, it is not the same as recording sex in private. It is consciously staged and edited to provide a particular perspective. What we see is sexual intercourse. When this sort of pornography began to catch on in Japan, the core demographic of adult video consumers were bachelors from their late teens to early twenties. Estimating from standard living conditions, these men would have been in a small student apartment or a compact one-room apartment. To watch adult videos, they would need a playback device and a television, which would typically have been a 14-inch screen. We can safely deduce this, because, on the one hand, the fact that so many such televisions were mass-produced back then meant that they could be acquired easily and cheaply, even for relatively poor men, and, on the other hand, such a device would fit into their small living space. In that space, these men's eyes would be less than

Image 21 A sample of Tanaka's *Helpless Darling* (*Itaike na dārin*, published by Fujimi Shuppan in 1999). The artist depicts the heroine seen from a first-person perspective and looking at the reader.



a meter from the screen. At that distance, on the 14-inch screen, the face of the actress would look about the size of a woman in the flesh – facilitating the immersion of the viewer engaged in imaginary sex with her, which is the point of the Gonzo shot and why it worked. I do not know if Tanaka intentionally introduced this technique from adult video, but it is almost the same in the sense of staging of intimacy through a first-person perspective.

Seen through the eyes of the protagonist, the attributes of female characters are diverse. Some are childish, others dignified, dreamy, classy, lovely and so on. In the basic form, however, they do not budge. They are brittle and ephemeral, but strong at the same time. They wait for the protagonist, accept him, comfort him, encourage him and bring him to life. They are an ideal type that is both girl and mother. Although this is opposite to the actual order of publication, one could say that Ai, the heroine of *Ai-Ren*, is the prototype of a number of variations on the same basic character form. In the same way, the protagonist is a young boy who can be a “bad person” (*dame ningen*) or someone who tries hard, someone who wavers or bends, but basically he will look straight ahead and always be on the side of good. For male readers, this is an “ideal form within reach,” or a pure and good self that also exists within us. It is easy to identify with such a protagonist, but the female characters are ultimately the objects of love, the characters that love us. One could probably describe this as “soft phallocentrism” (*sofuto na dankonshugi*) or “kind-hearted machismo” (*kokoro-yasashiki machizumo*), but Tanaka’s works are extremely refined as male fantasy.

Taking a leave of absence after *Ai-Ren*, appearing to be burned out, Tanaka Yutaka returned to *eromanga*. Without a hint of doubt or hesitation, he continues to sing the same song. He draws sex that is lovely, feels good and is positive and happy. Considering the works released after *Ai-Ren*, I anticipate that Tanaka will not add superfluous bells and whistles, but might move away from his characteristic narrative style. If that happens, we will see a world that is stylized like the theater, acted out by the characters, but where readers have to fill in more of the blanks. I cannot help feeling that the way Ai, the loving artificial girl, is reset and becomes an innocent existence with a new downloaded personality is symbolic.

Conservative Romantic Values

There are many methods of depicting love and romance. Just because Tanaka Yutaka succeeds with his formula does not mean that this is for everyone. If the artist does not have significant talent and commitment, this approach

ends in mediocre stories based in truisms. We can see a contrasting approach in Dorei Jackie's *A Wish: Just One Thing...* (A wish: Tatta hitotsu no...o komete, published by Enjeru Shuppan in 2004). This, too, depicts a form of pure romance that is classical and based in truisms. The difference, however, is the absence of the idealized he and she. The protagonist, Takuya, was the victim of sexual bullying in gradeschool, which left him afraid of women and impotent. He is unable to speak to Kirishima, the girl he longs for. Little does he know that Kirishima also suffers from a past trauma. Abducted and abused as a child, she is now unable to feel anything during sex unless involved in a gangbang with multiple men.

While they love each other, Takuya wants to fulfill Kirishima's desires. He thus participates in consensual molester play and gangbang scenes. While watching over Kirishima as many strangers violate her, Takuya tries to join in. He is excited, but unable to get an erection and penetrate her. There is not a single development that is cool. When outside the arranged scenes, Kirishima is attacked by a group of real rapists; this is not play, but she still enjoys it. Meanwhile, Takuya gets beaten black and blue trying to be a hero and save her; he is mocked for being an impotent loser in love with a slut; he cannot protect them from their attackers at all. In their quagmire of self-punishment and deep-rooted delusion, the two characters grow and proceed toward a "perfect union" (*kanzen naru ketsugō*). It approaches old-timey manga about the "sporting spirit" (*supokon*), where players struggle through the heat and strain, unpresentable, reeking of sweat and dirt, and yet somehow moving us through their efforts. What wipes clean the slate of their inadequacies is "love," and more specifically the "strong will to see love through."

In recent years, there has been a trend toward works with uncool male protagonists. An earlier chapter already introduced Kojiki Ōji's *Clover*, the stalker-rapist protagonist of which is someone who may appear in the nightly news at any moment. He is an extreme example of a young man who is a shut-in and social misfit, but certainly not outstanding in those characteristics. If anything, characters like *Neon Genesis Evangelion*'s Shinji, who is indecisive and withdrawn, are now almost the default. It is as if the negative attributes of the heroine of Mutsu A-ko's girly love comedy have been amplified and taken the form of the male protagonist. And consider just how far this is from boys manga, which Ishinomori Shōtarō explained as follows back in the 1960s:

Hero: The protagonist of the story. Usually a cool and strong man.

Heroine: The primary female character of the story. Usually a beautiful girl with a beautiful heart. [...]

The reader seeks in the hero his ideal. He meets himself everyday in the mirror, enough to make him sick. (Ishimori 1965)¹⁰

In other words, the protagonist is not the reader as he is, and certainly not his worst facets, but rather an ideal self. This classic definition may have been true in the 1960s, but it does not work at all for what we are seeing. Readers would not accept such idealism these days. Well, there are after all exceptions, but the artist has to have an incredible amount of strength to carry it through. The pedestal of the ideal is getting lower, and in many cases depicting “someone who looks like me” is given priority over any “ideal.” Macho values are crumbling; it is hard to see oneself in a cool and strong man in relation to a beautiful girl with a beautiful heart. However, no matter how much of a “bad person” the protagonist becomes, even if the heroine slides down from her throne as an angel, whatever form the narrative takes, whether a happy end or tragedy, there is one thing that we can say for certain. Romantic values tend toward the conservative. This is not a problem of good or bad, but rather the way that romance is in *eromanga*. In romantic love stories, love is good and that good binds the protagonist and heroine.

The Abyss of Love

Romantic themes are not limited to love comedy and boy meets girl. There are more than a few creators and works depicting aspects that are deeper, or more realistic, or go into the negative sides, or tread into the territory of absurdity and so on. Take for example Tamaki Nozomu's *You Lie With Your Body* (Kimi ga karada de uso o tsuku, published by Enjeru Shuppan in 2000), which is a long-form work exploring relationships that unfold inside the walls of a Western-style mansion. The main characters are Yoshito, a beautiful and frail boy; Sarasa, the young maid who takes care of him; and Hase, who is a classmate of Sarasa, employed as the private tutor of Yoshito and functions as the narrator. There are a number of relationships intertwined here. Officially, Yoshito and Sarasa are in the relationship of

10 [TN: Recall that Ishimori is the name used by Ishinomori before 1986.] In the part of this discussion that is most like the genius Ishinomori, he continues: “Before I became an artist, when I was still just a fan, back then every manga I saw had a beautiful hero and heroine. They were all strong and loved justice. Flawless people to the last. So I decided that when I became an artist, I would draw manga focusing on ugly men and women.” Today, manga focusing on ugly men and women are not rare.

“master of the house and servant,” but in private their relationship is sexual and that of “master and slave.”

On that note, however, Yoshito is a physically weak child without much authority. He requires the care of Sarasa, who in fact throws her young body at Yoshito’s hyena-like guardians in order to protect the boy and his property. In a relationship that also resembles mother and son, caring and being cared for, their roles of dominating and being dominated repeatedly switch depending on the situation. Peeping at Yoshito and Sarasa having sex, Hase, who has been seduced by Sarasa and started dating her, is drawn into their codependent and closed relationship. All three have sex, and Yoshito and Hase engage in homosexual acts. I will not go into too much detail, but suffice it to say that there is no easy catharsis. Depicted here is the form of these three people’s “love,” which is the self-sacrificing masochism of giving even one’s own life for their lover and, deeper still, a world of desires going down far enough that there is no bottom in sight.

There are a number of works with this in common, including Himuro Serika’s *Temptation of Water* (Mizu no yūwaku, published by Wani Magajinsha from 1997, then Daitosha from 2005). One of the masterpieces of the 1990s, it tells the story of a girl who can only express her love by dominating and abusing a boy. Love comedy is not unrelated to this kind of twist. In Mutsuki Tsutomu’s *A Lady and Her Dog* (Pochi to ojōsama, published by Tsukasa Shobō in 1997, then republished with additional material by Futami Shobō in 2001), we see depicted a boy who feels internal resistance toward a selfish young lady, but cannot go against her, pledges loyalty and continues to serve her.

Along with the passing of time, the forms of love expressed and the ways that they are expressed become richer. As I will discuss in subsequent chapters, views on gender have drastically changed among both creators and readers in a short span of years. This does not mean, however, that classic things have perished. Products diversify to respond to the needs of readers. Not only that, but every reader has within them multiple needs. If there are days when one wants to read a happy-go-lucky work of love comedy and smile, then there are also days when they want to be moved by a love story that is classic and pure. There are those days when readers want to grapple with a heavy love full of deep delusions and twists. Like the world itself, *eromanga* is full of all kinds of love and desire.

9 Sadomasochism and Sexual Minorities

Introduction

Eroticism and sexuality are like magma, fluid and multi-layered, polysemous and full of energy. These are things that cannot be fully grasped in narrow discussions of pornography. Trying to channel and curtail the flow of magma, the modern paradigm makes the family system and marriage the base of the nation-state and establishes male-dominant heterosexuality as the standard. Looked at structurally, pornography complements this system, because it serves as a device to release built-up pressure from the magma and cool the surface layer.¹ While the paradigm is effective, few notice the system in which they live; alternative expressions exist in niches. Once the paradigm begins to waver, however, the limits dissolve; the magma is no longer under control. Monstrous apparitions and spirits of the mountains and rivers burst into general areas and disseminate far and wide.²

While *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* carries an expectation of being pornographic, it can betray that expectation. In other words, it transcends the limits of the pornographic framework, deviates from it, interbreeds, integrates, imports, forges linkages, segments and becomes chaotic. In so doing, it widens the bandwidth. As if responding to changes in the paradigm, radical forms appear at the fringes of *eromanga*, or are introduced there; they invite diverse reading, and permeate and diffuse throughout *eromanga* as a whole. Given that their borders overlap, there are more than a few instances of this permeation and diffusion in *eromanga* extending to manga in its entirety. The reverse is also true. Numerous memes from any and everywhere come into *eromanga*. In the expressive world of manga generally and *eromanga* specifically, countless memes appear, or hide themselves, are passed on atavistically, mutate and transition.

1 Here I have in mind discussions of ladies comics, which function as pornography for women (Erino 1990; Fujimoto 1999). Incidentally, when Catharine MacKinnon, the standard-bearer of the anti-pornography movement, came to Japan, someone asked her what she thought about women producing and consuming ladies comics. To this MacKinnon replied that “women’s pornography” is actually “made by and for men,” even going as far as to estimate that “99 percent of readers are men,” which left people in the venue dumbfounded (Morioka 1999). It is easy to laugh at her ignorance, but consider her statements together with the systematic complementarity of ladies comics (Erino 1990). If we take MacKinnon’s assertion to mean that all pornography is “for men,” or sustains a system dominated by men, then it is not altogether off the mark.

2 In *eromanga*, the appearance of third-rate *gekiga* heralded the end of modernity. The post-modernization of *eromanga* was accelerated by the appearance of *lolicon* manga.

That things are born from the edges or begin to enter from there is not unique to *eromanga*, but it is quite visible in this content. Keep in mind that the golden rule in the historically loose world of *eromanga* is that “Anything goes as long as it’s erotic.” Precisely because of this relaxed atmosphere, the fringes of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* have become a site for experiments with expressions of eroticism and sexuality. From there have come subcategories and tropes such as “somasochism,” “shemales” and “*shota*,” which permeate and disseminate throughout the whole of *eromanga*. This side of *eromanga* also makes it a platform for creators with strong voices and identities such as Kago Shintarō and Machino Henmaru.

Somasochism and the Performing Body

A tiny subcategory of *eromanga*, somasochism was there on the fringes from the beginning. Leaving their core at the edges, somasochistic memes extended into other content, which gives many *eromanga* works a “somasochistic flavor.” For example, the training that appears in disgrace works is almost the same as somasochistic training or disciplining. The difference lies only in whether or not emphasis is placed on sexual intercourse.³

In the time of the Marquis de Sade and Leopold Ritter von Sacher-Masoch, whose names are the roots of the term itself, the concept of somasochism did not exist. What did exist, long before Richard von Krafft-Ebing came up with the term, were atrocities, cruel spectacles, violence in the bedroom and ecstasy through religious penance. These memes flowed into Victorian pornography.⁴ Closed-door play such as spanking and enemas became refined, and role-playing tropes such as “teacher and student” and “master and maid” were established. By giving it a name, somasochism was identified as a “form of desire” (*yokubō no keishiki*), its symptoms became independent and the distribution of

3 The revolutionary character of somasochism lies in the fact that it does not privilege genitally oriented sex, which is demoted to the position of just one of many pleasures.

4 Under the reign of Queen Victoria (from 1837 to 1901), the British Empire was at its peak. The culture was steeped in Puritanism, which demanded adherence to strict morals, but this was also contrarily a golden age for pornography (albeit underground). Many examples are available in Japanese, including *My Secret Life* (1888), which is known for its translation by the poet Tamura Ryūichi, and the spanking novel masterpiece *Frank and I* (1902). Many feature somasochism and cross-dressing, and their expertise is not outdone by contemporary *eromanga*. A representative maid manga by Mori Kaoru, *Emma* (Ema, published by Entāburein from 2002) is set in England in this period. The life of sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing also overlaps with the Victorian era.

memes got more energetic. Going through visualization by artists such as Dan DeCarlo since the 1920s, sadomasochism entered the “American Bizarre,” represented by illustrator and editor John Willie, from the 1940s into the 1950s.⁵ What is known as bondage fashion in contemporary Japan was established during this period.⁶

The reason that sadomasochism spread throughout *eromanga* was first off because of its visual nature and details. The gadgets and fetishism – bondage, costumes, whips, high heels and so on – characteristic of sadomasochism make great images. There is spectacle in the acts, something to see. That said, sadomasochism did not permeate *eromanga* on the strength of visuals alone. In the space of sadomasochistic play, people perform roles that are different from their everyday lives. They don the mask, costume or character of the master, queen, noble, teacher, priest, slave, nurse, prisoner, maid, child, dog, horse, pig and more. It is an intimate stage play where the characters overlap with spectators, a secret role-play. The “theatricality” (*engeki-sei*) of emphasizing the roles of the characters and simplifying human relations paradoxically awakens in us a sense of the “real” (*riaru*). Truth is hidden in the performance. It is the revelation that we, too, don costumes and perform roles on the stage of everyday life. If so, then sadomasochism in manga is

5 DeCarlo was active in the first half of the twentieth century. It is relatively easy to find his work in art books and reprints of novels. His illustrations provide the prototypes of contemporary bondage fashion. An artist, photographer and editor, Willie established an underground culture when he launched the magazine *Bizarre* in 1946. Other representatives include photographer Irving Klaw and illustrators Eric Stanton and Eugene Bilbrew (aka Eneg). The most iconic pin-up queen of the 1950s, Bettie Page, was Klaw’s model. The 1950s were also a golden age for science fiction in the United States, and many cover illustrations for pulp sci-fi novels were in the style of *Bizarre*.

6 I would like to highlight a few things about the reception of memes in Japanese sadomasochism. We can see glimpses in the prewar works of Tanizaki Junichirō and others, but sadomasochism did not really establish itself on the market until after the Second World War. More concretely, we need to zoom in on sex magazines in the 1950s. The three big sex magazines from this era – *Curiosities Club* (Kitan kurabu, from 1947), *Rear Window* (Uramado, from 1956) and *Curious Tales of Sex* (Fūzoku kitan, from 1960) – proactively introduced Western “bizarre culture.” Especially influential among the big three was *Curiosities Club*, which serialized representative Japanese novels devoted to sadomasochism such as Dan Oniroku’s *Flower and Snake* (Hana to hebi) and Numa Shōzō’s *Yapoo, the Human Cattle* (Kachikujin Yapū), later adapted as manga by Ishinomori Shōtarō. *Curiosities Club* had a huge impact on the culture of sadomasochism in Japan, with a key role being played by Dan Oniroku, who employed a lot of bondage and disciplining in his writing. These novels were succeeded by erotic *gekiga*. In fact, there are strong links between Dan Oniroku and *gekiga*. His writing was adapted as *gekiga* from the start of the 1970s by artists such as Maeda Juan, Oki Shōji and Kasama Shirō. The film adaptation of *Flower and Snake* was directed by Ishii Takashi, himself an influential *gekiga* artist treading into eroticism before the boom in third-rate *gekiga*.

performance on paper. Readers self-project onto characters, wear them like costumes and enter the story.

The same can be said about all creative works that contain personalities open to the possibility of projection, but sadomasochism in manga takes it further. In the framework of sadomasochism, characters can be roles without personalities. This is extremely economical for *eromanga*, which is published in 16-to-20-page installments in magazines and does not have much space to work with. No explanation is required if on page one you have a bondage queen stepping on the face of a restrained schoolgirl with her high heels and saying, "This is what you get for shoplifting." In an extreme example, Snowberry's *The Female Teacher on Platform of the Abyss* (Onna kyōshi naraku no kyōdan, published by Heiwa Shuppan from 2000) depicts the humiliation, violation and abuse of a naïve and newly hired female teacher, but the characters appear under only the names of their roles. There are the students, who are all bad boys, the unscrupulous principal and so on. In short, every single person related to the school. On account of the thorough anonymity of it all, "female teacher" becomes all the entries in our imaginary database under "female teacher." All of these characters and their relations are pulled up, which allows the blanks in the work to be automatically filled in.

Speaking of names, the heroines in Shiromi Kazuhisa's works are always called "Marika."⁷ In *Naburikko: FraKctured Red* (published by Fujimi Shuppan in 2002), the protagonist, Kazuhiro, trains his little sister, Marika, as a slave. He continues to put her up in slave auctions for an exorbitant price. Even if a successful bidder does appear, the deal is off unless Marika agrees. For his part, Kazuhiro thought that this was an absolutely safe form of "play," but things take an unexpected turn when a company president named Kiyohiko wins with a bid of 90 million yen and "lifetime sex slave rights" (meaning that he would only be able to keep this one slave for his lifetime) – and Marika accepts. Thus unfolds a drama of frantic, deep-rooted delusion centering on Marika. It is always the men who are active and violent, but Marika has them in the palm of her hand like an orthodox femme fatale. With Marika, Shiromi Kazuhisa characterizes femininity as something impossible for men to comprehend. Depicted here is the shape of our deep-rooted delusion and endless seeking of "ultimate pleasure," which can never be achieved.

7 A pioneer of such set identification is Machino Henmaru, whose works often feature a heroine named "Yumiko."

Image 22 A sample of Shiromi's *Naburikko: FraKctured Red*. The work explores the master-slave relation of sadomasochism.



Sadomasochism, Absolute Devotion to the System

That a slave like Marika has the right to choose is itself perverse, but this is a rule, and rules are strictly observed in sadomasochism. Indeed, it can become an ironclad system.⁸ “Lifetime sex slave rights,” which are part of the local rules of this work, restrain the master side and strengthen the perverse structure that “the master is bound by the slave.” In this tangled contract, structurally, the master and slave are equal. The men cannot escape this systematic restriction. One adheres to the contract (Kiyohiko), and one uses the “pure love” (Kazuhiro’s words) between siblings born from the same flesh as a shield. However, Marika is not completely contained by the system, which she manipulates for her own pleasure. To Marika, the contract and blood relation are nothing more than tools. While the Marika reflected in the eyes of men is a lascivious and cute slave, she is also simultaneously an enigmatic, eerie existence.

A work that clearly depicts masochistic pleasure as thorough and self-sacrificing devotion to the system is Onibara’s (aka Miyuma Subaru’s) *Queen and Slave* (Roshutsu mazo to nikutai joō-sama, published by Tōkyō Sanseisha in 2005). This long-form work expresses an absolute devotion that could be described as suicidal. The opening pages show a collared and stark-naked girl tied up – arms and legs spread wide, entirely exposed – on a summer beach. She tells assembled onlookers that she is a slave and “perverted masochist.” She was captain of the swim team at an all-girls highschool, and harboring masochistic and lesbian desires. Caught by younger students while masturbating in the locker rooms with her face buried in one of their swimsuits, the captain became the slave she had wanted to be. Derided by her new “mistresses,” she experienced every conceivable form of humiliation and sexual torture. She gave up lingering inhibitions and, as ordered, crashed the school’s graduation ceremony in her birthday suit. What followed was expulsion from school and abandonment by her parents. Finally, her

8 When talking about eroticism and the system, an important example is Kaimeiji Yū’s *K9* (Canine, published by Sanwa Shuppan in 1997), which is about domestication in a world where people are treated as dogs. There is a history here, too. In *Yapoo, the Human Cattle*, Numa Shōzō turns the descendants of the Japanese into livestock, which extends and intensifies the disgracing of Japan by Western powers. In contrast, Kaimeiji highlights the eroticism that lies within systematic, structural discrimination. In a similar vein, Keno Yantarō writes contemporary science fiction where boys and girls are domesticated on a selection basis. Through body modification and conditioning to lower intelligence, the domestication is carried out thoroughly and there is no turning back. One can easily read this as a caricature of adapting to the system. This is also the case in the works of Sanbun Kyōden, who was introduced in the discussion of disgrace works, but pursuing this theme quickly becomes political.

Image 23 A sample of Onibara's *Queen and Slave*. The heroine tells the story of her fall, and the reader both gazes at and empathizes with her.



mistresses grew bored and cast her aside, as well. This brings us back to the beach.

The reader self-projects onto the character of the former captain, who narrates the story, but this is not straightforward. Given that she is split into the one speaking and the one spoken about, the reader's consciousness

simultaneously experiences both the perspectives of “the blindfolded character” and “the omniscient narrator.” Moreover, the reader, like the onlookers at the beach witnessing it, has no way to verify if her confession is true or not. Maybe nothing actually happened and it is all her own wild fantasy, which is self-produced and self-performed. In this work, not a single man appears as a rapist. The ones who disgrace the heroine are all girls, and hard to tell apart. The onlookers jeering and insulting her are also almost all women. That said, however, it is probably premature to see this as really about women. If a mistress is not an individualized existence to a masochist, then she also does not represent all women. A mistress is one who perfectly executes the functions of mocking, punishing and so on. Like the nameless characters drawn by Snowberry, she is a role without personality. She is an imaginary existence. In a world where only the self exists, absolute devotion is to one’s own desires. Even when presented as suicidal, as they are in *Queen and Slave*, the devotion and desires follow the rules.⁹

Desire Deviating from the Sexual Organs and Polymorphous Perversity

Every conceivable form of desire exists and is subdivided on the fringes. Expressions, too, are varied. One can only describe the scene as an experimental laboratory of desires. For example, the most impressive part of Momoyama Jirō’s works is his cycling through sadomasochistic gadgets one after another, as well as his ideas for sexual torture. Even just thumbing through one book, *Sheep Faint in Pain* (Hitsuji tachi no monzetsu, published by Shōbunkan in 2005), a sacrificial lamb has to straddle an apparatus attached to a bicycle tire, which when rotated endlessly torments the anus; there is another machine where two victims are mounted on a seesaw with dildos and make each other go up and down; and there is a hollow lattice dildo with a device like an earpick used to tickle a vagina on the inside. Adding in body modification, things get crazier still, for example when a length of intestine cut from a victim is connected to her vagina, while the

9 When considering devotion to the system, one must mention Umino Yayoi’s *Doctor Training* (Chōkyō ishi, published by Sanwa Shuppan in 1997). Here we have piercing, circumcision of the clitoral hood and more done in the setting of a private hospital, where three stories cross. The best of these involves the nurse, who as a free slave offers herself to a future unknown master. What she believes in is the system of sadomasochism, which shapes her. Entering the story like a self-repair function, the community of sadomasochism in the background in the end punishes the bad people and saves the good people.

Image 24 A sample of Momoyama's *Sheep Faint in Pain*. The ideas of torture have become the object, irrespective of sex.



other end is connected to a hole opened in her back to make a tunnel (and new sexual organ). No matter how much sexual intercourse is depicted, it cannot compete with this torrent of excessive ideas. The idea, which one expects to be part of the pursuit of pleasure, has become its own goal.

Extreme body modification has become its own goal for a group of creators and their works. There is Uziga Waita (aka Ujiga Waita, aka Y-ta), who inserts a huge gas cylinder into the vagina of a girl with frog genes, and modifies a victim connected to a life-support system into a toilet. In work that adds *gekiga* style to a *shōjo* manga base for an aesthetic touch, Mukade Melibe depicts surgery to exchange a mouth and vagina. In *Maybe-na Afternoon* (Meibina tachi no gogo, published by Sanwa Shuppan in 2003), Oka Sundome (aka Ataka Atsushi) uses the entire book to lyrically express – to such an extent that the soul trembles – the world of girls whose arms and legs have been amputated. In works such as this, things are far removed from what

many think of as “sex.” Whether focusing on the process of body modification or the story of what happens after, the core is modification. This is the star, and genital coupling one of the planets orbiting around it.

We already know that genital coupling is not all there is to pleasure. Physical pleasure in genital coupling and friction is no more than a modest reaction in the brain. Before desires that are unsatisfied no matter the amount of sex, intercourse is something to tide one over. Most important here is the psychology of what we find erotic, what arouses us. Beyond the genital coupling of men and women lies exhibitionism, scatology, bestiality, Pygmalionism, homosexuality, fetishism and, of course, sadomasochism. All of these and more appear in *eromanga*. Such eroticism also permeates the mainstream, where it is used to spice things up and attract receptive readers. Sometimes the creator does not even do it on purpose. If there are cases where the artist recalls that, “I only wanted to draw fashionable shoes, but became popular with shoe fetishists,” then there are also cases where a certain segment of readers intentionally misread. As we approach the outer edges, polymorphous perversity appears not as something to add flavor or catch the eye, but rather in forms that are for their own sake.

For example, the exhibitionist play in *eromanga* devoted to sadomasochism can be in the service of staging flashy spectacle. Whether this is done voluntarily, or the character is forced into exposure, the horror of throwing your life away is present, and the scene has impact. (Recall *Queen and Slave*.) This is, however, just one type of play, and there are after all very few *eromanga* focusing on exhibitionism and relegating everything else to satellites orbiting it. Outstanding in this regard is the work of Suehirogari, who has over the course of many years struggled with the themes of exhibitionism and shame. His delicate and classy touch leaves only a faint odor of the maniac, but Suehirogari delves into the deeper layers of the psychology of readers. Another artist to mention here is Kiai Neko (aka Kiiro Neko). Depicting flash-and-dash exhibitionism, which more than shame includes a stalker-like catharsis, Kiai Neko creates a different kind of world than Suehirogari.

We can say the same about fetishism. Garments like leotards and tights are already ever present, but when it comes to fetish items such as diapers and toddler clothes that appeal to more fringe readers, there is a significant difference in treatment at the center of *eromanga* and on its peripheries. It is not that these things are not drawn, because diapers appear in sadomasochism, scatology and costume play, but there is a difference in enthusiasm and dedication. Fewer than five artists are guaranteed to draw

diapers in a way that resonates with fetishists and fans of baby costumes and baby play, for example Uchiyama Aki, Mizuyōkan and Dash.

On the outer edges also exist idiosyncratic talents such as Machino Henmaru and Kago Shintarō, and artists such as Tamaki Satoshi (aka Minamo Kokuren), whose work is full of squat girls who are regenerated over and over again through slaughter, scatology and magic. It is enough to surprise even Henry Darger, but Tamaki and others like him do intersect with the contemporary art scene.¹⁰ While having an inclination toward fetishism and scatology, Tenjiku Rōnin depicts the abyss within humans. There are even people like Horihone Saizō, who has every form of perversion in his kit for self-medicating and producing work that is grotesque and cruel, but also pleasant and pastoral. When it comes to creators such as these, creators whose voices and identities are so strong and distinct, each of their outputs could be counted as a category of content all its own.

10 TN: See for example the catalogued art and discussions of it in Murakami 2005. The discussion continues in Ngai 2005. For more on Darger in Japan, see Saitō 2011.



10 Gender Mayhem

Introduction

Starting from the fringes, there was another cluster of subcategories that like sadomasochism made remarkable strides in *eromanga*. These subcategories, which often overlap, focus on the figures and themes of the “shemale” (*shiimēru*) and hermaphrodite (*futanari*), transvestism (*iseisō*) and drag (*josō*), *shota* and sex change (*sei tenkan*). While following the same basic pattern of moving from the periphery to permeate and spread throughout *eromanga* more generally, this cluster differs from other subcategories in that it makes “male characters” into objects of desire.¹

It is of course not the case that comics incorporating desire for men had been absent to this point. An older example is Tomi Shinzō’s *Life of a Beautiful Boy* (Bidōki, published by Mitsunobu Shobō in 1967). Artists such as Tatsumi Yoshihiro, Kamimura Kazuo and Miyaya Kazuhiko also drew works with homosexual and drag themes. In *gekiga* treading into the erotic, there was a young gay man in a supporting role in Ishii Takashi’s *Angel Guts* (Tenshi no harawata, 1972), and in third-rate *gekiga*, Miyanishi Keizō and Hisauchi Michio created works with a rich concentration of gay themes. However, in contrast to *shōjo* manga – which experienced a boys love boom centering on the works of the Magnificent 49ers in the 1970s and grew into a massive market with *June* magazine, *yaoi* zines and finally its own commercial subcategory of content in the 1990s – works for men tended to stand in isolation and never led to a boom. Sex other than the heterosexual kind, including but not limited to homosexuality, was mostly relegated to a very limited market “for a specific kind of reader.”²

It is simple enough to grasp that operating in the background of this is male homophobia.³ Homosexuals and transvestites have been ridiculed

1 “Male” in terms of chromosomes, or “biologically male.”

2 Even today, hardcore depictions of male-on-male sex occupy a special position in the manga market, being for the most part targeted to the gay community. Working in this field, which is distinct from the boys love primarily produced by and for women, are artists such as Tagame Gengoroh, known for *Pride* (published by G-Project in 2004); Jiraiya, known for *Room for Five Guys* (Gonin beya, published by G-Project in 2004); and Yamada Sansuke, known for *Mun Mun Younger* (Wakasa de mun mun, published by Ōta Shuppan in 2004). This content is mostly available at specialty shops as “gay comics” (*gei manga* or *gei komi*).

3 In a homosocial, male-dominated society, the easy position for men is “the unaware gay” (*mujikaku na gei*). There they can exclude gays while receiving the benefits of the male-loving

as “queers” (*homo*) and “faggots” (*okama*) and turned into a punch line for jokes. Fear and laughter are two sides of the same coin, and the more male-dominated a community, the more homosexuality is discriminated against and marginalized. Destabilization of the discriminatory structure and its central tenet of machismo made possible the phenomenon of male characters becoming objects of desire in *eromanga*, as well as change in the treatment of homosexuals, drag queens and feminine men on television shows.

If we look back at the entirety of the manga world from the present, it is possible to see the harbingers of this phenomenon in content targeting female readers in the mid-1970s. Back then, girls and women were exposed to beautiful boys in drag, boys love and other expressions of male homosexuality in *shōjo* manga, and there was a significant crossover of male readers. In terms of content targeting male readers, a cross-dressing boy as love comedy lead made Eguchi Hisashi's *Stop!! Hibari-kun!* (Sutoppu!! Hibari-kun, published by Shūeisha from 1981) a path-breaking work in boys magazines.⁴ In manga magazines for young men, Oku Hiroya dealt with changing sex as well as male and female homosexuality in his series *Hen* (Weird, published by Shūeisha from 1988), thereby stepping into what had been regarded as risky territory, but nevertheless earned the support of readers. In *lolicon* manga, the pioneering Azuma Hideo included elements of drag and homosexuality early on; this was mostly for laughs, but also served to create cute boy characters. His assistant Oki Yukao drew a short story about a sister dressing her little brother up as a girl. In Hariken Ryū's *Space Punch* (Gekisatsu! Uchū ken, published by Amatoriasha from 1982), which was serialized in the *lolicon* magazine *Lemon People*, there is an episode where the prince is captured by the enemy and made to undergo a sex change. Here one detects the gender ambiguity and polymorphic eroticism of manga/anime memes transmitted by Tezuka Osamu. We also cannot overlook Amamiya Jun, who, in the style of *shōjo* manga, depicts a beautiful boy in drag loved by a female teacher; part of the so-called

structure. This structure, invisible to men, is clearly visible to the eyes of women who regularly read boys love and *yaoi*. When pointed out to men, most react with a bitter smile or great mirth.

4 There is an enormous body of significant work targeting female readers, including Kishi Yūko's *Tamasaburō's Love Capriccio* (*Tamasaburō koi no kyōsōkyoku*, published by Shōgakukan from 1972), Yuzuki Hikaru's *My First Time* (*Boku no shotaiken*, published by Shūeisha from 1975), Takemiya Keiko's *The Song of Wind and Trees* (*Kaze to ki no uta*, published by Shōgakukan from 1976), Hagio Moto's *They Were Eleven* (*11 nin iru*, published by Shōgakukan in 1976), Tachihara Ayumi's *Super Asparagus* (*Sūpā asuparagasu*, published by Akita Shoten from 1982) and Suzuki Masako's *A Female Story* (*Fimēru no itsuwa*, published by Shūeisha in 1983).

“pervert teacher series,” *Perverted Female Teacher: Dreaming of Love* (Hentai onna kyōshi: Ai o yume mite, published by Kubo Shoten in 1985) was ahead of its time in pairing a *shota* character with an older woman. Given that the object of desire was an immature form without much in the way of pronounced sexual difference, we should probably say that gender was on shaky ground in *lolicon* from the beginning. Fundamentalists who want to trace the source of everything back to him would likely say that, “These works have correctly inherited the ambiguous, fluid gender memes seen in Tezuka characters such as Astro Boy and Princess Sapphire.” It is not an entirely misguided argument.

We should note that not all the cute girl characters appearing in *eromanga* are as thoroughly objectified as Tanaka Yutaka’s Ai (discussed in Chapter 8). How, for example, might male readers interact with the world of joyful girls depicted in Taniguchi Kei’s *Flip Flop* (Furippu furoppu, published by Kubo Shoten from 1983)? These characters are very different from Ai, and they are not presented the same way. The conclusion that male readers take these girls as objects of desire seems incomplete, which means we must acknowledge possibilities such as identifying with, perhaps even being possessed by, one or more of the characters. This same critical impasse is also encountered when discussing Kagami Akira’s works and Ōtsuka Eiji’s idea of “*shōjo* manga for boys” (see Chapter 3). What we see here is gender instability, which was there in the early days of *lolicon* manga and continues on in contemporary *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*.

The first of the subcategories of *eromanga* to take up male characters (note the instability already in that formulation) as objects of desire focuses on the “shemale,” or female form with a penis. How did this character appear in *eromanga* targeting men, and how did it become so pervasive? Important here is a fundamental evolution in *eromanga*. Schematically, it goes as follows:

- 1 The Peep Show Model: Gender roles are firmly established, and the perspective is that of an outside observer.
- 2 Empathy Model A: Gender roles are still firmly established, and the perspective is that of the main male character. Reader identification or projection is with the main male character.
- 3 Empathy Model B: Gender roles are fluid and reader identification or projection is not dependent on sexual difference.

By and large we can say that the Peep Show Model lines up with early *gekiga* treading into eroticism, Empathy Model A with everything between Ishii Takashi and third-rate *gekiga* and Empathy Model B with everything from

lolicon manga to contemporary *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. This is intended only to suggest a rough chronological order of emergence, and does not say anything about the quality of works thus categorized. Furthermore, I am not arguing that Empathy Model B is now the only way to do things, but rather that all three models of expression and reading coexist and intermingle today. The diversification of expression and reading advances with the passing of time. The point is that these have built up, allowing for new models of expression and reading, at least for those with the necessary literacy.

In Tanaka Yutaka's works, there is a thorough, calculated effort to make the reader's perspective the same as that of the male protagonist. Identifying with this character, sharing his perspective and position, almost as if inhabiting him, the reader loves the heroine and has sex with her. The female character is an object to love, worship and possess. To the end, these works are drawn to fit Empathy Model A, and, although it is not impossible to read them in the manner of the Peep Show Model or Empathy Model B, this would require intentional effort. In the case of works focusing on "shemales," on the other hand, without grounding in Empathy Model B, they can probably only be read in the manner of the Peep Show Model.

At a peep show, the audience is safe because members are not committed to the acts happening on stage, but, to the same extent, there is no vessel for self-projection and things go round in circles. In Empathy Model A, where the reader self-projects onto the male character, only the female character's pleasure is depicted in a pronounced way (as is orthodox in pornography). While the vessel of self-projection, the male character is made transparent. The gaze goes right through him, and there is a tendency to identify with the pleasure of the female character. To avoid this, the artist would have to suppress depictions of pleasure, but that would diminish its impact as pornography.⁵

In the case of Empathy Model B, the extent of identification with the "female character" (not necessarily stable by this point) depends on the reader. They may consciously project onto the female character, cloak themselves in her guise, or unconsciously somehow feel what she does. Whatever the case may be, this is primarily understood to be "amusement" (*goraku*), which is distinguished from indulging in a sincere "desire to become a woman" (*josei-ka ganbō*). A short period of psychological cross-dressing is

5 That said, Seto Yūki is an artist who succeeded in expressing elaborate male pleasure. In *Stringendo* (Sutorinjendo, published by Tii ai Netto in 2002), Seto's depiction of the throbbing penis, which reacts intensely to caresses from the lips, draws male readers into feeling with the male character.

a safe and secret pleasure; the reader can find this therapeutic, and perhaps understand others through “transsexual simulation” (*isei-ka shimiyurēshon*). Even if leading to new misunderstandings, it at the very least expands consciousness and horizons. “Viewing the world as a ‘woman.’” This can become the work of recognizing other perspectives and positions. It is neither wasted time nor shameful.

With all of this in mind, let us get to the facts of gender mayhem in *eromanga*. Near the end of the 1980s, Terada Yōichi, an editor familiar with *dōjinshi* or self-published works, instigated an expansion of the marginal. In *dōjinshi* anthologies such as *TEA TIME*, *Bizarre Collection*, *D-Cup Collection* and *Shemale Collection*, Terada brought together works exploring alternative sex outside of acts between men and women.⁶ As stated in the earlier discussion of big breasts (see Chapter 5), it was American pornography that first introduced the “shemale.” From there, artists such as Kitamimaki Kei, known for his emphasis on big breasts, imported it into the Japanese *eromanga* world. In American pornography, much as in other forms of entertainment, the imperative is to show.⁷ It is a peep show, and, as one approaches the fringes, it can start to feel like a sideshow. Put at ease by the central conceit that the spectacle is removed from everyday life, viewers enjoy sexual deviation as if it was the business of someone else. Reflecting its history of importation, the “shemale” is treated like a symbol of excess and perverse sexual license in many *eromanga*. A good example of this is Gura Nyūtō, who draws works in which the big-breasted, hung “shemale” carelessly and joyfully bangs away.

However, despite the imported structure of safe distance, powerhouse creators Kitamimaki Kei and Makita Aoi put out works with emotional and introspective aspects. The “shemale” was more than something to look at, and rather a character with depth to identify and feel with. This probably had more to do with differences between orthodox pornography and *eromanga* than the United States and Japan. An early example in this vein, Kitamimaki’s “The Human Ranch” (in *Shemale Collection*, published by Byakuya Shobō in 1989) tells of a young man who is sold to a brothel and injected with female hormones, bodily modified and then bought by a rich playboy. The story is told primarily through the altered and abused boy’s nihilistic monologue. The reader can see inside that oppressed narrator the misery of a person who is poor, objectified and exploited. At this point it

6 TN: Although there are no specific dates and publishers given for these anthologies, we can place them around 1989 coming out of Byakuya Shobō.

7 TN: For more on “the frenzy of the visible,” see Williams 1989.

Image 25 A sample of Kitamimaki's "The Human Ranch." The work invites the reader to identify with the "shemale."



ceases to be a mere peep show. In the expressive form of manga, a monologuing subject is generally a vessel for reader identification and self-projection (Nagakubo 2005). Feeling with the "shemale" boy, the reader enters the story. One might describe this as virtual male-to-female cross-dressing, or rather an experience of wearing a "shemale" body.

“Shemales:” The Meaning of Breasts and a Penis

As a vessel for self-projection, the “shemale” is complex. In sexual situations, the “shemale” can appear male, female and something distinctly other as “shemale.” Roles as attacker or “top” (*seme*) and receiver or “bottom” (*uke*) can shift throughout the work. The same “shemale” character can be in the role of a sadistic female top in one scene, and in another play a masochistic male bottom who enjoys being disgraced by women. Top and bottom roles are not necessarily based on appearance. It is not rare to depict a “shemale” character who is actually the dominant one, but shivers in ecstasy while being whipped by a brawny man and brutally raped. Furthermore, each character has their own “gender identity” (*seijinjin*), which can impact reader identification and self-projection.

By a strict definition, “shemale” refers to a biologically male body that is molded into a female form, or a primary body that becomes a processed form. We might also include “hermaphrodites” (*ryōseiguyū*), which largely overlap with “shemales.” The *eromanga* under discussion feature characters with a base male body that has been modified and characters who are naturally both sexes, but it does not stop there. In many cases, a penis is attached to a female body, as in RaTe’s *P Total Bio-Chemical Laboratory* (P sōken, published by Akane Shinsha in 2002).⁸ In *eromanga*, it appears that biological sex and gender identity are secondary issues in defining the subcategory of “shemale.” What matters is that these are characters with “breasts and a penis.” The rest is narrative to emphasize the “breasts and a penis.”

As touched on in the earlier discussion of big breasts in *eromanga* (see Chapter 5), from the perspective of male readers, breasts are a symbol of a “body that feels good.” The penis, in contrast, is an organ associated with the pleasure of ejaculation, which the male reader experiences bodily. Now, one might argue that the “shemale” exists as a buffer against same-sex eroticism and arousal, or as an expression of homophobia. This is the common refrain that, “I don’t want to see the nasty naked body of a man.” If this was all that there was at work, however, then one suspects that artists would avoid drawing the penis, which most audaciously emblazons masculinity. Furthermore, if the goal was to avoid gazing at the male body, then the mainstream would be lesbian works, which featuring female bodies exclusively. It turns out, however, that *eromanga* focusing on lesbian characters and relationships

8 TN: There is also another term, *futanari*, which can refer to all of these variations and more. Basically, a combination of “male” and “female.”

– for example, Sano Takashi's early masterpiece *Pretty Tough* (Puriti tafu, published by Furansu Shoin in 1994) and Shimamoto Harumi's love comedy *Chocolate Melancholy* (Chokorēto merankorii, published by Kosumikku Intānashonaru in 2000) – are rather uncommon. Although there are a lot more men reading the sisterhood trope after the boom kicked off by Konno Oyuki's young adult novel series *The Virgin Mary is Watching* (Maria-sama ga miteru, published by Shūeisha from 1998), this is not reflected in the *eromanga* market. There are works such as Kurogane Ken's *Girls Sect* (Shōjo sekuto, published by Koa Magajin in 2005), which is set in a girls school, but lesbian characters and relationships remain on the periphery.

We are faced, then, with the widespread depiction of “shemale” characters in *eromanga* and male readers both gazing upon and identifying with them. By way of comparison, in American pornography, the penis often serves to make the “shemale” into a male actor. Sometimes appearing unreasonably large and perhaps even evil, this all-too-impressive phallus is simultaneously a reflection of penis envy and a guarantee of male pleasure. In *eromanga*, works that go deeper into this artificial hermaphroditization in the service of pleasure are Shinozaki Rei's *I Can't Love Anyone Anymore* (Mō daremo aisenai, originally published by Taiyō Toshō in 1992, then Akane Shinsha in 1996), *Blue Heaven* (Burū heven, published by Sanwa Shuppan from 1997) and *Camp Heaven* (Kyanpu heven, published by Sanwa Shuppan from 2003). While depicting pleasure and debauchery, Shinozaki's work also approaches a Bataille-esque Thanatos. The “shemale” thus allows for reflection on the body and sex, eroticism and pleasure.

“Shemales” and Related Territory

No matter how much we insist that the “shemale” is indistinguishable from a woman, sometimes even more beautiful than a woman, there is still that penis attached to the breasts. With the rise of “shemales,” the ban was lifted on desire for men in *eromanga*. Works focusing on these characters might have been shut away as something faddish and ephemeral, but, on the contrary, “shemales” crossed over, disseminated rampantly and became a trope that readers are used to seeing. Holes had burst open in the dam. No, more accurately, we probably should say that the “shemale” phenomenon proved that the dam was full of holes from the start.

“Shemales” and other subcategories with the commonality of men becoming objects of desire have one after another commenced crossing over from the periphery to the center. This is also true for related content

where passive male characters are vessels for self-projection, or where readers become the receiver or bottom who is loved. Examples include sex change (body modification, soul switching, possession and so on), male-to-female cross-dressing and *shota* (boys love, couplings of cute young boys and older women and so on). To discuss all this together may be a nuisance to people concerned with these issues in real life, but when limited to the world of *eromanga*, we are dealing with a cluster of subcategories that overlap and intermingle. Some readers might be invested in the differences between “shemales,” transvestites, transgender and transsexual folks, those diagnosed with “gender identity disorder,” cross-dressers, drag queens and more. Most readers, however, are drawn to the *bishōjo* with breasts and a penis. How it is read depends on the reader. For example, one could read the “shemale” as a person not finished transitioning, or someone “pre-op.” One could also read the “shemale” as an extreme form of male-to-female cross-dressing, where the body itself is turned into a costume. Similar ambiguity exists when discussing passive male characters and cute boys. In *shota* manga, it is possible to (mis)read the slightly built boy character as a flat-chested, Lolita-type “shemale.” (In these works, many of the boy characters choose to cross-dress or are forced to do so.) While unique in their own way, hermaphrodite characters can be read as an extension of the “shemale” and all-inclusive body that feels good.

On this note, Kamirenjaku Sanpei’s *Anal Justice* (Anaru jasutisu, published by Furansu Shoin in 1997 and 2002) is a masterpiece, but also a work that is itself an outrageous, all-inclusive affair.⁹ A serial erotic comedy, the setting is a girls school and its orgy club for hermaphrodites, or the “Girls Erection Club.” Appearing in the opening pages as narrator, which usually identifies the protagonist, Nanao – or “Nana-chan” – is a boy who loves penises. Fascinated by the Erection Club, he cross-dressed and entered this girls school. Unable to join the club because he is not a hermaphrodite, Nanao goes to peep at the orgy and is caught masturbating outside. With this opening an opportunity, Nanao’s membership is recognized as an exception. During the welcoming party, which is of course an orgy, Nanao has sex with Itsuka, the girl he had been in love with since before coming to the club. This is basically what happens in Chapter 1, but the details are

9 Under the name Ono Toshihiro, Kamirenjaku Sanpei also draws manga for a magazine targeting gradeschoolers. In Chapter 11 of his series *Barcode Fighter* (Bākōdo faitā, published by Shōgakukan from 1992), the heroine Arisugawa Sakura turns out to be a cross-dressing boy who suffers from “gender identity disorder.” This shocked many of the children reading it in *Monthly CoroCoro Comic* (Gekkan koro koro komikku), but at the same time sent a strong message that love is not dependent on gender.

where things get interesting. In this work, the entire cast of hermaphrodite characters self-identify as women. The sex in the aforementioned scene is the physically male Nanao taking the penis of Itsuka – whose gender identity is female – in his anus. In fact, looking at this first chapter, there is not a single instance of the most common form of intercourse in *eromanga*: the union of male and female genitals, the penis and vagina. This activity of the hermaphrodites is surprising for Nanao, who comments, “And they’re all having anal sex, too.” The structure of this introductory chapter is a mystical journey, where our protagonist succeeds in crossing into a different world (a girls school) through cross-dressing and is subsequently initiated into a secret society (the Erection Club) through a rite of passage (assuming the passive role in anal intercourse). Of course the reader, who identifies with Nanao and inhabits his body, also participates in this journey of “acquiring femininity while retaining a male body.” Here the penis serves as the “organ of identity” (*aidentiti no kikan*), and Nanao’s penis, which is being intensely stroked as Itsuka anally penetrates him, doubles for the reader’s own. (If the reader actually masturbates, the level of synchronicity rises.)

It is not until Chapter 4 that Nanao inserts his penis into a vagina. His partner is Mina, an arrogant *bishōjo* who enjoys penetrating the anuses of other cute girls with her strap-on. Denied membership because she is not a hermaphrodite, Mina holds a grudge against the Erection Club. In Chapter 3, she threatens and anally rapes Nanao and Itsuka. The heterosexual intercourse in Chapter 4, therefore, also serves as a kind of reconciliation, as well as a ritual to bring her into the club as a member. Important here is not just that Nanao loses his virginity, or has his first vaginal intercourse, but also the fact that the closed circle changed by allowing a male member (Nanao), which made room later for a female one (Mina). By making an exception for Nanao, the privileged character of the circle was lost, and adding Mina meant that Nanao was no longer the sole exception. The second half of the series introduces another secret circle, the Ball Club, which is composed of male cross-dressing students led by a female teacher, who is also a “shemale.” Here is depicted the collapse and repair of homosocial order, but not a return to exclusion and discrimination. In the artist’s stripping away from characters all kinds of privilege, we can see a morality and desire for equality and harmony.

Real Male Sexual Organs and Fantasy Female Sexual Organs

The female mimicry we see in “shemales” and related territory shows influence from myths that women are weak, cute, innocent, pretty, foolish,

graceful, feeble, passive, subordinate, masochistic, hedonistic, capricious and so on. That said, in the case of “shemales” in *eromanga*, we often see a simultaneous acquisition of mythologized femininity and deviation from it. For example, in the forms of pleasure emphasized in flashy, hard, intense depictions of sex, “shemales” can appear very feminine, but also assume the role of the “attacker” or “top” (*seme*). There are also works along a physical or brutish vector that show extremely macho “shemales” with rippling muscles going after women. Rather than inviting the reader to identify with the characters, these works feel more like the Peep Show Model and American pornography. Even these, however, are not merely a demonstration of curious and extreme sex. They generate a concept that paralyzes reason, specifically “mimicking femininity mimicking masculinity.” Here one senses the vertigo that saturates drawings of maniacal muscle-bound women by artists such as Suna and Dairoku Tenmaō Gurēto.

It can still be said that the classic myth that weakness goes by the name of woman lives on in the entirety of related subcategories where men become objects of desire. One can easily point out the residual discrimination and prejudice here, as well as the rape myth turned inside out (where passive male characters take pleasure in being raped by women). Doing so would be politically correct, and we hear this argument from the class president. What it misses, however, is all that makes humans, expressive works and *eromanga* interesting. For the reader of *eromanga*, it does not matter whether or not this is a myth. This is because while it is a “myth” (*shinwa*), it is also simultaneously a “setting” (*settei*), which provides the costumes the players will don. Furthermore, it should be said that these men who mimic women do not “want to become women.” To be precise, they “want to become like women.” It for the most part has nothing to do with gender dysphoria, and is not the same as a “desire to become a woman” (*josei-ka ganbō*).

Earlier on I theorized that as long as the female character is not thoroughly objectified, even in the classical schema of *eromanga* that couples men and women, it is possible for the male reader to self-project onto the female character.¹⁰ The trouble here is the organ that exists between the male

10 We can say the same about all characters. When *Enter the Dragon* (1973) was a hit, everyone exiting the theater was walking like Bruce Lee. Identifying with a character is another way of saying being possessed by a character. In media theory, this kind of identification is seen as something temporary, but the feeling of being under the spell of a character remains as memory. In that moment when the male reader projects onto the female character, he unconsciously cross-dresses in his mind and enters the narrative. This is mirrored by Nanao at the girls school. The sexual adventures of Nanao are re-enactments of the unconscious processes inside *eromanga* readers. Before readers realize what is happening, they are reading the act of reading *eromanga*.

reader's legs. One cannot simulate the sensations of female genitals with male genitals. No matter how much the male reader overlaps in feeling with the female character, it is precisely at that moment of excitement that his organ betrays him. He cannot escape in fantasy, because what he is reading is *eromanga*. Clearly displayed there are female genitals, which are obviously different from those of the male reader, and he cannot avert his eyes; arousal only further reminds him of genital mismatch. Here lies one answer to the question, "Why can't lesbian works move from the fringes of *eromanga*?" They lack the genital reality, the penis and site of synchronistic feeling, generally necessary for pornographic work targeting men. On the other hand, *The Virgin Mary is Watching*, a series of non-pornographic novels aimed at women, does not depict genitals and has a large following among men, who enjoy it as fantasy. There is not a reminder of difference, and they can self-project onto the female characters. In this sense, the introduction of "shemales" and related subcategories was epoch making. It allowed for scooping up the good things about femininity, the parts that are convenient, while still maintaining the pleasure of the penis.

If we look again at *Anal Justice*, we notice that Nanao absolutely "loves dick" and worships it in the "Erection Club." This does not mean, however, that he is gay. What he loves is actually his own penis, which secures his own pleasure; the penis of the other who stands before him, whether the person it is attached to is a biological male or a hermaphrodite, is a mirror image of his penis. In fact, at one point, Nanao makes dildos molded from his own and Itsuka's organs, which he presents to Mina, who then penetrates him with his copy penis. Toward the conclusion of the work, an unconscious Nanao meets a younger version of himself in a dream. The younger Nanao is upset that he cannot perform fellatio on himself, so the older Nanao allows him to lick his penis. His heart races as he reflects on the auto-fellatio, which is "like a dream." Then an adult Nanao, turned completely "shemale," appears, saying, "Yes, one cannot normally suck one's own penis (with a few exceptions)." The message seems to be, "That's why we suck other people's penises!" Adult Nanao continues: "But there is no need to be sad about it. [...] Let the cum flow through you, and you will understand. We shall become one!" And so it is that, in the dream, Nanao sucks the penis of adult Nanao, while younger Nanao sucks his penis. Setting aside the final theory and its seeming life lesson, from this autoerotic scene, sex with oneself like an Ouroboros snake eating its own tail, we can glimpse the essence of pornography. In other words, we do not get excited looking at pornography just because sexual activity unfolds before our eyes. Rather, pornography is a mirror to face our own erotic

desires. Pornography is not just what we see externally, but rather the forms of eroticism that exist inside us. Imagining the activity and masturbating is always sex with oneself.

Well then, what exactly is the femininity acquired by the characters appearing in “shemale” works and related subcategories of *eromanga*, or femininity donned like a costume? *Anal Justice* features “shemales,” hermaphrodites, cross-dressing boys and girls with strap-ons. Here “shemale” and hermaphrodite converge as “woman with male functions,” and the boys and girls are treated as “incomplete shemales.” All the characters are connected by an appearance and psychology tinged with femininity. In this and work in related territory, the core of femininity is not loving a man or having an ample bosom, but rather being an existence that is weak, effeminate, childish, frail, passive and dependent in relationships with others and in various situations.

The embarrassingly fancy boys repeatedly drawn by Sano Takashi are bullied by girls and violated. Their penises quiver in response, and they moan in the cute way that girls are imagined to moan. Such feminizing male masochism has spread in *eromanga*, as have cute boys as objects of desire and vessels for self-projection. If there are cases where the passivity of the protagonist is innate, then things also often begin from “the acquisition of passivity.” In the subcategory of “sex change,” for example, there are a number of variations – body modification, brain transplant surgery, change through drugs (hormone shots or magical potions), soul swapping, reincarnation and so on – that result in a range from remaining biologically male to becoming a woman completely. Whatever the case may be, however, the subject is most often forced into a female form through violence, threat or extortion. They might also be changed through deception as in Taira Hajime’s *Change!* (published by Shubēru Shuppan in 2000), or by accident as in Nankin Mā-chan’s *If I Changed Into Her* (*Boku ga kanojo ni kigaetara*, published by Kaiōsha in 1998) and the film *Transfer Student* (*Tenkōsei*, directed by Ōbayashi Nobuhiko and released in 1982). The gender identity of the subject is male, and he experiences the fear, humiliation and masochistic pleasure of being violated by men while having a man’s heart, as well as loving women while having a female form. We can read this in the same context as the amputation and body modification seen in the works of Oka Sundome, Keno Yantarō and Uziga Waita (see Chapters 7 and 9), as well as training children, which is about creating passivity and making a character weak in the works of Mizuyōkan. Stated provocatively, this is existence as a fantasy vagina eternally receptive to outside stimulation.

Shota, or Autoeroticism

In the mid-1990s, *shota*, or young boys, typically cute, emerged in *eromanga* as another of the subcategories making male characters into objects of desire. By the end of the 1980s, judging from trends in *dōjinshi*, editor Terada Yōichi had already predicted that the subsequent decade would be “the age of the cute boy.” Although delayed a few years due to the enormous popularity of *bishōjo* in *eromanga* at the start of the 1990s, Terada’s prediction turned out to be correct. Originally a subcategory of boys love and *yaoi*, which are primarily produced by and for women, a number of factors contributed to *shota* crossing over into *eromanga* targeting men. I mentioned in earlier chapters that the rise of female artists and their boys love memes was important at the time. The will of artists who wanted to draw it played a role, but the crossover would have been impossible without *eromanga* publishers determining that *shota* was commercially viable. Female and male artists inclined toward *shota* could produce work for anthologies targeting women, and correctly formatted work could be published basically unaltered. The time- and cost-efficient process was matched with converging style and crossover readership. The situation was such that *shota* works targeting women, men and a combination of both were all in close proximity.¹¹

The *shota* boom lost momentum right before the turn of the twenty-first century, however, and suddenly collapsed. That said, here too occurred the phenomenon of penetration and diffusion from the edge. Character types that were not macho – beautiful, androgynous and cute boys, little brothers, cross-dressers, passive boys – spread throughout the entirety of *eromanga*. Particularly superb in this vein is Yonekura Kengo’s *Pink Sniper* (Pinku sunaipā, published by Koa Magajin in 2001), which depicts passivity that is relative and dependent on relationships. Concretely, it shows how a female teacher with overwhelming power forces the protagonist, outwardly a beautiful boy but arrogant and psychologically macho, into the role of the “receiver” or “bottom” (*uke*). As seen in *Pink Sniper*, as well as Hayabusa

11 The anthology that started the boom is *U.C. BOYS: Under Cover Boys* (U.C. Boys: Andā kabā bōizu, published by Akane Shinsha in 1995). Apart from that, anthologies include *ROMEO* (published by Kōsai Shobō in 1996), which targeted women; *PET.BOY’S* (published by Tsukasa Shobō in 1997) and *Naked BOYS* (Nekiddo BOYS, published by Ōtō Shobō in 1998), which had a mixed readership of men and women; *BOY MEETS BOY* (published by Kōsai Shobō in 1997), which began with mostly male readers, but was later more popular with female readers; and *Petite Chime BROS* (Puchi chaimu BROS, published by Ōtō Shobō in 1997) and *Shota King* (Shota kingu, published by Koa Magajin in 1997), which targeted men.

more. While it is unclear where this is going, and it is not massive, *shota* is an established subcategory of *eromanga*.¹³

Limiting ourselves to works aimed at male readers as we proceed, when it comes to male-male pairings, the most prevalent are “boy and boy” and “young man and boy.” Rare is the pairing of “boy and young man,” or the boy as top and young man as bottom. In the case of boy-boy pairings, the top and bottom roles are not always fixed. For example, produced before the boom but still a *shota*-like work, Yōkihi’s *The Forbidden Mushroom* (Asoko kinoko: Magic Mushroom, published by Fujimi Shuppan in 1992) is a comedy where independent, intelligent, parasitic mushrooms shaped like women are attached to the penises of two boys. (Imagine a Barbie-sized figure attached to the crotch.) The mushrooms are sustained by semen from the boys, and in return provide their hosts with pleasure. The climax of the first part is a scene between the two boys; although the female mushrooms cover their genitals, they perform fellatio on each other. The boys lose themselves in pleasure, embrace and deep kiss, even as the female mushrooms on their groins are engaged in lesbian sex. Thus unfolds eroticism where top and bottom roles, gay and lesbian sex, melt into one. When it is just the boys, top and bottom roles are fluid. Sex roles are determined somewhat by the appearance of sexual difference, height and build, but it is ultimately only somewhat determined.

What I want to focus on here is the “secret between boys.” In Yōkihi’s work, the faces of the mushrooms are those of girls who the boys are crushing on, their lewd activities are seen by girls and so on, which suggests awareness of the opposite sex. In later *shota* works, however, the boys are emphasized, and there is a tendency toward removing women. This is a return to the boys-only clubhouse, and sex as a ceremony within a homosocial secret society. We can sense there not only contempt, fear and aversion of women, but also fear and aversion of the “outside world.”

Well then, what exactly is the desire that male readers have for boy characters? We might of course see conscious or unconscious homosexuality in taking the boy character as an object of desire. The works are structurally the same as *eromanga* depicting heterosexual relationships, except both bottom and top characters are the same sex as the male reader. Even if the receptive partner in anal sex is a replacement for a female character, he still

13 The market for *shota* did not disappear after the boom, but it readjusted. The number of anthologies fell to below half, which was an optimization perfectly matched with the arrival of a new generation of readers who were too late to experience the boom in the 1990s. The rise of artists such as Inumaru and Uchōten also stands out.

has an erect penis between his legs and shares male pleasure. Furthermore, stimulation of the anal membrane and prostate is something that men know, because of the pleasure of defecation. The difference is in the direction of force. All of the pleasures that appear in the work are within bodily sensations. Therefore, the conscious or unconscious homophobic response to pornographic gay manga represented by Tagame Gengoroh is not because the work is “impossible to understand,” as some claim, but rather precisely because it is possible to understand and experience bodily. We see in *shota* that homophobia is suppressed by the cuteness of characters. Moreover, there is the massive pretense that, “They are just manga characters!”

In the case of coupling young men and boys, the roles are comparatively fixed, with the former as top and the latter as bottom. Here it is easy for the male reader to self-project onto the character of the young man, with the object of desire changed from a cute girl to a cute boy. However, when the narrator is the boy or he is depicted in a way that includes interiority – that is, the character is not thoroughly objectified – the male reader is drawn in. As discussed earlier, this is also true of female characters, but it turns out that self-projection is significantly eased when the bottom is a male character. When the pairing is boy and boy, we reach a point where whether the reader is the bottom or the top becomes a matter of feeling. The fantasy is that “I have transformed into a cute boy and can do naughty things with other cute boys” (Nagayama 2003). How much difference is there between “the cute I” and “the cute other?” It seems it is always the self-image that is projected. Whether the “other” (*tasha*) paired with the boy is a young man or a middle-aged man or an old man, each is in its own way an image of “me” (*watashi*). Of course, this is true even if the character has a hideous face and is evil. I am both the cute boy who is loved and the other who loves. When you boil it all down, *shota* is about “me having sex with myself.”

This autoerotic structure is beautifully expressed in Akio Takami’s “Tamamimi” (in *Juvenile* [Jubanairu], published by Shōbunkan in 2004).¹⁴ After a quarrel that ends ties with his childhood friend Rōta, the young Terumi wakes the next morning and finds to his consternation that he has sprouted cat ears atop his head. According to an old story relayed by his grandfather, when you want to see someone but cannot, your soul grows ears to pick up the aura of that person. These are called “soul ears” (*tamamimi*). It turns out that Rōta has developed a pair of soul ears, too. With this, the two boys realize their mutual feelings of love. The most stunning scene in this

14 A different penname of Tanuma Yūichirō. In earlier chapters, I have introduced several works by Tanuma, including *Season*.

Image 27 A sample of Akio's "Tamamimi." The boys touch each other's ears. Note the similarity between them.



work is when Terumi and Rōta discover that having the person you think about touch your soul ears brings electrifying pleasure; they start caressing each other's soul ears, blushing, and their hearts pound. They check the temperature of each other's flushed cheeks, bringing them together, then their lips, then their bodies. When examining the sequence from petting to intercourse, we should not miss that difference between the boys is barely perceptible; visually, they are almost indistinguishable to the reader. Indeed, their inner monologues are superimposed on the panels as narration, but it is impossible to discern whether the subject thinking "I want to touch" or "I want to be touched" is Terumi or Rōta. Even if the reader identifies with Terumi, the narrator of the story, here they cannot tell which is which or where one ends and the other begins. This is the intention of Akio Takami. In the flow of events from caressing soul ears to kissing, by drawing the two boy characters as almost mirror images of each other, the artist stresses their equivalency and embeds a message that they are the same in love.

In contrast to "Tamamimi," which presents an ideal model where "you and I become one," consider Ueshiba Riichi's *Dream Messengers* (Yumetsukai, published by Kōdansha in 2001). Although it is not an *eromanga* in the strict sense, it makes up for a lack of explicit sex with a torrent of erotic ideas.

Here girls who were seduced by a cross-dressing boy and taken to another world create avatars of themselves that have penises, turn themselves into boys and then rub their penises against those of their avatars. It looks the spitting image of boys love or *yaoi*, but the essence is ultimately “sexual union with the self.” The unification that extinguishes otherness causes a gravitational collapse toward the vanishing point of autoeroticism. The end is a universe of the cute I, which has no outside.

In “Tamamimi” the pairing is one on one, and in *Dream Messengers* we have the pairing of self on self, but the number of participants is irrelevant to autoeroticism. In gangbang stories, one receiver is paired with multiple attackers, whose individuality dissipates; the more there are, the more they melt together. The reader’s focus is on the boy as receiver, and they feel with him. The rapist mob is delegated to the role of “those who appear just to violate the cute I.” This mob is the other I project to have sex with myself. The same is true for Uchōten’s *Spitfire Inbreed* (Supitto faia inbreed, published by Moēru Paburishshingu in 2005), even if that work is based in the relationality of a group of boys. When it comes to *shota*, the bottom and the top are “me.” Naturally, *shota* cannot be interpreted through autoeroticism alone. However, from the standpoint of *shota*, using this keyword, it is entirely possible to deconstruct *eromanga* as a whole. I also expect that this might be an effective approach to not just *eromanga*, but also understanding pornography more generally.



Part 3

Addition to the Expanded Edition (2014)



***Eromanga* in the Twenty-First Century**

In the eight years since the original publication of this book, *eromanga* has continued to be drawn, published and read. For this expanded edition, I considered adding to each of the original chapters, but the situation had changed too drastically between 2006 and 2014. Things had changed on social, systematic, economic and industrial levels. I came to the decision to keep additions and corrections to the original chapters to the bare minimum, while presenting this new chapter as an update on those drastic changes. In the original publication, to preserve the balance between the history and content of *eromanga*, I did not devote significant space to the regulation of expression, but this cannot be overlooked in the new environment. In discussing things after 2006, I will also need to fill in some information about what happened before. The issues are complex and dynamic, involving much political and emotional speculation, and to top it all off I was personally involved in some of the events relayed here. Presenting a full picture of the situation in the new millennium could fill another book, but I will try to be concise.

Deterioration of the Market and Restructuring of the Industry

There was a time when people said that, because erotic entertainment is a market rooted in basic human desire, a cheap and easy pleasure, “Eroticism can weather bad economic conditions.” This has by now been revealed to be a myth. Since the peak of the *eromanga* bubble in the 1990s, the market has been in a long-term decline that continues to this day. The decline is not unrelated to the general slump in the publishing world as a whole, and one could probably see it as a small episode in the broader economic malaise that plagued the Heisei Period (1989-2019), punctuated by the Lehman Shock. The slump in the *eromanga* industry cannot, however, be explained based on these factors alone. The special position occupied by *eromanga* has made the impact of the economic recession more severe.

Let us begin with a look at the current state of the *eromanga* industry. These are not exact figures, but, in terms of trade paperbacks, about 50 distinct titles are published every month. This amounts to about 600 a year, or roughly half of the number published annually during the *eromanga* bubble in the 1990s. The news is also bleak when it comes to magazines. Since 2006, an average of six magazines a year ceased publication. Bear in mind that some of the magazines that cease publication do so because

they are designated “unhealthy publications” (*fukenzen tosho*) serially or too many total times in a year, which results in a de facto ban.¹ Instead of fighting for the old magazine, there are many cases of the very same artists and series appearing just as they were in a “new magazine,” or rather the same things being published under a new name.

The number of magazines that actually disappear without any successor is four or five a year, but among them are once-popular titles such as *Comic Lemon Club* (COMIC remon kurabu, published by Nihon Shuppansha from 1992 to 2006), *Comic Papipo* (published by Furansu Shōin from 1991 to 2009), *Comic Dolphin* (Komikku dorufin, published by Tsukasa Shobō from 1992 to 2007), *Comic XO* (published by Ōtō Shobō from 2006 to 2010), *Comic Princess Thief* (COMIC hime dorobō, published by Shōbunkan from 1996 to 2009), *Comic Jumbo* (COMIC janbo, published by Ōtō Shobō from 1988 to 2007), *Comic Peach Princess* (COMIC momo hime, published by Fujimi Shuppan from 2000 to 2010), *Comic Rin* (published by Akane Shinsha from 2004 to 2012), *Comic Megastore* (Komikku mega sutoa, published by Koa Magajin from 1993 to 2013), *Doki!* (published by Take Shobō from 1997 to 2012) and *Men's Young* (Menzu yangu, published by Futabasha from 1995 to 2012). Also on the chopping block were more obscure magazines such as *Comix Flamingo* (COMIX furamingo, published by Sanwa Shuppan from 1991 to 2000) and its successor *Flamingo R* (Furamingo R, published by Sanwa Shuppan from 2005 to 2006), as well as long-established magazines dating back to the age of third-rate *gekiga* such as *Manga Dynamite* (Manga daenamaito, published by Tatsumi Shuppan from 1975 to 2011). Through the

1 In Article 21, the Constitution of Japan explicitly forbids censorship, which means that in legal terms there is no punishment that “prohibits sale.” However, there are works that violate Article 175 of the Penal Code, which concerns the distribution of obscene material. If deemed legally obscene, works cannot continue publication. In the case of copyright violation, when the court orders a cessation of publication, the aim is to protect the victim’s interests, which again is not the same thing as a ban. According to local ordinances, represented by the Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance Regarding the Healthy Development of Youths, publications deemed a hindrance to the healthy development of young people can be designated “unhealthy,” which means exposure must be limited and their sale to underage buyers restricted. These ordinances do not outright forbid the sale of designated publications, but there are consequences. Based on a 1965 decision by the Publication Ethics Council, as an agreement of self-regulation, a magazine that is designated “unhealthy” three months in a row or five times in a year must have a “book belt” (*obi*, or strip of paper wrapped around the cover) that states it cannot be sold to those under the age of 18. Furthermore, these publications are only sent to retail bookstores by special order. Simply put, they are taken out of regular distribution, which means major financial losses for publishers, many of which eventually go bankrupt. The threat is enough for most publishers to avoid risky material. To my eyes, these measures amount to de facto censorship and bans, but in the publishing world they are regarded as a necessary and acceptable form of self-regulation.

disappearance of some of these titles, one acutely feels the changing times. A new magazine in the pure sense appears once or twice a year, which is far outpaced by those disappearing. In spite of it all, as of this writing in 2014, there are 28 publishers putting out 59 magazines (including those that do so irregularly).² They are holding their ground.

Intensification in industrial restructuring has been marked by a decrease in the number of publishers overall. In 2003, Cybele Publishing (Shubēru Shuppan) went bankrupt, but this was only the beginning. The year 2005 saw the end of Soft Magic (Sofuto Majikku), which had been a standard-bearer in reprinting third-rate *gekiga*, as well as the long-established Heiwa Publishing (Heiwa Shuppan). Although it shifted its focus from *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* to boys love in a bid for new readers, BiBLOS Co. Ltd (Biburosu) closed its doors in 2006. One after another, in 2007, it was Eichi Publishing Inc (Eichi Shuppan), Yū Publishing (Yū Shuppan) and Ōtō Books (Ōtō Shobō) and its associated company Tsukasa Books (Tsukasa Shobō). Then, in 2010, another establishment, Tokyo Sanseisya (Tōkyō Sanseisha), which in its early days had published authors such as Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, suspended operations.

There were also publishers that were bought out instead of going bankrupt. For example, Iwao Satoshi's company, which had grown rapidly by selling adult magazines packaged with DVDs, acquired Akebono Publishing Co., Ltd (Akebono Shuppan), an old hand that had been operating since the age of rental manga; MediAx (Mediakkusu); and Issuisya (Issuisha) and its associated company Kōsai Books (Kōsai Shobō). Having ceased operations, Akebono was reborn as a publisher of adult magazines, and the other three continued their lives as publishers of adult comics. The exact details that led to the acquisitions are unclear, but it seems we can say this is a positive example of industrial restructuring. In contrast are many other publishers like Shinyusha Co., Ltd (Shinyūsha) and Taiyoh Tosho Co., Ltd (Taiyō Tosho), which moved away from content targeting male readers and are in a dormant state.

The market is certainly deteriorating, but it feels more like slowly rolling down a gentle slope than the bottom suddenly coming out. Since the total number of publications is decreasing, of course the number of excellent and revolutionary works is also decreasing. The space to publish adventurous and unique works in particular is vanishing. The rapid decline of magazines, which had become the receptacle for minor and niche artists and bodies

² This is just the number of *eromanga* magazines that target male readers. Although this book does not cover content targeting female readers (ladies comics, boys love and so on), I estimate that at the same time there were 11 publishers putting out 17 magazines.

of work, has contributed greatly to the erosion of the industry's element of surprise.³ If the number of publications decreases, inevitably the space designated to these works on the shelves of manga specialty stores also shrinks. In general bookstores, there are systematic constraints such as segregated floor and sales space.⁴ Many simply no longer carry *eromanga*. An active duty editor told me that, when it comes to readers buying *eromanga*, "90 percent go through specialty or online stores." The visibility of *eromanga* is definitely decreasing.

Maneuvers Surrounding "Non-Existent Youth"

Although the 1990s are more often remembered as a boom time for the industry and market, the withering of *eromanga* can be traced back to the beginning of that decade. It starts in 1991, when, as part of self-regulation, publishers introduced a system to differentially identify content: the adult comics label. Directly after the introduction of the label began the publication rush and exponential expansion. Charging into the *eromanga* bubble, one could probably look at this as a case of "abandoning reputation to reap profits" (*na o sutete jitsu o toru*), which seems sensible enough. Adopting a long view, however, one can see that embracing the label had an impact like a body blow.

Of course, as a policy to survive the major crackdown on manga expression and moral panic that united the public and private sectors and the mass media, this might have been the only option. Many *eromanga* artists had struggled to put food on the table. Small publishers, too, had faced hardship. There is no doubt that self-regulation was an agonizing choice. Returning to my own memories of the time, I will admit to seeing the ensuing boom and being greatly relieved that, "With this, *eromanga* publishers can recover." I have no right to criticize the introduction of the adult comics

3 I will provide details further below, but, in defiance of expectation, the emerging powerhouse Kill Time Communication (Kiru Taimu Komyunikēshon) has developed innovative thematic anthologies.

4 As a self-regulating measure by the industry, publications with the adult comics label were put in limited, segregated spaces in bookstores. This self-regulation, which had been a matter of good faith, got caught up in the Tokyo Metropolitan Youth Ordinance in 2001. With the more severe ordinance, the zoning of adult comics became mandatory, with fines for violations. The result was that manga specialty shops divided their sales floors and created spaces for adults only, while smaller stores made sure to put content with the adult comics label high up on shelves where children could not reach it.

label. Looking back, however, there is also the bitter self-realization that, “The introduction of the adult comics label was a decision that prioritized profits over freedom of expression and manga culture.” Important here is that producers themselves had defined *eromanga* as “publications that young people should not read.” This would shape subsequent trends in *eromanga* and its readers.

In developed nations in North America and Europe, regulations regarding pornography are basically, “It is forbidden to have minors appear in pornography or to show them these images, but adults are free to produce and consume pornography.”⁵ With the desire and pressure to internationalize, it was only a matter of time before Japan moved in a similar direction. There are, however, complications, starting with Article 175 of the Penal Code, which concerns obscenity and many legal scholars point out is potentially unconstitutional.⁶ Even if pornography is allowed, the existence of Article 175 means that adults are not free to view whatever they want.

When it comes to *eromanga*, the content is kept away from minors by labeling it as for adults and zoning accordingly. Here we are reminded that adults, even when separated from minors, do not have full freedom. Law enforcement occasionally plays its trump card with Article 175, as it did in the incidents involving *Shōbunkan* in 2002 and *Core Magazine* in 2013.⁷

5 Kyoto University Professor Takayama Kanako, who was involved in formulating the Kyoto Prefectural Government Ordinance Regarding Child Pornography (promulgated in 2011), says that, “There are fewer and fewer countries where adults are prohibited from seeing what they want to see. This is probably because there is no legal basis for prohibition.” This is apparently an idea shared by Hirano Ryūichi, her mentor and an authority on criminal law. The ordinance in question was born from a manifesto by Yamada Keiji, Governor of Kyoto Prefecture, who stated, “We will make the strictest child pornography ordinance in Japan.” The ordinance seeks to regulate possession by banning acquisition through purchase. The thinking is that this will deter manufacturing of child pornography for profit. With the primary aim to protect children, this ordinance goes further than proposed revisions to the Law for Punishing Acts Related to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. For more, and the source of the quotations here, see the report by Associate Professor Shirata Hideaki in volume 10 of *Manga Ronsoh*.

6 TN: The issue here is Article 21 of the Constitution of Japan, which states that, “No censorship shall be maintained.”

7 On April 19, 2013, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department investigated *Core Magazine* on suspicion of violation of Article 175 of the Penal Code. After conducting a search of the publisher’s premises, authorities issued a recommendation of caution. The charges were focused on *Comic Megastore* (Komikku megasutoa) and the May issue of *Nyan-2 Club* (Nyan nyan kurabu), a magazine centered on adult photography. The publisher said that it would cancel both magazines starting with their June issues, but on July 25, the chief editor and his superior (an executive) were arrested. On October 8, charges were brought in court against *Comic Megastore*, and against *Nyan-2 Club* nine days later. After pleading guilty, both defendants were convicted on October 24. The charges related to *Comic Megastore* resulted in only a fine, but because those

The adult comics label is not a way to distinguish content, but rather to create a ghetto. It is a ghetto ruled by guards, where prisoners watch other prisoners. And there is no freedom outside the ghetto. Under the guise of morals and the people's will, this enforced self-regulation might be called a clever kind of tyranny.

With the introduction of the adult comics label, an efficient division of labor was established. On the one hand, hardcore sexual expression became a matter of criminal law, and, on the other hand, softer sexual expression was controlled by local ordinances concerning young people. The governing bodies in charge of these ordinances came to exclude manga labeled as for adults from screening, because this content was not available to young people. This does not mean, however, that publications with the adult comics label cannot be designated as "unhealthy" or "harmful."⁸ This is ultimately a tacit agreement between the industry and authorities. There is no legal substantiation.

Regulation of expression, including self-regulation, continued to intensify even after the introduction of the adult comics label. Each publisher had its own version before, but the unified label for adult comics came in 1996. History shows that youth ordinances were being aggressively applied as the decade closed. Journalist Nagaoka Yoshiyuki reports that in Tokyo, for example, unhealthy publication designations rapidly increased from the second half of 1999 to around 10 per month (Nagaoka 2010). In 2000, some months saw as many as 15 designations. The following year, in 2001, an amendment of the Tokyo Metropolitan Youth Ordinance made it mandatory to have separate sales spaces for general publications and those with the adult comics label or designated unhealthy. Another amendment in 2004 made sealing them mandatory. Furthermore, publications that include erotic or sexual expression and are in the gray zone, neither bearing the adult comics label nor designated unhealthy, are dealt with through self-regulation on the part of distributors.⁹ The results of this cumulative regulatory zeal

related to *Nyan-2 Club* included a suspended prison sentence, litigation continues as of this writing. I should note that, as a result of this incident, there was confusion in the industry and increased genital blurring in adult magazines. *Dōjinshi* were also caught up in the aftermath.

⁸ In 2007, Kyoto Prefecture designated a large number of visual publications "harmful."

⁹ The degree of regulation in convenience stores depends on the chain, but they check for sexual expression and depictions of cruelty. They can be stricter than youth ordinances. In 2004, the Japan Franchise Association, which is a trade organization overseeing convenience stores, submitted their policy of strengthened regulation to the Publication Ethics Council. As a result, it is now mandatory to seal publications in the gray zone so that they can only be read after purchase. In addition, at the Tokyo Metropolitan Youth Healthy Development Council meeting on June 10, 2013, an anonymous member introduced the *Convenience Store Safety*

can be surprising, for example in Ibaraki Prefecture, where two volumes of *shōjo* manga put out by Shōgakukan were designated harmful publications in August 2007.

Despite opposition from the publishing world, Tokyo Prefecture steadily proceeded with strengthening regulation, but things changed in 2010. That year, the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly moved to again amend a youth ordinance, specifically the Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance Regarding the Healthy Development of Youths, and in the process stirred up protest on a massive scale.¹⁰ The proposed amendment was based on the premise – divorced from reality – that visual depictions of underage sexuality were running wild. The content of the proposed amendment bore strong shades of thought control, even piling on the innovative concept of “non-existent youth” (*hijitsuzai seishōnen*). Passages of the proposal made clear that the goal was to regulate sexual expression involving characters in manga, anime and games. Article 7.2, for example, laid out the key claim that there is a danger that exposure to sex acts involving “non-existent youth” – that is, depictions of entities that can be recognized as being under the age of 18 through visuals or audio that “bring to mind a person’s age” (*hito no nenrei o sōki saseru*) – or sexual objectification of them may impede the formation of healthy judgment in young people and their healthy development. This means most immediately that manga with such sexual expression would be designated “unhealthy,” which removes them from general circulation and places them in the limited circulation of publications with the adult

Station Activity Report for 2012. About adult magazines, the Japan Franchise Association said, “One hopes that we, as an association and in our entirety, can come to a full agreement not to sell them.” According to the report, 25.3 percent of convenience stores already moved in this direction.

¹⁰ Before submitting the revised bill, Tokyo Prefecture published the draft amendment and asked the public to submit comments. After a request by Nishizawa Keita, a member of the Metropolitan Assembly affiliated with the Democratic Party of Japan, all public comments were published 60 days after the legislative session. Of the total 1,581 comments, there were only 32 in favor of the amendment and an overwhelming 1,037 against it. (This is the ratio reported by Nishizawa, with the rest apparently being of a mixed opinion.) The opposing comments came not just from individuals, but also from organizations such as the Japan Magazine Publishers Association, the Japan Book Publishers Association, Japan Federation of Publishing Workers’ Unions, the Committee on Publication Ethics and others. Many people concerned about publishing and freedom of expression reacted to the proposed amendment, and it is unsurprising that there was resistance, but it is surprising that those opposed outnumbered those in favor by such a massive margin. The public comments quoted and criticized statements made by members of the committee reviewing the Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance Regarding the Healthy Development of Youths. Some decried this as slander, but the proceedings, which included the names of the committee members and their statements, had already been published and entered into the public record.

comics label. To avoid this financial damage, one anticipates that publishers would engage in self-regulation and steer away from material that might be targeted. At the time, critics of the amendment pointed out that this would impact the creation of love stories involving highschool students, for example couples having sex. In fact, depending on the authorities involved, the proposed amendment could very well result in socially conscious works, for example those casting a light on sexual abuse, being slapped with the label of “unhealthy publications.”

Since the proposed amendment qualified that the sex in question would need to be “without reason” (*midari ni*) and “positively” (*kōteiteki ni*) depicted, it is tempting to think that unhealthy publication designations would never become so unhinged. This ignores, however, just how subjective such qualifications can be. The vagueness leaves it up to the authorities to decide whether or not the sexual expression is at a reasonable level and has meaning, whether or not it is positive or negative. The proposed amendment was designed to target works that are not subject to regulation under the existing ordinance. It expands the authority to designate unhealthy publications to include those depicting underage sex. As controversy spread, Inose Naoki, who was at the time the Vice Governor of Tokyo, wrote on his blog that, “We had regulation for *eromanga*, but not for *lolicon*.”¹¹ In other words, the target of regulation was to be manga featuring characters under the age of 18 that did not have enough sexual content to get the adult comics label. To illustrate his point, the Vice Governor chose to attack *My Wife is an Elementary Student* (*Oku-sama wa shōgakusei*, published by Akita Shoten from 2006) by Matsuyama Seiji, an artist known for his big-breasted manga. There are, however, no explicit sex scenes in this work; the sex in question could only have been a metaphorical expression involving a banana and condensed milk. In the minds of these pro-regulation advocates, works depicting incest and rape are widespread, but they locate unhealthy sex in examples like this and word their proposed amendment in such a way as to deal with the amorphous problem they perceive. Later statements made by Ishihara Shintarō, who was Governor of Tokyo at the time, were similarly ungrounded and distinctively sounded as if they were coming from a desire to regulate.¹²

On top of the proposed amendment from the beginning, and working to get Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly members affiliated with the Democratic

11 The blog post was made on March 30, 2010. He phrased it almost as a slogan, mirroring the existing “*eromanga* regulation” (*ero kisei*) and necessary “*lolicon* regulation” (*rori kisei*).

12 TN: See for example this translated exchange: <<https://dankanemitsu.wordpress.com/2010/12/17/governor-ishiharas-alternate-universe/>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

Image 28 Cover of Matsuyama's *My Wife is an Elementary Student*. The work was singled out during the debates about "unhealthy publications."



Party of Japan to oppose it, was a group called the Institute of Contents Culture.¹³ The topic became much more widely known when Fujimoto Yukari, a manga critic and professor at Meiji University, and others sounded the alarm. With attention drawn to it as the “Non-Existent Youth Ordinance,” citizens, readers, manga artists and experts came forward opposing the amendment one after another, which began to take the shape of a movement. In attendance at a March 15 hearing for the Democratic Party of Japan’s General Affairs Committee were Yamaguchi Takashi (an attorney), Kure Tomofusa (President of the Japan Society for Studies in Cartoon and Comics), Professor Miyadai Shinji (Tokyo Metropolitan University), Associate Professor Morikawa Kaichirō (Meiji University) and Yabe Keiichi (Japan Book Publishers Association), as well as manga artists Chiba Tetsuya, Takemiya Keiko, Satonaka Machiko and Nagai Gō. Held on the same day, an emergency meeting at the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly Building attracted 300 people – three times the capacity of the appointed room. Also in attendance, I was surprised by all the familiar faces: manga artists and critics, people involved in the *dōjinshi* world, researchers.

Even after this highlight, members of the assembly such as Matsushita Reiko (Democratic Party of Japan) and Fukushi Yoshiko (Autonomous Citizens ‘93) continued to hold meetings. Streaming websites such as Niconico put together live programming on the topic. This reached mainstream broadcasting on March 29, when BS Fuji’s *Prime News* hosted a debate that pitted Vice Governor Inose and Watanabe Mayuko (adjunct faculty at Keiō University), who argued for the amendment, against Professor Fujimoto Yukari and Satonaka Machiko. Voices raised in opposition to the amendment were building, as demonstrated by a rally on May 17, which drew around a thousand people.¹⁴ With growing popular support for the movement, and opposition in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly from members affiliated

13 TN: See: <<http://icc-japan.blogspot.com/>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

14 At this gathering, among those opposed to the amendment and appearing on stage were Nishitani Takayuki of the Japan Book Publishers Association; Nakamura Kimihiko of the Japan Doujinshi Marketplace Network; Kishihara Takamasa and Yoshioka Ryōhei of the Content Evaluation and Monitoring Association; Kanno Yūka, an officer of the Parent-Teacher Association; Kawabata Hiroto, a novelist; Kanemitsu Daniel Makoto, a translator; Professor Tajima Yasuhiko of Sophia University; Professor Kawai Mikio of Tōin University in Yokohama; and Professor Miyadai Shinji of Tokyo Metropolitan University. In the last session, also opposing the amendment, appeared artists such as Takemiya Keiko, Yamamoto Naoki, Ume (aka Ozawa Takahiro), Arima Keitarō and Mito Izumi. Also present to support the opposition were Tanioka Ikuko, a member of the House of Councillors; and Yoshida Kōichirō, Matsushita Reiko and Kurishita Zenkō, members of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly affiliated with the Democratic Party of Japan at the time.

with the Democratic Party of Japan, the Japanese Communist Party, the Seikatsusha Network of Tokyo and Autonomous Citizens '93, on June 16, the proposed amendment concerning non-existent youth was rejected. One could say that this was basically the first major legislative victory for those desiring freedom of manga expression.

That said, however, the offensive of those wanting to control manga expression did not let up. A new version of the proposed amendment emerged immediately. The proposed amendment omitted the highly controversial phrase “non-existent youth,” but did not change the tenor of Article 7.2 and what the new regulation was meant to target as unhealthy publications:

Any manga, animation, or pictures (but not including real life pictures or footage) that features either sexual or pseudo sexual acts that would be illegal in real life, or sexual or pseudo sexual acts between close relatives whose marriage would be illegal, where such depictions and / or presentations unjustifiably glorify or exaggerate the activity in such a way that they would impede upon the formation of a healthy ability for judgment regarding sexuality of youth and there by be detrimental toward the healthy development of youth.¹⁵

Important here is the point that the amendment clearly treads into the territory of regulating expression. For example, even if it is fiction, works depicting “sexual or pseudo sexual acts that would be illegal in real life” and “sexual or pseudo sexual acts between close relatives” can now be designated unhealthy publications. What is this if not regulation against expression? The establishment of a highly subjective and ambiguous standard concerning works that “unjustifiably glorify or exaggerate the activity” deepens the issue.¹⁶

Naturally, this fired up the opposition movement. On December 3, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Press Club held a conference under the title “Considering the Amendment to the Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance Regarding the Healthy Development of Youths.” Fielding questions from reporters there were Yamanaka Hisashi, a writer of children’s literature and non-fiction; Kure Tomofusa (President of the Japan Society for Studies

15 TN: This translation is courtesy of Dan Kanemitsu, who followed the proposed amendment closely on his blog. See: <<https://dankanemitsu.wordpress.com/2010/11/22/anime-and-manga-more-harmful-than-tv-and-films-according-to-tokyo/>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

16 TN: One might add the question of media effects, or whether or not these works are “detrimental toward the healthy development of youth,” and how, and how that would be measured objectively.

in Cartoon and Comics); and manga artists Kōno Fumiyo and Takemiya Keiko. An opposition gathering held at the venue Nakano ZERO on December 6 drew 1,500 people.¹⁷ Those against the proposed amendment continued to argue their case at other gatherings and Niconico live-streaming events. If anything, voices in opposition were spreading and amplifying in December 2010.

This time, however, members of the assembly affiliated with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party were able to get their peers affiliated with the Democratic Party of Japan to come around in favor of the amendment, which passed. While a tough pill to swallow, it is worth noting that no publication was forced off of shelves by the new standard of the amendment between the time it went into effect in July 2011 and this writing in February 2014.¹⁸ As always, there were monthly designations of unhealthy publications, but these did not invoke the language of the amendment and would have occurred without it. The position of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office for Youth Affairs and Public Safety is that they have not needed to turn to the amended language “because industry self-regulation has meant that no works that require the adult comics label have been published without it.” To what extent stricter self-regulation actually occurred is an open question, but one can certainly posit that the new standard was unnecessary in the first place. The old standard was already almighty, depending on interpretation, so the new one was just gilding the lily.

The regulation of publications through youth ordinances is steadily progressing outside Tokyo, as well. As if providing covering fire for the

17 Chaired by Meiji University Professor Fujimoto Yukari, this gathering drew to the podium Tori Miki (aka Mickey Bird), Kisaki Takashi, Kondō Yōko, Mito Izumi, Yamamoto Hiroshi, Kure Tomofusa, Suzuki Riki, Nishitani Takayuki, Professor Kawai Mikio, Kanemitsu Daniel Makoto and Hosoka Nobuto (former member of the House of Councillors). Speakers from the House of Representatives were Kiuchi Minoru (Independent) and Miyazaki Takeshi (Democratic Party of Japan), and from the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly Yoshida Nobuo (Japanese Communist Party), Yoshida Kōichirō (Democratic Party of Japan) and Asano Katsuhiko (Democratic Party of Japan). The hall was stunned when Asano suddenly announced his agreement with the amendment. A few days later, Asano and I engaged in a heated argument on a Niconico live stream (“Tokushū: Tojōrei I, kaketsu kara 60 nichi,” streamed on February 13, 2011). The stream also included Shibui Tetsuya, a journalist, and Negoro Yū, a filmmaker. Incidentally, Niconico actively covered the issue through its live streams, while the mass media was spinning around in circles. For example, Niconico brought together for a live panel discussion of the amendment Akamatsu Ken, Azuma Hiroki, Yamaguchi Takashi, Takanuma Hideki (Deputy Chairman of the Editorial Ethics Committee of the Japan Magazine Publishers Association), Nishitani Takayuki and myself (“Manga / anime no kiki? Tettei kenshō ‘To seishōnen ikusei jōrei,’” streamed on November 29, 2010).

18 TN: This changed in May 2014, when a manga publication was designated unhealthy for “glorification of incestuous acts” (Anime News Network 2014a).

embattled amendment to the Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance Regarding the Healthy Development of Youths, in April 2010, Osaka Prefecture made waves by designating as harmful eight boys love magazines and three teens love magazines. Up to then, among editors, the thinking was that, “Boys love manga appeals to a specialized readership, as do gay comics, so it is fine not to put the adult comics label on even explicit content.” That is, even without the label, it would be separated out, not reach children and hence be safe. Produced by and for women, boys love might have been seen as outside what interested authorities most. Even today, in the minutes of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office for Youth Affairs and Public Safety group designating unhealthy publications, as well as in the hearings of self-regulating organizations, one occasionally comes across statements that view boys love as a special case. In fact, however, the present reality is that publications in categories targeting women are constantly designated as unhealthy or harmful.

Youth Become the Focal Point of Regulating Expression

“Youth” (*seishōnen*) became a keyword in regulation of manga expression around 2010. Prosecution of publications in violation of Article 175 of the Penal Code of Japan will likely continue in the future. In addition, as we have seen in South Korea, where child pornography laws include the regulation of fictional works, it is certainly possible for many otaku of the younger generation to be arrested for consuming certain manga, anime and games.¹⁹ Be that as it may, the trend overseas is toward “the freedom of adults to see,” as before. Concerning live-action pornography, a real issue is that anyone can see as much as they want if they are connected to the internet, which governments cannot completely control. In such an age, it seems a bit misplaced to crack down on *eromanga* books and magazines – which have a limited distribution in print and to readers over the age of 18, and are suffering from a rapidly shrinking readership anyway – domestically in the name of morality and public order.

19 In South Korea, the Act on the Protection of Children and Juveniles Against Sexual Abuse was amended in 2011, which expanded its regulatory range to include cartoon characters that appear young. After the amendment, the number of related crimes suddenly shot up 22 fold, and as many as 4,000 young people were reportedly arrested. Moreover, the amended law contains a nonsensical provision that punishes the distribution of *lolicon* manga more harshly than rape committed against adult women. Distribution seems to include sharing on peer-to-peer networks.

The focus of subsequent regulation is therefore likely to shift to “youth.” At the national level, in 2002, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party failed in its attempt to establish “The Basic Law Against a Harmful Social Environment for Young People,” and again in a related attempt in 2004. Electoral wins in 2012 came with promises to return to this issue. Details are as yet unknown, but it may well be a law that overwrites youth ordinances established at the local level – or something like what we see in Tokyo, but at a national level. There is by now nothing to be done about adults watching pornography on the internet, but perhaps the government wants to ensure that, through “healthy development,” young people do not become adults of that kind?

In contrast to youth ordinances that regulate the exposure of young people to pornography, child pornography laws exist so that young people are not made to appear in pornography. On the heels of the Kyoto Prefectural Government Ordinance Regarding Child Pornography, which passed in 2011, Osaka Prefecture started preparing an amendment to theirs the following year. There were already provisions on child pornography in ordinances in Nara Prefecture and Tochigi Prefecture. In the language of these ordinances, however, child pornography is treated the same as in current national law, which is to say that it only applies to live-action child pornography (and similar material) where a victim exists. They do not extend to fictional works such as manga and anime. This is perhaps obvious, but the reason is that actually existing young people are not appearing in manga and anime. The primary goal of child pornography laws is to protect the rights of real children and make sure they are not abused in the production of images; these are not laws to regulate expression. A desirable direction for amendments would be in a definition of child pornography that focuses on sexual abuse in the production process, which is an effective way to ensure that children are not involved and thus protected and safe. Why, then, are legislators leaving the vague definition in current law and trying to step into regulation of fictional works?²⁰

20 The definition of child pornography in the Law for Punishing Acts Related to Child Pornography (the full name is Act on Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protection of Children) is as follows: “The term ‘child pornography’ as used in this Act shall mean photographs, recording media containing electromagnetic records (any record which is produced by electronic, magnetic or any other means unrecognizable by natural perceptive functions and is used for data-processing by a computer; the same shall apply hereinafter) or any other medium which depicts the pose of a child, which falls under any of the following items, in a visible way: (i) Any pose of a child engaged in sexual intercourse or any conduct similar to sexual intercourse; (ii) Any pose of a child having his or her genital organs touched by another person or of a child touching another person’s genital organs, which arouses or stimulates the viewer’s sexual desire; (iii) Any pose of a child wholly or partially naked, which

Although there had been a number of attempts to regulate expressive works, drawing on campaigns from organizations such as the Japan Committee for UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking), the struggles had pretty much continued below the surface. Following the huge victory of the conservative coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and Kōmeitō in the national elections of 2012, the movement for stricter regulation began in earnest. To counter this, the Uguisu Ribbon Campaign, a non-profit organization that aims to defend freedom of expression, and the Institute of Contents Culture have taken the lead in arranging lectures across the country to summarize the issues.²¹ Building a movement with a long-term outlook, the Uguisu Ribbon Campaign supports the establishment of local groups, and the Institute of Contents Culture has held study sessions on lobbying. Large-scale gatherings are effective demonstrations, but the flip side is that it is difficult to connect them to the ongoing development of a movement. In this sense, it is worth paying attention to the Uguisu Ribbon Campaign and Institute of Contents Culture, along with independent lobbying activities by individual manga artists, centering on Akamatsu Ken.²²

The Liberal Democratic Party and Kōmeitō are proceeding steadily toward stricter regulation. On May 29, 2013, a proposed amendment to child pornography laws was submitted to the National Diet.²³ Two things stand out as problematic in the proposed amendment: First, simple possession and possession out of sexual curiosity would be penalized; and second, Supplementary Provision Article 2 calls for, "Research concerning the relationship between manga and such that resembles child pornography and acts that violate the rights of children." By manga and such, they mean comics, cartoons, computer-generated graphics, pseudo child pornography and so on. On the first point, penalizing and banning simple possession while the definition of child pornography in current law remains vague poses the danger of arbitrary application, false accusations and use in separate investigations. Simultaneously, it may lead to action against those in possession of works and publications from the past. Moreover, regarding

arouses or stimulates the viewer's sexual desire" (Article 2.3). The last stipulation steps into the gray area between gravure and pornography, but the definition remains vague on many points, which allows for various interpretations.

21 TN: For more on the Uguisu Ribbon Campaign, see: <<http://www.jfsribbon.org/p/about-uguisu-ribbon-campaign.html>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

22 TN: In fact, Akamatsu Ken has also served as managing director of the Japan Cartoonists Association. See: <<http://www.nihonmangakakyokai.or.jp/>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

23 This was session 183 of the legislative body.

penalization of possession out of sexual curiosity, one confronts a basic question: On what grounds will they prove this sexual curiosity, or prove that the possession is for sexual purposes? There is apparently a view that one can assume sexual purposes if the suspect possesses a large amount of the material, but the wording in the proposed amendment, in extending the power to judge human desire as such, risks infringing on the internal freedom guaranteed by the Constitution of Japan.

However, for the manga industry generally and *eromanga* specifically, it goes without saying that the biggest concern is Supplementary Provision Article 2. This is not immediately stepping into sexual expression in manga, but rather calling for research ahead of the planned review of the same law three years later. There is an issue, however, to begin with in the tendentious phrasing “resembles child pornography.” In the category of “manga and such,” one of the examples is “pseudo child pornography,” which has been pointed out to indicate pornographic videos starring adult actresses with small frames and infantile features, not the long-problematized photo albums and videos starring “junior idols” (*junia aidoru*). In either case, manga is invoked in the same breath as photography and film, but these are fundamentally different in the sense of having an actually existing person in front of the camera. On the effects of fictional works, there is prior research that refutes a causal relationship with sex crime – for example, a collaborative study by the National Research Institute of Police Science and University of Hawaii in 1999, and a report from the Danish Department of Police and Criminal Law in 2012. In the face of such research, the inclusion of fiction in the proposed amendment is puzzling. There is no evidence proving the causal relationship that has been suggested for years now and can be the only reason manga is included in a proposed amendment to child pornography laws.

From all this, Yamada Tarō (Your Party), a member of the House of Representatives at the center of opposition to the proposed amendment in the National Diet, criticized its restriction of expression.²⁴ The amendment was not deliberated during the session in 2013, but rather left up in the air for another day. As of this writing in February 2014, there has still been no movement.²⁵ One possible reason for this is that younger legislators, even within the ranks of the Liberal Democratic Party, opposed the amendment;

24 TN: Yamada is also the face of the Association for Freedom of Entertainment Expression. See: <<https://afee.jp/>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

25 TN: This of course changed with the revision of child pornography laws in the summer of 2014, but legislators did not include fictional works such as manga, anime and games. This omission reflects an understanding that child pornography and fictional works are separate issues, as Nagayama has been arguing here.

they wanted to erase Supplementary Provision Article 2 and narrow the amendment down to the prohibition of simple possession. Whatever the case may be, the direction from here is unclear. Even as I write this manuscript, information continues to fly around, and we cannot let our guard down.

Looking back at the past and toward the future, one cannot help but wonder where in the world this desire to regulate expression, to legally control expression, comes from. Let us list the arguments on the side of those seeking to regulate expression, as they come to mind, and respond:

- 1 Public order and morals, or to maintain social order. This is based in the logic of policymakers, or governance. These goals are achieved through existing laws such as Article 175.
- 2 Potential to spur sex crimes. There is, however, no evidence. Rather, statistically, the reverse seems to be true.
- 3 Sexual exploitation. In fiction, however, the victims are not real.
- 4 Appearances, or to save face amid global criticism. These are sketchy motivations, and critics are in any case targeting an imaginary "Japan."
- 5 Healthy development of young people. Again, there is no evidence that exposure to sexual expression in fiction hinders such development. Furthermore, there are already ordinances to regulate the material.
- 6 Determent of sexual discrimination.

From the standpoint of those opposing the restriction of expression, these arguments are poor. Many on the list are based in emotion. The last one concerning sexual discrimination has been in my thoughts recently. Some feminists take the position that "pornography is discrimination against women," and discourse criticizing it has existed from long ago. There are two basic positions: one that criticizes pornography but opposes legal regulation of speech and expression, and another that seeks legal regulation. The latter combines theories of collective human rights and media effects in claiming that, "Pornographic expression promotes the violation of women's human rights, and fosters societal trends that normalize this violation." If collective human rights are recognized without limits, I fear we might usher in a situation where criticism of certain political parties, religions or groups might be construed as some sort of violation. When it comes to speech and expression, legal restrictions should be limited to hate speech in context.

What, then, is the rationale to oppose the restriction of expression?

- 1 Danger of infringing on basic human rights (freedom of expression, freedom of thought and belief, internal freedom).
- 2 Danger of arbitrary application, false accusations and use in separate investigations or to open investigations.

- 3 Statistical data suggests that pornography might have the effect of deterring sex crimes.
- 4 Danger of a chilling effect.
- 5 Protection of cultural resources.
- 6 Protection of the right to the pursuit of happiness.²⁶

In truth, this side also has people prone to emotion, but the content of the above opinions is fairly logical and persuasive. That said, constitutionally defensive language has been over played, and the argument that it is guaranteed by the Constitution of Japan has by now become a cliché. This is my personal opinion, but the stronger case is that internal freedom is fundamentally inalienable. The law does not give us the right to what was already ours, and we must not allow it to take it away.

There are a number of factors contributing to confusion surrounding regulation of expression and the continuation of discussions that never reach the core problems. What is required is calm discussion, but emotional arguments have their own persuasive power, irrespective of if one is for or against something. Moreover, the vast majority of the population is uninterested in issues concerning restriction of expression and freedom of expression. Even the mass media, which advocates freedom of the press, is uneducated in reporting on the debates. There is thus a good deal of misinformation and misconception hindering productive dialogue and engagement. To make matters worse, freedom of expression is weak as an election issue. If anything, being seen as standing with producers and consumers of content that some find offensive puts politicians in a vulnerable position, which leads to measured avoidance. Discussion about the pros and cons of restriction of expression, and the extent of it, will likely continue for eternity.

Is the Internet the Enemy of *Eromanga*?

After the original publication of *Eromanga* in 2006, the biggest change has been in the relationship between manga and the internet. Widespread use of the internet delivered a massive blow to erotic media, or at least to

²⁶ TN: Nagayama does not spell this out, but he is again hinting at a legal argument, specifically Article 13 of the Constitution of Japan, which states: "All of the people shall be respected as individuals. Their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness shall, to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare, be the supreme consideration in legislation and in other governmental affairs."

the industry as it existed before. We can probably say this of live-action photography collections, gravure magazines and adult videos. After all, if one is connected to the internet, they can access uncensored pornographic images and videos – which very well might be caught by Article 175 of the Penal Code were they for sale in Japan – unlimited and for free. From crudely shot sex videos to sadomasochism catering to more niche demands, a simple search brings up as much as one could ever want – something for any and every fetish. People who used to buy or rent adult videos (to say nothing of print publications) where genitals are blurred are now naturally turning to the internet to satisfy their desires. In the sense that it dealt a massive blow to the existing industry, the internet has been called the “enemy of eroticism” (Yasuda and Amemiya 2006).

How about *eromanga*? Against the backdrop of the spread of CD-ROM, a large capacity and inexpensive recording medium, digital comics appeared in 1989. In the early days, the most common form that these products took was almost like game software to be played on home consoles such as the PC Engine. From the perspective of gamers, however, the content was not enough like games, and it failed to break through. Subsequently, packages of multimedia content to view on a personal computer took the stage. I still have two of these, namely *Ride the Cloud* (Kumo ni noru, by Motomiya Hiroshi) and *Hawk in the Flash Fighter* (Shidenkai no taka, by Chiba Tetsuya), the first and second releases in the Manga CD-ROM Club series by Softbank that started in 1996. The first CD-ROM contains all the chapters of the title work, a total of 1,271 pages, and the second 1,198 pages; both also include artist interviews and commentary. In the impressive line up of this series were also packages of *Candy Candy* (Kyandi kyandi, story by Mizuki Kyōko and drawings by Igarashi Yumiko), *Sabu and Ichi's Detective Stories* (Sabu to Ichi torimono hikae, by Ishinomori Shōtarō) and *Toward the Terra* (Tera e, by Takemiya Keiko). *Eromanga* also attempted this format. The ones that I still have are from the Digital Movie Comics series by Ohta Publishing Company that started in 1997. This series released collections of work by Yamamoto Naoki, Yui Toshiki and Utatane Hiroyuki. The packaging of the Yamamoto collection declares, “A new century for comics! Intensity level up 200 percent! A fresh departure from digital comics and games to now, this unprecedented new media will get you revved up!” Indeed, these products were more interactive and multimedia oriented.

These were interesting attempts in their own right, but the accelerating evolution of personal computers and the internet quickly made digital comics distributed through the CD-ROM format relics of the past. From 2000, eBook Initiative Japan Co., Ltd. commenced with download sales of

digital books and comics. By the mid-2000s, there were a number of websites and services distributing e-books and comics for mobile devices. The phrase “the First Year of the E-Book Era” (*denshi shoseki gannen*) made the rounds in 2010, but it ended up being pretty much just a slogan. Unperturbed, 2011 was also announced to be “the First Year of the E-Book Era.” Ultimately, it was the arrival of the black ships in the form of Amazon Kindle in 2012 that finally made it feel like something new had begun.

Mobile distribution of digital comics was far ahead of others. It appeared as if adhering to the historical precedent that, “Adult content leads the way in the popularization of new media.” Starting with *eromanga*, erotic works categorized as ladies comics, boys love and teens love were digitally distributed to mobile devices. There were among the ranks of *eromanga* artists those earning millions of yen in royalties.

Given that the majority of devices distributed to were mobile phones, there were issues with small screen sizes and low resolution. In most cases, this resulted in distribution of not full-page layouts, but rather editing to focus on individual frames (so-called “*koma mise*”). With authoring tools, editors and artists can break the pages up into individual frames. In these early days, the mainstream format was for the re-editing process to include colorization, added visuals and audio effects and so on. It was also a possibility to make the works easier to distribute by softening erotic expression via the omission of frames showing genitals and intercourse. For these reasons, it was a time when people were saying that *eromanga* is well suited for mobile distribution. In fact, back then, much of the manga content on flip phones was erotic.

It is said that the readership of mobile comics was composed of light users who did not normally purchase content in paper form. For them, mobile comics were easier to read, because they could be accessed on a device that was always already with them; furthermore, looking at the phone in public did not attract attention from others as reading a manga book or magazine might. This would be all the more so with erotic content. There are those who admit their image of the readership is “female workers in their late twenties who come home from the office and read in bed.” I am not sure if this is entirely accurate, but it also is not massively off the mark. It was a different way of reaching readers, not typical manga fans shifting as they were to mobile devices. The name recognition of the artist and work, and whether that work is new or old, is not very relevant in selling mobile comics. In mobile distribution, there is resistance to vulgarity and other bad words. To make a work marketable (or easier for readers to latch on to), even titles are sometimes changed. One *eromanga* artist I know used

a different penname when producing mobile comics. It might make sense to consider this a completely separate world from print manga at the time.

When the preferred mobile device became the smartphone, the larger screen and higher resolution made it possible for the original page layout to be displayed and for the page view to return as mainstream. Even as authoring costs are reduced, users can read the electronic version in a way that feels similar to reading manga printed on paper. Tablets and dedicated reading devices do even more to this end. With the spread of smartphones, tablets and dedicated reading devices, the flip phone market cooled down significantly, but has not yet disappeared entirely. Although both manufacturers and carriers promoted the transition to smartphones, they could not completely shift the market. Many users did not see the need for smartphones; some continued to use their old flip phones, and others on the contrary transitioned from smartphones back to flip phones. One hears that even now, and there is a great deal of variation depending on the publisher, but between 20 and 70 percent of company sales of mobile comics are for flip phones.

Although the whole of digital comic distribution, represented by key players such as DMM.com Ltd., has ups and downs depending on the period, it is steadily growing over the long run.²⁷ *Eromanga* and *dōjinshi* are naturally also distributed, and original content has also appeared. Recently there is backflow phenomenon, where digital comics and works that debut in web magazines are given published print runs. One example is Katayama Makoto's *Horny Shellfish Island* (Ingaijima, published by Shōnen Gahōsha in 2013), which is a harem-style work that gained popularity on the internet, was given a print run and promptly received an unhealthy publication designation in Tokyo Prefecture.

Launched by Akamatsu Ken as a website to distribute out-of-print manga and return revenue made from advertisements to the artists, J-Comi has also started carrying *eromanga*.²⁸ Readers subscribe for free and gain access to out-of-print manga, and artists who would not have seen a dime get some revenue from older works.²⁹ In addition, some manga artists are taking advantage of the independent production and distribution service launched by Amazon Kindle to put out their own work. Trailblazers here

27 There are various ways of accessing digital comics. One can connect to a site and read online, or download a file and read it on a computer or mobile device. Many publishers and magazines operate sites, while distributors tend toward the digital download model.

28 TN: See: <<https://www.mangaz.com/>> [Last accessed April 2, 2020].

29 Income varies depending on the artist. Constantly putting up new content also requires a good deal of effort on their part.

are Suzuki Miso and Ume, who have enjoyed some success and actively share their knowledge.³⁰ One anticipates that this will impact not only the commercial publishing world, but also the *dōjinshi* world, which is de facto independent publishing. When it comes to *eromanga*, however, there are various restrictions, which limit the potential of artists to adhere to the Suzuki Miso model.

Worth considering here is an incident that occurred in July 2013, when 46 works from companies such as Wanimagazine Co., Ltd. and Akane Shinsha disappeared overnight from the weekly top 100 sales ranking on Amazon. Given that these were *eromanga*, it seemed to be a crackdown, despite the fact that Amazon has an adult category in its digital marketplace, which is where these works were for sale. For its part, Amazon has responded that, “We take action as necessary based on relevant laws and ordinances.” This is a somewhat strange claim, however, because works in the adult category on Amazon basically all have the adult comics label. Furthermore, the record does not show that the 46 works in question were simultaneously charged with violating Article 175. In November, publications from Sanwa Publishing Company Ltd. and Oakla Publishing Co., Ltd. were also suddenly erased from the site. As before, the standards for this purge are unclear. For some time now, compared to other online booksellers, Amazon has been swift to remove publications designated as unhealthy. They have also taken independent action, for example suddenly refusing to carry *Comic LO* (published by Akane Shinsha) in 2012. They are not to the level of Apple, but Amazon gives the impression of being very strict on eroticism.³¹ When it comes to the industry’s role in digital distribution, access to almost all *eromanga* comes with a charge; this requires making a payment by credit card, and the age of the user has been further verified through the interface. The case of Amazon, however, reminds us that distributors can impose their own standards.

Not everything about the ubiquity of the internet is positive. One example is the abuse of peer-to-peer networks to illegally exchange files, or “peer-to-peer file sharing.”³² The use of peer-to-peer software has spread to police officers, who are supposed to stop crime; Japanese Self-Defense Force

30 For more details, see Suzuki 2014.

31 TN: For more on Apple’s “walled garden,” see Koebler and Cole 2018.

32 “Peer-to-peer” is sometimes abbreviated P2P. Individual computers are connected via the internet, which facilitates file sharing between users of the same software, programs or services. The technology is neutral and not in itself criminal, but it has become a hotbed for illegal distribution of content. There are also privacy concerns and the risk of viruses in opening the computer to share with others and downloading files this way.

officials, who must not allow information leaks; and even civil servants. Its penetration among the general public is beyond imagination. Obviously, illegal uploading and downloading of files using peer-to-peer software such as Winny also includes pirated manga and *eromanga*. Even if illegal uploading and downloading is penalized, the risk of being caught is very low. Moreover, illegal uploading of manga is a violation of the Copyright Act, but downloading is not penalized for manga, as opposed to music and video files. One reason that illegal downloading of manga is not penalized is that the Japanese publishing industry was passive, in contrast to the proactive moves of the music industry and so on.

Methods for illegal file sharing are evolving rapidly. In peer-to-peer networks, torrents have come to be used for downloading large files that would otherwise take significant time. On top of this is the exploitation of streaming services, where large files are stored and accessed on servers. Particularly notorious among streaming services was Megaupload Ltd, which had the largest share of this activity in the world. They were accused of having in-house programmers to illegally upload files, and of responding to takedown requests from copyright holders by erasing only some of the multiple copies to cover themselves. Finally investigated by the United States Department of Justice, the owners were arrested, and the company shut down in 2012. The Megaupload incident was more than just a simple case of copyright infringement; it also had aspects of a symbolic battle between the intellectual property business side (copyright holders, corporations, governments), which wanted to strengthen copyright protection on the internet, and the side advocating freedom on the internet. In fact, right after the incident, Anonymous launched cyber attacks on a range of websites belonging to the US government and copyright organizations.³³ One cannot talk about this with a simplistic schema.

Many streaming sites deleted illegal files or closed down immediately after the Megaupload incident, but they resumed uploading when the controversy blew over. Although not as bad as during the heyday of Megaupload, the cat-and-mouse game of copyright holders issuing takedown requests and sites finding workarounds continues to the present. When it comes to manga files distributed illegally online, the majority originates in popular magazines

33 As the name suggests, Anonymous is an anonymous collective of internet users who oppose regulation of peer-to-peer networks and pornography, oppose repression of WikiLeaks and protest governments, institutions and enterprises (sometimes including cyber attacks). They may appear to be centralized and highly coordinated, but Anonymous has no organization as an entity. [TN: For more, see Coleman 2014.]

that target general readers, but a not insignificant volume of *eromanga* is also widely available. On overseas sites for posting adult images, one finds not only Euro-American pornographic comics and illustrations, but also a huge number of raw files of data ripped from *eromanga* trade paperbacks and erotic *dōjinshi*; one also finds files with added translations of the text into English, Korean and many other languages, or as “scanlations.”³⁴ The damage to the *eromanga* industry caused by illegal distribution is difficult to quantify. If the moochers downloading illegal files are the type who only reads *eromanga* because the content is free, then the estimated impact on publishers and artists decreases. If many of them are the type who would purchase official releases in the absence of illegal files, however, then the estimated impact increases. Although it is not the true culprit behind the publishing recession, we can probably say that illegal uploading and downloading is not innocent.

While having various merits and demerits, the internet is still a world full of possibilities for *eromanga*. This is not limited to *eromanga*, but there are now options that were not available during the age of print. For example, artists themselves can become individual publishers online and release new work on their blogs. Onto the scene have arrived artists who use social media sites such as Twitter and Pixiv as new publishing platforms. With all these developments, we cannot look away from here on. The internet is not the enemy of *eromanga*. It is an undeniable fact, however, that the diversified and cheap entertainment available through the internet and mobile devices has shaved away the disposable income of the readership that once turned to *eromanga*. In short, readers who insist on *eromanga* will continue to support the content, while those who consider *eromanga* to be just another option will pivot elsewhere.

Diversifying Representations and Desires

When writing this book, I had a larger frame in mind. That frame was the collapse of machismo, which progressed in Japan after the Second World War, and attendant issues of diversification of erotic and sexual expression. *Eromanga* are not mirrors that accurately reflect society, but they absolutely do reflect the inner worlds of artists and readers living in different times.

34 “Raws” are scans of Japanese manga compiled into a file. When translation is added, they are called “scanlations.” In the case of animation, “raws” refer to untranslated video files, and the subtitled ones are called “fansubs.”

Image 29 Cover of Hiiragi's *Boy Housemaid Curo*. Note the cute boy in female clothing. By this point, male characters are objects of desire in *eromanga*.



To phrase this somewhat differently, the forms of eroticism and sexuality depicted in *eromanga* are not unrelated to reality, which is changing. That said, the various forms of eroticism and sexuality I observed in *eromanga* in 2006 have remained much the same since. There is no doubt that the default in the majority of works is still a straight pairing of men and women. Despite the market being smaller, however, between 2006 and 2014, there was a revival of the diversity that had been overshadowed by the dominance of works for “getting off.” The basic divisions are already filled out, and the direction is toward variation and deepening within them.

Take for example “*shota*,” or young boys, typically cute, which became a notable trend in the 1990s (see Chapter 10). While modest in scale, the *shota* subcategory has become established in *eromanga*. There are also multiple *dōjinshi* direct sales events dedicated to *shota*. This further developed into a boom in “boy-girls” (*otoko no ko*), or cute boys in female clothing.³⁵ There are a number of works to mention here, including Hiiragi Masaki’s *Boy Housemaid Curo* (*Shōnen meido Kūro-kun*, published by Shōbunkan from 2005), which was later adapted into an animated series; *Incurable Illness* (*Naosanai yamai*, published by Mediakkusu in 2009) by Kashimada Shiki, who is also active in boys love manga; Makita Masaki’s *My Boyfriend* (*Boku no kareshi*, published by Moēru Paburissingu in 2007); and the anthology series *Boys Heaven* (*Otoko no ko HEAVEN*, originally published by Tsukasa Shobō from 2007, then by Mediakkusu from 2011), which features artists such as Hoshiai Hiro, Chinzuriina, Inaba Cozy and Koin Rand. This is becoming its own domain. These works of course depict love and sex between men, but in their pages we find soaring pleasure, which is by this point without excuse.

The pure *shota* line did not expand to general magazines in a blatant form, but it is no longer rare for boy-girl characters to appear as protagonists or in supporting roles in mainstream manga. Representative works here include Endō Minari’s *Maria Holic* (*Maria horikku*, published by Media Fakutorii from 2006) and Matsumoto Tomoki’s *Prunus Girl* (*Puranasu gāru*, published by Sukuea Enikkusu from 2009). The advance of this offshoot of the *shota* or cute boy is such that two magazines devoted to boy-girls but not in the adult comics category have appeared, namely *Yeah!* (*Waai*, published by Ichijinsha from 2010) and *Boy Pussy* (*Oto nyan*, published by Mirion Shuppan

35 TN: “Boy-girls” is not the only possible translation for *otoko no ko*, which replaces the Chinese character for “child” (*ko*) with one for “daughter” or “girl” (*musume*, but also read as *ko*). So in direct translation instead of “man child,” or boy, we end up with “man girl.” For more on this concept and the boom surrounding it, see Kinsella 2019.

from 2010). As indicated by the subtitle of *Yeah!*, “Boys in Skirts,” the boy-girl character is closely associated with male-to-female cross-dressing.

Those unfamiliar with the history and content of *eromanga* might be wondering, “Why boy-girls?” As discussed earlier (see Chapter 10), these characters can be interpreted in the context of autoeroticism, or the fantasy of the “cute and loved I.” By introducing costumes as representations of gender roles, and then troubling those representations, these works include a questioning of gender differences in society, not just within oneself. Among the factors contributing to men dressing as women and being attracted to men dressed as women, we cannot overlook the fantasy of femininity as referring to “an existence that is beautiful, adorable, weak and ephemeral.” The fantasy femininity acquired as part of the desire to dominate and be dominated obviously diverges from the reality of femininity, or what a woman may take as self-evident and “my femininity;” it is simultaneously glorification and discrimination. It is, however, also a fact that there is pleasure in that structure of discrimination. An interesting project might consider boy-girls in *eromanga* together with a pattern that occurs in boys love manga, where cross-dressing at times entails a loss of status based on a loss of masculinity.³⁶

A fascinating aspect of the boy-girl boom has been that, while the extent of manga’s influence is unclear, there occurred a simultaneous increase in actual boy-girls, or male-to-female cross-dressers who identify as “*otoko no ko*.” There are cases where a man begins in cosplay, or costume play involving characters, then gets into cross-play, or costuming as characters of the opposite sex, and finally ends up dressing in women’s clothing and identifying as a boy-girl. While we cannot speculate about individuals too much, the general hurdle to cross-dressing is far lower than it was even 10 or 20 years ago. This phenomenon is not limited to Japan and can also be observed overseas. Derived from Lolita fashion, there exists a niche in boy-girl costuming called “Brolita.” The young man in Lolita fashion is not just a character in Morishige’s love comedy series *Fudanshism* (Fudanshizumu: Fudanshi shugi, published by Sukuea Enikkusu from 2007) and *Fudanshiful!* (Fudanshifuru, published by Sukuea Enikkusu from 2010), but also exists in reality.

The golden triangle of sex, discrimination and pleasure is also the structure of sadomasochism. Crucial of the epoch since 2006 has been the increase in themes of male masochism. In 2012, there was finally established

³⁶ TN: For English-language analysis moving in this direction, see the discussion of coercion and compulsory queerness in Orbaugh 2019.

a specialty *eromanga* magazine – albeit irregularly published – for masochistic men, *Girls for M* (Gāruzu fōmu, published by Akane Shinsha). Of course, works featuring masochistic men existed in a less organized way long before this symbolic moment. Older examples date back to the 1980s, when Komotoda Emai portrayed a male character in pantyhose getting tormented by a woman; Yonekura Kengo depicts relationships between men and women where the latter is thoroughly dominant; Nitta Jun has continued to draw, to a relentless degree, women sexually abusing virgin boys. Interestingly, two of the three aforementioned artists focusing on passive men being dominated are themselves women. They received some backlash from narrow-minded male readers, or those unable to gaze into the abyss of desire, but it is also a fact that these artists won over many male readers.

One manifestation of male masochism in contemporary *eromanga* is the small boom in “cuckolding” (*netorare*, as a subcategory distinction often abbreviated as NTR). These are works where another man steals – sleeps with, takes sexually – a character’s beloved wife or girlfriend. There are by now many trade paperbacks dubbed as belonging to the cuckolding subcategory, including Linda’s *Lost Wife* (*Netorare zuma*, published by Wani Magajinsha in 2006), Sakaki Utamaru’s *Cuckolding Anniversary* (*Tsuma no netorare kinenbi*, published by Enjeru Shuppan in 2013) and *Cuckolding Anthology Comics Volume 1* (*Netorare ansorojii komikkusu Vol. 1*, published by Kiru Taimu Komyunikēshon in 2011). There are a range of patterns from variations on humiliation of married women to stories about retaliation, nymphomaniacs and more. When one buys a work based on an attractive title, it is often simply about an adulterous wife. It might not be about having one’s wife or girlfriend taken, which positions the man as passive, but rather about taking someone else’s wife or girlfriend. Such works are less about male masochism and are distinct from other categories of content in name alone.

For self-avowedly normal readers, cuckolding may be a form of eroticism that is hard to understand, but it might also be considered par for the course. From long ago, there has been this phrase indicating the most thrilling relationships for a man: “one, another man’s wife; two, a maidservant; three, a mistress; four, a prostitute; and five, his own wife” (*ittō, nihi, sanshō, shigi, gosai*). As this phrase indicates, taking another’s partner has been part and parcel of the definition of a macho man. Indeed, I would like the reader to recall that countless works depicting sex with married women have appeared since the days of third-rate *gekiga*. However, in contrast to the pleasure of “taking” (*netoru*), which has to this point been the mainstream, things are reversed in this subcategory of *eromanga* cuckolding, where the pleasure

is in having her “taken” (*netorare*). This is the flip side of machismo, and we can probably say that it speaks to the still strong desire of men to possess and dominate women. Of course, the reversed pleasure of cuckolding was already flowing like a subterranean current beneath the fantasy that “taking demonstrates masculine competency.”

After the forms of desire have been drawn out, artists attempt combinations and permutations of multiple desires and going deeper. Consider, for example, a series of anthologies based on Kill Time Communication’s *Comic Unreal* (*Komikku anriaru*, from 2006), which are released one after another and have niche themes such as sex under hypnosis, tentacles, gonzo shots, female spies, sex change, forced exhibitionism, orgasm face, impregnation, milking and more. This relates to not just Kill Time Communication, but sometimes the themes can be too far out there, and a small misstep can mean a big setback for publishers. On the other hand, however, when it comes to niche works, publishers know that they can definitely move product if a stable fan base exists.

Writing this in February 2014, I look ahead to publications such as *Bishōjo Get Swallowed by Slime and Orgasm* (*Suraimu ni matowaritsukarete zekkō suru bishōjo-tachi*, published by Kiru Taimu Komyunikēshon in 2014) and *Bishōjo Expose their Puckered Up Fellatio Faces* (*Hyottoko feragao o sarasu bishōjo-tachi*, published by Kiru Taimu Komyunikēshon in 2014) and think that they might be very challenging to sell. Then again, it has been pointed out that these titles could have been inspired by adult games circulating in the same marketplace as *dōjinshi*, so the projects might be based on careful research of existing fans. At any rate, it is likely an attempt to reach readers who are unsatisfied with conventional themes, as well as readers who until now were uninterested in *eromanga*. For *eromanga* as a whole, strong sales can follow sluggish sales, which some suggest is one of the reasons that trade paperbacks tend to do better than magazines. They come out later, after things have caught on, so the point is to stand out and gain traction. As a category of content, the future of *eromanga* is not altogether bright. Personally, however, as long as it does not lose its attractive qualities of diversity and unpredictability, I think that *eromanga* will continue to be a hidden goldmine for those who appreciate sequential art.



Conclusion: Permeation, Diffusion and What Comes After

Pornography Without Sex

Standing on the *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* side and surveying the whole of manga, anime, games, light novels and other expressive forms targeting the younger generation and otaku, one notices something. Things that were once an attraction of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* – cuteness and beauty, the ridiculous and repulsive – have also become abundant in other categories of content since the mid-1990s. One can say that the object is that which stimulates those subtle feelings lumped together as “*moe*.” My intention is not to stir up trouble, but many of the memes contained in works associated with *moe* originate in *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*. Here I would like to trace some of this transfer from *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*.

Permeation and diffusion of course occur in every category of content. Works in various clusters cross borders, exchange genes and come to resemble one another. Take for example *Strawberry Marshmallow* (Ichigo mashimaro, published by Media Wākusu from 2003). One of the stars of *moe* content, it comically depicts the leisurely everyday of a 16-year-old girl in highschool and a group of four gradeschool girls who hang around her. That is all there is to the manga. According to the afterword to the first volume, the artist behind *Strawberry Marshmallow*, Barasui, started out as a “postcard artisan” (*hagaki shokunin*) submitting *lolicon* illustrations to *Monthly Comic Dengeki Daioh*.¹ Scouted by an editor, he became a professional manga artist. It is not an uncommon story for the submission of illustrations of cute girls to lead to a debut as a manga artist. In *eromanga*, this was the case for Rie-chan 14-sai (aka Rie-chan Jūyonsai), who is one of the forerunners of *moe*.² Like Rie-chan 14-sai, Barasui also had almost no experience drawing manga before his debut. Obviously, his technique as a

¹ “Postcard artisan” refers to readers who regularly submit writing and drawings to magazines. These typically come in the form of postcards. The illustrations submitted this way can be very elaborate, and talented artists can gain a following among readers. There are more than a few postcard artisans who went from submitting illustrations to debuting as professional manga artists. For example, before his debut, Machino Henmaru was a postcard artisan known for his work in *Manga Hot Milk* (a successor of *Manga Burikko*). In the case of Barasui, he recalls submitting to the “*lolicon* illustration corner” (*rori rori irasuto kōnā*).

² The artist Rie-chan 14-sai produces lyrical *bishōjo* illustrations and manga.

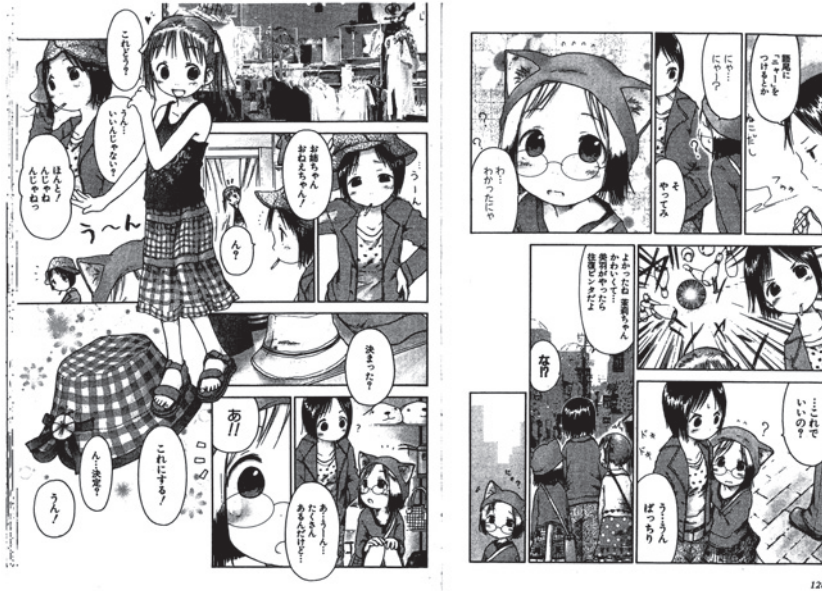
manga artist is still developing, and if there are places where the paneling looks wonky, then the pacing can also be off at times.

Judging from its framework, *Strawberry Marshmallow* belongs to the tradition of comedy manga about everyday life, or slice-of-life comedy manga. One might describe it as sharing traits with Sakura Momoko's *Chibi Maruko-chan* (Little Maruko, published by Shūeisha from 1987) and Haruki Etsumi's *Chie the Brat*. It is also possible to see it as the successor to Azuma Kiyohiko's *Azumanga Daioh* (*Azumanga daiō*, published by Media Wākusū from 2000), which was a hit series in the same magazine, *Monthly Comic Dengeki Daioh*. In *Strawberry Marshmallow*, major incidents do not occur, and serious problems do not exist. One does not find in these pages rape or child abuse. Also absent is bullying of the sort that pushes some to school refusal or suicide. The highschooler character, Nobue, is a heavy smoker, but there is not even a scene where she is reprimanded by authorities or punished by her teachers. The work just comically stitches together moments from a peaceful, carefree, lazy life.

The pleasure of reading this manga is close to the feeling one gets when watching small animals play as they please. Self-projection requires considerable effort for male readers, because no principal male character exists and, moreover, depictions of the interiority of the girls are extremely thin (recall Chapter 10). On top of this, because there is no character “growth,” the pseudo-interactive feeling – in the sense of reproducing the experience of games where the player nurtures a virtual existence – is also thin. Readers simply peek into the endlessly extended everyday of cute girls. Structurally, it is a peep show. The position of the reader is precisely what Sasakibara Gō calls the “I becoming gaze” (*shisen-ka suru watashi*), or the distant and transparent self who sees and knows the other (Sasakibara 2005). One can easily imagine some readers harboring pedophilic desires, but this is rather the minority. The object of desire of the “I becoming gaze” is the girls, but at the same time – no, even more so – “a comfortable harem space where cute girls frolic.” There, real members of the opposite and same sex do not exist to threaten the “I.” There is no sex that might end in getting hurt. As gaze, “I” roam around a world full of girls like a ghost. This is a harem for the impotent (*funōsha no hāremu*).³

3 I did not go into a detailed discussion in the main chapters of this book, but the format for “harem” (*hāremu*), or a single male protagonist who has relationships with multiple female characters possessing a wide range of personalities and attributes, began in the early days of love comedy and was inherited by *eromanga* and adult games (see Chapter 2). By providing various types of female characters, works appeal to many readers. It is also the optimal format for those who like to play at being Casanova. Of course, this format is also convenient for serialized stories.

Image 30 A sample of Barasui's *Strawberry Marshmallow*. The older female character responds to one of the girls, who wears a cat-eared hat and adopts anime-style cat speak.



128

In *eromanga*, a work that appeared right before *Strawberry Marshmallow* is Uona Telepin's *Sister Collection* (Shisu kore, published by Koa Magajin from 2002). Although they closely resemble each other structurally, the two series greatly differ in circulation and perception. Even though it was later published in trade paperback form without the adult comics label, *Sister Collection* was serialized in an *eromanga* magazine; it may not depict sex explicitly enough to warrant the label, but was still conscious of providing "cheesecake for men." In contrast, there seems to be little consciousness of *Strawberry Marshmallow* being for men. Obviously, *Strawberry Marshmallow* is not pornography in the standard sense. It is not *eromanga*, and was never identified with the adult comics label. Paradoxically, however, it is utterly obscene because of the impotence, because of the drives infinitely stopped just before. We are peeking into the imaginary paradise of a male artist, which appeals to male readers, but all without consciousness of that position or its sexuality. At least to me, artists such as EB110SS and Mikarin,

Just add another character to disrupt the relationship of the protagonist and heroine and round and round we go. When popularity begins to flag, artists simply toss in a striking new character (although there is no guarantee of hitting the mark).

who depict children having sex in a similarly stereotypical everyday, feel “healthier.”⁴ What the readers of *Strawberry Marshmallow* seek is not sex. They seek an eroticism that is self-effaced, covered up and made almost entirely unconscious. In this sense, *Strawberry Marshmallow* is a perverted product, what might be called “pornography without sex for virgin men” (*dōtei danshi no tame no sei naki porunogurafi*). There is a history here with early artists associated with *lolicon*.⁵

If Barasui is drawing an unconscious imaginary paradise in *Strawberry Marshmallow*, then Aida Yū’s *Gunslinger Girl* (*Gansuringā gāru*, published by Media Wākusu from 2002) is an extremely conscious work. Set in Italy in the near future, it tells the story of girls who have incurable diseases or serious disabilities, but are saved by the Social Welfare Agency, which gives them artificial bodies. What the Social Welfare Agency has actually done, however, is transform them into combat cyborgs – assassins used to fight the mafia and terrorists. While a force in contemporary *moe* content, *Gunslinger Girl* also speaks to the age of *bishōjo* that began at the end of the 1970s, and is the latest incarnation of the “battling *bishōjo*” (*sentō bishōjo*) represented by the eponymous heroine of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*.⁶

These artificial bodies are not just the idea of girl held by male readers or an expression of pedophilia. In the sense of being girls who have already been damaged by accidents, crime and illness, their existence is exceedingly fragile. Given man-made and returned-from-the-grave qualities by their cyborg bodies, they also become objects of pygmalionism and necrophilia. As cyborgs, their bodies do not mature, and their sex could be altered. More important is that they are gunslinger girls – girls who handle weapons. The terrible beauty of guns and fetishism for them is expressed throughout the entire work, but these weapons are also like detachable penises. In this sense, the artificial bodies are simultaneously girls and

4 TN: Key to understanding what Nagayama means by “healthy” is Sasakibara’s point that the “I-becoming-gaze” does not have to be aware of its own position and violence or ethical in interactions with others (Sasakibara 2005: 146-147, 150). Just as the “I becomes gaze” and self becomes transparent, the eroticism is not associated with me or myself, but rather something to gaze at in characters. It is not something to reflect on. This is in stark contrast to the discussion of EB110SS and *lolicon* more broadly in Chapter 4.

5 A predecessor of *Strawberry Marshmallow* is Taniguchi Kei’s *Flip Flop* (*Furippu furoppu*, published by Kubo Shoten from 1983).

6 For more on battling *bishōjo*, also known as beautiful fighting girls or armored cuties, refer to Saitō 2000. [TN: English translation is Saitō 2011.] For my own reading of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, see Nagayama 2005.

boys, possessing a hermaphroditic quality. One can describe them as an extremely polymorphous existence.⁷

Moreover, the artificial bodies have their past memories erased and are conditioned through brainwashing.⁸ Each one is paired with an adult male officer, who does this conditioning and works with them in the field. (The pair is called a *fratello*, which means brother in Italian, but the relationship is reminiscent of a fighting dog and its trainer.) Romantic or familial bonds develop between the artificial bodies and officers, but it is difficult for anyone to distinguish whether this is true love or optimization through conditioning. The girls are machines with hearts, but even these are artificial – hearts that have been reprogrammed, overwritten through brainwashing. Questions of humanity extend to doubts about interiority. It is not just that their bodies have been replaced with machines – their self-consciousness, their sense of self, is being tuned. Here the question is not just, “Am I human?” It is also and equally, “Am I myself?” On this point, *Gunslinger Girl* has the drama of searching for self, which we see widely since *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Like Shinji, the protagonist of that landmark series, getting into his giant robot, the brains and consciousnesses of the girls are put into artificial bodies. However, while Shinji is able to convince himself to pilot the machine with the mantra “I mustn’t run away,” the girls cannot get out of their artificial bodies.

In *Gunslinger Girl*, characterization is conscious and thorough. Among works of this kind, it ranks as extraordinary. This makes possible many different ways of experiencing the manga. As if at a peep show, male readers can gaze at the activities and communal living of the battling *bishōjo*. They can also self-project onto the officers and virtually experience having battling *bishōjo* as subordinates, or virtually experience “possession and domination;” this also allows for indulging a desire to protect and something close to twisted romantic love. If they venture deeper, readers can also identify and feel as one with the artificial bodies, savoring the masochistic loyalty,

7 Given the detailed depictions of the many firearms that appear in its pages, *Gunslinger Girl* also came to the attention of gun fanatics. Although set in the near future, the firearms are either ones currently in use or old models of the sort that military enthusiasts enjoy. Examples include the MG 42, which dates back to the Second World War and was nicknamed “Hitler’s buzzsaw,” and the Winchester Model 1897, outfitted with a bayonet as it was as a trench gun in the First World War. The flow of memes converging in *bishōjo* and firearms can be traced back to Sonoda Kenichi’s *Gunsmith Cats* (Gansumisu kyattsu, published by Kōdansha from 1991). Coming into view beyond this is the classic pairing of mecha and *bishōjo* in *lolicon* manga.

8 In the first chapter, her memory has been erased, but the second chapter begins with Rico reflecting on the past. Catch copy for the fourth volume reads, “Nostalgic memories, things one wants to forget... Tears tell of the past.” Perhaps memories are being overwritten again?

security, agony, darkness and sorrow of entrusting the right to decide – about embodiment, superior combat skills, life and death – to another.

Realistically, there is no merit to altering these girls into combat cyborgs. In hand-to-hand combat, Triela loses in her initial encounter with the boy terrorist Pinocchio, and is beaten down completely by her martial arts instructor, Major Salles, a member of Italian special forces. Given this, would it not be more efficient to recruit candidates from among the warriors of the special forces and alter their bodies? It is already absurd that Italy, which is not known for being on the frontlines of technology, developed this process of creating cyborgs and actually put it to use. Not to mention this would require enormous amounts of capital. Who invested, and how do they get returns on that investment? There is no end to it once we start asking questions. This is not, however, a problem. Criticism of a lack of realism in the premise is unlikely to reach the artist behind this work or the readers who support it. Here, reality as a story is unnecessary.

The reason is that this is a story revolving around the relationality of the pairing of “male officer and artificial body in girl form.” The focus is neither the technology nor the organization that uses it, but the pair called *fratello*, brother, which makes it sound as if they are one person. Each of the different *fratello* – Triela and Hilshire, Henrietta and Jose, Rico and Jean, Angelica and Marco – is performing a variation of a romantic relationship. These romantic relationships, like many others, are complementary. What at a glance appears to be a relation of guardianship, with the officer on top, can shift depending on the situation. Romantic relationships are to begin with something that turns those involved inward toward each other, but this goes further in *Gunslinger Girl*. To the artificial bodies conditioned to be loyal, the only real world is the *fratello* relationships with their officers. Outside is no more than a hollow illusion. This is basically the same as the world of autoeroticism, which is one of the acmes of *eromanga*. This manifests vividly in the existence of the artificial body Claes, who loses her officer Raballo and is kept as a test subject for the cyborg engineers. Modest though it may be, Claes lives in a self-contained peace; she tends a garden, plays piano and reads. One can interpret this peace as Raballo, through his death, being swallowed or assimilated as her memory. In that sense, we might see Claes as a “standalone *fratello*,” the ultimate form of autoeroticism.

When looked at in this way, one understands that psychological aspects of eroticism and sex pursued by *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* to this point are being taken on by manga associated with *moe* and otaku, which are not restricted to those over the age of 18. This book has limited itself to the field of manga, but we can also see a distancing from genitals and intercourse

and an inclination toward “eroticism” (*erosu*) – including everything from romantic feelings between men and women to fetishism and sadomasochism, homosexuality and transsexuality – in the worlds of light novels and games. At the core of *moe* is eroticism. On top are stacked up layers upon layers of elements. Although the form of desire is buried, depicting *moe* and taking pleasure in it is the work of erotic production and consumption.

If we stick to the position of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga*, this eroticization of other content makes it appear as if the territory of *bishōjo*-style *eromanga* has vastly expanded. From another vantage point, we see a perverse picture where manga that obscures genitals and intercourse and is thus not restricted to adults is for many readers more lascivious than *eromanga*. That is, manga associated with *moe* and otaku is more erotic than *eromanga*, or is the true “*eromanga*.” If we unconditionally accept the systematic division between adult and general content, we lose sight of things that should be visible. We miss out on what might work for us and feel good. If the division leads to the suppression of adult content, we may unexpectedly lose that option. This is not about classifications and definitions. More important is the question what forms of expression work for us and feel good, or what will most invigorate our own imaginary paradise.

Afterword (2006)

Even if as a cursory affair, I had the conceit to put pen to paper and map the invisible realm of *eromanga*. If there is bias in this book, then there is also much that is missing from its pages. The creators and works I was able to touch on are just the tip of the iceberg. In the first place, although it is on the smaller side, *eromanga* is not a realm that can be fully explored in one or two guidebooks. I myself have many things left to say – things about manga and eroticism, things about collective fantasy. Be that as it may, if this book lowers the erotic barriers of readers even a little, or the number interested in *eromanga* increases, then there can be no greater joy. I pray that even one more person finds a lead in this book and actually picks up a work that caught their attention or follows up on an artist. In some instances, you might run into a work that is not to your liking, but that too is part of the journey. You will surely encounter excellent works.

Many people were involved in the formation of this book. To begin, if close to 20 years ago now the former editor of *Manga Hot Milk*, Saitō Ōko (aka Saitō Reiko, aka O-ko), had not inspired a young man reviewing manga to expand into *eromanga*, then this book would not exist. I would

also like to thank my friends involved with *Net Discourse Final Version*. Without your stimulation, I would not have had the motivation to write this book. From all the manga artists who showed me kindness, and from the manga researchers, critics, editors and readers who gather at the manga history study groups and otaku meetings, I received all manner of advice, encouragement and pressure.

Regretfully, I was unable to directly hand copies of this book to Iwata Tsuguo, Hosono Haruhiko and Yonezawa Yoshihiro, the three men I first and foremost wanted to read it. Their passing leaves a void for many of us. My interactions with Iwata were fleeting, but I wanted to beg him to teach me more about the history of the Comic Market and *dōjinshi*. A friend and work colleague, Hosono and I spoke about the content of this book time and again, from which I received many important hints. When he was serializing “Postwar *Eromanga* History” in *AX* (Akkusu, published by Seirin Kōgeisha from 1998), Yonezawa said to me, “I don’t know much about things after 1990, so I’ll leave it to you.” If he had not said those kind words to me, I might have promptly abandoned my post and run away. Everyone, I am sorry to have been late.

Afterword to the Expanded Edition (2014)

When the original version of this book was published in 2006, I thought that I had written what needed to be written. I wrote what I wanted to write, as I wanted to write it. I thought that I had given a little back to *eromanga* and the manga world broadly. However, when starting the expanded edition, I noticed that, no matter how much I wrote, I could not write it all out. The subcategory of anthropomorphism, for example. I touched on it somewhat even in the original version, but for a time an outrageous spread was on display. When I was editing boys love *dōjinshi* guidebooks, I encountered the apotheosis of romantically and sexually pairing anthropomorphized boy characters in the form of a work devoted to “landslide and sandbag.” In *eromanga*, Koume Keito’s *Pollen Girls Advisory!* (Kafun shōjo chūihō, published by Wani Magajinsha) came out as a trade paperback in 2006, the year this book was originally published.

In works for children, basic animal anthropomorphization has been popular from long ago in all parts of the world. Perhaps it is the influence of experiencing such anime from an early age, but in North America, Europe and Japan, the minority called “furry fandom” – a subculture interested in fictional anthropomorphic animal characters with human personalities

and traits – is becoming a powerful force. Naturally, what they are into is not just stuff for kids. If there are *eromanga* magazines, then it is also bustling in corners of the net comic world. Forget about fur, because there are also fans who prefer anthropomorphized dolphins, snakes and dinosaurs. Furthermore, diversification and segmentation has continued to advance in the form of anthropomorphized animals plus homosexuality, *shota*, male-to-female crossdressing, age play, sadomasochism and more. There are cultural differences, but new terrain is expanding around the globe.

Another of the issues that I was unable to fully write out concerns manga and copyright. Parody *dōjinshi*, including erotic parody, has until now endured in a gray zone with the background logic that, “They’re just fanworks,” “We’re all guilty” and “It’s a barometer of popularity.” What will become of this arrangement in the future? During the negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, for example, the United States made demands about intellectual property that, if adopted wholesale, would mean legal revision in the worst possible form. The demands included making it possible to file legal charges without a formal complaint from the copyright holder, irrespective of fair use considerations; extending the length of protection of copyright after death; and introducing a legal compensation system.⁹ Parody *dōjinshi* are one gateway to success for new talent. If atrophy begins there, it will impact the entire manga industry, and furthermore accelerate the decline of the moribund publishing industry.

As to the future of *eromanga*, the topics of discussion are not all positive. The harsh conditions that I wrote about in 2006 have continued since then. However, as someone who has stuck with *eromanga* for many long years, I am not that pessimistic – even if the publishing depression does not abate, even if regulation of expression increases and becomes stricter, even if down the road copyright becomes more troublesome. The thing about *eromanga* is this: The more that crisis comes bearing down, the more interesting things come popping up. Dodging at the very last moment before crossing the line of regulation, pioneering niches and developing innovations. If anything, a new manga can be created without getting bogged down in distinctions between traditional *eromanga* and manga. This expressive art is tough, shameless, wild and wonderful.

9 TN: The first demand would be incredibly damaging to *dōjinshi*, because using copyrighted characters is basically tolerated as long as the original author does not make an issue of it. In the Japanese case, this is especially true of manga, which has allowed for the growth of the Comic Market to its current scale. If companies could pursue legal action regardless of the original author’s wishes, however, then the culture of tacitly agreeing to look the other way might end.

The map of *eromanga* seems to be updating every day. Working on this expanded edition, I was at times unsure and in need of directions. I reached out to Kimi Rito, who is an *eromanga* researcher and the man behind *The Eromanga Scene* (*Eromanga no genba*), a *dōjinshi* series of interviews with artists.¹⁰ If it had not been for him applying pressure in all the right places, there is no mistake that I certainly would have lost the path. I would also like to express gratitude to my esteemed friend Azuma Hiroki, who provided commentary on the expanded edition.¹¹ Had I not been involved with *Net Discourse Final Version*, which Azuma edited, *Eromanga* would not have been born. In addition to Kimi, I also received advice from active duty *eromanga* editors, who told me, “You should absolutely touch on this or that.” In the process of meeting and gathering material, I encountered people who held new information and knowledge. I had thought that I was walking alone, but such was not the case. Finally, I would like to extend a thank you to the editors in charge of both the original and expanded editions, everyone involved and readers who waited so long and patiently. Everyone, thank you very much. Let’s meet again.

10 TN: Beginning in 2009, the *dōjinshi* series has since ended and been released commercially as a complete collection (Kimi 2016).

11 TN: Due to considerations of space, Azuma’s essay has been excised from this translation.

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Index of Artists and Individuals

- Abe, Shinichi 55
Adachi, Mitsuru 76, 189-190
Agata, Ui 65
Aida, Yū 270
Aisaki, Keiko 170
Akamatsu, Ken 248, 251, 257
Akatsuka, Fujio 50, 58
Akiba, Nagi(to) 160
Akio, Takami (aka Tanuma Yūichirō) 133-134, 187, 231-232
Allison, Anne 35
Amamiya, Jun 39, 216
Amatsu, Sae 39
Amazume, Ryūta 39, 172
Anno, Hideaki 89
Aoki, Kotomi 153
Aoyagi, Yūsuke 55
Apo (aka Kagami Akira) 92, 120, 190
Araki, Akira 135
Aramata, Hiroshi 68-69
Aran, Rei 90-91
Arima, Keitarō 246
Āru, Koga (aka R-Koga) 135
Asuka, Yumiko 190
Ataka, Atsushi (aka Oka Sundome) 211, 227
Aura, Seiji 145
Azuki, Kurenai 145
Azuma, Hideo 89, 120, 216
Azuma, Hiroki 16-18, 46, 106, 152, 248, 276
Azuma, Kiyohiko 268
- Bangaichi, Mitsugu 128
Barasui 267-269
Beauty Hair (aka Suwa Yūji) 22-23, 27, 99, 172
Betsuyaku, Shō 182
Bilbrew, Eugene (aka Eneg) 205
Blackmore, Susan 166
- Chatarō 145
Chiba, Tetsuya 21, 25, 27, 246, 255
Chinzuriina 262
Choko 103
Clamp 26, 194
Cornell, Drucila 28, 35-36
Crumb, Robert 29
- Dairoku Tenmaō Gurēto 225
Dan, Oniroku 62, 205
Dash 213
Dawkins, Richard 46
DeCarlo, Dan 205
DePew, Daniel 32
Disney, Walt 50-52, 138
Ditama, Bow 39
Dorei, Jackie 200
- Dworkin, Andrea 30, 176-177
- EB110SS 131, 269-270
Ebifly 194
Eguchi, Hisashi 98, 216
Eisner, Will 39
El Bondage (aka Makimura Miki) 79, 90
Endō, Minari 262
Erotica Heaven 145
- Fujiko, Fujio 50, 57, 134
Fujimoto, Yukari 21, 23, 35, 246, 248
Fujiwara, Kamui 39, 92, 94, 121, 172
Fukuhara, Hidemi (aka Fukuhara Gōken) 65, 67
Fukui, Eiichi 50
Fukushima, Masami 55, 62
Fumizuki, Kō 39
Furukawa, Masuzō 55
Furuya, Mitsutoshi 58
Fūsen, Club 128
- Gaiman, Neil 29
Giraud, Jean (aka Mœbius) 172
Goblin (aka Koburin, aka Goblin Moriguchi) 183-184
Goodenough, Ursula 152
Gotō, Kasumi 120
Grace 148
Gura, Nyūtō 219
- Hachū, Rui 65, 145
Hagio, Moto 68, 73, 190, 216
Hagiwara, Kazushi 81
Hanamigawa, Kyūtarō 39
Handley, Christopher 33
Hara, Maruta 89
Hara, Taira 60
Hariken, Ryū (aka Hurricane Ryu, aka Miyata Hidemi) 91, 120, 216
Haruki, Etsumi 132, 268
Hayabusa, Shingo 147, 228-229
Hayami, Jun 83
Hayasaka, Miki 121
Hayashi, Seiichi 55
Heaven-11 145
Hiiragi, Masaki 262
Hikochi, Sakuya 153
Himuro, Serika 202
Hinden, Burugu (aka Hindenburg) 162
Hiraguchi, Hiromi 55, 67
Hirano, Jin 60
Hirano, Kōta 39
Hiromori, Shinobu (aka Miyasu Nonki) 39, 92, 190

- Hirukogami, Ken 89
 Hiryū, Ran 154, 162
 Hisauchi, Michio 55, 67, 215
 Hōjō, Tsukasa 83
 Honjō, Hiroshi 145, 147
 Horihone, Saizō 148, 182, 213
 Hoshiai, Hiro 262
 Hoshino, Fūta 133-134
 Hosono, Haruhiko 274
- Ichijō, Yukari 68
 Igarashi, Megumi (aka Rokudenashiko) 22-23, 27
 Igarashi, Mikio 67
 Igarashi, Yumiko 255
 Iida, Kōichirō 65
 Ikegami, Ryōichi 55
 Ikoma, Ippei 40, 172, 187
 Inaba, Cozy 262
 Inose, Naoki 244, 246
 Inoue, Hideki 65
 Inumaru 230
 Ishihara, Shintarō 20, 244
 Ishii, Hisaichi 67
 Ishii, Takashi 60, 62, 65, 187-188, 205, 215, 217
 Ishikawa, Jun 67, 89
 Ishimori, Shōtarō (aka Ishinomori Shōtarō) 50, 57-58, 200-201, 205, 255
 Itahashi, Shūhō (aka SYUFO) 172
 Itasaka, Gō 65
 Itō, Aiko 68
 Itō, Gō 105
 Iwade, Mariko 76, 190
 Iwata, Tsuguo 79, 274
 Izumi, Nōyuki (aka Izumi Nobuyuki) 107
- Jamming 145
 Jiraiya 215
- Kagami, Akira (aka Apo, aka Yamada Eiko) 92, 120-121, 190-191, 217
 Kagami, Fumio (aka Kagami Fumiwo) 192-193
 Kago, Shintarō 204, 213
 Kai, Yukiko 68
 Kaimeiji, Yū 208
 Kaishaku 39
 Kajiwara, Ikki 172, 189
 Kakinomoto, Utamaro 186
 Kamewada, Takeshi 65
 Kamimura, Kazuo 56, 60, 153, 215
 Kamimura, Sumiko 98, 141
 Kamirenjaku, Sanpei (aka Ono Toshihiro) 223
 Kamitō, Masaki 59
 Kamogawa, Tsubame 73
 Kanemitsu, Daniel Makoto 246-248
 Kanō, Hasumi 172
 Kasama, Shirō 56, 205
 Kashimada, Shiki 262
 Katayama, Makoto 257
- Kawaguchi, Kaiji 60
 Kawamoto, Hiroshi 145
 Kawasaki, Yukio 55
 Kazuna, Kei 91, 120
 Ken, Tsukikage 62, 83
 Kenmochi, Kazuo 87
 Keno, Yantarō 182, 208, 227
 Kiai, Neko (aka Kiiro Neko) 212
 Kihara, Toshie 68-69, 190
 Kimi, Rito 36-38, 276
 Kimura, Minori 55, 68, 190
 Kino, Hitoshi 162-163, 172-173
 Kinoshita, Rei 124, 127
 Kinsella, Sharon 24
 Kipnis, Laura 32-34
 Kira, Hiroyoshi 145
 Kishi, Motonori 55
 Kishi, Yūko 190, 216
 Kitamimaki, Kei 143, 147, 219-220
 Kiyooka, Sumiko 87-88
 Klaw, Irvine 205
 Kō, Shintarō 60, 89
 Koin, Rand 262
 Kojiki, Ōji 175, 200
 Kojima, Koo 49
 Komotoda, Emai 264
 Kono, Donto (aka Konodonto, aka Conodonts) 182
 Konoma, Kazuho 91
 Kotani, Mari 152
 Kotani, Tetsu 65
 Kotoyoshi, Yumisuke 145-146
 Kudara, Naizō 27, 191
 Kunitsu, Takeshi (aka Shima Takehito) 135
 Kure, Tomofusa 246-248
 Kurimoto, Kaoru (aka Nakajima Azusa) 71-72
 Kurogane, Ken 222
- Lazyclub 145
 Linda 264
- Machida, Hiraku 27, 47, 129-131
 Machino, Henmaru 204, 206, 213, 267
 MacKinnon, Catharine A. 29-30, 203
 Maeda, Juan 205
 Maeda, Toshio 65
 Makafushigi 155-156, 162, 194
 Makimura, Miki (aka El Bondage) 79, 90
 Makita, Aoi 182, 219
 Makita, Masaki 262
 Mamiya, Seiji 65, 83
 Masaki, Mori (aka Tōge Akane) 55-56
 Masaoka, Toshiya 60
 Masuyama, Norie 71
 Matsumoto, Dirty 65, 67, 69, 80, 120, 153
 Matsumoto, Tomoki 262
 Matsurino, Naginata 145
 Matsuyama, Seiji 137, 244
 McLelland, Mark 34

- Mibuno, Kakashi 154
 Mikarin 269-270
 Mikoshiro, Nagitō 145
 Mille-feuille 145
 Minamo, Kokuren (aka Tamaki Satoshi) 213
 Minor Boy 56
 Misakura, Nankotsu 103
 Mitamori, Tatsuya 195
 Miura, Yasuto 135
 Miyabi, Tsuzuru 147, 159
 Miyamoto, Masao 94
 Miyanishi, Keizō 55, 65, 67, 215
 Miyasu, Nonki (aka Hiromori Shinobu) 39, 92, 190
 Miyawaki, Shintarō 170
 Miyaya, Kazuhiko 55-56, 60, 120, 191, 215
 Miyazaki, Hayao 50, 88, 119, 138
 Miyazaki, Tsutomu 55, 95
 Miyuma, Subaru (aka Onibara) 208
 Mizuki, Hitoshi 194
 Mizuki, Kyōko 255
 Mizuki, Shigeru 55
 Mizuno, Hideko 50, 190
 Mizuyōkan 213, 227
 Mocchii 145
 Momoyama, Jirō 210-211
 Mori, Kaoru 204
 Mori, Mari 72
 Mori, Naoko 36
 Morikawa, Kaichirō 105, 246
 Morino, Usagi 91, 120
 Morishige 39, 128, 263
 Moriyama, Tō (aka Tōyama Mori, aka Yamamoto Naoki) 39, 45, 93-94, 153, 246, 255
 Moroboshi, Sairi 190
 Motomiya, Hiroshi 255
 Mukade, Melibe 211
 Muku, Yōji 56
 Muraso, Shunichi 65, 67, 91, 120-121
 Murata, Drill 145
 Murata, Range 103
 Mutsu, A-ko 76, 88, 190, 192, 200
 Mutsuki, Tsutomu 202
- Nachi, Misako 68
 Nagai, Gō 21, 25, 27, 57-59, 73, 246
 Nagaoka, Yoshiyuki 21, 242
 Nagayama, Kaoru (aka Nagayama Kaworu, aka Fukumoto Yoshihiro) 15
 Nagayasu, Takumi 189
 Nakajima, Azusa (aka Kurimoto Kaoru) 71-72
 Nakajima, Fumio 39, 55, 65, 67, 69, 91, 121
 Nakamori, Ai 121
 Nakamori, Akio 92
 Nakata, Aki 57, 72
 Nankin, Mā-chan 227
 Nemuri, Taiyō 83, 148
 Nendo 135
 NeWMeN 145
- Nishi, Iori 135
 Nishiaki, Gurin 121
 Nishimaki, Tohru 143-145
 Nishizawa, Keita 243
 Nitta, Jun 264
 Noguchi, Masayuki (aka Uchiyama Aki) 90-91, 120-121, 189-190, 213
 Nōjō, Junichi 39, 55
- Oga, Tomoyoshi 83
 Ogawa, Bii 96
 Ogawa, Kanran 135
 Oh!Great 39
 Oka, Sundemo (aka Ataka Atsushi) 211, 227
 Okada, Fumiko 55, 57, 68, 190
 Okada, Toshio 89
 Okama 39
 Okamoto, Fujio 104
 Okazaki, Kyōko 39, 92
 Oki, Shōji 205
 Oki, Yukao 216
 Oku, Hiroya 216
 Okudaira, Ira 55, 67
 Onibara (aka Miyuma Subaru) 208
 Ono, Toshihiro (aka Kamirenjaku Sanpei) 223
 Ōshima, Yumiko 68, 72, 194
 Ōshiro, Noboru 50
 Otamashakushi 65, 67
 Ōtomo, Katsuhiko 45, 94, 172
 Ōtsuka, Eiji 16, 92-93, 103, 138, 190, 193, 217
 Oyster 172
 Ozawa, Takahiro (aka Ume) 246, 258
- Pa-Ja 145
 Persona 172
 Point, Takashi 145
- RaTe 160-162, 221
 Rie-chan 14-sai (aka Rie-chan Jūyonsai) 267
 Rokudenashiko (aka Igarashi Megumi) 22-23, 27
 Rubin, Gayle S. 30-32, 41
 Rumoi, Jun 157-158
 Ryūzanji, Shō 65
- Saeki, Shun 26
 Saitō, Ōko (aka Saitō Reiko, aka O-ko) 92-93, 273
 Saitō, Takao 53
 Saitō, Tamaki 17, 28-29, 51, 53
 Sakaki, Masaru 62, 65
 Sakaki, Utamaru 264
 Sakata, Yasuko 68
 Saku, Yukizō 39
 Sakura, Momoko 192, 268
 Sanbun, Kyōden 181-182, 208
 Sano, Takashi 39, 222, 227
 Sarashina, Shūichirō 103
 Sasaki, Maki 55

- Sasakibara, Gō 268, 270
 Sasaya, Nanae(ko) 68
 Sasō, Akira 134
 Satō, Masaaki 53, 60
 Satō, Shio 68
 Satonaka, Machiko 21, 25, 27, 68, 246
 Sawada, Ryūji 62
 Sawatari, Hajime 87-88
 Schodt, Frederik L. 14, 26, 28
 Schoenheimer, Rudolph 166
 Sena, Yōtarō 166
 Senno, Knife 89, 120
 Seto, Yūki 218
 Sharp 103
 Shibata, Masahiro 80-81
 Shigematsu, Setsu 31, 36
 Shimamoto, Harumi 222
 Shimizu, Kon 49
 Shimizu, Osamu 65, 69
 Shin, Tsuguru 128
 Shinohara, Tooru 60
 Shinozaki, Rei 182, 222
 Shioyama, Yoshiaki 68
 Shirakura, Yumi 39, 92
 Shirato, Sanpei 54-55
 Shiroy, Gunpan 145, 147, 182
 Shiromi, Kazuhisa 145, 206-207
 Shiwasuno, Okina 104, 188
 Snowberry 172, 206, 210
 Sonoda, Kenichi 271
 Stanton, Eric 205
 Suehirogari 212
 Sugino, Nao 36, 246, 251
 Sugiura, Yukio 49
 Suna 225
 Suzuki, Masako 216
 Suzuki, Miso 258
 Suzuki, Ōji 55

 Tabuchi, Yumiko 76, 189-190
 Tachihara, Ayumi 216
 Tagame, Gengoroh 215, 231
 Tagawa, Suihō 50
 Taira, Hajime 227
 Takahashi, Rumiko 73-76, 88, 138-139, 189,
 191, 194
 Takano, Fumiko 57
 Takarada, Gorgeous 128-129, 164-166
 Takasugi, Dan 64
 Takatori, Ei 65
 Takayama, Kanako 241
 Takeda, Yasuhiro 89
 Takekuma, Kentarō 68, 92, 143-144, 189-190
 Takemiya, Keiko 21, 25, 27, 31, 55, 58, 68, 70-71,
 190, 216, 246, 248, 255
 Tamaki, Nozomu 177, 201
 Tamaki, Satoshi (aka Minamo Kokuren) 213
 Tanaka, Ekisu (aka Tanaka-Ex) 158
 Tanaka, Keiichi 47
 Tanaka, Yutaka 196-199, 217-218
 Taniguchi, Kei 90, 120, 217, 270
 Tanioka, Yasuji 60
 Tannōji, Kitsune 39
 Tanuma, Yūichirō (aka Akio Takami) 133-134,
 187, 231-232
 Tatsumi, Yoshihiro 39, 53, 215
 Tenchūmaru 145
 Tenjiku, Rōnin 213
 Terada, Yōichi 219, 228
 Tezuka, Osamu 25, 39, 45, 47, 49-58, 71, 89-90,
 96, 106, 120-121, 134, 138, 153, 171, 197, 216-217
 The Seiji 172
 Tomi, Shinzō 215
 Tomimoto, Tatsuya 172
 Tomita, Shigeru 65
 Tōge, Akane (aka Masaki Mori) 55-56
 Torii, Kazuyoshi 58
 Tōyama, Mori (aka Moriyama Tō, aka
 Yamamoto Naoki) 39, 45, 93-94, 153, 246,
 255
 Tsuchiya, Shingo 65
 Tsuge, Tadao 55
 Tsuge, Yoshiharu 55, 76, 120
 Tsukino, Jōgi 177-178, 187
 Twilight 145

 Uchiyama, Aki (aka Noguchi Masayuki) 90-
 91, 120-121, 189-190, 213
 Uchōten 230, 233
 Ueshiba, Riichi 232
 Ume (aka Ozawa Takahiro) 246, 258
 Umino, Sachi 145
 Umino, Yayoi 210
 Unite, Sōji 27, 101, 191
 Uona, Telepin 269
 Utagawa, Taiga 56
 Utatane, Hiroyuki 39, 255
 Uziga, Waita (aka Ujiga Waita, aka Y-ta) 185-
 186, 211, 227

 Wada, Erika 123
 Wang-Pac 135
 Wanyan, Aguda 125-126, 132
 Warner, Michael 28
 Watanabe, Mayuko 246
 Watanabe, Wataru 94, 139-141, 147, 191
 Wertham, Fredric 24-25
 Willie, John 205

 Yamada, Keiji 241
 Yamada, Kumiko 31-32
 Yamada, Mineko 68
 Yamada, Nora 65
 Yamada, Sansuke 215
 Yamada, Shūtarō 39
 Yamada, Tahichi 159, 172
 Yamada, Tarō 252
 Yamaga, Hiroyuki 89

- Yamagami, Tatsuhiko 73
Yamagishi, Ryōko 68-69, 77, 102, 153
Yamaguchi, Takashi 23, 246, 248
Yamakawa, Sōji 49
Yamamoto, Arisa 19, 23
Yamamoto, Johanne (aka Yamamoto
Yohane) 115, 187
Yamamoto, Naoki (aka Moriyama Tō, aka
Tōyama Mori) 39, 45, 93-94, 153, 246, 255
Yamamoto, Takao 88
Yamamoto, Yoshifumi 145
Yamasaki, Jūzō 91
Yamato, Akira 135
Yamato, Waki 68
Yanagisawa, Kimio 76, 189
Yaoichō, Narimasu 184
Yashiro, Masako 55, 190
Yōkihi 148, 191, 230
Yokoyama, Mitsuteru 57
Yonekura, Kengo 26, 191, 228-229, 264
Yonezawa, Yoshihiro 36, 78, 88, 96, 274
Yoriu, Mushi (aka Yoriumushi, aka Masuda
Haruhiko) 121
Yoshida, Akemi 31
Yoshida, Motoi 153
Yoyogi, Tadashi 127
Yui, Toshiki 39, 103, 255
Yūjin (aka U-Jin) 98
Yukiyanagi 145
Yūri, Ai 145
Yuzuki, Hikaru 76, 190, 216
Zeronomono 145

