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English Translations of Gender Nonconformity in *Shōjo* Manga and Anime:  
A Trans-Queer Materialist Feminist Analysis

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# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
Abstract .....	vii
Lay summary.....	viii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
0.1. Introduction and overview .....	1
0.1.1 Defining manga and anime.....	1
0.1.2 Manga and anime as cultural exports .....	2
0.1.3 Relation to gender/sexuality .....	4
0.2. Research motivation, principles, and frameworks.....	5
0.2.1 Theoretical frameworks and methodologies .....	7
0.2.2 Terminology and presentation of Japanese language.....	9
0.2.3 Research questions .....	11
0.2.4 Note on gendered language in analysis.....	12
0.2.5 Note on presentation of translation excerpts .....	12
0.3. Chapter summaries .....	13
<b>Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework</b> .....	<b>15</b>
1.1. Introduction .....	15
1.2. Multimodality and the materiality of translation.....	15
1.2.1 Material politics of translation .....	17
1.2.2 Feminist materiality .....	19
1.3. Materialist feminism.....	20
1.3.1 The division of gender/sex.....	22
1.3.2 Materialist feminist perspectives on gender and language .....	24
1.4. Decolonial feminism .....	26
1.4.1 Western imperialism and gender/sexuality in Japan .....	28
1.4.2 Translation, colonisation, and gender/sexual frameworks .....	30
1.4.3 Particularities of translating the nonconforming.....	33
1.5. Towards a trans-queer materialist feminism.....	35
1.5.1 Materialist feminism: an anti-essentialist framework .....	36
1.5.2 The question of structures .....	39
1.5.3 Encompassing “queer multitudes” .....	40
1.5.4 Implications for translation studies .....	43
1.6. Synthesis and application to multimodal analysis of <i>shōjo</i> .....	46
1.7. Conclusion .....	51

<b>Chapter 2: Historical Background</b> .....	<b>53</b>
2.1. Introduction .....	53
2.2. Background: Late Edo (1850-1867) to Meiji (1868-1912).....	54
2.2.1 Late feudalism and the end of isolationism.....	54
2.2.2 Feudal class, gender/sex, and social organisation .....	55
2.2.3 Premodern discourses of gendered language .....	57
2.2.4 The Meiji Restoration.....	59
2.2.5 Gender/sexual modernity and the family .....	60
2.2.6 Linguistic modernity .....	62
2.3. Prewar: the Taishō and Shōwa Periods (1912-1930s) .....	64
2.3.1 Girls' schools and girls' magazines .....	66
2.3.2 Material and visual expressions of girls' culture .....	68
2.4. Postwar girls' culture and the rise of <i>shōjo</i> manga.....	70
2.4.1 The making and breaking of convention .....	71
2.4.2 Television manga: the birth of anime and "image alliances" .....	73
2.4.3 Political struggle and social change .....	75
2.5. 1970s: the sexual revolution in <i>shōjo</i> manga .....	76
2.5.1 Beautiful boys and boys' love.....	77
2.5.2 Lesbian manga and compulsory heterosexuality.....	79
2.5.3 Radicalism versus consumerism in <i>shōjo</i> .....	80
2.6. 1980s-1990s: manga and anime reach Anglophone audiences.....	82
2.6.1 The first wave of English translation: localisation and adaptation.....	83
2.6.2 Magical girls and social crisis .....	85
2.7. 2000s-2010s: globalised <i>shōjo</i> and the English translation boom.....	88
2.7.1 The translation boom .....	89
2.7.2 Postmodern <i>shōjo</i> media and fan culture .....	90
2.8. Conclusion: the present day.....	91
<b>Chapter 3: Data and Methodology</b> .....	<b>95</b>
3.1. Introduction .....	95
3.1.1 Selecting representative examples .....	95
3.1.2 Access issues .....	97
3.2. 1970s-1980s: <i>The Rose of Versailles</i> .....	98
3.2.1 Themes .....	99
3.2.2 Translations.....	100
3.3. 1990s-2000s: <i>Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon</i> .....	101
3.3.1 Themes .....	102

3.3.2 Translations.....	104
3.4. 2000s-2010s: <i>Ouran High School Host Club</i> .....	105
3.4.1 Themes .....	106
3.4.2 Translations.....	107
3.5. Methodology: multimodal analysis .....	107
3.5.1 Case studies .....	109
3.6. Conclusion .....	111
<b>Chapter 4: <i>The Rose of Versailles</i>, Ikeda Riyoko (1970s-1980s).....</b>	<b>112</b>
4.1. Introduction .....	112
4.1.1 Source material.....	112
4.1.2 Scanlation: Lililicious, RosalinaScans, and RoV Scans .....	114
4.1.3 Translation: Udon Entertainment.....	118
4.1.4 Subtitles: Live-evil.....	120
4.2. Revolutionary androgyny: gender/sexual politics in <i>The Rose of Versailles</i> .....	121
4.2.1 Consumerist/bourgeois ideologies in <i>Rose</i> .....	124
4.3. Multimodality and idealised androgyny in <i>shōjo</i> .....	127
4.3.1 The chūsei aesthetic.....	128
4.4. Translation analysis.....	130
4.4.1 Pronouns.....	131
4.4.2 Oscar as lesbian/androgynous.....	135
4.4.3 Oscar's duality: language, identity, and categorisation .....	139
4.5. Conclusion .....	149
<b>Chapter 5: <i>Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon</i>, Takeuchi Naoko (1990s-2000s) .....</b>	<b>152</b>
5.1. Introduction and overview .....	152
5.1.1 Source material.....	152
5.1.2 Translation context.....	154
5.1.3 Subtitles: Studio Chikashitsu and VKLL.....	156
5.1.4 Dub: DIC and Cloverway, Inc. ....	157
5.2. Historical context and cultural significance .....	159
5.2.1 Trends in animation industry .....	160
5.2.2 Material cultures.....	161
5.2.3 Norms of translation and localisation .....	163
5.3. <i>Sailor Moon</i> through a materialist feminist lens.....	164
5.3.1 <i>Sailor Moon</i> 's neoliberal feminism.....	167
5.4. Translation analysis.....	169

5.4.1 Note on character names .....	170
5.4.2 Overview .....	170
5.4.3 Zoisite and Kunzite .....	171
5.4.4 Makoto (Sailor Jupiter).....	179
5.4.5 Haruka (Sailor Uranus) and Michiru (Sailor Neptune) .....	182
5.5. Conclusion .....	203
<b>Chapter 6: <i>Ouran High School Host Club</i>, Hatori Bisco (2000s-2010s) .....</b>	<b>207</b>
6.1. Introduction and overview .....	207
6.1.1 Source material.....	208
6.1.2 Scanlations: AkuTenshi + Eternal-Blue.....	210
6.1.3 Translation: Viz Media .....	212
6.1.4 Subtitles: LunarAnime.....	214
6.1.5 Subtitles: Funimation .....	215
6.2. Shifts in genre and media.....	216
6.2.1 Fan culture, audience engagement, and intertextuality.....	218
6.3. <i>Ouran</i> and the English translation boom .....	221
4. Gender/sexuality in post-bubble Japan.....	223
6.4.1 Host clubs and neoliberalism.....	224
6.4.2 Gender/sexuality as labour and performance .....	226
6.4.3 Interplay and conflict with shōjo gender politics.....	230
6.5. Multimodality: (audio)visually depicting class, gender, and humour.....	233
6.6. Translation analysis.....	235
6.6.1 Chapter 1 / Episode 1 .....	236
6.6.2 Chapter 2 / Episode 2 .....	244
6.6.3 Chapter 10 / Episode 9.....	249
6.6.4 Chapters 12-13 / Episode 10.....	253
6.7. Conclusion .....	257
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>261</b>
7.1. Introduction .....	261
7.1.1 Review of theoretical framework and historical background .....	261
7.2. Findings.....	263
7.2.1 The Rose of Versailles.....	263
7.2.2 Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon.....	264
7.2.3 <i>Ouran High School Host Club</i> .....	265
7.2.4 Synthesis and elaboration .....	266

7.3. Further considerations.....	271
7.3.1 Addressing gender/sex disparities .....	271
7.3.2 Fan versus professional translation.....	273
7.3.3 Other limitations .....	275
7.4. Conclusion .....	277
7.4.1 Contributions .....	278
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>281</b>

## Abstract

*Shōjo*, a category of manga and anime (Japanese comics and animation) primarily marketed to young girls, has a notable history of depicting gender nonconformity — i.e. gender/sexual identities, expressions, or embodiments marked as divergent from dominant norms. With the increasing popularity of manga and anime outside of Japan in the last three to four decades, many *shōjo* series have been translated into English, where particular linguistic constraints and political imperatives have manifested in the approaches taken to translating gender nonconformity. Applying a decolonial and trans-queer materialist feminist theoretical framework to the domain of multimodality, this thesis investigates English translations of gender nonconformity in three key titles that have defined *shōjo*'s growth and movement into English-speaking popular culture: *The Rose of Versailles*, *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, and *Ouran High School Host Club*. I use a comparative analysis methodology to analyse selected excerpts of official translations and fan translations and develop an understanding of how their treatments of gender nonconformity were influenced by material factors. Through these three case studies, I attempt to define an overall trajectory of translational approaches to gender nonconformity in *shōjo* and shed light on *shōjo*'s role in the mutual negotiation of gender/sexual frameworks between Japan and the English-speaking Western world.

## Lay summary

*Shōjo*, a category of manga and anime (Japanese comics and animation) marketed mainly to young girls, has a unique history of representing genders/sexualities that defy typical social norms (“gender nonconformity”). Because gender is expressed very differently in the Japanese and English languages, and because of the complex historical and political relationships between Japan and Western nations, these representations pose many challenges for English translation. However, *shōjo* has played a major role in the increasing popularity of manga and anime outside of Japan in the last 30-40 years, and many *shōjo* series depicting gender nonconformity have been translated into English. This thesis investigates English translations of gender nonconformity in three key titles that have defined the development of *shōjo* and propelled its expansion into English-speaking pop culture: *The Rose of Versailles*, *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, and *Ouran High School Host Club*. Using an analytical framework that incorporates materialist, decolonial, and queer/trans feminist theories, I explore the relationship between gender/sexuality, imperialism/colonialism, politics, popular culture, and translation. Looking at selected excerpts of both official translations and fan translations, I show how the approach to translating gender nonconformity in each series was influenced by cultural and political factors — for example, how institutional homophobia in North American television broadcasting led to censorship of *Sailor Moon*. Moving through all three case studies, I show the overall trajectory of translational approaches to gender nonconformity in *shōjo* and shed light on the continuous mutual influence of Japanese and Western ideas about gender/sexuality. Finally, I consider what my findings mean for the future of English translations of *shōjo* and discuss the wider implications for the field of translation studies.

# Introduction

## 0.1. Introduction and overview

For decades, feminist theories have analysed the role of media in representing, constructing, and influencing ideas about gender, sexuality, and sexual norms. Likewise, on the heels of LGBT movements, emerging queer and trans scholarship has critiqued and expanded feminist analysis to consider the ways in which specifically non-normative genders and sexual expressions are depicted in such media. With the advent of particular feminist, queer, and trans theories and the application of these analytical frameworks beyond their (primarily if not exclusively) Euro-American points of origin, further scholarship has raised questions of imperialism and (neo-)colonialism, calling attention to the functions of gender/sexuality within international/intercultural power relations (Noyé & Rebutini 2021; Jackson 2021; Puar 2007). The field of translation studies has much to reckon with here, as the longstanding concept of “equivalence” (Panou 2013) takes on new dimensions in the context of cross-cultural discourses on gender/sexuality.

Accordingly, this thesis will investigate a notable convergence of these issues in English translations of gender nonconformity<sup>1</sup> in *manga* and *anime*, two closely related forms of Japanese multimodal mass media whose development is grounded in the historical and political relationship between Japan and “the West” — particularly the construction of modern gender/sexual frameworks through media, language, and translation — and which feature a distinctive history with regard to depiction of non-conforming gender/sexuality. In this chapter, I introduce basic information on the topic, the rationale and aims of my research, and the theoretical and methodological tools used in my analysis. I also provide a brief summary of each chapter, sketching an outline of the thesis and prefacing the key themes that arise in my research.

### 0.1.1 Defining *manga* and *anime*

*Manga* is a Japanese word that can be translated as “cartoon” or “comic” (literally, “whimsical sketches”) (Schodt 1996: 34). First coined by the artist Hokusai Katsushika in 1784 (Shiraishi 1997: 236), it took on its modern meaning over the course of the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries, as a term for printed comics.

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<sup>1</sup> To be defined in section 0.2.3 of this chapter, as well as Chapter 1.5.

Since the 1980s, it has also entered English as a loanword, referring to the medium of Japanese-language comics produced by Japanese artists and disseminated worldwide in translation — though it may also include comics produced in other languages and locales in emulation of typical Japanese manga. The corresponding term *anime* (“animation”) originated as an English loanword in Japanese, first adopted into Japanese phonetics as *animēshon* and later shortened (Salazar 2021<sup>2</sup>). In Japanese usage, *anime* can refer to any kind of animation, but it has also been borrowed back into the English lexicon as a term for specifically Japanese animated visual media (including feature-length films and serialised live-air television shows alike), as well as the distinct visual aesthetics or artistic styles commonly associated with this media (Bryce et al 2010).

Despite the obvious distinction between manga and anime — the former consists of the visual and verbal modes, the latter is audiovisual — it is appropriate to consider them as a pair because of their intertextual, mutually-informed nature. When anime first appeared in the early 1960s, it was called *terebi manga* (“television manga”) (Saito 2014: 147). In terms of the material production of manga and anime, adaptation between these mediums is the norm (Shiraishi 1997: 252; Schodt 1996: 14). Typically, manga is adapted into anime for television, which may spawn films or other forms of media in turn. Adaptations may introduce variations in dialogue, character, or plot, but typically maintain overall consistency within the fictional universe or franchise. The existence of parallel visual and audiovisual texts, with the unique translational allowances and constraints of different combinations of modes (Borodo 2015: 25-27), generates compelling opportunities to compare different translation approaches to depictions of gender/sexuality marked as non-normative.

### *0.1.2 Manga and anime as cultural exports*

Like other media, manga/anime function as modes of artistic and political expression, as loci for fan subcultures, and as historical artefacts reflecting the circumstances of their production. Although generally considered “low-brow” — a form of popular entertainment rather than art or literature — they can be understood as politically charged due to their relationship to the development of the Japanese nation and its interactions with the rest of the world. In contrast to novels or films, manga/anime are

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<sup>2</sup> <https://public.oed.com/blog/japanese-words-in-the-oed/>

uniquely recognised as Japanese exports, with the mediums themselves often considered representative of so-called “Japanese culture” (Bryce et al 2010). The global recognition and consumption of manga/anime constitutes an economic and socio-political force, influencing interactions between Japanese and non-Japanese markets and populations and thus forming a major facet of Japan’s “soft power” (Brienza 2014: 385-386; Shiraishi 1997: 235, 272; Fennell et al 2012: 441). This force is not merely a fortunate by-product of Japanese domestic production, but a tool that the Japanese government has come to consciously and strategically leverage in order to improve the nation’s global reputation: in 2006, Japan’s Minister for Foreign Affairs Asō Tarō described creators of manga/anime as “this new era’s promoters of modern Japanese culture to the world” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan<sup>3</sup>) and in the following year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established an “International MANGA Award” to be awarded annually to an outstanding non-Japanese manga artist (ibid<sup>4</sup>).

Indeed, while most Japanese print- and film-based media receive relatively little attention from the English-speaking world, manga/anime today are widely translated into English. Since the 1990s, when domestic economic stagnation led Japanese publishers to seek out a market in the United States, thriving Anglophone fan followings and subcultures have grown around translated manga/anime. Today, manga makes up a significant portion of the comics industries in the United States; sales of manga “grew a remarkable 350% from \$60 million in 2002 to \$210 million in 2007” (Brienza 2009: 103). Although this trend slowed with the 2008 recession, more recently the manga market has continued to be “one of the fastest growing areas of comic books and narrative fiction,” growing 16% in the first quarter of 2019 (The NPD Group<sup>5</sup>). Likewise, anime is also forming an increasingly lucrative market, with major video streaming platforms such as Hulu and Netflix taking up distribution rights for anime series. Consumption of one medium is highly effective in promoting consumption of the other, thus propagating both; this pattern is playing out in the United States<sup>6</sup> much the same as it did in Japan in the mid-twentieth century, when

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0604-2.html>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2007/5/1173601\\_826.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2007/5/1173601_826.html)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.npd.com/news/press-releases/2019/sales-of-manga-books-are-on-the-rise-in-the-united-states-the-npd-group-says/>

<sup>6</sup> Although other Anglophone countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia are also implicated here, the United States has generally served as the economic centre of English-language manga/anime translation. Accordingly, most economic data that I have been able to locate is specific to the American publishing and broadcasting industries.

anime was first used to popularise manga among wealthier (television-owning) demographics (Shiraishi 1997: 249). Especially in recent years, the advent of the Internet has enabled quick and effective distribution of both official and unlicensed translations (Bryce et al 2010; Pérez Gonzalez 2007: 265-266). Undoubtedly, manga/anime makes up a huge proportion, if not the majority, of media translated from Japanese into English over the past three decades. The resulting cultural, economic, and political significance of manga/anime has already begun to be explored within media and cultural studies as well as Japanese and Asian studies, and, considering the involvement of translation in the intersection of these fields and their subjects, should invite closer critical attention from the field of translation studies as well.

### *0.1.3 Relation to gender/sexuality*

From a feminist perspective, manga/anime are also specifically noteworthy for their historical function in the material and ideological construction of modern Japanese gender/sexual norms. While manga can be linked to a broader history of Japanese artistic tradition, modern manga/anime as distinct narrative mediums emerged from the context of the Meiji Restoration and the subsequent development of modern Japan, a process which was characterised by the convergence of Japanese and Western cultures and politics, especially of gender/sexuality (Kawasaka 2018: 594). Manga/anime come in many genres and subcategories, with one of the most basic divisions being that of gender/sex. Beginning in the postwar period, when the medium recognisable as modern manga solidified, manga aimed at young readers was classified as either *shōjo* (literally “young girl,” marketed to girls) or *shōnen* (“young boy,” marketed to boys). In the first place, this gendered bifurcation of media marketing reflects a certain ideology of gender, as do the contents of each category: *shōnen* tends to be action-driven and typically focuses on boys/men, with girls/women appearing mainly as sex objects and/or love interests. By contrast, *shōjo* tends toward character-driven emotional drama, focusing on girls and their relationships with other girls as well as boys — or characters of indeterminate, dualistic, or disputed genders.

Both categories are relevant to the construction of gender/sexuality through media, but *shōjo* has an especially notable history of depicting gender nonconformity in ways that both challenge and reinforce dominant frameworks. *Shōjo* manga grew out of the convergence of the print-based prewar “girls’ culture” with the artistic and

economic developments of the postwar reconstruction period. As well as figuring majorly in the construction of normative girlhood, it later became a site of articulation of gender/sexual oppression. The debut of an influential group of women artists in the early 1970s brought about a cultural turn in *shōjo*, establishing girls' manga as a medium that could address serious and subversive subject matter such as homosexuality and sexual abuse (Fujimoto 2014: 27; Shamoan 2012: 107-113, 119-127; Power 2009: 126-127; Welker 2006: 843). At the same time as girls' manga featured subversive ideas, however, they also became central to a capitalist industry wherein character images are commodified and marketed through media, rendering the narrative content secondary and disposable (Saito 2014: 153; Anan 2014: 58-59). In other words, the depictions of gender/sexuality in *shōjo* manga are in a dialectical relationship with the material (i.e. social, geopolitical, economic) context of their production.

## 0.2. Research motivation, principles, and frameworks

Today, due to the overarching influence of *shōjo* culture on manga/anime more generally, depictions of nonconforming or ambiguous gender/sexuality are very common in manga/anime — especially in contrast to Western English-language comics and television traditions, where such depictions have often been disallowed (Close 2017: 275). However, *shōjo* media was also foundational to the manga/anime industries and fan cultures in the Anglophone Western world. Consequently, the English translation of *shōjo* manga/anime has always been a politically loaded process of mediating and sometimes contesting multimodal depictions of gender/sexuality, and at the same time, controversies around translational approaches to gender/sexuality in *shōjo* series have functioned to proliferate their consumption and production (ibid: 272-273; Allison 2006: 154).

It was the prevalence of nonconforming gender/sexuality in manga/anime, in combination with the general linguistic issues at play in the translation of gender from Japanese into English, that first led me to consider an investigation into this topic. Gendered elements of Japanese and English manifest inversely:

1. Whereas English grammar is heavily reliant on pronouns, Japanese grammar features a less clear linguistic distinction between nouns and

pronouns, and both are often dropped, as the subject of a sentence is typically implied by context.

2. The only first-person pronouns in modern English are “I”/“me”/etc., which are not overtly gendered. The third-person singular pronouns (“she”/“he”) are gendered as strictly male and female, with the masculine having historically been designated as default and universally inclusive. Although ubiquitous in actual usage (particularly in reference to nonspecific or unknown persons), the use of singular “they” as a non-gendered way of referring to a specific known individual is still not widely accepted (Martin & Papadelos 2017: 41-42). Conversely, in Japanese, there are many ways to refer to someone in the third person without utilising pronouns or indicating a specific gender/sex. Japanese equivalents to “he” and “she” (*kare* and *kanojo*) were created by translators in the late nineteenth century and are used less frequently, and with different nuances, than English pronouns (Obana 2003: 149-154). Japanese speakers can express gender/sex through choice of first-person pronouns, which can also connote age, regional identity, and the relationship between speaker and listener (Nakamura 2014: 16).
3. English inscribes gender/sex differences in third-person pronouns as well as in somatic aspects of speech such as pitch and intonation, but there is no distinct grammar used by or associated with particular genders/sexes. Modern Japanese features a normative feminine form, *onnakotoba* (“women’s language”), which is expressed through the use of particular verb/adjectival forms, vocabulary, and sentence-ending particles (ibid; Furukawa 2016: 78).
4. Pronouns in English are presumed to be static and fixed to the individual, whereas Japanese pronouns are contextually informed and may be chosen for a particular setting or interaction (Nakamura 2014: 16; Inoue 2006: 232-241). That is, a Japanese speaker might use different personal pronouns when speaking with friends, parents, or colleagues, whereas an English speaker will always say “I.” In Japanese, multiple third-person referents could be used for a person based on the relative position of the speaker, but in English, the use of “he” or “she” is (in normative usage) totalising and universal across all contexts.

In addition to the obvious complexities of translating gender between these linguistic frameworks, I also saw a challenge posed by the globalisation of gender/sexual frameworks and the role of translated popular media in larger political/economic processes. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholarship across a range of disciplines has highlighted the impact of Western imperialism/colonisation on gender/sexual frameworks in particular locales, the Eurocentrism of knowledge production about gender/sexuality, and the hegemonic function of gender/sexual politics in the post- or neo-colonial era (Jackson 2021; Kawasaka 2018; Angles 2017; Lugones 2016; Oyěwùmí 2016; Puar 2007; Lunsing 2005; McLelland 2000). Gender-nonconforming depictions in manga/anime reflect a dynamic and evolving context in which Japanese and Western ideological frameworks and political structures of gender/sexuality have mutually shaped and reacted to one another, not necessarily from positions of equal power. With the Japanese state leveraging manga/anime in the service of its international reputation, it has been widely posited that the mass commercial translation of manga/anime poses some threat to Euro-American cultural and economic hegemony in the realm of entertainment (Brienza 2014: 384; Allison 2006: 271-279). However, this view does not account for the ideological and political dimensions of translation in all of its constituent processes, particularly as pertaining to gender/sexual norms and nonconformity. The aim of my research is to determine ideological trends in English translations of gender nonconformity in *shōjo* manga/anime and to understand the function of these translations as commodities produced by/within a globalised media industry.

### *0.2.1 Theoretical frameworks and methodologies*

The foundation for my theoretical framework is materialist feminism, mainly drawing from the French lesbian materialist feminist tradition (Delphy 1993; Wittig 1992), though also incorporating important critiques and advancements by decolonial feminists regarding the role of colonialism and imperialism in systems of gendered oppression (Lugones 2016; Oyěwùmí 2016). Both materialist and decolonial feminist theories generally hold that systems of social/economic hierarchy and classification based in biology/physicality, namely race and gender/sex, are constructed through the material organisation of society, and that particular frameworks of racial and sexual

categorisation are rooted in capitalist and colonial economic systems and processes. In opposition to the idea that the social phenomenon of “gender” is produced universally and uniformly by a naturally binary system of biological “sex,” materialist and decolonial feminism calls attention to diverse precolonial gender/sexual frameworks and identifies the material processes of capitalist industrialisation, colonisation, and globalisation — including translation — as the basis for a universalised, biologically defined framework of binary gender/sex and heterosexuality. While exercising historical awareness in any cross-cultural application of particular conceptual frameworks, to account for the centrality of nonconforming gender/sexuality in my analysis, I also incorporate elements of queer and trans theories, echoing transfeminist and queer materialist traditions which show the relevance of materialist and decolonial feminist theory to gendered positionalities other than the normative female (Noyé & Rebutini 2021).

Although not strictly a theory, multimodality is also fundamental to my theoretical approach. Multimodality is a conceptual framework that names the integrated coexistence of multiple semiotic modes (e.g. visual, verbal, auditory) in creating meaning (Kaindl 2013; Kress 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen 2001). A multimodal turn in translation studies has already led to exploration of the particularities of translating visual and audiovisual media, including manga and anime (Adami & Ramos Pinto 2020; Josephy-Hernández 2017; Assis 2016; Borodo 2015; Lee 2011). However, further critical developments in the application of multimodality to translation studies have argued that single modes are also expressed multimodally — for example, printed text conveys information not only through the linguistic form of the words but also through visual elements such as typeface and colour. Because modes must be expressed through a physical medium, multimodality ultimately emphasises the materiality of translation and the causative relationship between form and content (Kaindl 2020; Littau 2016; O’Hagan 2013). This analytical lens equips me to take full account of the material cultures of *shōjo* manga/anime production, translation, and consumption, and paired with a materialist feminist theoretical framework, it illuminates the connection of modern media/popular culture to larger systems of material dominance and subordination.

Finally, I use case studies to structure my research, working with three “typical” cases (Saldanha & O’Brien 2013). This methodology allows me to approach each

manga/anime series and its translations in the context of its own historical moment, giving due focus to external material factors at play.

### *0.2.2 Terminology and presentation of Japanese language*

A few key terms are used throughout the thesis, which I will briefly clarify here, although these points will be elucidated more thoroughly in Chapters 1 and 2.

Firstly, with a few exceptions for brevity and/or clarity, I generally refer to “gender/sex” and “gender/sexuality” as units. My theoretical framework holds that frameworks of biological/physiological “sex” are not natural or pre-social, but are colonial ideologies substantiated by cultural norms and institutions that materially enforce binary “gendering” of bodies through law and medicine (Fausto-Sterling 2000; Lorber 1993), and that the gender/sex binary is constructed as intrinsically heterosexual, and deviation from heterosexuality constitutes deviation from normative gender/sex roles. Therefore, rather than perpetuating the convention of using “sex” to mean anatomy and “gender” to mean social role or identity, I use both to make explicit that one always invokes the other (likewise with “gender” and “sexuality”).

Next, I use the term “gender nonconformity” and its variations (i.e. “nonconforming gender/sexuality”) to encompass the range of depictions of gender/sexuality included in my analysis. This phrasing and framing emphasises my focus on characters marked as divergent from dominant norms in their source materials, without uncritically applying globalised frameworks of categorisation (namely LGBT/queerness). Because certain patterns of non-normative gender/sexuality can be construed as solidifying into “norms” of their own, particularly in the context of *shōjo* manga/anime’s visual culture, I generally opt for “nonconforming” over “non-normative” to avoid the confusion between materially established norms (i.e. hegemony) and conceptual norms (i.e. archetypes) which sometimes troubles queer theory.

I continue to use “*shōjo*,” “manga,” and “anime” as already defined. Note that as Japanese loanwords, there is no distinction between their singular and plural forms. I use the term *shōjo* by itself in two senses: to refer to the totality of the culture/industry (manga/anime, merchandise, fan communities, etc.), and to refer to the gendered figure or archetype who is the idealised subject of this culture/industry. Less ubiquitous terms pertaining to manga/anime and Japanese culture will continue to be italicised (if

they come from Japanese) and glossed after they are introduced. In discussing fan translations, I refer to “fansubs” (anime or television subtitles produced by fans) and to “scanlation,” a portmanteau of “scan” and “translation” referring to manga translations produced through digital scanning and image editing. Both terms also function as verbs (e.g. “fansubbing,” “scanlated”).

I use several different terms for geographic, political, and cultural regions or entities. I use “Japan” and “Japanese” to refer to the nation of Japan and its people, clarifying specific historical delineations of borders, citizenship, and national/ethnic identity where necessary. Likewise, I use the conventional framing of “the West” and “Western” to refer to the geopolitical bloc that contains, is internally dominated by, and is often externally defined by or associated with the industrialised national powers of (particularly) the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Germany. This is to contextualise the “Japanese”-“Western” dichotomy as a product of historical discourse, and not to position either “Japan” or “the West” as internally fixed or homogeneous, but to operate within the framework commonly established in national discourses surrounding these entities and in much critical academic discourse regarding the same. Terminology for the regionality of English translation is slightly harder to pin down: although official English translations have most often been licensed by U.S. and Canadian enterprises, and although the Internet is hardly without its own borders, the increasing digitisation of media distribution has meant that consumption of translated manga/anime is by no means limited to the locales of official production. Hence, I primarily use “Anglophone”/“English-speaking” in combination with the geopolitical descriptor (i.e. “the Anglophone West”) to name the broad cultural realm in which most English translations of manga/anime are produced and consumed. More specific terms, such as “Euro-American” or “North American Anglophone,” are used where this specificity is evident and relevant.

Finally, I present names of Japanese individuals in the Japanese order (surname first, personal name second). I use the modified Hepburn system of romanisation, except where established convention favours a different spelling (e.g. “Tokyo” rather than “Tōkyō”).

### 0.2.3 Research questions

Bearing in mind the issues raised so far, and according to my established theoretical framing, my primary line of questioning is as follows:

How have Japanese-language depictions of gender/sexual nonconformity in *shōjo* manga and anime been translated into English, and how do these depictions and translations figure within the materiality and multimodality of gender/sexual politics in the source and target cultural contexts, respectively?

I also consider these secondary questions:

- In light of the colonial historical background of dominant frameworks of gender/sexuality, how do observed translation decisions relate to hegemonic norms? How do translations of gender nonconformity promote, challenge, or otherwise invoke ideologies of cross-cultural gender/sexual “equivalence” or “universality”?
- Based on the argument that gender nonconformity is relative to materially established norms in a given context, which specific norms — produced by which material factors — are observably expressed, suppressed, and/or contested within translations?
- How does multimodality factor into the translation of gender nonconformity, considering both the significance of the visual mode to *shōjo* media’s coding of gender/sex and the materiality of the production and distribution of translations comprising multiple modes?
- What notable or consistent differences in approaches to gender nonconformity appear in officially licensed, professionally produced translations versus fan translations, and what material factors have produced these differences?

My investigative framing is oriented around an understanding of both manga/anime and gender/sexuality as implicated in, and (re)produced by, material politics. Rather than approaching gender nonconformity in *shōjo* as “representation” of gender-nonconforming demographics per se, I examine these

media portrayals and their English translations as a part of a wider process of constructing gender/sexual norms.

#### *0.2.4 Note on gendered language in analysis*

As discussed, the introduction of gendered pronouns is a recurring issue in Japanese-English translations of nonconforming gender in *shōjo*. With regard to certain characters discussed throughout the thesis — namely Oscar in Chapter 4 and Haruka in Chapter 5 — I take nonconventional approaches to pronoun usage to reflect the characters' gender/sexual duality or ambiguity and avoid their static linguistic categorisation as masculine or feminine. Rather than using the singular “they,” which tends to connote a static neutrality, I use “he” and “she” interchangeably or in combination (e.g. “s/he”), according to the characters' gendered positionality in context of the particular scenes being discussed. This is in no way a blanket condemnation of the use of singular “they” for gender-nonconforming characters in translation or otherwise, but merely a reasoned decision on the basis that all of the cases I review in this thesis specifically feature discourses of duality or ambiguity between masculine and feminine polarities, rather than discourses of distinct neutral or “third” genders. By flouting the norm that subjects in English are exclusively referred to by one static set of pronouns based on a naturally fixed gender/sex, I hope to both illustrate and deconstruct the functional relationship between gender and language in a way that complements my overall theoretical analysis of these translations.

#### *0.2.5 Note on presentation of translation excerpts*

Only English translation excerpts appear in the main chapters, with references made to the Japanese source text as needed. The full romanised text corresponding to each excerpt is located in the Appendix, along with my literal English translations, for comparative purposes.

In all excerpts, formatting and punctuation reflects that used in the excerpted materials as closely as possible, and typographical errors are transcribed as found. I use parentheses to distinguish annotations (text appearing handwritten outside of speech bubbles, rather than typeset inside speech bubbles) and square brackets for translators' notes.

### 0.3. Chapter summaries

Chapter 1 introduces my theoretical framework in depth. I construct a materialist feminist lens, with decolonial, queer, and trans theoretical influences, through which to approach cross-cultural concepts of gender/sexuality that emerge both in/through and as a result of translations. This framework underscores the materiality of gender/sexuality as well as language, and draws connections to multimodality as the material result of multimedia. Chapter 2 provides an extensive historical background of modern gender/sexual frameworks and mass media culture in Japan. Beginning with the final years of feudalism and the project of modernisation, industrialisation, and nation-building, I trace the development of a material “girls’ culture” through the shifting political and economic conditions of the prewar and postwar periods, and then through three periods delineated to correspond with my case studies (roughly, the 1970s-1980s, the 1990s-2000s, and the 2000s-2010s). Chapter 3 contains the inventory of the source materials used in each case study, discusses research methodology and structure, and gives a brief overview of key points of interest and other relevant information for each.

Data analysis begins in Chapter 4, which covers the 1970s franchise *The Rose of Versailles* and focuses primarily on two translations of the manga, with a fansubbed version of the anime also included. With a significant gap between the original Japanese release and the English translations, this chapter aims to historicise and politicise particular manifestations of gender nonconformity in *shōjo*, relating girls’ popular culture to contemporary social unrest and the tensions between consumerist and socialist feminisms in postwar Japan. In Chapter 5, on *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, I focus on the anime and its audiovisual translations, comparing the first official English dub with a contemporaneous fansubbed version. This chapter centres on the 1990s as a period characterised by globalisation of media cultures and economies, practices of localisation and censorship in official English translations, and the formation of regional Anglophone fan subcultures. In Chapter 6, I analyse official and fan translations of both the manga and anime for *Ouran High School Host Club*. Spanning the mid-2000s to the early 2010s, this chapter’s key themes include the explosive growth of the manga/anime translation industry in Anglophone North America, the effects of the Internet on fan culture and fan translation, and the renegotiation of gendered economic roles under Japan’s neoliberal policies. Chapter 7 concludes the

thesis with a summary of findings, a reflection on their significance, and consideration of future investigative possibilities relating to nonconforming gender/sexuality in translated manga/anime.

# Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

## 1.1. Introduction

To approach the multifaceted topic of gender/sexuality in Japanese-English translated media, a multifaceted analytical framework is necessary. In this chapter, I construct the theoretical basis for my research and flesh out key concepts needed in analysis of the source media and translations. I begin with multimodality, grounding my approach to manga/anime in an understanding of the materiality of all forms of media and communication and the determinative relationship between production, form, and content. From the materiality of translation, I move into a discussion of materialist and decolonial feminist frameworks, relating them to language, translation, and the Japanese historical context. I also incorporate elements of trans and queer lenses to clarify the relevance of materialist feminism to gender nonconformity, and unpack the theoretical and political challenges of translating gender/sexuality. Finally, I draw these concepts and frameworks together as they pertain to the specific phenomenon of gender nonconformity in *shōjo* manga/anime, laying a foundation for the analysis of specific media, characters, and translations.

## 1.2. Multimodality and the materiality of translation

Multimodality refers to “[t]he use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001: 20), that is, the communication of information using a combination of visual, linguistic, and/or auditory means. Manga utilises the visual and verbal modes through pictures and text, while anime is audiovisual and may also incorporate the verbal mode through subtitles. In multimodal texts, meaning is constructed through the interactive relationships between the different modes. For example,

[i]n a comic book, the visual mode plays the primary role and the verbal mode has a subordinate and complementary role to play, but these two modes constantly interact, at times overlapping in what they communicate and sometimes diverting from each other in the meanings they express.

— Borodo 2015: 23

The roles of individual modes, and the relationships between them, are prone to change in translation; whether images, words, and/or sounds are at play in the construction of a narrative will affect the way meaning is constituted in the multimodal work and thus how a translator is able to translate it. Depending on the situation, the presence of visual information in a manga panel might provide leeway with translating dialogue, or conversely it might call for further explanation or adaptation for an audience unfamiliar with the visual cues (ibid: 25).

Similarly, one of the first questions in the multimodal translation of anime is the choice of subtitles or dubbing, which each present a unique set of working conditions. Subtitling makes it possible to “[preserve] the original text, both aurally and visually, while adding an extra layer of information” (Díaz Cintas 2013: 274). With the addition of the extra layer in translation, the relationships between the modes change; the role of the auditory mode is rendered complementary to that of the visual and (translated) linguistic modes. The average English-speaking viewer of subtitled anime cannot understand the Japanese dialogue — beyond what inferences might be made from intonation, volume, and pitch — and primarily derives meaning from the subtitles and animation. Instead of conveying linguistic meaning, then, the auditory mode might fulfil another purpose for the viewer: to intrigue with its foreignness, or to signal the viewer’s cultural competence (Fennel et al 2012: 446). In dubbing, the primacy of the auditory mode is retained, but cultural dissonance is introduced between the auditory/verbal and visual modes — i.e., characters might be visually presented as Japanese people living in Japan, while speaking English and making American cultural references. Alternatively, localising approaches might take greater liberties with translating nonverbal elements of the text, such as replacing a drawing of Japanese food with Western food (Adami & Ramos Pinto 2020: 79-80). In either case, translational possibilities are both opened up and constrained by each of the different modes and the interplay between them, making the translation in large part a product of the medium by which it is communicated. In this way, multimodal translation reinforces the understanding that translation is an inescapably material act, dealing not just in the metaphysical realm of ideas, but existing first and foremost in/through the physical (Kaindl 2020: 51; Littau 2016: 83). Translation processes

are shaped by material reality on a micro level: the existence of media is dependent on a physical form as a vessel for the linguistic and ideological content, be it the paper, ink, and glue that make up a manga magazine or the animating, recording, and broadcasting equipment involved in the production of anime.

### *1.2.1 Material politics of translation*

The material world influences translation on a macro level, too: heightened access to the Internet and other forms of communicative technology has enabled manga/anime to become increasingly internationally popular and profitable since the 1990s (Pérez-González 2007: 265; Allison 2006: 4-6; Shiraishi 1997: 262-263). The global spread of culture has been enabled by physical infrastructure, in the form of digital technologies facilitating the reproduction — including translation — of media around the world (O’Hagan 2013: 506-508). If this phenomenon was enabled by physical infrastructure, then it was also enabled by the conditions that produced that infrastructure: economic circumstances, political agendas, industrial capacity for production at a given time/location, cultural norms, practices of censorship or promotion of particular materials over others, and any other forces affecting production. To give one example, the *shōjo* series *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* features an antagonist who appears as a feminine/androgynous man in a romantic relationship with another, more masculine antagonist. This character was rewritten as female in DIC Entertainment’s 1995 English anime dub, a choice reflecting a political climate in which it was unacceptable for “homosexuals” to appear in a children’s cartoon — even as villains. Similarly, the dub of a later season of the show rewrote the lesbian-coded protagonists as cousins. Because the visual mode depicted one of them in both overtly masculine and feminine personas, changes to the script endeavoured to impose a heteronormative interpretation of their relationship over the visual mode. By manipulating the auditory and visual modes through the dubbing and editing process (Ladd & Deneroff 2009: 100-101), DIC censored gender nonconformity throughout the series, upholding dominant target cultural norms of acceptability.

These examples illustrate how material factors beyond the immediate physical form of a text — i.e. the material arrangement of society as a whole, or in a word, politics

— are just as directly relevant to translation. *Sailor Moon* was licensed for production as a dub mainly as a matter of target cultural expectations and accessibility to its target audience, U.S. American and Canadian children (Close 2017: 270) Then, the actual quality of the dub was defined by the socio-political context of homophobia and sexual conservatism following the AIDS crisis. As one of the series' American producers has stated, the censorship was carried out because “no other solution would have satisfied a U.S. broadcaster's department of Standards and Practices” — airing the unaltered episode “would have indicated DIC's apparent approval of behavior considered deviant in the Western world” (Ladd & Deneroff: 146-147). By contrast, the 2014 re-dub of the series by Viz Media, released on various private streaming services such as Hulu, was characterised by a deliberate faithfulness in translating previously censored content after almost twenty years of fan backlash and calls for increased representation of diverse gender/sexual identities in Anglophone media (Gramuglia 2020<sup>1</sup>). These cases show that translations are the product not only of the physical matter enabling their transmission, but also of the historicity of their production.

Accordingly, I argue that an investigation of multimodal translation demands a broader materialist analysis. The translation of gender nonconformity in manga/anime interacts with different layers of information imparted through speech, images, and sound, but analysis should not stop at the level of the text — rather, it should account more fully for the social contexts in which these textual elements derive gendered meaning and the political forces by which they are arbitrated in particular ways. Analysis of the translation of gender-nonconforming characters in the multimodal context of manga/anime calls for a deep understanding of the history behind why such depictions appear in these forms of media, which is necessarily also a history of the development of certain narrative mediums and frameworks of gender/sexuality. Multimodality alone is not sufficient to accomplish this task. Kress (2011) emphasises that multimodality

by itself does not constitute a theory. Rather it projects the domain in which a theory [...] find [sic] its application. Multimodality and social semiotics, together, make it possible to ask questions around meaning and meaning-making; about the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.animeherald.com/2020/06/22/revisiting-dics-sailor-moon-25-years-later/>

agency of meaning-makers, the constitution of identity in sign- and meaning-making; about the (social) constraints they face in making meaning; around social semiosis and knowledge; how 'knowledge' is produced, shaped and constituted distinctly in different modes; and by whom. Multimodality includes questions around the potentials — the affordances — of the resources that are available in any one society for the making of meaning; and how, therefore, 'knowledge' appears differently in different modes.

— Kress 2011: 38

Grounded in the cultural realm of Japanese manga/anime and the linguistic context of the Japanese-English language pair, my research will investigate how Japanese-English translation processes have always been political processes of gendering, which have cooperated with other ongoing material and linguistic processes of modernisation to create categories of social meaning including gender, sexuality, nationality, class, race, and ethnicity (Nakamura 2014: 227-229, Inoue 2006: 59-60, 79-81). In order to carry out this investigation, I will apply materialist feminist theories to the "domain" of multimodal translation. Using these theoretical lenses will enable me to interpret multimodal Japanese-English translation of gender nonconformity in light of relevant material processes beyond the texts, providing a basis for analysing the political character of these translations.

### *1.2.2 Feminist materiality*

In the general sense, I have chosen a feminist approach to this research because many of the texts I will analyse are situated within the modern history of nationalism, patriarchal oppression, and the political construction of gender/sexual identities and frameworks in Japan. The thematic shift toward gender/sexuality that occurred in *shōjo* culture in the 1970s was contemporaneous with Japanese feminist and lesbian movements and the mass entrance of women into the workforce (Shamoon 2012: 102; Power 2009: 126; Matsui 1990: 441-442). However, much of the Western feminist tradition has been critiqued as Eurocentric, essentialist, and unable to account for gender/sexual structures and ontologies outside of the Western hegemonic gender system, let alone the numerous violent historical impositions of the latter upon the former (Oyěwùmí 2016: 9-17, Lugones

2016: 12-16). While Japan was not strictly colonised, its rapid modernisation and Westernisation, and the modes of gender/sexuality and artistic expression that developed during this period, should be understood in the context of nineteenth-century Western imperialism in Asia. I suggest that the project of Westernisation-as-modernisation undertaken through the Meiji Restoration, initiated under conditions of domestic unrest and military pressure from the United States, can be understood as pseudo-colonisation through which “Western” ideological values, political systems, and social structures, including gender and the family, were imposed, while traditional structures, practices, and norms associated with the feudal system were dissolved or otherwise discouraged (Gluck 1997: 566-572; Nakamura 2014: 73-75). I utilise specifically materialist and decolonial trans-queer feminist theories because these provide an effective lens for analysing the problems of nation, gender/sexuality, class, capital, and power that are fundamental to the actual production, translation, and consumption of manga/anime, as well as the meaning of nonconforming gender/sexuality within them. Rather than treating content and form as abstracted from one another, materialist theories identify a material relationship between form and meaning, which is vital to understanding the proliferation of translated media (Littau 2016: 89-90). Likewise, these particular feminisms account for political, social, and economic structures in the material world as forces that engage language, media, and translation in the construction of particular (patriarchal, capitalist) ideologies of gender/sexuality. None of these theories orient themselves toward Japan or Japanese language specifically, yet when integrated and interpreted through lenses of translation studies and Japanese history, they present a coherent analysis of the historical development of modern gender/sexuality in Japan and representations of gender nonconformity in English translations of *shōjo* manga/anime.

### 1.3. Materialist feminism

Materialist feminism refers broadly to a school of feminist thought stemming from the synthesis of historical and dialectical materialism, as originated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, with critical feminist consciousness. The result of this synthesis is a theory of the hegemonic male/female gender/sex binary as a kind of economic class structure particular to patriarchal capitalism, or capitalist patriarchy (Wittig 1992: 15-20; Delphy

1993: 8). Although materialist feminism as such is a development of the late twentieth century, stemming primarily from the French feminist tradition (Noyé & Rebutini 2021: 13), Engels' foundational writings<sup>2</sup> of the mid-nineteenth century began to articulate one of materialist feminism's central tenets: that sex/gender is an economic structure, with the roles and status of "women" and "men" alike determined by the conditions of their economic class under capitalism. In 1845, reflecting on a working class man's sense of emasculation by economic conditions which had turned his wife into the breadwinner and himself into a stay-at-home father, Engels wrote:

We must either despair of mankind, and its aims and efforts, when we see all our labour and toil result in such a mockery, or we must admit that human society has hitherto sought salvation in a false direction; *we must admit that so total a reversal of the position of the sexes can have come to pass only because the sexes have been placed in a false position from the beginning*. If the reign of the wife over the husband, as inevitably brought about by the factory system, is inhuman, the pristine rule of the husband over the wife must have been inhuman too.

— Engels 1887: 112 (emphasis mine)

Of course, Engels' analysis never calls into question many of the underlying assumptions about biology, nature, and society that materialist feminists, among others, have since challenged. His and Marx's original theories of capital and labour have been critiqued for orienting the white/European proletarian man as the primary or centrally significant victim of capitalist exploitation, disregarding the oppression of white/European proletarian women as well as Black/African and other indigenous peoples who were colonised or enslaved outside of Europe and excluded from notions of historical subjectivity (Noyé & Rebutini 2021: 2-7, Federici 2014: 12-13, Vogel 2013: 31-77, Wilderson 2003: 229-234; Spillers 1987: 65-68). Such materialist accounts of history show that not only is capitalism sustained by the unwaged reproductive labour<sup>3</sup> of women, it was jumpstarted by a period

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<sup>2</sup> Notably, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884).

<sup>3</sup> Coined by Marxist feminists, the term 'reproductive labour' refers to labour that "reproduces" the population by facilitating the conditions for life. Importantly, "[the capitalist] gender-order does not require that all women give birth" but "entails gendered relations in which the social responsibility for birthing and raising the next generation is coded as female" (Vogel 2013: xxix).

of “primary accumulation” of starting capital, in the form of human life and labour: the domination of European women through witch-hunting, the establishment of the transatlantic chattel slave trade, and the colonisation of multiple continents. Thus, while the capitalist system can be understood to broadly consist of a bourgeois ruling class whose members own the means of production and a proletarian class whose members are compelled to sell their labour power to the ruling class in exchange for a wage (Marx 1865), it is ahistorical to deny other meaningful material divisions, or “classes” — i.e. gender, race — within the “working class” more broadly conceived, as such denial obscures the fact of capitalism’s foundation upon racial and sexual hierarchies. Since the transitional period of roughly 1500-1800 that set the stage for modern industrial capitalism (Amin 2011: 17), the capitalist system has always needed, created, and perpetuated social hierarchies in order to rationalise mass systemic exploitation (Federici 2014: 103-105; Wilderson 2003: 229-230; Wittig 1992: 2-12). Materialist feminisms therefore build on Marx and Engels’ basic assessment of capitalist political economy, demanding that gender/sex and race be understood as fundamental, not incidental, to the system.

### *1.3.1 The division of gender/sex*

Materialist feminists have argued that modern capitalist societies are organised according to an economic base in which “sex” functions as a basic division of labour, and conversely, that this labour division is particular to modern capitalism. Broadly, in pre-capitalist times throughout history and around the world, “women” and “men” shared responsibility for vital forms of labour within their communities, with different cultures developing their own frameworks, many of which could be characterised as egalitarian (Leacock 2008: 17-24). In medieval Europe, under the feudal system, there was as yet

no social separation [...] between the production of goods and the reproduction of the work-force; all work contributed to the family’s sustenance. [Peasant] women worked in the fields, in addition to raising children, cooking, washing, spinning, and keeping an herb garden; their domestic activities were not devalued and did not involve different social relations from those of men, as they would later, in a money-economy, when housework would cease to be viewed as real work.

— Federici 2014: 25

The same was true in feudal Japan, where peasant women dedicated more time to agriculture and textile production than they did to childrearing; women of other classes similarly had many responsibilities outside of domestic work, and samurai women notably were not expected to raise their own children (Uno 1993: 18). The notion that women's domesticity is their "natural" or "original" state, based on a capacity for childbirth, is plainly disproven by history. However, the advent of the capitalist system in Europe saw the transformation of social life with the enclosures of the commons, the dissolution of feudal classes, and the division of societies into public and private spheres, with "men" able to occupy the former and "women" confined to the latter.<sup>4</sup> By the time of the early industrial period, men either worked for a wage or owned property/means of production, depending on their class, while women regardless of class were legally disenfranchised and consigned to unwaged domestic labour.<sup>5</sup> Interdependent multigenerational communities were increasingly broken down into nuclear family units, rendering women and children economically dependent on a male head of household (Federici 2014: 68-75).

"Sex" was not merely a biological distinction, then, but a socially-determined assignment of economic role and social status based on distinctions among bodies (Oyěwùmí 2016: 8-10; Delphy 1993: 6-7). Thus, while bodily physiology has so often been identified as the objective, stable, and natural source of the cultural/social phenomenon which early feminists have named as "gender," materialist feminism argues that in fact the cultural/social hierarchy of gender "precedes sex: that sex itself simply marks a social division; that it serves to allow social recognition and identification of those who are dominants and those who are dominated" (Delphy 1993: 5, emphasis mine). Furthermore, neither sex nor gender is pre-social, in the sense that the sexual classification of human bodies is also a social (and often medical and/or legal) process based in particular historical traditions, political ideologies, and cultural norms (Spade & Willse 2016; Fausto-

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that these categories were always actively constituted through social and political processes arbitrated by law and religion, counter to the notion that gender/sexual categories were clear-cut in premodern times. Anne Fausto-Sterling documents several cases of "hermaphrodites" in the same places and times covered by Federici, showing that sexually ambiguous people were forced to commit to male or female presentation according to the judgments of doctors and courts (2000: 35-36).

<sup>5</sup> Of course, the nature and intensity of this work would vary significantly by class.

Sterling 2000: 56-66). Attempts to define (social) “gender” as unstable or culturally constructed by juxtaposing it against a universally stable (biological) “sex” make invisible these processes and ideologies, essentialising particular constitutions of “biology” which are themselves loaded with historical, religious, political specificity and purpose (ibid: 16-17, Delphy 1993: 7).

For example, during the transition to capitalism in Europe, institutions such as the Church produced ideologies that naturalised and justified the male-female sexual hierarchy, seeding the popular understanding of certain familial and sexual configurations as biologically preordained and morally proper, and others as sin and heresy (Federici 2014: 34-39). In the realm of scientific research, biological explanations of the human body were adjusted in order to recategorise ambiguously sexed bodies within the male-female binary, framing the biological existence of bodies outside this binary as mistakes in need of correction (Fausto-Sterling 2000: 37). Likewise, in Japan, the abrupt transition from decentralised feudalism to nationalised industrial capitalism over the course of the Meiji Restoration resulted in a drastic reformulation of social life and the establishment of new ideologies of womanhood which came to be state-sanctioned (Nakamura 2014: 74, Gluck 1997: 571). Early modernist thinkers “introduced and advocated the modern idea of the division of labour by sex” (Takeda 2005: 38), constructing “maintenance and improvement of the population” (39) as women’s natural civic duty, and promoting women’s education only insofar as to further this aim. The Ministry of Education also enshrined the ideal of *ryōsai kenbo* (“good wife, wise mother”) and instructed women to dedicate themselves entirely to “motherhood and household management” (Uno 1993: 17, 35-39). In the context of Meiji Japan, language — especially the concept of *onnakotoba*, “women’s language” — became a primary domain through which these new gender ideologies were articulated and established (Nakamura 2014: 90-102). This historical fact brings the Japanese context, and by extension manga/anime subcultures, into theoretical alignment with materialist feminist theories of gender/sex and language.

### *1.3.2 Materialist feminist perspectives on gender and language*

Materialist feminism theorises language as a part of the “superstructure,” which originally springs from, then mutually informs, the economic “base” of society. The existence of

gendered language, then, does not reflect an essentially gendered quality of speakers, but reveals gender as an external structure, located in a patriarchally organised world, which demands that speakers gender themselves in order to participate in social discourse. That is, gendered language is the consequence of a materially established sexual hierarchy, and not the reverse. Monique Wittig develops this idea extensively and rejects the usage of “gender” to mean a social projection of “sex,” defining it instead as “the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes and of the domination of women” (77):

Sex, under the name of gender, permeates the whole body of language and forces every locutor, if she belongs to the oppressed sex, to proclaim it in her speech, that is, to appear in language under her proper physical form and not under the abstract form, which every male locutor has the unquestioned right to use. The abstract form, the general, the universal, this is what the so-called masculine gender means, for the class of men have appropriated the universal for themselves. One must understand that men are not born with a faculty for the universal and that women are not reduced at birth to the particular. The universal has been, and is continually, at every moment, appropriated by men. [...] It is an act carried out at the level of concepts, philosophy, politics.

— Wittig 1985: 79-80

Wittig’s analysis deals with French and sometimes English, where she identifies personal pronouns as the only parts of speech that specifically function as “gender bearers” (ibid: 76) by requiring speakers to articulate their gendered positionality in the sense she describes. Nevertheless, her insights are relevant to the Japanese language, which also requires speakers to gender themselves — not through a static, dichotomous choice of masculine or feminine terms, but through the context-dependent choice of one of many personal pronouns, vocabularies, and speech patterns which may reflect the speaker’s age, gender/sex, sexuality, and regional identity (Nakamura 2014: 16), and may be chosen consciously by the speaker to suit a particular occupation or situation (ibid: 8-11; Inoue 2006: 213-216). However, while linguistic expression in Japanese is multifaceted in this way according to descriptive accounts, the modern socio-political order in Japan

has attempted to prescriptively delineate language into masculine and feminine forms, primarily by regulating the feminine through the concept of a distinct “women’s language” (Nakamura 2014: 87-102).

So-called women’s language “is thus understood as a set of linguistic forms and functions exclusively or statistically used by women and very often associated with certain feminine demeanours, roles, and attributes, such as being soft-spoken, polite, hesitant, empathetic, gentle, and non-assertive,” and has been “viewed as an emblem of nation and tradition” and used as “a self-conscious parameter of civil order and social change” in constructing Japanese national and cultural identity (Inoue 2006: 2-3). The body of research on women’s language has definitively shown that this concept solidified specifically in the context of Japanese capitalist modernity, as one aspect of the Meiji era project to establish and naturalise a new universal role for women. As such, the notion of women’s language is a patriarchal discursive ideal rather than a linguistic reality for all, or even most, Japanese women — historically and in the present (ibid: 6-9, Nakamura 2014: 10, Furukawa 2016: 80-82). The perceived success or failure of Japanese women to achieve this ideal is central to the social construction of Japanese womanhood, with the “corruption” and “death” of women’s language being a frequent topic of Japanese public discourse (Inoue 2006: 163-165), and the nonstandard usage of women’s language in variant styles such as *onēkotoba* (roughly, “queens’ speech”) is also central to the performance of gender/sexual nonconformity by many groups of “sexual minorities” in Japan (Abe 2010: 97-135). Therefore, in the Japanese context, gendered language can also be said to function as the linguistic enforcement of social/political/economic “sex.”

#### 1.4. Decolonial feminism

From a materialist understanding of gender/sex as a cultural and economic system of hierarchical categorisation, it follows that gender/sex is culturally and historically specific, not “natural.” Particular hegemonic models have, however, been spread through colonisation processes which asserted these models as rightfully, if not factually, universal (Oyěwùmí 2016: 80-156, Lugones 2016: 4-16). This cultural hegemony produces what the Nigerian feminist sociologist Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí calls “the woman problem”: the essentialist tendency of Western feminisms to universalise their own local

histories of patriarchy and interpret all information from other cultural contexts accordingly, relying on an unquestioned assumption that in all contexts across time, culture, and geography, the subject position of “woman” has been a biological inevitability, always constructed and oppressed in identical ways. The presence of this essentialism in so much existing feminist theory raises ethical and logical problems with applying feminism to non-Western contexts influenced by Western imperialism. By combining feminism with decolonial thought, decolonial feminism acknowledges that a patriarchal gender/sex binary is present in many postcolonial societies — whether as a traditional structure, a colonially imposed structure, or a combination of both — and so concedes that a feminist analysis may be useful in understanding these conditions.

Equally, decolonial feminism asserts the importance of rejecting the universalisation of historically specific systems of gender/sexuality and the necessity of understanding the “coloniality of gender” (Lugones 2016: 8), i.e. the inextricability of gender/sex systems (on both global and local scales) from historical colonialism and present-day neo-colonialism. The specific gender/sex system that arose with European capitalism was inherently racialised from its inception, as racialised physical characteristics too were used in the sexual classification of bodies. Gender/sexual categories were applied differently to enslaved and colonised people, who experienced total disruption of their indigenous ontologies of so-called “gender/sexuality” and exclusion from normative womanhood/manhood, categories developed relative to the “civilised,” the “citizen,” and the “human” — which were all defined in terms of whiteness (Henderson 2018: 196; Lugones 2016: 13; Spillers 1987: 79). A high degree of sexual differentiation/dimorphism was framed as a marker of civilisation; conversely, Black/African and indigenous peoples were construed as sexually ambiguous, undifferentiated, or multi-sexed, and thus in need of colonisation to bring them into order (Lugones 2016: 7, 12-13). Of course, not every human society prior to the colonial era featured an idealised egalitarian, non-binary, or multi-gendered system, nor did all notions of gender/sex as bimodal and/or biologically determined originate purely with colonisation (though many did). Rather, European colonisation invariably disrupted indigenous systems with the deliberate intentions of installing the colonising culture’s political values and economic systems — whether that meant imposing them over a different existing

system, or taking advantage of similar existing ones. This point demonstrates the inherent ideological connection between decolonial and materialist analysis: a decolonial understanding of gender/sexuality is necessarily materialist, locating the construction of gender in concrete political systems and social discourses rather than in nature or metaphysical idealism. It is impossible to paint a historically complete and accurate picture of gender/sexuality without also addressing colonialism, race, and slavery — which is true in the context of Japan as well.

#### *1.4.1 Western imperialism and gender/sexuality in Japan*

While Japan may appear detached from these histories and theories, it is no less implicated in global processes of imperialism, colonialism, and capitalist expansion. The onset of capitalist modernity in Japan was also an onset of new, modern frameworks of gender/sexuality and race. At the same time that Marx was developing his theory of capital, the United States was beginning an eastward push into Asia, with explicit plans to Christianise and Westernise Japan as well as China, bringing these societies into the yoke of industrialism. This political pursuit was overtly discursively gendered/sexed, with commentators of the time characterising the United States as a male suitor who sought to dominate Japan, possess “her” material assets, and put “her” in “her” proper (i.e. subservient) place in international relations. Of the U.S. naval expedition led by Matthew Perry to force the country to open to foreign trade, one participant wrote:

Why would not a single messenger of peace be more appropriate than batteries and guns? The lords of creation do not commonly make their proposals to the weaker sex at the cannon’s mouth. But Japan was a somewhat supercilious dame, and had hotly resented such overtures before. She would do so again. [...] [...] was high time to teach the island empire of the east how to behave to the citizens of the great republic of the west.

— Sewall 1905: 124

At this time, feudal Japan faced internal political conflict between the disempowered imperial family and the power-holding Tokugawa shogunate. The Perry expedition took advantage of this instability and forced Japan to make a choice: quickly

advance as an imperial power itself or, like many other Asian countries, become the next target for colonisation. The outcome of this conflict — namely, the restoration of political power to the imperial throne and the beginning of the Meiji era — resulted in a rapid transition from feudalism to modern industrial capitalism and the onset of Japanese “modernity” as Japan sought equal footing with its aggressor (Takeda 2005: 35). This enormous economic shift transformed the social lives and roles of Japanese people, with women in particular being the subjects of explicit government mandates (Nakamura 2014: 73-74, Inoue 2006: 79-81; Uno 1993: 35-36). Consequently, the decolonial perspective is not that feminism is inapplicable to the Japanese context — the factual existence of a Japanese feminist tradition speaks for itself in this regard — but that the adoption of feminism in Japan must be understood to have occurred in conjunction with Japan’s changing role on the global stage, from a periphery under threat of colonisation by Western imperial powers, to an imperial power itself. Feminist movements developed in Japanese modernity, after the society and government had been largely remodelled after Western political structures, and Japanese women had been subsumed from various class-based roles into the single sex-based role of wife/mother — much like women in European imperialist nations had been for some decades prior (ibid: 441). Similarities between the progression of feminist/women’s movements in Japan and the West after the turn of the twentieth century should be attributed to the similarities in their economic trajectories from feudalism to capitalism and the deliberate mirroring of Western social and political structures in Japanese modernisation — not a biologically essential or inevitable struggle.

Equally, though, this is not to assert that a purely traditional “Japanese” ideological/cultural framework was erased and a purely modern “Western” one neatly established in its place. The *sui generis* theory of “Japanese culture,” and the implied corollary of “Western culture” as equally monolithic, are essentialist notions which themselves reflect historical struggles for dominance and self-assertion between these spheres (Sakai & Morris 1997: 47-48). Rather, gender/sexual frameworks in Japan and the West have had both historical and modern similarities and differences, and gender in the Japanese context has undergone significant changes, deliberately imposed and otherwise, in response to changing conditions. Modernisation entailed not wholesale

erasure but *renegotiation* of cultural notions of gender/sexuality, including those which Western frameworks might characterise as deviant or “queer.” Because ideas of appropriate gender performance and sexual normality figured centrally in the construction of a modern Japanese national identity, and because this modern Japanese national identity was constructed in opposition to both the traditional Japanese identity and the modern Western identity, gender/sexual variance acquired multiple, often contradictory, connotations and valuations. In the Japanese context, the notion of normativity or normality with regard to gender and sexuality “has been sustained by contradictory discourses and confusing cultural distinctions between Japan and the West, rather than definitive transitions towards Westernisation and clear cultural distinctions between Japan and the West” (Kawasaka 2017: 593). For example, *nanshoku*, male-male sexuality practiced by samurai men, was reconfigured as a relic of the past and dropped from modern constructions of the samurai as a national icon, while aspects of samurai identity considered compatible with modern Japanese masculinity — which sought parity with white Western men — were retained (ibid: 601-604). Likewise, pre-modern categories of variant gender such as *okama* and *onabe* (typically defined as “feminine homosexual man” and “masculine homosexual woman,” respectively) (Dale 2019: 61; Abe 2010: 11) have persisted into modern times, overlapping with terms of Western origin (e.g. “gay,” “lesbian,” “transgender”) as the progression of capitalism has both a) led to gender/sexual variance beginning to develop in similar patterns as in the West due to socioeconomic factors and b) actively introduced Western gender/sexual frameworks into the Japanese context through translation (Welker 2017: 149-153; Abe 2010: 10-13, McLelland 2000: 466-468).

#### *1.4.2 Translation, colonisation, and gender/sexual frameworks*

Decolonial and materialist feminist theories (e.g. Oyěwùmí 2016, Lugones 2016, Wittig 1992, Delphy 1993), as well as linguistic research not necessarily aligned with these philosophies (Furukawa 2016, Nakamura 2014, Inoue 2006), arrive at a shared conclusion: that language is a means by which dominant political systems and ideologies, notably those of gender/sex, are articulated and maintained. Translation can therefore be understood as a powerful potential tool for imperialist and colonial purposes, enabling

one system or ideology to supplant another in historical discourse; this is especially true of the translation of gender/sexuality. On the one hand, within the “imperialised” language context, translation can import or impose a new dominating ideology into/onto the subordinated cultural context by inserting that ideology into the subordinated language, functionally displacing or overwriting native concepts. On the other hand, within the “imperialising” language context, translation can erase the culturally specific “world-sense” (Oyěwùmí 2016: 3) of the subordinated culture as expressed through language, assimilating all discourse into the logic of the dominating language. In either case, the choice of material to be translated and the choices made in translation are all informed by dominant political ideologies, economic conditions, and the unequal power dynamics informing them.

Focusing on the British colonisation of the Yoruba people, Oyěwùmí investigates translation as a mechanism for the imposition of Western gender onto the originally genderless Yoruba context (ibid: 32-47, 157-179), noting that this was accomplished through both the translation of Yoruba culture into English and the translation of gendered English terms into the Yoruba language (162). Because “[the] cultural logic of Western social categories is founded on [...] the conception that biology provides the rationale for the organisation of the social world” (13), it is usually taken for granted — even by most feminists — that the commonality of basic human biology equates to the commonality of the gender/sex binary. Following from this first assumption, it is also typically assumed that “man”/“male” and “woman”/“female” are universal concepts that can be translated directly in any context, independent of other cultural or ontological differences. However, Yoruba society had no equivalent social structure to gender/sex prior to colonisation, and Yoruba ontology does not view the body or its sexual anatomy as the primary basis for social existence. Therefore, the terms *obìnrin* and *òkùnrin* — which are routinely mistranslated as “woman”/“female” and “man”/“male” respectively — are not equivalent to the Western gender/sex binary (32-36), on the basis of several key differences:

1. The terms *obìnrin* and *òkùnrin* only apply to adults, i.e. those who have reached sexual maturity. Children are not referred to in a way that denotes their sexual anatomy unless it is somehow specifically

- relevant; single words equivalent to “boy” and “girl” do not exist, nor do gender/sex-specific kinship terms (41-43).
2. *Obìnrin* and *òkùnrin* are not situated in a hierarchy of social power, whereby one is privileged and the other disadvantaged; they are not defined oppositionally, and personality attributes are not assigned exclusively to one or the other. “Bioanatomical differences are a source of neither distinction nor identity [...] [Anatomical sex] is incidental” (173-174, emphasis in original). Both words share the linguistic root *rin*, indicating humanness, in contrast to “woman” being an etymological derivation from “man” (33).
  3. The prefixes *obìn* and *òkùn* denote only reproductive anatomy and the corresponding ability to impregnate or gestate. They are not associated with a set of “matching” social behaviours, psychologies, or cultural roles, or indeed with hormones, chromosomes, or secondary sexual characteristics (34), all of which figure centrally in definitions of gender/sex in Western science, law, and medicine (ibid: 178, Fausto-Sterling 2000: 115-169).

In light of widely accepted understandings of “biological sex” as a natural or pre-social binary which inevitably gives rise to a binary “gender” division, “to try to question these ‘facts’ is indeed to try to crack one of the toughest nuts in our perception of the world” (Delphy 1993: 5). Nevertheless, Oyěwùmí’s case study is one example that disproves the Western gender/sex framework’s claim to objectivity, as well as revealing its historical/political agenda of displacing/eradicating other ontological frameworks. The fact of colonisation and translation means that “no language is an island”; languages that come into contact inevitably influence each other, but

the more important question [...] is the nature of contact, since this has enormous effect on the direction, amount, and content of exchange. In fact, the choice of calling these linguistic intrusions a borrowing or an imposition rests on the social context of contact.

— Oyěwùmí 2016: 162

Considering the historical relationship between Japan and the West, the intrusion of Western gender frameworks into Japanese language could be characterised as somewhere between a mere borrowing and a forceful imposition. Political and economic circumstances — that is, imperialist aggression and the threat of domination by industrialised Western nations — led Japan to self-impose Western values and structures in pursuit of modernity. The Meiji period saw the translation of large quantities of imported literature from languages such as English, German, and French, and the difficulties encountered by Japanese translators led to the invention of Japanese equivalents for “he” and “she” (Obana 2003: 140-141). Furthermore,

paradoxically, it is the translated speech of non-Japanese women that has preserved the tradition of Japanese women’s language. Long before the term ‘globalization’ was introduced, the translated speech of non-Japanese women in media has been playing a crucial role in maintaining Japanese women’s language.

— Nakamura 2014: 15

Non-Japanese women’s speech is routinely translated in compliance with the norms of Japanese “women’s language,” reinforcing the Japanese linguistic ideology that all women naturally speak a particular way due to a shared feminine essence (ibid: 14; Furukawa 2016: 83-84).

#### *1.4.3 Particularities of translating the nonconforming*

This essentialising and assimilating potential of translation is also demonstrated in the case of gender nonconformity. Some Japanese-origin terms for variant genders/sexes have operated flexibly, expanding to include new meanings while still echoing conceptualisations from earlier historical periods. As a result, these terms may individually encompass several meanings that in English are considered more distinct. For example, *okama* might be translated as “queen,” “transvestite,” “transsexual,” or “gay,” and is

sometimes used<sup>6</sup> to refer to people who identify themselves within these parameters of identity. However, the Japanese term originated independently of the English ones before coming to subsume them, and does not quite sit within the same framework. Particularly as recent popular conceptions of gender nonconformity in the West have focused on an individualist identity-based model of gender/sexuality, one which has not taken hold to the same extent in Japan (McLelland 2000: 464-468), a typical problem with translating a Japanese depiction of gender nonconformity into English is a lack of specificity in the Japanese text. Portrayals of gender nonconformity in manga and anime are often constructed through visual cues, speech, and cultural allusions<sup>7</sup> rather than the explicit naming of identity, making it difficult (not to mention ethically questionable) to attempt to place gender-nonconforming Japanese characters in a more rigid English-language taxonomy of gender/sexuality. In such cases, the risk of translation is in subsuming the Japanese expression — which needs not name itself to make itself known, because it is expressed through the character’s deployment of gendered speech and their rendering within the gendered visual language of manga/anime — to a specific identity which is located in a different historical and cultural context.

Even when the contexts are similar, though, they are not actually equivalent, as direct translation might suggest. For example, the roles of *tachi* and *neko* in Japanese lesbian bar culture (Abe 2010: 26) resemble the butch-femme dynamic in Western lesbian bar culture in many ways, and even originate from a similar historical and economic context, but they are neither completely identical nor directly linked. What are the implications for these terms and their affiliated histories and communities, then, if they are universalised through translation, each portrayed as a rote equivalent of the other? Even where one term came directly from another, it can take on new connotations such that the two are no longer equivalent; this is the case for *gei*, from English “gay,” which has developed particular associations with the Japanese entertainment industry, sex work, and a certain category of crossdressing (McLelland 2000: 460). Translating

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<sup>6</sup> Although its usage for gay men and transgender women is fairly common, it is usually considered pejorative unless in self-reference (Abe 2010: 7-8).

<sup>7</sup> For example, the unisex Japanese given name Kaoru “acts as a lesbian signifier and has been used as the name of the more masculine characters in female-female relationships in manga since the 1970s” (Welker 2006: 851).

gender/sexuality involves more than just terminology; it also invokes underlying ontological frameworks, knowingly or not. Particularly when translating into a globally hegemonic language such as English, translation can become a contestation of knowledge about gender/sexuality — canonising certain frameworks and vocabularies at the cost of displacing or erasing others.

### 1.5. Towards a trans-queer materialist feminism

As established at the outset, my research will focus on translations of “gender nonconformity,” a term I have chosen to denote non-normative gender/sexual embodiments and expressions, broadly conceived — theoretically including any number of specific roles/identities which would be considered atypical within their own social contexts, while striving to avoid the pitfalls of identity-labelling as discussed. Yet the fact of addressing this topic at all is that specific existing identities and frameworks are necessarily implicated. Even if characters in media are not labelled in explicit terms, media depictions of nonconforming gender/sexuality are inevitably anchored to real-world reference points, invoking concepts such as queerness and transness in contexts where these frameworks operate. Given that feminism writ large is oriented around the category of “women” — and furthermore, that materialist feminism in particular has been associated with the stance that the primary class struggle is one of “women” against “men” — it may be questioned why I opt for a materialist feminist lens in approaching issues of gender/sex that challenge the stability of these binary categories. Is queer theory not better suited to this undertaking? To respond, I challenge the assumption that materialist feminism is only equipped to analyse normative gender/sex categories, as well as the assumption that gender nonconformity can only be usefully addressed by queer theory. A feminist lens brings an analysis of gender and sexual norms as facets of patriarchy and thus matters of socio-political power, oppression, and marginalisation, which I argue are central to the question of nonconforming gender/sexuality — both in general (i.e. how normativity and nonconformity are defined or materially produced) and with regard to the particular phenomenon of gender/sexual nonconformity in *shōjo* media (elaborated in the following section). While feminism as a concept may be concerned primarily with the category of “women”, for materialist feminists in particular this concern has extended to

questioning the category itself, and certainly the contributions of feminist scholarship to the understanding of gender/sexuality do not become irrelevant simply because the analytical scope of gender/sexuality has widened beyond the normative heterosexual female. In this section, I advance an understanding of materialist feminism as intrinsically queer and trans, articulating a more concrete theoretical definition of gender nonconformity in the process.

Since the former's inception in the 1990s as an outgrowth of poststructuralist approaches to studies of gender/sexuality, queer theory and materialist feminism have often been conceived as oppositional and mutually antagonistic, though this is an oversimplification. "Queer as Materialism" (Noyé & Rebutini 2021) provides a nuanced and comprehensive account of the interactions between these traditions, exploring their primary disagreements while highlighting examples of their overlap. Materialist feminism is primarily concerned with material relations between gendered/sexed groups of people under patriarchy/capitalism. It asserts that gender/sex is a socio-economic structure first and foremost, and that gender/sexual "identities" develop discursively as a consequence of navigating these structures, wherein conformity and nonconformity have different material consequences. The main criticism of materialist feminism from the queer theory perspective is that it is overly binary and essentialist in its conceptions of class struggle based on fixed categories (e.g. women versus men, the proletariat against the bourgeoisie), and that it treats issues of sexuality as purely superstructural/cultural. On the other hand, materialist feminism criticises queer theory for "abandoning the role of historical and material structures of domination" in favour of the individual and symbolic (Noyé & Rebutini 2021: 2-3). While I share this critique of queer theory and will return to it, I will first address the critique of materialist feminism.

### *1.5.1 Materialist feminism: an anti-essentialist framework*

Without denying that materialist feminism has been deployed (albeit erroneously<sup>8</sup>) in reductionist arguments, I would regard the notion that it does not account for sexuality as

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<sup>8</sup> Some anti-transgender movements have claimed materialist feminism as the theoretical basis for arguing that sex/gender is biologically dictated and immutable, and that one's social status as either victim or benefactor of patriarchy is determined solely by this immutable sex. This particular ideology is a major reason that queer feminism has distanced itself from materialist feminism (Noyé & Rebutini 2021: 2).

primary in its theory of class struggle, and that it relies on the stability of binary male/female gender categories, as quite reductive itself. On the contrary, a central tenet of materialist feminism developed by lesbian materialist Monique Wittig is the theory of the “heterosexual social contract” (1992: 34), which holds that under patriarchy, heterosexuality is a defining characteristic of normative gender, particularly womanhood. “Heterosexuality” is not just an individual’s sexual proclivity or personal “orientation,” but an all-encompassing social and economic order that defines women collectively and individually by their (dependent, subservient) status in relation to men. Within such a system, to reject the heterosexual contract as a woman is to definitionally fail to *be* a woman at all, hence Wittig’s infamous statement that “lesbians are not women” (ibid: 32). She conceived of lesbianism as a “fugitive” political identity (45), which was not simply a point on a continuum of organic sexual orientations, but a defiance of the patriarchal ordering of society. For Wittig, to be or become a lesbian — to refuse self-definition as a woman in relation to men, to reject “the economic, ideological, and political power of a man” (13) — is to be gender-nonconforming intrinsically.

Interestingly, a similar idea has proliferated in Japanese popular culture and entertainment industries, where queer sociologist Mark McLelland notes that “homosexuality [...] is often mixed up with transgenderism” (2000: 461). Even while arguing against a universal identity framework of gender/sexuality, McLelland frames this idea as an unfortunate misconception and seems to insist on a clear line between “gender normative” gays/lesbians and transgender or transsexual people. However, an argument based in Wittigian thought might pose that the conflation of “homosexuality” and “transgenderism” is closer to truth than error. If lesbians are not women, perhaps it follows

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However, it is also a fundamental misunderstanding of materialism, in which “construction is not an activity, but an act, one which happens once and whose effects are firmly fixed” (Butler 2014: 9). Materialist feminism derives from *dialectical* materialism, a method that views every object of analysis as a system comprised of moving parts that act on and influence one another — looking at the full context, the sum of real physical, social, political, economic conditions in which a subject exists. The idea that sexed body parts directly equate to, or contain, uniform experiences of gendered/sexual oppression (a social relation) — independent of external power relations and political processes — is not materialism, but idealism which flies in the face of material reality. In more concrete terms, if people experience violence, discrimination, or disenfranchisement as a consequence of deviating from “biological” gender/sex, that is decidedly material. That such material consequences do affect transgender, intersex, and gender-nonconforming people on a systemic scale is evident in modern history (Feinberg 1996). As I elaborate in this section, biological-determinist appropriations of materialist feminism are contradicted by the theory itself.

that gay men are not men, having also broken the heterosexual contract. Indeed, while Wittig did not write as extensively about gay men as she did about lesbians, this interpretation appears evident in the few instances where gay men are mentioned in her work.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, transness as such does not figure centrally in Wittig's theorising, but neither is it precluded. In my reading, the following quotation appears to suggest a radical solidarity between butch/masculine "cisgender"<sup>10</sup> lesbians and transgender women, on the basis of their shared exclusion from the category of authentic womanhood and their vilification by heterosexual society:

Today this double accusation [that lesbians are not 'real' women and that lesbians want to be men] has been taken up again with enthusiasm in the context of the women's liberation movement by some feminists and also, alas, by some lesbians whose political goal seems somehow to be becoming more and more 'feminine.' To refuse to be a woman, however, does not mean that one has to become a man. Besides, if we take as an example the perfect 'butch,' the classic example which provokes the most horror [...], how is her alienation different from that of someone who wants to become a woman?

— Wittig 1992: 12

Wittig makes explicit that the political goal of materialist feminism is the total abolition of the categories of male/female and the institution of heterosexuality in which they are founded (1992: 29-30). She theorises materialist feminism as militantly opposed to essentialism — particularly as she saw it adopted by other feminists of her time, who had begun to embrace positive stereotypes of womanhood instead of questioning them (ibid:

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<sup>9</sup> For example: "If we, as lesbians *and gay men*, continue to speak of ourselves and to conceive of ourselves as women *and as men*, we are instrumental in maintaining heterosexuality" (Wittig 1992: 30, emphasis mine).

<sup>10</sup> While there are strong arguments for the rhetorical power of "[marking] and [naming] unmarked categories that exist as the unnamed normal," I echo Kevin Henderson's call "to be equally distrustful of difference between 'cis' and 'trans' as a name for natural difference rather than as the product of regulatory power" (2018: 199-200). There are times where a distinction between trans and non-trans individuals is salient, but the conception of "cisgender" as indicating someone who "identifies with" their assigned "biological" sex/gender is difficult to apply to gays and lesbians within an understanding of the gender/sex order as intrinsically heterosexual. Indeed, the material overlap between lesbian/gay/bisexual/queer and trans/gender-nonconforming communities is a well-documented fact — not to mention the historical basis for the "LGBT" coalition (Feinberg 1996: 98-99).

13) — and argues that gender/sexual identities are politically contingent/constructed, and therefore can be changed or even destroyed. Finally, her body of work revolves around the idea that gender-nonconforming lesbian subjecthood is a vital avenue towards this abolition.

### *1.5.2 The question of structures*

With my understanding of materialist feminism as anti-essentialist, I postulate that its dissonance with queer theory stems from its location of these problems in oppositional material structures, as queer theory favours poststructuralist approaches emphasising language and symbolic representation (Jackson 2021: 471). Thus queer theory disavows lesbian feminist materialism on the basis that its categories are restrictive, even as these categories are conceived precisely for the undoing of the systems from which they emerged — not so unlike the queer impulse to destabilise gender/sexual categories, apart from the focus on the material/structural rather than the symbolic/discursive. The key point is that actually existing systems of power actively work to stabilise particular models of gender/sexual categorisation by suppressing and eliminating nonconformity, and it is this material domination which must be reckoned with (Lugones 2016: 11-12). The materialist feminist argument is not that “men” and “women” are the only gender/sexual categories or classes that “really” exist, but rather that the capitalist patriarchal system operates to forcibly construct such a reality through an economic arrangement of society that allocates resources on the basis of heterosexual marriage and withholds resources from people engaged in non-heterosexual relationship or family structures.<sup>11</sup> This system is also understood to be linked with other axes of structural oppression:

For heterosexual society is the society which not only oppresses lesbians and gay men, it oppresses many different/others, it oppresses all women and many categories of men, all those who are in the position of the dominated.

— Wittig 1992: 29 (emphasis mine)

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<sup>11</sup> Hence the focus of mainstream gay rights movements on equal marriage has been criticised as a form of maintenance and expansion of a heterosexual institution which substantiates racial capitalism and imperialism, theorised as “homonationalism” (Puar 2007) and “homohegemony” (Jackson 2021).

Although Wittig's work has rightly drawn criticism for metaphorically positing racial and gender/sexual oppression as parallel rather than intersecting and co-constitutive (Henderson 2018: 196), it has also coalesced with theoretical traditions which take an economic-constructionist view of race (Noyé & Rebutini 2021: 13). Materialist feminist theory developed in this context has been able to more effectively articulate the role of patriarchy and its gender/sexual framework in global and local processes of imperialism/colonisation (Lugones 2016: 12-13), and a materialist or "economic turn" has begun to emerge in queer theory over the last decade, as political developments have led to an increased focus on the structures imposed on gendered/sexed and racialised groups by the state (Noyé & Rebutini 2021: 2). By the same token, some materialist feminist camps, influenced by queer perspectives, have taken on a more pluralistic approach to naming the classes of oppressor and oppressed. Formulations such as "queer multitudes," which consider "the feminist subject" to include all women alongside all queer, trans, gender-nonconforming, and intersex people, express a coalition-building ethos that echoes the sense of "all women and many categories of men" in more modern terms (ibid: 19-20). Though its adherents are a minority, especially in the academic realm (ibid: 3), this particular formulation is the closest to the one I utilise in my research. Although I retain the basic logic of materialism and do not incorporate queer poststructuralism, I understand the material relations of capitalist patriarchy to produce gendered/sexual oppression of groups of people other than gender-normative (heterosexual) women. Therefore, concepts of transness and queerness are ever-present in my understanding of materialist feminist subjectivity. From this point, the challenge is to make room for these concepts, particularly as they appear in translation and cross-cultural discourse, while being careful to avoid universalising "white Euro-American" gender/sexual epistemologies (ibid: 7-8).

### *1.5.3 Encompassing "queer multitudes"*

I use "gender nonconformity" in the spirit of "queer multitudes" — to encompass any gender/sexual expression that diverges from the capitalist patriarchal gender-order (in either the source or target cultural context, or both) and is accordingly marked and marginalised. The breadth of this term allows me to refer to a range of possible subjects

without becoming mired in questions of the applicability of narrower categories within the Japanese context, while also remaining conscious of the adoption of terms or frameworks of Western origin/influence. The precise linguistic categorisation of nonconforming gender/sexuality has varied greatly throughout history; terms such as “invert,” “homosexual,” “sexual pervert,” and “hermaphrodite” were part of the standard vocabulary of gender/sexual nonconformity in early twentieth-century Western sexology and biology, but later gave way to terms such as “queer,” “transgender/transsexual,” “non-binary,” and “intersex” (Halberstam 2018: 50-51; Fausto-Sterling 2000: 13-15). Although Western discourse is largely characterised by the defining belief that these categories emerge from biology and are thus objective and universal (Oyěwùmí 2016: 11-12), the specific discourses deployed to rationalise this underlying essentialism have shifted (i.e. from the medical pathology of “inversion” to the “born this way” narrative), and the language used in various arenas to describe gender nonconformity is constantly fluctuating. Factoring in the unequal nature of cultural exchange within imperialist/colonialist relations, and translation as one mechanism by which these processes are carried out, it becomes even more difficult to create strict and specific categories for nonconforming gender/sexuality. In many contexts where a Western framework is imposed over or alongside a native one, traditional categories of nonconformity have been doubly marginalised — considered atypical or minoritised within their own context, rendered unacceptable within the colonial gender system, yet also too far removed culturally to be intelligible within “progressive” Western models of variant identity that reinforce Western political hegemony (Puar 2007: 11-20).

Even the concept of gender/sexual “identity” itself poses significant problems, because it too lacks the universality often ascribed to it. It is problematic to automatically ascribe the quality of “gender” to traditional/precolonial social roles or categories that may not have functioned or been conceived as equivalent to such (Oyěwùmí 2016: 11-12). Specifically in the Japanese context, while Western frameworks of gender/sexuality (particularly those pertaining to nonconformity, e.g. LGBT<sup>12</sup>) have been widely adopted since the beginning of modernity and more explicitly since the social developments of the

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<sup>12</sup> There is extensive nuance to variations such as LGBTQ, LGBTI, LGBTQIA+, etc. I use LGBT for simplicity, as it is the original historical form and the common base.

1960s (Welker 2017: 151-153), the construct of gender/sexuality as a central or defining facet of individual identity has not taken root in Japan to the extent that it has in the West. In mainstream Western LGBT/queer culture, the concept of “coming out” — the act of socially solidifying one’s individual sexual identity by publicly/openly naming it<sup>13</sup> — has come to be figured as central since the 1990s, with the ability to “come out” being framed as a primary metric for both political liberation and personal fulfilment. In Japan, though, sexuality has been considered more a personal affair, going unnamed more due to norms of privacy than to discrimination or oppression, which in Japan lacks the extensive material basis in politics and religion that it has in Western countries (McLelland 2000: 464-468; Abe 2010: 6-8). Historically, whether a person had sexual relations with members of the same or different sex/gender was not considered to define them as a unique type of person, as it does in the modern Western conception (Valentine 1997: 97). This attitude toward sexuality persists alongside Western frameworks that categorise and name particular modes of gender/sex embodiment or sexual activity. A materialist understanding of nonconformity as a structural issue is reflected in the observation that non-normative gender/sexual subjectivities are not stigmatised in their own rights as individual identities or sexual practices; rather, they are stigmatised specifically on the basis of their “perceived opposition to conventional family roles” (McLelland 2000: 467), which have been (attempted to be) enforced by Japanese state policies regulating abortion, birth control, and gender/sex transition (Dale 2019: 61-63; Takeda 2005: 40, 85, 170; Matsui 1990: 439-441).

As well as straying from the material basis of the construction of gender/sexual normalcy and nonconformity, orienting my research around identity-focused terms such as “queer” or “transgender” could easily exclude or misappropriate depictions of gender nonconformity in the Japanese context. Without explicit textual designations, it can be difficult to pin down “what” a character is supposed to be; what is evident, however, are the ways the character is marked as nonconforming through different semiotic modes.

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<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that the phrase “coming out”, when it originated in the mid-twentieth century, *also* suggested an “action” model rather than an “identity” model of sexuality: it meant a first gay sexual experience or other entrance into an LGBT social landscape. The more widely understood present meaning — to announce one’s identity within their presumed non-LGBT social landscape — developed from the late 1980s onward, corresponding with the mainstreaming and depoliticising of LGBT activism.

Moreover, I am interested less in the identity of a fictional character, who has no literal subjectivity or autonomy to speak of, and more in how that character's nonconformity is interpreted and represented in translation. Here, again, my framework deviates away from the conventionally "queer" and toward the materialist. Rather than dwelling on the characters themselves as individual symbolic depictions of global or even local "queerness," I want to investigate the social relations at work in their translations. How are they marked as nonconforming in the source and target texts? What ideologies of gender/sexuality are invoked in the surrounding narrative? How does the English translation mediate, highlight, suppress, or otherwise navigate gender nonconformity in *shōjo* media, and which particular ideologies or norms of gender/sexuality does it advance in doing so? None of these questions require strict categorisation of their subjects. "Gender-nonconforming" can include explicitly named identities, but regardless of the labels used (or not used), as an analytical category, it places the focus outside of the individual and onto the system within which the character is differentiated: a system consisting of norms that are materially enforced.

#### *1.5.4 Implications for translation studies*

Having discussed queer theory and decolonial/materialist feminism with regard to translation, here I will also address the specific feminist and queer translation studies traditions, which each have distinct lineages within the wider field of translation studies. First, "feminist translation" is most commonly understood to have originated in Francophone and Anglophone intellectual communities in France, Canada, and the United States, beginning in the 1980s (von Flotow 1997: 8). Influenced by sociological developments of the decade prior, early feminist translation theorists established an analysis of language as a patriarchal institution based on the conditions of their own linguistic and cultural contexts, in which women's speech and writing had been historically controlled, marginalised, or outright excluded from literary and cultural canons in particular ways. Feminist translation studies also explored the gendered metaphors of translation itself, positing that women and translations "have been relegated to the same position of discursive inferiority" (Simon 1996: 1) respective to men and "originals", and called for disruption, through translation, of the power structures that maintained this dual

marginality. However, by the turn of the century it would also be observed that much feminist translation theory was grounded in “a set, stable definition of the feminine” derived from specific (e.g. French) feminist philosophical traditions that “[tended] to essentialize feminine difference” and ignored the cultural differences in gender/sexual categorisation that translation could quickly bring to light (Massardier-Kennedy 1997: 56-57). Since then, the field of feminist translation studies has turned significant attention to addressing critiques of Eurocentrism and essentialism, incorporating queer and postcolonial thought, and thus expanding its scope to encompass a broadening range of regionally-rooted feminisms and gender discourses — but still remaining rooted in feminism and the analytical category of “women” as a baseline (see Castro & Ergun 2017, von Flotow & Farahzad 2016).

Queer translation studies, on the other hand, did not emerge from feminist translation studies in the same way that queer theory and queer studies originated as a critical offshoot of feminist/women’s/gender studies. Rather, queer translation studies has come about via investigations of the intersections of queer theory/studies with translation studies, and has been particularly focused on questions of postcoloniality and cultural transmission, e.g. the loss or intentional erasure of queerness in translated texts or the function of translation in proliferating queer gender/sexuality frameworks (Spurlin 2017). Queer translation theory has emphasised a parallel between the concepts of “queer” and “translation”: translation is understood as being “always already queer” due to its function “as a site of othering, hegemony and subalternity” (Epstein & Gillett 2017: 1), while translation of gender and sexuality in particular is understood to reveal the social, cultural, and linguistic construction of these categories (ibid; Santaemilia 2018: 20). The relationship between “queer” topics and major geopolitical issues of the 2000s — such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the rise of a mainstream reformist gay rights movement that sought equality within the institutions of marriage and the military — has informed queer translation studies’ continuing focus on the dissemination of Western frameworks of gender/sexuality through imperialism and the role of translation and queerness in carrying out, or resisting, cultural domination. Likewise, decolonial queer translation theory has investigated translation as a historical tool of colonisation that operates by replacing indigenous ontology with the colonial, and suggests that analysis of colonial translations

provides opportunities to identify, expose, and disrupt ongoing colonial violence (Ruvalcaba 2017).

Both queer and feminist translation studies have had to reckon with problems of Western imperialism and cultural specificity, and both have arrived at the understanding that translation as an activity is well-poised to expose the multiplicitous and constructed nature of “gender” and “sexuality.” Despite these similarities, though, there are notable tensions between queer and feminist translation studies, a fact which has implications for my theoretical approach to this research and its significance as a contribution to the field. Many recent queer translation studies texts engage with feminism minimally or not at all, while conversely some recent feminist translation studies texts have explicitly acknowledged an intention to continue addressing binarist gender structures from “a ‘woman’ perspective” despite challenges from queer studies (von Flotow & Farahzad 2016: xiii). Why this chilliness between two fields that should, one might think, be closely allied? Perhaps one factor is that both have staked claims on a characterisation of translation itself as being intrinsically aligned with their own primary subject, yet these characterisations (translation as an activity of the marginalised feminine versus translation as a queer methodology that destabilises binaries) are not immediately reconcilable. Queer translation scholar William Spurlin argues that “[preserving] the gendered binary between the sovereign (masculinized) original text and the peripheral (feminized) translated text depoliticizes translation” because it “fails to situate translation socially and masks relations of power in the very act of translation” (2017: 175). Although feminist translation studies has largely moved beyond these simple metaphors, it still approaches the question of sexual difference first and foremost through the opposition of sovereign male and peripheral female; this approach is based in acknowledgement, rather than affirmation or naturalisation, of the active material enforcement of this particular gender/sex binary (von Flotow & Farahzad 2016: xvi), but nevertheless depends on the stability of “male” and “female” as categories of power in ways that queer translation studies, more closely aligned with decoloniality, may find suspect. I suggest, then, that the tension between feminist and queer translation is also a tension between the impulse to have one clearly defined subject (“woman”, even if defined more

expansively than in the past) and the impulse to avoid the theoretical limitations of definition as much as possible (as seen in discussions of “queer”).

By drawing from both traditions in my own theoretical framework, I hope to bridge the chasm that currently exists between feminist and queer translation theory, combining a (decolonial, materialist) feminist understanding of hegemonic patriarchy with a trans- and queer-oriented lens that focuses on subjects other than the normatively female or male. The translation of gender nonconformity cannot be properly addressed without an awareness of the relationship between translation and normative gender, nor without an understanding that the material reality of gender/sexuality is substantially more varied and less stable than the sum of the ideological norms that are materially imposed upon it. By using this framework to analyse existing translations of gender nonconformity, I also hope to implicitly gesture to the usefulness of what could be called “trans-queer materialist feminist translation”: what I would define as a context-dependent approach to translating gender nonconformity or “queer” representations, in which a) multiple overlapping social forces that construct/enforce gender in a given context and b) agents whose social identities and practices are formed out of resistance to this enforcement are both consciously brought to the forefront. Whereas feminist translation studies and queer translation studies respectively have been concerned with the separate, isolated subjects of “women” and “queer,” I propose a translation theory that addresses both categories as inherently interrelated and co-constructed. This co-construction will be particularly evident in the case of *shōjo* manga and anime.

## 1.6. Synthesis and application to multimodal analysis of *shōjo*

With a theoretical framework of trans-queer and decolonial/materialist feminism now established, I will revisit multimodality, specifically in relation to manga/anime, and give an overview of how the framework will apply to this terrain. As I argued initially, multimodality invites further materialist analysis because it highlights the interaction between different material media associated with modes, the role of extra-textual factors in creating and circulating media, and the function of media within political/economic systems and processes (Kaindl 2020: 59-61). Multimodal media were central in the material processes of constructing gender/sex norms in Japanese modernity, beginning

with prewar girls' magazines that established the earliest linguistic and aesthetic norms of modern girls' media (Shamoon 2012: 14-81). Since the emergence of manga/anime in the mid-twentieth century, these mediums have continued to function as cultural arenas in which gender norms are articulated, especially through linguistic elements:

[M]ost Japanese learn women's language as knowledge from conversations in media. Most people living in Japan use their regional varieties in their everyday interactions. But women's language is a standard variety. This means that most Japanese do not have a chance of listening to standard women's language spoken by the women around them. But they all know what kind of speech is women's language. Why? That is because Japanese speakers acquire knowledge of women's language by listening to female characters speaking in films, radio and TV dramas, or reading comics and novels. They learn what linguistic and stylistic features can be used to construct particular feminine identities from those conversations. Women's language is not a style of speech used by actual women as the essentialist-evolutionary approach claims; rather, it is knowledge speakers acquire by listening to or reading conversations in the various forms of media. As the use of particular features by female characters in the media is repeatedly reproduced and widely consumed by a large audience, those features become associated with particular feminine identities.

— Nakamura 2014: 13

When Wittig wrote that gender is the linguistic enforcement of political/economic sex categories (1992: 76-89), she mainly provided a theoretically grounded argument for why gender appears in language and what purpose it serves in doing so. The ongoing role of multimodal media in propagating a normative idea of women's language, however, provides a real-world example: depictions of women/girls using women's language reifies their supposedly essential difference and provides an apparent body of "evidence" for it, despite the fact that most women and girls do not use women's language (or do so consciously and strategically as a means of navigating social relations; see Furukawa 2016: 83 and Inoue 2006: 232-235). Gender is enforced not only through the general social expectation that girls/women should or must speak in a sex-appropriate way, but

also through the actual deployment of language in multimodal contexts to make it appear as if they really do.

Similarly, depictions of gender nonconformity found in many archetypal *shōjo* manga can be understood to demonstrate certain materialist feminist theories of gender/sexuality. In particular, Wittig's theory of lesbians as neither women nor men provides a compelling explanation for the trope of ambiguously sexed girls and masculine lesbians in the *shōjo* manga culture of the 1970s. Traditionally and continuing into the prewar modern period, marriage was predicated on family status and other economic factors (Shamoon 2012: 18; Uno 1993). In the postwar period in which *shōjo* manga solidified as a genre, the modern concepts of romance and "love marriage" became newly popularised, and girls were instead expected to find their self-fulfilment exclusively and totally through achievement of a heterosexual relationship. This created widespread alienation and desperation among girls, feelings which were reflected in *shōjo* manga, with many narratives reinforcing the idea that being chosen and loved by a man was the only way to achieve happiness and confidence in one's right to exist (Fujimoto 2014: 35). Lesbianism in *shōjo* manga represented a "fugitive" positionality, as conceived by Wittig (1992: 45) — albeit one usually doomed to be recaptured by heterosexual norms (Fujimoto 2014: 26-32). However, the medium of manga was also utilised by artists to resist or escape these narratives. The genres of *shōnen ai* ("boys' love", or BL) and, to a lesser extent, *shōjo ai* ("girls' love", or GL) began to emerge from *shōjo* manga in the early 1970s, a trend which Deborah Shamoon links to the prevalence of sameness and homosociality as aesthetic ideals in prewar girls' magazines (2012: 12). Although these narratives were few in number compared to typical boy-girl romances, they became enormously influential, with some regarded as *shōjo* literary canon (Powers 2009: 126-127; Welker 2006: 843). Importantly, boys' love and girls' love subgenres developed with distinct thematic differences: *shōnen ai* tended to depict "purified" fantasy romances between androgynous young boys, removed from "the censoring gaze of society, rumor and gossip, or taboo" (Fujimoto 2014: 33). *Shōjo* manga scholars have argued that these "beautiful boy" characters are in fact cross-dressed analogues for girl readers, taking advantage of the medium of text and image to allow girls to experience romance precariously, unfettered by femaleness (ibid; Welker 2006: 842) and the excessive

sentimentality associated with prewar narratives of love between girls (Shamoon 2012: 107). Conversely, “lesbian” narratives typically took place in settings rooted in contemporary Japanese society and nearly always followed a tragic formula that saw one or both girls dead by the end. A feminist critique of this phenomenon is strikingly well-aligned with Wittig’s theory of gender/sex: manga scholar Fujimoto Yukari argues that lesbian manga narratives “exist in opposition to the male homosexual texts, which adopted the figures of boys in order to soar away from reality” (2014: 33). Gender nonconformity in either case — be it the androgynous homosexual “boy” or the outright lesbian — functions as a “fugitive” identity as theorised by Wittig (1992: 45). Effectively, the prevalence of gender nonconformity in *shōjo* manga can be directly attributed to Japanese women’s alienation under modern capitalist patriarchy, mirroring the social analysis advanced by materialist feminists, and the allowances of the visual mode employed by *shōjo* were key in expressing it. The stylistic approach used by many forerunners of *shōjo* manga aesthetics lent itself to the portrayal of idealised androgyny as well as femininity (Shamoon 2012: 61).

These gendered aesthetics drew from Japanese as well as European roots, often reflecting discourses of race and nationality developing as part of Japanese-Western relations. Therefore, the decolonial lens is also relevant to the construction of gender in *shōjo*. Decoloniality emphasises the continued influence of historical colonialism as well as present-day neo-colonial structures on discourses of gender/sex and race, and calls attention to precolonial and indigenous frameworks (Oyěwùmí 2016: 175-179; Lugones 2016: 1-16). In this sense it is important to account for both Japan’s political subjugation to the West and its own record of imperialism/colonialism throughout Asia. The origins of *shōjo* aesthetics are inextricable from Japan’s dual positionality within these histories: the girls’ magazines that laid the cultural foundation for *shōjo* manga were the product of intermingling Western and Japanese aesthetic traditions and the adoption of Western modes of economic production and political structures. Likewise, the manga aesthetics that solidified in the postwar cultural boom, pioneered by artists like Tezuka Osamu, were explicitly inspired and influenced by Western sources (Welker 2006: 841; Allison 2006: 52; Shiraishi 1997: 250). European cultural traditions such as ballet have also been noted as foundational in the construction of normative femininity in early *shōjo* (Monden 2014:

261-264). Building on this tradition, *shōjo* manga has routinely employed aesthetics associated with Europe, and particularly France, in the construction of androgyny and nonconforming gender/sexuality. In some cases, the use of European settings/characters has been said to offer a literal and conceptual distance that allows greater lenience for nonconformity, particularly “male homosexuality” (Fujimoto 2014: 33). However, *shōjo* series featuring “female” gender nonconformity have also used French culture to construct aesthetics of modern upper-class femininity; Ikeda Riyoko’s classic series *Dear Brother* revolves around a Western-style “sorority” at an elite Japanese girls’ school and a group of students including two lesbian-coded girls (one of whom goes by a French nickname and occasionally speaks French), while her more famous work *The Rose of Versailles* takes place in pre-revolutionary France and tells the story of a noble girl who is raised to be a man (Shamoon 2012: 29, 121).

In these ways, gender nonconformity has frequently been constructed in terms of foreignness or Western-ness (Kawasaka 2018: 605-611). Simultaneously, *shōjo*’s gendered aesthetics have come to connote uniquely Japanese cultural identity, and have been strategically deployed within Asia and throughout the world to build and assert Japanese “soft power” (Brienza 2014: 385-387; Iwabuchi 2002: 451-453). The visual mode is key to this function; the perceived racial ambiguity of anime and manga characters has been cited as one reason these media are so readily consumed by such a wide range of different audiences (Fennel et al 2012: 442-445). On the other hand, certain Japanese cultural aspects of the visual language can pose challenges in translation. For example, the coding of long hair as feminine is more present in Western cultures than in Japan. As a result, male manga/anime characters with long hair may be perceived as more feminine by Western audiences than intended. In the example discussed in 2.1, both male characters have very long hair; however, they are distinguished as feminine and masculine through their body types, vocal registers, and speech patterns. The construction and contestation of gender/sexual norms in *shōjo* is and has always been a multimodal affair, so awareness of Japanese cultural background and historical categories is needed to avoid a simplistic reading of gender/sexuality in cases such as these.

## 1.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I articulated a materialist feminist theoretical framework that incorporates decoloniality and trans-queer materialism, and showed its relevance to the analysis of multimodal depictions of gender nonconformity in *shōjo* manga/anime. I set out by briefly contextualising *shōjo* in the history of Japanese political development and relations with the English-speaking Western world, from the end of isolationism and the advent of modernisation in the Meiji period, to the present-day practices of cultural exchange which define Japan's "soft power." The emergence of *shōjo* as a category of media reflects gender/sex formations that developed in the context of the shift from feudalism to capitalism, the prewar intensification of nationalist family structures, and the postwar economic reconstruction. *Shōjo* has functioned simultaneously as a domain in which women artists have been able to create stories featuring visual and narrative themes of gender/sexual oppression and transgression as they have manifested in modern capitalist society, and as an industry that utilises gender/sex-based marketing strategies and social norms to exert political and economic force within this same system (Shamoon 2012: 102, 136). The interrelation between content and form — the materiality of media and translation — becomes evident in this mutual influence. This understanding aligns with the premise of multimodality: that meaning is created in multimodal texts through the interaction between different material forms or modes of expression as well as the conditions framing the production, translation, and consumption of texts.

Likewise, a materialist feminist lens provides an understanding of gender/sexuality as a system of categorisation materially constructed through political/economic structures and social relations. I argued that this understanding is necessary to avoid inappropriately universalising Western frameworks; although there are many similarities between modern structures of gender/sexuality in Japan and the West, these must be understood as the result of specific historical processes in which Japan strove to follow a Western path from feudalism to imperialist capitalism, rather than a natural uniformity of cultural models of gender/sexuality, which is contradicted by the literature (Oyěwùmí 2016; Lugones 2016; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Feinberg 1996). With patriarchal capitalism as the organisational principle of society, sex/gender has proceeded from a specific division of productive and reproductive labour, and is inscribed in linguistic practices and knowledge production

(Butler 2014; Wittig 1992). Imperialism/colonisation has spread this particular framework around the world, resulting in a global hegemony that has sometimes been erroneously used as evidence of natural and universal gender/sex roles (Leacock 2008: 17-18). However, local frameworks still have their own particular backgrounds and have responded differently to these impositions. Japanese and Western discourses of gender/sexuality have long been mutually informed through exchange and conceptual opposition (Kawasaka 2018: 594; Valentine 1997: 95-96), and can be traced through the development of *shōjo* itself, where gender nonconformity — defined in material terms as a broad class of expressions/embodiments that deviate from structurally established norms — features prominently in themes and narratives from the 1950s onward. I related these issues to existing feminist and queer translation theory and articulated the significance of “trans-queer materialist feminist translation” to the field of translation studies. Finally, returning to multimodality, I discussed the distinct roles of visual and linguistic modes in these depictions. In the linguistic mode, speech conventions are implicated in wider discourses of correct gender/sexual subjecthood (Inoue 2006; Nakamura 2014). In the visual mode, the *shōjo* manga style has been used to enable blurring and crossing of gender/sexual categories (Fujimoto 2014; Shamooin 2012; Welker 2006); however, the possibility of different cultural interpretations of the visual mode can pose unique challenges for English translation.

So far, I have given a broad account of *shōjo* relative to the broader history of Japan and the West, but many points need to be explicated in further detail to show the full significance of the depictions of gender nonconformity examined in my data analysis. The following chapter will provide a thorough historical background, beginning with the formation of the modern Japanese state, family, and gender/sexual structures, and ending with the developments in international economic and cultural relations seen so far in the twenty-first century. This background will underscore the relevance of materialist feminist theories to the Japanese context, and particularly to the analysis of *shōjo* manga/anime in English translation.

## Chapter 2: Historical Background

### 2.1. Introduction

As forms of mass media, manga/anime — particularly *shōjo* — are deeply implicated in the modern reconstruction of Japanese society, political structures, and gender/sexual frameworks. Of course, the translation of *shōjo* media into English is also situated within these histories. *Shōjo*'s involvement in these processes can be traced from its precursor, *shōjo zasshi* (“girls’ magazines”), in the modern prewar period, to its subversive yet contained function in 1970s popular culture as a mode of exploration of gendered/sexual oppression and transgression, to its current position as a product in an international market and a fixture of mass popular culture that has been engineered to serve Japanese political/economic interests. In order to fully understand the material interactions which have shaped Japanese and Western Anglophone discourses of gender, and which have also produced *shōjo* manga/anime as media forms through which these discourses may be constructed, perpetuated, challenged, or otherwise engaged, it is necessary to take stock of the overarching historical relationship between “Japan” and “the West.” This history precedes and contains the actual development of these frameworks, effectively encompassing the material conditions that produced them.

In this chapter, I outline the development of gender/sexual frameworks, nation and economy, and girls’ visual culture in Japan from the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. I begin by summarising the political context of premodern Japan, focusing on the issues of gender/sex and language, before moving through the modern period and its state-led transformation of the same. After covering the politics and aesthetics of girls’ magazines in the prewar period, I review the postwar economic boom that led to the coalescence of modern *shōjo* manga and anime. The last three sections will focus on the time periods corresponding to each of my case studies — the 1970s-1980s, the 1990s-2000s, and the 2000s-2010s — and their relevant historical developments with regards to gender/sexual frameworks in Japan, *shōjo* manga/anime, and their English translations. I conclude with an overview of the situation as it has developed throughout the 2010s and into the 2020s, providing additional retrospective context for the data to be analysed.

## 2.2. Background: Late Edo (1850-1867) to Meiji (1868-1912)

The development of *shōjo* media has always been intertwined with the course of Japanese political development, reflecting engagement with Western aesthetics and politics. I choose the 1850s as a starting point because these were the formative years in which Japan and the West first properly materialised as political entities constructed in relation (specifically, in opposition) to one another — that is, “Japan” as a modern nation-state and “the West” as its conceptual geopolitical opposite both emerged and developed as a result of contact instigated by the United States in pursuit of hegemony in East Asia. Concepts of “Japanese” and “Western” identity, although constructed as discrete and individual, have each only come into being and taken on meaning through comparative and oppositional relations to the other (Sakai & Morris 1997: 45-50). For the prior duration of the Edo Period (1603-1867), Japan had been a feudal system ruled by the Tokugawa shogunate, which enforced an isolationist policy (*sakoku*) heavily regulating most forms of cultural, political, or economic influence by the outside world. Even during this time, Japan was not completely isolated and continued to conduct international trade with a few select nations. However, these exchanges were managed through compartmentalised infrastructure according to the strict rules set by the shogunate (Duus 1998: 19-21)

### *2.2.1 Late feudalism and the end of isolationism*

Beginning in the 1850s, foreign relations became impossible for the shogunate to avoid. November 1852 marked the departure of the U.S. naval expedition to Japan, led by Matthew Perry, which sought a trade deal opening the country as a market to the U.S. and the rest of the industrialising Euro-American world. Perry’s fleet used intimidation tactics against port officials and local citizens for six days after arriving illegally in the bay of Edo (present-day Tokyo), threatening military assault on nearby towns if their demands were not met. The fleet left after receiving temporary landing permissions, but returned in February 1854 with additional ships and soldiers. After weeks of negotiations, the Convention of Kanagawa was signed in March 1854, granting the U.S. rights to access several other Japanese ports and agreeing to open up Japan to international trade (Duus 1998: 60-64).

This forced break with isolationism came at a time of enormous economic and political tension for a world increasingly connected through ties of imperialism and colonialism. While the U.S. was less than a decade away from its civil war, Japan also had internal concerns: pre-existing territorial disputes and conflicts over governance were being intensified sharply by the new economic, cultural, and political uncertainties resulting from abrupt reconnection with the rest of the world. Events following the arrival of the U.S. fleet effectively accelerated Japan's political development into a modern capitalist state by throttling the feudal economy. The unequal trade deals and treaties forced on Japan by the U.S. induced rapid economic decline, and with its continual failure to secure a stronger economic/political position for Japan, the shogunate fell into increasing disrepute. Some members of higher-ranking feudal classes turned their support to the imperial house, and the final years of the Edo Period were characterised by internal political turmoil and war between the shogunate and the imperial throne (Duus 1998: 64-67). The struggle between the imperial and shogunate Japanese factions, spurred on by the looming threat of domination by Western nations, laid the groundwork for the reconstruction of Japan as a modern imperialist nation-state.

### *2.2.2 Feudal class, gender/sex, and social organisation*

Premodern gender/sexuality and family structures in Japan were particular to the economic system of feudalism. Under the Tokugawa system, all people outside of the shogunate belonged to one of four classes — samurai, peasant, artisan, or merchant — or to a stigmatised underclass. The indigenous Japanese gender/sexual framework was bimodal and patriarchal, much like Europe's; importantly, though, the bimodal categorisation of sex/gender did not produce identical social categories across all feudal classes, or rather, the biological designation of male or female did not correspond to a single universal role defined by particular types of labour (i.e. productive, reproductive). Confucian ideologies of male superiority and female subservience/domesticity began to enter Japanese society before and during the feudal period, but these ideologies circulated mainly through the activities of the upper classes until the seventeenth century and did not reflect an absolute or uniform gender-order for most people (Nakamura 2014: 40-42). Instead, a person's social role and economic prospects depended primarily on

their feudal class; although the overall cultural context was patriarchal, the roles and status of women as well as men varied significantly by class (Uno 1993: 19-21; Duus 1998: 13-14). Samurai, for example, maintained stricter conventions of sexual purity and patrilineal inheritance, requiring women to be virgins before marriage and denying family membership to illegitimate children. However, samurai women did not bear the primary responsibility for domestic tasks such as cooking and child-rearing, which would often be left to servants (Gluck 1997: 571). On the other hand, marriage and sexuality were less rigidly institutionalised for women of lower classes. In a society based heavily on agriculture, peasant women in particular bore responsibilities for economic production that occupied more of their time than childcare; they planted and harvested crops and managed production of textiles and other necessities. Likewise, merchant women could participate in family business and often played vital roles, for example, hosting clients or balancing books. They, like samurai women, often left childcare and other domestic work to servants if they could afford to do so (Uno 1993: 27-29). Although records of the lives of artisan women are sparse, evidence suggests that they too were involved in the primary productive labour that defined an artisan household (ibid: 29-30).

If women in premodern Japan were engaged in non-domestic and productive work despite popular belief that only men did this type of work, then the inverse is also true: men were involved with the reproductive labour of housekeeping and childrearing, particularly with sons, whom they were expected to educate in their trade (ibid: 30-34). Furthermore, non-sexist ideological imperatives such as filial piety could prevail over Confucian subordination of women; ideals of gender/sex and divisions of labour would have been negotiated in response to material conditions, with poorer and smaller households required to be more flexible (ibid: 23-24). With a binary sex/gender framework expressed through a feudal rather than capitalist mode of production, the domestic reproduction-based roles of mother and wife were not necessarily primary in women's lives. Norms of sexuality were also characterised by the feudal structure, with a form of normative male-male sexuality being recognised in *nanshoku*, sexual relationships between samurai men and their subordinates (Leupp 1995). Coexisting with the ideological influence of Confucianism was the material reality of disparate classes in which women and men did not always have separate roles or occupy distinct spheres.

Most importantly, gender/sexuality in premodern Japan was not a static origin point waiting to receive Western influence, but rather a constantly changing and evolving social structure, shaped by other prior influences and underpinned by the economic organisation of society at that time.

### *2.2.3 Premodern discourses of gendered language*

Premodern issues of gender/sex and language are also inextricably tied to the feudal class structure. To begin with, distinctions of gendered language in early Japanese primarily concerned the literate upper classes, where imported Confucian ideals of distinct roles and education for men and women first took root. While modern Japanese is written using a combination of *kanji* (logographic characters of Chinese origin) and *hiragana* and *katakana* (Japanese phonetic syllabaries derived from *kanji*), premodern Japanese was written using only *kanji* or only *hiragana* depending on context. There was a distinction between *kango* (Chinese words) and *wago* (Japanese words), and likewise between *onyomi* (Chinese phonetic readings of *kanji*) and *kunyomi* (Japanese phonetic readings of *kanji*). Because Japan's primary political and cultural influence at the time was China, and because scholarly and intellectual pursuits were limited to men of upper classes, this division of "Chinese" and "Japanese" forms of Japanese language also amounted to a gender/sex division. Women of all classes were prohibited from using *kanji* or *kango* because these forms connoted a distinctly masculine "bookishness" (Nakamura 2014: 17, 37, 41-44). Literate upper-class women were instead prescribed to use *hiragana*, which was consequently also called *onna-de* — literally "woman's hand."

Notions of distinct gender/sex-specific language thus developed in the context of a particular ruling class, whose material power/influence perpetuated its ideologies further throughout Japanese society over the centuries. In constructing a "genealogy of women's language," linguist Nakamura Momoko identifies the beginning of the wider gendered regulation of speech and language in the twelfth to sixteenth centuries, with the influx of Confucian "conduct books" aimed at improving various aspects of women's behaviour, including their speech — mainly by advising them to speak very little, to speak in a polite and considered manner, or to not speak at all. Conduct books presented unregulated female speech as immoral and a potential threat to the prosperity of family and society.

They were largely contained within the upper classes for centuries, used as educational texts to prepare girls for marriage. However, during the Edo period, new printing technologies allowed them to be widely reproduced and circulated among all classes, where they also began to serve as textbooks for women who were learning to read. Feudal Japanese women thus accessed literacy through a medium that placed moral judgments and constraints on their speech. In this way, “[t]he carefree view of women in the Middle Ages and the andro-centric view of Buddhism and Confucianism gradually merged into the feudal family system” (ibid: 42-43).

Of course, just as the influence of Confucian ideology did not mean that women were actually limited to idealised domestic labour roles, it also did not mean that women always spoke according to the prescription of conduct books. Rather, historical prescriptions of appropriate feminine speech implicitly prove the divergence of actual women’s speech: that women have always used “inappropriate” and “unfeminine” language is evidenced by centuries of complaints about women’s language (ibid: 16-18). While the organisation of the highest classes allowed a rigid gender/sex division to flourish, resulting in linguistic phenomena such as *nyōbō kotoba*, or “court-women’s speech”<sup>1</sup>, there is no evidence that most women utilised “women’s language” consistently/habitually, or that they did so without consciousness of the social valuation of speech norms associated with the higher classes (ibid: 55-70). Furthermore, “[t]he premodern norms of feminine speech were mainly characterized by greater concern with whether women should talk at all, than with how they should speak” (ibid: 51). Although conduct books referred to the ideal feminine characteristics of the time, they were concerned with achieving social stability and harmony, rather than with defining the feminine essence of women. However, this emerging ideology around women’s language would survive and mutate along with the national power structure and mode of production.

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<sup>1</sup> Court-women were women who served in the imperial palace from the fourteenth century onward, notable for creating a form of speech in which “sets of operations” are applied to ordinary words to create alternative vocabularies. It is generally understood by scholars as a product of the court environment and the court-women’s roles, and was also understood by people of the time as a feature of the upper echelons — “mansion speech” — rather than a type of speech specific or inherent to women. Court-women’s speech was sometimes adopted by upper-class men due to this connotation of high class. However, beginning in the late premodern period, “court-women’s speech became the ideal, normative speech style of women, because the range of metalinguistic practices, such as dictionary and conduct book discourses, gave court-women’s speech the normative value of use for all women” (Nakamura 2014: 70)

Along with structures of gender/sex and family, language — particularly the regulated language of women and girls — would figure centrally in the transformation of Japanese society and the development of modern girls' culture, the precursor to *shōjo* manga and anime.

#### *2.2.4 The Meiji Restoration*

With the resignation of the shogun in 1867, political power was restored to the Meiji Emperor, and the new Meiji government was created the following year. This change marked the beginning of the era of societal transformation known as the Meiji Restoration, and the historical designation of the Meiji Period (1868-1912). The restoration of power to the throne after more than two centuries was understood at the time as a historical event that would radically transform Japan, and the newly formed imperial government made clear its intentions of total structural change. The first instance of political reform, enacted in April 1868, was the Five Charter Oath (*gokajō no seimon*), the fifth article of which dictated that “knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule.” With Japanese ports flung wide open to foreign trade, the domestic market experienced an influx of Western material goods, from clothing, food, furniture, and appliances to music, literature, and visual art (Gluck 1997: 579). Along with these physical products came ideologies, philosophical concepts, political discourses, and social/cultural norms. Compared with the abundant economic output of the “civilised” West — achieved, of course, not through intrinsic superiority but through colonial extraction of raw resources and labour power (Federici 2014: 62) — the existing Japanese economy seemed, to the Meiji reformists, woefully inadequate. This sense of inferiority to the industrialised West engendered a national attitude of self-flagellation and a determination among reformists to “catch up” to the more advanced Western nations. The agenda of Japanese political reform was in fact an agenda of “leaving Asia,” as it was expressed by Fukuzawa Yukichi, a leading political theorist of the time (Barshay 2004: 74-75).

In accordance with the Five Charter Oath, the Meiji government launched concentrated efforts to model the new Empire of Japan after Western imperial nation-states — primarily the United States, England, France, and Germany. Japanese students

and professionals were sent abroad to study these nations' systems of education, government, medicine, and social infrastructure, with the intention that the knowledge they brought back should be used to implement the same systems in Japan. The goal of the era was modernisation: to wholly abandon the "primitive," "undeveloped," "backwards" ways of the old Japan, and to join the "civilised" countries in the higher stages of human advancement (Kawasaka 2018: 601-604; Gluck 1997: 572-574). Japan itself, therefore, came to be constructed ideologically as a site of past and tradition, while the conceptual opposite, associated with future and innovation, was characterised not as one specific nation but as the political amalgam *Ōbei* — literally, "Europe and the U.S.," or figuratively, "the West."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Japanese scholarship sought to find or create "Japanese" equivalents to established "Western" concepts and fields of study (Sakai & Morris 1997: 48). The pursuit of equivalence reflects an overarching "regime of translation" (ibid: 51), an ideological conception of translation as symmetrical exchange of equal values between wholly separate and distinct languages/cultures, which served in the Japanese historical case to enable the construction of a homogenised national language and identity out of a heterogeneous reality.

### *2.2.5 Gender/sexual modernity and the family*

Western gender/sex frameworks began to be implemented in Japan through the deliberate restructuring of socioeconomic class and of the social institution of the family, which amounted to a restructuring of gender/sex. The second clause of the Five Charter Oath ordered the dissolution of the feudal class system; the transition to the industrial capitalist mode of production, and the emergence of a corresponding nationalist imperialist model of the family, was seen as necessary for the implementation of the new social order (Nakamura 2014: 90-96). Family stability would produce social stability; the empire could only build and maintain strength through the cooperation of nuclear family units, which each internally replicated the power structure of the empire itself. Within this system, all women were to function identically as domestic figures within their socioeconomic class, obligated to serve as reproducers, nurturers, and teachers of future

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<sup>2</sup> Generic Western-ness was also indicated through the affixation of *you*, using a kanji meaning 'ocean,' to nouns such as *fuku* ('clothing') and *shoku* ('food').

citizens. While claiming to abolish the “evil customs” of feudalism, the imperial government adopted elements of Confucian philosophy to promote gendered moral obligations, particularly the ideal of *ryōsai kenbo* (“good wife, wise mother”). Conversely, all men were conceptualised as soldiers, the authority figures and labourers who would materially produce the empire and maintain its borders. Sexual practices that had once constituted normative behaviour, such as *nanshoku*, were discarded in order to reconcile Japanese cultural figures with modern/Western conceptions of masculinity and sexual normality (Kawasaka 2018: 601-604). Furthermore, whereas the upbringing of all children under feudalism would have depended largely on class, and been intended to raise a child to fulfil a specific associated economic role or trade, the infrastructure developed at this time was oriented around raising children into dichotomous gendered citizenship roles. In a literal sense, children were no longer being raised to become farmers or tradespeople, but to become Japanese men and Japanese women. Girls in particular were targeted by gender/sex-specific educational agendas in response to the threat of nonconformity from this model:

Some of the first wave of girl students in the 1870s [...] attended boys’ schools and adopted boys’ clothing and even cut their hair short in a masculine style [...]. In reaction to this perceived loss of femininity, in the following decades, more girls’ schools opened, promising a more normatively feminine educational track. While education for girls was a priority in Japan’s modernization, the government intervened to ensure girl students conformed to conservative ideals of feminine behavior. In 1883, girl students were banned from wearing men’s clothing [...] and in 1899 the Girls’ High School Law (*Kotō Jogakkō Rei*) enforced a standardized curriculum in all girls’ schools.

— Shamooin 2012: 16

The state prescription of gender/sex roles, as part of the wider campaign to mirror the socioeconomic systems of the West, produced a staunchly patriarchal system that moralised the actions of women/girls and restricted their autonomy, assigning them one nationalist and natalist purpose in life. This marked a significant departure from the class-based variation in women’s roles under feudalism; “this ideology of childrearing

motherhood” was “a product not of tradition but of modernity” (Gluck 1997: 571). However, because this framework was implemented through the material transformation of Japanese society, it would soon come to be perceived as essential, traditional, and eternal — much like the conceptions of unique Japanese national identity being constructed in parallel at the time (Shimoda 2010: 720-721). In more recent times, it has been taken for granted as such even by some modern Japanese feminists and scholars of women’s issues, who refer to Japanese feminists’ struggle against “traditional” life pathways for women (Matsui 1990: 444; Ogi 2003: 781). The fourth article of the Five Charter Oath, which asserted that modern Japanese society should abide by “the law of Nature<sup>3</sup>,” reflects the underlying ideological commitment to promoting an imperial nationalist model of gender/sex and family as the “natural order” of society.

#### 2.2.6 Linguistic modernity

The material restructuring of society in the Meiji period manifested in changes to the Japanese language through projects of *genbun’icchi*, “unifying speech and writing” (Inoue 2006: 50). Some linguistic developments were the spontaneous results of linguistic spheres colliding; new loanwords from Western languages accompanied the influx of cultural concepts and artefacts, such as *kēki* (from English “cake”), *arubaito* (from German “Arbeit”), and *annyui* (from French “ennui”). However, other changes were deliberate: language, like gender/sex, was explicitly a part of the project of modernisation. That is, Japanese language was not simply passively receiving Western influence, but it was being proactively shaped with an awareness of Western influence. For Japan to become a modern nation-state, it was believed, it needed a modern national language (*kokugo*). “[T]he task of determining the new fate of dialects fell largely to scholars freshly trained in Western-style linguistics” (Shimoda 2010: 723), who were commissioned by the state to develop a standardised Japanese language out of the hundreds of different regional dialects that proliferated throughout the archipelago. Dialects associated with distinct ethnic groups, such as the Ainu and Ryūkyū people, were suppressed and stereotyped as backward, uncivilised, and unsophisticated (Nakamura 2014: 78-80;

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<sup>3</sup> *Tenchi no kōdō*, literally “the justice of heaven and earth.”

Inoue 2006: 79-81). Gender/sex-specific speech norms were also standardised. While men's speech was regulated in terms of adherence to the "national language," women's speech was regulated in terms of adherence to "women's language" — *onnakotoba*, a prescriptive, idealised feminine version of the newly designated Standard Japanese. Modern women's language was polite, submissive, indirect, and deferential, opting for longer (polite) verb forms, "softer" utterance-endings, and more abstract or oblique formulations (Furukawa 2016: 83). These norms were based on the speech of middle-class Tokyo housewives as well as schoolgirls, i.e. a largely middle-class group of intended future housewives, reflecting the centrality of class and the economic structure to the conception of modern femininity. The speech patterns associated with particular women/girls were canonised by (male) writers and linguists as a norm reflecting Japanese modernity, but when actual girls' and women's speech did not adhere to this established norm, it was often received by as a sign of moral degradation threatening social stability (Inoue 2006: 93-98, 110-111; Nakamura 2014: 118-124).

Other changes to the Japanese language resulted even more explicitly from contexts of translation. Gendered third-person pronouns (e.g. the English "he"/"him" and "she"/"her") posed a problem for translators working into Japanese due to the absence of direct equivalents and the general avoidance of pronouns in normal speech (Obana 2003: 140). As a solution, the genderless archaic referent *kare* — roughly meaning "distance" in the sense of someone "over there," separated physically from the speaker — was brought into the modern vocabulary as an equivalent for the male third-person pronoun. Much as "he" would be used as a default or universal pronoun while also referring to specifically men, *kare*, despite originally referring to otherness or distance rather than gender/sex, took on the meaning of maleness. The corresponding female pronoun, *kanojo*, was created by affixing the possessive particle *no* and *jo*, the *onyomi* (Chinese reading) for the character meaning "female/woman," to a shortened reading of the *kare* kanji: *ka-no-jo*. Mirroring Wittig's theory, the universal non-gendered position was actively appropriated by and for men, while women were relegated to the particular (1992: 80). In this way, Western gender/sexual norms came to be expressed through Japanese language and thought. The Western framework's linguistic infiltration of other cultures through colonisation has been documented in other cases (e.g. Oyěwùmí 2016), but the

example of Japan shows that colonisation in the most literal sense is not the only oppressive means by which one economically/politically dominant culture/nation can impose its ideologies on another. Japan was not colonised outright, but may be said to have “self-colonised,” as at this crucial juncture of its entrance onto the global stage, its language was being deeply affected by the ideologies and values of the colonial West.

The intrinsic link between the construction of gender/sex and nationality in Meiji-era Japan is evident in the issue of language: the disparate dialects spoken across Japan were subject to campaigns of assimilation and unification into the national language (Shimoda 2010: 715-716), while the modern construction of nationalist womanhood was substantiated by the prescription of “women’s language” reflecting idealised feminine characteristics. Through the ordination of a specific women’s language, literature became, even more so than it already was, a means for the articulation of norms and expectations surrounding linguistic gender performance. It could represent alike the voices of Japanese women and foreign women (through translation of Western works) as essential and uniform by expression through an idealised feminine Japanese language (Nakamura 2014: 13-15). The role of literary and visual media in constructing ideals of citizenship, nationhood, and gender/sexuality, particularly womanhood/girlhood, would consolidate and intensify enormously over the following decades, in step with the rapid development of the Japanese empire.

### 2.3. Prewar: the Taishō and Shōwa Periods (1912-1930s) <sup>4</sup>

By the 1910s, the current of modernisation had begun to falter, with Japan’s social and political conditions developing similarly to those of other industrialised nations such as Germany. Widespread disillusionment in the wake of World War I led to the eruption of political activity from fascist, liberal, communist, feminist, suffragist, workers’, and other movements, as organised groups across the political spectrum began to question modernity and call for another systemic change according to their respective interests. With the sickly emperor leaving political matters to cabinets and ministers, party-based politics emerged. Western political and economic influence, particularly from the United

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<sup>4</sup> In the Japanese era calendar, the prewar years (1910s-1930s) fall into two periods, Taishō (1912-1926) and Shōwa (1926-1989).

States now, remained strong while also drawing backlash (Gluck 1997: 577-579; Duus 1998: 166-172).

While Meiji womanhood had been established as the urban middle-class norm, continued modernisation and industrialisation also saw women resisting and moving away from this norm, often instigating cultural anxieties about the demise of “traditional” womanhood. The *atarashii onna* (“new woman”) of the 1910s and the *moga* (*mōdān gāru*, from English “modern girl”) of the 1920s emerged as archetypes reflecting women’s changing roles in a changing society. Fluidity and ambiguity of gender/sex began to appear as themes in media and public discourse as well. The “gender-bending culture” that developed in Tokyo was associated both positively and negatively with modernity (ibid: 579-580). The all-female Takarazuka Revue, founded in 1913, popularised the gender play of women performing male roles in costume — although its underlying rationale was to provide “a way for girls to enjoy theater without becoming sexually aroused by the sight of a man onstage” (Shamoon 2012: 46). Western and specifically Christian conceptions of love and sexuality, in tandem with capitalist family and gender/sex structures, influenced attitudes about sex and morality (Inoue 2006: 100). Pre-Meiji Japan did not share the popular European literary concept of love (i.e. romantic love) as a spiritual dimension of heterosexuality; so-called love stories instead revolved around *iro* (literally “colour,” figuratively “lust”<sup>5</sup>) and the division between the “pleasure quarters” and the domestic sphere. However, with the adoption of Christian philosophy, girls came to be configured as vessels for male spiritual fulfilment (Shamoon 2012: 16-18). Secondary education for middle- and upper-class girls — principally in private girls’ schools that taught “chastity, refinement, and sophistication” — became a norm (ibid: 29-30). Overall economic growth throughout this period “allowed for a flourishing of print culture, particularly newspapers and magazines” (ibid: 59). At the conjunction of this thriving print culture and the institutional attempts to shape modern womanhood/girlhood, a girls’ visual media culture began to take shape.

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<sup>5</sup> The *kanji* for *iro* can also be read as *shoku*, as in the term *nanshoku*.

### 2.3.1 *Girls' schools and girls' magazines*

By the 1920s, educational norms had shifted: although a majority of Japanese girls only undertook the state-mandated primary education, it was considered appropriate for girls from bourgeois families to attend a girls' secondary school (high school). This created a class of girls, previously confined to the private realm, whose existence was now visible to the public — for whom “the schoolgirl in her distinctive sailor suit uniform became a visible, enviable figure, embodying privilege and urban sophistication” (Shamoon 2012: 30). Conceptually and materially, schoolgirls “emerged as an unprecedented category of Japanese women [...], a newly defined interstitial space for the duration of their schooling, being neither producers nor reproducers” and became visually emblematic of a particular notion of Japanese modernity, utilised in national discourses and aesthetics (Inoue 2006: 41-43). This particular girlhood, constructed as a component of a modernisation and nationalisation project, is the basis of the *shōjo* concept: a girl in the preparatory stage for eventual womanhood (Masuda 2015: 23; Saito 2014: 151). In terms of media, the *shōjo* first appeared in modern Japanese literature as a figure viewed from a male perspective — a manifestation of the anxieties of male writers about the existential threat to society posed by girls and by the changing ideals of love and sexuality, with the *shōjo* representing the subject of chaste spiritual love, *ren'ai*, as opposed to the Edo concept of *iro* (Shamoon 2012: 16). However, in the “private, closed world of girls” that developed among students at girls' schools, spiritual love became an affair between girls, rather than between a woman and a man (ibid: 28). Some Japanese sexologists, influenced by the contemporary Western pathological view of homosexuality, were wary of *S kankei*, or “S-relationships” — girl-girl relationships mirroring heterosexual courtship — while others believed that these relationships were acceptable and even beneficial as long as they were transient and limited to the school setting (ibid: 35-36).

The temporally bounded homosocial environment of girls' schools and the idealised passionate relationships conducted between students formed the basis for the plethora of *shōjo zasshi* (“girls' magazines”) published beginning in the 1900s and peaking in the 1930s. “Through the use of reader-submitted content and girls' language, these magazines attempted to speak directly to girls, creating a private realm apart from

the pressures of patriarchal society and impending marriage” (Shamoon 2012: 29). The magazines also featured fiction by authors such as Yoshiya Nobuko, who is considered the founder of *shōjo shōsetsu* (girls’ novels) and the most popular contributor to prewar girls’ magazines (ibid: 70). Her writing centred on the emotional lives of girls and established conventions of lyricism and emotionality that would characterise later *shōjo* media. Importantly, although some scholars have attempted to read Yoshiya as lesbian and/or feminist, her writing neither challenged the sexism of Japanese society or the state, nor otherwise diverged from what was considered acceptable for girls’ education. While the idea of S-relationships as a refuge from heterosexuality may recall Wittig’s theory of the fugitive lesbian, these relationships were conceived as inherently temporary and even preparatory — ultimately stabilising, rather than resisting, institutions of heterosexuality. The writings in girls’ magazines also reflected the wider politics of the empire; for example, many of Yoshiya’s novels represented German women as “models of sophistication and intelligence” and Korean women as incompetent and uncivilised (ibid: 72-73). Sexual and political content was expressly forbidden (ibid: 121). Overall, the magazines promoted an ideal of girlhood/womanhood that suited the political agenda of the prewar imperial Japanese state.

Normative femininity was constructed not only through the thematic content of the magazines, but also through the actual language used in them, which was incorporated into the continuing project of linguistic modernisation and solidification of norms of women’s language. As a form of media that materialised in the context of girls’ schools, girls’ magazines utilised *teyo-dawa* speech, a form associated with (and subsequently used by) schoolgirls that reflected their education and class status. As magazines in general became a dominant media form, schoolgirl speech was more widely adopted by publishers and advertisers seeking to attract female consumers through the use of a “female” voice (Inoue 2006: 69-70). Consequently, a particular feminised form of Japanese language came to “[mark] ahistorical, universal modern femaleness, envisioned variously by the state, the market, and the civil society” (ibid: 111-115). In this sense, girls’ magazines — and print culture generally — can be understood as pivotal in the crystallisation of modern binary gender/sex in Japan. While girls’ magazines sought to participate in the co-creation of a private world for and by girls, their position within the

emerging media and material culture meant that their constructions of femininity had more far-reaching implications for the rest of Japanese society.

### 2.3.2 *Material and visual expressions of girls' culture*

In addition to their literary content, girls' magazines were defined by their visual content and their connection to external commercial products and processes. If girls were neither reproducers nor producers, they were instead consumers, and consumption was core to the logic of the magazine as a media form (Inoue 2006: 110). While the patriarchal logic of the modernised Japanese language posited men's speech as the standard, magazines gave women and girls a distinct voice — that is, created a voice for women and girls in which they spoke as potential consumers (ibid: 111). As well as affecting language, these marketing strategies generated material cultures linking multiple forms of media. For instance, girls' magazines often contained information and images related to the Takarazuka Revue, which was conceived as a “wholesome” tourist attraction (Shamoon 2012: 46). The Revue had a wide following among schoolgirls, for whom it represented a parallel all-female space in which actresses mimed heterosexuality while eliding the moral/sexual threat posed by men. Therefore, participation in Takarazuka fan culture, often organised through networks similar to the ones that formed around magazines, comprised another dimension of girls' culture. Takarazuka also contributed significantly to the developing aesthetic of *chūsei*<sup>6</sup>, an ideal of gender neutrality characterised not as the juxtaposition of maleness and femaleness but rather as “a safe, neutral midpoint where gender differences were elided” (ibid: 45-47). The use of the visual mode to create a conceptual space of “sexlessness” would become central in *shōjo* media of later decades.

In the meantime, the *chūsei* aesthetic was also developed through the illustrations that accompanied stories as well as advertisements, blending traditional Japanese art styles with contemporary Western styles and high art with commercial art. Three of the most influential girls' magazine illustrators were Takehisa Yumeji, Takabatake Kashō, and

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<sup>6</sup> Literally “middle sex.” *Chūsei* in the context of girls' culture refers to an ideal of literal sexlessness, rather than androgyny in the sense of ambiguous sex, but is also used by some gender-nonconforming people in Japan as a label for androgynous or non-binary gender identity (Dale 2019: 64).

Nakahara Jun'ichi, whose *jojōga* (emotive portraits of girls) reflected the Japanese/Western dichotomy while also developing an aesthetic of sameness and androgyny (ibid: 61-69). Takehisa, the first illustrator to gain association with girls' magazines in the early 1910s, was a self-taught artist known for his "sketchy" style that flouted high art conventions and reflected the *chūsei* ideal. Takehisa's art style was considered lowbrow but was extremely popular with young female audiences; his work was the first to extend into the realm of commercial goods such as posters and stationery, the latter of which played an important role in the sentimental relationships between schoolgirls. In the 1920s, Takabatake Kashō (known by his personal name, Kashō) also made his artistic debut with illustrations advertising the products of a pharmaceutical company, before later producing work for magazines, stationery, and other popular printed goods. Kashō blended the two prevailing categories of fine art in Japan: *yōga* and *nihonga*, or "Western painting" (oil painting) and "Japanese painting" (a modern style using "traditional" materials and aesthetics) respectively. Formally trained in both styles, Kashō drew inspiration from Western trends such as Art Nouveau and infused them into *nihonga*. In addition to girls' magazines, Kashō worked on boys' magazines and publications for older demographics, and his illustrations of boys as well as girls have been noted for their androgyny and sensuality — precursors to the "beautiful boy" (*bishōnen*) who would later become a central figure in certain genres of *shōjo* manga (ibid: 64; Welker 2006: 842). The last of the three, Nakahara Jun'ichi, began illustrating for prominent girls' magazine *Shōjo no tomo* in 1921, and his art defined the magazine's overall aesthetic profile by the next decade. His style incorporated popular elements of Takehisa and Kashō's styles, but inspired by earlier work in doll-making, he drew girls with large, expressive eyes and slender, fragile-looking bodies (Shamoon 2012: 68-69; Masuda 2015: 24). Together, these artists (along with Yoshiya) set the aesthetic precedents that would underpin postwar *shōjo* manga.

Japan's entry into war interrupted the development of girls' media culture and led to explicit interventions by the Japanese state in the content consumed by girls. "[Girls'] magazines in the late 1930s and early 1940s were [placed] under intense government scrutiny" (Shamoon 2012: 72), and "as Japan entered the second Sino-Japanese war in the 1930s, didactic articles that promote the ideal image of women [...] started to replace

'frivolous' novels and illustrations" (Power 2009: 114). Kashō's images of androgynous youths were censored, and Nakahara Jun'ichi was banned from publishing in *Shōjo no tomo* on charges of his art being "too individualistic" (Shamoon 2012: 149). Yoshiya, on the other hand, "was allowed to continue writing throughout the duration of the war" as her stories suggested a conservative ideology in line with the state (ibid: 72). However, many of the norms and thematic trends established in the prewar girls' print culture — fan engagement, commercialism/consumerism, crossdressing, passionate relationships — would be carried forward in the postwar rejuvenation of print media, albeit forever shaped by the national traumas of having both dealt and suffered massive destruction.

#### 2.4. Postwar girls' culture and the rise of *shōjo* manga

In the aftermath of World War II, Japan entered a period of reconstruction characterised by rapid economic growth, technological advancement, and upward mobility, with the economy "doubling in size every seven years" (Allison 2006: 67). With the fascist empire replaced by a newly established liberal democracy, the gender/sex binary continued to operate as an enforcing component of the capitalist economy — women were expected to manage the home and the upbringing of their children, subservient to husbands who worked outside the home. Women gained suffrage and many were voted into office in the first postwar elections, but women's issues remained marginalised in both state politics and radical movements (Anan 2014: 47; Matsui 1990: 437; Ogi 2003: 781-782). Women's organising was primarily through "pacificist and consumerist" frameworks (Mackie 2003: 134). "The postwar cultural reform and the absorption of American values inspired cultural producers to target women as active consumers" (Power 2009: 114), and the *shōjo* figure returned in the form of "*shōjo* stars" who appeared on radio and film as well as new girls' (and other) magazines. Initially, postwar girls' magazines were not much different from their predecessors; they primarily contained illustrations, short stories, and educational articles, with manga making up just ten percent of content. However, manga would soon overtake illustration and writing as the medium of the new era. Japan's economic recovery was produced by a generation of whom many had witnessed death and destruction up close, and some critics have argued that manga as a medium was uniquely suited to express these traumas. "Vision had become the only relevant medium" and the use of

stark black and white contrast reflected the visual impression of a “bomb-scorched, barren” cityscape (Shiraishi 1997: 245).

For these reasons, although manga was embraced first by the young, it was never bounded by the notion of “children’s media.” Instead, it became the medium of choice for literary and artistic innovation and exploration, as well as the expression of subversive themes. In the early 1950s, in the context of the Korean War and anti-communist purges, the U.S. occupation censored adult manga containing satire of the emperor and other political content. It was this censorship which allowed another form of manga — narrative manga or “story manga” — to develop more prominently in its place (ibid: 248). Later, in the 1960s, manga would become an avenue for avoiding Japanese state censorship: weekly *shōnen* (boys’) manga publications included photographs of U.S. atrocities in Vietnam, and of Japanese atrocities in China, at a time when these incidents were subject to Japanese censorship (ibid: 247). Emerging from a context of atomic devastation, postwar manga and *shōjo* media came to be moulded by the conditions of another national reconstruction.

#### *2.4.1 The making and breaking of convention*

While narrative art has been traced throughout Japanese history, and the word manga was coined in the Edo period, manga did not come to denote narrative comics until the postwar Shōwa period when this particular form emerged. Most “manga” in the Meiji and Taishō eras took the form of short or single-frame cartoons, modelled after Western comic strips and political cartoons and focusing on the delivery of humour and political commentary rather than the creation of narratives or characters (Schodt 1997: 41-42). In the immediate postwar period, manga became increasingly common in magazines and newspapers, but like prewar comics, they were generally very linear and formulaic, they provided simple amusement, and they were not considered a serious mode of artistic expression. This status quo was disrupted and replaced with the “story manga” paradigm by Tezuka Osamu, who is consequently known as the “god” or “father” of modern manga (Power 2009: 111). Born in the city of Takarazuka, Tezuka was raised in close proximity to performers in the Takarazuka Revue; his exposure to the theatre led him to believe that manga could function similarly as a multimodal form of dramatic narrative which could

convey not only simple jokes, but also serious, thought-provoking, and emotionally complex experiences. At a time when the vast majority of manga rigidly adhered to straightforward layouts, using only “regularly arranged panels, and images that [remained] within the boundaries of those panels” (Fujimoto 2012: 28), Tezuka began to produce work that challenged these conventions, using an art style and subject matter heavily inspired by Walt Disney and Western fairy tales, but also incorporating gender-bending themes drawn from the Takarazuka tradition. After publishing two less successful girls’ manga, he created *Princess Knight* (*Ribon no kishi*, literally “ribbon knight”), which was foundational to *shōjo* manga as a category and, more broadly, to manga as a long-form narrative medium.

First appearing in the girls’ magazine *Shōjo Club* from January 1953 to January 1956, this series “is considered the first story comics for young girls” (Power 2009: 111). *Princess Knight* follows the titular character Sapphire, a princess who is mistakenly given two “souls” or “hearts” (*kokoro*) — one male and one female — in her female body at birth. The king and queen, incidentally, also decide to raise her partly as a son so that she can ascend the throne instead of the evil duke who is next in line. The duke discovers her true gender/sex, kills her father, and imprisons her, but Sapphire escapes and resists the duke as her male persona, the “ribbon knight,” before eventually finding a happy ending in marriage to her true love, Prince Frantz Charming (ibid: 113). Opinions vary on whether the work poses a serious challenge to gender/sex essentialism, or if its play with stereotypes only serves to reinforce them. Regardless, *Princess Knight* set a precedent for gender-bending premises even in the earliest days of *shōjo* manga. In addition to raising narrative standards, it contributed to the development of the distinct visual character of *shōjo* manga; Sapphire’s character design, with large limpid eyes and slender limbs, reflected the earlier influence of Nakahara Jun’ichi as well as Tezuka’s fondness for Disney animations. Another contemporary artist credited with the development of the *shōjo* manga style is Takahashi Makoto, who is known primarily as a magazine illustrator and stationery designer, but began his career in the 1950s as a *shōjo* manga artist. Takahashi’s 1958 manga *Beyond the Storm* (*Arashi wo koete*) was pivotal in popularising the illustrative “style picture” in girls’ manga, shattering conventions of panel boundaries, and demonstrating the earliest examples of “starry eyes,” which today

are practically metonymic for *shōjo* manga (Fujimoto 2012: 24-25; Power 2009: 113). While Tezuka had steered the development of manga by incorporating the dramatic and dynamic elements of theatre into the composition and sequencing of individual panels, Takahashi literally broke up the norm of rigid panel boundaries with the “three-row overlaid style picture,” a full-body illustration of a girl superimposed over the typical three rows of panels in which the story is told. “Although [the style pictures] are not directly related to the story, they express in an abstract way the atmosphere of the world the artist wishes to convey” (Fujimoto 2012: 25), functioning similarly to the illustrations that accompanied stories in earlier girls’ magazines.

With the contributions of these artists, the medium of manga and the concept of *shōjo* solidified throughout the 1950s, with girls’ magazines once again forming the nexus of Japanese girls’ culture. However, whereas prewar girls’ magazines had featured content by mainly women authors as well as submissions from young girl readers, postwar girls’ culture was largely conceived and produced by men (Power 2009: 114). Now more than ever, “girls’ culture” was not so much the authentic culture of girls as it was a culture of ideal girlhood envisioned by the men who dominated media production. This situation would begin to change nearing the end of the decade, however,

when a group of young female artists made their debut. All of these artists [...] had been avid readers of Tezuka’s work. Being only slightly older than the readers, the new generation of female cartoonists dealt closely with issues and concerns of adolescent female readers, such as friendship, first love, body image, and the fear of imminent adulthood.

— *ibid*: 123-124

Their debut marked the beginning of a shift toward women-driven production of *shōjo* manga, foreshadowing the much larger cultural turn of the 1970s and once again setting the tone of popular *shōjo* manga as interactive between young female artists and readers.

#### *2.4.2 Television manga: the birth of anime and “image alliances”*

In the late 1950s, with widespread technological advances and class mobility, television became part of the Japanese media landscape. The first Japanese television stations

began broadcasting in 1956, and the first Japanese animation studio was founded in 1957. By 1960, several more channels had been established and were broadcasting U.S. animated shows such as Popeye (Shiraishi 1997: 250). A pioneer of anime as well as manga, “Tezuka created the first serialized television animation in Japan in 1963 and set up the character merchandising system to pay the cost” (ibid: 237). To reduce costs, Tezuka developed the “bank system” of animation, in which animators swapped out interchangeable parts rather than drawing unique images for every frame; he conceptualised anime and manga not as illustrations, but as texts composed of “hieroglyphic” visual signifiers (ibid: 243-244). This approach was highly efficient and effective in adapting manga to the screen, and adaptation had the advantage of promoting consumption of both mediums. At a time when television sets were still unaffordable for most Japanese people, *terebi manga* (“television manga,” the original term for anime) brought manga to wealthier audiences. As the price of such consumer goods dropped and even more people watched television, audiences — and profits — grew.

The merchandising of character images separately from manga/anime, first devised as a practical method of funding production, quickly gave rise to the phenomenon of the “image alliance”: an economic coordination between publishers of manga/anime and producers of other commodities, in which the images associated with popular manga/anime series are circulated as commodities in order to generate profits. In a successful image alliance, each iteration of the image (whether it appears in an advertisement, on a piece of merchandise, or as part of a multimodal text) invokes and promotes the other forms in which the image appears (ibid: 252-253). Importantly, this image alliance system began to undermine the primacy of narrative, with the image instead becoming the main source of (economic) value (ibid: 254). This is not to say that narrative became irrelevant, particularly in the case of narrative-driven *shōjo* manga that characterised the 1970s, as we will see. However, the image alliance both orients the visual mode as the primary vector of value and meaning, and uses the materiality of visual media as the locus of a multi-industry system generating continual growth and expansion. Although the character image driving an image alliance usually originates from a manga and/or anime, once in circulation, its value becomes detached from its narrative and it takes on an almost hieroglyphic function (Saito 2014: 153), echoing Tezuka’s conception

of manga images as signs. In other words, in the media culture of postwar Japan, the infinite reproducibility of the image came to form a basis for capitalist commodity production and continual expansion of profits. All of the material discussed in this thesis has been produced within this framework of commodification of character images, and whatever their narrative or thematic contents, *shōjo* media cannot be divorced from their commodification.

#### *2.4.3 Political struggle and social change*

On the flip side of rapid economic growth and prosperity was the frustration of the groups whose labour was exploited to achieve it. The 1960s saw the rise of Japan's New Left movement, which included many young women disillusioned with restrictions on their bodily autonomy and obligations of unpaid domestic labour. "Student radicalism peaked in 1968 and 1969 in Japan, with study at several major universities being disrupted" (Mackie 2003: 147). However, the movement struggled to properly relate "women's issues" to "class issues", which were often conceived as disparate or oppositional. With modern womanhood and girls' aesthetics being historically inseparable from bourgeois norms (as discussed in 2.3-2.4, 3.1), many young women in New Left contexts who advocated for women's issues or embraced femininity through consumerism were dismissed as bourgeois — including future manga artist Ikeda Riyoko, who was nearly expelled from the Japanese Communist Party's youth wing for wearing a flashy red suit (Anan 2014: 46, 52). The chauvinism of many New Left and student left spaces resulted in a fracturing of radical movements along gender/sex (as well as other) lines, and the departure of many women from communist/socialist militancy in favour of liberal, pacifist, and consumerist forms of activism (ibid: 56-57).

Interestingly, the late 1960s also have been described as a "lesbian boom" in Japan, slightly preceding the rise of feminist/women's liberation movements in the 1970s. Earlier in the postwar period, a deluge of imported Western print media, particularly "text-heavy publications ranging in tone from the quasi-sexological to the primarily pornographic" (Welker 2017: 149), had begun to (again) introduce Western sexual ontologies to Japanese audiences. These *hentai* ("perverse") magazines included homosexual as well as heterosexual content, and although lesbianism was less central

in the early waves, it had become a topic of enormous interest in wider print media in 1967-1969. Adopted into Japanese as *lesubian* or *rezubian*, “lesbian” identity came to be constructed as “both old and new” — conceptually linked with a historicised mythology of ancient Greece, while emerging specifically in the context of the modern postwar period. Welker notes that

as in English, [...] even as it has existed in some form for at least a hundred years, the term [*rezubian*] began to come to its current pronunciation and usage in the 1960s, around the time it came to be applied with any regularity to Japanese women.

— 2017: 151

Other terms of English-language origin also began to spread in Japanese usage during this period, such as *homo*, which was preferred to the clinical sound of the Japanese translation for “homosexual,” *dōseiaisha* (literally “same sex love person”) (Angles 2017: 94). While adopting vocabulary and frameworks from Western and usually Anglophone sources, Japanese speakers negotiated new usages, variations, and meanings within their own social context. The print media culture of the postwar years laid the groundwork for the wider popularisation of particular notions of gender/sexual nonconformity in the following decades.

## 2.5. 1970s: the sexual revolution in *shōjo* manga

Following from the politically turbulent 1960s, the 1970s in Japan saw a continuation of rapid economic growth as the New Left’s struggles against capitalism were defused and subsumed by consumerist individualism. While earlier decades had normalised the stay-at-home housewife, more married women were working outside of the home because a single income no longer supported the cost of living. However, women remained marginalised in the workplace by state policies, corporate exploitation, and sexist practices (Ogi 2003: 781; Ueno 1989: 2-4). These conditions, in combination with the aforementioned issues pertaining to the Japanese left, brought about the rise of a contemporary Japanese women’s liberation movement (*ūman ribu*), which has been retrospectively considered a strain of radical feminism due to its analysis of (anatomical)

sex as a/the primary axis of oppression, and its call for a “comprehensive transformation” of Japanese society away from “male-centrism” (*dansei chūshin shugi*) (Shigematsu 2012: 164). This period also saw a distinct lesbian movement and the increasingly widespread adoption of Western frameworks of sexuality. The Japanese translation of the U.S. feminist text *Our Bodies, Our Selves* was pivotal in orienting the movement around sexual and reproductive autonomy (Matsui 1990: 438, 441-442). At the intersection of these issues stood young women in the *shōjo* manga industry. Since the late 1950s, it had become evident that *shōjo* manga was better received by audiences, and therefore more profitable, when stories were drawn from artists’ first-hand experiences of girlhood and girls’ culture. Many artists were very young, even high school graduates; they would then age out of their roles and either “disappear” or move on to writing manga aimed at adult women (Power 2009: 127). However, the women artists of the 1970s were also influenced by the previous decade of political unrest as well as contemporary discourses of sexual liberation. Building on the legacy of foundational *shōjo* series like *Princess Knight*, while also echoing the proliferation of discourses of lesbian and gay sexuality (Welker 2017: 149-151), *shōjo* manga became a medium through which complex social and psychological issues could be explored. In particular, the “Year 24 Group”<sup>7</sup> — a group of loosely affiliated women artists including Ikeda Riyoko, Hagio Moto, Takemiya Keiko, and Yamagishi Ryōko, among others— are characterised as having “revolutionised” *shōjo* with portrayals of androgyny, same-sex romance and sexuality, abuse and trauma, and philosophical themes, surpassing their predecessors in taking new unconventional approaches to panel layout (Anan 2014: 41; Shamoan 2012: 102; Power 2009: 115).

### 2.5.1 Beautiful boys and boys’ love

One of the biggest developments in 1970s *shōjo*, attributed principally to artists like Hagio Moto and Takemiya Keiko, was that stories no longer focused exclusively on girls. Protagonists could also be boys, or adults (Power 2009: 126). The shift from girl to boy protagonists also resulted in the creation of a new subcategory of *shōjo*, *shōnen ai* (boys’

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<sup>7</sup> “Year 24” refers to Shōwa 24 (1949), a year popularly but mistakenly attributed as the birth year of all of the associated artists (Shamoan 2012: 151).

love, or “BL”), which retained the core *shōjo* focus on passionate relationships but replaced girl characters with *bishōnen*, or “beautiful boys.” Many manga scholars have theorised these characters as literary proxies through which girls could safely explore their sexuality, with the worlds of sexually and ethnically ambiguous boys functioning as a “safe haven” for self-discovery within a contemporary climate that strongly disapproved of Japanese girls taking interest in their own sexuality (Fujimoto 2014: 32-34; Shamoon 2012: 104, 111-113; Welker 2006: 842). The aesthetics of *bishōnen*, with their tendency to appear in dark and light pairs, echoes the *chūsei* aesthetic of neutrality, sameness, and sexlessness defined in prewar girls’ magazines. Gender/sexual difference is elided and replaced by other visual differences (Angles 2017: 95). *Bishōnen* became an important part of *shōjo* culture with their gender/sexual ambiguity and ability to create different gendered readings or layers of meaning within manga.

Two foundational examples are Hagio Moto’s *Heart of Thomas* (*Tōma no shinzō*, 1974) and Takemiya Keiko’s *Song of the Wind and Trees* (*Kaze to ki no uta*, 1976-1984), which both revolve around passionate relationships between young boys at European boarding schools (German and French, respectively) and deal with homosexuality, sexual abuse, and suicide. Mirroring the all-female world of Yoshiya Nobuko’s writing, the worlds of these manga are almost exclusively populated by boys, yet even in the most sexually explicit scenes, *bishōnen* are depicted as physically ambiguous or sexless (Welker 2006: 848-849). This ambiguity can be partly attributed to Japanese censorship laws which ban realistic depictions of genitalia, but crucially, it allows readers a particular freedom to interpret and identify with characters outside of a restrictive and clearly defined (hetero)sexual dichotomy. According to Takemiya Keiko, the androgynous styling of the boys in *shōnen ai* is a deliberate strategy “to mentally liberate girls from the sexual restrictions imposed on us [as women]” (ibid: 855). Whether the *bishōnen* is read as a girl in drag, a gay boy, or a neutral third gender, “he” is a stand-in for young female readers, who through “his” narrative can vicariously experience a subjectivity outside of the constraints placed on girls and women in the real world. This theory is substantiated by records of reader engagement with *shōnen ai*-focused *shōjo* manga magazines, and by the testimonies of some members of Japanese lesbian communities who credit the gender-bending *shōjo* manga of the 1970s with providing narratives into which they could

read their own (otherwise scarce) representation (ibid: 843). However, it has also been noted that girl-girl relationships in school settings may have been negatively connoted as “sappy” or “old-fashioned” for female manga artists of the time, who associated “S-relationships” with old girls’ magazines (Shamoon 2012: 107). Both perspectives point to the same conclusion: images of “girls” could not operate independently of readers’ (and artists’) material experiences of girlhood as shaped through historical narratives and cultural institutions.

### 2.5.2 Lesbian manga and compulsory heterosexuality

Owing to the continuing stigma around female sexuality, manga featuring girl-girl relationships were significantly less common and, when they did appear, almost invariably followed tragic patterns. The 1971 manga *Shiroi heya no futari* (“the two in/of the white room,” no official English title) by Yamagishi Ryōko, considered the “earliest and most famous” example of a lesbian or *yuri*<sup>8</sup> *shōjo* manga (Fujimoto 2014: 26), depicts a passionate romance between two schoolgirls which ends in tragedy when one kills herself. This narrative became a template for subsequent lesbian manga, which nearly always ended with one or both lesbians dead, usually by suicide. Alternatively, they might be suddenly revealed as long-lost sisters, their intimate emotional connections thus explained away into socially acceptable bonds which rendered lesbian relationships invalid — and their lives consequently spared. In the world of *shōjo* manga, boys were permitted, as neutral literary devices, to bend and break the rules of gender and sexuality in distant imaginary worlds, whereas girls were bound to reality by misogyny and compulsory heterosexuality. Noting this pattern, Fujimoto argues that “for *shōjo*, and also for women, being a woman is the most insurmountable symbol of reality” (ibid: 34).

Despite the changing economic conditions of women in Japan, there remained a strong social and economic obligation for their lives to be delineated by marriage to men. Lesbian relationships definitionally could not provide girls with the social capital and economic security associated with heterosexual marriage, so *shōjo* manga, with its

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<sup>8</sup> *Yuri*, meaning “lily”, came to emblemise girl-girl relationships in the prewar context, where it was often used as a symbol of Christian girls’ schools. In the 1970s, lilies took on an association with *shōjo ai* (girls’ love), which was also linked with recently imported notions of lesbianism (Shamoon 2012: 146).

central themes of self-discovery and emotional fulfilment through romance, was inherently poised to regard lesbianism as ill-fated — reflecting less the homophobia of individual artists and more the oppressive material conditions in which lesbian gender/sexuality and *shōjo* culture are situated. Therefore, depictions of same-sex love and androgyny in 1970s *shōjo* manga have not always ultimately challenged the status quo of gender/sexuality, instead offering temporary, experimental escapism that often ends with a narrative reinforcement of nonconformity as unsustainable, illusory, or otherwise impossible. Nevertheless, it is clear that the strong current of gender nonconformity in *shōjo* manga since the 1970s reflects the general disillusionment of women with their social status under patriarchy and capitalism (Anan 2014: 59-60; Saito 2014: 158-161). *Shōjo* manga has functioned as a space within mass culture that gives voice to this disillusionment, while its relatable and consumable qualities are simultaneously what enable it to be a profitable commodity in a capitalist market targeting girls as consumers.

### 2.5.3 Radicalism versus consumerism in *shōjo*

The defeat of the New Left and the subsequent surge of consumerism was followed by an explosion in the *shōjo* manga market. *The Rose of Versailles* began serialisation in the *shōjo* magazine *Margaret* in 1972, beginning a media sensation that would define the decade. Its creator, Ikeda Riyoko, had been politically active in the student left as a member of the Democratic Youth League of Japan, but after dropping out of university, Ikeda incorporated her interest in revolutionary history and politics into *shōjo* manga (Anan 2014: 52). *The Rose of Versailles* follows Marie Antoinette and a fictionalised member of the Royal Guard, Oscar François de Jarjayes, from birth to death over approximately thirty years preceding the French Revolution. Introduced as a girl who was raised as male in order to become a soldier, the character of Oscar took on great significance in a thematic landscape characterised by “romantic love ideology,” where *shōjo* manga conventionally provided one of two narratives: an idealised romance between two beautiful boys, removed from reality, or an idealised romance between a boy and a girl, in which the girl’s social existence is dependent on being validated by the boy’s desire (Fujimoto 2014: 35). Whereas Sapphire of *Princess Knight* performed split gender/sex roles in ways that arguably served to validate them (Power 2009: 122),

Oscar's gender duality is depicted in a way that challenges the stability of gender/sex altogether: the narrative shows repeatedly that her anatomy prevents her from being fully recognised as a man, but his lived male role and identity prevent him from being fully recognised as a woman. In terms of *shōjo*'s visual grammar, and explicitly within the text, s/he is both *shōjo* and *bishōnen* at once. Similarly, Oscar's childhood friend and love interest, André, is visually and narratively feminised over the course of the story such that the two of them eventually look like the same gender, again evoking the *chūsei* ideal. Their romance became hugely significant for many readers who saw Oscar and André's relationship as a model for heterosexual love based in equality rather than hierarchy (Anan 2014: 51; Shamoon 2012: 127).

With its themes and production deeply embedded in girls' culture and women's material conditions, *The Rose of Versailles* could be read as a suggestion that gender/sex, like class, was an oppressive system that could be overturned. However, inextricable from its capitalist production, it also evoked the division of feminist consciousness between socialism and capitalism/consumerism/liberalism. That these ideas were expressed through mainstream girls' manga publications reflected the ideological character of contemporary feminism. While *The Rose of Versailles* presents a narrative of Oscar joining the working people to overthrow the corrupt monarchy, Oscar is also defined by bourgeois aesthetics (s/he almost always appears in stylish military uniform), and class distinctions are made primarily in terms of fashion. Ikeda is noted as having commented that "Oscar fought with the common people, but she cannot live as a commoner in dirty clothes" (Anan 2014: 56) This statement

reveals the dilemma of women's consumerist sentiments. Here is the tension between Ikeda's red suit and the poor's dirty clothes. Consumerism provided her with a space and commodities through/with which she constructed her own identity, but for her, the working class generically remained just as those in dirty clothes. Yet, in her mindset, she was somehow also concerned with social equality. *The Rose of Versailles* exhibits the predicament of women who had the leftist awareness, but found a possible tool to make their voice heard in consumerism. Indeed, it was one of the works/events which marked the shift in

the site of political action from class-based street action to lifestyle-based performance, one that derived much potential from the realm of consumption.

— *ibid*: 56-57

Sure enough, radicalism largely receded after this period, with Japan yet to experience the height of its capitalist boom. However, *The Rose of Versailles*' popularity continued through to the beginning of the 1980s. The Takarazuka Revue was the first to adapt the manga into a different multimodal form in 1974, while an anime series followed in 1979. As a result of Oscar's popularity, swordfighting, crossdressing female protagonists began to appear more commonly in *shōjo* manga (Davidson 2012<sup>9</sup>). The work of Ikeda and her contemporaries set the new precedent that *shōjo* manga could incorporate history, action, and other elements not associated with previous girls' media (Anan 2014: 41-42). The continued success and profitability of the "image alliance" model in the case of franchises like *The Rose of Versailles* also laid the foundation for manga/anime to be linked with new and larger commercial enterprises.

## 2.6. 1980s-1990s: manga and anime reach Anglophone audiences

1980s Japan represented the peak of the so-called "bubble economy" — the final decade of the long period of economic prosperity before the bubble burst in the 1990s, which in turn would come to be called the "lost decade" (*ushinawareta jūnen*), characterised by economic stagnation and the most significant social unrest since the end of the 1960s (Saito 2014: 156; Dasgupta 2009: 79-81, Allison 2006: 74-81). Entertainment, media, and service industries thrived, creating new spaces and new modes of gendered/sexual relations — such as "hostess clubs," establishments where young women waited on male clientele, and later the inverse, "host clubs" in which female clients paid young men for entertainment (Takeyama 2016). Concepts of gender/sexuality also continued to expand, as the 1980s saw a "gay boom" in literature translated from English to Japanese (Angles 2017: 88) and a "golden period" of transgender people appearing on variety shows (Dale 2019: 61). Although they were presented as entertainment, their visibility promoted the development of new vocabularies around transness and had a consciousness-raising

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/feature/2012-10-30>

effect for some viewers. As well as being associated with entertainment (including sexual entertainment), “transgender” was broadly conflated with “homosexual” in popular conceptions. Japanese communities largely adopted Western taxonomies and vocabularies of gender/sex/sexuality, but did not uniformly adopt the understanding of sexuality as an essential inner identity that was promoted by many Western LGBT activists (Angles 2017: 94; McLelland 2000: 462-464). However, some Japanese gay activists did adopt the identity model and articulated themselves as victims of ingrained homophobia in Japanese society, advocating for a “gay liberation” movement equivalent to the ones in Western nations such as the U.S. and U.K. (Lunsing 2005: 82-83). Similarly, the dominant paradigm of transness changed abruptly to a medicalised one in the 1990s with the publicised case of a trans man fighting for the legal precedent to have genital reconstruction surgery, which resulted in the government making a special allowance for diagnoses of “gender identity disorder,” or GID (Ho 2021: 2; Dale 2019: 62). Partly in response to media narratives that characterised transition as strictly male-to-female or vice versa, specifically non-binary transgender identities also began to coalesce and find expression through new terminology such as “X-gender” as well as existing Japanese-language terms, e.g. *chūsei* (ibid: 64-65). However, as a concept developed and disseminated through online and multimedia contexts, X-gender was quickly detached from its “radical queer” underpinnings and subsumed under the pathologising GID framework. These developments reflect the globalisation of LGBT/queer politics and the increasing connectedness of Japanese and Anglophone media spheres.

### *2.6.1 The first wave of English translation: localisation and adaptation*

Commercial English translation of manga and anime began in the late 1970s and 1980s, when the industry and subculture began to gradually take root in the Western English-speaking world. “Niche translation experiments started in the 1970s,” and a few anime (such as a heavily adapted *Princess Knight*) managed to make it into U.S. serialisation, but broadly speaking, “in North America commercial ventures didn’t succeed until the late 1980s” (Schodt 2016: 7), when Japanese live-action shows like *Super Sentai* and anime series such as *Gundam* had begun to generate enormous sales and build brand recognition among children by pairing toys with television shows. Producers of media and

commodities in the United States found that they could license and adapt a Japanese show for a fraction of the labour and costs needed to produce footage domestically:

[Haim] Saban, the person who greatly facilitated the opening up of U.S. kids' entertainment to the presence of Japanese cultural goods, was motivated by strictly economic reasons. In an era when industrial countries's [sic] production was increasingly relocating overseas, Saban treated Japan — itself an industrial power with a healthier economy than that of the United States in the 1980s — as an “outsourcer” in the field of kids' culture.

— Allison 2006: 117

Likewise, after the domestic economy declined, Japanese producers would seek to invest in overseas markets. As a result, commercial links were established between particularly U.S. and Canadian and Japanese media producers.

The earliest official translations of manga into English were heavily localised, prioritising accessibility and appeal to local audiences. A manga translator's job included redrawing Japanese onomatopoeic sound effects in English and flipping the art to read from left to right in the typical Western reading order (Schodt 2016: 7). Similarly, the earliest anime licensed for English-language distribution were heavily edited and dubbed, sometimes combining footage from multiple Japanese series or combining licensed and new footage. Television in particular was subject to scrutiny by Departments of Standards and Practices or equivalent bodies within broadcasting companies that arbitrated moral concerns. As well as erasing signs of cultural specificity, producers were required to censor depictions of violence, nudity, and other content considered inappropriate for the target market, such as excessive “foreignness” (Ladd & Deneroff 2009: 100-101; Allison 2006: 115, 120). This target market, at least to begin with, was exclusively boys. “Early [translation] efforts deliberately chose male-oriented action-adventure and sci-fi stories” (Schodt 2016: 7) based on the traditionally male makeup of the United States comics fandom and the stereotypical assumption that girls did not read comics. On the other hand, in Japan, girls' media was thriving and adapting along with new technologies and changing social conditions.

### 2.6.2 *Magical girls and social crisis*

Separately from *shōnen ai*, another genre of *shōjo* had been forming in Japan since the 1960s, inspired in large part by the U.S. sitcom *Bewitched: mahō shōjo*, “magical girl.” This genre was developed mainly through anime produced by Tōei Studio, with stories written by popular male manga artists of the day, and shared the basic premise of a young girl having magical powers that transform her physically, often into a fully grown woman. These anime “[embodied] antagonisms between traditional gender expectations and emerging concepts of women’s power” and depicted the magical girl as “a temporary phase of gender vacuum” to be indulged in before the eventual acceptance of “female duties” (Saito 2014: 141) — an interstitial period in which girls were neither producers nor reproducers, but only (and especially) consumers. However, the popularity of these shows declined abruptly in the 1970s, with audiences favouring shows adapted from girls’ manga, and Tōei stopped producing magical girl series altogether. In the early 1980s, a few other studios took up the concept and reinvented it. Around the same time, a fundamental shift was induced by the reversal of value initiated by image alliances (Shiraishi 1997: 253) alongside the development of technologies that transformed television shows and films into individually purchasable commodities:

[A]nime’s value expanded from its promotion of merchandise sales as twenty-five-minute-long toy commercials, toward visual commodities that allegedly have their inherent values in being owned by individual consumers. It is no coincidence that this phase parallels the emergence of VCR technology that enabled personal recording and viewing in the mid-1980s.

— Saito 2014: 152

To put it differently, whereas the original merchandising strategy was to use the anime to sell products, VCRs materially enabled anime to become an atomised product — a unit that could be individually purchased and owned, as opposed to only being accessible by watching a live broadcast or going to a cinema. Corresponding to this shift, in new *mahō shōjo* series, the magical girl character (i.e. the “image” at the heart of the alliance), not the narrative, was the focus. Designed to attract older male anime fans and their purchasing power, characters often represented idealised femininity and sexual appeal.

In a shift widely described as postmodern, the primacy of the narrative was replaced by the primacy of characters as icons, visual signifiers able to be relocated and reinterpreted, i.e. in fan fiction (Saito 2014: 153). The consumption of manga/anime and the types of images/characters consumed came to constitute social identity, as consumption was the available means of self-expression. This context produced *otaku*, a Japanese word for people (stereotypically young men) who were engrossed in manga, anime, and/or video games to the point of social incompetence (Eng 2012: 166; Allison 2006: 84-85).

*Otaku* fan culture and the commodification of images of girls figured centrally in the crisis of violence and social instability that coincided with the downturn of the economy, beginning as early as 1988-1989 when it was widely misreported that a serial murderer of four young girls had been found to possess a large quantity of anime and manga, instigating a moral panic (ibid: 79-83; Saito 2014: 157; Iwabuchi 2002: 454). The bursting of the speculative economy in the early 1990s, was followed by surges in unemployment, suicide, and murders by and of young people, as well as the subway sarin gas attacks in 1995 (Dasgupta 2009: 81; Allison 2006: 85). The orientation of social existence around individual consumption was linked to the fraying of community cohesion. As the modern (“traditional”) nuclear family structure failed to provide stability and prosperity, Japanese women and men had to renegotiate their gendered identities in terms of new and uncertain economic roles. Old value systems and structures seemed to collapse, and “hopes and dreams” became the new rhetorical currency of the neoliberal economy as the Japanese state attempted to stimulate economic growth (Takeyama 2016: 33-35). In this context, the 1990s magical girl came to symbolise a possible futurity based on the rejection of previously defined adult male and female roles: whereas early magical girls had transformed into adult women, representing the inevitability of girls becoming mothers and wives, contemporary magical girls’ power was their youth. “Gender-bending” and similar themes also began to appear in magical girl series, undoubtedly due to some extent of influence by the presence of gender nonconformity in earlier popular girls’ manga, but also arguably reflecting the destabilisation of modern gender/sex roles (Saito 2014: 158-161).

Exemplifying these issues, Takeuchi Naoko’s *mahō shōjo* series *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* was an immediate commercial success after the manga debuted in 1991 in

*Nakayoshi*, one of the most prominent girls' manga magazines. It featured a team of middle school girls, each affiliated with a different celestial body, who used special items to transform into stylised sailor suits (schoolgirl uniforms) and fight against evil. Though not as expressly political as *The Rose of Versailles*, *Sailor Moon* echoed the zeitgeist; the protagonist, Usagi, faces constant dangers after learning that she is the future Queen Serenity of the magical kingdom on the moon called the Silver Millennium. Magical transformation and time travel allow (or require?) her to be a carefree schoolgirl, a warrior, a powerful queen, and a mother and wife all at once — echoing contemporary discourses about whether women could “have it all.” *Sailor Moon* presented a world in which girls *could* have it all, and in which their stereotypical feminine desires (to consume fashionable commodities, to have fun with their friends, to fall in love with boys) generated the power to save the universe. While the magical heroines of *Sailor Moon* were mostly depicted as young and normatively feminine, the cast of evil characters included older women in heavy makeup and/or revealing clothing (Saito 2014: 158), as well as a variety of feminine and gay-coded men. Furthermore, several of the ten main cast of magical girls were coded to varying degrees as non-heterosexual. Most notably, two were presented as a couple, in which one, Haruka, was depicted as male-passing and described in the manga as being both male and female. With the “retooling” of series over multiple story arcs to expand merchandise lines (i.e. by adding new characters, new abilities, new weapons) being the standard approach to a franchise, it is not too cynical to posit that the gendered coding of some of the magical girls in *Sailor Moon* was calculated to attract different demographics. With the modern magical girl genre being targeted to adult men as much as (if not more than) young girls (ibid: 152-153), including tropes of gender ambiguity and homoeroticism that developed in the *shōjo* manga tradition effectively expanded the series' target market. Capturing two fairly distinct audiences with the single aim of generating profit, *Sailor Moon* promoted “girl power” and represented gender/sexual diversity, while also ultimately reifying gender/sex essentialism in the moralisation of different gendered/sexual embodiments.<sup>10</sup> This contradiction reflects the wider trend in

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<sup>10</sup> That is, the gender-normative female characters are always morally good unless they are mature and overly sexual, in which case they are evil. Gender-nonconforming (masculine, non-heterosexual) female characters are shown to be more morally complicated, but are still fundamentally good because of their essential (physical) femaleness. The gender-normative male characters, of whom not many appear, can be

*shōjo* and *mahō shōjo* anime/manga in which apparent resistance to gender/sex roles functions to discursively reaffirm the roles even as they are materially destabilised (ibid: 161).

This multipronged approach to the marketing of *shōjo* anime was highly successful. Based on the profitability of the franchise in Japan, toy company and license-holder Bandai saw an opportunity for *Sailor Moon* to be as popular with girls in overseas markets as *Super Sentai*, adapted into *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, had been with boys (Allison 2006: 131). Although the English dub's rocky reception following its initial U.S. and Canadian debut was officially blamed on insufficient localisation, *Sailor Moon*'s divergence from the gendered norms of Western cartoons and children's television made it a cult classic among people of all ages and genders, and a fan campaign called "Save Our Sailors" arose in response to the show's cancellation in 1996. Contestations of the dub's approach to localisation, including its heavy censorship of gender nonconformity, also generated greater awareness and interest (ibid: 151-158; Close 2017: 273-276). Though fan activism was not the only contributing factor, the series was restored in 1997, and an English translation of the manga by Mixx Entertainment (later Tokyopop) as well as the anime began to sell decently. *Sailor Moon*, along with other multimedia franchises/image alliances from Japan such as Pokémon, came to the forefront of the developing current of Japanese pop culture into the Anglophone West.

## 2.7. 2000s-2010s: globalised *shōjo* and the English translation boom

By the end of the 1990s, the manga/anime media phenomenon was being consciously leveraged by the Japanese state as a cultural export and a mechanism for building "soft power" (Brienza 2014: 385; Shiraishi 1997: 234). While first established throughout Asia, this soft power was also developed in the English-speaking Western world — particularly the United States and Canada — as the economic links established by multimedia industries throughout the 1980s and 1990s gained firmer footholds in Western economies. Of course, on the other side of this wave of industrial development were the consumers. The increasing availability of digital technologies and media, principally the Internet,

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good or evil. The gender-nonconforming male characters are always evil, although a few are redeemed. The ultimate effect is that gender nonconformity is morally coded as suspect, particularly in the case of "male" characters.

enabled the massive global expansion of fan communities and subcultures. After the turn of the millennium, manga and anime would quickly come to rank among Japan's most widely recognised and consumed cultural exports, generating millions and later billions of USD in sales of physical and digital goods both domestically and abroad (Bryce et al 2010). Much of this growth occurred explosively in the mid-2000s, after the successful revival of *Sailor Moon*: from 2002 to 2007, the market for manga translated into English more than tripled (Brienza 2014: 383). Per changing norms and expectations from consumers, who were now more widely able to access alternative translations or source materials through the Internet, anime and manga were no longer "culturally neutralised." As early as the late 1990s, the heightened visibility of Japanese popular culture in English-speaking North America led to a rhetoric of Japanese cultural "invasion" in the United States, which expressed anxieties about loss of cultural hegemony to Japan. However, the economic reality is that the U.S. publishing market embraced manga translation due to its profitability (ibid: 395). Writing on the topic of soft power and alleged "Japanisation," Koichi Iwabuchi notes critically that "the Japanese animation and video game industry was only able to become a global player with the help of the power of Western media industries" (2002: 457). Effectively, manga/anime became economically and culturally accepted as the basis for consumer identity in the United States and other adjacent Anglophone spheres, with English-speaking fans even adopting the word *otaku* self-referentially<sup>11</sup> (ibid: 454; Bryce et al 2010; Eng 2012).

### 2.7.1 *The translation boom*

The popularisation of manga/anime and increased fan engagement with source materials and alternative translations, as epitomised by the circumstances surrounding *Sailor Moon*, resulted in increased demand and an expanded market for both official and unlicensed translations. This context produced lively fan translation scenes with varying ethos, as well as major developments in professional translation, as the two informed each other in direct and indirect ways. While the very first fan translation projects had appeared in the

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<sup>11</sup> The English meaning of the word, essentially "manga/anime fan," diverges from the Japanese usage, in which it can apply to someone who is an obsessive fan of essentially anything.

1990s, with a translation newsgroup dedicated to the *shōnen* series *Ranma ½*<sup>12</sup> dating back as far as 1989, it was the years of 1999-2001 during which disparate fan translation efforts were first widely organised and coagulated into distinct recognisable practices of “scanlation” (fans digitally scanning and translating manga) and “fansubbing” (fans subtitled anime) with broadly agreed-upon community norms (*Inside Scanlation*, “The Land Before Time”<sup>13</sup>). With the sharp rise in legally licensed/professional translations in the following years, fan translation communities evolved and splintered quickly. While early best practice, retained by some groups, was to only translate unlicensed series (which was considered legally and morally defensible), many groups came to disregard this norm, illegally translating licensed material in order to make it available sooner and/or more readily. The material result was a proliferation of translations and fan communities based around translation. In some ways, fan translation came to function as an interactive space in which translators and readers communicated, similar to the dynamic of girls’ magazines in Japan. Many fan translation groups specialised in particular categories (such as *shōnen ai* or *yuri*), strengthening their function in constructing consumption-based identities as fans. As fan translation broadly prioritised access to the authentic source material and valued knowledge of Japanese context, manga/anime fandom, including *shōjo* fandom, became globalised (Hills 2017; Eng 2012; Lee 2011).

### 2.7.2 Postmodern *shōjo* media and fan culture

In Japan, *shōjo* media industry had continued to expand and develop based on the consumerist model of production established in the 1980s and 1990s as well as the gender/sexual metaphors of 1970s girls’ manga. However, because the driving logic of commercial media was the reproducibility of character images and the ownership and reinterpretation of characters by fans, many 2000s *shōjo* series no longer took the form of grand narratives like *The Rose of Versailles* or *Heart of Thomas*, but instead revolved around day-to-day interaction between casts of characters representing different popular archetypes. Hatori Bisco’s *Ouran High School Host Club*, which ran in the *shōjo* magazine *LaLa* from 2002 to 2010, simultaneously satirised and epitomised the defining tropes of

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<sup>12</sup> A series about a boy martial artist who is cursed to change sex as a result of contact with cold water.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.insidescanlation.com/history/history-1-1.html>

its era. Based on the concept of real-world host clubs, which were sensationalised in Japanese media as a model of idealised masculine entrepreneurship (Takeyama 2016: 6, 10-12), the series features a host club at an elite private school in which male students, each representing a different iconic character “type,” entertain the female students according to their favoured type. Due to convoluted circumstances, the protagonist, a female scholarship student, also becomes a host, committing to the performance of a male role/identity while at school, so as in *The Rose of Versailles*, gender duality or ambiguity is utilised to represent both homoerotic and heterosexual dynamics. *Ouran High School Host Club* was massively popular with Japanese and English-speaking audiences, and was later credited with establishing a new humorous subgenre of *shōjo* that was comedic, self-aware, and featured characters crafted specifically for fans to engage in “shipping” (the fan practice of construing or advocating for particular characters to be in a romantic/sexual relationship). By the time it concluded in 2012, it exemplified not only the role of *shōjo* manga/anime as commodified images in a global economy, but also the stage of development of the English translation of manga/anime generally.

## 2.8. Conclusion: the present day

Up to this point, I have presented a historical review of my topic: the development of *shōjo* manga (and later anime) in tandem with the modern reconstruction of Japanese political and social frameworks, including gender/sexuality and particularly norms of girlhood/womanhood; *shōjo* culture’s expansion into English-speaking locales through translation; and the specific role of nonconforming or non-normative gender/sexuality in *shōjo*. Beginning with a summary of the basic economic and political conditions in Japan in the decade leading up to the Meiji Restoration, I have clarified the significance of Meiji era policies and programmes in establishing new ideological frameworks and material structures of family and gender/sexuality. Whereas “women” in feudal Japan had varying roles and responsibilities based on their feudal class, womanhood in the modern period was reconfigured as a biologically ordained category for the purpose of reproducing the family, with the institution of the family itself mirroring the imperial nation-state (Gluck 1997). The Japanese language was also a target of state reconstruction and

modernisation, and the language use of women/girls in particular was a focus of prescriptive activity. Essentialist narratives of women's language were constructed from historical literature such as documentation of court ladies' speech, attempting to reify the idea of natural womanhood or universal feminine essence (Nakamura 2014) and thus evoking the materialist feminist conception of gender in language as a marker of the political/economic category of sex (Wittig 1992). The figure of the *shōjo* was central in discourses surrounding gendered/sexed linguistic norms, with the speech of girls/women being scrutinised and treated as symbolic of the state of modern society (Inoue 2006). At the same time, literary conventions shifted in pursuit of "Western" (i.e. Euro-American) standards, leading to the creation of new mediums for the development of gendered aesthetics and ideologies. In the prewar period, girls' magazines were one such medium, consisting of illustrations and short stories/novels that often depicted sameness, relative androgyny, and passionate relationships between girls (Shamoon 2012). In the postwar consumerist boom, "girls' culture" again congealed around the medium of mass print, although the majority of content was initially produced by adult men and reflected a hyperfeminine ideal. From the 1960s onward, more young women artists began to find success in the industry due to the popularity of their work with girls (Power 2009). In the 1970s, with the debut of the members of the Year 24 Group, more *shōjo* manga began to reflect social issues affecting women, and gender nonconformity began to appear as a literary device allowing women artists and girl readers to negotiate their alienation from heteronormative gender/sexuality (Fujimoto 2014).

By the 1980s, with Japan's economic prosperity, manga/anime production continued on an upward trend, with some series beginning to find their way throughout Asia and into the Euro-American sphere. However, most series licensed for English translation during this time were aimed at boys and/or were heavily adapted to remove as many of the traces of foreignness as possible (Schodt 2016). It was not until the 1990s that manga and anime began to gain significant attention in the West, due to a convergence of factors. In Japan, economic stagnation drove publishers to seek new markets beyond Japanese borders while in Anglophone North America, broadcasting companies were dubbing more anime due to the success of adapted Japanese franchises in the late 1980s (Allison 2006). Although these dubs continued to localise and even

ensor content, the emergence of the Internet enabled fan communities to self-organise, produce, and distribute alternative translations, with many groups specialising in categories such as *shōjo* and *shōnen ai*. By the 2000s, in response to growing consumer demand and the success of earlier franchises, U.S. and Canadian media companies were beginning to make room for manga and anime, and more officially licensed translations began to appear; in another decade, the industry was well-established, with multiple major companies routinely licensing English translations for thousands of series.

Today, the manga and anime industries are roughly seventy years old (manga being slightly the older). Newer media has continued to express reflexivity, intertextuality, and awareness of fan culture, and gender nonconformity has continued to feature in series that draw influence from foundational *shōjo* manga/anime of earlier decades. Manga and anime have become situated firmly in mainstream popular culture. Since 2012, the year *Ouran High School Host Club* finished its eight-year run in English translation just a year behind the final Japanese release, the industries comprising the production and translation of manga and anime have only continued to grow. Even the COVID-19 pandemic has not impeded this trend, with the U.S.-based anime/manga publisher Viz Media recording “a 70% growth in the U.S. market for 2020, in line with a 43% increase in overall manga sales in the United States in 2020” (Pineda 2021<sup>14</sup>). Not only is it easier than ever to access manga and anime online through reading and streaming sites, whether officially licensed or illegally pirated, but there is now an observable reciprocal influence on media produced in the English-speaking Western world. Recent titles of U.S. origin which have depicted nonconforming gender/sexuality, such as *The Legend of Korra* (2012-2014), *Steven Universe* (2013-2019), and *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (2018-2020) — all animated children’s television series with graphic novel adaptations or continuations — are plainly styled after manga/anime, from the visual aesthetics that invoke Japanese animation, to the narrative concepts and character tropes that make allusions to *shōjo* and *shōnen* (boys’) classics. In a sense, history has come full circle, as the Japanese medium that took inspiration from Western comics and animation is now shaping a new generation of Western animation and visual storytelling that seeks to

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2021-03-04/viz-vp-company-saw-70-percent-growth-in-2020-u.s-market/.170213>

emulate the Japanese form (Bryce et al 2010). By the same token, as Western frameworks of gender/sexuality continue to gain traction in Japan, a new and expanding range of identities and positionalities are coming to be articulated through anime and manga. The fundamental “hybridity and fluidity” of manga and anime continue to reflect culture and ideology back and forth between Japan and the West, creating a rich “interculture” (ibid). Alongside these new developments, the retranslation and reimagination of old titles perpetuates certain iconic representations that continue to exert intertextual influence. This broad history, as I have laid it out here, will be visible at a closer distance in the progression of my three case studies: from *The Rose of Versailles*, characterising the 1970s and early 1980s; to *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, characterising the 1990s and early 2000s; and finally to *Ouran High School Host Club*, defining the 2000s and early 2010s. Before moving on to examine these series and their notable English translations in detail, the next chapter will comprise a brief review of this data and the methodology to be used in its analysis.

## Chapter 3: Data and Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

In the following chapters, I will analyse data drawn from Japanese-language source texts and English-language translations of three *shōjo* series, each of which I will argue is broadly representative of one of three different periods in the parallel processes of *shōjo*'s development as a media category and the English translation of *shōjo* media: the 1970s to the early 1980s, the 1990s to the mid-2000s, and the mid-2000s to the 2010s. In this chapter, I will provide relevant background information on source materials and the data-gathering process, beginning with a general explanation of my rationale for selecting particular sources and a few caveats regarding issues encountered in the course of research. Then, each series and its key points of relevance to the thesis will be introduced briefly, signposting the further details and historical context to be explored in depth in the corresponding analysis chapters. Finally, I will conclude with a summary of my methodological approach, multimodal analysis structured by case studies.

#### *3.1.1 Selecting representative examples*

What constitutes “representativeness”? To briefly elucidate my selection process, I chose titles for analysis based on a combination of three primary factors: belonging to the *shōjo* category, prominent depiction of gender nonconformity, and degree of popularity, reach, or influence. A general list of all manga and anime featuring gender-nonconforming characters would be extensive and diverse (not to mention constantly expanding), but would include many series which are relatively obscure or have otherwise not been particularly influential to mass culture. Emphasising intertextuality as a core of the *shōjo* tradition and maintaining a focus on translation, I focused on series which have exerted demonstrable influence and achieved iconic status in both Japanese and Western Anglophone media. Of course, choosing to focus on more well-known series also widened the pool of available relevant literature and analysis, allowing me to locate my thesis more securely in an existing lineage of media research rather than veering into relatively uncharted territory. Following this selection process, I narrowed my sources from an initial

list of dozens of series<sup>1</sup> to three *shōjo* titles which, in my view, most strongly characterised the *shōjo* media culture at their time of publication and were most clearly interrelated with the preceding and following titles. As I will show throughout this chapter and in each respective Data Analysis chapter, *The Rose of Versailles* achieved significant popularity in Japan in the 1970s, laying visual and narrative foundations for the ongoing development of *shōjo*; likewise, *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* became massively popular with both Japanese and North American Anglophone audiences in the 1990s, introducing *shōjo* to a generation of English speakers; and *Ouran High School Host Club* defined the period of the 2000s-2010s when manga and anime culture solidified as a part of mainstream popular culture in many Western countries (especially, though not exclusively, predominantly Anglophone countries like the U.S. and Canada).

In some cases, these selection criteria did lead to the exclusion of relevant and interesting sources. For example, Ikeda Riyoko's 1975 manga *Dear Brother* and its 1991-1992 anime adaptation provide an equally compelling example of *shōjo* as a medium for exploring gender/sexuality, class, and power as *The Rose of Versailles* does; however, the overall reach of the series has been insignificant in comparison to *The Rose of Versailles*, and there are fewer extant English translations. Similarly, the *shōjo* series *Fruits Basket* by Takaya Natsuki, consisting of a manga (1998-2006) and two anime adaptations (2001 and 2019-2022 respectively) was an all-time bestseller in the U.S. as well as Japan, and features several gender-nonconforming characters, but these characters are less central and provide less of a basis for in-depth analysis than *Sailor Moon*, which it followed, and *Ouran*, which it slightly preceded. Finally, many examples are not *shōjo* and are not particularly widely known, making them more difficult to frame within a historical outlook, even though their translations pose interesting theoretical questions. The three titles I eventually selected are by no means isolated examples, but

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the series that were chosen, an initial list consisted of *shōjo* titles *Dear Brother*, *Claudine*, *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, *Fruits Basket*, *Princess Princess*, and *Princess Jellyfish*, and girls' love titles *Simoun*, *Asagao to Kase-san*, *Kämpfer*, and *Yuri Kuma Arashi*. It also included *shōnen* titles *Hunter X Hunter*, *Kino's Journey*, *Ranma ½*, *Aoharu x Kikanjuu*, and *Naruto*; and several titles which are categorised mainly according to genre (e.g. drama, action, romance, sci-fi, supernatural) rather than age/gender categories: *Cowboy Bebop*, *No. 6*, *El Cazador de la Bruja*, *Tokyo Godfathers*, *Wandering Son*, *Yuri!! on Ice*, *Requiem of the Rose King*, *Carole & Tuesday*, *Stars Align*, and *Sarazanmai*. Finally, a few noteworthy newer series that came to my attention over the course of the research period were *Blue Period*, *Kageki Shōjo!*, *Wonder Egg Priority*, *Fire Punch*, and *Welcome Back, Alice*.

they are foundational in a way that lends them more readily to the theoretical orientation of a thesis.

### 3.1.2 Access issues

Material factors also contributed to narrowing my scope. My original intent was to analyse every extant English translation of all three series, but this goal quickly proved unrealistic. First, it became evident that the volume would exceed the allowance of a single thesis, and (as we will see) there are not always many appreciable differences between different fan translations, which tend to approach the source material under similar conditions and with similar priorities. Then the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted my planned travel to Japan to locate certain out-of-print materials — such as Frederik Schodt's 1981 English translation of the first two volumes of *The Rose of Versailles* — in person. Attempts to locate these materials online were unsuccessful. I was also unable to access the official English subtitles for *The Rose of Versailles* anime due to licensing issues: in 2013, U.S. media company RightStuf and its subsidiary Nozomi Entertainment had released the subtitled anime for limited-time streaming on the platform Viki and as a limited-edition Blu-Ray DVD set, and neither source was available as of late 2019-early 2021. Later in 2021, the license was acquired and re-released by Discotek Media, and the DVDs have since become available again, though too late to be acquired and included in this research. Their absence from my analysis is disappointing, but also clearly illustrates the materiality of both translation and knowledge production about translation.

In other cases, locating unlicensed digital translations posed similar challenges. As a popular series that coincided with the rise of online fan translation culture, as well as one known for having official translations contested on the basis of inaccuracy and censorship, *Sailor Moon* has been translated by multiple different fan groups. Whereas these fan translations would have originally been distributed directly from producers to viewers through communities formed over IRC channels or on dedicated online forums, many such groups have long since disbanded, and their distribution channels are likewise defunct. Corresponding with the mainstreaming of manga/anime in English translation, licensing and copyright crackdowns have altered the landscape of fan translation. Many old fan translations remain on the Internet, but are no longer archived in relation to the

groups that produced them. Instead, fansubs and scanlations from multiple (often unattributed) sources proliferate on unlicensed streaming/reading websites which amalgamate links to mass hosting platforms. In terms of their practical distribution, fan translations are treated as fungible. It would be difficult to locate complete sets of every English-language fan translation ever released for every series, and with fan translation being only peripheral to my topic, it did not seem like the most useful body of data to pursue. In the end, the problems with complete and consistent access to fan translations made the decision straightforward: I have selected translations based on availability. For each series, I have compared two or more different fan translations to encompass all of my chosen excerpts — either because chapters/episodes from different translation groups were spliced together, or because no group ever produced a complete translation in the first place.

Specific means of access for each translation are noted at the end of the corresponding section. All untranslated manga series were accessed as paid content on the Japanese website Sukima ([sukima.me](http://sukima.me)).

### 3.2. 1970s-1980s: *The Rose of Versailles*

The first series in my chronology, *The Rose of Versailles* (*Berusaifu no bara*), is a seminal *shōjo* title by Ikeda Riyoko — a member of the so-called “Year 24 Group” and arguably one of the most influential individual *shōjo* manga artists in history. Much of Ikeda’s influence has been attributed to the popularity of *The Rose of Versailles* itself, allegedly “the most famous girls’ manga of all” (Schodt 1996: 256-257) and is a central part of *shōjo*’s early expansion beyond Japan. The manga ran in Shueisha’s *shōjo* manga magazine *Margaret* from 1972 to 1973, and was subsequently collected in thirteen *tankōbon* volumes.<sup>2</sup> In 1974, it was adapted by the Takarazuka Revue into one of their most famous and long-running theatrical productions (*ibid*), and was eventually also adapted into a 40-episode anime series by TMS Entertainment, which aired on Nippon

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<sup>2</sup> A note on the norms of manga publication: most manga is printed in large, cheap volumes using newspaper-quality paper, and is intended to be discarded after reading. Series deemed to have lasting value (i.e. potential for more sales) will be reprinted as *tankōbon* (“short volumes”), and it is these volumes which often end up being the most authoritative originals that manga researchers can work from, due to the ephemeral nature of the true original prints (Shamoon 2012: 82).

TV from 1979 to 1980. Over the course of the decade, between the original manga and its other multimodal adaptations, the story and characters became cemented in Japanese popular culture. Along with other works discussed in the previous chapter, *The Rose of Versailles* helped to develop a particular aesthetic style that has come to be a signature of *shōjo* manga, with its intricate illustrations of flowers and French royal attire, and character designs featuring large, sparkling eyes and flowing hair.

### 3.2.1 Themes

At the outset, the manga and anime versions diverge slightly in their focal points; a fictionalised Marie Antoinette was the original intended protagonist of the manga, but was quickly overshadowed in popularity by a side character, Oscar, who becomes an equal focus of the manga after the first few chapters and is the sole protagonist of the anime. Born into a noble family with ties to the French Royal Guard, Oscar is anatomically female, but is raised as male from birth to meet the family patriarch's need for an heir. S/he grows up to become a talented swords(wo)man and is appointed to the Royal Guard, but later defects to fight alongside the lower classes in the French Revolution — becoming entangled in a variety of archetypal passionate relationships with both women and men along the way. Oscar's character serves as the locus of the series' gender-nonconforming themes, signifying revolution against gender/sex and class hierarchies from within the gender-normative and consumerist arena of *shōjo* manga (Anan 2014: 43-52). While the narrative frames gender/sex in biological terms, the drama of the series is driven by an understanding of gender/sex as cultural/social/economic role or performance. Although it is stated that Oscar is a woman (because of her/his body), Oscar is also shown repeatedly to not be a woman (because of his/her lived experience). S/he has been raised from birth to perform her/his duties to family and nation as a son and soldier, bearing identities and responsibilities which preclude womanhood. At the same time, her/his biological categorisation as female often produces external and internal challenges to his/her maleness. This tension appears throughout the narrative as Oscar struggles to reconcile her/his own ambiguous or dual-gendered identity with her/his various gender-specific relationships and roles in life, particularly the question of whether to pursue a relationship with a man or a woman. Expressed through visual and verbal aspects, Oscar's ambiguity

is utilised narratively to portray different gendered/sexual relationship dynamics, from the classic “S-relationship” (girl-girl passionate/romantic friendships; see Shamoan 2012: 35-36), to implied homoeroticism between two “beautiful boys”, to normative heterosexuality. When selecting and analysing specific excerpts, I am primarily concerned with how the different translations approach dialogue in which Oscar and other characters reckon with these ambiguities directly.

### 3.2.2 Translations

Given its positive mass reception at the time, it is unsurprising that *The Rose of Versailles* also came to be at the forefront of manga’s spread beyond Japanese borders and into Anglophone spheres (as well as, notably, France and Italy). However, its English translation history is punctuated by gaps and inconsistencies. The first and second volumes of the manga were first translated into English by Frederik Schodt for a Japanese publisher, Sanyusha, in 1981, making it one of the earliest manga (and possibly the first *shōjo* manga) to be commercially translated into English.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, it is an early cornerstone of both Western Anglophone and Japanese manga cultures alike. However, Schodt’s translation for Sanyusha was primarily commissioned for the purpose of teaching English to Japanese speakers (Thompson 2010<sup>4</sup>) and the full series was never officially translated into English until 2019-2020, when Canadian publisher Udon Entertainment finally released its five-volume omnibus edition. Likewise, the anime was officially licensed by U.S.-based RightStuf and released on streaming service Viki in 2012-2013, but this subtitled version became unavailable when the license expired at some point before 2019. As explained earlier, in 2021, the rights were acquired by the

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<sup>3</sup> It is sometimes claimed apocryphally as *the* first commercially available English-language translation of manga (of any category) in North America, but I have been unable to find legitimate sources supporting this claim. Frederik Schodt himself has written that *Barefoot Gen (Hadaka no Gen)*, a historical *shōnen* (boys’) manga, was the only “story manga” available in English translation in 1980 (1996: 309). Additionally, the actual commercial availability of the 1981 translation in North America is dubious. An excerpt consisting of 21 pages from the first volume is included in Schodt’s 1983 (1997) book *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (215-237), where it is also specified that the translation was published in Japan.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/jason-thompson-house-of-1000-manga/the-rose-of-versailles/2010-05-06>

U.S.-based Discotek Media, but I was unable to obtain the Blu-Ray set in time to include this translation in my analysis.

Consequently, for the anime, I exclusively consider the fan subtitles produced by fansubbing group Live-evil (live-evil.org) in 2005. For the manga, I compare the complete official English translation of the manga (2019-2020), translated for Udon Entertainment by Mari Morimoto and Jocelyne Allen, with a fan translation comprising three continuous scanlations by three different groups: Lililicious (chapters 1-18, 2003-2010), RosalinaScanlations (chapters 19-24, 2011-2012), and RoV Scans (chapters 25 and onward, 2013-2017).<sup>5</sup> Although there is no guarantee of their completeness, records maintained in the fan archive BakaUpdates (mangaupdates.com) suggest that these were the only English scanlations produced of the series. For the Udon Entertainment translation, I referred to the physical volumes in my personal collection. I accessed the scanlation on MangaHere (mangahere.cc) and the fansubs on the recently defunct streaming website AnimeFreak<sup>6</sup> (animefreak.tv).

### 3.3. 1990s-2000s: *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*

*Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* (*Bishōjo senshi sērā mūn*), or simply *Sailor Moon*, is a *mahō shōjo* (“magical girl”) series — a genre of *shōjo* featuring girls with magical abilities (Saito 2014: 144-145) — created by Takeuchi Naoko. The *Sailor Moon* manga was first serialised in the *shōjo* manga magazine *Nakayoshi*, a publication of Kodansha, between 1991 and 1997. An instant hit, it was adapted into an anime almost concurrently with its original publication run, airing on TV Asahi from 1992 to 1997. (During the same period, the manga was also collected in *tankōbon* volumes.) While *The Rose of Versailles* planted an awareness of *shōjo* manga in the Western landscape for participants in subculture, the *Sailor Moon* franchise pushed girls’ manga and anime closer to the Western mainstream, as “[the] success of Sailor Moon in the North American market triggered the first wave of cute female-hero action programs [...] in the United States and Europe” (ibid). It built on the visual style and narrative tropes established by the previous two decades

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<sup>5</sup> All three groups appear to have dissolved. RosalinaScans and RoV Scans were inactive as of 2020-2021. Lililicious had an active website (lililicious.net) which is now defunct (last accessed successfully on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Last accessed successfully on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

of *shōjo* manga culture, while also incorporating influences from *shōnen* (boys') manga/anime and *tokusatsu* (special effects) television shows in its use of action sequences and cartoonish monsters as villains.

Like many other Japanese children's media franchises at the time, the series was conceived strategically for the purpose of marketing mass-produced toys and goods, such as replicas of the magical items used by the characters in battle (Allison 2006: 131; Schodt 1996: 93). As well as product lines, many further spinoff manga, live-action films, and other forms of derivative media have come to follow the original series. Likewise, its spread into Western Anglophone spheres was "motivated by strictly economic reasons" (Allison 2006: 117). In the late 1980s and 1990s, United States and Canadian television producers began to look to Japanese media for content that could be licensed, translated and edited — i.e. Westernised — and aired as a new show, at a fraction of the costs of actually producing a new show (ibid: 116-117). Initially, this approach assumed boys as the primary audience, but *Sailor Moon* was at the forefront of a deliberate shift to targeting girls as a marketing demographic. The series' impact on *shōjo*'s transformation into a global product can be seen to reflect the continued construction of gender norms and categories through economic processes.

### 3.3.1 Themes

*Sailor Moon* revolves around a group of Japanese middle school girls who discover that they are reincarnations of warriors ("Sailor Senshi") from a kingdom on the moon in the far future, and when awakened, each is capable of wielding magical powers corresponding to one of the planets in the solar system. The main character, Usagi — who transforms into the titular Sailor Moon — is the incarnation of their queen. For the most part, the series operates within normative modes of gender/sexuality, with the girls often striving to meet contemporary fashion and beauty standards and discussing their attraction or attractiveness to boys. The tension between Usagi's responsibilities as a magical hero and her desires as a young girl — and their reconciliation in the form of commercialised "girl power" (ibid: 128-143, Saito 2014: 144-147) — forms the thematic crux of the series. Nevertheless, some aspects of the series have been received as transgressive, particularly by Western audiences. Fred Ladd, one of the lead consultants

for the DIC dub, recalls feeling astonishment at the idea of the *bishōjo senshi* (“pretty soldier” or “girl warrior”) in the 1990s:

Serena [Usagi’s name in the dub], a girl, along with Sailor Mercury, Sailor Venus, Sailor Mars, Sailor Jupiter — five girls — expected to be ‘warriors’? How strange, I thought. How different from the images of girls in Western culture! [...] [T]hese five girls, all 14 years old, all in high school, all thinking about boys, are themselves fulfilling the roles of boys when they unite to battle the evil queen of the negaverse!

— 2009: 131

To many of the people involved in dubbing the show, and perhaps to some audiences as well, the mere premise of girls fighting amounted to a subversion of gender norms. However, the series does also portray nonconforming gender expressions and sexualities. The first season’s main cast of villains includes Zoisite, a young man who is overtly feminine in speech and appearance, as well as his more masculine lover Kunzite (changed to Malachite in some early translations); Canadian and U.S. studio executives were shocked to find unabashed “homosexuality” in a children’s show (ibid: 146-147). On a similar note, the third season introduces protagonists Sailor Uranus (Haruka) and Sailor Neptune (Michiru). Haruka is androgynous or masculine-presenting and is shown to be frequently perceived as male, which the narrative uses to create suspense and mystery around her character before eventually revealing her to be a Sailor Senshi. In addition to Haruka’s appearance, various elements such as scene settings, dialogue, and visual subtext strongly imply that Haruka and Michiru are lovers. The fourth and fifth seasons also feature gender-nonconforming characters or those who appear to change gender/sex in some sense, although I have opted to exclude these seasons from analysis due to limited space and relevance.

*Sailor Moon* depicts both female empowerment and gender fluidity/ambiguity, although, not unusually for a *shōjo* series, it does so in a way that ultimately “generates and reconfirms conventional gender norms and heterosexuality” (Saito 2014: 147): overall, feminine men tend to be villains and henchmen of mature “seductress” characters (though three-dimensional in characterisation, with the possibility of redemption for some) whereas masculine girls are characterised as heroic, morally good, and encompassing

the positive qualities of both binary sexes/genders. However, while this distinction is apparent in the source material, the English translations are another story. My analysis of *Sailor Moon* will focus on Zoisite and Haruka as characters whose perceived gender nonconformity was met with censorship due to the institutionalised standards of translational agents (consultants, broadcasting companies, etc.) and contemporary cultural pressures (such as state suppression of “homosexuality” during and after the AIDS crisis). I will also include excerpts dealing with Sailor Jupiter (Makoto), who is less often cited as an example of non-normative gender/sexuality in the series due to her feminine presentation, but whose femininity and heterosexuality is occasionally called into question in both the Japanese and English versions.

### 3.3.2 Translations

The first English translation of *Sailor Moon* was a dubbed version of the anime, licensed by the U.S. arm of international production company DIC Entertainment, which aired (with several interruptions and cancellations) from 1995 to 2000 on YTV in Canada and on USA Network and Toonami in the United States. In line with the industry standards of the time, the DIC dub, headed by agents such as Ladd, heavily censored all content perceived as gender-transgressive, to the frustration of many fans who had viewed the original episodes via other sources (Close 2017: 274-277). Most notably, Zoisite’s gender was changed to female in order to render the onscreen relationship heterosexual. DIC also heavily localised the series — though not to the degree typical of other imported children’s shows — giving characters non-Japanese names and cutting content that was deemed excessively violent or otherwise offensive (Ladd & Deneroff 2009: 100-101). *Sailor Moon* had a worse initial reception in the U.S. than in Canada, but eventually became popular in both countries, with a fan-organised campaign protesting its cancellation in 1996 (Allison 2006: 152). Another company, the U.S.-based Cloverway, Inc., picked up the license from DIC and dubbed the remaining seasons, which continued running through 2002 (again, on YTV in Canada and Toonami in the U.S.). Cloverway took a similar approach to DIC, rewriting Haruka and Michiru as cousins in order to censor their implied relationship. The increasing popularity of the anime, bolstered by fan discourses around its censorship, also drew greater attention to the manga. The original

eighteen volumes of the *Sailor Moon* manga were first licensed for English translation by the U.S. manga publisher Mixx Entertainment (later Tokyopop) and released as “Pocket Comics” volumes, mirroring the Japanese *tankōbon*, from 1997 to 2001. This translation used most of the same Westernised names as the DIC-Cloverway dub but was otherwise a separate translation and did not share the same approaches to gender/sexuality or other controversial content.

As the *Sailor Moon* franchise has continued to grow, both the manga and anime have since been retranslated by new license holders, addressing dissatisfaction with the earlier translations. However, in order to maintain my focus on the time period of the 1990s and early 2000s, I work primarily from the earliest translations of the anime, comparing the DIC-Cloverway dub of seasons 1-3 with fansubs by Studio Chikashitsu (season 1) and VKLL (seasons 2-3).<sup>7</sup> Where relevant, I also include excerpts from the Tokyopop manga translation for comparison. I accessed the scanlation on the fan website Miss Dream ([missdream.org](http://missdream.org)), and both the dubbed and fansubbed anime on streaming website GoGoAnime ([gogoanime.be](http://gogoanime.be)).

### 3.4. 2000s-2010s: *Ouran High School Host Club*

*Ouran High School Host Club* (*Ōran kōkō hosuto kurabu*) is a *shōjo* series created by Hatori Bisco, originally in the form of a manga that ran from 2002 to 2011 in Hakusensha’s magazine *LaLa*. Beginning in 2003, it was also published in *tankōbon* volumes under the company’s *Hana to Yume* (“Flowers and Dreams”) label between 2003 and 2011, reaching 18 volumes in total by the end of the series. Midway through its serialisation, it was adapted into a 26-episode anime which aired on Nippon TV in 2006, and it has also been adapted into audio dramas and live action films. Whereas *The Rose of Versailles* and *Sailor Moon* played pivotal roles in establishing awareness and appreciation of *shōjo* manga in the English-speaking world, *Ouran* arrived on the path they carved out before it, to a context where fans already had access to a wide variety of *shōjo* media — with fan communities, and merchandise widely available on the Internet as well as at physical

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<sup>7</sup> I was unable to determine exact dates of release, but references made in fan forums to these translations being distributed on VHS tape suggests that they date to the 1990s or early 2000s — probably produced shortly after the official dub began airing.

libraries, conventions, and other offline spaces. The series is self-aware about this reality, deliberately presenting characters in a way that acknowledges and encourages particular forms of fan engagement, such as fan fiction (and is considered to have also pioneered a new genre, *fujoshi* comedy, in this regard<sup>8</sup>).

### 3.4.1 Themes

Building on *shōjo* manga history and fan culture, *Ouran* plays on several popular tropes and themes, including gender and class: the protagonist, Haruhi, is a poor scholarship student at a prestigious high school, where she is assumed to be male because of her androgynous appearance and lack of hyperfeminine mannerisms. Through a series of slapstick accidents and misunderstandings, Haruhi becomes indentured to the school's host club — a satirical variation on real-world host clubs, where women pay to be entertained by male clientele — and must maintain a male social role/identity in order to continue working as a host, a job which she finds intuitive and enjoyable. Haruhi's philosophical indifference to gender/sex, and its physical manifestation in her androgyny, form the basis of much of the series' comedic and dramatic narratives. In allusions to stereotypical *shōjo* dynamics, she can play either a male or female role; on the one hand, she embodies the homoerotic archetype of the *bishōnen* alongside the other hosts, and on the other, she is an archetypal *shōjo* heroine with the hosts serving as her (heterosexual) romantic interests. Gender nonconformity is also explored through several supporting characters: Haruhi's father, Ranka, is portrayed as a bisexual crossdressing *okama* who transitioned to a feminine presentation after the death of Haruhi's mother. The Zuka Club, a group of militant lesbian-coded girls from a rival all-girls school, are portrayed as a parody of the Takarazuka Revue, Takarazuka fandom, and other aspects of historical *shōjo* culture. My investigation into this series focuses on comparing translational approaches to gender nonconformity primarily with regards to Haruhi, Ranka, and the Zuka Club members.

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<sup>8</sup> *Fujoshi*, literally “rotten girl,” refers to female fans of male-male relationships in manga/anime — originally derogatory, but adopted by many as a basis for gendered fan community and identity (Okabe & Ishida 2012: 207). *Fujoshi* comedy has been defined as “comedy series with largely male casts that cater to shippers,” as *Ouran* does (<https://honeysanime.com/bisco-hatori-at-anime-expo-2019/>).

### 3.4.2 Translations

As a series whose Japanese release coincided with the mainstreaming of manga/anime publishing in the U.S. and Canada, *Ouran* has a straightforward translation history. The manga was translated for release in the U.S. and Canada and published by Viz Media beginning in 2005 and ending in 2012. Official subtitles and a dub of the anime were released by the U.S. company Funimation in 2008-2009. There have been no official retranslations, though multiple fansubbing and scanlation groups also translated the series. In my research, I compare the Viz Media translation with scanlations by two separate fan groups, AkuTenshi (2004-2005) and Eternal-Blue (2005-2006). For the anime, I compare the Funimation subtitles with the fansubs produced by the group LunarAnime (2006). I accessed the Viz Media translation on ManhuaScan ([manhuascan.io](http://manhuascan.io)), the scanlation on MangaFreak ([w13.mangafreak.net](http://w13.mangafreak.net)), and the fansubs on GoGoAnime ([gogoanime.be](http://gogoanime.be)); the Funimation subtitles were accessed through Funimation's paid streaming service ([funimation.com](http://funimation.com)).

### 3.5. Methodology: multimodal analysis

My research was conducted using multimodal analysis, in which “not only language and its functions/functioning, but also other central modalities such as music and image as well as the associated submodalities must be examined with regard to their functions and cultural specificity” (Kaindl 2020: 55). Although translation of linguistic elements is still preeminent in my research, in manga and anime the linguistic operates in tandem with the visual and the auditory to produce a cohesive multimodal whole. Each of my source “texts” is constructed through the interplay of multiple different semiotic modes, so in order to analyse how gender nonconformity has been depicted and translated, it is necessary to take stock of how each of these modes or elements functions in a manga/anime's depiction of gender and its construction of narratives surrounding gender nonconformity. At the same time, different modalities need to be analysed in the historical context of their actual manifestations: manga and anime must be understood as the cultural products that they are, not just “visual/audiovisual media” as an abstracted concept. Echoing the earlier sociological turn in translation studies, multimodality deepens the understanding that

semiotic objects themselves do not contain or produce meaning in isolation, and that the interactive role of external agents and material factors must always be considered (ibid: 65). Therefore, each series needs to be put in wider context in order to thoroughly understand how its constituent modalities (image, language, sound/music) are deployed, and how its translation has engaged with and been shaped by these modalities.

This imperative set the direction for my multimodal analytical process. Following the same process for each case study, the first stage of analysis was an initial reading/viewing of the source material, in which I moved through a series and its translation(s) one chapter/episode at a time. During this stage, guided by my research questions and theoretical framework, I noted significant appearances of the types of linguistic and cultural issues pertaining to gender nonconformity that are discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Accordingly, I also investigated general context and took note of thematic connections/reflections of the historical moment of production of the series in question. Extra-textual and paratextual information was also considered (e.g. platforms of publication/distribution, covering art and opening themes). In addition to instances where gender is overtly confronted as a topic in the source material, I paid attention to the presence or absence of gender-laden linguistic elements throughout, as well as the overall role of visual and auditory elements in constructing normative and nonconforming gender in the “text.” This step of the process allowed me to construct an overall profile of how each manga or anime, and each translation, approached gender nonconformity multimodally.

Based on this initial review, the second stage involved closer comparative multimodal analysis of the anime and manga (originals and translations alike), focusing on the specific chapters/episodes or excerpted sections identified as relevant in the first stage. By overlaying a direct comparison of multiple multimodal interpretations of the same character or narrative content with a profile of the historical circumstances of each one (e.g. socio-political context, contemporary technological/communicative capabilities, cultural pressures and priorities), it becomes possible to identify patterns and hypothesise relationships between modality/medium and the translation of gender. Bearing in mind the differing external constraints on different forms of media and varying translation

practices, it was also pertinent to note when particular narrative content did *not* appear in both forms, and where translational approaches varied significantly by form.

The third stage comprised the final selection and analysis of translation excerpts. Similarly to how I selected the three series for analysis based on their historical representativeness, I selected excerpts based on how clearly they demonstrated the translation's overall approach to gender nonconformity, particularly with regard to multimodality, and how much opportunity for theoretical discussion they offered. For example, many instances of gendered third-person pronouns being casually inserted in English translation are not included for specific discussion because this is a general feature of Japanese-English translation and does not, in and of itself, indicate much about the overall translational approach to gender/gender nonconformity. On the other hand, I do discuss instances of pronoun insertion when they can be situated within a larger effort by the translational agent to “correctively” re-gender certain characters (such as in Chapter 5.4.3).

### *3.5.1 Case studies*

As well as following the process of multimodal analysis outlined above, my research is organised in the form of case studies. Saldanha and O'Brien write that

the case study [...] can make contributions to knowledge beyond the particular in three different scenarios: (1) in exploring questions of how and why, (2) for hypothesis generating (as opposed to hypothesis testing), and (3) for testing the viability of a theoretical framework[.]

— 2013: 209

This structure enables me to effectively explore the questions of “how and why” gender nonconformity has been translated in particular ways in particular contexts, to develop a hypothetical answer to these questions, and to test the viability of my theoretical framework — a materialist feminism informed by concepts of decoloniality, transness/queerness, and multimodality — in reaching that answer. I will apply this analytical lens to three case studies, each comprising one of the three series introduced

above and its selected English translations, and following the chronological order also laid out above.

Using the system of case study types laid out by Saldanha and O'Brien, these cases fall most closely under the category of "typical." As I have briefly laid out here and will explore in depth in the following analysis chapters, each series and its translations are very broadly representative of the state of *shōjo* manga/anime culture and its adoption/translation into English over a roughly 10-20 year time period. In the case of both *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* and *Ouran High School Host Club*, the translations are roughly contemporaneous with the source material, and can be seen to demonstrate the period's industry standards, cultural norms, and key developments in English translation of manga/anime. The translations for *The Rose of Versailles* date to anywhere from a quarter to half a century after the release of their respective source materials, but the absence of earlier translations is also indicative of the historical context. Without assuming that any case is individually representative of a period, these cases in combination can be read as a timeline spanning several decades, from which a generally representative picture of the subject of inquiry can be derived. My goal is to observe the translational approaches to gender nonconformity in each instance, take note of significant differences or similarities between translations, and hypothesise the reason or motive behind certain approaches — taking into account both textual and extra-textual information from a variety of sources (academic, journalistic, etc.), as well as drawing my own conclusions from historical information read through the lens of my theoretical framework.

The case study structure will allow me to approach each series as a cohesive whole, assessing the "texts" and their translations in relation with the wider external context of their production, and accounting for extra-textual factors linked to each mode and its material medium. This accounting is important because, as established, translations have not only been affected by linguistic and cultural factors, but also by material processes related to the medium of communication. Many of the translations I will analyse were informed primarily by concerns or constraints specific to the (changing) medium; for example, scanlations are often rushed in order to prioritise quick releases on digital platforms, and subtitles are often translated with brevity and readability rather than

accuracy as a priority. Understanding the surrounding material processes involved in the production and distribution of each medium is vital to ascertaining the “how and why” of these translations. With the case studies following a timeline, I will be able to show holistically how each case builds on the one before it, emphasising the intertextual nature of each series and the concrete connections between the media, the modes, and the translated content.

### 3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have summarised the background information about the sources of my data and outlined the methodological process and structure utilised in their analysis. I introduced the three series selected for investigation — *The Rose of Versailles*, *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, and *Ouran High School Host Club* — and provided a cursory overview of the key gender-related themes and translation issues to be explored in their respective case studies. Finally, I introduced my guiding methodology: multimodal analysis, structured by case studies. With this foundational information laid out, I proceed to the analysis chapters, starting with *The Rose of Versailles*.

## Chapter 4: *The Rose of Versailles*, Ikeda Riyoko (1970s-1980s)

### 4.1. Introduction

*The Rose of Versailles* does not mark the beginning of *shōjo* manga, or even the first instance of experimentations with gender-nonconforming or “gender-bending,” but it does mark a significant first coalescence of several factors: a multimedia *shōjo* franchise, in which gender nonconformity and sexual ambiguity/duality was a driving theme and aesthetic, that began to find some commercial success in translation in Western Europe (Pellitteri et al 2010: 254). Though no English translation of either the manga or the anime was widely available until decades after the original Japanese serialisation/broadcast, *The Rose of Versailles* was foundational to the cultural, artistic, and literary developments and the political and economic circumstances that brought about the popularity of other *shōjo* media in English translation prior to its own. To establish the general structure that this and subsequent analysis chapters will follow, I begin with a summary of the source material, highlighting key themes and lines of investigation and providing relevant background information about the plot and characters. Then I provide an overall review of each of the specific translations up for analysis, before discussing the series in its wider political context and relating it to my theoretical framework. After conducting this general analysis, I proceed to translation analysis, referring back to concepts established in earlier discussion while comparing selected excerpts from the manga and anime. To conclude, I reflect on my findings and clarify the continuity with the next chapter of analysis by discussing the series’ actual influence on the development of *shōjo* media.

#### 4.1.1 Source material

*The Rose of Versailles* (hereafter abbreviated as *Rose*) is generally recognised as the most iconic of the numerous *shōjo* manga created by Ikeda Riyoko. First serialised in *Margaret* from 1972 to 1973, it was adapted into an anime series by TMS Entertainment and aired on Nippon TV from 1979 to 1980. It was also adapted as a Takarazuka play in 1974 and even as a Japanese-French co-produced live-action film, also in 1979. With regards to manga translation, I compare selections from the first four volumes of the

English translation licensed by Udon Entertainment (2019-2021) with corresponding excerpts of the combined fan translation produced by scanlation groups Lililicious, RosalinaScans, and RoV Scans from 2003 to 2017. For the anime, primarily for access reasons (see 3.1.2), I am working from the 40 fansubbed episodes released by the fansubbing group Live-evil in 2005.

*Rose* is a historical fiction and romance set during the thirty-odd years leading up to the French Revolution, centred on the lives of two figures: Marie Antoinette and the fictional Oscar François de Jarjayes, a female soldier in the Royal Guard. At first the two are friends and allies in the political games of Versailles, but over time, Oscar gains awareness of the material conditions of the French working class and participates in the revolution. In some key respects, *Rose* closely mimics its predecessor *Princess Knight* with its portrayal of Oscar as a child of nobility who is “born female, but raised as male” for political purposes. Like *Sapphire*, Oscar is declared a son by a powerful father desperate for a male heir to carry on his role in the monarchy, and also like *Sapphire*, Oscar sometimes struggles with an inner conflict between adherence to that duty and faithfulness to his/her own personal desires. However, the idea of ambiguous gender/sexuality is taken much further with Oscar, whose narrative function is to “radically [question] the assumptions of heterosexual romance and gender roles” (Shamoon 2012: 121). Unlike *Sapphire*, who was just as content (if not more so) in a female role and whose story concluded with marriage to her male love interest, Oscar’s masculinity is not portrayed solely as an unwanted obligation that is forced upon her by circumstance. Rather, it is shown to be an integrated part of her self-concept. While he experiences conflict in totally giving up womanhood (and the initial external coercion of her maleness is intensified in the anime adaptation), Oscar does not ultimately wish to settle down and become a woman. On the contrary, he fights — literally as well as figuratively — to maintain his claim to manhood.

This ambiguity of gender/sexuality, expressed through the visual language of *shōjo*, creates a plurality of possible gendered readings of the romantic relationships developed between Oscar and other characters, which form the majority of the narrative alongside the historical content. In contrast to *Sapphire*, who is always posited as the true love of a prince, Oscar is paired with three different characters — Rosalie Lamorlière (a working-

class French girl), Hans Axel von Fersen (a fictionalised version of the real Swedish duke and love interest of Marie Antoinette), and André Grandier (Oscar's childhood friend, also fictional) — with each relationship representing a distinct gendered/sexual dynamic. Oscar and Rosalie evoke the prewar S-relationship, while Oscar and Fersen are a normative heterosexual couple, though the narrative shows their love to be tragically invalidated by Oscar's masculinity. Oscar and André, whose romance wins out as the conclusive one, technically pass for a heterosexual couple while also suggesting both male and female same-sex readings and the concept of *chūsei*, androgyny in the sense of neutrality and non-physicality, which was uniquely enabled by the medium of manga (Anan 2014: 44; Shamooin 2012: 82). The gender/sexual politics of *Rose* reflected the visual media culture developing around girls' manga, as well as the wider political climate of 1970s Japan, and its expression of revolutionary ideas through consumerist mediums and bourgeois aesthetics would establish the tone of *shōjo* manga going forward.

#### 4.1.2 Scanlation: *Lililicious*, *RosalinaScans*, and *RoV Scans*

Until 2018, with the exception of a short excerpt from the first volume, the *Rose* manga was only available in English via scanlation. My first source text is a scanlation produced by three separate fan translation groups over the course of fourteen years — and, to my knowledge, the only English scanlation of the series. The first group, Lililicious, was founded in the early 2000s and specialised in translation of *yuri* (girl-girl) manga and other media relating to lesbian/bisexual women in Japan, such as the 1996-2003 lesbian lifestyle magazine *Anise*. The name Lililicious refers to “lily,” the literal meaning of *yuri* and its aesthetic symbol in *shōjo* visual language. Posts on their recently defunct website evidenced that they began scanlating *Rose* in 2003 but dropped the series by the end of 2010 and removed the scanlation from their own archive after the planned official translation was announced in 2015. However, a more obscure group called Rosalina Scanlations picked up the series and released chapters from 2011 to 2012. The rest of the manga was then scanlated by RoV Scans from 2012 to 2017. I could locate no useful information about these two groups; the simplicity of the name RoV Scans, compared to the fan-oriented cultural branding of stylised group names like Lililicious or Live-evilL, suggests that it existed solely for the purpose of completing the scanlation in question.

This disparity is also reflected in the actual translations: although their approaches to the issues of gender/sexuality and the style of prose overall are consistent, they demonstrate the shift in values in fan translation over the course of the fourteen years. Lililicious, as part of the early waves of scanlation groups, adhered to the fan community's broadly accepted moral principles around licensing, and their scanlation exemplifies the classic function of digitally-mediated fan translation as an interactive process rooted in community.

The Lililicious scanlation is characterised by straightforward, if not entirely "fluent" translation; despite many minor grammatical errors, there are not many typographical errors, and the text reads coherently throughout. French terms are frequently used to imbue the text with the cultural flavour of its setting and the translation uses a register that invokes high-class period speech norms (or rather, modern stereotypes of them) rather than modern usage. Unique typefaces are used which fit the aesthetic and thematic profile of the manga and add additional character to the text. Chapter divisions and page numbers are inconsistent, appearing to work from different copies of the source text; some pages appear to come from the *tankōbon* collected volumes while others may come from manga magazines, and pages are often reformatted entirely to allow for the extensive use of footnotes and annotations. These range from simple glosses for the French terms to multiple sentences or small paragraphs of explication of subtext, sometimes filling the margins with explanations of what is being shown. For example, an early chapter of the manga shows newlywed Marie Antoinette struggling to navigate her new life in the French court, which imposes a much stricter lifestyle than she enjoyed in Austria. Visual elements, as well as the dialogue between characters, are used to convey the conflict between Marie Antoinette's carefree nature and the rigidity of her new environment. However, a footnote clarifies explicitly: "The court of Versailles is a society fixed strictly on the submission to etiquette, and the respect for the hierarchies of both."

In general, the footnotes speak in an authoritative though not impersonal tone on historical and political details as well as the subjective feelings or positions of the characters based on real figures. In an earlier scene of 14-year-old Marie Antoinette meeting her future husband, Louis XV, the footnote adds:

Unfortunately for M-Antoinette, her groom has been guided by people belonged to the anti-Austrian faction, all his life. So, it is of little wonder that he is indifferent towards her, here. He will continue to neglect her, until she/love won him over.

The somewhat academic register of the historical narration is mediated by the use of linguistic norms developing in digital text-based communication, such as the mixed use of abbreviations and emojis, as seen in this footnote appearing after a panel that explicitly shows the concerned Queen of Austria ordering a diplomat to go to Versailles to check on Marie Antoinette:

By 'service' Count Mercy-Argenteau's actual mission was to serve as a spy (that's what diplomats are for) for Marie-Antoinette's mother on her activities and the political policies at Versailles. So, there are times when M-A was baffled to receive letters of reproach from her mother for things she thought only she knew.  
Dashed meddling old woman >.<

In some cases, as much as half of a page is specially dedicated to explanations of historical background information, as in the case of one note emphasising the differences between the manga's depiction of the character Madame du Barry and the more well-rounded historical accounts of the real historical figure. From a multimodality perspective, this tendency could be seen as privileging the linguistic mode — suggesting that the translation approach includes the translation of visual subtext into linguistic form, perhaps to account for modern English-language readers' cultural perceptions of a story being difficult to follow.

At the same time, it also mirrors the multimodal/multimedia aspect of Japanese girls' culture. Although the mechanisms of online scanlation communities were not precisely the same as those of magazines and reading clubs, the Lililicious scanlation features extensive extratextual materials relating to the manga and any other relevant topics of interest to readers. Multimedia collages with commentary and trivia are included in the first few pages of every chapter with its release. For example, chapter 5 shows a commemorative stamp of Oscar, released by the Japanese postal authority in 2000, alongside two photographs of locations in France related to the historical de Jarjayes

family. Notes appearing outside of the main manga pages use an overtly friendly register and more written elements which evoke verbalised speech:

Anyway, it has been a loooooong while since the last chapter, so, in case anyone forgets, ye read the pages from right to left. Let's continue on with the story, Part I of the du Barry saga then, shall we? =D

With regards to gender/sexuality, the approach suggests a conceptual distinction, on the part of the translators, between the language being spoken by the characters and the language on the page. For example, one footnote says that “Oscar’s father is the only person whom always refer to her as **him**” (Chapter 1, page 27). Although the reader is given this information at the end of the first chapter, subsequent translations of Oscar’s father’s dialogue refer to Oscar as “her” — as does the footnote itself. This framing may relate to the fact that Lililicious was a group oriented specifically around the translation of lesbian/*yuri* content. In addition to recognising the relevance of *Rose* to this manga tradition, Lililicious translators may have been motivated to interpret Oscar as a specifically lesbian and female figure. At the same time, the scanlation notably features far more instances of masculine pronoun usage for Oscar in comparison to the official translation — for example, using “he” in the dialogue of court ladies expressing attraction to Oscar, whereas the Udon translation uses “she” in these cases.

The other two parts of the scanlation, by RosalinaScans and RoVScans, are less individually remarkable. With a near-total absence of footnotes, commentary, or extratextual material, they lack the communicative character of the first part. They carry through some elements of the first scanlation (including the use of French terms and similar typeface), although the register used by Oscar and André becomes notably more casual, especially in comparison to the official translation. Although I can only speculate in the absence of further concrete information, I would suggest that these translations may reflect an attempt to produce a consistent continuation of the existing scanlations outside of the community-based context and ethos underpinning Lililicious. At the same time, there could have been a different ethos behind RoV Scans’ continuation of the scanlation. Although the license was announced in 2015, the project experienced

continual delays and the first volumes of the official English translation would not be published until 2019. In the continued absence of this official translation, continued illegal scanlation could have been rationalised as a way of appreciating an untranslated classic and making at least one full English translation available.

#### 4.1.3 Translation: Udon Entertainment

Released from 2019 to 2022, Udon Entertainment’s official English translation of the manga, translated by Mari Morimoto and Jocelyne Allen, offers readers a fundamental piece of *shōjo* manga cultural and literary canon, with cover materials describing *The Rose of Versailles* as “the queen of shojo [sic] manga” and a “historical fiction masterwork.” Though not technically a first translation, it is the first full translation intended for a wider commercial readership; Frederik Schodt’s 1981 translation (which only covered two volumes) was a bilingual text created for the specific purpose of aiding English language education for Japanese speakers, and is not commercially available today (Thompson 2010<sup>1</sup>). Through various paratextual elements, the Udon translation expresses awareness of *Rose*’s primary English language audience: people who are already familiar with manga and the surrounding subculture, who have an appreciation for the Japanese source material, who do not expect or require a domesticating approach to translation, and who may even be existing fans — who might have experienced the series through scanlations, the anime, the Takarazuka production, or who have even read the manga in the original Japanese. It presents itself as the sole and authoritative English version, based on the “Perfect Edition” compiled by Japanese publisher SHUEISHA, Ltd. It is laid out in the Japanese style, right-to-left, and it does not include an explanatory page at the end of the book, as many larger publishers of mass-marketed manga series in English translation have often done to prevent uninitiated readers from accidentally seeing the last page first. The first four volumes present the story in the manner in which it was originally published in *Margaret* over the course of 82 weeks, beginning in May 1972 and ending in December 1973. The table of contents lists each chapter<sup>2</sup> along with the year

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/jason-thompson-house-of-1000-manga/the-rose-of-versailles/2010-05-06>

<sup>2</sup> Each chapter is called an “episode” in the table of contents and section headers, but I continue to refer to them as chapters to avoid confusion.

and issue of original publication. Each episode is preceded by a page showing the original cover page with a translation of the cover text and is followed by a page of transitional art from the original printing, once again with a note on the issue of first publication. Each volume also contains a “gallery” of additional cover art for certain chapters at the very end.

Notably, however, while the translation presents *Rose* as part of a respectable literary canon — a designation not typically awarded to manga in the West regardless of theme or calibre — it also presents it as a historical artefact. The translation conveys the content in a way that roots it quite firmly in its original context as a story that was printed in weekly serialised magazines for mass consumption by young Japanese girls in the 1970s. Rather than fully repackaging the story as something new for the modern reader, the translation uses paratexts to invite readers back into its original time. Within the actual manga, for example, Ikeda’s notes on financial conversions have been retained in translation, showing in a different font the conversion of French livres into 1972 Japanese yen (which is then converted to the 1972 USD equivalent, rather than adjusting for inflation, in footnotes below the panel). On the cover pages between chapters, rather than the art alone being the focus, the promotional text is also translated. This typically consists of short blurbs reminding readers of the previous week’s cliff-hanger and generating excitement about the continuation, such as: “WHAT OF ROSALIE, WHO HAS BEEN SUBDUED BY OSCAR...!? THE SENSATIONAL TOUR DE FORCE THAT IS THE DOMINANT TOPIC OF YOUNG GIRLS’ CONVERSATIONS RIGHT NOW!!!”, and “ROILING EXCITEMENT – GRAND ROMANCE TO MAKE YOUR HEART POUND AND MOVE YOUR SOUL.” The blurbs are translated in full uppercase for effect, but are printed small so as not to overwhelm the cover art. The overall effect of this translation, from the paratexts to these finer details, is to emphasise the historical significance of the source text and the emotional experience of the original readership who participated in that cultural moment. This includes a heightened awareness of the gender/sexual themes; its library classification in the back pages designates it as “LGBTQ” and its covers show Oscar in his/her various gendered dynamics: paired with Marie Antoinette (volumes 1-2), paired with André (volume 3), and alone in battle (volume 4). The focus is as it was originally: centred on Oscar as a figure of idealised and romanticised androgyny.

Multilingualism is also a notable aspect of this translation; French language has a strong presence in the manga, and German (glossed) is also incorporated once. Other than the book covers and chapter cover pages, no Japanese appears in the translated manga, at times giving the impression that it is primarily a French-English text. Many French words appear throughout the English translation without glosses; for instance, *eiheitai* is rendered as “the Gardes Françaises” instead of “the French Guard.” The characters in *Rose* can, in a roundabout way, be conceptualised as (representations of) French speakers: their speech is rendered first in Japanese (in the source text) and then in English (in translation), but it is given a French affect in the English manga translation by the regular use of “oui” and “non,” “merde,” “maman,” and other such short, easily deduced French words — as well as occasionally longer ones which are footnoted. Occasionally, more substantial meaning-bearing phrases are used in dialogue, such as “C’est tu toi, André” or “Je t’aime!” This technique emphasises the French setting and culturally roots the characters within it.

#### 4.1.4 Subtitles: *Live-evil*

Having been unable to access the official subtitles, I opted to focus on the 2005 fan subtitles produced by the subtitling group Live-evil. Though membership is said to have fluctuated greatly and contribution is effectively anonymous (only members’ online screen names are credited), Live-evil have been active continuously since their founding in 2001 (“History of Live-evil”<sup>3</sup>). Live-evil have also taken on several other landmark *shōjo* series with themes of gender nonconformity and sexual transgression, such as *Revolutionary Girl Utena* and *Song of the Wind and Trees*. However, information gathered from their website suggests that this was not a matter of thematic interest or speciality; rather they picked up titles on the basis of their availability in English (or lack thereof) and whether any larger fansubbing groups were already working on them. Typically for fansubs produced in online community contexts, the Live-evil subtitles assume a certain level of prior knowledge of anime and follow a very straightforward and literal translation approach. For example, *Osukaru-sama* is sometimes left untranslated as “Oscar-sama” (-sama

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.live-evil.org/history-of-live-evil>

being the most respectful Japanese honorific, as well as non-gendered), or translated as “Lady Oscar” or “Mademoiselle” (always female-gendered variations) with no apparent underlying logic. There are no footnotes explaining honorifics as might commonly be seen in some early subtitles, which — like manga with their explanatory pages — often tried to account for Anglophones’ general lack of knowledge about Japanese language and culture. The direct translation and lack of footnotes suggests an audience who is aware of honorifics, or perhaps even feels strongly that they should not be changed in translation. On the other hand, whereas both manga translations take pains to infuse the dialogue with French character, the anime makes no such efforts in the subtitles and translates only into plain English, with minor exceptions such as “Mademoiselle” mentioned above. This choice could relate to the medium, with subtitles in general often prioritising ease of reading (Díaz Cintas 2013: 274-279), although it could just as easily reflect lack of knowledge of French terms on the part of the translators. The contextual factors, along with the occasional mistranslations, suggest translation by English speakers with intermediate knowledge of Japanese. Fan subtitling as a form of language study has also been documented (Vazquez-Calvo et al 2019: 207); these translators could have been invested in translating the series as a way of developing their Japanese skills, in which case linguistically representing the French background would not have been a translational aim. The inconsistency of some aspects of the translation also suggest the involvement of multiple translators and/or a lack of editing, both also common to the fan translation context.

#### 4.2. Revolutionary androgyny: gender/sexual politics in *The Rose of Versailles*

Produced within the broader political landscape of the 1970s, *Rose* can be understood to articulate the ideological conflicts that had dominated the previous decade’s political movement from a leftist female perspective. Anan Nobuko specifically contextualises the series and its gender/sexuality-related themes in the aftermath of the February 1972 Asama-Sansō incident, in which the Japanese leftist group United Red Army purged and murdered twelve members for “ideological weakness” (2014: 42). Among these members were several women who were “executed because they cared about fashion” (ibid: 46).

This incident was underscored by a broader culture of male chauvinism and patriarchal attitudes among the Japanese New Left, and it cemented many women's alienation from socialist politics while also heavily informing the direction of the recently formed women's liberation movement (Shigematsu 2012: 165). The dramatic opposition between Marie Antoinette and Oscar mirrors the dilemma of Japanese women, torn between the opposing forces of bourgeois consumerist feminism and radical socialist consciousness; Marie Antoinette represents motherhood and bourgeois decadence, while Oscar represents a *shōjo* positionality in defiance of the state ideology of womanhood (ibid: 49). Although the first volume focuses mainly on petty court drama, the second volume begins to develop a broader political scope:

#### Chapter 34

##### Udon Entertainment

André: Whaaaaat?! Tax the nobility?!

Oscar: What's so shocking about that? The way it's been is what's strange. Taxing penniless commoners and not taxing the wealthy nobility and clergy!

##### RosalinaScans

André: Eh?! Charging the nobles?!

Oscar: Why are you surprised? It's strange the way it is now. Why should only the poor people and commoners pay, when the clergy and the nobles don't?

As Oscar mingles with liberal thinkers and revolutionaries including Robespierre and Saint-Just, the story also begins to give a platform to political views that echo Marxist rhetoric in the contemporary context, as in the following lines of dialogue from a side character, journalist Bernard Chatelet:

#### Chapter 39

### Udon Entertainment

If I am a thief, then what are you nobles, pray tell?! You produce nothing, you make nothing. You eat the food the people grow, wear the clothes people make. You live like parasites on the poor masses.

### RoV Scans

If I'm a thief, what are you nobles?! You people don't do anything! Just eat what's been produced by others, wear what's been sewn by others. While the poor people are living like mites.

In this case, it is interesting to note that the two translations came up with opposite versions of the metaphor, with the RoV translation saying that “poor people are living like mites” as opposed to Udon’s formulation that the “[wealthy] live like parasites on the poor.” The RoV version likely emerged from a misreading of the phrase *mazushii minshuu ni dani no you ni kisei kurashite* (“living like a tick on the poor masses”). If the particle *ni* were changed to (or misunderstood to be) the particle *ga*, the RoV translation would be grammatically accurate; this kind of translation mistake appears commonly in fan translations, where translators may be actively learning Japanese or otherwise lack native-level fluency.

Although technically incorrect, the RoV version still conveys the extreme poverty and misery of the French people by comparing them to “mites.” However, with the connotations of bloodsucking, the Udon version is closer to the sense of the Japanese, again echoing *Rose’s* Marxist rhetoric. In chapters 76-78, which focus on the conclusion of the French Revolution and the founding of the French republic, the narration even explains how the events of the revolution produced the bourgeois class (*burujowa kaikyū*) and proletarian class (*puoretaria kaikyū*). The series suggests the constructed nature of both class and gender as Oscar develops class consciousness and betrays the nobility from which she came, while also continually rejecting attempts by other male members of the nobility to give up her career as a soldier and accept a female role. At its time of

original publication in Japan, *Rose* “provided girls and women with a stage to experience the life of a revolutionary androgyne who fights to overthrow the ancient, powerful regime of gender and sexuality” (Anan 2014: 42). The brief appearance of a fictionalised Louis de Saint-Just, depicted as a man so beautiful that Oscar initially mistakes him for a woman wearing men’s clothes (*dansō*), seems to further substantiate a textual link between gender nonconformity and revolutionary politics. In contrast to the male chauvinist ideological trends of the Japanese New Left, it presented a view of class struggle in which gender/sex was recognised as a central part of the oppressive apparatus.

#### 4.2.1 Consumerist/bourgeois ideologies in *Rose*

While, on the one hand, Oscar appears to represent a transgressive or revolutionary ideology, it was significant that these ideas found expression in the commodified medium of *shōjo* manga which rapidly expanded into a profitable multimedia franchise. As much as Oscar within the text represented frustration and resistance against gender/sex, Oscar as an image within the prevalent *shōjo* media culture could not escape certain archetypes:

As a woman soldier without a material body, she fires cannon to the old gender and sexual system that tries to drag her down to the world which categorizes its inhabitants according to their biological bodies. She also challenges the class system by participating in the battle as one of the citizens. However, Oscar cannot live in a new world. The revolution sets the stage not only for the demonstration of her independence, but also for her heroic death. She fulfils [sic] girls’s [sic] aesthetics by dying young.

— Anan 2014: 54

In other words, Oscar is presented as a revolutionary figure, but the actual outcome of revolution is never depicted or imagined; the story ends with most of the main characters dead. The revolution is an abstract concept, never literally depicted on the page/screen apart from certain moments of climactic violence (e.g. the storming of the Bastille, the execution of the royals). The poverty of working-class people is portrayed in superficial terms, and Oscar continues to embody the aesthetics of the nobility even after supposedly betraying his/her class. Furthermore, even as *Rose* appears to champion the values of

the French revolution and the overthrow of the class system, it relies on rhetoric that links nobility to morality, beauty, and charisma, echoing the premodern European ideology that viewed class (and race) distinctions as the natural manifestation of biological superiority/inferiority (Mason 2013: 687). Poor women in particular tend to be portrayed as morally depraved, with the two main female villains both coming from stigmatised class backgrounds. One, Madame du Barry, is a former commoner and prostitute (*shōfu*) who uses seduction and fraud to secure a high status at Versailles; the other, Jeanne de Valois, is the illegitimate child of a man from a fallen house of nobles, who abandons her mother and half-sister out of desperation to escape poverty, and later defrauds and murders an elderly noblewoman in order to claim her estate. Meanwhile, her half-sister Rosalie remains dutiful to their mother, and it is eventually revealed that Rosalie was adopted from a noblewoman herself — a twist both foreshadowed and explained by her physical beauty and moral purity. Although *Rose* portrays the nobility as flawed, and revolution as justified, its narrative is streaked with this kind of class essentialism.

Furthermore, the revolutionary politic of the work is limited to the scope of the imperialist Western sphere, pointing to both the prewar and postwar significance of Western nations as models for Japanese political thought and national development. The U.S. war of independence from England is upheld as an example of national liberation that inspires the French revolutionaries, with no mention of colonialism or slavery in relation to any of the three countries involved. Likewise, while the narrative frequently refers to the nation's wealth, the colonial material basis for this wealth is never identified; only the poverty and exploitation of the French working classes is within scope. Meanwhile, the aesthetic glorification of French, Austrian, and Swedish royal costume and military attire lends itself to, at worst, a white nationalist/fascistic reading, especially in combination with the blond-haired, blue-eyed profile of both Oscar and Marie Antoinette. The embrace of these aesthetics reflects the lack of historical/political consciousness in Japanese education and a cultural nostalgia for militarism: *Rose* “deconstructs the conventional gender/sexual dichotomy to a great extent, but exhibits reactionary sentiments, as demonstrated by representation of Oscar as a patriotic soldier. The uncanny lingering of nationalist sentiments of prewar girls is found here” (Anan 2014: 58-59). Oscar's last words in the manga are “Vive la France” (*Furansu banzai*); the

glamorisation of her nobility and passion in dying for “the fatherland” can be heard all too strongly as echoes of Japanese imperialist rhetoric and the fascist deification of death in battle (ibid: 57). The reliance on French and other European cultural aesthetics in *Rose* is not unique; contemporary *shōjo* works depicting nonconforming gender/sexuality were often set in “the borrowed psychic space of a romanticized Europe” (Welker 2006: 842). In the modern period, while rigid gender/sex roles had been established by merging Euro-American economic, religious, and social frameworks with pre-existing strains of Confucianism, Europe was also construed as the original source of new frameworks of nonconformity, e.g. those transferred from Western sexology (Kawasaka 2018: 597-598; Nakamura 2014: 96). French culture, along with German culture, was particularly influential in Japan from the Meiji Period onward: French food, music, clothing, and architecture have come to serve as signifiers of high class status in Japanese media (including but not limited to *shōjo*), and French art styles like Art Nouveau have been specifically identified as an influence on some of the earliest foundations of *shōjo* aesthetics (Shamoon 2012: 63-68). In other words, it is due to the material historical relationship between Japan and Western nations such as France that *Rose*’s subject matter and aesthetics, and the issues of gender/sexuality played out in the foreign context of revolutionary France, held such an appeal for readers both then and now.

Ultimately, *Rose* as a media franchise cannot be characterised as definitively or objectively transgressive; rather, Oscar can be read as a literary device whose androgyny and duality, expressed through textual and visual aspects, enables a fantasy of gender/sexual liberation through the modes and mediums of consumerist girls’ culture. In the world of *Rose*, much like the wider world of *shōjo* manga, gender/sex roles are dichotomous and clearly delineated for most people: women are emotional, weak, sensitive, domestic, and in need of protection; men are logic-oriented, strong, brave, and capable of protecting the weak. Oscar’s literary function is as an icon of drama or tragedy: someone who is simultaneously a man and a woman, and therefore cannot truly be either. Among the cast of characters, there are some who believe Oscar is a typical man, while in Versailles, most characters know about the details of Oscar’s situation and think of her as a woman doing a man’s job. Some are disapproving based on their faithfulness to patriarchal convention, while others are satisfied to view/treat Oscar as a man because

of his capable fulfilment of the male social role. The tension between these different gendered interpretations of Oscar within the narrative mirrors the tension that occurs outside of it. Readers could experience an essentialist reading of Oscar's story, as a tragedy of a woman forced by her father to give up her innate womanhood and internalise a male identity, just as easily as a transgressive reading of the story a struggle against class and sex essentialism. Indeed, it may well be this flexibility/fluidity of possible readings which made Oscar and *Rose* so massively popular despite some of its more potentially subversive elements. My intent is not to focus solely on transgressive or reactionary elements, but to analyse all of these politically loaded elements (and their translations) through a materialist feminist lens.

#### 4.3. Multimodality and idealised androgyny in *shōjo*

Before delving into more extensive translation analysis, I want to contextualise the issues raised so far specifically through the domain of multimodality, as well as review some general issues relating to the two different media forms of *Rose*. Up to this point, much of my discussion of the anime and manga has naturally overlapped, because they share the visual and verbal modes which also form the basis for their commodification as linked multimedia. Additionally, the use of a vast array of onomatopoeia in Japanese manga has been observed to bring an aural dimension to a medium that is usually associated with silence; even silence has a common onomatopoeic form (Shiraishi 1997: 241-242). Panels and other artistic effects can be manipulated to create intense emotional atmospheres in the text (Fujimoto 2012: 25). However, the impression of sound in manga is distinct from the actual use of sound in anime. The specific materialities of each medium need to be considered. Although adaptation between media forms (e.g. manga to anime) is not the purview of this thesis, it is worth briefly noting that the anime adaptation made several changes that significantly altered the framing of Oscar's birth and sex/gender assignment. From a storyboarding perspective, the changes served to reorient the narrative emotionally around Oscar (and André) instead of Marie Antoinette, the original main character whose inner world is in sharpest focus at the outset of the manga. When the anime was produced in 1979, it was Oscar, not Marie Antoinette, who was at the centre of the image alliance. By introducing Oscar's gender conflict in the first episode as

a central driving force of the dramatic narrative, the episode positions Oscar as the series' main protagonist and prepares viewers to anticipate Oscar's struggle with gender/sexuality as a primary aspect of the storyline. Auditory and visual elements (i.e. opening theme song, sound effects, background music, colour/lighting, vocal quality) are used to cast a tragic emotional tone for the first episode that contrasts with the light-hearted, humorous tone of the manga's first few pages. There is also the question of whether the element of voice acting —a direct link to human physicality, which can semiotically signify information about a speaker such as their gender/sex — may be in certain ways linked to the anime's tendency to question Oscar's maleness, and reassert her femaleness, more frequently than the manga. Some differences in translations of the anime and manga can be attributed to the broad underlying media-based variation in the source material, as the materiality of anime and manga is also integral to the development of the aesthetics they express.

#### 4.3.1 *The chūsei aesthetic*

From its inception in the postwar period, manga functioned as a visual language based on repeated/recognisable signifiers, likened to writing with images (Shiraishi 1997: 242-244). In a continued development of the gendered aesthetics of Japanese girls' culture, *shōjo* manga in the 1970s developed its own particular visual language of gender (Anan 2014: 44; Welker 2006: 852). Maleness and femaleness are encoded in aspects of character design such as body shape and proportion, facial proportions, and the size and level of detail in facial features (especially eyes). While the gender differentiation in *shōjo* manga is less extreme than in some other manga/anime stylistic traditions, and clearly male-coded manga/anime characters have often been perceived as feminine by Western audiences, gender/sex is delineated clearly in terms of opposition: men are taller and more angular with thicker eyebrows and longer faces, women are smaller, softer, with lighter brows and bigger eyes. Precisely because the visual grammar of gender/sex has been constructed in these relative terms, a character like Oscar becomes possible in the intermediary space. This is perhaps reflected in the common Japanese translation for “androgyny” and the term for the idealised neutral gender in *shōjo* aesthetics (introduced in 2.3.2): *chūsei*, which unlike the English term is not a combination of roots meaning

“male” and “female” but literally means “middle sex.” This visual language enabled the portrayal of an idealised “androgynous” who could transcend the idea of biologically fixed sex/gender:

*The Rose of Versailles* indeed entails a possibility of transcending a clear gender division, and the most conspicuous marker of this is Oscar’s graphic image. She is presented not so much masculine as androgynous, and it is manga’s graphic convention that makes this possible. As graphic images, manga characters ultimately do not have physicality. [...] The depiction of her gender and sex is thus not fixed. In this regard, she is free from bodily constraints.

— Anan 2014: 44

To readers fluent in *shōjo* aesthetics, Oscar’s gender duality or ambiguity is visually recognisable as an ideal androgynous form: more feminine than the male characters but more masculine than the female characters. Within *shōjo* genres where characters were all or mostly the same gender/sex, such as *shōnen ai* (boys’ love), further visual grammars developed — arguably an extension of the prewar *chūsei* aesthetic in girls’ magazines, which featured illustrations of pairs of Japanese girls whose femininity was neutralised by their sameness and subsumed by other visual differences. In the prewar modernisation context, this was usually the difference of nationality/ethnicity/culture (expressed visually in terms of Japanese versus Western fashion). In the 1970s girls’ culture, the prevalent difference was a black/white colour scheme, in which one character would be drawn with white hair and an overall “light”-coded appearance and personality, the other with black hair and a “dark” coding. For some manga researchers, this pattern suggests that

however much the manga artists wanted to liberate their readers from the restrictions of the gender dichotomy, it was difficult for the writers themselves to escape the notion that a dyadic relationship must be between opposites.

— Welker 2006: 853

However, without totally dismissing the possibility of an underlying essentialism, I would suggest that this trend relates to the materiality of manga as a medium which is traditionally black-and-white. From an artistic perspective, featuring one “black” and one “white” character could serve to maintain visual balance and make effective use of contrast. In the specially coloured panels that appear throughout the *Rose* manga and its covers, Oscar’s hair is coloured either yellow or times bluish silver, while André’s hair appears in varying shades of green — less suggestive of binary opposition. On the contrary, even within the narrative of the manga, it is remarked upon several times that André is Oscar’s “shadow”. His dark palette is alluded to as an inversion or mirroring of Oscar’s light one, emphasising their sameness and connectedness rather than their difference; the text even compares them to Castor and Pollux (the twin stars and corresponding Greek mythological figures). Their similarity is also emphasised through the gradual changes in their character designs over time: Oscar becomes more masculine, and André becomes more feminine, until by the end of the manga they are essentially indistinguishable in terms of gender/sex (Anan 2014: 49; Shamoan 2012: 125-130). Their visual sameness and shared *chūsei* quality enable them to be read through multiple gendered/sexual dynamics. However, a degree of familiarity with *shōjo* aesthetics and fan culture is necessary to recognise these particular readings. In English translation, as we will see, different readings are generated.

#### 4.4. Translation analysis

While continuing to apply the theoretical concepts explored previously, in this section I will proceed through comparative analysis of excerpts, organised into three sections based on key translation issues related to Oscar: gendered third-person pronouns (as well as titles, etc.) in English translation, approaches to framing and/or categorising Oscar’s gender/sexuality (particularly as a lesbian and/or androgyne), and approaches to articulating Oscar’s gender duality in his/her relationships with other characters. With the print medium of manga bearing particular significance to the development of *shōjo* culture in this period, I will place more analytical focus on the manga translations. However, where relevant, I will also include corresponding excerpts from the anime and discuss pertinent aspects of the audiovisual form.

#### 4.4.1 Pronouns

A basic problem in the translation of gendered language from Japanese to English is the inverse functions of first- versus third-person pronouns in indexing gender/sex in these languages. Gendered subjectivity is expressed by Japanese speakers through variations in vocabulary and register, all of which vary regionally and contextually, in particular their choices of first-person pronouns (Nakamura 2014: 13-16). Accordingly, Oscar's speech in Japanese is not strictly gendered; in most contexts, it is characterised primarily by his rank/station. In exchanges with superiors, Oscar uses the most formal and polite forms, including the first-person pronoun *watakushi*, while elsewhere in the court he uses *watashi*. Both of these pronouns can appear in conventional women's language, due to the equation of feminine speech norms with politeness and restraint, but in contexts where formality is expected, it remains gender-neutral in usage by men and thus does not characterise Oscar's speech as feminine. In exchanges with close relations or others who rank beneath him, such as André, Oscar typically uses more rough/casual and thus more masculine-coded speech, including the most masculine first-person pronoun, *ore*. While these linguistic choices intimate a particular gender/sexual positionality overall, they do not strictly define a speaker as male or female. It is only in the speech of others that Oscar is repeatedly called out as a woman — usually specifically as *onna*, which has a coarser sexual connotation compared to more respectable, differently nuanced terms such *onna no hito*, *fujin*, *josei*, or *joshi* (ibid: 2-3). In English, with the first-person pronoun containing no explicit gender/sex in contrast to the binary third-person pronouns, the significance of the first-person usage is lost and third-person pronouns are the primary linguistic dimension through which English translations reveal different approaches to Oscar's character.

None of the translations appeared to avoid using gendered pronouns where none or few were present in the original Japanese, but they did frequently take different approaches from one another. In the Udon translation, pronouns in reference to Oscar are frequently bolded/italicised and used to express the shock and drama around revelations of Oscar's sex, representing in language the conflict between two diametrically opposed gender designations:

## Chapter 2

### Lililicious

Marie Antoinette: Mme de Noailles, who is the...?  
Countess de Noailles: Oh? Ah! Her name is Oscar Francois de Jarjeyes.  
She is the daughter of general de jarjeyes.  
Although a woman, she'd attained the position of  
captain of the royal guards.  
Marie Antoinette: A woman?!

### Udon Entertainment

Marie Antoinette: C-countess de Noailles... Wh-who is he...?  
Countess de Noailles: Hmm? O-oh! That is Captain Oscar François de  
Jarjayes, and **she**... ..is General de Jarjayes's  
daughter...and, though a woman, is attached to the  
commander of the royals guards.  
Marie Antoinette: He's a **she**...?!

## Chapter 11

### Lililicious

S-... So Oscar... is a woman?! No wonder... She's too slender to be a man.....  
How fragile she is...! And yet...what an impressive person!!

### Udon Entertainment

H-he's... ..a she?! No wonder... "His" face is too thin... and "he" cuts a way too  
vain figure... yet... **merde**, what a fellow!

## Chapter 19

### Lililicious

Monsieur Oscar? He's here?! At a ball?! He's with some girl..!! [...] He took her hand again! Augh! No, no, no! I could just die! Stop it! He belongs to us!

### Udon Entertainment

Colonel Oscar?! Did I hear "Colonel Oscar"?! **She's** come to a ball?! Colonel Oscar's with some young lady... [...] Ahh, she held her hand again! Aargh, non, non! She's killing me! Stop! She is **our** Colonel Oscar, ours!

In the above excerpts, the Udon translation places grammatical and orthographic emphasis on pronouns to concentrate their dramatic effect in the dialogue. In the Chapter 2 excerpt, the first bolded "she" in Countess de Noailles' line corresponds to a use of the female pronoun *kanojo*, and "daughter" and "woman" are likewise translated directly from *musume* and *onna*. However, "he" is translated from the neutral *ano hito* ("that person"), and Marie Antoinette's final response is translated from, simply, *onna* ("woman/female"); a direct/literal translation would have been "who is that person?" and then "a woman?!", as exemplified by the Lililicious version. In the Chapter 11 excerpt, all of the gendered pronouns are introduced in English; only one pronoun is used in the Japanese passage, the non-gendered referent *aitsu*, as Fersen essentially says "T-that person...was female!" (*A...aitsu...! Onna datta no ka!*). However, the Udon translation also makes the masculine connotation of *yatsu* explicit in "fellow," foreshadowing Fersen's initial impression of Oscar as male which is later cited as the reason that Oscar's love for Fersen is unrequited. In the Chapter 19 excerpt, all instances of pronouns and gendered language are introduced in English translation. Spoken by the court ladies who admire Oscar, these lines use a mix of very formal register in which the most respectful terms, which do not connote gender/sex, are used, and a casual speech delivery in which characters speak in rushed fragments rather than complete sentences. The added reference to Rosalie ("some young lady") and the emphasis on "**our**" draws out the possessive and jealous characterisation of the court ladies in this comedic scene, as well as making the physical interactions of

the characters (as depicted visually) more verbally explicit. On the other hand, the Lillilicious translation in Chapter 19 refers to Oscar as “he,” which more effectively conveys the court ladies’ relation to him as an object of desire. The use of “she” in Fersen’s dialogue does not as effectively foreground the gendered dynamics of their particular relationship, but can also be seen as emphasising Fersen’s discovery of Oscar’s femaleness.

Titles and honorifics also factor into the linguistic delineation of Oscar’s gender/sex. In general, Oscar is most commonly referred to by other characters as “Oscar-*sama*,” with *-sama* being a genderless honorific as well as the most respectful/formal. Throughout the Udon translation, *Osukaru-sama* becomes either “Lord Oscar” or “Lady Oscar” depending on context and how the speaker is gendering Oscar. This approach emphasises the relational aspect of Oscar’s gender (though not always consistently, as seen above). The significance of an unwanted suitor addressing Oscar as “Lady Oscar” while confessing that he has always viewed her as a woman is felt more strongly when most other characters call him “Lord Oscar.” The scanlation and the fansubs both vary widely between the use of Lady Oscar, “mademoiselle,” and “Oscar-*sama*” untranslated, giving no particular impression beyond inconsistency in this regard. The other formal title often used for Oscar is *ojō-sama* (“young lady”), which is used exclusively by André’s grandmother, the Jarjayes family’s elderly maid, who dotes on Oscar and persistently pressures him to embrace womanhood. Interestingly, although the Udon translation is notable for its incorporation of French vocabulary, it translates *ojō-sama* as “my lady”, whereas the anime, which hardly uses any French, subtitles it as “mademoiselle” (as does the scanlation). The grandmother’s term of address is also translated differently in each version. In Japanese, Oscar calls her *bāya*, a colloquial term for an elderly maid or nanny, while André calls her *obā-chan* (“grandmother” with casual/affectionate inflection). In the Udon manga she is called “Nanny” by Oscar and “Grand-maman” by André, but in the scanlation and the fansubs, they both call her “Granny.” These choices suggest different nuances to the relationships between the characters: while the use of “Granny” by both Oscar and André emphasises the biological relationship to André and parallel familial relationship to Oscar, the distinction between “Grand-maman” and “Nanny” more strongly conveys the classed aspect of their relationship. Oscar holds a higher status (as a noble

and as their master/employer) and thus speaks in a more formal register, which is also taken as an opportunity to add French flavour to the translation in “Grand-maman.” Similarly, André’s use of “Nanny” is more understated, as the speech of a servant, and emphasises the character’s position as a domestic worker over the familial relation.

#### 4.4.2 Oscar as lesbian/androgynous

Although the different translations’ approaches to pronouns are revealing in their own right, the amount of outright discussion of Oscar’s gender/sexual categorisation in the text calls for a broader analysis. In light of the background explored so far, it seems particularly fitting to apply the theories of Monique Wittig — a French lesbian materialist feminist building on the Marxist tradition — to the translations of a politically informed *shōjo* drama about an androgynous fighting in the French Revolution. While I have contextualised Oscar specifically within the *shōjo* manga tradition, I propose that Oscar can also be understood to exemplify Wittig’s theory of lesbian androgyny or un-womanhood. The figure of the lesbian-coded androgynous was not only a recurring trope in Ikeda’s own work, but has also persisted in later eras of *shōjo* manga (as will be covered extensively in the next chapter focusing on the 1990s). In English translation, the depiction of Oscar also provides an interesting basis to apply one of Wittig’s core theoretical concepts: that language as it has developed under patriarchy is grammatically structured to require gender categorisation; and that sex is a kind of economic grammar applied to human beings. Whereas Wittig’s concern is primarily the French subject who must gender herself in order to speak, she also takes note of personal pronouns in English: “The manifestation of gender that is identical in English and in French takes place in the dimension of the person” (1992: 76) I use her theory here to articulate the challenge of *Rose* rendered in English: the subject who must be gendered in order to be spoken of — that is, the subject for whom perception and cognition demands gender categorisation at a linguistic level.

While gender might not be linguistically marked in the way Wittig theorises in the original Japanese, Wittig’s theory is relevant in the case of the English translations, both of which introduce a significant amount of gendered language. The insertion of gendered pronouns in third-person speech is grammatically unavoidable; “Oscar-*sama*” becomes “Lady/Lord Oscar” and pronoun-less sentences become statements of what “she” (or,

less often, “he”) did. The English language inflicts its own mark of gender, which, though it manifests in pronouns and nouns rather than conjugations and declensions, accomplishes the same goal that Wittig identifies in the case of French: it forces the articulation of a subject in terms of gender/sex. For Wittig, this is a binary system of economic division held together by a heterosexual social contract: the basic ordering of social relations is heterosexual, and womanhood and manhood alike are defined by heterosexuality (1992: 3-8). In rejecting heterosexuality, lesbians also defy the basic organising logic of gender/sex under capitalism, and so lesbian existence constitutes a distinctly gendered positionality in its own right. Wittig’s idea of the lesbian as a breakaway or rebel category in modern capitalist society can be traced back through premodern historical development of gender/sexual ideologies. As early as the eighteenth century, fears of sexual ambiguity manifested in changing approaches to scientific sexual categorisation and the idea of “two genders and three bodies” — gender nonconformity in women taking form as a distinct physical sex (Halberstam 2018: 54-55; Fausto-Sterling 2000: 7). Oscar, I argue, can be seen as a modern reconfiguration of this fear into feminist fantasy.

Along similar lines, some Japanese feminist manga critics have also put forward theories that Oscar’s appeal as an androgynous figure is based specifically in her ability to reject physicality, and by extension, the reproductive biological processes associated with women’s bodies and controlled by the Japanese state (Anan 2014: 49-51). Where Wittig theorises lesbianism in material terms as an escape from a sexual hierarchy that coerces and exploits women’s reproductive labour — including but not limited to literal sexual reproduction — Oscar functions in *shōjo* culture as a literary form of escape from this same system. Underscoring the escapist aspect of androgyny in *Rose*, only rarely does Oscar’s fanciful depiction of gender nonconformity intersect with a portrayal of non-normative gender/sexuality grounded in specific history, as in the following narration:

Chapter 15

Lililicious

At the time..... among the ladies of the upper class, it was fashionable to have special female friends — though not in a homosexual way. A number of these ladies dressed in men’s clothing and had a certain appeal to them.

#### Udon Entertainment

At the time, in high society... ..it was en vogue as a chic pastime among noble ladies to have a favorite... ..female companion, though never in a sexual sense. There were no few of such who wore male attire and oozed a dubious magnetism.

The Lililicious translation of “had a certain appeal” is not inaccurate, but imprecise. In translating *ayashii miryoku wo tadayowaseru* (“gave off a suspicious appeal”) as “oozed a dubious magnetism,” the Udon translation evokes the attitude of suspicion toward masculine-presenting women that is later revisited. In an arc covering the Affair of the Diamond Necklace (chapters 27-31/episodes 23-24), the fraudulent noblewoman Jeanne de Valois publicly accuses the queen of lesbianism, pointing to Oscar’s masculine presentation as conclusive evidence. Although Oscar is obviously fictional, the charges are not: French culture at the time viewed lesbianism as a foreign degeneracy, so the accusation invoked xenophobic sentiments harboured by many French people against the Austrian-born queen (Hunt 1997: 124-127).

#### Chapter 30-31

#### RosalinaScanlations

Jeanne: It’s that... We have a love affair... In fact, her majesty the queen likes women. And she is in love with me... Her majesty and I had a physical relationship!

Crowd: The queen likes women ?! THE QUEEN LIKES WOMEN !!?

[...]

Jeanne: Everyone knows the favourite of the queen, Madame de Polignac. She is also one of her mistresses! As well as...the colonel of the royal guards who is over there! That person is the most striking

proof! She is the commanding officer of my husband, Nicolas de la Motte. Even if she is dressed like a man, she is a woman! She is the most irrefutable proof!!! Her majesty the queen asks the woman she loves to dress like a man... and puts her by her side so that she can be her mistress.

Oscar: What!? Me, a lesbian!? I am going to cut her in half!? [...] Me, Oscar, a lesbian? This pisses me off!

### Udon Entertainment

Jeanne: Well...it is, in short, of a sapphic nature... Her majesty happens to have unnatural leanings. She feels love for me... Meaning the queen and I have a lesbian relationship!

Crowd: The queen is lesbian...?! You're saying she is sapphic?!  
[...]

Jeanne: Everyone knows about her majesty's favorite, the Countess de Polignac. She, too, is one of the queen's lovers. Plus... ...that commander over there! She is the greatest proof of all! Despite wearing male clothing... ...and being my husband Nicholas's superior, she is a woman! Is that not sufficient enough proof?!! The queen thus makes the women she loves wear male attire, and... ...keeps them close at hand, so they can attend her when she wills.

Oscar: Y-you! You say I am lesbian? I-I swear to cut you down! [...] To hell with you! What a joke! I, Lord Oscar, lesbian? I'm breaking out in hives!

### Episode 23

#### Live-evil

Her Majesty loved me, Sir. I mean, in a lesbian fashion... The truth is, the Queen has a taste for women. And I was her lover. [...] And the most decisive evidence is the Royal Guard Regiment Commander Oscar François. She's the

commanding officer of my husband Nicolas. Though she's wearing men's clothes, she's a genuine woman. Her Majesty made her lover dress like a man and kept her close as a playing partner.

These excerpts constitute the only appearance of a number of real-world sexuality labels in the source texts. The term *dōseiai* ("same sex love"), a direct literal translation of "homosexuality" which connoted same-sex love/attraction as a kind of emotion rather than an identity (Angles 2017: 93), appears alongside *rezu*, a fairly new (at the time) formulation of "lesbian," and *resubosu-fū*, "in Lesbos fashion," using the older pronunciation (Welker 2017: 150). In translation, Udon is the only agent to use "sapphic," while the RoV scanlation leans into the more casual formulation of "liking women."

#### *4.4.3 Oscar's duality: language, identity, and categorisation*

To be sure, Oscar is not a lesbian in the sense most likely associated with this term at the time. 1960s Japan saw a huge influx of Western language and ideological frameworks around gender and sexuality being imported into Japan through translated literature, which coalesced with the awareness of the women's/feminist movement to produce a sharp increase in lesbian consciousness (ibid: 151); however, the combination of Western sexology with early modern Japanese gender ideology produced an idea of lesbianism as a stable manifestation of homosexuality in a normatively female-identified woman. In late eighteenth-century Europe, a multiplicity of categories for nonconforming female gender/sexuality existed (Halberstam 2018: 56-59), and according to this taxonomy Oscar would have more likely been described as an "androgynous" than a "lesbian," which implied femininity. Setting aside these distinct conceptions of the term as having their own historical specificities, and instead following Wittig's modern theoretical model of lesbianism as a negation of womanhood by women, a dualistic gender which is "a not-man, a not-woman" (1992: 13; Henderson 2018: 192), Oscar remains an exemplary case. Her androgyny and masculinity, expressed through aesthetics but primarily defined by her position within the class structure as a soldier, are not enough to wholly extract her from the various other biological, cultural, social factors that tie her to a normatively defined woman-ness. At the same time, they fundamentally set her apart from





## Chapter 38

### RoV Scans

Lady Sophia: Haha... If I hadn't realized you were a woman, I'm sure now I...  
Lady Oscar, I'm in love with you So in love I could die... Yes, it's true.

Oscar: That's a great honor! Just for being born a woman I can't make such a beautiful and charming lady my wife! Lady Sophia, you might not believe it... But since I was little I've always thought of myself as a man, never doubted it.

### Udon Entertainment

Lady Sophie: Ho ho! You see, if I did not know you were a woman, I most certainly would be... ..deeply in love with you, Lord Oscar. Perhaps enough to pine away for you.

Oscar: Well, that is a great honor! Because I was born a woman... ..I missed out on having such a beautiful and bewitching lady as my wife! Lady Sophie, perhaps you will not believe this... ..but when I was little... ..I always thought of myself as a boy. I truly had no doubts about it.

On the whole, these excerpts are very close to one another, but they contain distinctions in their framing of Oscar's gender. In the Chapter 11 excerpt, Lililicious places more emphasis on the succession and family obligation, while Udon emphasises the gender assignment and the moment of birth. More overtly, in the Chapter 38 excerpt, the present perfect tense used in Lililicious gives a different impression to the past tense used in Udon: in the context of a conversation where Oscar is reminded that her gender/sexual positionality poses an obstacle to the possibility of future relationships, there is a meaningful distinction between "since I was little, I've always thought of myself as a man" (implying continuity/ongoing identity) and "when I was little, I always thought of myself as

a boy” (implying past/resolved identity, or at least that the time of doubtlessness has passed). The phrasing of the Japanese, *chiisai koro* (“[around the time] when [I was] small”), more concretely indicates the Udon translation, as opposed to “since I was little” (*chiisai koro kara*). Again, language competence may be considered as a factor, but this could also represent a deliberate choice in the construction of Oscar’s gender identity.

However, Oscar’s literary and visual function as an androgynous character in the context of *shōjo* culture resists attempts to pin down his/her “identity” (as it were) in static individual terms. Oscar’s gender/sexuality is always fluid and always established in relation to other characters. With Oscar and André having grown up as boys together before falling in love, and their visual sameness reflecting the *chūsei* aesthetic, their relationship is configured as simultaneously homosexual and heterosexual. In relation to Fersen, Oscar sees herself as a heterosexual woman, and is heartbroken to find that Fersen sees her only as a man. Conversely, Oscar is disgusted when another man, de Girodelle, states that he sees her only as a woman and asks her to marry him. To Marie Antoinette and most of the female side characters, Oscar functions as an androgyne, both in its historical meaning and in the sense of the *shōjo* concept: women recognise Oscar as a woman, or not-man, and they are attracted to her all while professing heterosexuality. With Rosalie specifically, Oscar is the older girl in an S-relationship — Rosalie’s “practice run” before meeting her male love interest — and their relationship also evokes the tropes of tragic/ill-fated lesbian love:

## Chapter 18

### Lililicious

Why... Why does she exist in this world? Why did you have to be born a woman, Oscar...?!

### Udon Entertainment

Why... Why does someone like her exist...? Lord Oscar! Why were you born a woman...?!

## Chapter 29

### RosalinaScanlations

Oscar: If I was a man... I would have made you my wife without any hesitation....

Rosalie: Mademoiselle Oscar!

Oscar: If I was a man... everything would be much easier!

### Udon Entertainment

Oscar: If I really **were** a man... ..I would marry you without a doubt...truly.

Rosalie: Lord Oscar!

Oscar: How much easier things would be... ..if I were a man...!

Again, despite the overall closeness of the translations, I would highlight the nuances in the phrasing and consequent theoretical framing of each. The phrasing of the Chapter 18 excerpt translated by Lililicious suggests that it is “this world” which is incongruent with Oscar and her gender/sexuality, closely matching the Japanese phrasing (*kono yo*), whereas Udon translates the line more figuratively as a question of why she exists. In the Chapter 29 excerpt, Udon again uses text formatting to intensify a particular part of the sentence; “if I really **were** a man” carries more emotional baggage around “realness” and authenticity than the simpler construction “if I was a man.” Also in this excerpt, Udon translates Rosalie as calling Oscar “Lord,” whereas RosalinaScanlations renders the honorific as the feminine “Mademoiselle,” creating two distinct impressions of how Rosalie understands or relates to Oscar’s gender.

The gendering of Oscar’s character may present more of a conundrum for today’s readers/viewers of the English translations, rooted in English-language discourses of gender/sexual identity, than it did for Japanese readers in the 1970s. In Western and especially English-speaking contexts, since the development of modern sexology at the

end of the nineteenth century, sexuality has been increasingly constructed as an individually held trait and core aspect of identity, first as a pathology or perversion and later as a matter of personality or basic social character. Increasingly since the 1990s, Western Anglophone LGBT/queer communities have prioritised the naming of one's gender/sexuality, the claiming of a specific identity, and public "coming out" as necessary goals for self-realisation of queer subjects (McLelland 2000: 462-464). Reacting (I would argue) to the organisational failures of the previous decade's radical socialisms much as feminists did in Ikeda's time, many Western LGBT/queer communities today have broadly turned to consumerism and individualism as the ideological apparatus through which to pursue social equality, favouring pursuit of rights within systems over the radical struggle for liberation from systems. In turn, expanding vocabularies of identity have been created which may offer self-expression or validation, but all too often are "instrumentalized in maintaining the categories of sex and gender and shoring up the epistemic authority of medical doctors and social scientists" who function on behalf of certain classed, gendered, and racialised political and cultural institutions (Henderson 2018: 199). The highly historical, subjective, and constantly-evolving nature of gender/sexual frameworks may be rejected by modern subjects in favour of an ahistorical, static, and essentialist model of gender/sexual identity, which seeks to legitimate and canonise modern Western identities by locating them as already pre-existing in the past and/or in other cultures (Halberstam 2018: 46; Puar 2007: 22-24, 58-61).

The official English translation of *Rose* is officially categorised and marketed as "LGBTQ," but precisely which of those constituent terms applies to Oscar would be difficult to determine objectively. In particular, in the currently accepted lingua franca of trans identity, trans people are those who identify with a sex/gender other than the one they were assigned at birth, or framed in the negative, do not identify with their sex/gender assigned at birth (Henderson 2018: 199). By this definition, Oscar is not transgender, because he articulates a male identity and was quite literally "assigned male at birth":

Chapter 1

Lililicious

Lord Jarjayes: What...a girl again? My god! Six children, and all are girls! Is the house of Jarjayes cursed? For a family of generals in charge of protecting the royal family! I don't need another girl! Damn it all! Hmm... She bawls just like a boy, loud and strong. [...] Yes, that's it. Oscar! Your name is Oscar! A most worthy name, is it not?

Granny: Isn't that a name for a boy? That is...

Lord Jarjayes: Yes! She will follow in my footsteps! I will raise you to become France's finest general! Oscar! My son!

### Udon Entertainment

Lord Jarjayes: **A-another** girl, you say?! H-how can that be? Six offspring, all girls?! Is the house of Jarjayes cursed?! The house of a general who protects the royal family and leads armies has no need of girls! Gah, **merde!** Mm...her cries are at least as robust as a boy's. [...] Done! Oscar it is! Your name shall be Oscar! 'Tis a good name, hm?

Nanny: Huh?! B-but is that not a boy's name, my lord?! / No matter how you look at it...

Lord Jarjayes: That's right! She shall be my heir! I, her father, shall raise her to become the best soldier in all of France! Oscar! You are my **son**, do you understand?!

### Episode 1

#### Live-evil

Lord Jarjayes: A boy! It's got to be a boy this time! It... it can't be!

Granny: No, Sir, it's a beautiful Princess, as you can see.

Lord Jarjayes: In a family of generals, who command the military and guard the royal family... There's no need for a girl! I've decided. You're a boy! Your name is Oscar, my son!!

As briefly stated before, the original manga and anime take different approaches to this scene that shape some of the differences of the translations. The anime episode frames Oscar's father and his decision more ominously, with moody music and pathetic fallacy in the form of a thunderstorm. It is also the only version of the text in which Oscar's father explicitly states that Oscar is male (*otoko da*), as opposed to "my son" (*musuko*). Unsurprisingly, all of the instances of "she" in all translations of this scene originate in the English, replacing the genderless pronoun *koitsu* (another form of *aitsu*, mentioned previously) or no pronouns at all.

In practice, Oscar remains gender-nonconforming because his birth assignment as male defies the typical logic of sex assignment based on physical traits, and he continues to be categorised partly as female, with his claim to maleness often being contested. Oscar complicates the hegemonic ontology of gender/sex by virtue of having been subjected to an almost paradoxical dual gender assignment: Oscar is classified as female, and not just in spite of but because of this, under the circumstances of his father's need for an heir, Oscar is raised as male, though no pretence is held regarding her physical body. Oscar's bifurcated gender/sexuality is deployed deliberately for dramatic effect, placing the character in different gendered relationship dynamics, defying the norm of a stable and clearly articulated identity. Rather than depicting an essential manhood or womanhood, Oscar seems to represent an idea of gender performativity which is common to the Japanese theatrical tradition, such as the *onnagata* in kabuki as well as the Takarazuka *otokoyaku* (Shamoon 2012: 131; Welker 2006: 846-847): that it is men who can most evocatively perform womanhood/femininity, and women who can most evocatively perform manhood/masculinity (Episale 2012: 92-95). Recalling that postwar narrative manga drew inspiration from the stage (Power 2009: 115-117), Oscar's character in *Rose* can be likened to gender-crossing roles in performance arts. By being neither really male nor female, Oscar is best positioned to portray the appealing qualities of both men and women.

As a character rooted in this specific visual language and culture, Oscar resists the question of whether s/he is "really" male, female, lesbian, transgender, etc. At the same time, the dominant Western logic of gender/sexuality, continuing to be imposed onto and

adapted within the Japanese context by processes of imperialism and globalisation, increasingly expects it — in both linguistic and social terms. To be translated into English, speakers must be linguistically identified within a gendered social structure, mainly through gendered pronouns that are assumed to correlate to static and innate male/female identities. In the source media, Oscar’s language and narrative both reject the notion of gender/sexual identity as static, but in English translation, even very minor choices operate to reinforce particular ideas of Oscar as “really” male or female.

## Chapter 53

### RoV Scans

Thanks for letting me live in this wide world closed off to women... For letting me walk down the path of human foolishness....

### Udon Entertainment

Although a woman, I travel a path through such a wide world, living as a human being, floundering in the midst of all this raw human foolishness...

This statement by Oscar, expressing gratitude to his father for raising him as male, echoes Oyèrónkẹ Oyèwùmí’s articulation of feminism in Western and colonised contexts (paraphrased from Denise Riley) as a struggle toward “unsexed humanity” (2016: 156). Whatever the precise labels or pronouns applied to Oscar in English translation, s/he represents a formative depiction of gender nonconformity as a mechanism for girls to find love without losing their independence to the institution of heterosexuality (Shamoon 2012: 127), an alternative to the contemporary girls’ manga norm depicting love as capitulation to a patriarchal order and surrender of individual identity (Fujimoto 2014: 35). Although the translations examined here do not always necessarily reflect mindfulness of cultural issues of gender/sexuality and translation, in a way, they prove the flexibility of Oscar’s character as a vessel for multiple potential gendered readings in varying cultural contexts and media traditions.

## 4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I set up *The Rose of Versailles* as the starting point in my investigation of gender nonconformity in *shōjo*, outlining the historical and cultural background of its production in order to underscore the significance of the original series as well as its English translations. Beginning with the advent of the so-called Year 24 Group, I have reviewed the conditions of *shōjo* culture in the 1970s with regard to both the material/industrial production and distribution of manga and anime and the themes and ideologies of gender/sexuality conveyed through them. Young women began to overtake men in the role of *shōjo* manga artist at this time, primarily because their stories were more successful (i.e. profitable) with audiences of girls only a few years younger than them. While their work was still contained within an industry based on rigid gender norms, artists like Ikeda utilised *shōjo* manga as a subversive space in which to explore serious issues of relevance to girls and young women — not only issues of gender/sexuality, but also historical and political topics. *Rose* incorporated elements of the radicalism associated with the Japanese student movement, in which Ikeda herself had participated, alongside *shōjo* aesthetics and narrative tropes. The intentional use of *shōjo*'s visual grammar and the particular multimodal features of manga and anime to depict Oscar (and to a certain extent André) as ambiguously gendered/sexed has enabled both heteronormative and transgressive readings. Most notably, Oscar has been read as a character rebelling against the construct of gender/sex as well as class (Anan 2014), and her “homogender” relationship with André provided readers with a seemingly contradictory yet empowering model of heterosexual romance based in sameness and equality, achieved through androgyny, or *chūsei* (“middle sex/gender”) (Shamoon 2012: 127, Welker 2006). However, at the same time as *Rose* appears to take a transgressive approach to gender/sex categories, it is also “still firmly embedded in a discourse of girls’ culture” (Shamoon 2012: 131). It also has the potential to invoke (or be read as invoking) conservative and consumerist rather than revolutionary ideologies: the aesthetic fixation on France, European beauty ideals, patriotism, and heroic death speak to the imperialist underpinnings of modern Japanese society, and within that, to Ikeda’s perspective as a Japanese woman born and raised in the postwar period (Anan 2014: 58-59). Nevertheless, the series’ immediate popularity and proliferation through other multimodal

forms, such as the Takarazuka theatre, have meant that the presentation of gender nonconformity and gendered aesthetics in *Rose* exerted foundational influences on the continued development of *shōjo*.

With manga and anime beginning to spread outside of Japan, *Rose* also became popular in Europe in the 1980s, but was not translated into English — commercially or otherwise — for decades. Beginning in 2003, it took three scanlation groups (Lililicious, RosalinaScanlations, and RoV Scans) fourteen years to produce one complete scanlation. I compared this scanlation with the more recent (2019-2021) official translation licensed by Udon Entertainment, as well as fansubs of the anime produced by the group Live-evil in 2005. The fansubs are typical of their time, not showing any particular awareness of the gender/sexuality-related content in their translation approach, but prioritising direct accessibility and comprehension of the source material. Likewise, the official translation and scanlation of the manga do not appear to take different approaches to gender/sexuality or nonconformity — reflecting that by the end of the 2010s, industry standards with regard to such topics have been swayed firmly away from censorship — but they do expose differences in the time and means of their production. The scanlation (particularly the chapters produced by Lililicious in the 2000s) makes greater use of annotations and extratextual material, taking a conversational tone with readers that mirrors the interactivity common to *shōjo* manga magazines. It editorialises historical details and fills in subtext, attempting to provide readers with as much background information as possible. On the other hand, the official translation presents itself as an entry in a literary canon. Footnotes are used occasionally but are kept brief and academic, and although some extratextual material (magazine page covers from the manga's original release, full-colour versions of artwork, etc.) is included, these are framed almost as historical artefacts. It could be rationalised that while the scanlation, along with the fansubs, situates itself within an interactive fan subculture, the official translation seeks to place *Rose* in a mainstream literary position as a “historical fiction masterwork.”

While the manga series is now recognised as a classic in English translation, *Rose*'s true legacy is in its influence on subsequent *shōjo* manga and anime. Oscar is credited with having popularised the trope of the crossdressing girl protagonist (Davidson

2012<sup>4</sup>), which came to appear frequently by the 1990s, with noteworthy examples including *Revolutionary Girl Utena* and, the subject of the next analysis chapter, *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* (though *Sailor Moon* notably surpasses the concept of “cross-dressing”). Additionally, in continuing a tradition established in prewar girls’ culture, *Rose* contributed to the endurance of French culture (or rather, aesthetics associated with French culture) as a signifier of sophistication, refinement, and high class status that is frequently utilised in *shōjo*. This aesthetic and thematic impact can also be traced into the 2000s series *Ouran High School Host Club* (to be addressed in my third analysis chapter), which juxtaposes an androgynous Japanese girl against rigid gender/sex roles in a wealthy European-styled school. Nearly fifty years since its debut, *Rose* may be considered part of a historical canon, but remains alive and present in the works created in its wake.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/feature/2012-10-30>

## Chapter 5: *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, Takeuchi Naoko (1990s-2000s)

### 5.1. Introduction and overview

The previous analysis chapter covered a series which established a lasting association between gender nonconformity and female empowerment in *shōjo* media culture, as well as paving one of *shōjo*'s earliest pathways into English translation. This chapter addresses the next significant *shōjo* series in my chronology, which effectively introduced *shōjo* anime and manga to a generation of English speakers: *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*. I begin by introducing the source material and exploring the historical setting of the 1990s, a time defined by globalisation and social change. Framing *Sailor Moon* and its depictions of gender/sexuality within the context of economic crisis and Japan's millennial shift to neoliberalism, I articulate the series' role in the spread of manga/anime, and specifically *shōjo* aesthetics, in both Japanese and Western Anglophone spheres. I emphasise the relevance of material cultures and the capitalist mode of production/consumption to processes of translation, and discuss the cultural significance of the *Sailor Moon* and its translations as pertaining to contemporary feminisms and other issues of gender/sexuality. Then I move to translation analysis, focusing on three subunits consisting of specific characters or character pairings, before concluding with a reflection on the franchise's impact on the expanding landscape of Anglophone fan culture and translation.

#### 5.1.1 *Source material*

The *Sailor Moon* franchise today encompasses numerous mediums, including the original manga and anime series, an anime reboot incorporating CGI animation techniques, multiple feature-length animated films, a live-action television series, several video games, musical theatre and ice skating shows, and extensive merchandise (ibid; Allison 2006: 131). However, it all began in 1992 with a manga created by Takeuchi Naoko for the girls' magazine *Nakayoshi*. The series was quickly picked up for anime adaptation by Tōei Animation, a division of the Tokyo-based media producer and distributor Tōei Company, and the adaptation began to air on Japanese television in 1992. While Takeuchi

originally planned to end the story after the first arc, *Sailor Moon*'s popularity led Tōei to request its continuation, and the manga and anime both continued until 1997. Capitalising on the original series' explosive success, new *Sailor Moon* media was produced through the 2000s as well as in more recent years. In 2012, Tōei Company announced it would collaborate with publishing giant Kodansha to release a second anime adaptation, *Sailor Moon Crystal*, which was marketed as a more faithful adaptation of the original manga (Loo 2014<sup>1</sup>). The latest instalment in the franchise was a sequel film to *Crystal*, released in January 2021.

*Sailor Moon* revolves around Usagi Tsukino, a 14-year-old girl in her second year of middle school in Tokyo. One day Usagi meets a talking cat, Luna, who reveals that their world is under threat by evil forces and that Usagi herself must fight back by transforming into Sailor Moon, one of the planet's fated defenders known as *sērā senshi*.<sup>2</sup> At first, Usagi struggles to accept this unwanted responsibility, epitomising the notion of the *shōjo* as consumer: she only wants to eat junk food, read manga, and flirt with boys at the arcade. However, she eventually rises to the challenge and meets the other "Sailor Senshi," who represent the other planets in the solar system. Together they protect Tokyo from the evil schemes of humanoid beings from an alternate dimension, whose attacks generally involve leeching people of vital "energy" (*enerugii*), stealing their "pure hearts" (*pyua na kokoro*) or "beautiful dreams" (*utsukushii yume*). Eventually, Usagi learns that she is not only Sailor Moon, but also the future Neo Queen Serenity, the leader of a magical lunar kingdom called the Silver Millennium, and she must acquire more powerful items in order to defeat new enemies in battles with increasingly high stakes. The first several story arcs follow Sailor Moon and the "Inner Senshi"<sup>3</sup>: Mercury, Mars, Venus, and Jupiter. In later arcs, the more powerful "Outer Senshi" begin to appear: Pluto, Uranus

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2014-01-09/new-sailor-moon-anime-producer/not-remaking-1st-anime>

<sup>2</sup> Literally "sailor soldier", although *senshi* has sometimes been translated into terms like "guardian" or "scout" which carry less aggressive/hypermasculine connotations in English usage. "Sailor" refers to the *sērāfuku*, or "sailor suit", the name for the iconic uniform worn by Japanese schoolgirls. The term adopted most widely in English-language fan discourse and fan translations is "Sailor Senshi," so I use this term throughout the chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Fans used the terms "Inner Senshi" and "Outer Senshi" as early as 1995, and they appear widely in English translations from both official and unofficial sources.

and Neptune, and finally Saturn. The plot progresses according to a formulaic structure: Usagi and her friends find their everyday lives interrupted by the antagonists' schemes to steal human energy, which often involve the stereotypical desires of girls (e.g. fashion, romance, sweets). Before any harm can befall the target(s), one or more Sailor Senshi appear on the scene to confront the villains, undergoing magical transformation sequences that dress them in stylised schoolgirl uniforms and enable them to wield elemental powers associated with their respective planets. The battle concludes with a positive resolution for the victims of the attack, and often a moral lesson for the Sailor Senshi (and viewers/readers). However, this formula allows for a notable amount of social commentary and nuanced character development. As the rest of this chapter will discuss in more depth, *Sailor Moon* addresses a range of issues relating to girls' experiences of the contemporary world, including but not limited to gender/sexuality. The formula itself also reflects significant ideological understandings of concepts such as justice, peace, happiness, and young people's dreams of the future, which I address later in the context of contemporary global politics, economic crisis, and neoliberalism.

### 5.1.2 Translation context

The licensing of *Sailor Moon* for English translation has been a complicated affair. The first official English translation was a localisation of the first two seasons of the anime, *Sailor Moon* and *Sailor Moon R*, which were produced by DIC Entertainment and first aired in the U.S and Canada in 1995. The series did not meet with immediate popularity in either country, though it was significantly more successful in Canada, where it qualified as local programming because the dub was recorded by a Canadian studio, Optimum Productions (Close 2017: 272). On the other hand, in the U.S., it aired at non-ideal hours, usually on very early weekday mornings rather than during the Saturday morning slot in which other imported Japanese series found massive commercial success (Allison 2006: 152). As it did not generate the expected merchandise sales, *Sailor Moon* was considered a failed experiment, and DIC cancelled the show in 1996, less than a year after it started airing. However, just as the show's popularity in Japan forced Takeuchi to continue the series, fan demand in North America was key to reviving the English dub. A campaign called "Save Our Sailors" was formed and a petition was circulated; the massive

organisational efforts of the fans behind the campaign received national news coverage, and DIC eventually relented (Close 2017: 273). Production of the dubbed second season was resumed, and the remaining episodes of *Sailor Moon R* were broadcasted by the end of 1998 — airing under more favourable conditions this time, on the Toonami slot of Cartoon Network. However, DIC did not acquire the rights to dub the rest of the series, which by now had finished airing in Japan. Instead, a media licensing agency called Cloverway, Inc., which worked with Tōei Company to distribute a variety of Tōei-owned media, acquired the license and contracted the same recording studio, Optimum Productions, to dub the next two seasons. These were completed and aired by the end of 2002. The final season, *Sailor Moon Stars*, did not receive an English dub until 2014 when the new (and current) rights-holder, Viz Media, released its full re-dub of all five seasons. Meanwhile, the manga received similarly patchy treatment. Distributor Tokyopop (known at the time as Mixx Entertainment) licensed the series for English translation alongside the DIC dub, initially serialising it in a magazine format that mimicked its Japanese publication. The chapters were later released in eighteen volumes between 1998 and 2001, mirroring the eighteen Japanese *tankōbon*, but these went out of print in 2005, leaving a vacuum until Kodansha acquired the license in 2011.

As a consequence of this complicated history, multiple official translations and unlicensed fan translations exist for the original manga and anime series alike. The full corpus of English-language *Sailor Moon* translations is expansive as well as difficult to access — many fansubbers voluntarily ceased distribution of their work when Viz Media acquired the *Sailor Moon* license, and access to manga scanlations was similarly affected by Internet copyright regulations when Kodansha licensed a new English translation of the manga series in 2011. For these reasons, my analysis will focus on the anime series, comparing its English dub with contemporaneous fansubbed versions by Studio Chikashitsu (season 1) and VKLL (season 3). I will also discuss a few corresponding sections of the Tokyopop manga and its first licensed translation, but overall more attention will be paid to the audiovisual form, its practical distribution over television networks, and the use of dubbing and subtitling as strategies to censor audiovisual depictions of gender nonconformity.

In addition to access-related factors, this decision is based on the historical

significance of the first English dub as a pioneering force in the popularisation of anime (and by extension manga) among Western Anglophone audiences, for many of whom this dub was the first definitive version of *Sailor Moon*. As I will show, the DIC-Cloverway dub is especially noteworthy for its censorship and other strategies applied to *Sailor Moon*'s portrayals of nonconforming gender/sexuality. Knowledge of the censorship was commonplace at the time among those fans who had the knowledge and resources to engage with the source material independently (Ladd & Deneroff 2009: 146), but it can be reasonably surmised that mass television audiences — i.e. the majority of the Western English-speaking audiences at the time — would have been aware of *Sailor Moon* only through the DIC-Cloverway dub. In general, it was the appearance of anime on television that introduced manga to new audiences outside of Japan, and not the other way around (Schodt 1996: 14). The historical positioning of the original anime dub makes it the most interesting of the possible texts for my purposes in mapping a trajectory of translations of gender nonconformity in anime/manga.

### 5.1.3 Subtitles: Studio Chikashitsu and VKLL

The anime subtitles chosen for analysis were produced by Studio Chikashitsu and VKLL. Both entities<sup>4</sup> were active in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when fansubbing was a more laborious process that involved physically processing, editing, and mailing out VHS tapes. Studio Chikashitsu subtitled the first season of *Sailor Moon* and several episodes of the second season. VKLL completed the subtitles for the remaining second season episode, as well as for the rest of the seasons and the season recap films. VKLL's translations were made available for use by other fansubbing groups and have been redistributed online through the *Sailor Moon* Center, a fan website that remains in operation. Accessing specific fansubs is difficult to achieve in the present day, as *Sailor Moon* has been legally re-licensed for English-language distribution for almost a decade, and while Studio Chikashitsu inserted their own credits on the first season episodes that I was able to access, it is less clear whether I am correct in identifying the remaining seasons as having been translated by VKLL. However, after investigating different existing fansubs of the

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<sup>4</sup> Studio Chikashitsu appears to have been a group while VKLL is referred to in fan forums as an individual. Both operated under aliases, and both ceased operations in the mid-2000s.

seasons in question, I am reasonably confident that the translations I have accessed were produced by VKLL and reformatted by the Sailor Moon Center (SMC) for their own distribution.

The quality of the subtitles from both sources is very similar and could be mistaken for translations produced by the same agent; both tend to translate fairly directly, matching sentence for sentence where possible, though with some changes for ease of English expression and occasional mistranslations, such as the phrase *iie*, ‘*matte*’ *janakute* — spoken by Usagi urging another character, “no, don’t wait” — being translated as “I won’t wait” (back-translation: *matana!*). The Studio Chikashitsu subtitles use plain yellow text with a black outline, while the VKLL/SMC subtitles use colour-coded text to help clarify which character is speaking. There are no translators’ notes, and honorifics (e.g. *-chan*, *-sama*) are frequently used, suggesting an assumption that viewers possess a certain level of basic knowledge of the source culture and linguistic customs. This is consistent with the wider context of fansubs; those created prior to the mid-2000s were generally aimed at audiences who were already relatively familiar with anime and Japanese culture, and who, for precisely that reason, wanted an alternative to the heavily localised English dub. This approach is also reflected in the handling of gender nonconformity; there are no notable instances where it is minimised or elided, and the priority appears to be the honest representation of the source material. Fansubs such as these promised viewers a more “authentic” or less heavily mediated experience of the source material than was standard in official translations at the time.

#### *5.1.4 Dub: DIC and Cloverway, Inc.*

For the official anime translation, I analyse the English dub produced by DIC Entertainment (seasons 1-2) and Cloverway, Inc (seasons 3-4). All seasons were recorded by the same studio and are essentially a continuous work. The only notable difference is in their background music, as Cloverway was able to acquire rights for more of the original Japanese score than DIC. Otherwise, both producers’ translations are characterised by censorship of nonconforming gender/sexuality, which prompted backlash from fans at the time of initial release. With the target audience being children in the U.S. and Canada, the dub was produced according to the dominant “reader-

centred” approach to translating children’s media, which seeks to neutralise or erase the foreign (Close 2017: 270). It utilises a kind of exaggerated slang common to children’s television shows of the time, if not to the actual speech of young people, and some characters are voiced with distinctive U.S regional accents. Although *Sailor Moon* was less heavily edited than other adapted Japanese shows at the time, the animation itself is sometimes cut or altered to meet target cultural norms — for example, in a scene that shows a character bathing, the bathwater is made opaque. Most of the dub’s censorship and localisation, though, occurs through changes to dialogue which attempt to reframe the content being presented in the visual mode (for example, describing a rice ball seen onscreen as a “chocolate chip cookie”). This approach forms the basis for the dub’s translation of gender nonconformity: through dialogue, the DIC dub changes the gender of one character in order to turn a male-male relationship heterosexual, while Cloverway rewrites two lesbian-coded characters as cousins.

The dub also has mechanical problems involving the content and delivery of lines. Although characters have a range of typical U.S. accents, speech may follow an unnatural-sounding rhythm, and lines sometimes overlap each other awkwardly. Dialogue is occasionally nonsensical, or seemingly rewritten without any apparent reason. These problems can be attributed to constraints placed on the translation process by the multimodal media form, as well as by the economic and political context of production. Compared to film, the medium of animation theoretically allowed for the possibility of seamless dubbing, which was highly desired in order to produce a less foreign-feeling text for the North American (mainly U.S.-oriented) markets. The recording studio specifically utilised the Rhythmoband technique, in which the script was matched to the animation based on mouth movements:

...rather than relying on translating the dialogue, per se, the writers created English scripts that matched the characters’ Japanese mouth movements and actions. This often meant heavily re-writing or altogether throwing out the original Japanese storyline.

— Close 2017: 271

However, this method posed voice actors “the very difficult challenge of conveying emotion while also speaking in a highly precise rhythm” (ibid) — possibly explaining the odd pronunciation of many lines. Taking the technical problems together with the political issues of censorship at play in these dubs, fans today often consider them to be comical, absurd, and inferior to other translations (such as fansubs or the 2014 Viz re-dub), but these factors make the DIC-Cloverway dub a compelling subject of analysis.

## 5.2. Historical context and cultural significance

The 1990s were a landmark decade in the rapid development of new connective technologies, most obviously the Internet and cellular devices. Economic and political developments also drove these goods — and by extension, new avenues to media access — into new markets, as the conclusion of the Cold War left Soviet-allied and Third World (i.e. unaligned) countries open to the flood of capitalism, and geopolitical borders shifted drastically (Allison 2006: 168). In Japan,

[t]he 1990s was also the beginning of the end of what had been presumed to be an epoch of continuous and reliable Japanese economic growth. This period was thus a critical moment in the transformation of both Japanese political economy and public culture.

— Inoue 2016: 152

Increased exports of manga/anime to English-speaking markets were prompted by the bursting of the “bubble economy” in 1991, a crisis which brought a swift end to the nation’s long postwar period of economic growth and ushered in years of social crisis and economic stagnation that would become known as the “lost decade” (ibid: 85-87; Inoue 2016: 152; Dasgupta 2009: 79). Both narratively and as a multimedia franchise, *Sailor Moon* was a product of the conditions of this time, with media reflecting national anxieties about an uncertain future (Saito 2014: 156-157). In a 1996 treatise on the contemporary state of the industry, manga translator Frederik Schodt writes that “profit margins are razor thin, competition is fierce, and it takes constant innovation to survive,” and describes how companies would carefully coordinate the simultaneous production of manga, anime adaptations, and merchandise in order to maximise reach and earnings (Schodt 1996:

92-93).

In Japan, the image of the *shōjo* had been closely associated with consumerism since the 1970s (ibid: 139), with the foundations for the *shōjo* as a consumer block having been laid even earlier in the century (Shamoon 2012: 58). The rationale for importing *Sailor Moon* to North America was similarly to capture girls as a new distinct group of consumers; regional branches of toy companies Bandai and Mattel were centrally involved in the initial decision-making processes around licensing the series in English translation, viewing young girls in the U.S. and Canada as untapped potential in a mostly boy-focused market (Allison 2006: 128-129). On both sides of the Pacific, then, anime was not being produced simply for the purpose of narrative storytelling or cultural production in itself, but for the sake of developing an industry in order to generate profits, at a time of great economic instability and uncertainty for Japan in particular. This economic instability also prompted cultural anxieties about the consequent destabilising of the gender roles of the capitalist nuclear family, which were reflected in many contemporary media productions, including the *Sailor Moon* series.

### *5.2.1 Trends in animation industry*

Changing methods of production and patterns of consumption, in line with these larger systemic developments, placed certain demands on the medium itself. Anime episodes could be produced at a faster pace than manga chapters, because “scores of animators progress more quickly than the more artisan-like set-up of the mangaka [manga artist] and their much smaller team of assistants” (Davis 2016: 619). This meant that when an anime was being adapted from an ongoing manga, as was commonly the case, anime production would often outpace the manga — meaning animation studios would run out of material to adapt. In order to stick to the television broadcast schedule and the contract for a particular number of episodes, the anime production team would have to come up with original content, creating side stories or plotless episodes to stall the progression of the narrative while the source material “[caught] up” (ibid: 620). This added material became known as “filler” and is often reviled among fans who are loyal to the original manga (or simply impatient for plot progression). The website Anime Filler List, a fan-created site that exists to document which episodes of different anime series are filler,

makes the following explanatory statement on its homepage: “Fillers do not further the story and usually are of a lower quality both visually and narratively.” The *Sailor Moon* anime contains a great deal of filler — Anime Filler List records 98 out of 200 episodes as filler, or 49% of the show.<sup>5</sup>

Another practice that arose from breakneck anime production schedules was one which had begun as a necessary cost-saving measure in the 1960s with early anime series like *Astro Boy*: the “bank system”, or the re-use of the same animation frames and sequences for multiple different scenes (Schodt 1997: 72) This style of “limited animation” was sometimes considered inferior to the “full animation” technique utilised by Disney because it produced less visually fluid images and could sometimes be recognised as repetitive. However, because these factors pushed anime producers to find other ways to make their work compelling, some scholars have argued that these “material limitations directly helped develop the complexity and depth of narrative” of anime (Saito 2014: 152-153). It is therefore notable that, as well as relying on character drama to complicate simple visuals, the *Sailor Moon* anime actually managed to incorporate its stock animations as a positive feature of the show. Usagi’s transformation sequence, including the delivery of her catchphrase — “I’m the pretty sailor-suited soldier of love and justice, Sailor Moon. In the name of the moon, I’ll punish you!” — lasts for 51 seconds and occurs once per episode. Each of the other Sailor Senshi also has her own (slightly shorter) stock transformation sequence, which is inserted whenever the plot calls for her to transform; multiple subsequent transformations in a team ranging from five to ten members mean that some episodes feature two minutes or more of continuous stock animation. However, these transformations became an iconic part of the viewing experience, featuring particular animation and music that fans not only expect but enjoy.

### 5.2.2 Material cultures

Since the early twentieth century, *shōjo* media had always been closely intertwined with Japan’s newly capitalist system and the marketing of consumer goods: the first girls’ magazines often promoted products such as stationery and cosmetics, much as the *shōjo*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.animefillerlist.com/shows/sailor-moon>

manga magazines of the 1990s promoted jewellery and toys (Shamoon 2012: 58). Buying merchandise from a favourite show — in a broader sense, participating in capitalism as a consumer — had become a way for fans, especially children, to deepen their sense of engagement in a story, while for the owners of successful franchises, it was a lucrative new avenue of profit (Allison 2006: 112). At the same historical moment as capitalist crisis created a financial incentive for Japanese companies to produce more manga, anime, and merchandise than ever, the global market for these products was also massively expanded by the increased connective capabilities of modern technology. However, most of the anime and manga adapted/translated into English in the 1980s was *shōnen* (boys') or *seinen* (literally “youth,” aimed at young men) (Schodt 1996: 95). Western broadcasting companies, which were usually U.S. and/or Canadian ventures at that time, would purchase regional distribution rights to Japanese series — most commonly shows featuring mecha (‘giant robot’), sci-fi, or military themes, reflecting the hostile political climate of the Cold War and the social psychology of post-industrial capitalism (Allison 2006: 100, 185-186). These shows were not simply dubbed, but were usually heavily adapted: scenes would be cut and rearranged, titles changed, characters and places renamed, and background music rescored. In one case, three different anime series were spliced together to create a singular dubbed version, *Robotech*, which was presented as completely Western in setting. Like their original media, these shows in English translation usually had corresponding toy products (ibid).

Another genre that would become popular for Western English-language adaptation and the marketing of toys was *sentai*, which originated in Japan in the late 1970s with the *Super Sentai* series and established itself throughout the following decades (ibid: 95). *Sentai* can be translated as “squadron” or other similar military terms describing a team of fighters; as a genre, it refers to *tokusatsu* (special effects) television shows that feature such a team of heroic figures who fight against cartoonish villains and monsters. Takeuchi Naoko has stated that *Sailor Moon* was inspired by her love of the *sentai* genre; she wanted to make an all-girls version of the concept, in contrast to the typical *sentai* teams which were either entirely or predominantly male (*Smile* 1998<sup>6</sup>). Further to that point, executives at *Nakayoshi* approached Takeuchi to write *Sailor Moon*

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sailor-games.com/misc2/interview.html>

in the first place because they believed it could be as lucrative and successful with girl audiences as the series had been with boys (Allison 2006: 131). The sixteenth *Super Sentai* series was the first of several to be adapted into the U.S. series *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, beginning in 1993 — the year after the production of *Sailor Moon* began in Japan — and was later used as the basis for a fully U.S.-produced *Power Rangers* franchise (ibid: 96). In other words, while U.S. airwaves were not yet broadcasting Japanese content without first heavily reworking it as American content, Japanese media trends were nevertheless beginning to exercise significant influence on Western popular culture and children’s media.<sup>7</sup> By the time *Sailor Moon* first hit screens in North America, the concept of a superhero squadron consisting of five or more members, who use items to transform from civilian to hero identities and fight evil using a variety of signature weapons, special items, and attack phrases, had been well-established in children’s television programming.<sup>8</sup> It was specifically *Sailor Moon*’s potential to generate toy sales among girls in North America, based on the success of *Super Sentai*’s English-language adaptation among the young male demographic, that motivated the production of its initial English translation in 1995 by DIC Entertainment (ibid: 148-150).

### 5.2.3 Norms of translation and localisation

Although the brief of the English-language producers was generally to localise as thoroughly as possible (Close 2017: 270) — or at least “culturally neutralise”, as lack of capital meant that DIC and Cloverway could not afford the advanced technological methods larger companies often used to Westernise Japanese animated series (Allison 2006: 150) — certain qualities nevertheless distinguished children’s shows of Japanese origin from their Western and particularly U.S. American counterparts. Nudity and

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<sup>7</sup> It bears repeating that while “Western” is not synonymous with “of the United States,” the U.S. has been the most politically and economically dominant among the Western nations. In the case of manga and anime especially, English translations have generally been produced with the American market in mind (Close 2017: 271; Allison 2006: 150).

<sup>8</sup> Naturally, superheroes were also established in print media by the Western comics tradition. American comics experienced a revival in the 1980s with multiple animation and film adaptations, and popular characters like Superman were a fundamental influence on the *sentai* genre. However, the specific structure of a team in which every member was a necessary part of a whole — as opposed to individual heroes — was popularised specifically by *sentai* shows (Allison 2006: 98-101).

sexuality was one sticking point; sexually suggestive portrayals of female characters (“fanservice”) were a common feature of many anime shows, and benign non-sexual nudity, such as depictions of family members bathing together, was also common due to Japanese cultural norms. On the other hand, nudity was taboo for U.S. audiences, with even non-sexual nudity among parents and children requiring censorship in order to receive a TV-14<sup>9</sup> rating (Davis 2016: 751). The other major factor was the approach to death and violence; while slapstick violence was popular among U.S. audiences, serious bodily harm or even the threat thereof, particularly to children, was considered inappropriate for children’s shows. Similarly, the topic of death was rarely broached, in sharp contrast to Japanese children’s media which discussed death openly (ibid: 151-152; Ladd & Deneroff 2009: 155). Editors cut and rearranged footage to reduce the amount or severity of violence shown, made dialogue changes in the dubbing process to transform a character’s death into mere unconsciousness, or digitally added steam to censor nudity (Davis 2016: 563, 567). Nevertheless, what remained after bowdlerisation were still shows which, on a core level, dealt with more serious topics than standard U.S. children’s media. This point was one often raised by fans in support of the “Save Our Sailors” campaign, such as one teenage girl quoted by the *Los Angeles Times* (Matsumoto 1996):

Sailor Moon is the right combination of silliness and seriousness. With a lot of American shows, it’s either cute little bunny rabbits or, like, big buff guys with machine guns. There’s nothing in between. With Sailor Moon you get a good story line and romance. But it’s enough about beating up monsters that my little brother can watch it without falling asleep.

### 5.3. *Sailor Moon* through a materialist feminist lens

Most academic discussion of *Sailor Moon* and feminism tends to begin by establishing that it is first and foremost a show about powerful girls, which appears remarkable against

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<sup>9</sup> The TV-14 rating, as determined by the U.S. federal government, indicates that content “may be unsuitable for children under the age of 14” — meaning that even the most heavily censored English-language localisation of *Sailor Moon* was targeted at children aged 14 and older, whereas the source material was targeted at girls *under* 14 (Schodt 1996: 92).

the backdrop of mass media's broad criticism by decades of Western feminist scholarship as being disproportionately male-centric and promoting patriarchal gender stereotypes when women are featured (Allison 2006: 128). There are relatively few male characters in the series, all of whom are defined by their relationship to the main cast of girls and most of whom serve primarily as comic relief. The rest are either antagonists or minor one-off side characters, and there are no male heroes equivalent to Sailor Moon: her romantic counterpart Tuxedo Mask (the true identity of her crush, Mamoru) is usually incapacitated or even killed in the course of major battles, requiring Sailor Moon to rescue and/or revive him.<sup>10</sup> The basic logic of the series is a reversal of the patriarchal stereotype — common in both Western and Japanese media, including *shōjo* predecessors such as *Princess Knight* — that men are the active protectors of passive women. Instead, it is girls who are the active defenders of all humanity. Furthermore, although the girls discuss past and present crushes on boys and fantasise about future husbands, female homosocial relationships are overwhelmingly the focus of the show. Each of the Sailor Senshi is implied at least once throughout the manga and/or anime to be attracted to other girls: Mercury's strict studiousness is suggested to be her excuse for not showing interest in boys; Mars secretly admires crossdressing Takarazuka actresses; Moon, Venus, and Jupiter all fall for Sailor Uranus. Meanwhile, Uranus is actually in a relationship with Neptune, and one story arc sees the two of them move into a household along with Pluto in order to co-parent the reincarnated Saturn — who, prior to her reincarnation, develops a passionate friendship with Chibi-Usa, Usagi's time-travelling daughter from the future. The world of *Sailor Moon* is one in which the bonds between girls are of paramount significance, manifesting as magical power capable of reversing death and even remaking the universe (Allison 2006: 142).

Of course, these feminist and queer implications are largely overshadowed by narratives that affirm each girl's desire to pursue heterosexual love/marriage and reproduce the nuclear family. *Sailor Moon* does presents girls' interest in other girls as being in some sense normal, but this presentation follows the prewar girls' cultural

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<sup>10</sup> Takeuchi has stated that Mamoru was “made in my image of an ideal man, because I like men that I can't rely on” (*Smile* 1998). Given Mamoru's role as a prince-in-distress, his name — a common Japanese male name, but also a verb meaning “to protect” — may be deliberately ironic.

convention of the S-relationship, a bond between girls that is passionate but fleeting (Shamoon 2012: 11). In other words, implications of homosexuality are allowed to exist in the present because they are accompanied by a promise of heterosexuality in the future. In this sense, despite the representation of nonconforming sexuality/gender, it is problematic to categorise the series as a whole as intrinsically queer, as the spectre of lesbianism is still confined/consigned to ephemerality: that is, girls can have crushes on other girls, so long as their true ambition is to marry a man and become a housewife and mother in the end. In this sense, *Sailor Moon* inverts, but does not subvert, the gender roles of patriarchal capitalism.

Nevertheless, since arriving in North America almost thirty years ago, *Sailor Moon* has been positively associated with themes of female empowerment by Western audiences of all ages and genders, most of whom are outside the official target market of girls from age two to eight (Allison 2006: 151). The series exemplifies a concept that has been termed “weaponised femininity”<sup>11</sup>, whereby femininity is conceived as not only compatible with heroism and strength, but as the actual *source* of girls’ heroism and strength. *Sailor Moon* portrays the fashion and frivolity associated with girls as powerful and morally upright: it is precisely because Usagi cares so much about being a carefree, stereotypical, flawed teenage girl that she is motivated to fight against evil forces who exploit girls’ interests. Many episodes feature dialogue to this effect, in which Usagi condemns villains who take advantage of girls’ gendered ambitions and consumerist desires. While *Sailor Moon*’s portrayal of femininity can be seen as stereotypical, the stereotype is arguably disrupted because femininity is not portrayed as passive, weak, or inferior to masculinity. Many episodes of the anime address contemporary gendered social issues with potentially feminist (or at least female-positive) overtones: one early filler episode shows Usagi develop (and overcome) disordered eating and exercise habits in an effort to lose weight and become more attractive to men, while another shows the

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<sup>11</sup> This term is not rooted in academic discourse, but in 2010s online fan discourse. In particular, I credit an essay posted on microblogging website Tumblr on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013 by a user identified only as “Miss Turdle,” titled “On the importance of Magical Girl Heroines & Weaponized Femininity,” which asserted a view of the magical girl genre as a form of feminist literature. The post is currently only accessible through the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine, and contains a request not to quote the writing without the author’s express permission — which, given the circumstances, cannot be sought out. However, in light of the importance of fan engagement as discussed in this chapter, it would be remiss not to cite this example of fan discourse and “low-brow” media analysis influencing the direction of my academic research.

Sailor Senshi denounce male chauvinism with a cry of *danjo sabetsu hantai!* (“Down with sexual discrimination!”). *Sailor Moon* also portrays girls as possessing an active, rather than passive, sexuality, frequently repeating the theme of girls drawing strength and courage from the passionate pursuit of love. Even delving into the issue of rape culture, the second season introduces an alien couple who are unaware of the concept of love and a prince who wants to forcibly marry Usagi, and uses these characters to convey the message that “love is not something you take by force” (*ai wa ubau mono janai*), promoting romance/sexuality as an undertaking shared between two equals (albeit differently gendered). With mainstream Western feminism revolving around issues of sexual violence, consent, and female empowerment within hegemonic structures of neoliberal capitalism, it is easy to understand why English-language audiences have often read *Sailor Moon* as a feminist text.

### 5.3.1 *Sailor Moon's neoliberal feminism*

However queer and feminist its reputation, the “girl power” of *Sailor Moon* must be subjected to a more critical material analysis: under global capitalism, submerged in the waves of economic crisis and social change that have swept the world continuously since the 1990s, what does it mean to be a “girl,” and what does it mean to have “power”? As evidenced by its popular reception by a range of female and queer audiences around the world, the series speaks to something deep about the material oppressions and inequalities faced by these groups. Nevertheless, it cannot be divorced from its origin (and indeed its ongoing status) as a franchise, a money-making endeavour; any other social or political function it might serve is ultimately secondary to that of making Tōei a profit. However authentically the themes of the story might be felt, Takeuchi Naoko did not create the series as a self-motivated expression of feminist struggle — on the contrary, the overarching narrative was determined in collaboration with Tōei editors, and plot points were carefully scheduled months in advance in order to maximise revenue from merchandise sales. Schodt (1996: 92) explains:

Peak sales seasons in this genre are February (new year), April (new school year), and September (summer vacation), so the *Sailor Moon* plot was designed to have

exciting episodes hit at just these times, along with new characters or warriors and surprising revelations.

With this context, even the more apparently subversive themes take on new historical and political meanings. These depictions of empowered middle school girls in frilly variations on the typical school uniform were produced by, for, and within particular normative gendered systems of labour, production, and reproduction. Put more simply, the premise of a “pretty sailor-suited soldier of love and justice” is steeped in the reality of a world in which young girls, beauty norms, school uniforms, fighting teams of soldiers, and concepts such as peace, love and justice were/are attached to real socio-political circumstances. The sudden destabilising of a previously stable model of social production (wage labour, the workplace) and reproduction (domestic labour, the family/home) had enormous implications for the construction of Japanese womanhood/femininity (ibid) as well as manhood/masculinity (Dasgupta 2009: 81-84). The collective anxieties felt around these changes were reflected in cultural production that engaged with gendered expectations and realities. With the end of guaranteed lifetime employment shattering the norm of the salaryman as the model of Japanese masculinity, the credibility of fictional male heroes crumbled as well. Powerful girl heroes and feminised boys began to predominate in pop culture, with the carefree *shōjo* — who represents an unproductive member of society, that is, one who is purely a consumer — becoming aspirational for boys and grown men as well as girls (Allison 2006: 140). The *shōjo* figure functions as a cathartic outlet for a gendered crisis of capitalism, wherein both men and women want to flee the social and economic responsibilities forced upon them as men and women. The various crises and traumatic events of the decade shattered the long-standing illusion that conformity to gender/sex roles and the nuclear family structure would guarantee individuals prosperity and stability. Therefore, individuals regardless of gender desire the ideal of the *shōjo*, whose only responsibility is to consume (Saito 2014: 158).

Along similar lines, Anne Allison problematises the equation of the Sailor Senshi’s performance of idealised femininity, which is suspiciously aligned with existing patriarchal beauty norms and both global and local trends of sexual objectification of schoolgirls, with a meaningful exercise of power: far from threatening the economic basis for the pressures

placed on girls/women, the “commodity spectacle of sexy schoolgirls who combine action with fashion” functions as “an endorsement (pretty, heroic, kindhearted) of capitalist consumerism” (2006: 142). Reflecting the policies of post-bubble Japan (Inoue 2016: 152), the feminism of *Sailor Moon* is distinctly neoliberal, primarily concerned with female valuation and participation inside the capitalist system (Spade & Willse 2016: 551). The message that “girlhood is powerful” echoes the idea that “woman is wonderful” (Wittig 1997: 13), celebrating rather than challenging the notion of a distinct female essence. Although the trope of magical transformation and malleable bodies has been received by some audiences as affirming of alternative gendered possibilities, the iconography of the series upholds cute, pure, young, and virginal<sup>12</sup> girls as the epitome of goodness, while the territory of villainy is occupied primarily by effeminate, ambiguously sexed homosexual men and “power-hungry seductresses with thick makeup” (Saito 2014: 158). Thus, for feminisms which view gendered/sexual categorisation itself as the precursor to subjugation, *Sailor Moon*’s limitations as a feminist text lie in its commitment to the distinctive purity of the *shōjo* identity.

#### 5.4. Translation analysis

As alluded to previously, the most glaring translational issue in *Sailor Moon* is that of censorship, primarily of nonconforming gender/sexuality (in addition to violence, nudity, and the occult). The bowdlerising approach to the first English dub stemmed from the political context of the 1990s: specifically, the wake of the continuing AIDS crisis and the ongoing state repression of gay sexuality and gender variance, especially in media produced for children (Close 2017: 275). While some of the censored episodes were filler and could be cut without disrupting continuity, the more overt offences to dominant gender/sexual norms were recurring characters. In this section, I discuss translations in three groupings of relevant characters, presented in order of appearance: antagonists Zoisite and Kunzite, Sailor Jupiter (Makoto), and Sailors Uranus and Neptune (Haruka and Michiru).

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<sup>12</sup> While the girls and particularly Usagi are portrayed as having active sexual desires, the fulfilment of these desires is clearly relegated to the future.

#### 5.4.1 Note on character names

Most characters' names were changed in the DIC-Cloverway dub. I use the original Japanese names as main points of reference, but use the dub names when discussing the dubbed version of the character or quoting that character's lines from the dub. For reference, below is a table of original and dubbed character names for characters referenced in the excerpts:

<b>Original name</b>	<b>Dub name</b>
Usagi	Serena
Ami	Amy
Rei	Raye
Makoto	Lita
Minako	Mina
Haruka	Amara
Michiru	Michelle
Unazuki	Lizzie
Kunzite	Malachite

#### 5.4.2 Overview

While I will explore the finer points of the different translation approaches through the rest of the excerpts in this section, the overall politics of gender/sexuality in each translation can perhaps be best characterised by the following excerpt from an early episode:

Episode 13<sup>13</sup>

Studio Chikashitsu

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<sup>13</sup> Episode numbering varies between the fansubbed and dubbed versions of the anime due to several full episodes being cut from the dub. For simplicity, I use the original and fansubbed episode numbering.

Jadeite: Your trusty Tuxedo Mask is dead! Cry and wail! Can you do nothing without the help of a man?! Women are such foolish creatures in the end!

Rei: Only old men think men are better than women these days!

Ami: That's right! Scorning women is positively feudalistic!

Usagi: Down with sexual discrimination!

All: We must fight against Jadeite, the arrogant man!

#### DIC

Jadeite: That's all that's left of him! That stupid rose! Tuxedo Mask didn't have a chance against me, and now it's your turn. You really think you can defeat me?

Raye: We can defeat you, Jadeite, and every monster you send against us from the Negaverse!

Amy: That's right! Together we fight for love and justice and together we will triumph!

Serena: United we're invincible!

All: Down with Jadeite and the Negaverse!

While knowledge of the underlying corporate strategy that steered *Sailor Moon* may suggest a more cynical reading, the scene acknowledges patriarchy as well as girls' resistance. Neither translation captures the specific tones of the Sailor Senshi's use of normative feminine language, but the Studio Chikashitsu translation mirrors Jadeite's slightly archaic masculine formality, and conveys the girls' words literally. The DIC dub, though, elides the issue of patriarchy and instead affirms the power of teamwork. With the norms of target cultural production requiring children's television to be sanitised and depoliticised in translation, the official English translation of *Sailor Moon* could not be allowed to so explicitly espouse even the liberal feminist politics of the Japanese source material.

#### 5.4.3 Zoisite and Kunzite

The first gender-nonconforming characters to appear in the series, Zoisite and Kunzite

are two of the *shitennō* (literally “Four Heavenly Kings” or also “Four Lords”), the first major antagonists. Zoisite is the third of the four to be appear, and by comparison, appears notably more feminine within the medium’s language of gender differentiation: he is flat-chested and wears the same masculine military attire, but is much shorter and slimmer than the other male characters, with softer facial features and larger eyes. Furthermore, his Japanese speech incorporates elements of conventional “women’s language” such as the polite *masu* verb forms, *kenjōgo* (“humble speech”), and *-teyo/dawa* speech (Inoue 2006: 59, 139). Although the intended speakers of this conventionally feminine language are gender-normative women, its use is also associated with certain adjacent/overlapping groups of gender-nonconforming people in Japan, including gay men, trans women, and *okama* (Abe 2010: 97). Being visually coded as male, Zoisite’s use of feminine language thus marks him as nonconforming to normative heterosexual masculinity. As for Kunzite, the final *shitennō*, his character design marks the masculine end of the series’ visual gender-coding spectrum — he is very tall, broad-shouldered, and uses masculine-coded speech. While never named in explicit terms, the nature of Zoisite and Kunzite’s relationship is apparent in their dialogue and their interactions as depicted visually: over the course of several episodes, they flirt, quarrel, embrace, and declare their love for one another, before Zoisite eventually meets a tragic end.

In fact, the presence of “homosexuals” in a children’s show was so unthinkable to producers at DIC that they initially perceived Zoisite as a female character. This reading raised confusion about the voice casting, however, and the producers were scandalised to discover their mistake. (The Japanese dialogue makes Zoisite’s gender explicit in one scene, several episodes after his first appearance, when a character sees him and exclaims *ano otoko!* — “that man!”) In light of institutional norms and regulations at the time, censorship was the only option considered for translating the material:

DIC’s solution to the male lovers situation in Sailor Moon was to do the only thing DIC could do, under the circumstances, namely, identify Zoysite [sic] as a woman and completely skirt the issue of homosexuality. No other solution would have satisfied a U.S. broadcaster’s department of Standards and Practices.

— Ladd & Deneroff 2009: 146

Female voice talent was cast for Zoisite's part in the dub, and the character was rewritten as a woman, irrespective of the visual signifiers indicating otherwise. The translation strategies employed in Zoisite's re-gendering are notable: English translations usually do not (and often grammatically cannot) recodify gendered aspects of Japanese, but in this case, the re-gendering motivation resulted in a translation that does convey a certain degree of femininity in Zoisite's speech, particularly in the delivery of the lines through the auditory mode. It at least does so more overtly than the Studio Chikashitsu subtitles, which provide fairly direct translations and make no interventions into characters' gender/sexuality. The difference can be seen (though not as much as it can be heard) in Zoisite's first spoken line in the anime:

Episode 18

Studio Chikashitsu

I would be more than happy to help you. The operations are bound to go better with two of us rather than one. Don't you think so, Queen Beryl?

DIC

It seems to me that those three little girls are giving you a lot of trouble, Nephelite. Perhaps you need a little bit more of the feminine touch, am I right, Queen Beryl?

If the DIC dub had cast a male voice actor for Zoisite, the same "feminine touch" line would have encouraged a reading of Zoisite as deviating from normative target-culture masculinity; together in context with other scenes, the character would have been legible as a feminine gay man. By simply associating the character with a female voice, all of Zoisite's subsequent interactions with Kunzite are automatically re-coded to comply with heterosexual norms.

On the other hand, as Close (2017: 275) points out, this censorship also has the unintended effect of depicting a greater diversity of "female" body types. While *Sailor Moon* has been regarded as feminist for its depictions of powerful girls, it is worth critically considering the implications of the series' aesthetics on its messaging about femininity

and desirability. Much as the aesthetics of *The Rose of Versailles* belie its revolutionary messaging, *Sailor Moon* reflects neoliberal and capitalist ideals of femininity. All of the girls in *Sailor Moon* — even Makoto and Haruka, whose physical strength and androgyny are highlighted as central to their characters and distinguishing them from typical girls — are drawn with idealised thin and tall bodies. Many have blond hair, and with one exception, all are very light-skinned. This *shōjo* style exists within a long tradition of *shōjo* aesthetics associating girlhood and femininity with ethereality and daintiness (Monden 2014: 253), but must also be viewed in relation to the influences of Western imperialism on beauty norms (Darling-Wolf 2003: 165-166; Kawasaka 2018: 602), particularly the increasing tendency for Japanese girls to identify with characters and dolls with racial ambiguity that approximated whiteness. The series uplifts femininity and beauty as powerful, but in doing so, replicates certain racialised patriarchal norms of beauty (Allison 2006: 138-142). These norms are fundamentally built into the visual language of *Sailor Moon*, where one of the key signifiers distinguishing male from female is the shape and proportion of the torso. In male characters, the torso is typically very broad-shouldered, flat-chested, and rectangular, and in female characters it is very small, consisting mostly of the breasts and curving to a tiny waist. Zoisite's character design followed this logic: though his hairstyle, facial features, and body size distinguished him from other male characters, he remained visually coded as male in his body shape and attire. While DIC may have successfully translated a nonconforming sexual expression into a normative one, this created a new depiction of a woman that diverged from norms of physical beauty and the vilification of female sexuality (Close 2017: 275).

In most subsequent examples of dialogue involving Zoisite, gender is not as heavily asserted in the dub as it is in this example, and the subtitles also continue to address the character without invoking gender. However, the dub often takes opportunities to reassert Zoisite as female through pronouns:

Episode 27

Studio Chikashitsu

Huh? Uh-oh...

DIC

Huh? Where'd she go?

Episode 34 (30)

Studio Chikashitsu

Zoisite? Why is Zoisite with this guy?

DIC

Hey, that's Zoisite. What's Darien doing arguing with her?

Episode 29

Studio Chikashitsu

Zoisite: The next target is this woman. The top student at the Azabu Technical Institute.

Kunzite: She is rather attractive.

Zoisite: Kunzite-sama, that's mean! She's only an ugly youma<sup>14</sup> and you call her attractive?

Kunzite: Zoisite, jealousy does not become you. Zoisite...

Zoisite: I'm not listening!

Kunzite: Even this rose cannot surpass your beauty.

Zoisite: Kunzite-sama! I will get the Rainbow Crystal for you.

DIC

Zoisite: Rita Blake, the research student from the school of biology.

Malachite: Too bad we have to destroy such beauty.

Zoisite: How can you say that of a human, Malachite! You told me I was the ultimate example of perfect beauty.

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<sup>14</sup> *Yōma* means "ghost" or "spirit." In the series, it refers to the disguised monsters sent to Tokyo by the Dark Kingdom; Studio Chikashitsu opts for leaving the term untranslated throughout.

Malachite: Shh, don't be mad. Queen Beryl will see your anger as weakness.  
Zoisite...  
Zoisite: Go away!  
Malachite: You know there's no one more important to me in all the  
Negaverse.  
Zoisite: I'm so lucky. Now it's time to collect what's rightfully ours.

At times, the transformation of a same-sex relationship into a heterosexual one also involved changes to the relationship dynamic. In the original Japanese dialogue in episode 33 (29), Zoisite's thoughts can be heard in a voiceover, and are translated by Studio Chikashitsu as "Kunzite-sama, for your sake, I will succeed even at the cost of my life." The dubbed episode removes this line entirely, which has the effect of giving Malachite the last word in the scene and characterising Zoisite as passive and receptive, rather than a fiercely protective lover. In the context of historical sexual practices in Japanese culture, the relationship between Kunzite and Zoisite may be understood to draw from the *nanshoku* male-male sexual practices and relationships that are known to have existed in the premodern period, particularly among samurai (Kawasaka 2018: 602-604). "Such relationships were rooted in, and mirrored, the lord-retainer bond" (Leupp 1996: 203). While simply changing Zoisite's gender suffices to resolve the threat of overt homosexuality, Western cultural norms generally cast men as protectors of women rather than vice versa. A character like Zoisite, whose gender is being contested and rewritten through translation, must be asserted especially strongly as a woman. To this end, the DIC dialogue emphasises Zoisite's vanity and presents Malachite as more of an authority figure in relation to Zoisite:

#### Episode 34

##### Studio Chikashitsu

Zoisite: Now we have all the Rainbow Crystals and Chiba Mamoru has  
been captured. And we can dispose of the Sailor Senshi.  
Kunzite: You'll have revenge for your scar.

### DIC

Malachite: Are you ready?  
Zoisite: Never been more ready for anything in my entire life. He's *gonna* pay for cutting my face!  
Malachite: Revenge can be sweet. Just don't get carried away.

While Zoisite's characterisation as vain is reflective of the source material, in the original scene it is Kunzite who brings up the topic of revenge — not to discourage Zoisite, but to encourage him. The dubbed Zoisite is driven by desire for revenge, and Malachite is her level-headed overseer — reflecting Western patriarchal stereotypes of women as emotional or hysterical and men as rational. This gendered framing of the characters and their relationship is solidified in the episode featuring Zoisite's final appearance:

### Episode 35

#### Studio Chikashitsu

Zoisite: Kunzite-sama... Kunzite-sama, Sailor Moon is the Moon Princess.  
Kunzite: I see. So the Princess awakened and the Rainbow Crystals were drawn to her.

### DIC

Zoisite: Oh, oh...  
Malachite: Zoisite, you're trembling!  
Zoisite: Help me, Malachite! Help me get them all before they escape! They'll find the exit...and take the Imperium Crystal with them.  
Malachite: No, they won't! They'll never find their way out of here! We'll get that crystal back, don't you worry!

In the source dialogue, Zoisite does not ask for help, and Kunzite neither acknowledges his physical condition nor reassures him. The dubbed dialogue introduces a paternalistic element to the relationship: Malachite shows concern and confidence, while Zoisite shows weakness and hopelessness. A similar change in characterisation also occurs later in the

episode, when Zoisite is killed<sup>15</sup>:

Studio Chikashitsu

Kunzite: I'm sorry, Zoisite. I tried to shield you from Queen Beryl-sama's wrath.

Zoisite: I am happy that I will die with you beside me. But can I ask you for one last favor?

Kunzite: What is it?

Zoisite: I want to die beautifully. So pretty... I'm happy, Kunzite-sama. I loved you, Kunzite-sama.

Kunzite: Forgive me, Zoisite.

DIC

Malachite: Oh Zoisite, I'm so sorry! It's not fair, Queen Beryl should have punished me for not teaching you to be more patient! I'm so sorry, I failed you!

Zoisite: Hold me. The only one who failed was me, Malachite. You told me not to seek revenge but I didn't listen. Promise...just promise me one last thing, Malachite.

Malachite: Anything.

Zoisite: Don't forget me!

Malachite: I would never.

This final conversation, in the dub, places responsibility for Zoisite's death on both characters according to patriarchal roles: as a man, Malachite claims fault for failing to adequately teach and protect his female partner, and as a woman, Zoisite claims fault for failing to obey her wiser male partner. Rather than the Japanese lord-retainer relationship, the relationship dynamic mirrors the Western binary in which women are related to men as economic subordinates (Wittig 1997: 2-4; Oyěwùmí 2016: 31; Federici 2014). Even the Studio Chikashitsu subtitles in this case put a protective spin on the line — saying

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<sup>15</sup> This scene also serves as an example of visual and linguistic censorship of violence: after Zoisite is hit with a blast of energy, there is a shot of his crumpled body giving off smoke, which was cut from the dub. Furthermore, his killer tells Malachite to "let this be a warning to you," whereas in the Japanese dialogue she instructs Kunzite to "dispose of that garbage" (*sono gomi wo shimatsu shiro*).

that Kunzite “tried to shield [Zoisite] from Queen Beryl’s wrath,” whereas the Japanese line only says that he asked the queen to restore Zoisite (*omae no fukkatsu wo tanomou to shita*).

Overall, the translation of the gay male Zoisite into the heterosexual female Zoisite clearly involves more than just the use of gender-indicative pronouns or a higher-pitched voice. To fully rework Zoisite as a woman, and his relationship with Kunzite as heterosexual, significant changes were made to dialogue in order to construct their characters in line with patriarchal norms of male versus female personality and behaviour. While there may still be some merit to the argument made by Close (2017: 275) — that the increased diversity of “female” body types in the dub provides a feminist silver lining to the clouds of homophobic censorship — it would be remiss to ignore the other distinctly patriarchal aspects of the translation. Had Zoisite’s gender only been addressed through changes to the vocal casting and gendered language, the Zoisite of the English dub might indeed have been an interesting portrayal of an androgynous female villain. Instead, Zoisite’s character was also translated into a more emotional, romance-driven, and subservient/passive role, in order to better model the intended normative gender role in the target cultural context.

#### 5.4.4 Makoto (*Sailor Jupiter*)

A less overt but nevertheless notable case of gender nonconformity lies in the character of Makoto (dubbed as Lita). The fourth of the main cast to be introduced, she is characterised by a juxtaposition of masculine and feminine traits: she is a beautiful girl with talents for cooking and cleaning, but she is very tall, superhumanly strong (*kairiki*), and hot-tempered. She is introduced in the anime as a transfer student who physically intervenes when Usagi faces a possible assault by a group of men, and the narrative establishes that she was “expelled from her last school for fighting” (Studio Chikashitsu, episode 25). Throughout the series, she is portrayed as one of the most romantic-minded of the girls, with stereotypically feminine desires and interests, but is also shown to struggle with perceptions of her size and strength as unfeminine. In her first appearance, when she rescues Usagi, she asks *daijōbu kai* (“are you okay?”) using *kai*, an informal/familiar and typically masculine inflection of the question-marking particle *ka*.

Usagi then blushes as she takes note of Makoto's rose earrings — a scene which seems to invite a connection, however tenuous, to the (homo)sexual symbology of the rose in *shōjo* manga/anime since the 1970s (Welker 2006: 859).

## Episode 25

### Studio Chikashitsu

Usagi: Say, Mako-chan, how come you're not wearing our school uniform?

Makoto: There's no size that fits me.

### DIC

Serena: I come here almost every day. I like video games, don't you?

Lita: Sure, as long as there's lots of action.

This excerpt poses an interesting case, fairly unique among the examples I will discuss, of a gender issue being introduced in the English translation rather than elided through English translation. While Makoto's femininity is a recurring point of contention in the source material, the original Japanese dialogue here does not address this issue. The expression *hada niau* literally means "to suit one's skin" and can be used in reference to cosmetics or fashion; in this sense Makoto can be read as affirming the brand of femininity portrayed in *Sailor Moon* by choosing her school uniform based on how well it complements her skin. Alternatively, *hada niau* can also be used idiomatically to mean that one finds something comfortable or suitable; according to this reading, Makoto is simply being established as a strong-willed character who makes decisions based on her own preferences. In the Studio Chikashitsu subtitles, this line has been completely rewritten in a way that emphasises Makoto's defeminised qualities of height and strength. In the DIC dub, the topic is again completely changed — to video games, as the corresponding animation follows a pan shot over the entrance to Usagi's favourite arcade.

Later in the same episode, the topic of Makoto's gender is raised in the source material but completely elided in the dub. Usagi and Makoto are conversing with a boy who reminds Makoto of an unrequited crush when Zoisite attacks them. Usagi confronts

the boy as he attempts to flee by himself:

Studio Chikashitsu

Usagi: Are you running away, without helping the girl with you?  
Joe: I don't even know her! She just followed me!  
Usagi: What!?! And you call yourself a man?  
Joe: It's none of your business. Besides, that kind of absurdly tall girl isn't my type.

DIC

Joe: Oh! I gotta get outta here!  
Usagi: What did you, Mr. Game Wizard, set up a trap?  
Joe: What are you talking about? I don't even know that lady [Zoisite]!  
Usagi: Yeah, right! Then how come she knew exactly where you were?  
Joe: I have no idea what you're talking about, so get out of my way if you know what's good for you!

Here, the scene cuts from Joe running past Usagi to a close-up of Makoto's shocked expression. In the Japanese dialogue, she does not have a line here, but musical and visual cues communicate her emotional distress in response to being called "absurdly tall" (*bakadekai*). Conversely, the dub cuts the clips to make her appear to be looking at Zoisite, who is wreaking havoc in the diner, and her thoughts are voiced-over: "Maybe she's his jealous girlfriend!" This translation serves a dual purpose in the dub's agenda of stripping the series of gender/sexual nonconformity — it provides another anchor point for the reformulation of Zoisite as a heterosexual woman, and it erases Makoto's gender-related insecurity. The rest of Makoto's appearances throughout the episode must be similarly rewritten:

Studio Chikashitsu

Usagi: Mako-chan, are you okay? Mako-chan?  
Makoto: It's the same all over again.  
Usagi: Mako-chan?  
Makoto: Damn!

## DIC

Serena: Lita! Did that wacko hurt you? Are you okay?  
Lita: She came outta nowhere and sprang a surprise attack on us!  
Serena: How do you feel though?  
Lita: Angryyyyy!

Makoto's gender issues are relatively minimal, certainly in comparison to the examples that remain to be discussed. Therefore it is all the more noteworthy that the dub still chooses to erase them, using the scene to strengthen Lita's characterisation as the brawn of the group instead of depicting the struggle of a girl who is shamed for her perceived physical masculinity.

### *5.4.5 Haruka (Sailor Uranus) and Michiru (Sailor Neptune)*

Haruka and Michiru (dubbed as Amara and Michelle) appear later in the series, as mysterious figures whose true allegiance is uncertain for several chapters/episodes before they are revealed as Sailors Uranus and Neptune. Their character designs and speech styles are used to construct their genders as complementary: Michiru exemplifies a highly refined ideal of femininity, while Haruka is androgynous and masculine-presenting, often passing as male. Their appearances together generally connote maturity and sensuality, with visual elements in the manga and anime (e.g. lighting, composition, colour) and auditory elements in the anime (e.g. music, vocalisation) frequently conjuring a romantic atmosphere around them. The framing of their first appearance in both mediums leads the audience to believe that Haruka and Michiru are a heterosexual couple, followed by the revelation that Haruka is a girl. The manga is even more forthright about their relationship than the anime, with several panels that show Haruka and Michiru being physically close/affectionate.

The centrality of Haruka's gender duality/androgyny, alongside her Sailor Senshi status, dissuaded Cloverway from taking the same approach to overwriting homosexuality that DIC took with Zoisite and Kunzite. In the episode of Haruka's first appearance, the dub follows the source material fairly closely: the Inner Senshi encounter Haruka at the arcade and, perceiving him as an attractive boy, quickly become fixated on him. The

translation of this episode begins by using less direct methods to deflect from the “gay panic” induced by the situation, such as emphasising Haruka’s masculinity in the eyes of the Inner Senshi.

## Episode 92

### VKLL (subtitles)

Haruka: Then, miss. Can I drive along side of you?  
Usagi, Minato: You’re kidding... [Background text: He’s HOT!]

### Cloverway (dub)

Amara: I’ll race you. And I’ll even give you a head start.  
Serena, Mina: Wow.... [Background text: He’s HOT!]

### VKLL (subtitles)

I’m so lucky! It’s not every day that such a hot guy comes up and talks to you!

### Cloverway (dub)

This is my lucky day! This guy’s a total hunk-asaurus!

Here, it is interesting to note the intensity of gendered terms being used for Haruka. The Japanese term *kakkoii hito* appearing in both excerpts is non-gendered in the sense that neither word is gender/sex-specific in its literal meaning — *kakkoii* means “cool” or “hot” (i.e. attractive) and *hito* means “person” — but it is colloquially masculine in much the same way as “handsome” in contemporary English. The feminine alternative would be *kirei na hito* (“pretty person”) or *kawaii* (“cute”) and the use of *kakkoii* in regard to a woman tends to imply a specifically masculine or androgynous charm. Therefore, in the context of Usagi and Minako’s belief that Haruka is a boy, translations such as “he’s hot” or “hot guy” are not necessarily more gendered than the language used in the source material. On the other hand, the slang term “hunk-asaurus” in the dub is comically hypermasculine. The source material, as well as the subtitled version, allows for an interpretation that the girls are attracted to Haruka precisely *because of* her androgyny. Conversely, the dub — which in general is heavily localised to a target audience of 1990s school-aged children

in Anglophone North America — needs to emphasise normative masculinity as the quality that girls should find attractive.

As in the case of *Zoisite*, it becomes evident here that the “corrective” translation approach to nonconforming gender does not only entail changes surrounding gendered language, but can also involve qualitative changes to characterisation and interpersonal dynamics between characters. In the *Cloverway* dub, Haruka’s character is rendered substantially more pessimistic and self-deprecating, and less flirtatious. These changes can be observed in a series of scenes in which Usagi and Minako have followed Haruka to a tuning garage, hoping to learn about his relationship with Michiru.

#### Episode 92

##### VKLL

Haruka: Little kittens... How long are you going to hide there?  
Minako: So you knew about us?  
Haruka: Haruka Tennou. Tenth grade. You wanted to know, right? About me...

##### Cloverway

Amara: [speaking to another character offscreen] Here and there. Virtual driving at the arcade.  
Mina: Hey, did someone say arcade?  
Serena: Yeah!  
Amara: If you wanna know something, just ask me.  
Serena/Mina: Huh?  
Amara: You were following me. Or should I say spying.

In the continuation of this scene, Haruka teasingly encourages the girls’ crushes on her, but Amara quickly rejects them and assures them that they will find their “princes”<sup>16</sup>:

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<sup>16</sup> The dub frequently uses “Prince Charming” as a translation for the Japanese term *unmei no hito* (literally “fated person,” i.e. one’s destined lover).

## Episode 92

### VKLL

Haruka: The other things that you have been wanting to know...

Minako: Yes! The person who you were with until a few minutes ago... how is she related to you?

Usagi: ...to you?

Minako: What kind of relationship do you have?

Usagi: ...have?

Minako: She's not your lover... right?

Usagi: Right?

Haruka: Lovers? Michiru and me?

Minako: Michiru... so you guys are close enough to not use honorifics?

Usagi: ...not use them?

Haruka: Let's see... You could say we're closer than that... But... don't give up. You two still have a chance...

Minako: O-okay...

### Cloverway

Amara: Wonder why two pretty girls would not spy on me, then...

Mina: I know! Maybe they wanna know what perfect hair and skin means to you!

Serena: ...means to you!

Amara: Huh?

Mina: Are you guys an item?

Serena: ...an item?

Mina: It's not all serioso, is it?

Serena: Serioso!

Amara: With Michelle? Is that who you mean?

Mina: Of course! We wanna know whether or not you're fair game.

Serena: Fair game...

Amara: Oh...you're funny. But I'm afraid there's not any us. You know, you guys seem really sweet, and I'm sure you'll find your princes someday.

Mina: Like...today?

The scene continues with Michiru's appearance, and the question of her relationship with Haruka is made explicit:

Episode 92

VKLL

Michiru: Don't be fooled...

Haruka: Michiru!

Michiru: This person always says things like that when cute girls are spotted.

Haruka: Isn't that a little much to say?

Michiru: Oh, is it all right to say that to me? I'll just take what I brought for you and go home.

Haruka: Come on...

Minako: Question! Are you Haruka's lover?

Usagi: Please answer yes or no!

Michiru: No.

Minako: Alright! This romance is mine!

Cloverway

Michelle: There you go again, Amara...giving love advice.

Amara: Hey, Michelle.

Michelle: Amara's got this thing about people living happily ever after.

Amara: And there's nothing wrong with it, either.

Michelle: Except that it only happens in fairy tales. If you ask me, anyone waiting for Prince Charming is not living in reality.

Amara: Here we go again.

Mina: Question! Does that mean Amara isn't your Prince Charming?

Serena: A simple yes or no will do, thanks!

Michelle: Simple no.

Mina: Excellent! Today's my lucky day...

Importantly, Takeuchi has confirmed in interviews that Haruka and Michiru *are* intended to be lovers (*Smile* 1998); Michiru’s verbal denial of their relationship in the Japanese script — as conveyed by VKLL — should not be taken literally, but rather as ironic, in light of the flirtatiousness of the surrounding dialogue. (It could have also been the product of institutional pressures in the original manga-to-anime adaptation process, which is performed by a large team rather than an individual artist, and consequently often results in the anime being a “watered-down version” of the manga, per Schodt 1996: 14). The subtext of their relationship is evident in the source dialogue and VKLL’s literal translation, where Michiru’s teasing of Haruka reveals their actual closeness. Cloverway’s version of the scene renders their exchange as a disagreement over values, characterising the two as oppositional instead.

Later in the episode, Haruka first discusses her love of motor racing. A major character point established over the course of the series is that, because of her connection to the planet Uranus — said in astrology to rule the skies<sup>17</sup> — Haruka is fixated on speed. She is an elite track athlete as well as motorist; in the manga, she is introduced more directly as a famous race car driver who is known as male in her career. However, awakening as a Sailor Senshi disrupted these career aspirations. Her emotional response to this change differs significantly in the DIC dub, where she claims to have given up her dream of racing because she is “not good enough” rather than because she has discovered a higher calling:

#### Episode 92

##### VKLL

Michiru: Haruka’s dream is to become the top race car driver...

Haruka: No... That’s not true. It’s not a dream... It WAS a dream.

Minako: It WAS a dream?

Usagi: Then what is your dream now?

Haruka: To do something that only I can do. And to do that, I will make any sacrifice... No matter what I lose... I won’t regret it...

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<sup>17</sup> Uranus was the god of the sky in Greek mythology and Haruka’s surname comes directly from the Japanese term for Uranus, *tennōsei* (literally “sky king star”).

Minako: He really is awesome...  
Usagi: Yeah. He loses to Mamo-chan, but still.

### Cloverway

Michelle: It's always been Amara's dream to cross the finish line and see the checkered flag.  
Amara: It was.  
Michelle: Huh?  
Amara: Not anymore. It'll never happen. I'm not good enough.  
Mina: You're giving up?  
Serena: Giving up is too easy and I should know!  
Amara: It's time I found a different dream. One I can actually fulfil. I finally come to accept that race car driving is not my destiny, it's something else.  
Mina: So he's more than just a pretty face...  
Serena: Mhmm... His side view is perfect too.

At the end of this episode, Haruka's gender is revealed directly. She returns to the arcade with Michiru, this time drawn more similarly to the other female characters, with narrower shoulders, larger/rounder eyes, and a more prominent chest:

### Episode 92

#### VKLL

Usagi: Michiru!  
Minako: Aren't you with Haruka today?  
Michiru: I am.  
Rei: Where? Where is this cute guy? Where?  
Makoto: Where? Where is the guy that looks like the upperclassman we know?  
Minako: Where is he?  
Rei: A girl...  
Makoto: ...right?  
Haruka: I don't recall ever saying that I was a guy...

Minako: That can't be!  
Ami: We don't have time for all of this...  
Usagi: I thought Mamo-chan was better from the beginning! Yeah, I did!

#### Cloverway

Serena: What's up, Michelle?  
Mina: No, it can't be, is it you Amara?  
Michelle: Of course.  
Raye: Where, where? I wanna meet this hunkster!  
Lita: Radar, radar! Where's the fox, where's the fox? Radar!  
Mina: We give up.  
Raye: He's a hunksterette!  
Lita: He's a her!  
Amara: Sorry if it burst your bubble that I'm a girl.  
Mina: I'm out of breath!  
Amy: And you blew study buddies all for this?  
Serena: I knew there was something fishy right from the start, but Mina wouldn't listen. Hmph.

While the dub cannot avoid this one direct acknowledgment of Haruka's gender transgression, it redirects attention from it by increasing the focus on the physical comedy of the scene (as the girls are shown piling on top of each other in excitement) and once again using hypermasculine contemporary slang (which is comically "corrected" with the affixation of the feminising ending "-ette" to "hunkster"). It also increases the girls' confidence in identifying Haruka as a girl, whereas their language in the Japanese is more uncertain, as reflected by the VKLL subtitles. To top it off, Usagi's insistence that she always thought Mamoru was more attractive (affirming her own heterosexuality) is replaced with Serena's insistence that she could tell there was something suspicious about Amara, creating more of a sense of stigma around the latter's gender presentation.

The anime's portrayal of these events diverges from the manga, in which Haruka is an active character for several chapters (appearing alternately in civilian and Sailor Senshi forms) before her gender is explicitly confirmed. Additionally, her androgyny and her flirtatious relationship with Usagi are depicted more overtly; Haruka kisses Usagi

twice, once in each of her personas, and Usagi begins to independently realise that they are the same androgynous individual. The Tokyopop translation of the manga, operating through the medium of print rather than television and catering to a niche (at the time) audience, did not face the same institutional pressures or norms of acceptability as the anime dub. It translates everything to do with Haruka's gender literally, such as Usagi's curious reflections: "It's strange... he looks like a guy... ..and a girl..." (Tokyopop, Volume 8, Act 29). When the manga does finally address the question of Haruka's gender, the answer it gives is somewhat different as well. Whereas the untranslated anime makes the assurance that Haruka is a girl — albeit a crossdressing homosexual one — the manga states without further explanation that Haruka is both female and male (*otoko demo ari, onna demo aru*):

Volume 9, Act 32

Tokyopop

Uranus is... ..both a girl and a guy. She has the strengths and the personalities of both genders.

The knowledge of this information from the manga, shared among fans, also influenced readings of the translated anime. Interestingly, this part of the text stands alongside Takeuchi's insistence that "Haruka was always a girl" (Takeuchi 1998) in response to fans questioning whether she physically changed sex when she transformed. Much like Oscar in *The Rose of Versailles*, Haruka evokes the lesbian figure theorised by Wittig (1992: 12) in her unstable gender: she is a girl and yet her gender is distinct from the other girls in the series, even from Michiru. Together, Haruka and Michiru mirror the Japanese *tachi/neko* archetypes of Japanese lesbian bar culture (Abe 2006: 29). Although to varying degrees, in the manga and anime alike, Haruka represents this ideal of a distinct non-binary, transgender or transsexual lesbian subject position (Wittig 1997: 12). She is a girl and not a girl, a girl and a boy; she is a girl who transforms into a boy and a boy who transforms into a girl. By being all of these things explicitly within the text, her character constitutes a significant development in the *shōjo* tradition of androgynous boy characters serving as narrative devices for girls to identify with (Welker 2006: 865).

However, returning to the anime translation, Haruka's gender was not the only problem posed by the source material. There was also her relationship with Michiru and her flirtatious interactions with the other Sailor Senshi (particularly Usagi, in the manga, and Makoto, in the anime). While the anime was not as forthright as the manga in terms of showing physical intimacy — possibly due to similar variations in norms of print versus television in the Japanese context — significant elements of the animation still conveyed the sexually charged nature of Haruka's interactions with other girls. The use of *shōjo* iconography such as roses and lilies appearing around or behind characters, blushed cheeks and shimmering eyes, along with sensuous background music, imbued many of Haruka's onscreen appearances with an overt homoeroticism. To reframe these images, Cloverway scriptwriters had to introduce significant changes in dialogue, overcompensating for the visual signifiers with information that attempted to produce a different interpretation of them. The first example of this strategy can be found in a scene showing Usagi and her friend Unazuki at a café, discussing the prospect of having one's first kiss. Haruka and Michiru, seated at the adjacent table, join their conversation:

#### Episode 94

##### VKLL

Haruka: So cute, to be dreaming of kisses.

Michiru: Oh, I think it's romantic. Do both of you know about the first kiss in world history? The first people to kiss in this world were Adam and Eve.

Haruka: There are many different kisses. The kiss on the back of the hand of someone you look up to. A kiss of friendship on someone's forehead. A kiss on the palm of one's hand to wish for something.

Usagi: You really know a lot of things, Haruka.

Michiru: In 15th-century Italy, it was said... ..that if a young couple kissed, they had to get married.

Unazuki: They were really strict.

Michiru: A first kiss... You want to cherish it.

Haruka: See ya!

Usagi: Haruka and Michiru are so mature...

### Cloverway

- Amara: It seems so long ago, my first kiss.
- Michelle: Not for me, Amara. It feels like...like it was yesterday, it was so magical. I remember it vividly. It was with Brad, the cutest guy in the school.
- Amara: There are many types of kisses actually. A kiss on the hand means respect. A kiss on the cheek means friendship. A kiss on both cheeks is the French way.
- Serena: Yeah... I'm sure there are many kissing customs.
- Michelle: Like in fifteenth century Italy. There was a strict law about kissing. It decreed that if a young couple kissed each other they must be married.
- Lizzie: Huh? That's way strict for me.
- Michelle: My sweet Brad... I wonder where he is today.
- Amara: Hah. See ya!
- Serena: She obviously treasures her first kiss, so I think you're right.

When Michiru talks about Adam and Eve, and when Michelle recounts her first kiss with “Brad”, the scene is interspersed with a shot of a man kissing a woman in low lighting; their silhouettes resemble Usagi and Mamoru, suggesting that this is Usagi’s imagination. Then, when Michiru speaks the line about cherishing one’s first kiss — or, in the dub, when Michelle wonders about “sweet Brad” — the scenery suddenly changes from the café to an ethereal pink space, and the view pans to a smirking Haruka, suggesting that their first kiss was with each other. The dub’s implication that the interstitial shows Michelle and “Brad,” rather than Serena and her own boyfriend, serves to anchor “Brad” in reality and thus establish Michelle as heterosexual, drawing attention away from the visual orientation of her sexuality around Amara. Ironically, though, Michelle’s line “I wonder where he is today” creates a *new* (presumably unintended) visual double entendre (particularly for viewers aware of the source material), seeming instead to suggest that “Brad” is merely an alias for Amara — who, based on her characterisation in the previous episode, could easily have been “the cutest guy in the school.”

Perhaps suggesting an awareness of the transparency of individual instances of

ensorship, the dub continually inserts new information attempting to deflect the possibility of homosexuality. In the next episode, Haruka and Michiru enter a public “affection contest,” which the other Sailor Senshi are observing as audience members. Seeing Haruka and Michiru as contestants leads the girls to speculate about the nature of their relationship:

#### Episode 95

##### VKLL

Usagi: Huh? It's Haruka and Michiru.  
Rei: Wonderful!  
Makoto: I wonder if they're in the contest as well.  
Ami: Two girls together?  
Minako: But looking at them like this, it's like they really were lovers...

##### Cloverway

Serena: Oh, look! Here come Amara and Michelle!  
Lita: Oh, great. Why do you think they've entered the contest?  
Amy: They're girls, and cousins too!  
Mina: Maybe they've decided to enter as a practical joke.

Amy's line is the first instance of the claim that Amara and Michelle are cousins, which creates discontinuity even for viewers who were unaware of the censorship, as neither Amara nor Michelle ever provided this information previously. However, as further excerpts will show, the dub simply attempts to enforce this reading through sheer power of repetition. Likewise, it introduces multiple lines stressing that Amara and Michelle entered the contest as a practical joke:

#### Episode 95

##### VKLL

Haruka: They sure try hard. It's only a game.  
Michiru: It is, but... ...I think being able to become that serious is a

wonderful thing. It's not just a game for him...

Cloverway

Amara: I can't believe he'd take that contest so seriously.

Michelle: Some people do, you know. You shouldn't make fun of the poor guy. He seems to be very much in love with this girlfriend of his. He didn't enter the contest as a joke, like we did.

Finally, Ami's speculation that the two really are dating is rewritten as Amy praising their "strong friendship":

Episode 95

VKLL

I wonder if they really are in THAT kind of relationship.

Cloverway

I can't help hoping they win the contest, their strong friendship is contagious.

One episode focuses on Makoto's feelings about Haruka, which resemble the archetypal S-relationship, in which a younger girl felt passionate love and admiration (*akogare*) for an older one (Shamoon 2012: 37), and Usagi's concern that Makoto is interested in girls. The dub reframes their conflict in terms of friendship: Lita's desire to become friends with Amara sparks jealousy in Serena, Lita's "best friend." In many cases, this reframing involved not only rewriting existing lines, but also creating new lines for Serena where Usagi had none. For example, in the following scene, Serena shouts complaints for several seconds while Amara and Lita are seen gazing into one another's eyes — distracting from the atmosphere of the original scene, in which the auditory and visual elements the two being alone in their own dream-like world together (hence Usagi's frustration at being shut out):

Episode 96

### VKLL

Haruka: You, over there. You're bleeding a bit.

Makoto: Huh? Oh, you're right...

Haruka: I'm sorry.

Makoto: I'm fine if it's only a small scratch.

Haruka: It's just that my thoughts were elsewhere so I wasn't paying attention to what was in front of me. I have no excuse for this.

Makoto: No, it's alright...

Haruka: You're brave and look out for your friends. I'm sorry to have surprised you. See ya!

Usagi: Bye! Mako-chan, thanks for covering for... me... Mako-chan? You shouldn't! Even if she's really attractive, Haruka is a girl!

Makoto: Sheesh! W-What are you saying? Of course it's [sic] nothing like that!

Usagi: You're right, what am I saying?

### Cloverway

Amara: You sure about that? Looks like a nasty scratch.

Lita: What? Oh, yeah, guess it is.

Amara: Let me help you.

Lita: Your scarf! It's gonna get all dirty, y-you shouldn't!

Amara: Zip it! It's the least I can do for nearly plowing you guys over. I don't have very many friends around here. I better take care of the ones I got.

Lita: Well...if you insist....

Serena: Old friends keep the top spot on the cookie list, right, old friend?

Amara: That was so brave of you to save Meatball Head.

Serena: Hey! Only my old friends are supposed to call me Meatball Head! Right Lita?

Amara: So no hard feelings, right guys?

Serena: That's right.

Amara: Cool. See ya around!

Serena: Bye-bye! I don't know about you, Lita, but I think Amara is so...cool? Earth to Lita! Come in, Lita! So, does this mean you're shoppin' for a new best friend and I'm being put out to the curb?

Lita: No, not at all, Serena, how could anyone ever compare to you, you're one of a kind!

Serena: If I didn't know better, I'd think she's trying to pull the wool over my eyes.

Lita: For a second there I didn't think she was gonna fall for it.

The rest of the episode continues to depict Makoto's pining and Usagi's worrying, which the dub continues to reframe as established. In one instance, the opportunity is also taken to characterise Michelle and Amara's relationship as a normative platonic friendship between girls:

#### VKLL

Makoto: Hey, does anyone know where Haruka's house is?

Usagi: No, I haven't asked.

Ami: Haruka? You mean THAT Haruka?

Usagi: What are you going to do with her address?

Makoto: W-Well, I have to return this to her! [...] W-Wait! If I don't have that, I don't have an excuse to see Haruka!

Ami: Excuse?

#### Cloverway

Lita: You guys wouldn't happen to know where Amara lives, would ya?

Serena: I think it's somewhere around here.

Amy: She's pretty fabulous, huh?

Lita: Mm.

Serena: Why do you wanna go to her house, hm?

Lita: Oh, well, I'm just thinking she'd like her scarf back.

Serena: You know, Amara's already got a best friend. Her name is Michelle, remember? Miss Perfect Hair and Skin!

Ami: I like Michelle. She's so smart and sweet.

Later, Haruka invites Makoto to go driving with her and Michiru, intensifying Usagi's concerns:

#### Episode 96

##### VKLL

Makoto: Oh, I'm sorry. Actually, I haven't found Haruka's scarf since I lost it here this morning.

Usagi: Y-You know, Mako-chan, I told you this yesterday, too...

Makoto: I-I've been saying it's nothing like that.

Usagi: Are you sure?

Makoto: I'm sure!

Haruka: Hi. I'm glad I bumped into you again today.

Usagi: Haruka...

Haruka: I have something to ask you. Do you mind joining me?

Makoto: Do you mean me? S-Sure!

Usagi: Mako-chan, don't you think there's a slight problem here?

Haruka: What, girls can't go on a drive together?

Usagi: I wasn't saying that...

Haruka: Then it's all right. I'll borrow your friend for a bit. You'll come with me, right?

Makoto: S-Sure!

Usagi: M-Mako-chan? I don't care about this anymore...

##### Cloverway

Lita: Sorry, Serena, but I really wanted to get Amara's scarf back so I can take it back to her place.

Serena: But I planned best friend stuff — shopping, and movies, remember?

Lita: We can do that any old time!

Serena: What's wrong with right this second?

Lita: I have to return the scarf!

Amara: Hi! What are you guys up to? Mental mall-trawling?

Serena: Sort of...

Amara: You wanna hop in, Lita? I need to ask you something.  
Lita: A ride? With you? Sure, why not?  
Serena: Hey! Traitor! First you ditch me at school and now you're ditching me in the street?!

Amara: Whoa, you can come along too, Serena. There's plenty of room.  
Serena: Uh, I've seen the way you drive a motorcycle so I think my answer is no.

Amara: Suit yourself. Guess it's just the three of us then. We thought we'd get ice cream.  
Lita: Sure, sounds great!  
Serena: What? Ice cream? Ice cream? Can you bring me back a doggy bag?

On the drive, Haruka's flirtation with to Makoto is transformed into a conversation about Amara and Michelle being cousins, and Lita and Serena's friendship:

Episode 96

VKLL

Makoto: How old are you two?  
Haruka: We're in tenth grade.  
Makoto: Tenth grade? Then is it all right for you to drive a car?  
Michiru: Is it all right?  
Haruka: Let's see... I-I got a license overseas.  
Michiru: So she says.  
Haruka: Those are pretty earrings. They look good on you.  
Makoto: Do you think so?  
Haruka: Was it bad for us to force you like this?  
Makoto: No, not at all! So, what did you want to ask me?  
Haruka: I want to be better friends with you.

Cloverway

Lita: What year — what year of high school are you guys in, anyway, third or fourth?

Michelle: Oh well, I'm only a first-year student.

Lita: You playin' me? How come you guys already have your driver's license and a car?

Michelle: Amara's the right age!

Amara: Yeah, my license...I got it 'cause I'm older and we lived overseas.

Michelle: Right.

Lita: How'd you guys meet then?

Michelle: We're cousins. We grew up together.

Amara: We've been inseparable since we were born, we can almost read each other's minds.

Lita: Like best friends?

Amara: Sort of like you and Meatball Head too.

Lita: She drives me nuts! But then...deep down I know she'll always be there when I need her.

Amara: You must have a truly pure heart to think that way. That's why we wanted to get to know you better. We could really use some true friends in this town.

In the original version of the next scene, the remaining Sailor Senshi discuss Makoto's excursion with Haruka, which Usagi has described as a date. They wonder whether Makoto is attracted to girls. When Rei expresses displeasure with Haruka for "chasing" girls, Usagi mocks her by saying that "Rei has a girlfriend" and holds up a magazine/book bearing the title *Shōjo Kagekidan Shashinshū* ("girl theatre troupe photo collection") and featuring a crossdressing actress on the cover. The book is a clear reference to the Takarazuka Revue, the all-female theatre popularly associated with girls' culture (see 2.3.2); photo collections of the *otokoyaku* (male role) actresses are popular products consumed by fans. The reference creates another casual instance of female same-sex desire being normalised, which the dub erased:

Episode 96

VKLL

R., M., A.: A DATE!?

Usagi: Y-Yeah... But it's with a woman.  
Rei: A woman?  
Ami: This is a problem...  
Minako: Did Mako-chan's preferences change?  
Ami: That's not it!  
Usagi: And it was Haruka she went off with!  
Minako: I can't laugh that one off.  
Rei: No matter how attractive she is I can't believe that she's chasing after women.  
Ami: That's not it!  
Usagi: But, Rei, you have THIS, too! [Onscreen: Girl Opera Troupe Photobook]

#### Cloverway

R., M., A.: She WHAT?!  
Serena: She got in, then they went to get some ice cream without me.  
Raye: In a convertible?  
Amy: Sounds fantastic.  
Mina: I'd love study buddies for once to do that.  
Amy: You would, Mina?  
Serena: She blew off the shopping and movies I planned.  
Raye: What?  
Mina: Whoa, you were gonna hit the racks without telling me?  
Raye: Meanwhile we woulda wasted another afternoon waiting for you to show up!  
Amy: We could still get some stuff done, Raye.  
Serena: Yeah, like finishing the love quiz you're hiding underneath the books? [Onscreen: "Female Musical Group Photo Book"]

The new conversation is completely centred around various conflicts in the girls' friendships. While the title of the book is glossed onscreen more or less honestly, it is described as a "love quiz" (a common feature in Western girls' magazines) and Raye's visible extreme embarrassment, shown in the redness of her face and the animation of

her body language, is explained as her annoyance at being caught doing the quiz instead of studying.

Throughout the season, in which Haruka and Michiru make regular appearances, the dub continues to find opportunities to reassert the “cousins” narrative. The results are sometimes awkward as the auditory mode fails to subdue the accompanying visuals, such as the following line — spoken by Michiru very close to Haruka’s face in a manner that reads as sexually suggestive, with their mouths highlighted:

Episode 98

VKLL

Leave it to me.

Cloverway

Leave it to me, cuz!

Because they so thoroughly changed the relationship between central characters, censorship decisions taken in earlier episodes often had knock-on effects on conversations in later episodes. The assertion in an earlier dubbed episode that Haruka and Michiru had known each other since birth required the complete reworking of the script for a later episode which tells the story of how they met in high school. A side character in the scene provides exposition, reminding the audience what the two “cousins” already know about each other, with the dialogue placing a particular emphasis on their shared “gene pool”:

Episode 106

VKLL

Haruka: [voiceover] *If I had not met Michiru Kaiou back then...*

Elsa: Miss Haruka Tennou! I had heard rumors about you. You really are amazing! I have someone I want to introduce to you. Come on over, Michiru. This is Michiru Kaiou. She’s really intelligent and

she's said to be a prodigious painter. She says she's interested in you.

Michiru: You aren't sweating at all... Perhaps you were holding back quite a bit?

Haruka: What do you mean?

Michiru: Can't you hear the sound of wind rustling?

Haruka: That was when I realized... That she was the person. And that she knew exactly who I was, too. I was born with the destiny of a soldier. But, in my heart, I didn't want to acknowledge that fact yet. Because I had a hunch that if I did I was pretty sure that everything around me would change.

Haruka: You're weird. So, what do you want with me?

Michiru: Will you be a model for one of my drawings?

Haruka: I'll pass. I don't like stuff like that.

### Cloverway

Amara: [voiceover] My past, my future, my destiny, and with the visions I had I was afraid of what that destiny might be. So I just kept up the search for speed.

Elsa: That was an awesome race. Normally I'd be really upset, but you were so amazing, I just had to come tell you I admire your talent. Guess it runs in the family. You excel at track and field, and your cousin excels in the arts. Guess you guys come from a pretty spectacular gene pool, huh?

Michelle: I guess you could say that, Elsa. Although I don't think Amara appreciates where she comes from.

Amara: That's nonsense.

Michelle: Maybe it is, but then why are you always running from it? Your destiny is set. Your past and future are forever intertwined and nothing in the world will change that whether you accept it or not.

Amara: [voiceover] *In that moment I knew Michelle had felt the same way I did. But obviously she had stopped running and accepted her destiny. But the look in my cousin's eyes was so intense, so full of knowledge greater than I could imagine, that I was more afraid. I*

*knew if I stopped running now there'd be no escape.* You know,  
just because we're family doesn't mean we agree.

Michelle: How about we talk over hot chocolate?

Amara: No thanks. I've made up my mind for good.

DIC's translations of scenes such as these were at the centre of heated fan discourse at the time. Because of the circulation of alternative translations by fansubbers like Studio Chikashitsu and VKLL, many fans were aware of the changes. Some believed the censorship to be an acceptable trade-off for having *Sailor Moon* as an officially licensed product in their region, while others considered it an insult to the source material (Close 2017: 276). Though these translations take drastically different approaches, as shown, their antagonisms and differences functioned to circulate the series more widely than if only one translation or the other had existed in a given market. They also drove demand for retranslation, further increasing the series' cultural relevance and economic value in the decades to follow. Although the DIC-Cloverway dub is held in broadly negative regard by fans, and while the individual fan translations have not been widely remembered on the same scale, both were key to shaping the direction of *shōjo* in English translation at a pivotal moment in the conjunction of Japanese and Western English-speaking popular media and material cultures.

## 5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the significance of *Sailor Moon* and its English translations to *shōjo*'s transformation into a truly international pop culture phenomenon. Beginning with the situation at the start of the 1990s — when Japanese media and toys aimed at boys, not girls, made up the majority of the manga and anime exported to U.S. and Canada, and total localisation was the prevailing standard approach to their translation — I reviewed the economic and social conditions that set the stage for magical girl series. With Japan experiencing an abrupt end to several decades of continuous economic growth, corporate interests on both sides of the Pacific began to view girls as an untapped market for the sale of new media modelled after lucrative male-oriented series. As part of the *mahō shōjo* (magical girl) genre of *shōjo*, *Sailor Moon* incorporated action into the *shōjo* repertoire without sacrificing the focus on girls and their emotional

lives, and reflected a broader trend of magical girls as metaphors for social change and economic instability (Saito 2014: 156-157). Although generally focused on gender-normative femininity, *Sailor Moon* also contained notable depictions of gender nonconformity in characters like Zoisite and Kunzite, a same-sex male couple, and Haruka and Michiru, a lesbian-coded couple (with Haruka in particular being constructed as dual-gendered), which has been widely received by both Western and Japanese audiences and critics as “LGBT representation” (Fujimoto 2015: 38). Characters such as Makoto were also used to explore gender/sexuality and make allusions to previous *shōjo* influences like *The Rose of Versailles*. Owing to the combination of these factors, the series was an instant hit in Japan, where its production functioned strategically as a marketing tool for franchise-affiliated goods and merchandise (Schodt 1996: 93-94). Conversely, its initial reception in English translation was fraught with difficulties that came to represent significant developments in the trajectory of *shōjo* manga into Western consciousness. The original English dub that aired in the U.S. and Canada was cancelled or nearly cancelled multiple times. At a time when North American manga/anime fandom remained a tiny subculture, fan demand is credited with a previously unprecedented role in keeping the dub in production (Allison 2006: 154; Close 2017: 271-273), spreading knowledge of the anime series and (by extension) the manga to millions more people than otherwise might have seen it. Meanwhile, fan reaction to the technical quality and political character of the dub generated increased interest in the source material and led to multiple retranslations by fans and professionals alike.

My analysis here covered three different English translations: the official 1995-2002 dub by DIC Entertainment and Cloverway, fansubs by Studio Chikashitsu and VKLL (early 2000s, exact dates unknown), and the 1991-2001 Tokyopop manga translation. The DIC-Cloverway dub was characterised by corrective censorship, informed by institutionalised homophobia in U.S. and Canadian television industries at the time of its production. Given the multimodal nature of the material, however, this censorship required more than just the manipulation of gendered language. Affirming the general knowledge in translation studies that the modality of dubbing affords a greater capacity for censorship through the auditory mode (Wang 2020: 623), dialogue was also reworked so as to encourage particular normative interpretations of suggestive visual elements,

and characters' personalities and behaviours were "overcorrected" with conformity to binary gender stereotypes. Even less overt references to feminism and gender issues were removed in order to thoroughly depoliticise the portrayals of gender/sexuality, whether normative or not, in the text. By contrast, the fansubs make no such interventions in the text. It appears to be the case here that fan translators "translate texts out of personal interest and intrinsic motivation [...], expressing their affiliation to a cultural product" (Vasquez-Colva et al 2019: 205); this affiliation to the product takes precedent over political agendas or economic incentives that typically inform professional translations. In contrast to both anime translations, the Tokyopop manga translation used a much more literal translation approach, using the same localised names as the dub, but forgoing censorship entirely due to its occupation of a different, less strictly regulated multimodal medium.

Both in its original Japanese and in English translation, *Sailor Moon* "defies easy categorization as either (or simply) a feminist or sexist script" (Allison 2006: 137). While its girl warriors evoke the contemporary ideal of "girl power," the strength of liberationist readings is limited by the series' fundamentally consumerist purpose and its idealisation of hyperfeminine norms that do not challenge patriarchal gender/sex ideology. At the same time, the presence of overtly gender-nonconforming characters within the text resonated with diverse audiences and propelled the *shōjo* tradition of reckoning with complex ideas about gender and sexuality into the twenty-first century, earning the right to be called a cultural icon as one of the most widely recognised female superhero stories in the world. In much the same way as *Sailor Moon* has become an icon of *shōjo* manga, the early English translations of *Sailor Moon* have become notorious for their localising approaches, steering many audience preferences and industry practices away from domesticating/localising practices in more recent years. In particular, the example made of DIC Entertainment and Cloverway has imbued Anglophone manga and anime fan culture with a greater consciousness of censorship and other forms of suppression of gender nonconformity in translation (Close 2017). The ongoing adaptation of *Sailor Moon* into new anime and the associated fan discourses accompanying their translations have ensured that these issues remain at the forefront. Just as *The Rose of Versailles* left a lasting mark on *shōjo* culture, the cultural power of the Sailor Moon franchise has

continued to make its cultural impact evident in the following generation of *shōjo* manga and anime — as I explore in my next and final analysis chapter focusing on one such series, *Ouran High School Host Club*.

## Chapter 6: *Ouran High School Host Club*, Hatori Bisco (2000s-2010s)

### 6.1. Introduction and overview

The late 1990s and 2000s were a watershed period in which anime and manga expanded rapidly into global markets through both officially licensed and fan-produced translations, integrating with the growing industry of physical merchandise production to become highly profitable internationally as well as in Japan. Popular franchises such as *Sailor Moon* introduced anime (and, by extension, manga) to English-speaking audiences in North America and around the world, making the literary tropes and visual aesthetics of the *shōjo* genre recognisable to emerging generations of consumers in non-Japanese-speaking locales. This momentum continued into the 2010s, with *shōjo* media continuing to respond to economic and cultural forces, while also mutually shaping and being shaped by an increasingly large, active, and visible fan culture. The series covered in this chapter, Hatori Bisco's *Ouran High School Host Club*, exemplifies the key developments in *shōjo* during this period: its branching-off into distinct subgenres, its self-awareness and deliberate deployment of long-standing genre conventions, and its reflexive engagement with fandom — the last of which had long been a key component of *shōjo* culture, but now began to take on new dimensions thanks to developing communication technologies and the increasingly mass international character of fanbases. Like *Sailor Moon* and *The Rose of Versailles* before it, *Ouran* can be placed firmly within the *shōjo* tradition of series which have dealt centrally with themes of gender nonconformity as well as the relation of gender to socioeconomic class. However, in terms of its content and narrative style, *Ouran* was distinct from its predecessors: it responded directly to the contemporary culture of manga/anime fandom, and in doing so, further developed and expanded this culture. The series itself constructs a comedy of contemporary gender/sexuality and class issues in Japan, and likewise, its English translations reflect contemporary issues in the translation of *shōjo* manga and anime. In this chapter, I contextualise these issues through the lens of my theoretical framework before moving to translation analysis.

### 6.1.1 Source material

The original manga by Hatori Bisco was serialised from September 2002 to November 2010 in the monthly *shōjo* manga magazine *LaLa*, published by Hakusensha, and was concurrently published in *tankōbon* (short volumes) under the company's *Hana to Yume* ("Flowers and Dreams") label between 2003 and 2011. Meanwhile, an anime adaptation produced by the studio Bones aired on Nippon Television between April and September 2006. Because of the timing of the series in relation to the expansion of manga/anime consumption and the increasingly routine commercial translation of works into English, the *Ouran* anime and manga were both licensed soon after their Japanese releases, and have only received one authoritative/official English translation each (as opposed to earlier series like *Sailor Moon*, where conflicts over marketing and licensing have resulted in multiple licensed translations). A North American English translation of the manga was licensed by Viz Media and released in volumes (corresponding to the Japanese *tankōbon*) between July 2005 and June 2012, trailing the original Japanese release by as little as a year for the later volumes. The anime was officially subtitled and dubbed in English by Funimation (also for North America) two years after its Japanese release, in 2008. Various scanlations and fansubs, of course, preceded the official releases by as much as a year or more.

For each respective medium, I will be analysing the official translation alongside a corresponding fan translation. For the manga, I will compare the 2005-2012 Viz Media translation with the scanlation produced by two different groups, AkuTenshi (August 2004 to January to 2005) and Eternal-Blue (June 2005 to December 2006). The reason for looking at two separate translations is that neither of these groups completed their own scanlation of *Ouran*, as "[it] was common during these days to see a manga dropped by a group before completion and subsequently picked up by another group due to poor management and planning" (*Inside Scanlation*, "The New Scene"<sup>1</sup>). AkuTenshi, a group founded and spearheaded by a teenager using the alias "Tsubasa," only translated the first few chapters of *Ouran* before apparently dropping the series in early 2005, and had gone on permanent hiatus by 2008. A smaller group called Eternal-Blue picked up the translation in AkuTenshi's wake, translating up to chapter 27. The remainder of the manga

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.insidescanlation.com/history/history-2-3.html>

(up to the complete 83 chapters) was translated by several other groups, but in the interest of narrowing my scope, I only conduct analysis on excerpts selected from chapters 1-13 of the manga. The material covered within corresponds to the first 10 episodes of the 26-episode anime adaptation, providing a solid basis for direct comparative analysis. For the anime, I will compare the official 2008-2009 subtitles by Funimation with the fan subtitles produced by fansubbing group LunarAnime in 2006.

*Ouran* revolves around Fujioka Haruhi, an androgynous working-class student who has received a scholarship to the high school division of Ouran Academy, an institution that is otherwise attended solely by the children of Japan's wealthiest, most elite bourgeois families. Through convoluted circumstances, Haruhi stumbles upon the school's eponymous "host club" and becomes an unwilling member. A host club is a type of nightclub in Japan, in which attractive young men entertain a (usually but not always exclusively) female clientele. The entertainment provided in host clubs is generally nonsexual: drinks, refreshments, and flirtatious conversations are standard, although hosts often develop more intimate romantic and/or sexual relationships with long-standing clients outside of the club environment, and in this sense the practice of hosting is not limited to the venue space (Takeyama 2016: 51, 62). In the real world, as well, host clubs are run by and for adults, and while many clients are bourgeois women (ibid: 45), most hosts come from disenfranchised working-class backgrounds and have "virtually no chance of achieving socially approved success in Japan's highly stratified corporate system" (ibid: 84). The premise of a host club at a private academy for elites is to a certain degree parodying the privileged lifestyle of children of the Japanese bourgeoisie, but must also be taken in context of the broad trend of media valorisation of the host industry as a modern, stylish profession and a promising pathway to wealth and fame for entrepreneurial young men (ibid: 73-74). In *Ouran*, the host club consists of six boys, all elites in some sense, who embody particular character archetypes that are desirable to their equally elite female classmates (and in turn, to the presumed female audience). As a line early in the first chapter/episode<sup>2</sup> exposit: "The hidden Ouran High School Host

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<sup>2</sup> In general, the anime is quite closely adapted from the manga, so many lines in each form correspond one to one. Unless otherwise specified, when I discuss a particular scene or line, it can be assumed that I am referring to both the manga and anime.

Club is a place where six beautiful boys of the high school division, having an abundance of free time, provide respite for equally unoccupied girls. A grand game, unique to this school for the ultra-rich” (my translation).

Enter Haruhi, whose discovery of the host club is constructed as parallel with the reader or viewer’s: in the first chapter/episode, Haruhi accidentally breaks an expensive vase in the host club room, and is coerced into working for the club in order to pay off the debt. The twist that is revealed by the end of this introductory arc is that Haruhi is not a boy, as the all-male host club members had assumed, but a girl — “biologically, at least,” as she puts it (*seibutsugakujō wa ichiō*), expressing a philosophy of egalitarian indifference to sex/gender norms which quickly becomes one of her defining character traits. However, with her honest and down-to-earth nature, she proves to be a natural at entertaining the girls who attend the club, and continues presenting as male in order to continue working off her debt as a host. Her pragmatism is contrasted humorously with the elitism of the other host club members: friends Tamaki and Kyōya, friends Honey and Mori, and identical twins Hikaru and Kaoru (note that they appear in easily identifiable pairs). The disparities between Haruhi’s class/gender and the class/gender of the other hosts forms the overall basis of the series’ comedy and drama, along with the interactions and relationships that form between them and other students.

### *6.1.2 Scanlations: AkuTenshi + Eternal-Blue*

Both of the scanlations I will examine here are exemplary of their time period in the trajectory of fan translation of manga, providing a glimpse into an active but turbulent segment of the scanlation culture of the 2000s. Although I am technically looking at translations by two entirely different groups, there is an overall sense of cohesion between their translation styles, which I would argue can be attributed to the material factors surrounding scanlation and scanlators, as discussed above. With this in mind, I will comment about the scanlations generally as a singular entity, although any actual excerpts will be cited to the specific group that translated them. The overall tone of the translation is informal, in keeping with the comedic nature of the work and the casual/community-based nature of the translation process. Translators’ notes at times are self-referential, and in general the translation does not attempt to disguise itself as an

original in the way that professional translations are often expected to. On the contrary, additional pages are inserted between chapters with notes crediting the team's translators and editors and encouraging readers to support the author by purchasing the licensed translation as soon as it becomes available. Misspellings and grammatical errors are common, reflecting translation teams often consisting of schoolchildren as well as non-native English speakers. In addition, the translations of *omake* (bonus material), such as Hatori's notes to readers, are not always translated in full. For instance, in Chapter 14, translated by Eternal-Blue, a note discusses the background of how Haruhi's name is written in kanji. The surrounding discussion is translated, but "[dunno kanji]" appears twice in place of a real gloss of the kanji in question, making it impossible for readers to get any context for the choice being discussed.

Overly literal translations, and mistranslations resulting from a literal word-for-word approach, are also a recurring issue. For example, in a scene in which Tamaki is teaching Haruhi the basics of hosting, he says, "*Soshite komatta toki wa shita kara no anguru ga koukateki da.*" The line occurs at the end of his monologue about effective techniques for a host to use when entertaining clients, and the meaning is that in the event Haruhi is having trouble (*komatta toki wa*) — that is, struggling to charm a client despite all of Tamaki's previous advice — lowering herself/her face and looking up at the client from below (*shita kara no anguru*) is effective. However, this line is translated by AkuTenshi as "When you have any kind of problem, it's better to see the people from a lower perspective" — a translation which is grammatically valid and can be matched mostly word-for-word with the source text, but is unclear in meaning and feels detached from the context of the discussion at hand. Unclear translations of this nature are common throughout the scanlation, and may only make sense with close reading of the images and background knowledge of the source text/language/culture — e.g. being able to guess a Japanese expression that has been translated into vague English — although the series' high proportion of slapstick comedy probably diminishes the extent to which this caused a problem for the average reader.

While this problem of Japanese linguistic vagueness versus the English obsession with detail and clarity was well-known and documented by professional literary translators decades ago (Ryan 1980; Fowler 1992), this concern was likely not felt by the members

of AkuTenshi or the other scanlation groups involved in translating *Ouran*. It was increasingly the case in the mid-2000s that many scanlation groups prioritised releasing any translation — even a lower-quality one — as quickly as possible, rather than spending a longer time on a higher-quality translation. This was particularly true for the scanlations that remain available today on archival sites such as MangaFreak and OneManga, the latter of which was specifically criticised by more professionally-oriented scanlators for “their practice of uploading and keeping the first scanlation that comes out of any given chapter” which meant that “they basically serve as an archive of all the worst scanlations available of a series” (*Inside Scanlation*, “Online Reading and Direct Downloads”<sup>3</sup>). These problems, however, did not prevent scanlations such as the ones examined here from becoming the primary point of contact with manga for Western fans who could not read Japanese.

### 6.1.3 Translation: Viz Media

Typical of many professional manga translations during this time period, the 2005-2012 Viz Media translation leans more in the direction of localisation than any of the other translations examined here. English slang expressions and colloquialisms are used in favour of more straightforward translations of the source text, adhering to the more casual/comical register of speech associated with comedy media in North America. Some lines are also oddly translated or mistranslated. For example, the phrase *rune no kabin* is used in reference to the vase Haruhi breaks; the meaning of *rune* is unclear and varies between translations. Funimation refers to it as a “Renaissance vase” with *rune* being interpreted as a shortening of the Japanese phonetic translation *runesansu*. My own research suggests that this line refers to René Lalique, a famous French glassworker; this theory fits with Tamaki’s (and several other characters’) French ethnic background and the general function of French culture in Japan as a signifier of high class or refinement (a connotation stemming from French political and cultural/artistic influence early in the Meiji era<sup>4</sup>). However, Viz Media translates: “That vase was by Rune.” No vase-maker called Rune exists in the general Western cultural consciousness; this translation

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.insidescanlation.com/history/history-3-4.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ndl.go.jp/france/en/index.html>

thus gives the impression that the translator simply avoided the issue, since after all the maker of the vase is secondary to the main point that readers need to understand, which is conveyed through the characters' dialogue and depicted body language: i.e., that it was very rare and expensive. These kinds of small mistranslations or questionable translations, which do not greatly impact the transmission of humour or otherwise affect the reading experience for a non-critical eye, are common throughout this version of the manga.

The Viz Media translation also distinguishes itself with its supplementary texts, namely the cover blurb that summarises the series. The first collected volume in Japanese is introduced with the following blurb (my translation):

At the ultra-wealthy Ouran Private Academy, commoner and special [scholarship] student Haruhi encounters the six beautiful boys of the 'host club.' Haruhi is unconcerned with them, but then smashes a (800,000 yen!) vase in the club room, and ends up having to become a host to pay off the debt...?!

By contrast, the Viz Media cover blurb reads as follows:

One day, Haruhi, a scholarship student at exclusive Ouran High School, breaks an \$80,000 vase that belongs to the "Host Club," a mysterious campus group consisting of six super-rich (and gorgeous) guys. To pay back the damages, she is forced to work for the club, and it's there that she discovers just how wealthy the boys are and how different they are from everybody else.

While the overall gist is similar, the Japanese blurb emphasises Haruhi's disinterest in the host club boys and implies that the series will focus on her compelled performance of the host role. It also does not spoil the twist of her gender, which is not revealed until near the end of the first chapter. On the other hand, Viz Media's blurb primes readers to know from the beginning that Haruhi is a girl. It then places emphasis on the boys' attractiveness and Haruhi's eventual interest in them, with her enlistment as a host being presented as incidental and the boys being presented as the real focus. In light of the various gender issues at play in *Ouran*, the difference is significant, with the marketing

signalling heterosexual norms. Not only this extra-textual material but the translation itself tends toward a heteronormative framing that downplays the playful attitude of the text toward gender and sexuality. Even heterosexual interactions between the male hosts and female clients are sometimes downplayed, as in an early scene where lead host Tamaki has decided to make instant coffee (a novelty to the wealthy students). A client fears she will be scolded by her father for drinking such a cheap substance, so Tamaki asks her, “how about if it’s mouth-to-mouth?” (*kuchi-utsushi nara dou desu ka*), to which she blushing responds, “I’ll drink it!” (*nomimasu*). Every other translation translates this line directly, but Viz Media translates “No! A c-cup’s fine!”, making the girl appear to be shocked and disgusted by Tamaki’s flirtation, rather than enjoying it. This general approach is not unexpected from an official licensed translation at a time when manga was still only beginning to be accepted into the mainstream in North America, but provides an interesting basis for comparison with the fan translations of the time, as well as the slightly later official anime translation.

#### 6.1.4 Subtitles: LunarAnime

Like many fansubs of its time (including those analysed in previous chapters), the fansubbing group LunarAnime’s 2006 subtitled version of *Ouran* appears to be oriented toward an audience with a basic awareness of Japanese language and culture. It does not appear to have a particular stance with regards to the gender issues in the show, but provides the viewer with enough information to understand the comedy as it functions in the source language and cultural context. In most cases, Japanese puns are translated literally and explained with a translator’s note. In the first episode, when Tamaki calls Haruhi “Dasaoka-kun,” a footnote explains that he has replaced the first part of her surname, Fujioka, with the adjectival *dasa* meaning “uncool”. Honorifics (e.g. *-sama*, *-chan*, *-kun*, *-san*) are usually written as part of characters’ names, as these reflect characters’ relative social positioning and relationships with one another, and so might be particularly significant for fans of this series. Often, though, colloquial English expression takes priority over sticking closely to the Japanese script: in a scene where Haruhi’s father scolds Tamaki for using Haruhi’s name without an honorific (*yobisute*), the line “*Nani hito no musume yobisute ni shitenda*” is translated as “Who do you think you are, calling my

daughter by her first name?” — a less accurate translation, strictly speaking, but more in line with Western cultural conventions around name usage than the concept of honorifics. Dialogue is also sometimes simplified in translation, often in instances where a direct/literal translation would have been straightforward, but might have made the subtitles wordier. The overall impression, typical for a fansubbed series from 2006, is of a translation which prioritises accessibility and informative value to fans — faithful to the comedy but not necessarily to the script. This difference can be attributed to the medium, with fansubbed anime operating according to the constraints of the audiovisual mode compared to the visual mode of manga (as detailed in Wang 2020, Hills 2017, Pérez Gonzalez 2007).

#### 6.1.5 Subtitles: Funimation

Reflecting the seismic shift in the landscape of official English manga/anime translation in the mid-2000s (Brienza 2014: 383; Eng 2012: 165), the translation provided in Funimation’s 2008 subtitled version is oriented towards an audience that is familiar with the Japanese cultural background and expects the translation to be faithful to the source material, not localised for Western audiences. Honorifics are included in the subtitles in italics (e.g. “Haruhi-*kun*”), and Japanese puns (such as the aforementioned “Dasaoka-*kun*” joke) are explained with brief footnotes rather than reworked into English-language replacements. Direct/literal references are also made to “dropping honorifics” and other particularities of Japanese speech. However, on a linguistic level, the translation reads as highly polished and fluent. Gender-wise, much as in the case of the Viz Media manga translation, the marketing and supplementary texts attached to the Funimation subtitles are noteworthy. Take the following blurb which appears on the Funimation streaming site:

Haruhi, the new Host in the Ouran Host Club knows exactly what girls want — because she is one! Can the boys keep her secret safe?

This framing not only fails to introduce the premise of *Ouran*’s class issues (e.g. the elite status of the school, the circumstances of Haruhi becoming a new host) but immediately designates Haruhi’s gender as female and constructs a dynamic in which the boys are

responsible for protecting her — again relying on heteronormativity as a framing device. Whereas much of the text is focused on Haruhi's difference from other girls, and she repeatedly expresses alienation from gendered categorisations of herself and others, the blurb takes an ideologically opposite approach by pitching her character to viewers in terms of her conformity to female gender. Throughout the subtitles, various translational choices appear to have an agenda of normalising, if not minimising, gender nonconformity — translating such that the Japanese portrayal of gender-nonconforming people is mapped to Western frameworks. While the gender play of *Ouran* was popular in fan culture, its translation was conceived in terms of the dominant logic of gender/sex and heteronormativity, with the translational aims of a company like Funimation at this time being to make its product appealing to a wider mainstream audience.

## 6.2. Shifts in genre and media

*Ouran* can be understood as epitomising, and satirising, the postmodern shift in *shōjo* that resulted from the commodification of character images as commodities in global markets (Saito 2014: 153). Rather than being action-oriented or narrative-focused, as in the works covered in previous chapters, it takes a highly episodic format which focuses almost exclusively on characterisation and relationships. Rather than long story arcs with pacing calculated to sell merchandise, the story follows the day-to-day lives of characters who are themselves the basis for merchandise. Characters are constructed as conscious variations on recognisable (stereo)types, or *kei*: there is a “wild type,” a “cool type,” and so on. The plot of each individually contained chapter/episode functions purely to place the cast of characters in situations that reveal certain information about them or generate particular interactions between them, for the enjoyment of the readers/viewers. As well as being categorised as *shōjo*, the series is an example of the “reverse harem” genre, in which a female protagonist is surrounded by multiple male characters who vie for her affection (this genre itself, as the name implies, being a gendered reversal of the “harem” genre in which multiple girls orbit around a male protagonist). Notably, *Ouran* has also been credited with establishing a new genre, *fujoshi* (“rotten girl”) comedy, which is characterised by fanservice of male characters targeted to a female audience that derives

pleasure and/or entertainment from the implications of gay relationships.<sup>5</sup> Unlike early *shōjo* series which addressed nonconforming gender/sexuality as a serious topic and source of narrative drama (Fujimoto 2014: 26-33), and unlike many series that began to appear later in the 2010s, *fujoshi* series tend not to depict “real” gender/sexual nonconformity or its possible material implications (e.g. marginalisation, discrimination). Instead, “*fujoshi* comedies flirt with the idea of gayness for titillation, but they never quite go there” (Bridges 2015<sup>6</sup>). One such recurring flirtation in *Ouran* concerns the twins Hikaru and Kaoru, who perform incestuous *kyōdaiai* (“brotherly love,” or “twincest” in Anglophone fan parlance) as their character archetype. On the page and onscreen, their clients are shown being delighted by this performance, while later scenes call into question whether their taboo relationship is really all an act, eliciting the same reaction from fans who “ship” the pair. Similarly, characters Mori and Honey are paired together with character designs that deliberately evoke a sexual taboo — they are both high schoolers, but Honey, the “boy Lolita type” (*rori-shota kei*), is shown to have the appearance and behaviour of a much younger child, while Mori is very tall, resembling an adult, and acts as Honey’s caretaker. Their appeal to their clients comes from both the suggestion of this unequal power dynamic and its subversion: Honey is actually the heir to a family of martial arts masters and is a master himself, while Mori comes from a family that has served Honey’s family for generations and is essentially Honey’s subordinate, echoing *nanshoku*<sup>7</sup> with the apparent ages of master and subordinate reversed (Kawasaka 2018: 599-604). Finally, there are implications of intimacy between Tamaki and Kyōya, who fit the mould of a pair of *bishōnen* (beautiful boys), with one coded as dark/black and the other as light/white (Welker 2006: 853-854).

In a series that derives its humour from intimations of queerness, Haruhi’s dual gender positioning serves a multi-layered purpose, allowing for numerous *shōjo* tropes and scenarios to be explored concurrently. As a girl, she can be paired with any of the male cast in reverse harem fashion, and many story arcs involve Haruhi growing closer emotionally to different host club members. At the same time, her male-gendered role as

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<sup>5</sup> <https://honeysanime.com/bisco-hatori-at-anime-expo-2019/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/feature/2015-09-02/the-secret-revolution-of-ouran-high-school-host-club/.92432>

<sup>7</sup> Male-male sexuality practiced between samurai.

a fellow host means that male characters who are paired with Haruhi are also tinged with the homosexual undertones by which *fujoshi* comedy operates. Nevertheless, Haruhi's "true" (biological) femaleness means that the series can still utilise the *shōjo* trope of the heroine finding love with a boy (which it does; the manga and anime have different endings, but both involve Haruhi and Tamaki confirming their love for one another). The overall narrative strategy of *Ouran* is to simultaneously parody and indulge the stereotypes that defined *shōjo* in the 2000s.

### 6.2.1 Fan culture, audience engagement, and intertextuality

*Ouran*'s explicit invocation of character stereotypes speaks not only to the development of *shōjo*, however, but also to the general state of manga/anime and fan culture that had grown out of post-bubble Japan by the time of the series' creation. Through the destabilisation of Japanese social and economic structures that occurred over the course of the 1980s and especially the 1990s, narrative structure lost its primacy in media. Characters, then, detached from the defining context of stories, became what might more aptly be called icons — "signs that lack the depth and context that are indispensable for a round human character" (Saito 2014: 153).<sup>8</sup> By the 2000s, characters in many popular manga/anime could be identified as belonging to particular categories of *kyara*, and fans might engage with media based on the presence of their preferred *kyara*, which are defined by a primary physical or aesthetic attribute, such as "pink-haired" or "maid." "Glasses" (Kyōya) and "blond/blue-eyed" (Tamaki) are among the common *kyara* types that feature in *Ouran*. This reduction of characters to signs also reflects the continuing material linkage between the manga/anime industries and industries of merchandise production; goods such as figurines, keychains and posters allow *kyara* to be commodified and purchased, holding value as fetish objects for fans even out of the context of their source media (ibid). Along with the basic profit motive for publishers and merchandisers to find new international markets, the iconographic focus of manga/anime can be seen as having facilitated its increasing cultural and commercial success overseas: compared to other Japanese media, e.g. literature and film, manga/anime are

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<sup>8</sup> Saito uses *kyara*, the Japanese shortening of the loanword from English, to distinguish these icons from "characters" in the more conventional sense.

more easily transmitted and interpreted across cultural barriers, even if interpretations vary between differing cultural contexts (Fennell et al 2012: 443-444).

*Shōjo* manga's cultural forerunner, the prewar girls' magazine (*shōjo zasshi*), was not a simply unidirectional form of media; rather, girls' magazines served as a communicative space in which readers were encouraged to participate directly. This practice laid the foundation for the future development of *shōjo* culture in the postwar period. "Although post-war girls' magazines [in which *shōjo* manga was serialised] did not devote as much space to reader-generated content, letters columns and fan feedback remained important," and as this culture of interactivity has continued for several decades, a "sense of intimacy between artists and fans [was] still a part of *shōjo* manga fan culture" (Shamoon 2012: 83). *Ouran*, particularly the manga, maintains a strong sense of connection between itself and its audience. Hatori Bisco's voice is ever-present in the text in the form of short letters and notes within and in between chapters, as well as annotations in the manga panels. Some annotations even address readers directly; in the first chapter, Tamaki says he is hooked on the show *Oshin*, a 1983-1984 NHK drama which would not necessarily be known to the average teenager in 2002. Underneath Tamaki's speech bubble, a note says: "If you don't know what *Oshin* is, ask an adult" (my translation). On the other side of the interaction, *omake* in the collected volumes show fanart and letters that fans sent in during serialisation, revealing that fans sometimes were given input into textual information such as characters' birthdays, and were also invited at certain points to make suggestions for story arcs, situations, relationship developments, or even outfits they wanted to see certain characters wear. These *omake* also contain Hatori's responses — thanking fans for their engagement and explaining why she did or did not acknowledge certain requests, taking a conversational tone with the audience despite the mediation of their interaction by time, distance, and the work itself. Through such annotations, the parasocial relationship between creator and audience becomes encoded in the work itself, signalling to future readers or readers of translations that such a relationship existed.

These elements of the manga cannot all be carried over in adaptation to the audiovisual form, but the anime nevertheless retains a sense of self-awareness of its context within a fan-driven popular culture. Throughout the series, characters break the

fourth wall, express awareness of genre tropes, or articulate an outside reader/viewer's perspective on the "text" itself. In these ways, an additional mode of communicative space is opened up between the text, the author/artist, and the readers/viewers, usually to comedic effect. For example, when Mori — one of the less central host characters, as his defining characteristic is being "strong and silent" — has an angry outburst, Tamaki asks whether he is upset because there have not been any story arcs focusing on him. Mori is actually responding to a threatening figure who has just entered the club room, unnoticed by Tamaki, but humour is generated by the characters demonstrating momentary awareness of their existence within a deliberately constructed narrative frame. Another notable example is the side character Renge, a wealthy French-Japanese high school girl and *otaku* who transfers to Ouran Academy in chapter 3/episode 4 after seeing a photograph of Kyōya, who looks identical to the visual novel *kyara* she is obsessed with. She appoints herself club manager, insisting that as a female *otaku*, she has expert knowledge of how to utilise each member's unique charms to appeal to their female clients. After her introduction, she then largely disappears from the main narrative, but at key moments, a high-powered motor is shown powering a massive mechanised platform that can propel her out of the ground at any location — in order for her to orchestrate a scene, comment on character dynamics, or otherwise influence the episode from the perspective of a fan. Renge's character provides fans with a symbolic presence in the series; even if readers/viewers (particularly of translations) do not understand the various cultural references to the history of *shōjo*, the series is still explicitly connected to the external existence of audiences and fan communities.

Finally, *Ouran* also continues a tradition of intertextuality in *shōjo*, with intertextual references comprising a significant part of the series' comedy. As I will later discuss at greater length, there are several major references to the all-female cross-dressing Takarazuka Revue, as well as references to general tropes of *shōjo* and associated genres (e.g. romance, drama). In addition to these explicit references, there are implicit references built into the text through, for example, character design. For example, Hatori revealed during an exclusive live interview in 2019 that Haruhi's love interest, Tamaki, is modelled after Sailor Uranus from *Sailor Moon*. Even without this explicit statement, their visual similarity is evident: they fit the same *kyara* type, with cropped blond hair and blue

eyes. The production of characters based on other popular characters is less akin to appropriation or plagiarism and closer to visual allusion, a referencing of the iconography that functions as the shared language of fan culture (Saito 2014: 153; Shiraishi 1997: 244). Hatori also stated that “my influences come from anime, movies, TV, and theatre so, with that, I can’t really put a finger on one specific source of influence” (Hatori 2019, interview<sup>9</sup>). Based on the overall trajectory of manga/anime culture and the increasingly iconographic role of characters, it is evident that the overall artistic design of *Ouran* is inspired by its predecessors and by the visual girls’ culture within which it operates.

### 6.3. *Ouran* and the English translation boom

*Ouran*’s initial manga serialisation, which spanned almost a decade, coincided with the explosive growth of the English-language manga translation industry. At the turn of the millennium, some manga/anime series (such as *Sailor Moon*) were being licensed and published outside of Japan, but they were also spreading in new forms of fan translations enabled by developing technology, primarily home-subtitled VHS tapes of anime and digital scanlations of manga. While scattered efforts had existed throughout the 1990s, the first organised scanlation and fansubbing groups began to coalesce in 1999-2001. These early scanlation groups began to upload their translations to IRC (Internet Relay Chat) channels and later to websites for direct download and online reading (*Inside Scanlation*<sup>10</sup>; Eng 2012: 160-165). From its humble beginnings at the turn of the century, in which scanlations were only produced by a very few long-standing groups, the scanlation scene grew and changed rapidly in response to constant changes and developments in the landscape of professional/licensed manga translation. After a decade of manga/anime steadily gaining visibility for global and particularly North American Anglophone audiences, the period from 2003 to 2007 marked a period of explosive growth when companies such as Tokyopop and Viz Media brought manga/anime into mainstream U.S. publishing<sup>11</sup> (Brienza 2014: 383). With both licensed and unlicensed manga translations more readily available than ever, the number of

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<sup>9</sup> <https://honeysanime.com/bisco-hatori-at-anime-expo-2019/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.insidescanlation.com/history/history-1-2.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.insidescanlation.com/history/history-2-2.html>

manga fans increased, further driving the expansion of scanlation culture and leading to seismic shifts in the production and consumption of scanlations. As a consequence of this transition, the ethical codes and norms of the practice came into heavy dispute among scanlators as well as fans and professional translators. Early scanlation communities followed the generally agreed-upon principle that series with existing licensed English translations should not be translated illegally:

Scanlation was already sparking debates in 2001 and 2002, but it wasn't nearly as legally-questionable as it was in 2008 and 2009. Most groups were in good standing with publishers and dropped projects as soon as they were licensed [...].

— *Inside Scanlation*<sup>12</sup>

However, even as licensing became more common, demand outstripped official production cycles, and many newer scanlation groups disregarded the ethical codes, scanlating without regard for licenses. Some would argue that this practice constitutes piracy and actively compromises the ability of struggling professional translators to find work, because fans allegedly become unwilling to pay for official translations when free options are readily available. Others would counter that scanlations function as a vital force in the manga industry and fandom alike, because they allegedly provide an economic basis for official translations to be licensed in the first place: widespread piracy can reveal that a foreign market exists for a particular series, increasing the likelihood that a company will expect a reliable return on the costs of licensing an official translation, and introducing the work to more potential new fans along the way (Hills 2017: 86; Lee 2011: 1137-1143). Both moral positions reflect the same material reality: scanlations were ubiquitous and defining to the manga world/fan culture of the 2000s.

As a popular series of the 2000s, *Ouran* was situated at the crux of the conflict between unlicensed fan translation and professional translation. Official English translations of the manga volumes began to be published while the series was still in Japanese serialisation, and the anime was released with English subtitles just two years

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.insidescanlation.com/history/history-1-4.html>

after airing in Japan. However, this pace was still not fast enough for many fans, equipped with the Internet as a tool to produce, distribute, and access translations faster than official publishers could (or perhaps would) allow. Of the scanlations of *Ouran* that I was able to locate online, some trailed Japanese releases by only a few months; in the case of other highly anticipated series, some scanlation groups developed highly coordinated international operations that cut this time to a few days or less, focusing on speed and quantity over quality in order to gain visibility among online fan communities.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the ethos that substantiated the work, scanlation was done on a volunteer basis by groups of fans, unpaid and self-organised through the Internet, who were often untrained young people attending school or university (Vazquez-Calvo et al 2019: 205-206; Hills 2017: 80-82; Lee 2011: 1137). Without the working norms, resources, and regulations that underpin much professional translation, scanlations were often of poor quality in terms of the actual image reproduction (i.e. resolution, typesetting) as well as the translations themselves, which rarely met the standards of “fluency” that predominate over commercial literary translations. Nevertheless, scanlations made manga highly accessible to wide audiences — including *Ouran*, which became highly popular among North American fans and is now regarded as a classic *shōjo* series that both embraced and transformed its genre (Bridges 2015).

#### 4. Gender/sexuality in post-bubble Japan

The collapse of the speculative bubble in 1991 ended what had been believed to be an endless trend of economic growth, and consequently it also marked the destabilisation of modern (i.e. Meiji) gender roles. The model of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners was never universally reflected in the Japanese working class (Takeyama 2016: 95), but the economic boom of the 1980s, followed by the collapse of the 1990s, produced visible shock waves in media portrayals of gender, which reflected gendered anxieties about the possibility that fulfilment of these social roles and expectations might no longer be economically feasible, let alone individually desirable. Likewise, the neoliberal “recovery” of the 2000s, characterised by the reduction of state welfare and an overall increase in insecurity/precarity for workers, in the name of market flexibility (ibid:

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.insidescanlation.com/history/history-2-2.html>

8), was reflected in media and cultural practices of gender/sexuality, as the traditional gendered economic roles of the salaryman and housewife destabilised and new gendered economic roles formed around them in response to the neoliberal conditions. In turn, existing structures and ideologies of gender/sexuality have also shaped the manifestation of neoliberal values in Japan. In her ethnographic research into host clubs, Takeyama Akiko makes the argument that “hopes and dreams” — promises of futurity which can be used to rationalise and endure exploitation and suffering in the present — have become a new kind of social and political currency in twenty-first century Japan (2016: 8-10). Meanwhile, *shōjo* writ large is already drenched in this flavour of gendered capitalist rhetoric, as observed through previous analysis of earlier series. In portrayals of heterosexual and non-heterosexual relationships alike, *shōjo* media has articulated the message that a woman’s role is to find self-actualisation and emotional fulfilment, as well as economic security, through a love relationship with a man (Fujimoto 2014: 35). More recently, it has also reflected the destabilisation of the economic basis for the male gender ideal and the emergence of an ideal of young girls (i.e. *shōjo*) as empowered consumers (Saito 2014: 156-161), and “hopes and dreams” have become frequent themes of 2000s manga/anime of all genres. In this context, as a *shōjo* series spanning the 2000s, *Ouran* is notable for its treatment of class and gender/sex — particularly as it makes use of the concept of the host club.

#### *6.4.1 Host clubs and neoliberalism*

Host clubs, as a phenomenon, are exemplary of how gender/sexuality — in a sense encompassing both identities and ontological categories and social practices and performances, as these continually co-produce and reinforce each other — are directly bound up with economy. Takeyama contextualises host clubs within the progression of the Japanese economic situation, characterising them as “a microcosm of the socioeconomic dynamics of the neoliberal state” (2016: 10). Originating in 1960s Tokyo, host clubs were the conceptual opposite of hostess clubs — a wider phenomenon stemming from cabaret as well as the geisha tradition, in which young women waited on a male clientele (serving drinks, socialising, etc.). With more of a stigma surrounding women visiting male hosts, host clubs were initially rare, but they took on connotations of

fashionable youth and wealth during the booming 1980s, and experienced a massive surge in public acceptance and popularity by the turn of the millennium (ibid: 5). In Japan's fluctuating post-reform labour market, hosting, despite its proximity to (and overlap with) sex work<sup>14</sup>, has come to be configured as a form of entrepreneurial activity through which masculine subjectivity can be expressed: a way for young men to claim self-reliance and economic autonomy in accordance with neoliberal values and male gender expectations, even while they actually work in exploitative conditions, with no safety net or legal recourse, and must depend on the favour of their wealthy female clients to survive. Conversely, by paying for the company of a host, women can express themselves as "liberated consumer-citizens" (ibid: 7) who knowingly buy into a carefully co-constructed fantasy in which attractive men lavish them with attention and care — affirmations of their feminine desirability. In these men and women's co-performances, the line between reality and fiction becomes blurred: both clients and hosts are aware of the transactional and commodified nature of their relations, yet every interaction is heavily premeditated, staged, and sometimes even literally scripted in order to deliver gendered narratives of true romance (for clients) and financial success (for hosts). Additionally, this is not a one-sided manipulation wrought by male hosts to exploit female clients; female clients also intentionally manipulate their hosts to their own ends, as they are essentially purchasing an experience to validate their gender as (heterosexual) women. Emotions and affective desires, "hopes and dreams" of love and wealth, and compulsions to embody heteronormative gender roles are all "exploited as a limitless human resource for the speculative accumulation of capital" (ibid: 161).

This industry, in which men and women transactionally co-produce idealised heterosexual relationships and interactions, moves vast sums of money through the Japanese economy. By 2010, the year the *Ouran* manga finished serialisation, host clubs reportedly generated revenues of about 1.4 billion USD annually (Takeyama 2010: 231). In the wake of financial collapse and neoliberal reforms, this financial success drew media

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<sup>14</sup> Takeyama (2016) details extensively how *makura-eigyō* ("pillow business"), i.e. sex with clients, is effectively an occupational requirement for many hosts, yet this reality is usually downplayed due to the generalised stigma against sex work, as well as the specific stigma against men participating in sex work as workers rather than clients. The distinction between "hosting" and "sex work" is primarily a discursive one, which can be maintained because hosts manage these kinds of relationships with clients outside of the host club, during "after hours" at other venues or in the clients' own homes.

sensationalism: earlier in the 2000s, “a series of TV shows [had] highlighted the success stories of a few young hosts who had become overnight millionaires” (ibid: 234), advertising host clubs as exotic, magical places (Takeyama 2016: 2). Although Takeyama’s research does not mention *Ouran*, the series must surely be placed in this wider context of contemporary Japanese media romanticising the hosting business. Although the host club in *Ouran* is to a certain degree a parodical representation of fan culture, with the female clients representing fans’ indulgence in particular *kyara* types, the series also contributes to the association of hosts with glamour and wealth. The hosts of *Ouran* are “ultra-rich” (*chō-kanemochi*) social elites, the sons of families who are shown to possess assets such as island mansions, private police forces, and national news media outlets. Ironically, however, it is Haruhi who most resembles the average real-world host. Hosts tend to come from working-class backgrounds; they are attracted to hosting as a “get rich quick” scheme which, unlike the corporate world, does not discriminate based on criminal records, poor educational performance, etc. While successful hosts’ monthly earnings may afford them markers of wealth like designer clothing and sports cars, these commodities are not acquired in order to embody the tastes of the upper classes, but rather are meant to appeal to other working-class men in order to draw them into the business.<sup>15</sup> Actual bourgeoisie, whose sensibilities incline them to spend money on less outwardly visible assets, perceive hosts as “gaudy,” “tacky,” and “nouveau riche” (ibid: 171-172). Of course, as a comedy, *Ouran*’s equation of hosting with the ultra-wealthy may be ironic on some level, but the *omake* that precedes the first chapter of the manga — in which Hatori depicts snippets of her experience attending a host club with her editors for research — make it seem plausible that this representation emerged from Hatori’s acceptance of the glamourised narratives of hosting that proliferated at that time.

#### 6.4.2 Gender/sexuality as labour and performance

Despite this deviation from the real world class dynamics of hosting, *Ouran* uses the fictional host club as a device to humorously address class inequality, and frequently

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<sup>15</sup> This is because the way “up” for a successful host is into management — the club itself takes over half of hosts’ earnings, and even successful hosts can fall to the bottom rungs overnight if they are stiffed by a customer or otherwise fail to bring in money for the club (Takeyama 2016: 64). Hosts are therefore incentivised to entice not only women as clients, but also men as other potential hosts (ibid: 172-173).

associates gender/sexuality with labour (in the sense of work that is performed for an economic purpose) and performance (in the sense of action that is done, as distinct from a state of simply being). Much of the invocation of class is simply for comedic effect; many recurring jokes are based on Haruhi's resentment of being called *shomin* ("commoner" or "peasant"), as well as Tamaki's tendency to imagine Haruhi's life outside of school as a caricature of extreme poverty. However, at the core of this comedy, enabling all of its irreverence, is the rather serious premise that Haruhi must work in the gendered role of host in order to pay off a massive debt. On the one hand, in a deliberate departure from a popular trope in *shōjo* stories at the time *Ouran* was conceived, there is no particular contrivance behind Haruhi's initial masculine/androgynous presentation and her willingness to be perceived as male. Haruhi explains to the other hosts at one point that she appeared in the first scene wearing her everyday attire of hand-me-downs from her father because she could not afford the fancy school uniform, and that she cut her hair short because gum accidentally got stuck in it before the first day of term; her supposed masculinity is explained as unrelated to gender. In the words of Hatori Bisco, Haruhi was dressed that way because "those are the clothing she wears and likes" (2019, interview<sup>16</sup>). Likewise, Haruhi asserts at various points in the series that she feels no attachment to femaleness/femininity or to gender/sex in general, saying in one instance: "my consciousness of things like 'male' or 'female' is probably lower than average" (my translation). Haruhi's gender ambivalence is presented as a value-neutral character trait, mirroring ideas of individuality and particularly that of *jibun-rashii* ("self-like," being like oneself), which has been widely promoted in Japanese educational systems since the 1990s as a part of neoliberal policies promoting entrepreneurialism and consumer-based identity. *Jibun-rashisa* (noun form, "self-like-ness") as a political/ideological concept is often related to acceptance of gender/sexual nonconformity (Lunsing 2005: 83-84), as well as being a core tenet of host club "performances of personhood" (Takeyama 2016: 137).

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<sup>16</sup> "At that time there was that sort of thing going on and it was popular so I hesitated, wondering if I can create this kind of gender swap that is better than what is out there now which is how I came upon this 'what if she doesn't have a reason?' ...what if she doesn't need to dress up as a boy other than the fact that those are the clothing she wears and likes" (<https://honeysanime.com/bisco-hatori-at-anime-expo-2019/>)

Yet on the other hand, while Haruhi's lack of active gender identification can be attributed to *jibun-rashisa*, she is nevertheless engaged in an active gender performance as a host because of her debt. Like many real hosts (ibid: 82-88), Haruhi is obliged to perform a particular gender/sexual role as a matter of economic survival, regardless of her own "authentic" personal interest (or lack thereof) in embodying that role otherwise. She also states at one point that she will not leave Ouran Academy because "I have a dream that I want to fulfill" (*jibun ni wa kanaetai yume ga atte*), closely resembling the rhetoric deployed by real-world hosts in justification of their careers (Takeyama 2016: 63) as well as the general neoliberal rhetoric of dreams as the motivation for young people's perseverance. (Haruhi's dream is not specified — simply *having* a dream is the significant thing for a *shōjo*.) Meanwhile, Haruhi's situation is mirrored by that of Ranka, her father, who is feminine-presenting and supports their modest lifestyle by working full-time at an "okama bar," a type of establishment commonly found alongside real host clubs under the umbrella of *mizu shōbai*.<sup>17</sup> Haruhi often refers to Ranka as being primarily responsible for her lax views on gender, but in contrast to Haruhi's unspecified ambivalence about identity, Ranka is explicitly identified (and identifies him/herself) as *okama*.<sup>18</sup> It is also explicated in various scenes that Ranka used to identify/present as Ryōji, a bisexual man, but fell in love with a woman — Kotoko, Haruhi's mother. Kotoko's sudden illness and death then triggered Ranka's transition from male to *okama*, and Ranka began working long hours in order to provide for Haruhi. Similarly to Haruhi, Ranka's gender is partly presented as a matter of his/her individual *jibun-rashisa*, but it is also stated that Ranka feels the need to be both a mother and father to Haruhi (i.e., embody both cultural roles in all they entail emotionally and financially), yet precisely because of his/her gender, is only employable at the *okama* bar. Both "father" and "daughter" occupy gendered subjectivities which, on an individual level, are framed as inexplicable aspects of their

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<sup>17</sup> Literally "water trade", a term referring to Japan's nightlife industry.

<sup>18</sup> This gender/sexual category in Japan dates back to the Edo period (see 1.4.3), where it referred to a class of "male" sex workers, and has no direct Western equivalent. As discussed in 2.4.1, it may be used to refer to gay men, trans women, or other similar/adjacent groups. Lunsing (2005) reviews some of the conflicts over this term among mainstream Japanese gay advocacy groups and individual activists, and suggests that some gendered groups broadly view the term more favourably than others. Specifically, transgender women are said to prefer *okama* over alternatives such as *josōsha* ("crossdresser," literally "one who wears female clothes"), while gay men who see themselves as gender-normative have more often rejected it due to the feminine connotation.

personalities, but on a social and economic level, are being materially demanded of them. In this way, *Ouran* provides an interesting, if unintended, commentary on the economic nature of gender/sexual structures/norms and their performance.

Looking beyond the gender nonconformity of Haruhi and Ranka, and on to the other normatively gendered characters, *Ouran* also evokes the idea that all gender is constituted through performative acts, as famously theorised by Judith Butler: “gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed” (2006: 34). Each host performs a “type” (*kei*) of masculine ideal — some types of which may be evaluated by audiences as more or less masculine according to their own cultural norms and expectations (Fennell et al 2012: 449-450), but all of which are performed in order to meet a particular desire that is observed or assumed in (heterosexual) girls/women. It is explicitly stated in early scenes that these masculine personas are deliberately cultivated and managed for the desires of particular female clients. For example, in the first chapter of the manga, twin hosts Hikaru and Kaoru say to Haruhi: “Listen up, girls love a pair of beautiful gays. It’s also desirable to play it up as indecision between love and friendship...but in our case, we’re weaponising the ultimate taboo of being twins” (my translation). Meanwhile the clients, standing in for the presumed audience, also perform their own gendered/sexual identities through their active selection/preference of one of these “types.” (The same is also true of real-world interactions between male hosts and female clients; see Takeyama 2016.) The explicit performance involved in hosting reveals the performative nature of gender/sexuality in general: “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler 2006: 34).

Haruhi exemplifies the Butlerian argument with her conscious performance of differing gender roles, which is portrayed as being so effective that people who are unaware of her situation cannot recognise male-presenting Haruhi and female-presenting Haruhi as the same person. Alternatively, or additionally, this framing of Haruhi’s dual performance could be understood as a commentary on essentialist perceptions of gender. Multiple scenes throughout the series involve gags based on the premise that someone who has met Haruhi in host attire will not recognise her if she is dressed in feminine

clothes and a wig — even while she fails to perform female gender through hyperfeminine speech. This seems absurd, but can be reliably expected to be the case, because of the prevailing cultural logic in which gender is assumed to be completely stable and congruent with an equally stable biological sex, the former proceeding in a linear fashion from the latter (Butler 2014: 8-10). Because of this ideological framework — which Haruhi herself rejects as ridiculous — she cannot be reconciled as one individual across multiple gendered performances. The ending of the manga provides a further layer to this reading: Haruhi attends a school party wearing a dress, intending to reveal herself to everyone as a girl. To her surprise, many of the female students respond that they knew all along. Then, later on, it is revealed in a further twist that the girls had misunderstood Haruhi to be coming out as (male-to-female) transgender; they claimed to have known all along because she was the most androgynous/feminine of the hosts, but they still believed she was “biologically male.” The scene ends with some of the girls saying that they plan to ask Haruhi for tips on presenting as male, as if Haruhi’s gender performance has prompted them to reconsider their own. Here, the illusory and constructed nature of “gender reality” is indicated. “When a customer is unable to distinguish the real from the unreal” — a phenomenon occurring not only in fictional manga, but also in actual practices of *mizu shōbai* and sex work in Japan — then “the question of gender reality becomes pointless. It does not matter” (Abe 2010: 62).

#### *6.4.3 Interplay and conflict with shōjo gender politics*

While I have been able to read a particular materialist and feminist analysis into the series’ portrayal of gender and class, *Ouran* is not necessarily straightforward in its own articulations of gender politics. To reiterate an established point, the series is highly reflexive toward its own origins, deliberately utilising *shōjo* tropes in order to mock them as well as indulge in them. At times, this deployment of tropes suggests some degree of ideological conflict with certain strains of the *shōjo* tradition. Of particular note is the depiction of the “Zuka Club” and the “White Lily Group”: student groups hailing from the nearby all-girls’ school, Saint Lobelia Academy. Upon visiting Ouran Academy, the tall, short-haired, and deep-voiced leader of the Zuka Club — who uses the masculine-coded first-person pronoun *boku* and is nicknamed Benibara (“crimson rose”) — immediately

sees through Haruhi's performance of maleness, identifying her by her "limpid maiden's eyes" (*sunda otome no hitomi*). Benibara insists that Haruhi is being oppressed and forced to conceal her authentic femininity by the host club, which she and the other Zuka Club members deride as a shameless racket that exploits girls, and tries to convince her to defect to Lobelia Academy. Though Haruhi does not do so, in a later story arc, the Zuka Club also recruits her to perform in a play — which appears to be a parody of the Takarazuka adaptation of *The Rose of Versailles* — during which Benibara attempts to forcibly kiss Haruhi. The Zuka Club is an obvious reference to the Takarazuka Revue, the all-female theatre company in which some actresses are designated as *otokoyaku* ("male role") and perform a stylised ideal of masculinity for their predominantly young female audience (Shamoon 2012: 46-47, Power 2009: 118). The larger student group, the White Lily Group, is likewise a reference to Takarazuka's fervent fan following, but also evokes the prewar culture of homosociality in girls' schools.

This depiction is heavily laden with satirical references to several different strands of gender politics that have been central to the development of *shōjo*, and (problematically) conflates them into one female essentialist and separatist ideology. While echoing the history of tragic lesbian narratives, same-sex desire, and gender nonconformity in *shōjo* and other female-targeted media, the Zuka Club is also portrayed as aggressively man-hating and sexually predatory (with the masculine-coded Benibara in particular making multiple advances on Haruhi). The anime even goes as far as associating them with fascist imagery: swearing to destroy the host club for its exploitation of girls, the Zuka Club members are animated wearing brown military uniforms and performing the Nazi salute with cries of "Heil Zuka Club," while behind them rises a Nazi flag bearing the kanji *onna* ("female") in place of the swastika. Such a politically loaded portrayal is complex to analyse. On the one hand, the notion of a morally pure and distinct female essence, as the Zuka Club appears to advocate, is totally at odds with materialist, social constructivist, and other feminisms and analytical lenses in general (Abe 2010, Butler 2014, Wittig 1992, Lugones 2016, Oyěwùmí 2016, Inoue 2006) and indeed has close ties to Japanese right-wing nationalism and social conservatism on gender/sexuality, particularly in the popular girls' novels of the prewar period (Shamoon 2012: 71-73). On the other hand, it is difficult not to interpret the conflation of lesbianism

and gender-nonconforming girls with sex essentialism, fascism, and sexual aggression as deliberately anti-feminist and homophobic.<sup>19</sup> This is problematic not only to the analytical eye of an academic, but also drew significant backlash from fans of the manga and anime in both Japanese and Western contexts. At least in the context of the manga's original Japanese serialisation, fan response was strong enough that the manga artist commented in later *omake* (my translation):

The parody elements in the host club are all based on LOVE!!! There's the saying that precisely because you love something, you can joke about it!! Also, please understand that my intention is for the parody elements to be vague, and there are absolutely no references to specific characters or works. (Just now, before I get a massive telling-off, I definitely do not think Zuka = lesbians, so!!)

Similarly, a controversial scene in chapter 9/episode 8 shows Kyōya stage a “false” attempt to rape Haruhi after she individually stands up to multiple men harassing her female classmates/clients on a club trip. He does this in order to demonstrate to her that her disregard for gender/sex differences is naïve and dangerous: “As a male, I can lay hands on you at any time, and you, a female, will absolutely not be able to win against me” (my translation). Haruhi is not only unperturbed by this, but immediately sees through the ruse and tells Kyōya that he is a very kind person, understanding that he is teaching her to be mindful of her own safety. While *Ouran* overall can be read through the lens of social constructionism, gender performativity, and materialist feminism, scenes such as this one revert to a highly essentialist ideology of gender/sex, in which oppressive social relations are preconfigured in anatomy and “females” are always vulnerable potential victims of sexual dominance by “males.” Though in many ways, as I have explored, the series does build on and extend a tradition of potentially transgressive approaches to

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<sup>19</sup> For viewers in an Anglophone North American context who grew up at the time *Ouran* was released, this scene likely calls to mind the concept of the “feminazi,” a disparaging term deployed by anti-feminists against feminists perceived as radical/militant.

gender in *shōjo*, this is not to say that it is always more transgressive than its predecessors.<sup>20</sup>

### 6.5. Multimodality: (audio)visually depicting class, gender, and humour

As a multimodal parody of other multimodal media, *Ouran* uses many of the same techniques discussed in previous chapters while also taking advantage of the multimodal forms to call direct attention to its use of these techniques — making meta-references and even breaking the fourth wall. In the 1960s and 1970s, *shōjo* manga pushed the boundaries of graphic storytelling with pages that broke up the rectangular panel format, allowing images to spill across the page and representing emotional tone through sprays of flowers, feathers, bubbles, and so forth (Monden 2014: 262-265). In the 2000s, *Ouran* pushed these boundaries even further, often to comedic effect: the art does not attempt to depict reality, but depicts extreme/cartoonish interpretations of emotional affect, in order to construct humour. While *Ouran* was by no means the first manga/anime to take this approach, it does so overstatedly and distinctively as a parody series. It makes frequent use of the “super-deformed” art style, in which characters are drawn as smaller, more simplified and cartoon-like versions of themselves, to convey humour and absurdity. For example, when Tamaki’s ego is injured by Haruhi’s anti-climactic reaction to his hosting lessons, the anime depicts him “wilting” in an anatomically impossible way, and his life essence is shown departing his body in the form of a grey silhouette with a minimally sketched face that signifies “crying.” In general, the level of detail in the drawings and animation roughly corresponds to the proportions of slapstick humour versus serious drama in the scene. Similarly, at comedic moments, common symbols found in comics, such as arrows, interface directly with the characters: a character who

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<sup>20</sup> This scene can be read against a scene in the *Sailor Moon* manga, for example, in which Haruka, whom the other Sailor Senshi still believe is male, challenges Makoto to a sparring match and throws her to the ground. When the Senshi react with anger, Haruka scolds them for believing that a woman could not possibly be strong enough to fight a man and win — conveying a fairly radical message that women’s strength is only limited by their learned lack of confidence. It could also be compared to a scene in *The Rose of Versailles* in which André rips off Oscar’s shirt to expose her/his breasts during a heated argument over Oscar’s gender and André’s unrequited love. There is not a linear progression of depictions from “less feminist” to “more feminist,” but the recurrence of these types of scenes affirms *shōjo* manga as an arena in which discourses of gender/sex inequality and violence have played out over multiple decades.

is being repeatedly insulted by another is shown being stabbed by multiple cartoon arrows, representing the emotive effect of the dialogue visually.

As in previous case studies, *Ouran* also makes ample use of visual coding to convey gender and class differences. While the art style is distinct from that of previously discussed series, the same general rules apply: male characters are taller and broader, female characters are shorter and slimmer. Hatori also tends to exaggerate the Adam's apple, hand size, and limb length in male characters.<sup>21</sup> This visual language is subtly acknowledged when Haruhi's eyes are cited as the giveaway to her "real" gender (e.g. by Benibara) — in biological terms, eyes are not sexually dimorphic, yet in *shōjo* manga, they often are. School uniforms are also key; the male hosts wear identical uniforms with extremely squared-off shoulders and straight silhouettes, while the female clients wear identical gowns with voluptuous skirts that exaggerate their waist and hips. With access to colour and motion as semiotic elements, the anime makes especially strong use of the uniforms to convey class and gender, most notably in the first episode: Tamaki has asked Haruhi to replenish the club room supply of coffee, and Haruhi has purchased cheap instant coffee, which the blue-suited hosts and yellow-dressed clients marvel at. Each gendered group is shown to move and speak in unison throughout the scene, while a disgruntled Haruhi is squashed in between them, visually distinct in drab, dishevelled, and oversized casual clothing. As soon as she puts on the schoolboy uniform, however, she is immediately able to perform the class/gender role associated with it, and her hair and facial features begin to be drawn with greater detail and polish. Again, these ways of depicting characters and scenarios are not always meant to be stylised depictions of literal/textual reality, but rather signal subtextual information to readers/viewers.

Also in the anime adaptation, audio effects and animation techniques are utilised to further exaggerate the sense that emotional experience, rather than narrative reality, is being depicted. Backgrounds frequently transform from realistic settings, such as the host clubroom, into theatres of imagination: black stages illuminated by unseen overhead lights, where characters perform dramatic gestures and monologues expressing intense emotions in absurd or otherwise humorous ways. Visual signs and sound effects are used as tools of dramatic irony, pointing out to viewers elements of the scene which characters

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<sup>21</sup> This tendency is common in the BL (boys' love) genre, which Hatori is associated with.

onscreen have not yet noticed. For example, in the first episode, a blinking arrow, accompanied by a beeping sound, points to the vase on its pedestal multiple times before Haruhi eventually stumbles into it and breaks it. Furthermore, many scenes consist of one character's imagination being depicted in a serious manner as if it were reality, only to be labelled as fantasy by captions appearing onscreen. The character Renge's inexplicable motorised platform, discussed earlier in the context of symbolic audience representation, is also an illustrative example of how what is visually depicted in *Ouran* is often figurative rather than literal, reflecting a textual awareness that it is a text and not reality. The machine is not a literal object suggesting that the story takes place in a technologically advanced world; it is a narrative device that enables Renge's role as an audience stand-in by "explaining," in a nonsensical way, why she is able to constantly oversee the host club and appear in their midst at any moment.

In these ways, the multimodal form is utilised in order to draw the reader or viewer into the text, or rather to convey a sense that the text is aware of its audience. In the first chapter of the manga, when Tamaki finds out that Haruhi is a girl, the panel is composed with Tamaki and Haruhi facing each other, while in the foreground, the tops of the other hosts' heads are visible, giving the reader the impression of standing just behind them. Likewise, at the end of the first episode, Kyōya looks back over his shoulder and makes eye contact with the "camera" as he addresses the audience and asks whether this could be the beginning of a love story. Just as characters in early *shōjo* manga began to break free of panels and spread out across the page, the characters in *Ouran* reach beyond the boundaries of the fictional universe in which they are constructed.

## 6.6. Translation analysis

As I have established, *Ouran* exemplifies the intertextual, self-referential, postmodern, and consumerist *shōjo* fan culture that developed throughout the 2000s, and reflects wider issues of globalisation and neoliberalism with regards to gender/sexuality. This complexity creates many challenges for translation, which different translational agents have approached differently according to their respective material limitations, allowances, and priorities. In my translation analysis, while addressing the same broad issues of translating gender/sexuality and nonconformity as in previous chapters, I also focus on

the distinction between fan and professional translations in the changing landscape of contemporary manga/anime translation. How do they each frame Haruhi's gender fluidity, and the sexual playfulness of the series overall, for a particular target-culture audience? How are they situated within the wider political issues of media production and consumption, and the postmodern renegotiation of gender/sexual norms, identified thus far? To address these questions, I examine translation excerpts which best highlight the differences between fan and professional approaches to gender/sexuality in *Ouran*, presenting them in chronological order of appearance in the series. Note that while most excerpts come from both the manga and anime, a few examples are specific to one or the other, due to variations in the script between mediums. I discuss examples in the chronological order in which they appear in the series, as the episodic format of *Ouran's* narrative makes this a straightforward way to address the issues of gender nonconformity in translation.

#### 6.6.1 Chapter 1 / Episode 1

As the first chapter/episode of *Ouran* serves to introduce readers/viewers to the premise of the entire series, it encompasses several useful examples of the discourse of gender/sexuality that is constructed in the text and the different approaches taken to translating it. From the outset, in the manga's opening scene of Haruhi discovering the host club, there are noticeable differences between the translations of Haruhi's reaction to the hosts and the hosts' reaction to her:

##### AkuTenshi

Haruhi: Surprised... What the heck is this beautiful group...

Hikaru/Kaoru: **Oh it's a guy.** (No fun.)

Tamaki: Watch your mouth. He is our important guest even if he is a guy.

##### Viz Media

Haruhi: Wah-hah! Men! **Good-looking men!** Oh gosh...

Hikaru/Kaoru: It's a **guy!! (Hmph)**

Tamaki: Hey!! Men are valuable patrons too, so stifle it.

In introducing the different translations, I noted that AkuTenshi tended to translate literally, even at the expense of fluency, while Viz Media tended to translate into a fluent-sounding North American English dialect, but applied a heteronormative framework; these tendencies manifest here. Although stilted from a fluency perspective, AkuTenshi's translation accurately conveys the sense of the source text: Hikaru and Kaoru are disappointed to receive a male client, while Haruhi is startled to find a group of attractive, well-dressed people in a room she thought empty. The Viz translation sounds more fluent, but alters the dynamic: Hikaru and Kaoru seem shocked and angry, while Haruhi seems more fixated on the hosts' genders ("men" being repeated twice, even though they are not adults) and on the fact that they are "good-looking" — bold text emphasises this part of her speech where it is not emphasised in the Japanese.

In the continuation of the scene, the other hosts mention that there have been many rumours about Haruhi, the only scholarship student at their wealthy school. They are surprised that this student is visiting the host club, i.e. seeking out the romantic attention of other boys, i.e. homosexual. While all other translations manage to translate this straightforwardly, Viz mistranslates Tamaki's dialogue as saying that there was a rumour about Haruhi being gay:

AkuTenshi

I cannot believe the rumored student is gay... What would you like? Wild? Lolita? Pedophile?

Viz Media

Of course, we heard the rumor you're a man lover... What is your type? Wild man? Boy Lolita?

LunarAnime

But, I never expected the famous bookworm to be gay. So, what type do you fancy? The wild type? The loli-shota type? [Note: Shota designates a complex for young boys (0-17 years old).] The little devil type? The cool type?

### Funimation

Still, to think that such a fabled erudite student would be gay. What is your preference? The wild type? The boy Lolita type? The little devil type? The cool type?

From a purely grammatical perspective, this mistranslation is unlikely to have been an accident. This suggests a deliberate choice to frame Haruhi's sexuality, rather than her class position, as a subject of gossip. Indeed, in the cultural atmosphere of 2000s North America, this would more likely be the case — perhaps suggesting a choice based on a strategy favouring localisation. If this is the case, however, it is interesting that the Viz translation is the only one to use “man lover” rather than “gay” for the word *danshokuka*. *Danshoku* is an alternate reading of the *kanji* for *nanshoku*, the term for the premodern homosexual practices that existed among the samurai class (Kawasaka 2018: 599; Leupp 1995: 8); the affixation of *ka* makes the precise meaning “one who practices male homosexuality.” *Danshokuka* is a distinctly Japanese term for male same-sex relations, unlike “gay,” which made its way to Japan from a Western Anglophone context as a loanword in the mid-twentieth century and eventually took on connotations of feminine (i.e. transgender) presentation and prostitution (McLelland 2000: 460, Lunsing 2005: 6). Translating *danshokuka* as “man lover” might otherwise serve as a refusal to translate Japanese sexuality into Western terms; however, juxtaposed against the rest of the Viz translation, this purpose seems unlikely.

While I initially expected to see a clear difference between translational approaches based purely on whether the translation was officially licensed or produced by fans, I was surprised to find that in many cases, the fan scanlations, official subtitles, and fan subtitles had relatively few differences, while the official manga translation by Viz continued to stand out. This could be seen as both chronological and a reflection of the changing dynamics specific to each medium and its material distribution. Scanlations as always were free of institutional scrutiny, and with the anime being produced well into the translation boom (2006-2009), both the fansubs and the official subtitles were disseminated mainly through private/individualised methods of purchase and viewing (DVD, paid streaming services) which bypassed the regulations placed on broadcast

television. The timing of the anime translations could also mean that they were produced in a context where the gender play common to *shōjo* manga was broadly less stigmatised than it had been just a few years prior. On the other hand, as an official English translation coming in on the early end of the translation boom (2003), the Viz Media translation may have been subjected to greater pressure to minimise the perceived gender/sexual transgressions of the text. Take the following excerpt, in which Haruhi first expresses her trademark gender-blind attitude at a point when the hosts (and perhaps also the reader/viewer, unless the extra-textual material has spoiled it for them) are still under the impression that she is a boy:

AkuTeshi

Besides, it doesn't really matter, does it? Guy, girl, or appearance... It's what's on the inside what counts, right?

Viz Media

Man or woman, how we look is... ..irrelevant anyway, right? It's what's inside that's important!

LunarAnime

It doesn't really matter, does it? Men, women, looks... It's what's inside that matters for a person.

Funimation

It doesn't matter either way, does it? Men, women, appearances, and such? What's important as a person is what's on the inside, right?

AkuTenshi, LunarAnime, and Funimation produce very similar literal translations. Only Viz significantly restructures the lines, and in doing so, produces a slightly different meaning: whereas Haruhi is saying that the categorisation of gender itself is irrelevant, Viz translates that for men and women alike, appearance is irrelevant — reifying the categories, and only questioning their aesthetics.

Even when the Viz translation stays close to the literal meaning of the source text, it tends to rephrase liberally in order to create a particular comedic register in English. In the following (manga-exclusive) excerpt, in which Hikaru and Kaoru explain to Haruhi the appeal of their “twincest” performance, they use the term *homo*. Although obviously derived from the English word “homosexual,” *homo* in Japanese does not share its medicalised/pathological connotation (instead, the Japanese translation of “homosexuality,” *dōseiai*, has this connotation) and functions in colloquial usage more similarly to the English term “gay” (Angles 2017: 94; Lunsing 2005: 84).

AkuTenshi

You see, females love two beautiful homosexuals together. It is a nice plot to have two guys who cannot decide to further the friendship or not... In our case, we have our twin-ness as our forbidden weapon.

Viz Media

Now, women **are** attracted to good-looking gay guys... ..and a tension between friendship and love can work, but... ..it takes a pair of **twins like us** to crank that sort of thing up to the **maximum danger level**.

However, this choice was likely not considered on the basis of nuance between the different possible translations of *homo* in this context. Just a few pages later, Viz makes another deliberate choice to translate into a heteronormative framework, despite this explicitly contradicting with later parts of the text. The genderless term *aijin* (“lover”) is translated as “girls,” but it is later stated explicitly that Ranka has sworn off dating women after the death of his wife and is popular with men. (Furthermore, *okama* bars generally serve a male clientele.) Ranka has yet to appear or be revealed as *okama* at this stage in the narrative; nevertheless, while AkuTenshi has translated directly and conveyed the meaning of the source text, Viz has projected a heterosexual lens onto the “father”:

AkuTenshi

My father brings his lovers during the daytime. (He has a night job.)

Viz Media

Dad brings his girls over during the day. (He works at night.)

This can also be observed at several points throughout the series, when the term *mama-san*, meaning the female head of an establishment such as a hostess club or *okama* bar, is translated as “boss” by Viz, while fan translations in particular use variations such as “madam neechan.” Although “boss” is technically non-gendered and only carries a male connotation in English due to structural sexism, it is a departure from the obviously feminine *mama-san* and connotes a more conventional modern workplace (i.e. an office or shop) rather than the marginalised industry of night work, which often has its own distinct vocabularies.

This pattern continues in the following excerpt from the end of the first chapter, in which all of the host club members — Tamaki last of all — have become aware that Haruhi is female. She explains why she did not correct their assumption, and Ranka is shown for the first time along with several annotations that supplement Haruhi’s lines:

AkuTenshi

If senpais thought of me as a guy, I figured that was okay with me. (And you bought me a pair of uniforms, too.) Probably my consciousness of being a guy or a girl is lower than other people. (It’s probably my dad’s influence.) (*After his late wife passed, he realised about this category of crossdressing*) And I’m not that interested in appearances, either. Oh but... But you were cool earlier, senpai. And actually, I realised it’s not that bad to be popular among the girls. I’m probably a little into that---. Oh yeah, I should address myself with “Ore” from now on.

Viz Media

I figured it would be easier if you thought I was a guy. (...since you already bought me the uniform...) Can’t say that I fully appreciate the difference between the sexes anyway. (I think Dad influenced that a lot.) (*DAD adopted this view after her mother died.*) I don’t care about looks much... Still... You’re being **pretty cool** about it, though. And I kinda **enjoy** having the girls hassle over me. Guess I’m a little **hent** that way. Maybe I’ll use #@\$&\* when referring to myself. Yeah... [Here, Haruhi uses “ore,” a Japanese word for “I” that guys use.]

Here, Viz makes another (likely deliberate) mistranslation that changes the meaning of the source material: Haruhi tells Tamaki, “You’re being pretty cool about it” (i.e. her gender) rather than “you were cool earlier” (when he was demonstrating host techniques and trying to seem impressive). Immediately following, it uses the term “bent” as a euphemism for gay/queer/etc., as Haruhi describes enjoying the female attention she receives through hosting; while this accurately conveys Haruhi’s feeling, the English term carries a sense of stigma or perversion, whereas the Japanese *socchi no ki* is more euphemistic in the sense of being vague (“that feeling/inclination”). The Viz translation also implies that Ranka’s gender is (or stems from) a (philosophical?) “view” on the unimportance of sexual difference, and uses an unpronounceable sequence of symbols to replace the first-person pronoun *ore*, relegating it and its explanation to a footnote outside the panels, rather than leaving it inside the panel as part of Haruhi’s speech. On the other hand, AkuTenshi again translates straightforwardly, if not quite to a perfect standard of fluency.

In the anime version of this scene (which is largely the same, minus the supplementary lines featured in annotations), similar distinctions finally emerge between the fan-produced subtitles and the professionally translated ones:

#### LunarAnime

I thought it was fine if you senpais took me for a guy. It seems like my consciousness for genders is lower than that of an average person. Ah, but you were a bit cool back there, senpai. [...] But it’s not too bad to be a host and listen to girls chit-chat. Oh! Maybe I’ll start addressing myself as “ore” from now on. [Note: “Ore” is a less polite version of ‘I’, as opposed to “watashi” or “jibun.”]

#### Funimation

Senpai, if you all think of me as a boy, then that’s okay with me, too. My feeling is... that any awareness of being a boy or girl falls lower than that of being a person. Still, Senpai, you were kind of cool earlier. [...] You know, being a host, and getting fussed over by girls, might not be all that bad. I know! From now on, I’ll start using “ore.”

The Funimation version is a mistranslation based on a misreading of a grammatical expression, which, intentionally or not, imparts Haruhi's speech with a sense of active gender identification that is contrary to the source text. *Hito* ("person") in the phrase *hito yori* has been interpreted as a noun corresponding grammatically with *otoko* ("male") and *onna* ("female"): i.e., also being referred to by *no ishiki* ("consciousness/sense of"). However, *hito yori* is an expression meaning "more so than others [in general]," so the above sentence reads instead as "my consciousness of [things like] male or female is lower than other people's [senses of gender identity]." In other words, Haruhi is saying that she does not have a strong awareness of gender (in herself or in others) compared to the cultural/social norm. Conversely, the Funimation translation makes Haruhi seem to say that she feels more like an ungendered subject ("person") than a male/female gendered subject. This reading loses the element of Haruhi's social analysis and self-comparison to the norm, and makes her appear to actively identify with gender-neutral subjectivity rather than being passively disengaged from gendered norms of subjectivity.

On the other hand, the LunarAnime fansubs, like the AkuTenshi scanlation, more accurately articulate the meaning of Haruhi's statement with regards to her indifference to gender. However, at the same time they reframe Haruhi's characterisation of her engagements with girls from "being fussed over" (something the girls do to Haruhi) to "[listening] to [them] chit-chat" (something the girls do, presumably amongst themselves, in Haruhi's proximity) — dampening the queer and/or masculine implication of Haruhi saying she enjoys it. They also do not note the masculine connotation of *ore*, only that it is "less polite." Although the LunarAnime translation is unlikely to have had a specific materially motivated agenda of minimising gender nonconformity, it is interesting to see in this case what amounts to a minimisation of Haruhi's playful masculine gender performance. It is worth noting at this stage that Haruhi typically uses the first-person pronoun *jibun*, a word which literally means "self" and is used universally by Japanese speakers regardless of gender in the reflexive sense of "myself," but can also be used as a genderless alternative to the more conventional first-person pronouns such as *watashi*, *atashi*, *boku*, and *ore*. Haruhi does not use *onnakotoba* ("women's language"), unlike most female characters in Japanese fiction, but rather speaks in language that is relatively

unmarked by prescriptive femininity — more like the majority of young Japanese women in reality (Nakamura 2014: 17-22; Unser-Schutz 2015: 245-246). In the second chapter/episode, Haruhi's linguistic choices — particularly her choice to use *ore* rather than *jibun* — become a point of open contention for other characters, as well as a source of humour for the audience.

### 6.6.2 Chapter 2 / Episode 2

As Haruhi settles into the host club, Tamaki struggles to reconcile her “true” femaleness with her social performance of maleness and becomes fixated on correcting her gender nonconformity, beginning with her clothing:

#### AkuTenshi

I cannot stand it anymore, Haruhi! Wear proper girls' clothing! [...] How can you be so popular among girls when you yourself are a girl!! I tell you, it's only the club members that know you are the girl!! (Argh, I can't take it! It's against my gentlemen's policy to look over the poor girls!!!)

#### Viz Media

**Enough** of this, Haruhi!! From now on, **dress** like a **female**!! [...] You're a **girl**, but the **girls** like you as a boy! Why **is that**?! You're **not** a boy, but only the **club members** know that!! (**It's just nuts!!! How can I, a gentleman, let our customers be deceived?!!**)

#### LunarAnime

All right, I can't stand it any more! Haruhi, look like a woman already! Why do you have to become popular amongst girls if you're already a girl?! Frankly, the only people that know you're a girl are the club members here!

#### Funimation

I'm at the limits of my patience! Haruhi, start dressing like a girl! Why do you have to be so woefully popular with the girls, when you yourself are a girl?! To put it bluntly, the only ones who know that you're a girl are in this club!

Predictably by now, Viz's translation is the only one to deviate from the straightforward approach taken by the other three, in order that the target text evokes target cultural gender norms/ideology — particularly the idea of gender nonconformity or cross-dressing as deception, which has long been a common fixture of discourses surrounding transgender/gender-nonconforming people in Western contexts. However, LunarAnime's subtitles are also notable here as the only translation in which Tamaki tells Haruhi to “look like,” rather than “dress like,” a girl, implying that her clothing is not the only factor in her masculine presentation.

Eventually, Tamaki's consternation over Haruhi's gender presentation shifts from focusing on her appearance to focusing on her language:

#### AkuTenshi

Haruhi: I\* [\*Translator: Haruhi is addressing herself as a guy.] don't really mind being treated as a guy. (I don't really care.) Actually, that's better because I can finish my quota of 1000 people and pay of the debt of 8 million yen. So...

Tamaki: **A girl cannot address herself with “ore”!! Mom!!! Haruhi uses bad words-!!!**

#### Viz Media

Haruhi: Look, #@\$& don't care how I look. But... (I just don't.) ...being taken for a guy will help me reach my quota of **1000 requests** so I can clear my **debt**. So...

Tamaki: **A girl should not say #@\$&!! Mother!!! Haruhi's got a potty mouth!!!!**

#### LunarAnime

Haruhi: I really don't mind if I'm taken as a guy.

Tamaki: Girls shouldn't use “ore”!!! Mom! Haruhi's using foul language!

#### Funimation

Haruhi: “Ore” didn't really care if I looked like a boy. [ore: I]

Tamaki: Girls should not be referring to themselves as “ore”! Mommy!  
Haruhi is using dirty words!

Tamaki’s indignation is portrayed as comedic, but reflects real-world beliefs about how women should speak (Nakamura 2014: 11). Each translation of this passage is slightly different, but all convey the norm that girls using masculine-designated language is highly improper and even morally wrong: “dirty,” “foul,” “bad,” and “potty-mouthed.” As the modern nuclear family structure, like the modern convention of *onnakotoba*, is a product of Japanese modernity (ibid: 73-74), it is apt that Tamaki, who has taken to calling himself the “father” (*tō-san*) of the host club, invokes the family structure of the nuclear family in order to chastise Haruhi. (“Mother” here is *Kyōya*, who is officially second-in-command.) However, while the first-person pronouns *boku* and *ore* (especially the latter) continue to be taught and coded as masculine, research into actual linguistic practices has shown that young girls use them as well (Unser-Schutz 2015: 227) Later in the series it is revealed that Tamaki, who is half-French and grew up in France, only recently learned Japanese; his indignation at Haruhi’s use of the “wrong” first-person pronoun thus can also be considered to reflect the gender ideology that permeates Japanese language pedagogy (Nakamura 2014: 6). Tamaki eventually changes his tune in order to convince Haruhi to attend a school party:

AkuTenshi

Fine!! If you want to walk the road of men, let me help you!! **Social dance is a gentleman’s common knowledge!!**

Viz Media

Whoa there!! If you’re so **set** on being a guy, I’ll be **happy** to show you what it **takes!! And social dancing’s a must!!**

Funimation

No, social dances are a common practice for a gentleman. If you want to walk the path of the host that badly, then you have to show us how far you’re willing to go, Haruhi-kun.

### LunarAnime

No, ballroom dancing is common knowledge for a gentleman. If you want to walk the path of a host that much, show me exactly how serious you are, Haruhi-kun.

Both fan translations and the Funimation subtitles translate literally the expression of “walking the path/road of a man/host,” whereas Viz translates it as “being a guy.” Recalling the earlier discussion of gender and hosting as performative labour, this translation would seem instead to reify the notion of gender as a static essence that one simply is, or possesses. This is contrary to the source material, as Haruhi has clearly not articulated a male identity, and the other hosts are co-facilitators of what they all recognise as an active performance.

As the party nears, Haruhi practices ballroom dancing with one of the club’s regular clients, Kasugazaki, who has recently designated Haruhi as her favourite host. Haruhi realises that Kasugazaki is pining for another student, Suzushima, to whom she has been betrothed since childhood. Kasugazaki loves him but believes he does not care for her, and her frequent visits to the host club are both a means of distracting herself and an attempt to provoke his jealousy. The other hosts decide to stage a romantic scenario to force Suzushima to declare his true feelings, which involves Haruhi posing as another female student who will confess to Suzushima. However, the love letter that Haruhi is supposed to have sent was written jointly by the other hosts using a hyperfeminine style, very unlike Haruhi’s speech which is largely free from prescriptive feminine markers. Again, though this scenario is comedic, it reflects a documented phenomenon in which the speech of women characters written by men is significantly more normatively feminine than the speech of actual women (Furukawa 2016: 79-82). The humour derives from confusion on the part of Suzushima, who expected a different person based on the letter.

### AkuTenshi

**Love..** <3 Just thinking about you, my heart gets crazier and crazier, and I’m so into this love like a hurricane or deep impact! I want to be in love with you. Let’s go rendezvous in Noah’s arc.

### Viz Media

My love... Just thinking of you smashes my heart to pieces like in a scene in “Twister” or “Deep Impact.” I badly want to fall in love with you. Let’s rendezvous on Noah’s ark.

### LunarAnime

Love Love! Ever since I first saw you, my heart has been going super love love! Teehee! As if there were eternal cyclones and neverchanging typhoons, my heart is swirling with winds of LOVE! I want to meet up with you in Noah’s ark ~noda! Noda, noda!<sup>22</sup>

### Funimation

“I’m in love-love! From the first time I ever saw you, my heart fell in super love-love! Tee-hee! It’s like, I’m in a never-ending tropical cyclone, not unlike a typhoon, where love is whipping around in my heart, and I want to have a rendezvous with you on Noah’s Ark! I do, I do!”

Given the lack of written gender markers or gendered speech variations in the English language, none of the translations are able to fully convey the sense of the Japanese, which juxtaposes childish, “cutesy” speech with highly formal feminine speech. The Funimation version perhaps comes closest, using “like” in a manner often associated (negatively) with the speech of teenage girls. Fortunately for non-Japanese-speaking audiences, the multimodal form provides some compensation: in both cases, the visual mode depicts the letter, which uses large, bubbly handwriting and is interspersed with numerous hearts and drawings of emoji representing blushing faces. In the anime, the voice acting also conveys a childish, hyperfeminine affectation. Haruhi does not attempt to adjust her own speech to match the letter, but instead speaks to Suzushima normally, encouraging him to communicate about his feelings with Kasugazaki directly instead of maintaining distance for the sake of upholding his masculine pride.

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<sup>22</sup> Here, *noda* is the grammatical ending of the sentence (~*shitai noda*, “want to”), which is repeated as the character’s voice is heard echoing. It is unclear why the subtitles transcribed the echoes this way; at a guess, the translator may not have understood the meaning, or may have felt it necessary to transcribe audible speech even without a translatable meaning.

### 6.6.3 Chapter 10 / Episode 9

As the series progresses, gender nonconformity begins to be explored through characters other than Haruhi, with the introduction of the rival Zuka Club:

#### Eternal-Blue

Benibara: Saint Robelia Girls Academy's "White Lily Group" AKA: **Zuka Club**  
[Note: Zuka – A theatre troupe comprised solely of female members. The females play the male roles as well, dressing up as men.]

Tamaki: THEN LESBOS?!

#### Viz Media

Benibara: We're the Saint Roberia **Womens** Institute's "White Lily Club"!  
**Otherwise known as the Zuka Club!!**

Tamaki: **Zuka club? Are we talking LESBIANS!?** [Zuka = Takarazuka, an all-female theater troupe in Japan. -ED.]

Only the manga features this mention of lesbians, but both translations here are noteworthy. While "lesbo" as a shortening of "lesbian" in English is typically derogatory, *rezu* as a shortening of the loanword *rezubian* in Japanese is not, and is simply a common shortened form of the word, as is *bian* (Welker 2017: 151). In that sense, the Viz translation is perhaps more accurate while the Eternal-Blue translation incorrectly assumes that *rezu* is equivalent to a shortened form of "lesbian" in English. On the other hand, in context, it would make sense for Tamaki to use a somewhat derogatory term rather than a neutral one, and in that sense the Eternal-Blue translation can be seen as more evocative. There are similarly subtle but meaningful differences in the translations of the following excerpt, in which Benibara informs the host club about the Zuka Club's philosophy:

#### Eternal-Blue

We are proud...because our souls have an equal relationship made possible by being the same sex in the same environment. Even if... It is a romantic relationship...

#### Viz Media

Sisterhood is pride. Because we are of the same gender, we are all equal in our souls. For example... ...Even a romantic relationship can be...

#### LunarAnime

Our pride... A mutual relationship from the depths of our souls because of our common gender and resolve. For example...it could even be a love relationship.

#### Funimation

Our pride... It comes from having soulful relationships based on equality, as a result of being the same sex. Including, yes... ...even relationships of love.

As if the references to past decades of *shōjo* culture embedded in her character's appearance were not already obvious, Benibara's lines also echo the sentiment expressed by Fujimoto Yukari in her discussion of *shōjo* manga, lesbianism, and heteronormativity: "we find that two girls can understand each other because they are both female, because they both share the same realities, and because they share the same level of emotion" (2006: 39). As usual, Viz changes the wording the most significantly, but all of the translations — with the exception of LunarAnime, which translates "our common gender and resolve" — miss out on the *dōshi* ("same will") that accompanies *dōsei* (same sex). This additional word can be seen to complicate the portrayal of the Zuka Club's ideology somewhat, suggesting that their bonds are not based purely on sex/gender, but also on shared values or intentions. In response, Tamaki once again voices a sexual conservatism that reflects his Western background, specifically using biblical references to justify his disapproval of lesbianism:

#### Eternal-Blue

**You guys are under the wrong impression about something! What kind of productivity is there when women make love to each other?! Then why did God create Adam and Eve and....**

Viz Media

You girls are all wrong!! What can come from a woman loving a woman? Why did God create Adam and Eve, if not—

LunarAnime

You guys are wrong! What productivity is there in a love between two women?! Why do you think God made Adam and Eve-

Funimation

You girls are wrong! Where is the fruitfulness in a girl being in love with another girl?! Why else would God have created Adam and Eve?!

There are two notable things about this excerpt: first, that the fan translations (Eternal-Blue and LunarAnime) both use the more direct translation of *seisansei*, “productivity,” rather than eliding it (as Viz does) or using the differently connoted “fruitfulness” as Funimation does. This particular wording aligns with the materialist feminist theorisation of gender/sex as a political organisation of productive and reproductive labour, with sexual (re)production being coerced from women (Wittig 1992, Federici 2014). The second is that both licensed translations translate *kimitachi* (“you” [plural]) as “you girls,” while both fan translations translate it as “you guys,” which, despite the masculine denotation of the singular “guy,” is frequently used as gender-neutral by young speakers of North American English. For decades, this usage has been criticised by feminists as perpetuating sexism: “the feminine is submerged in the masculine, which is then treated as the norm” (Martin & Papadelos 2016: 43). Therefore, as in the previous example of translating Tamaki saying “lesbos” versus “lesbians,” there is an argument that the more sexist translation may be the more contextually accurate one.

Once again, however, Tamaki backpedals and takes on a different stance in order to win over Haruhi, leading the rest of the hosts to dress up in Takarazuka fashion:

### Eternal-Blue

Ladies who grew up in the greenhouse of Robelia might have a difficult time comprehending this, but commoners are always weak at “free extras”!! Admittedly, Haruhi can feel an attraction to the Zuka club. MAIS!! But, if you choose our club, in addition to niichans, neechans are included as a free extra.

### Viz Media

Aha! You protected girls of Roberia probably won't understand this, but the common folk have a weakness for bargains! Haruhi may feel attracted to Zuka club, yes. However... ..if she chooses our club, she'll have brothers **and** sisters! Two for one!

### LunarAnime

I'm sure the Lobelia ladies that were carefully brought up wouldn't know, commoners are very susceptible to extras! Indeed, Haruhi may be attracted to the fascinations of the Zuka Club. But! If you choose our club, you can have both oniisamas and oneesamas!

### Funimation

You ladies who have lived sheltered lives at Lobelia might not know this, but commoners are apt to have a weakness for free things. It's true that Haruhi may now be distracted, and sensing the appeal of joining the Zuka Club. However, if you choose our club, your brothers and sisters come with it!

In this excerpt as well, there is a marked delineation between the translation approaches taken by fans and professionals, mainly regarding the translation of *onii-sama* and *onē-sama*. *Onii* and *onē* (combined with the honorific *-san*, *-chan*, or *-sama*) mean “elder/big brother” and “elder/big sister” respectively, but in common usage, they function as generic terms of address for any young man or woman. For example, a young child or elderly man might call an unfamiliar young woman *onē-san*. Also, *onē* without an honorific carries the specific meaning of a male-to-female crossdresser or trans woman (Abe 2010: 11). “Brother” and “sister” in standard North American English, by contrast, do not have this

same flexibility or generality. I would therefore argue that keeping the Japanese terminology more accurately conveys the sense of the host club members' relationship to Haruhi.

As an aside, it is interesting to note the prevalence in fan translations of adopting Japanese words with the English pluralising “s” (“niichans and neechans,” “oniisamas and onesamas,” as well as “senpais” in an earlier excerpt) — suggesting that these Japanese terms are in a sense becoming loanwords for English-speaking fan communities due to their unique connotations and usages. The replacement of *onii-sama* and *onē-sama* with “niichans” and “neechans” in the Eternal-Blue translation also support this view. In comparison to the very formal *onii-sama* and *onē-sama*, which evoke the social dynamics and linguistic norms of upper-class girls' schools (here, Lobelia), the dropping of the *o* and the use of the familiar honorific *-chan* frames Tamaki's proposition as more playful and intimate. While Japanese readers would more likely understand the use of the formal terms as part of the cultural reference around Takarazuka and classical girls' culture, the translators in the context of Anglophone fan culture may have interpreted it as stiff, and opted for the more familiar/informal terms, which would signal kinship and closeness — the emotional content of the dialogue — to readers in the same fan subculture.

#### 6.6.4 Chapters 12-13 / Episode 10

Following the somewhat melodramatic portrayal of the Zuka Club, the next two chapters focus on Haruhi and Ranka (or Ryōji), her father. These excerpts feature some of the most interesting differences in translations due to the handling of the term *okama*, as well as the surrounding discourse in the narrative about discrimination and social stigma of this category. While there is no single straightforward translation for *okama*, there are multiple English-language terms that it tends to be mapped onto. We can begin to see some of these tensions play out in the following excerpt, a flashback in which Ryōji (having not yet taken on the feminine name and appearance of Ranka) vents his anxieties to his boss after finding out that Haruhi withheld information about a parents' visiting day:

Eternal-Blue

Boss: Huh? Haruhi in a rebellious phase? Can't be. It's probably because... you're a "gay dad". She didn't tell you because she was so ashamed of...?

Ryōji: **Say what? Say that again, you old fart! Who the fuck are you calling gay?!** I'm telling you again, I'm originally bi!! (Bi = person who <3 both men and women) But, I decided that I will never love another woman besides Kotoko ever again! Of course, it seems like I'm kind of popular with men and I even get scouting proposals from those types of shops!

#### Viz Media

Boss: Haruhi's rebelling? Are you sure that's it? It's not because... ..**she has a gay dad...** ...she's embarrassed about?

Ryōji: **What?!** Did you say something, you hairy old man? (Who's gay?) For your information, I'm bi! But I decided I won't love any woman other than Kotoko! And I've gotten some very good job offers from the male bars!

#### LunarAnime

Boss: Haruhi-chan is in a rebellious stage? I don't think that's right. She's probably just embarrassed that her dad is an okama, and so, she didn't want you to go to Parents' Day.

Ryōji: Let's get this straight! I was originally bisexual! But I've decided I can't love anyone other than Kotoko, so I'm just making it seem like I'm popular while working at the bar.

#### Funimation

Boss: Huh? Haruhi-chan is going through a rebellious phase? I think you've got that wrong, don't you? She just couldn't invite you to Parents' Day because she's embarrassed that daddy is a tr\*nny, right?

Ryōji: Let me remind you, I've always been bi! But now that I've settled on loving no one besides Kotoko, I'm just trying to keep my reputation, so I can keep working in the shop.

Some differences in the translations here are due to the differences in Ryōji's lines between mediums; the manga is more explicit that he has sworn off women but still takes male lovers, and he elaborates on being scouted by establishments that cater to such a clientele. However, the translation of *okama* can be compared between all of them. Eternal-Blue and Viz both translate it as “gay,” implying that Ryōji is offended by being called gay because it is inaccurate (i.e. he is bisexual, not homosexual). On the other hand, Funimation uses the derogatory term “tr\*nny”<sup>23</sup>, which comes across as offensive in its own right, rather than specifically contraindicating bisexuality. LunarAnime, interestingly, leaves the term untranslated.

Back in the main timeline of the narrative, the host club has decided to visit Haruhi at her home one weekend in order to alleviate Tamaki's fears that she is living in dire poverty. In the ensuing chaos, Tamaki accidentally trips and falls on top of Haruhi, pinning her to the ground at the exact moment that Ranka arrives home from work:

Eternal-Blue

Dad who came home unexpectedly (works at a gay bar)

Viz Media

The father returns unexpectedly. (He works at a tr\*nny bar.)

LunarAnime

Her father, who suddenly came home... / ...works at an okama bar.

Funimation

All of a sudden, her father came home... / ...from his shift at the tr\*nny bar.

The anime also includes the following line:

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<sup>23</sup> I choose to censor this term (which is not censored in its appearances in the translations) because of its function as a derogatory gendered slur outside of specific contexts of reclamation, which are difficult to negotiate in academic writing. My hope is that marking the word as such will call attention to this issue for readers who are not familiar with or affected by its negative usage, and avoid treating it as politically neutral or treating the issues of its usage/meaning in general as easily separable from an academic discussion of its usage/meaning in translations.

LunarAnime:

So Daddy, you're an okama? This is the first time I've seen a real okama.

Funimation

Papa-san, you're a tr\*nny? You're the first genuine tr\*nny we've ever seen.

Once again, Eternal-Blue translates *okama* as “gay,” while LunarAnime does not attempt to translate it — nor do the subtitles provide a gloss or footnote. Possibly it was assumed that viewers, as likely fans of other anime/manga with similar themes, might already have a passing familiarity with the term. This translation avoids the philosophical and ethical quagmires of translating *okama*, but the Viz and Funimation translations plunge right into it with the use of the gendered slur “tr\*nny.” Interestingly, although both sets of subtitles generally transcribe honorifics, neither in this case translates the distinction between *okama* in the narration (objective, impersonal) and *okama-san* in Hikaru/Kaoru’s and Tamaki’s lines (contextual, conversational). However, in Japanese usage, it has been observed that attaching an honorific (i.e. *okama-san* or *okama-chan*) often denotes a usage that is affectionate or courteous rather than derogatory (Lunsing 2005: 88). This would have been a relevant distinction to translate, although there is no equivalent method of affixing a respectful connotation to “tr\*nny” through linguistic markers. In a certain sense, the Funimation and Viz versions may culturally ground the series for Western English-speaking viewers in a way that the LunarAnime’s more straightforward method does not: whereas *okama* may be inescapably abstract as a gender/sexuality category originating in the Japanese context, the word “tr\*nny” indicates a distinct hypervisibilised abject gender against which Western hegemonic gender norms are defined. It is present throughout English-language media and culture, usually deployed to induce amusement or revulsion (or both). Indeed, there is a bitter irony to the construction “genuine tr\*nny” in English, as the slur at its core is a denial of genuineness — an accusation of false or pretend womanhood. In one manga-exclusive line spoken by Tamaki, we can glean a further sense of how Ranka’s gender is constructed through this and other terms in translation:

### Eternal-Blue

Even though he's gay, he was born as a man.

### Viz Media

Even if he is a cross-dresser, he's still a man.

Eternal-Blue, interestingly, constructs “gay” as contradicting maleness: it translates that Ranka was “born as a man” but is now “gay,” a different thing. This usage may read as strange or incorrect to an English-language reader —particularly in 2022, almost two decades since the manga and this translation were first released, during which popular discourses of gender and sexuality in Anglophone spheres have drawn a clear line between the concepts of “gay” and “transgender/transsexual.” However, it is truer to the contemporary Japanese context, where the two were often conflated (McLelland 2000: 460; Lunsing 2005: 84). “Born as a man” echoes Western discourses of gender/sex assignment without straying far from the Japanese *moto wa otoko* (“[Ranka’s] origin/basis is/was male”). Conversely, the Viz translation switches to the term “cross-dresser” instead of “tr\*nny,” but emphasises — blatantly diverging from the source text in order to do so — that “he’s still a man” (back translation: *mada otoko* or *ima mo otoko*) This excerpt is illustrative of Viz Media’s approach to the gender/sexual nonconformity in *Ouran*: at every opportunity, it appears to deliberately translate through the lens of dominant Western gender ideology, reifying heteronormativity and the belief in gender/sex as static and biologically innate.

## 6.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how *Ouran High School Host Club*, as one of the most culturally influential manga/anime titles of the 2000s, uses the politically loaded phenomenon of the host club as the setting for a satirical, self-aware take on *shōjo* tropes and fan culture. I set out by contextualising the series and the conditions it satirises: for Japan, the 2000s were a time of political and economic transformation, characterised by neoliberal reforms and an accompanying shift in moral values that prioritised individuality and self-reliance over earlier values and established social structures. The host club was one arena in which new neoliberal modes of masculine and feminine subjectivity took

form (Takeyama 2016: 74), yet the relationship between gender/sexuality and economic structures/modes of production remained unbroken, only changed. *Ouran* presented gender and class issues side-by-side for the sake of comedy which built on the tropes established by its *shōjo* predecessors, but in doing so, pushed the genre forward in new directions as well as generating a new one, *fujoshi* (Bridges 2015). The 2000s were also a time of enormous change and development for the world at large, as the technological advances of the Internet allowed fansubbing and scanlation to become easier and more popular than ever. At the same time, the explosive growth in international manga/anime fandom that was enabled by these advancements meant that more official outlets began to appear for legal translations, with the mid-2000s marking a turning point at which a large and powerful North American publishing industry began to establish itself (Brienza 2014; Eng 2012).

Most crucially, I reviewed the series' multimodal depiction of gender/sexual nonconformity in this context, and then analysed four different English translations: two officially licensed translations by the anime and manga publishing giants Viz Media and Funimation, Inc., and two versions (fansubs and a scanlation) which were produced on the Internet through the self-organised activities of untrained fan translators (LunarAnime and AkuTenshi + Eternal-Blue). This analysis reaffirmed yet again the known differences between professional and fan translation: the fansubs and scanlations were often of lower editorial quality because they were being produced by untrained young people on a volunteer basis, often within competitive time constraints. They also tended to feature lower-quality images/video, due to the illegal nature of the activity and their lack of direct access to the official source material prior to publication. Conversely, the official translations I examined were highly polished, as they were funded by large publishing companies. However, by the same token, these agents had different priorities and agendas which influenced the final products. As I have shown, the fan translations — despite their occasional issues with grammar and accidental mistranslations — reflect the unique attitude of fan translators to Japanese source materials, often leaving difficult words such as *okama* untranslated to stand on their own merit, and adopting English usage of other Japanese terms like *onē-sama* and *senpai*. While this may not have been a deliberate politically informed decision with regards to the portrayal of gender

nonconformity, the effect is that gender nonconformity remains more visible in the translation: Japanese terms, and Japanese usage of English-language terms, are left to the interpretation of the reader/viewer, rather than the translation presenting viewers with a neatly sanitised and localised portrayal of gender/sexuality. On the other hand, the official translations sometimes elided important nuances or forced a Western gender/sexual framework onto the characters, especially Haruhi and Ranka. Viz Media in particular appeared to have an agenda of imposing heteronormativity onto the manga, with many lines having been (seemingly) deliberately mistranslated in order to create a different meaning in the target text.

Notably, the differences between fan and professional translational approaches to gender nonconformity were more exaggerated in the translations of the manga than in the translations of the anime. This pattern can perhaps be ascribed to the progression of time; the Viz Media manga translation (particularly the earlier volumes, from which most of my excerpts were drawn) was released beginning in 2005, whereas the Funimation subtitles were released in 2008-2009. As discussed, the 2000s were a particularly turbulent time for both fan and professional translation of manga/anime. In 2005, Viz Media had just been newly reformed and may have been informed more heavily by the previous decade's translation practices, as exemplified by *Sailor Moon*. It could also be the case that by the end of the decade, the political climate had changed enough that Funimation's translational agents saw no reason to take an interventionist approach — or perhaps even employed translators who had a background in fan translation. Medium may also play a role; in the case of *Sailor Moon*, I observed that the manga translation was subject to fewer strictures than the anime dub (which was to be broadcast on daytime television), but with changing means of distribution, this precedent may have already begun to shift. With Funimation releasing its subtitles (and dub) in DVD form first, and later on its own cable television channel, the anime may not have ever been subject to the same pressures as earlier anime translations. On the other hand, with translated manga becoming more common in mainstream bookstores, manga may have ceased to be a medium that could “get away with” transgressive or taboo material more easily than its televised counterpart. While the translations and their portrayals of gender/sexuality

ultimately speak for themselves, these material factors almost certainly influenced their production and their approaches to gender nonconformity on some level.

What is clear is that the English translation of *Ouran High School Host Club* represented a point at which the landscape of manga/anime was forever changed from what it had been in decades prior. Depictions of gender nonconformity in these forms of media have become increasingly more common and more varied throughout the 2010s, and now the 2020s. They range from the realistic to the fantastical, and they are spurred on by international fandoms who look to manga/anime as a source of this representation, which in Western contexts continues to scarcely found and heavily contested in production (especially regarding media aimed at children). When *Ouran* debuted, it was building on a foundation that had been established by previous decades of iconic *shōjo* manga in which gender/sexuality had become a central theme, yet as I have discussed in previous chapters, these icons were sometimes limited to a few series by several of the same artists/authors who closely shared an artistic lineage, with only a few noteworthy examples each decade. Now, *shōjo*'s thematic influence has spread far and wide, and it seems nearly impossible to form an exhaustive list of every manga/anime series featuring a character (or multiple characters) whose gender/sexual expression is marked as nonconforming. One wonders what depictions of gender nonconformity in manga and anime will look like in another ten, twenty, or thirty years, but my own expectation is that the influence of *Ouran* and its *shōjo* predecessors will continue to be apparent.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.1. Introduction

In this thesis, I set out to examine English translations of gender nonconformity in *shōjo* manga/anime, using multimodality and decolonial/trans-queer materialist feminist theories to frame source materials and translations in the wider context of Japan's historical development and the globalisation of Western gender/sexual frameworks through political/economic processes (i.e. colonialism). I reviewed excerpts from fan translations and professional translations of *The Rose of Versailles*, *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, and *Ouran High School Host Club*, with particular attention to the characters of Oscar, Zoisite, Haruka and Michiru, Makoto, and Haruhi and Ranka. With each series broadly representing a particular stage in *shōjo* history, the case studies together make up a narrative that widens in scope over time, ending with as many (or more) questions than answers. In order to bring this research to a conclusion, I will briefly review my overall argument and findings from each case study before giving consideration to some remaining questions and possible further considerations due to this analysis as it currently stands.

#### *7.1.1 Review of theoretical framework and historical background*

I carried out analysis through a materialist feminist lens informed by multimodality, decoloniality, and trans-queer frameworks, operating with an understanding of gender/sex as a politically constructed hierarchical system and a foundational component of (post-)colonial global capitalism (Lugones 2016: 12-16), in which deviation from hegemonic norms/roles is materially and discursively marked. According to this understanding, gendered language is one way in which sex categories are naturalised, with some grammars essentially requiring speakers to locate themselves in a gendered/sexual hierarchy in order to speak (Wittig 1992: 78-80). Consequently, the imposition of language (as through translation) and the political reorganisation of a society (as through colonisation) can amount to the imposition of gender/sexual frameworks. While Western and Anglophone influence is evident, Japanese discourses on gender/sexuality also have their own particularities stemming from their distinct historical

paths and local conditions (Dale 2019). Recognising the risk of universalising different frameworks through language and translation, not to mention the framing of investigative questions around gender/sexual categories (Oyěwùmí 2016: 16-17), I defined the subject of inquiry ‘gender/sexual nonconformity’ in material terms, to indicate any and all embodiments/expressions diverging from locally established ideas of sexual normality, and reviewed some of the tensions between feminist, trans-queer, decolonial, and materialist schools of thought in order to fully clarify the scope of my theoretical framework. I also introduced the concept of multimodality: a “domain” of analysis rather than a theory, applying to “texts” in which multiple different semiotic modes (i.e. linguistic, visual, auditory) interact in the construction of meaning. As each mode is materially distinct, the translation of multimodal content encounters distinct allowances and constraints to translation (Borodo 2015).

In my historical background, I demonstrated the applicability of these theories to the Japanese context, outlining the transformation of gender/sex categories and family structures that took place during the Meiji reformation, the role of gender/sex in the construction of a new national language, and the artistic, economic, and social functions of *shōjo* media in relation to the above. With roots in the printed media culture that flourished prior to the second world war, *shōjo* manga took shape in the booming postwar years and became the core of a vibrant multimodal culture and industry in which gender nonconformity was frequently used as a mechanism for the exploration of themes surrounding patriarchal oppression, alienation, abuse, and other serious topics relating to gender/sexuality. *Shōjo* culture would continue to grow unchecked until Japan’s economic crisis in the early 1990s, but even then, having always emerged from prior instances of social transformation, *shōjo* manga and anime (including subcategories such as *mahō shōjo*, “magical girl”) adapted to the changing conditions and began to reflect the destabilisation of gender/sex roles, the uncertainty of the economic future in light of this and similar instabilities, and other material issues of the time in the form of drama, romance, and comedy (Saito 2014: 158-161). At the same time, with the increasing availability of anime and manga to non-Japanese audiences through television and the Internet, fan communities crystallised around the various processes of producing, distributing, and consuming English-language translations of manga and anime, which

began to gain a foothold in the mainstream publishing/broadcasting industries in the following decades. The three series I analysed each punctuated a key moment in this timeline, and likewise, their English translations — even if they were not produced exactly contemporaneously with the original manga and/or anime, as in the case of *The Rose of Versailles*, translated decades later — reflect a historical narrative of their own.

## 7.2. Findings

### 7.2.1 The Rose of Versailles

For *The Rose of Versailles* I compared fan group Live-evil's fansubs from 2005, a scanlation from three different groups (Lililicious, RosalinaScanlations, RoV Scans) spanning 2003-2017, and the official English translation released by Udon Entertainment in 2019-2020. This case presented the most difficulties in drawing direct comparisons between different translations, due to the long time between the original release and all of the translations, as well as the duration of time taken to complete the fan translation of the manga (fourteen years). I began with *Rose* because of its foundational influence on *shōjo* culture, but for a starting point, I had to approach it, as many of its translations do, through a historicising framework. Although it was one of the first *shōjo* manga to gain a following outside of Japan, with particular significance to the spread of manga to locales such as France and Italy, there were no known complete English translations<sup>86</sup> of the series in existence prior to the twenty-first century. As such, I could not gain any insight into how *Oscar* might have been translated into English at that time. However, looking at the more recent translations, particularly how (or if) they seek to take “modern” approaches to a “classic” series, still turned up some worthwhile results. I found that there were relatively few differences between the official/licensed and fan/unlicensed manga translations, although early scanlations were marked by interactivity with readers in the form of annotations, commentary, and bonus materials mimicking the *omake*<sup>87</sup> that appear in some manga publications. While the Udon Entertainment translation is more polished overall, the scanlation also appears relatively well-researched and well-

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<sup>86</sup> There is Frederik Schodt's 1981 translation of the first two volumes, which I was unable to source; see 3.1.2.

<sup>87</sup> *Omake* literally means “something extra thrown in” or “freebie.” In the context of manga/anime it refers to extra or bonus material, which is often comedic, self-referential, or otherwise outside of the main storyline.

presented; based on findings from the latter two analysis chapters, it is a sign of changing times that the fan translation and professional translation did not vary consistently in their approach to Oscar's gender/sexuality and relationships. Both translate fairly straightforwardly from the Japanese and do not shy away from the topic of gender nonconformity or ambiguity, although they sometimes take subtly divergent approaches to the construction of Oscar's masculinity or femininity through English language norms, such as use of gendered third-person pronouns by other characters. Likewise, the fan subtitles take a straightforward and literal approach; though appearing to have no specific interest or investment in sensitively approaching the issues of gender/sexuality in the anime, this translation reflected the dominant ethos of fan translation in the early 2000s, that is, to convey the original Japanese content as fully and as accurately as possible to the viewer, rather than aggressively domesticating and localising content as per the policy of mainstream broadcasting companies.

### 7.2.2 Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon

My case study of *Sailor Moon* focused more on the audiovisual mode (in the context of the aforementioned policy/tendency) and on the censorship of gender nonconformity through dubbing, comparing the 1995-2002 DIC/Cloverway dub with fan subtitles by two different groups (Studio Chikashitsu and VKLL) in the early 2000s, as well as incorporating some excerpts from the Tokyopop (Mixx Entertainment) manga translations from 1997-2001 to illustrate the different leniencies allowed to manga versus anime in English translation at the time. These translations showed the starkest contrast between fan and professional versions, reflecting the priorities and constraints/allowances of each mode of translation. Mainstream producers were interested in anime purely on the basis of profitability and required translations to be both inoffensive and accessible to mass audiences. Accordingly, all instances of gender nonconformity were censored in one way or another; the character Zoisite's gender/sex was changed through dubbing to turn a homosexual relationship into a heterosexual one, and dialogue was rewritten extensively to recast the lesbian-coded couple Haruka and Michiru as cousins. Additionally, the character Makoto's struggles with masculinity and femininity were erased from the dub, despite her character overall being relatively gender-normative compared to the other

examples discussed. Although the dub reached wide audiences and was instrumental in the series' popularity in the U.S. and Canada — and by extension, in manga/anime's journey to the Anglophone cultural mainstream — many fans were critical of it even at the time, being drawn to the series precisely because of the content which was removed in order to (supposedly) render the translations inoffensive and accessible (Close 2017, Allison 2006). The tensions between these forms of translation, with their distinct ideologies and priorities, can be observed in the differences between translations. Whereas the dub censors and rewrites many instances of dialogue for the sake of localisation as well as for more overtly political reasons, the subtitles from both fan groups translate literally and directly, except where they occasionally simplify dialogue for the sake of minimising text onscreen. The Tokyopop manga translation strikes an interesting middle ground; it takes a more localising approach than the fansubs and uses the translated (Westernised) names from the dub, but perhaps because such a niche (at the time) form of print media was not subject to the same scrutiny as broadcast television, there was no particular effort to avoid taboo topics such as homosexuality; for example, lines of dialogue that describe Haruka as being simultaneously male and female are translated directly.

### 7.2.3 Ouran High School Host Club

In the case study of *Ouran*, I compared the 2006 fansubs by LunarAnime with the official subtitles released by Funimation in 2008-2009, and the official Viz Media translation (2005-2012) with a scanlation made up of contributions from two different fan groups (AkuTenshi and Eternal-Blue) between 2004 and 2006. Like the previous one, this case study provides a clear-cut basis for comparison, and the results suggest a possible shift resulting from the establishment of manga and anime in mainstream Anglophone popular culture. The difference between professional translations and fan translations remained fairly stark, but there was less of a difference in approaches taken in the translation of manga versus anime, perhaps reflecting an evening-out of the terrain in terms of how heavily the two are regulated. Whereas the *Sailor Moon* anime dub was subject to harsher scrutiny because it was meant to air on regular television for small children, Funimation released its subtitles (as well as a dub) in DVD form and on its own branded cable network.

In other words, anime in English translation was more able to find a niche in the emerging media landscape that was no longer based primarily around broadcast television. However, in comparison to the fan translations with their typical non-interventionist approach, both the Funimation subtitles and the Viz Media manga translation tended to impose Western frameworks of gender/sexuality onto the source material. The Viz Media translation in particular displayed a clear tendency toward suppressing and correctively tweaking depictions of gender nonconformity in order to favour heteronormative readings. On the other hand, the fan subtitles and scanlation, as per usual, prioritised straightforward transmission of the source material.

#### *7.2.4 Synthesis and elaboration*

Having reviewed each case individually, here I will synthesise my findings and discuss them in terms of my research questions. Firstly, while my case studies present only a snapshot of a broader picture, I have observed that depictions of gender nonconformity in *shōjo* manga and anime have been translated into English primarily according to the dominant norms of heteronormativity and gender essentialism, though the imposition of normative readings has tended to be more passive and incidental in the case of fan translation compared to professional translations (until recently). These translated depictions of nonconformity have become touchstones for a wider Western subculture of anime/manga fandom, informing the material dissemination of their associated multimodal media through particular channels and communities; whereas early manga translation efforts assumed a heteronormative male target audience parallel to that of the U.S. comics tradition, translations of *shōjo* — official and unlicensed both — have raised a mass contingent of audiences gendered as female, queer, and trans, bringing to light conflicts of interest between audiences and the institutions mediating professional translation. The translations I examined largely took the equivalence and universality of gender/sexuality for granted, demonstrating rather than overtly recognising the hegemonic norms at work in the Japanese-English translation process, though close analysis revealed nuances between different translational agents' decisions and likely underlying outlooks. Specifically, heteronormativity, binarism, and biological essentialism/determinism — features of the dominant model of gender/sexuality in both

Japan and “the West” today — are frequently expressed through the translations, while understandings of nonconformity rooted particularly in the Japanese context (e.g. *okama/onabe*, the distinction or lack thereof between “gay” and “trans”) are in most cases overwritten with a contemporary Western worldview. Given the material impetus for the translation of *shōjo* and of manga/anime generally — entertainment on the part of audiences, profit on the part of media producers and distributors — these translations have not perceptibly set out to contest or unseat dominant gender/sexual norms, but have sought either to make sense of what is presented in the text according to prevailing understandings of gender/sexuality, to straightforwardly convey the discourses of gender/sexuality expressed in the source text, or to actively bring the text into compliance with dominant norms. The multimodality of manga/anime has placed significant constraints and allowances on all of these approaches, with the centrality of the visual mode in particular making it difficult to erase or alter many representations of nonconformity, and with *shōjo*’s visual language itself being subject to varying gendered interpretations. Because *shōjo* media primarily expresses gender through a visual language, rather than identifying terminology, linguistic translation (including both subtitling and dubbing) must constantly mediate the visual aspects and can only go so far in contradicting them before calling (generally) unwanted attention to the contradiction. The material forms of translated manga/anime have also exerted a clear influence on translational outcomes: series have been subject to different degrees and kinds of intervention based on whether they were translated for broadcast television, for mass print, for private digital consumption, and so on.

Stemming from these issues of materiality, a theme that runs throughout my findings is the distinction between fan translation and professional translation. Despite often bearing evidence of amateur production — typos, poor typesetting, low image quality, grammar mistakes, and even mistranslations — fan translations as a general rule are concerned with presenting the source material “as it is,” only making significant alterations out of error (e.g. having read the Japanese incorrectly) or in order to simplify (e.g. to keep subtitles from taking up too much time or space onscreen). Substantial additions (in the form of footnotes, etc.) are far more common (and almost ubiquitous) compared to deletions. This is not a new discovery in research into fan translations;

existing literature has already observed that on a broad scale “fan translation is different from professional translation, as it is part of an ecology of practices that transcend translation and favor tacit or explicit interaction between fan translators and audience” (Vazquez-Calvo et al 2019: 198; Mattar 2008). However, in addition to confirming that this theory applies to particular terrain, I have been able to explicate some of the ways that it is specifically relevant/important in this context. Vazquez-Calvo et al’s characterisation of fan translation mirrors the long tradition of interactivity in *shōjo* culture (per Shamooin 2012) and suggests a possible reason why fan translations have consistently been more lenient with regard to gender nonconformity. While the fan ethos does not inherently entail a sensitive or considered approach to topics of gender/sexuality, it is materially set apart from the heavy hand of censorship wielded by many professional translational agents, who have tended to be concerned with wider audience reception and mainstream acceptability as predictors for profitability. However, the recent official English translation of *The Rose of Versailles* suggests that this trend is changing: the translated volumes are explicitly categorised as “LGBTQ” as well as romance and historical fiction, and the series’ depiction of gender/sexuality is central to the framing of the translation as a classic. Fan discourses that developed around earlier translations, particularly of *Sailor Moon*, may have set a firm precedent that official translations can no longer “get away with” censorship of such content in the name of social acceptability.

Another takeaway worth discussing is that although the depictions of gender nonconformity in each series can be traced through the same lineage within a particular multimodal media culture, they are also distinct from one another. All of the characters examined in this thesis, including the most prominent three — Oscar, Haruka, and Haruhi — tell different stories about different experiences and expressions of gender/sexuality; they are not identical or interchangeable. However, their differences are somewhat flattened in English translation, due in large part to linguistic constraints. Therefore, it may be asked: are Oscar, Haruka, and Haruhi all (translated as) the “same gender”? More precisely, do they all belong to one coherent and recognisable category which constitutes a gender/sexuality in its own right within the universe of *shōjo* — and does translation into English effectively change the answer to this question? In the source materials, each depiction has its own nuances and presents distinct explanations for the character’s

gender/sex. Oscar is articulated as “a girl raised as a boy” — a woman who is a man and a man who is a woman. Her body is identified one way with respect to the gender/sex binary, but an atypical social assignation takes precedent for political/economic reasons, and Oscar professes a male identity as well as desiring men (or rather one man — André, who is constructed as feminine in relation to Oscar; see Shamoon 2012: 125-127). Haruka, on the other hand, is presented as having distinct masculine and feminine personas, which are not based in her biology, but rather in her personality and Sailor Senshi status: in her everyday civilian form, he is masculine-presenting and lives partly as a boy, but as Sailor Uranus she embodies the same hyperfeminine aesthetic as the other Sailor Senshi. It appears that for Haruka, “anatomical sex is incidental” (Oyěwùmí 2016: 174). Finally, Haruhi expresses an ambivalence about gender/sex as an unnecessary categorisation; she is depicted as actively rejecting the premise of categorisation in identity terms. The frequent subject of discussion is not Haruhi’s own identity or gendered/sexed nature, but its ambiguity/fluidity and other characters’ perceptions of it based on her external presentation.

Ultimately, while the nuance in these depictions comes across in the Japanese through factors such as use of (or abstention from) particular gendered speech forms, this nuance loses its full dimensionality in English, where the gendered shades of meaning in the Japanese expression of first-person pronouns, verb forms, and utterance-ending particles have no equivalent form in which to be reconstructed. With the narrative and visual grammar of *shōjo* marking them as nonconforming, but no further explicit information appearing within the linguistic mode in translation, the universalising label of “queer” might be applied. On a basic linguistic level, as I myself have done in many instances, the translations all reduce them to “she”/“her,” eliminating the gendered nuances of their own first-person speech patterns — Oscar’s *ore* and *watashi*, Haruka’s *boku*, and Haruhi’s *jibun* and occasional defiant *ore*. This much can perhaps be attributed to irreconcilable linguistic differences between Japanese and English. As mentioned already, most translations of these series have broadly not been conceived with critical awareness of their engagement with gender/sexual frameworks as a main priority, if a factor at all; rather, translators were working within a set of goals and constraints imposed by external material factors such as market trends, industry standards and practices, and

so on. Nevertheless, conscious choices can make some difference, as more recent translations and retranslations have demonstrated. This finding leads less to an answer and more to another question: how could future English-language translations of gender nonconformity in Japanese-language media attempt more actively to counter the universalising tendency of English translation and make room for other gender/sexual frameworks in English?

Finally, although it would be reductive to consider the different depictions of gender nonconformity reviewed in my research as essentially “the same” — and this terminology has served its purpose in referring to them by their key similarity while avoiding more specific categorisation — there is an important trend in these depictions, which is that most of the characters I have analysed are portrayed as girls in a biologically defined sense. Ranka and Zoisite (and to a lesser extent Kunzite) are the only exceptions. The fact that nonconformity from “femaleness” appears more frequently in *shōjo* than nonconformity from “maleness” is perhaps unsurprising, but still noteworthy given that much of the literature on non-normative genders/sexualities in Japan seems to share a consensus that “male homosexuality” (often conceived as including gender nonconformity) is much more highly visible, represented, and researched than “female homosexuality” (likewise, encompassing gender nonconformity) (Dale 2019: 61; Abe 2010: 11; Lunsing 2005: 89-90). At least within the realm of *shōjo*, this does not appear to be the case; although *shōjo* is only one category of manga/anime, the titles examined here have been pivotal in the development of international manga/anime culture, taking on an iconic quality in popular consciousness. For example, the Cloverway dub’s treatment of Haruka and Michiru continues to be discussed in relation to *Sailor Moon* fandom history (Rodriguez-Garcia 2022<sup>88</sup>; Gramuglia 2020<sup>89</sup>), and has been invoked by fans to criticise retranslations and other relevant materials published more recently by its current English-language license holder, Viz Media (Peters 2019<sup>90</sup>). Furthermore, much of the existing literature that I have cited thus far is exclusively concerned with depictions of “female homosexuality,” or discusses depictions of “male homosexuality” only as they

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<sup>88</sup> <https://www.michigandaily.com/tv/the-dangers-of-censorship-and-sailor-moon/>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.animeherald.com/2020/06/22/revisiting-dics-sailor-moon-25-years-later/>

<sup>90</sup> <https://comicbook.com/anime/news/sailor-moon-sailor-stars-viz-media-apology-error-lesbian-neptune/>

relate to female artists and consumers. Again, this does not negate the possibility that “male” nonconformity has been given more attention in other fields of study dealing with gender/sexuality in Japan, or that (for example) gay men are more sensationalised in certain forms of media than lesbians, as some of these sources suggest; however, it does indicate that the overall landscape of representation and visibility is more nuanced than a blanket declaration that lesbians or gender-nonconforming “females” are wholly invisible in Japanese culture. On the contrary, as well as holding iconic status in *shōjo* culture, they appear to make up a significant proportion of gender-nonconforming characters in manga/anime. Of course, a fuller quantitative review would be needed to substantiate this hypothesis. On that note, in the following section, I will review this and other possible future directions for these findings.

### 7.3. Further considerations

#### *7.3.1 Addressing gender/sex disparities*

I have presented as comprehensive as possible an assessment of my chosen scope, within the constraints of the space and time available to me. However, there are some gaps remaining, which could be taken as signposts to new directions of investigation. One significant absence in this thesis, as previously stated, is that of gender-nonconforming characters who are construed as “biologically male” or departing from maleness; with the exceptions of Zoisite and Kunzite, antagonists in *Sailor Moon*, and Ranka, a minor character and foil to protagonist Haruhi in *Ouran High School Host Club*, all examples of gender nonconformity I have examined have concerned characters who were explicitly depicted as “biologically female.” This imbalance can be explained by *shōjo*’s historical existence as a cultural space that has been conceived as belonging to, or primarily concerning, girls and women as normatively defined. In most of these depictions, “girl” is a point of departure: girl who was raised as a boy, girl who is both male and female, girl who passes as male, and so on. Despite the elements of feminist and lesbian counterculture that have crossed over with *shōjo* manga/anime, these media forms are also inescapably mainstream. That is, these franchises are corporate products, and their “revolutionary” or subversive quality is not without certain caveats (Shamoon 2012: 102; Allison 2006: 133-143; Schodt 1996: 93-94). Rather than serving as an idealistic open

space in which all conceivable groups affected by gender/sexual oppression — i.e. Japan’s so-called “queer multitudes” (Noyé & Rebutini 2021) — have been equally able to articulate their stories, *shōjo* comprises forms in which some Japanese women have been able to employ themes of gender/sexual nonconformity and alienation from normative roles within the gendered constraints of the manga/anime industry, and is in some sense possibly bounded by essentialist conceptions of gender/sex. One possible course of further investigation would be the realm of *dōjinshi*, or self-published manga, which constitutes a thriving subculture of its own; it is conceivable that *shōjo* (or *shōjo*-inspired) content created outside of the corporate publishing industry might have greater variation in its subjects. Also notably, *dōjinshi* culture is already intertwined with the histories I have discussed here, being a common medium for derivative works, BL (boys’ love), and other subgenres with a sexual focus (Shamoon 2012: 112), as well as LGBT, queer, and intersex topics. Perhaps indicating the convergence of these issues, a 2018 documentary film covered the life and career of an intersex manga artist, Arai Shō, who is best known for a series of educational manga about “sexual minorities” (Loveridge 2018<sup>91</sup>). Pursuing this direction would lead to many questions not only about the presence of other gender-nonconforming subjectivities in manga/anime subcultures, but also about the particular frameworks of gender/sexuality they themselves might be developing or advancing.

Alternatively, one might attempt a survey of all manga and anime for depictions of specifically “male-assigned” nonconformity, or those in which the characters are not simply construed as “biological females”; these depictions do exist, but seem to be more commonly in *shōnen* or in series that do not fall neatly into the *shōjo*-*shōnen* dichotomy, which is increasingly common as these categories exert mutual influence on one another, actual audiences range widely in age and gender, and marketing comes to rely more on genres proper — i.e. sports, music, romance, comedy. These depictions are no less complex/nuanced than the ones found in the *shōjo* series discussed here, and often raise similar questions around identity and language. For example, the seminal *shōnen* series *Hunter X Hunter* — whose creator happens to be the husband of *Sailor Moon* creator

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<sup>91</sup> <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/interest/2018-05-10/intersex-manga-creator-sho-arai-publishes-book-about-sexual-minorities/.131404>

Takeuchi Naoko — invokes gender nonconformity for purposes of both sexual comedy and serious character drama. In an instance of the former, a female character offers a bet on her anatomical sex, and a male character bets that she is really a crossdressing *okama* in order to be allowed to touch her; his lecherous attitude is construed as humorous. However, a later story arc centres on Alluka, the sister of protagonist Killua, both of whom come from a dysfunctional and violent family. The other family members refer to Alluka as a son or brother, but she is feminine-presenting, and Killua is adamant that she is a girl (*onna no ko*). This aspect of Alluka's character is presented without reference to concrete identifying terms, but takes shape instead through the social relations between the family members. Her portrayal can also be understood within the context of gendered messaging about masculinity and femininity in the specific realm of *shōnen*. English-language interpretations of Alluka have varied between application and rejection of transgender identity frameworks, and these interpretations have been developed and contested primarily in the arena of fan translation (on the sides of both production and consumption). Similarly generative examples can be drawn from many other series, which could prompt an investigation into a possible relationship between gendered category/genre and translation of gender/sexuality (nonconforming or otherwise), if not a narrower question of representation of specific identities and translation as a tool in the construction of new gender/sexual taxonomies.

### *7.3.2 Fan versus professional translation*

Yet another path of inquiry might explore the changing nature of the distinction between professional translation and fan translation. As demonstrated in the case studies of *Sailor Moon* and *Ouran*, fan translators and professional translators have often taken drastically different approaches to the translation of gender nonconformity, with the professional approach tending toward erasure and sublimation of non-heterosexual expression. As previously noted with regard to the *Rose* case study, more recent examples may suggest that this trend is changing. However, this is not to claim the existence of a uniform “progress” which has occurred in a straightforward, linear fashion. While a positive or “faithful” approach to perceived nonconforming gender/sexuality may no longer be the distinct purview of fan translators, fan translation as a practice has hardly lost its *raison*

d'être. The manga/anime translation industry may have been bolstered in certain ways by the continuing development of communicative technologies and growth of international markets, but audiences for "pirated" manga and anime translations persist in spite of and alongside of the increasing availability of paid, licensed translations on platforms such as Netflix and Hulu. Although direct engagement in fan communities is no longer remotely necessary to access fan translations of manga/anime, there is still enough of a delay between the releases of original Japanese content and English translations that amateur translators continue to self-organise to make translations available sooner. Likewise, changes to the digital landscape have not snuffed out the precedent of fan communities in which translation also serves as a form of social engagement, language pedagogy, and/or leisure activity. It seems likely, then, that the dominant ethos of fan translation will come to be defined by different priorities pertaining to these aims — though at the same time, professional translations may yet address portrayals of nonconforming gender/sexuality in ways fans find problematic or dissatisfying, in which case fan translation will undoubtedly remain as one possible avenue in which these issues can be played out.

Interestingly, some recent cases suggest a possible reversal of the priorities of fan translators and professional translators where gender nonconformity is concerned (rather than e.g. professional translators simply "catching up" to fan translators). The series *Blue Period* features a character, Yuka, who is portrayed as being male, feminine-presenting, and desiring male partners. While specific labels are not used, dialogue includes overt discussions of Yuka's gender/sexuality. The official English subtitles of the anime, licensed by Netflix and released on an ongoing basis in 2021 in step with the original Japanese release, use gender-neutral pronouns (the singular "they") for Yuka, and translates Yuka's lines about their gender/sexual identity very closely from the Japanese. On the other hand, in fan subtitles released on unlicensed streaming websites several days in advance of the Netflix subtitles, no such considerations appear to have been made; instead, the translation (which also has numerous basic issues with comprehension of the Japanese) characterises Yuka and others as making negative value judgments of Yuka's gender/sexuality. Whereas in the 1990s and 2000s, it was fan translators who were more likely to approach nonconforming gender/sexuality with

sensitivity to the nuances of the source material, and professional translators employed by large publishing companies who were more likely to censor it or frame it negatively, now it is large publishers who may be materially incentivised to take a conscientious approach. DIC and Cloverway's censorship of *Sailor Moon* remains widely part of English-speaking fan community knowledge, as it was often cited surrounding the 2014 redub by Viz Media. When Viz Media published promotional materials that referred to Haruka and Michiru as "friends," fans were quick to respond and demand a "correction" (Peters 2019<sup>92</sup>). While a clear difference remains in professional versus fan-oriented translation practices, as other research has established (Vazquez-Calvo et al 2019), their individual tendencies and their relationship to one another have changed as a result of shifts in the politics of censorship and representation of gender/sexuality, which further research could elucidate.

### 7.3.3 Other limitations

In addition to the points discussed above, there are a few other limitations to my research worth briefly articulating. One limitation is that the difficulties I encountered in accessing primary materials (discussed in Chapter 3.1.2) resulted in my data set providing less of a complete picture than I initially intended. First and foremost, the *Rose* case study would have benefited greatly from the inclusion of both the official anime subtitles from Nozomi Entertainment/RightStuf and the first manga translation by Frederik Schodt. The official subtitles would represent a case of professional translation from 2013, a few years into the current era of "queer-conscious" manga/anime fandom and translation — a case distinct from the 2005 fansubs both in historical context and material production/distribution. Likewise, although the Schodt translation was incomplete and could not be used for a full direct comparative analysis with the 2019 Udon Entertainment translation, it would provide a meaningful glimpse into a different historical moment — 1981, before *shōjo* media and fan culture had taken root in Anglophone spheres — as well as presenting an instance of explicitly pedagogical translation, which could have been usefully contrasted with the entertainment-focused translations I was able to

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<sup>92</sup> <https://comicbook.com/anime/news/sailor-moon-sailor-stars-viz-media-apology-error-lesbian-neptune/>

examine. If the possibility had not been foreclosed by time/space constraints and the lack of accessible digital archives, it would also have been useful to compare all seasons of *Sailor Moon*, as well as the new Viz Media dub from 2014, and to compare multiple fan translations (where multiple exist). Although fan translations are unlikely to have varied enormously in some regards given the commonality of certain material aspects of their production, it cannot be said that fan translations are actually homogeneous or interchangeable, and more data would have made for a more robust analysis. It would have been particularly interesting to observe variations in interpretations of characters such as Haruhi, whose gender was (anecdotally) a topic of much debate and discourse in 2000s-2010s fan communities.

On this note, I also acknowledge my work's limited engagement with reception studies and consider this field a significant arena for future research on the subject of translating gender nonconformity. Although this thesis is oriented firmly in translation studies, much of my analysis of the material production, distribution, and consumption of translated manga/anime takes place on similar terrain to reception studies. That is, the issue of gender/sexual frameworks being propagated or contested through translation is fundamentally an issue of how texts are not only translated but received. An investigation into audience reception of translations of gender nonconformity — considering, for example, the role of these translations in the negotiation and construction of identities or gender ideologies among readers/viewers — would complement and substantiate many of my arguments regarding social and political impact. Integrated with other components of my theoretical framework, this line of inquiry could produce a “materialist queer reception studies” addressing the role of translated nonconformity in not only the development of audiences' own identities or understandings of gender/sexuality, but also audience perceptions of Japanese culture with respect to gender/sexuality, and the broader intercultural construction of queer and trans narratives which has been noted since the 1990s. While my thesis has addressed the questions of *how* gender nonconformity has been translated and *why*, a continuation in the direction of reception studies would address more deeply *why* this *matters*.

## 7.4. Conclusion

Gender nonconformity can perhaps be said to occupy a “queer” positionality in the wider world of manga and anime. Through language, visual grammar, and reference to real-world social structures, gender-nonconforming characters are marked as divergent from the typical or normal gender/sexual embodiment of the cisgender, heterosexual man or woman. Yet they have also become icons that are foundational to the media form itself, proliferating their influence throughout a range of genres and titles. At the outset of this research, I sought to compile a full list of manga/anime series that prominently featured gender nonconformity and quickly realised that this would not be realistically possible. This can only be more true today, three years later. Many notable titles appeared contemporaneously with or shortly after *Ouran*, such as *Princess Jellyfish (Kurage-hime)*, a *josei* (women’s) manga (2008-2017) and anime (2010) series about an *otaku* girl and a beautiful crossdressing boy, and *Wandering Son (Hōrō musuko)*, a drama manga (2002-2013) and anime (2011) about two transgender middle schoolers. The 2016 sports anime *Yuri!! on Ice* gained particular fame among Western fans for its depiction of gay characters and relationships, including a kiss scene and open discussion of gender fluidity. More recently, *Stars Align (Hoshiai no sora)* (2019-2020), a drama and sports anime about a middle school volleyball team, has featured a main character who comes out as “X-gender,” a Japanese non-binary gender category that emerged in the 1990s (Dale 2019: 63-64), as well as a recurring side character who is revealed as a transgender man. Furthermore, depiction of non-normative gender/sexuality has not been limited to the realistic; *Land of the Lustrous (Hōseki no kuni)*, a fantasy action manga (2012-ongoing) and anime (2017), depicts a society of genderless/androgynous humanoid gemstones, as well as other species with distinct gender/sex systems, alongside Buddhist themes and imagery from Japanese mythology.

As I discovered three years ago, simply compiling and categorising the full volume of examples would comprise a thesis in itself. Whereas nonconforming gender/sexuality has only recently begun to surface in mainstream Western Anglophone media — and remains heavily contested and/or sanitised, particularly in content produced for children — vast and diverse representations of gender nonconformity can be found in manga and anime. Making sense of these portrayals, as well as their translations, requires a nuanced

understanding of local conditions and the historical exchange of ideological frameworks. Much as foundational feminist translation theory has been noted to be incompatible with the Japanese context, as it is based on the false presumption that women's universal problem is invisibility (Furukawa 2016: 76-77), these findings should pose a further challenge to the narrative that Japanese sexual minorities face the same issues with media representation (or lack thereof) as Western LGBT/queer people (McLelland 2000: 467-469). Indeed, whereas manga and anime were first primarily imported and translated into English for a gender-normative male audience (Schodt 2016: 7), the arrival of *shōjo* series like *Sailor Moon* drew mass female audiences and led to the formation of distinct female-gendered fan identities (Okabe & Ishida 2012: 207; Allison 2006: 154-156), and the presence of gender nonconformity or perceived "queerness" in these series has also attracted an audience consisting of "queer multitudes" in Western Anglophone contexts.

#### *7.4.1 Contributions*

The critical study of manga/anime has proliferated in the last two decades, as have studies of gender/sexuality in relation to language, translation, and modern capitalism and imperialism. Building on pre-existing work on these topics, this thesis establishes a historical narrative of how modern gender/sexual frameworks and *shōjo* media cultures have developed in tandem over the course of 150 years and, in so doing, makes several noteworthy contributions to the associated fields of study. Firstly, my theoretical framework brings dialectical materialist feminism to the domain of multimodality, considering the material construction of gender/sexual categories and norms to be inherently multimodal in practice, and examining the function of different modes — particularly the visual — in modern capitalist economies and gender orders. Although feminist theory has long engaged with media (e.g. through film theory with the notion of the "male gaze"), there has as of yet been no clear multimodal turn in feminism, nor a feminist turn in multimodality. In this research, then, I have modelled a path that these hypothetical turns might follow. By linking multimodality to materiality, and materiality to a materialist feminist analysis, I have taken multimodality to its logical conclusion, showing the inseparability of production, form, and content (Kaindl 2013) and politicising not only the contents of texts but the means of their creation and consumption. I applied this

theoretical approach to three different historically significant *shōjo* series in which gender nonconformity figured prominently, treating each case study as a stepping stone for the next. The results of my analysis, though they do not amount to a *complete* review in any sense, do serve to illuminate the overall mutually constitutive material relationship between manga/anime culture and industry, historical processes of imperialism, modernisation, and nation-building, and hegemonic systems of gender/sexual normality and nonconformity. Through theoretical discussion and translation analysis, I identified the manifestations and impacts of this relationship in/on the English translations of each series, adding to the body of work on fan translation, particularly of manga/anime, as distinct from professional translation (Vazquez-Calvo et al 2019) and relating the norms and practices of fan translation specifically to theoretical/political issues of gender/sexuality in translation.

Likewise, my theoretical framework brings together several supposedly distinct or disparate strands of feminist thought into a cohesive whole. I showed the theoretical alignment of French lesbian materialist feminist theory (Wittig 1992) with Japanese feminist scholars' critical interpretations of gender nonconformity, androgyny, and sexuality in *shōjo* culture (Anan 2014, Fujimoto 2014) and Japanese feminist linguistic research (Nakamura 2014, Inoue 2006) — as well as the relevance of a materialist lens to the consumerist character of the *shōjo* media industry and its commodification of radical gender-nonconforming aesthetics. Furthermore, materialist feminism is understood here through decolonial, trans, and queer advancements, demonstrating the applicability of the theory to gendered positionalities other than the idealised gender-normative heterosexual female, and contributing to the small but growing body of research based in trans-queer feminist materialism (Noyé & Rebutini 2021). In this way, I have attempted to contribute to the revival of a radical understanding of Wittig's lesbian feminist materialism as an intrinsically trans, queer, and anti-essentialist philosophy, which recognises structural oppression but rejects the naturalisation of categories of power (Henderson 2018). As repression of nonconforming gender/sexuality intensifies under Anglophone capitalist regimes on both sides of the Atlantic, the political and ideological tensions exemplified by *The Rose of Versailles* in 1970s Japan — that is, between radical and neoliberal models of gender/sexual nonconformity and liberation —

can be seen to re-emerge. With English-language translation of manga/anime making up a multi-billion dollar international industry that is anchored particularly in the U.S., and with the precedent long set for Anglophone fans to look to manga/anime for LGBT representation, the political questions and challenges of translating gender nonconformity raised in this thesis will only become more salient in the coming years and decades. Thus, finally and fundamentally, I have brought my trans-queer materialist feminist lens to the field of translation studies, setting the stage for further research to approach the translation of gender nonconformity as ideologically and materially motivated. I constructed an extensive argument against biological foundationalism and other universalising Western feminist approaches that have predominated in feminist translation, emphasising the assimilative power over ontological frameworks of gender/sexuality that can be (and frequently has been) wielded through processes of translation (Oyěwùmí 2016). Whereas much of the literature on gender in translation has focused on particular normative categories of “women,” or (more recently) on particular positionalities delineated as specifically “queer” or “trans,” this thesis puts forward gender nonconformity as an analytical category based on marked divergence from materially enforced norms. This framing could be adopted or adapted for investigations of gender nonconformity in translation in other linguistic and cultural contexts. Ultimately, this research has charted a vital new approach to the topic of gender/sexuality in translation, opening up many possible directions for a feminist, multimodal, and materialist translation studies.

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