2008

Female Protagonists in Shōjo Manga - From the Rescuers to the Rescued

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FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN SHŌJO MANGA – FROM THE RESCUERS TO THE RESCUED

A Thesis Presented

by

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Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2008

Japanese

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Stephen D. Miller, for providing me with direction and guidance every step of the way. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Bruce P. Baird, Dr. N.C. Christopher Couch, and Dr. Amanda C. Seaman, for their insightful comments and suggestions. I am grateful for the support that my entire committee provided. Special thanks to Sharon Domier, our fantastic East Asian librarian, for her assistance in finding a number of the sources utilized in this thesis.

A big thank you goes out to Mom, Dad, Yoshi, and everyone else who cheered me on!

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO *SHŌJO MANGA*

Shōjo manga is a popular form of entertainment for girls in Japan. While *manga* refers to graphic novels in general, the word "*shōjo*" indicates a particular genre of *manga* that is aimed at girls. *Shōjo manga* is just one facet of the extensive history of *manga* that can be traced back to pictorial narratives such as *Chōjūgiga* (Animal Scrolls), produced by Bishop Toba in beginning of the 12th century.[1] However, Futagami Hirokazu[2] states that it is hard to pinpoint exactly where the history of *shōjo manga* itself begins.[3] He says that in the beginning "there was no consciousness to divide *manga* into two genres, like boys' novels and girls' novels…Even on the side of the *mangaka* (*manga* writers), there was nothing to clearly differentiate what they wrote as *shōjo manga*; they merely felt like they did nothing more than supply the arrangement of necessary tools and stories that would delight girls."[4]

In the early 20th century, *shōjo manga* was a regular feature in monthly magazines for young girls.[5] It received limited exposure due to the fact that there were only three monthly magazines for girls founded from the beginning of the 20th century until 1945: *Shōjokai* (Girls' World; 1902-1912)*, Shōjo no tomo* (Girls' Friend; 1908-1955)*, and Shōjo kurabu* (Girls' Club; 1923-1962).[6] Since *Shōjokai* was only published for ten years, it is worth noting that for the majority of this period there were only two

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[1] Frederik L. Schodt, *Manga! manga! The world of Japanese comics*, 3rd ed., (Tokyo: Kodansha:1983), 28.
[2] The names of authors of Japanese works and *manga* characters will be presented as family name first and given name last.
[3] Futagami Hirokazu, *Shōjo manga no keifu*, (Tokyo: Pengin Shobō, 2005), 18.
[4] Ibid, 18.
[5] Schodt, 95.
[6] Futagami, 227.

monthly publications for girls.[7] This further limited *shōjo manga*'s exposure. While

manga in general saw very slow growth directly following the end of World War II,

once Japan entered the 1950s, there was a *shōjo manga* boom. The establishment of

new monthly publications for young girls, such as *Nakayoshi* (Best Friends; 1955),

Ribon (Ribbon; 1955), and the now defunct *Shōjo bukku* (Girl's Book; 1951-1963),[8]

showed that girls were recognized as consumers. Eventually the content in magazines

like *Nakayoshi* and *Ribon* came to consist of nothing but *shōjo manga*.

As a result of its sudden popularity *shōjo manga* became a recognized genre,

and this popularity enabled it to become an effective method of both advocating and

reflecting social change. Since the genre we know as *shōjo manga* came into being, a

number of works with progressive ideas have both quietly and outright questioned the

status quo of Japanese females. However, this connection between *shōjo manga* and

social change is not as prominent today as it has been in the past. Social changes that

are presently taking place in Japan are largely excluded from *shōjo manga* storylines.

Female protagonists have taken steps away from equality in a genre that has

traditionally taken steps towards it. Modern Japanese females are far more

independent—namely, less dependent upon males—than previous generations, and it

seems that this independence is acquired as they age. In today's *shōjo manga*, however,

female protagonists become far more dependent upon males as they age. In order to

better understand how the connection between today's *shōjo manga* and social change

has weakened, we must first examine *shōjo manga* from the 1950s to the 1970s.

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[7] Ibid, 227.
[8] Ibid, 228-229.

1.1 *Shōjo Manga* and Social Change from the 1950s to the 1970s

After the creation of a new constitution in 1946, Japanese women were, in principle, equal. Article 14 stated, "All people are equal under the law, and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of…sex…."[9] In spite of this, the status of females stagnated under the prevailing thinking that clearly defined what females could/should do and could/should not do. *Ribon no kishi* (Ribbon Knight[10]) by Tezuka Osamu questioned this prevalent way of thinking about females and gender in general when it began its serialization in *Shōjo kurabu* in 1953.[11] *Ribon no kishi* tells the story of Sapphire, a female who has both a boy's heart and a girl's heart. She was born to the king and queen of "Silverland, a fictional country that resembles Europe."[12] In this country, however, a female cannot claim the throne. In order to conceal this fact from her uncle, who wants to claim the throne as his own, her parents raised Sapphire as a boy from the minute she was born.[13]

Young girls who read *Ribon no kishi* in the 1950s did not have the same degree of freedom that young boys had. However, these girls were able to experience that freedom through *manga* such as *Ribon no kishi*. Not only did Sapphire dress in "unfeminine" ways, but she was also able to act like a boy by doing things such as sword fighting and horseback riding,[14] things that a girl should not do according to gender roles at the time. The readers knew that even though Sapphire wore a male's

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[9] National Diet Library, The Constitution of Japan | Birth of the Constitution of Japan, http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c01.html. (Accessed April 5, 2008).

[10] *Ribon no kishi* is sold in English-language markets as *Princess Knight*.

[11] Futagami, 229

[12] Natsuko Onoda, "Drag prince in the spotlight: Theatrical cross-dressing in Osamu Tezuka's early shōjo manga," *International Journal of Comic Art* (Fall 2002), 135.

[13] Taniguchi Hideko, "Shōjo manga ni okeru dansō—jendā no shiten kara," *Gengo bunka ronkyū* 15 (2002), 106.

[14] Ibid, 106.

clothing and did "boyish" things she was a girl just like them. If the main character was

a real boy, the experience would not have been the same for a female reader. While

there are a number of issues that can be raised concerning the fact that Sapphire has to

disguise herself as a male in order to be truly free and equal, *Ribon no kishi* should be

seen as an important yet subtle critique of gender inequality produced by a male for a

female audience.

In addition to gender issues, *shōjo manga* of the 1960s also promoted

individuality. Whereas *shōjo manga* prior to the 1960s tried to reach a majority of

readers, *manga* in the 1960s tried to reach special interest groups. This meant that

readers could no longer connect with every story. Thorn says that this is "Because

readers looked for works that clicked with them personally, they were not content to

simply read what everyone else was reading."[15] In other words, *shōjo manga* was

beginning to de-emphasize the idea of cultural homogeneity. This shift had its roots in

the Summer Olympics. In 1964, the Japanese women's volleyball team won the gold

medal at the Tokyo Summer Olympics,[16] and at the Mexico City Summer Olympics in

1968 the team won the silver medal.[17] Curiously, there was no sudden interest in

volleyball in 1964 or 1965, but by the end of 1968, there were two popular volleyball

themed series: *Atakku No.1* (Attack No. 1) by Urano Chikako and *Sain wa V!* (The Sign

is V!) by Mochizuki Akira. While both works were published in 1968, only *Atakku

No.1* predated the Summer Olympics. This trend of specialized sports *manga* continued

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[15] Matt Thorn, "Shōjo manga – something for girls," *Japan Quarterly*, (July-Sept. 2001), 49.
[16] Schodt, 98.
[17] Olympics Records, http://www.olympics-records.com/medalistbyyear.asp. (Accessed April 5, 2008).

into the 1970s with series such as the popular tennis story *Ēsu wo nerae* (Aim For the Ace) by Yamamoto Sumika in 1973.[18]

      Atenshon purīzu (Attention Please), written by Hosokawa Chieko and published from 1970 to 1971, was not only a specialized interest *manga*, but it was also among the first serialized stories to focus on working females. In this story, the female protagonist**,** Misaki Yōko moves to Tokyo to try and become a stewardess.[19] While one could argue that a career as a stewardess is a "feminine" career when compared to a "masculine" career such as a doctor, it was important that younger readers got to see ambitious females working in any sort of salaried job. It is likely that many girls who read *Atenshon purīzu* grew up with stay-at-home mothers as their female role models so they may not have otherwise been exposed to the benefits of a profession outside the home.

      The appearance of the working female in *shōjo manga* reflected a changing society. In the 1960s, only thirty percent of women in their early twenties were employed, but in the 1970s, seventy-percent were employed.[20] The number of women in professions increased in general, and the profession of *mangaka* was no exception. While the majority of *shōjo manga* readers had always been female, beginning in the early 1970s, the majority of *mangaka* had become female as well.[21] As Schodt says, "Girls who had been raised on *Ribon no kishi* and other girls' story-comics drawn by

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[18] Futagami, 244.
[19] "Tosho no ie" shōjo manga shiryōshitsu: Hosokawa Chieko, http://www.toshonoie.net/shojo/05_list/hosokawa-works.html. (Accessed April 5, 2008).
[20] Fusami Ogi, "Gender insubordination in Japanese comics (manga) for girls," *Illustrating Asia: Comics, humor magazines, and picture books*, John A. Lent, ed., (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 173.
[21] Ibid, 174.

men began to wonder why there weren't more women drawing them."[22] *Shōjo manga*,

which was initially overwhelmingly written by men, had finally become a genre written

by females for females. The *Hana no nijūyonengumi* (The Team of Year 24 Flowers[23]),

a group of female *shōjo manga* writers who were all born in or about Shōwa 24

(1949)[24], were at the forefront of this increase in female *mangaka*. *Berusaiyu no bara*

(Rose of Versailles) by Ikeda Riyoko, *Tōma no shinzō* (The Heart of Thomas) by Hagio

Moto, and *Kaze to ki no uta* (The Song of the Wind and the Trees) by Takemiya Keiko

are just some of the many well known works by *mangaka* from this group.

This shift in the number of female authors created a change in *shōjo manga*'s

unwritten code of morals, specifically those regarding sexuality. Up until the 1970s,

sexuality was considered inappropriate for *shōjo manga* and was thus non-existent on

its pages. As a medium for social change, it seems only natural that *shōjo manga*

gradually integrated sexuality into its stories as sexual dynamics in society changed.

However, authors in the 1970s used pairs of male characters, as opposed to a male and a

female character, in order to incorporate sexuality into *shōjo manga*. As Fujimoto says,

"By portraying 'forbidden' homosexual love, these comics sidestepped the easiness of

heterosexual love to focus on the issue of 'pure love'."[25] The success of these works

helped to pave the way for the establishment of the boys' love, or *yaoi*, genre.

As evidenced by *Ribon no kishi*, readers make connections with the characters in

a story. Even if a female reader cannot relate to a female protagonist in terms of age or

hobbies, she can always connect with a female character based upon their shared

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[22] Schodt, 97.

[23] They are often simply called *Nijūyonengumi* (The Year 24 Team).

[24] Yukari Fujimoto, "A life-size mirror: Women's self-representation in girls' comics," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* (December 1991), 53.

[25] Ibid, 56.

gender. Therefore, if a male and a female were depicted in a sexual situation, it may have compromised the *shōjo*'s innocence through her gender-based connection with the female. However, if two males were depicted in a sexual situation, the reader would have been unable to relate as a result of her gender. She, thus, would have been able to focus only on the "pure love" aspects of the relationship. When *mangaka* chose to adopt "non-female bodies, the representations in *shōjo manga* create[d] the *shōjo* at the ideological level, while showing what *shōjo* [could not] readily comprehend: that is, something beyond the category of *shōjo*."[26] This introduction of sexuality forever changed the landscape of *shōjo manga*. In order to see its impact, we must now turn our attention to today's *shōjo manga*.

1.2 Today's *Shōjo Manga*

While present-day *shōjo manga* has not completely undone the aforementioned thirty years' worth of progress, it has not shown a concerted effort to continue that progress over the past few decades. Female protagonists are no longer actively striving to do what society thinks they cannot or should not. There is a sense of antipathy in *manga* with regard to events that do not directly influence the characters or setting. The majority of female protagonists and supporting female characters in any given *manga* are students. In other words, instances of working females in *manga* for older and younger girls alike have become less common. Some female protagonists hold part-time jobs, but most do not. Certain females have multiple identities that theoretically could be called "professions," such as super hero or pop idol, but even these females are rare. *Shōjo manga* storylines ultimately seem to converge on a single topic: romance.

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[26] Ogi, 182.

Once a certain age is reached, at some point in time female protagonists, the majority of whom are unemployed students unconcerned with the world around them, enter into relationships. This repeated pattern, meant to appeal to a wide audience, seems to be sending a message that conformity—being in a romantic relationship— is good, and anyone who conforms is "normal."

In addition, the idea of "showing something beyond the category of *shōjo*" has become commonplace, and as a result it has given *shōjo manga* a questionable reputation. The difference between *shōjo manga* from the 1970s and today's *shōjo manga* is that today's *shōjo manga* uniformly shows little hesitation in portraying a male and a female in sexual situations. In 2007, the *Nihon* PTA *Zenkoku Kyōgikai* (The National Congress of Parents and Teachers Association of Japan) released its' annual "Kodomo to media ni kansuru ishiki chōsa" (Survey on Awareness of Children and Media) based on information from 2006. This survey was the first to feature the "*Yomasetakunai zasshi*" (Magazines I Don't Want to Let My Child Read) category. *Shōjo komikku* (Girls' Comic; Shōgakukan) was ranked number one. *Ciao* (Shōgakukan), *Nakayoshi* (Kōdansha), and *Bessatsu Furendo* (Another Volume Friend; Kōdansha) were ranked second through fourth respectively.[27] The top four magazines parents do not want their children to read are monthly *shōjo manga* magazines with the exception of *Shōjo komikku*, which is bi-weekly.

When parents were asked why they didn't want their children to read these magazines, sixty percent of them said that "there were numerous details about sex, and

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[27] Nihon PTA Zenoku Kyōgikai, "Kodomo to media ni kansuru ishiki chōsa," 66.

this was causing their children to have an unnecessary interest."[28] Based on this

statement, it is evident that *shōjo manga* is, indeed, leaving less to the imagination of

the reader these days, and social change is no longer associated with *shōjo manga*. The

effects of the sexual revolution in *shōjo manga* are still evident not only in *manga* itself

but in the reactions to *manga* as well as evidenced by the survey. If the *shōjo manga*

that today's girls read continued to advocate or move beyond the social change found in

shōjo manga that their mothers read, perhaps the PTA's survey would have yielded

different results.

1.3 What This Thesis Intends to Examine

While it cannot be said that Japanese females have attained the equality set forth

in the constitution, they have, indeed, made great strides towards it. As previously

stated, today's generation of Japanese females is far less dependent upon males than

past generations. For many of today's Japanese women, "men are merely to be put up

with."[29] In other words, women no longer view them as people upon whom they want

to depend. The new-found independence of Japanese women is evidenced in issues

such as Japan's falling birthrate,[30] females who choose to work instead of starting or

focusing solely on a family, an increase in both the marriage age,[31] and the number of

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[28] Ibid, 67.

[29] Nicholas Bornoff, *Pink samurai: Love, marriage, and sex in contemporary Japan*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1991), 467.

[30] Japan's birthrate is 1.32. Kokuritsu shakai hoshō/ jinkō mondai kenkyūjo, Shusshōsū oyobi gōkei tokushu shusshōritsu no sui'i, http://www.ipss.go.jp/syoushika/seisaku/html/111b1.htm. (Accessed March 31, 2008).

[31] In 2005, the average age of marriage for a female was 29.4. In 1990 it was 26.9, and by 2000 it had increased to 28.2. Kōseirōdōshō, *Jinkō dōtai tōkei*, (2007).

females who are unmarried.[32] In addition, many of today's Japanese women, but not

men, are adaptable internationalists.[33] These women serve as Japan's connection to the

rest of the world.

Everyday females have clearly taken steps towards independence, but female

protagonists in *shōjo manga* still seem to be very dependent upon males. More

specifically, they become increasingly more dependent upon males as the target age of

the audience rises. This means that a female protagonist in a series targeted at a

younger audience is far less likely to depend on a male than one who appears in a series

targeted at an older audience. This thesis will document the changes that occur, paying

close attention to themes such as fantasy and romance.

In order to examine the changes that take place, I have divided *shōjo manga* into

three distinct categories: an age 9-13 group, an age 11-15 group, and an age 15-21

group. I arrived at these numbers by utilizing readership statistics given in books,

analyzing peoples' perceived age ranges of monthly *shōjo manga* publications on the

internet, examining the ages of readers who have written into certain monthly

publications, and using information presented by publishers themselves where possible.

The very definition of a *shōjo* is something that varies from scholar to scholar, and this

was taken into account as well. The concept of *shōjo* has been defined in terms of both

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[32] As of 2005, 23.2% of females 15 and over were unmarried. The increase in the number of unmarried women is most prominent in women aged 25-29. In 1990, 40.2% of women in this age bracket were unmarried, and this number increased to 54% in 2000. By 2005, 59.0% of females aged 25-29 were unmarried. It is also worth noting that the percentage of unmarried women between the ages of 30-34 rose from 19.7% in 1995 to 32.0% in 2005. Ibid.

[33] Karen Kelsky, *Women on the verge: Japanese women, Western dreams*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 117-121.

age[34] and lifestyle.[35] Because it is possible that based upon one definition a twenty-one

year old female cannot be considered a *shōjo*, but under another definition this is

possible provided she meets certain criteria, this thesis has taken both kinds of

definitions into consideration. In addition to *shōjo*, the words "independent" and

"independence" must be defined. For the purposes of this thesis someone who is

"independent" shall be defined as a person who does not depend or count on others and

has the drive to do things of their own volition.[36] "Independence" shall be defined as

being self-sufficient.[37]

Despite these set boundaries, each and every reader may not fit neatly into a

category. First, there is some overlap between the groups. This is an attempt to account

for the fact that a reader will not simply stop reading a publication the moment that she

turns a certain age. Second, the practice of "reading up"—individuals read material

aimed at an age group higher than the one to which they belong—has been documented

with magazines, so it can be surmised that it also occurs with *shōjo manga*.[38] Some

readers may continue to follow works aimed at an age group that they have already

exited as well, but there is no statistical data with regards to either "reading up" or

"reading down." It should also be mentioned that within the same age group, and even

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[34] "Strictly speaking, the term *shōjo manga* refers only to those aimed explicitly at girls below the age of 18, but they are also read widely by women who can no longer be called 'girls.'" Thorn, 43.

[35] For example, a married female is not considered a *shōjo*: "Until they marry, and thus cease to be *shōjo*…." John Whittier Treat, "Yoshimoto Banana writes home," *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, John Whittier Treat, ed., (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 281.

[36] （他の人・ものに）たよらない、依存しない、独立心の強い. Tomoshichi Konishi and Kōsei Minamide, *Taishūkan's genius English-Japanese Dictionary=Jīniasu eiwa jiten*, 3rd ed., (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 2001).

[37] 自立（した）. Ibid.

[38] Merry White, "The Marketing of Adolescence in Japan: Buying and Dreaming," *Women, media, and consumption in Japan*, Brian Moeran, Lise Skov, eds., (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 263.

within the same publication, there are certain works and publications that are more "childish" than others as well as those that are more "mature."

In order to show that the ideas in this thesis are not limited to a single publication or publisher, I selected works from three major publishers: Kōdansha, Shūeisha, and Shōgakukan. Each of these three publishers have a monthly, or in some cases bi-weekly, publication aimed at the 9-13 age group, the 11-15 age group, and the 15-21 age group for a total of nine publications. One work was selected from each of these nine publications. There are far more than three publishers in the *shōjo manga* market, but I limited the focus of this thesis to three due to time constraints. Moreover, not all publishers market monthly or bi-weekly publications towards all three age groups. For example, Hakusensha reaches the age 11-15 group with the popular bi-weekly publication *Hana to yume* (Flowers and Dreams) and the monthly publication *Lala*, but it does not currently have any publications targeted at the 9-13 or 15-21 age groups.

The nine works chosen to represent the three publishers were selected based upon title recognition (popularity), author, time frame (all works are from the Heisei era) and personal preference. The three works that will represent the 9-13 age group are *Bishōjo senshi Sērā Mūn* (Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon; written by Takeuchi Naoko, originally serialized by Kōdansha in *Nakayoshi*), *Shōjo kakumei Utena* (Revolutionary Girl Utena; written by Saitō Chiho, originally serialized by Shōgakukan in *Ciao*), and *Kodomo no omocha* (Child's Toy; written by Obana Miho, originally serialized by Shūeisha in *Ribon*). The three works that will represent the 11-15 age group are *Pīchi gāru* (Peach Girl; written by Sakurai Miwa, originally serialized by Kōdansha in

Bessatsu furendo), *Fushigi Yūgi* (Mysterious Play; written by Watase Yū, originally serialized by Shōgakukan in *Shōjo komikku*), and *Hana yori dango* (Boys Over Flowers; written by Kamio Yōko, originally serialized by Shūeisha in *Māgaretto*, or *Margaret*). The three works that will represent the 15-21 age group are *Boys esute* (Boys Beauty Clinic; written by Masaki Sōko, originally serialized by Kōdansha in *Dezāto*, or *Dessert*), *Sex=Love*[2] (written by Shinjō Mayu, originally serialized by Shōgakukan in *Cheese!*), and *Nana* (written by Yazawa Ai, currently serialized by Shūeisha in *Kukkī*, or *Cookie*).

Relevant outside data was also utilized where possible in addition to the *manga* listed above, but in many instances applicable data simply was not available. In these cases arguments were supported based upon the *manga* themselves. This lack of relevant data is due to the fact that the notion of popular culture in general as a topic for scholarly study has been slow to catch on. The idea of popular culture in academia is gradually gaining acceptance domestically, but it is still a relatively new area of study. The idea of exploring popular culture in a scholarly light has unfortunately yet to gain the same momentum in Japan. With *manga* gaining popularity worldwide, it is sure to become the topic of research in many future projects both in the United States and Japan.

The second chapter in this thesis will focus on the 9-13 age group. This chapter will serve as a baseline against which the other chapters will be compared. The third chapter will focus on the 11-15 age group. While this group is in many ways a transitional stage, it does have some significant developments to link the 9-13 and 15-21 age groups. The fourth chapter will focus on the 15-21 age group. This chapter will

compare female protagonists in this age group to contemporary Japanese females. Information presented in these three chapters will be summarized and analyzed in the fifth and final chapter.

CHAPTER 2

SHŌJO MANGA FOR READERS AGED 9 TO 13

The first category of *shōjo manga* this thesis will explore is works aimed at readers who range in age from nine to thirteen years old. This chapter will detail how female protagonists in *manga* targeted at this age group are the most independent despite being the youngest, as well as how these females manage to remain independent. In order to do so, this chapter will examine how females avoid depending on males. Next, it will take a look at the minimal role male characters play in these works. Finally, it will examine common threads of fantasy found among works in this age group. These objectives will be accomplished through a discussion centered on the female protagonists from this age group themselves. The works I have chosen to represent *manga* from this age group are *Bishōjo senshi Sailor Moon* (henceforth referred to as "Sailor Moon"; written by Takeuchi Naoko, published by *Kōdansha*), *Shōjo kakumei Utena* (written by Saitō Chiho, published by *Shōgakukan*), and *Kodomo no omocha* (written by Obana Miho, published by Shūeisha). While outside data was (comparatively) readily available for this chapter, much of the information in this chapter is based upon a close reading of these three works.

2.1 Female Protagonists Do Not Depend on Male Characters

2.1.1 Magical Powers as a Source of Confidence

In order to become independent, a female protagonist must first learn to have confidence in herself. One way this is achieved in *shōjo manga* is through the use of magical powers. In her very first battle in *Sailor Moon* (1991-1996), Sailor Moon is able to beat her enemy simply because it becomes distracted by the sound of her

crying.[1] If Sailor Moon had continued to fight like this, she would not have been a superhero for very long. She had no confidence in herself, and a result, she did not believe she could survive until the end of the battle. Her magical powers enabled her to become a successful superhero because she had confidence in them, and as a result, she gained confidence in herself. As Tsukino Usagi, Sailor Moon is a clumsy crybaby who is gluttonous at times. In addition, she neglects her studies in favor of reading *manga* and going to the arcade. Unlike her friends, Usagi does not excel in any specific field. She is not gifted or particularly skilled at anything, so it can be surmised that her confidence has suffered as a result. However, when Usagi raises her magical brooch and transforms, she sheds this identity and becomes Sailor Moon. These magical powers have given Usagi a second chance at life.

Through her magical powers, Usagi is not only able to become a superhero, but she also is able to become another person, a more confident person. When she sheds her identity as Tsukino Usagi, she acquires an array of traits and encounters a number of situations that inspire her to become confident and make her believe in herself. As Sailor Moon, she is able to do what she cannot do as Tsukino Usagi. As Tsukino Usagi, an everyday middle school student, she is unable to set herself apart from other girls her age in terms of accomplishments or laudable abilities. Moreover, based upon her personality, she is unreliable, and no one depends on her. As Sailor Moon, she is powerful, tough, and vital to the success of her teammates. She becomes the leader of a team of girls who come to depend on her. These girls need her in order to succeed.

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[1] Takeuchi Naoko, *Bishōjo senshi Sailor Moon*, vol. 1, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), 22-36.

Perhaps it can also be said that Usagi had no choice but to become confident for the sake of her teammates. Each of them possesses their own magical powers, but no one has powers like those of Sailor Moon. They are each equipped to fight a villain, but none of their powers are as strong as Sailor Moon's powers. No matter how much the others are able to weaken the villains, the one who always delivers the finishing attack is Sailor Moon. Sailor Moon comes to realize that without her, or her magical powers, the team is at a severe disadvantage. If she does not believe in herself or her powers, then the team will fail.

Perhaps the link between confidence and powers is more evident when someone does not have any powers. In *Sailor Moon*'s fourth story arc, Sailor Mercury, Sailor Mars, Sailor Jupiter, and Sailor Venus each receive a "power-up" that enables them to utilize stronger attack methods. Before they receive these power-ups, however, they each realize at separate times that they are temporarily unable to use their current powers. Sailor Venus is the last of the four to receive a power-up, and as a result, she is the one without magical powers the longest. This lack of powers appears to frustrate her and causes her to question her ability as a leader. She ends up reaching a breaking point and finally lashes out at the other three girls, telling them, "I know, I'm not a dependable leader."[2]

The loss of her powers causes Sailor Venus to lose the confidence she gained through them. Without her powers, and without confidence, she cannot function as an effective leader. She seems to realize this, and decides to enter a competition for hopeful pop idols. As an idol, she would not need confidence or magical powers; she

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[2] Ibid., vol. 13, 80.

would just need others to support her and make decisions for her. In short, she would

go from being in control to being controlled. Her powers keep her in control, so

without them she becomes unsure of her place in the world. Sailor Venus began

operations as a Sailor Senshi (the generic term for a character like Sailor Moon or Sailor

Venus; literally a "sailor warrior") before the others—before she met Sailor Moon,

Sailor Mercury, Sailor Mars, and Sailor Jupiter, she was working independently as

"Sailor V"— so she has had her powers longer than the others.[3] Because she has had

her powers longer, it is possible that the source of her confidence may be rooted deeper

in her powers than that of anyone else. The change in the personality of Sailor Venus

clearly illustrates that magical powers are a source of confidence, and without

something to believe in, readers witness her level of confidence plummet.

Having power allows female protagonists such as Sailor Moon or Sailor Venus

to believe that they can manage the task at hand. This power gives them self-

confidence, which can be defined as "self-reliance."[4] The self-confidence they get from

their power allows them to handle situations on their own. While female protagonists

occasionally depend on their female friends, as we will see in the next section, they only

do so when they truly need help. Without power, protagonists would be forced to

constantly rely on their friends, potentially becoming burdensome. Power

simultaneously prevents them from becoming a burden and allows them to remain self-

reliant.

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[3] Takeuchi Naoko, *Bishōjo senshi Sailor Moon*, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), 105
[4] Self-confidence. Dictionary.com *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*. MICRA, Inc.
http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/self-confidence (accessed: April 04, 2008).

2.1.2 Reliance on Female Friends

The idea that a female protagonist is independent is, of course, prevalent throughout the three works representing this group, but when female protagonists in works under discussion in this chapter need help, there is usually one kind of person that they will turn to: a female friend. Based solely upon their ages, one might think that they would turn to their parents for help first. This is simply not the case. Whenever these girls need a helping hand, they do not go running to their parents or even into the arms of a male; they know they can rely on their female friends to help them overcome any obstacles. This reliance on female friends strengthens bonds of friendship and reinforces the idea that girls do not need to rely on their male counterparts.

Takeuchi Naoko, the creator of *Sailor Moon*, herself believes that what makes the heroines in *Sailor Moon* stronger is their attitude that girls should not depend on men, and a girl's best friend is another girl.[5] In other words, girls should be friends with and depend on other girls. It is evident in *Sailor Moon* that female friendships are more important than relationships with males. In a "bonus" story featuring Sailor Mars, a villain tries to psychologically weaken her with phantom images of an older man she cares for. Sailor Mars sees through this trick, and just as her friends arrive, she tells the villain that "Right now, love isn't necessary for me. That's because I have partners who share the same goal."[6] This assertion is shared by the other girls at various times throughout the series, but none of them are as passionate about it as Sailor Mars, who

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[5] "Girl Talk With Sailor Moon," *Animerica* 4, no. 8, (1996), 7.
[6] Takeuchi Naoko, *Bishōjo senshi Sailor Moon*, vol. 11, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), 174.

has a reputation for disliking males and labeling them as stupid. This message of friendship over love can be interpreted as reliance on female friends instead of males.

This idea of friendship over love is also visible in the relationship between Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Kamen (Tuxedo Mask), a male superhero who, as his name might imply, wears a tuxedo and is Sailor Moon's love interest. When Sailor Moon needs assistance in battle, she turns to her friends. Not only are they her friends, but they are her teammates, so the idea of working in and for the sake of a team takes precedence over a romantic partner as well. On the occasions when Tuxedo Kamen is at the scene of a battle, he seems to be relegated to the role of a supporter. He offers words of encouragement, but very little help. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Sailor Moon never really gives him the opportunity to play a vital role since she always depends on her friends. It seems unlikely that Sailor Moon has deemed Tuxedo Kamen undependable or incapable of fighting villains; rather, it seems as if she simply prefers to rely on her friends. While it may be difficult to say that Tuxedo Kamen "depends" on Sailor Moon as that would imply that he expects her to help him, Sailor Moon comes to his aid a number of times. This issue will be discussed later in more detail.

Because readers outside of this age group seem much less likely to encounter depictions of strong bonds between females in *shōjo manga*, it is important for *mangaka* to repeatedly present the idea of strong female friendships to a younger audience. As the readers in this age group grow older and move into subsequent age groups, the importance placed on female friendships will lessen, and the idea that girls should not depend on men becomes less prevalent. Female characters in works discussed later in this thesis will play roles as rivals and backstabbers instead of friends. Without females

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to befriend, the female protagonist is presented with little choice but to rely on a male. Often the male's help is enlisted in dealing with one of these backstabbing or rival female characters. Both the issue of females as rivals and the issue of enlisting a male's help to deal with rival females will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The reason female protagonists in this age group are strong, independent, and never rely on males when they need help is due to the fact that their creators were a part of the first generation to truly believe in the concept of a strong, independent woman. Takeuchi[7] and Saitō Chiho[8] were both born in 1967 and Obana Miho in 1970.[9] When the three were growing up in the 1970s, seventy-percent of women were employed.[10] As discussed in the previous chapter, the number of female *mangaka* increased dramatically in 1970s beginning with the *Hana no nijūyonengumi*. Not only were Takeuchi, Saitō, and Obana reading stories about empowered, independent female protagonists, they were reading stories written by empowered females when they were growing up. Perhaps then it is only natural that they, too, would write stories about empowered female protagonists who do not depend on men.

2.1.3 Internalization of "Masculine" Qualities

Males have practically been rendered useless in *manga* under discussion in this chapter. In addition to relying on female friends instead of males, female protagonists have internalized masculine qualities themselves. It appears that these females have an advantage over real males because they possess both masculine and feminine qualities.

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[7] Takeuchi Naoko bishōjo senshi Sailor Moon manga V, http://www.mangav.com/ta/takeutinaoko.html. (Accessed April 5, 2008).
[8] "Tosho no ie" manga sakuhin dēta, http://www.toshonoie.net/archive/m-data/data_saito_chiho.html. (Accessed April 5, 2008).
[9] Obana Miho manga V, http://www.mangav.com/o/obanamiho.html. (Accessed April 5, 2008).
[10] Ogi, 172.

For the purposes of this chapter, "masculine" shall be defined as "having qualities traditionally ascribed to men,"[11] and "feminine" shall be defined as "having qualities traditionally ascribed to women."[12] While these definitions are taken from a Western source, both the West and Japan have ideals that are deemed either exclusively "masculine" or "feminine." These definitions allow us to examine masculine and feminine qualities from both a Western and a Japanese perspective. It is important to keep in mind that in the process of internalizing masculine qualities, these female protagonists have not abandoned their feminine qualities. In addition, these females have internalized masculine qualities as a result of their own volition. No one has forced them to adopt masculine traits, and their quality of life does not hinge upon their degree of masculinity.[13] These protagonists have adopted masculine qualities because such qualities complement the way in which they want to live their lives.

In *Shōjo kakumei Utena* (1997-1998), Tenjō Utena is a student who internalizes masculine qualities because she "would rather be a prince than a princess who needs to be protected."[14] She speaks like a boy, using words such as "*boku*" and "*kimi*" repeatedly for "I/me" and "you" instead of the more feminine "*watashi/atashi*" and "*anata*" respectively.[15] She also uses the masculine words "(*ano*) *yarō*,"[16] "*koitsu*,"[17]

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[11] Masculine. Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. http://dictinonary.reference.com/browse/masculine (accessed: April 04, 2008).

[12] Feminine. Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. http://dictinonary.reference.com/browse/feminine (accessed: April 04, 2008).

[13] Taniguchi, "Shōjo manga ni okeru dansō—jendā no shiten kara.

[14] Saitō Chiho, *Shōjo kakumei Utena*, vol. 1, (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1997), 86.

[15] It should be pointed out that some females, such singers or middle and high school students, use the word "*boku*" to refer to themselves. However, Senko K. Maynard labels "*boku*" as an informal word that males would use. Senko K. Maynard, *An introduction to Japanese grammar and communication strategies*, (The Japan Times, Ltd., 1990), 45.

[16] Saitō, 103.

[17] Ibid, 124.

and "*yatsu*"[18] to refer to other characters. Perhaps what is most striking about Utena is her unique school uniform. She wears a uniform jacket that is similar to what the males wear, but instead of a skirt or even pants, she wears shorts.[19] Utena wears shorts instead of a skirt since "a skirt would rip soon…Because I'm always running and jumping, if I wore a skirt, the boys would constantly see my underwear, and that's disgusting."[20] Despite all these masculine aspects of Utena's personality, she does not despise her femininity so much that she wants to become a male.[21] Utena never expresses a desire to rid herself of her femininity.

In an older *shōjo manga*, such as *Ribon no kishi* (1953-1956), the female protagonist would have adopted masculine traits in order to make progress in a male-dominated society. *Ribon no kishi*'s female protagonist, Sapphire, did not choose to adopt these traits; her parents decided that she would be raised as a boy.[22] In *shōjo manga* from the past fifteen years, female protagonists have made their own decisions to adopt masculine traits. In other words, a modern female protagonist, such as Utena, adopts masculine qualities as a result of her own volition. Moreover, Utena does not adopt these traits in order to make progress in a male-dominated society.

Utena also reinforces the idea that despite the fact there are still widely held ideas regarding what constitutes femininity and masculinity, a female is not obligated to exhibit solely "feminine" qualities. Females no longer need to adhere to once coveted standards such as "*yowai*" (weak), "*kowagari*" (cowardice), or "*hito ni tayotteiru*"

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[18] Ibid, 147.
[19] Taniguchi, "Shōjo manga ni okeru dansō—jendā no shiten kara, 109.
[20] Saitō, vol. 1, 5.
[21] Taniguchi, "Shōjo manga ni okeru dansō—jendā no shiten kara, 109.
[22] Ibid, 106.

(depends on people) for the sake of a job or marriage. Females are free to become a person who is described in terms that have long been prized only by males, such as "*tsuyoi*" (strong), "*daitan/futeki*" (bold), or "*dokuritsu shita*" (independent).[23] Unlike girls who grew up reading *Ribon no kishi*, today's females, girls and women alike, are free to openly display these traits. Moreover, today's females may be labeled feminine, or perhaps unfeminine, in terms of Japanese social values, such as a gratitude, belongingness, and cooperation, as opposed to their characteristics or personality.[24] The masculine/feminine dichotomy still exists, but the methods of classification have changed over time.

Both Japanese society and society portrayed in *manga* have come to realize that a person's sex does not necessarily equal a person's gender, and a person of a certain sex may not always identify with the gender that is most often associated with their sex. Sex and gender are created through the repetition of actions.[25] Situations repeat in *manga*—Utena is not the only character with masculine traits, for example, and Utena herself repeats actions as well—causing sex and gender to be created. This repetition makes the creation of a "natural" sexed, gendered, heterosexual female protagonist possible.[26] In addition, whereas sex is biological in nature, gender "refers to the socially learned behaviors and expectations that are associated with the two sexes."[27] In other words, gender is not biological; it is shaped by society. Utena displays

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[23] Oshiyama Michiko, "Tezuka Osamu 'Ribon no kishi' – 'dansō no shōjo' no tanjō," *Manga Kenkyū* 2 (2002), 29.

[24] Brian McVeigh, "Cultivating 'femininity' and 'internationalism': Rituals and routines at a Japanese women's junior college," *Ethos* 24, no. 2, (1996), 343.

[25] Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[26] Judith Butler, *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "sex,"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[27] Margaret L. Anderson, *Thinking about women – sociological perspectives*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 20.

masculine traits as a result of the aspects of society with which she came in contact in the *manga*. Utena shows that just because a character is biologically a female, this does not mean that she must act in a manner that society in a *manga* considers "feminine." Moreover, since Japanese society, which is always in a state of flux, decides what is "masculine" or "feminine," the very definitions of these two words must be constantly changing as well. Society's attitudes towards displays of gendered behavior are also always being reconsidered. Because there is less inequality today between real males and females than there was in the era of *Ribon no kishi*, the gender lines have become blurred for many individuals. As a result, society is more accepting, but not yet totally accepting, of females and female characters, such as Utena, internalizing and displaying "masculine" traits. Society's acceptance of females with masculine traits has enabled them to become more reliant on themselves and less dependent upon males.

2.2 Males Are Secondary Characters

Plot development in all the works under discussion is largely spurred by female characters. Male characters in works representing this age group make very few major contributions to the storylines. While some males in these works can be called main characters, they do not have the same status as a main female character.

2.2.1 Females Often Come to the Rescue of Males

Takeuchi Naoko directly tells her readers in the first volume of *Sailor Moon*, "We girls have to be strong, OK? You see, we have to protect the guys we love."[28] It seems that this opinion is shared by other *mangaka* of works in this age group. Readers

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[28] Takeuchi, vol. 1, 76.

of *shōjo manga* were perhaps conditioned by Japanese picture books to expect that a passive female is always waiting to be saved by her prince or knight in shining armor, something seen in Western fairy tales.[29] *Manga* in this age group make a clean break with the outdated idea that a female must always wait to be saved by a male. In these works, males and females have swapped "traditional" roles. Males are the ones who need to be rescued, the ones sitting around waiting to be saved, and females are the ones who do the rescuing. This change in roles should be attributed to the fact that the authors whose works are under discussion in this chapter grew up reading about empowered females, as discussed earlier.

  Sailor Moon is comprised of five major story arcs. Throughout these five story arcs, Tuxedo Kamen contributes little to the efforts of the team of Sailor Senshi in their quest to vanquish evil. He is, instead, a liability. In four out of five of these arcs, Sailor Moon must save Tuxedo Kamen. He is abducted, brainwashed, and forced to fight Sailor Moon in the first story arc.[30] He gets lured into a trap, brainwashed, and thinks that Sailor Moon is his enemy in the second story arc.[31] In the fourth story arc, he is affected by health issues that mysteriously coincide with the appearance of a new villain.[32] As a result, Sailor Moon ends up having to split time between fighting evil and looking after his health. Tuxedo Kamen's alter ego, Chiba Mamoru, intends to go abroad in the final story arc, but he is once again abducted, brainwashed, and later becomes evil.[33] Ironically, none of the characters seem to realize what a burden Tuxedo

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[29] Taniguchi Hideko, "Jendā furī to igyō—ehon no naka no joseizō," *Gengo Bunka Ronkyū* 17 (2003), 29.
[30] Takeuchi, vols. 2 and 3.
[31] Ibid., vols. 6 and 7.
[32] Ibid., vol. 12.
[33] Ibid., vol. 16.

Kamen is and that if it were not for Sailor Moon, Tuxedo Kamen would probably be seriously injured or perhaps even dead.

While Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Kamen could simply be looked at as unknowingly playing the roles of a prince and a passive princess, respectively, I do not think that this is the case. Rather than boyfriend and girlfriend, in some respects, Sailor Moon can be likened to a mother and Tuxedo Kamen a child. If Tuxedo Kamen were truly representing a princess, he would be aware of his situation and wait for someone to save him. He is always unaware of the trouble he is in, so it seems that he should be likened to a child who does not realize that he is in trouble or that he has caused trouble. A mother must keep her children safe, look after them when they are sick, and provide them with help when it is needed. As evidenced in the previous paragraph, Sailor Moon does just this. It is also worth pointing out that Tuxedo Kamen takes Sailor Moon's efforts for granted, never bothering to thank her, thus reemphasizing Sailor Moon's role as a mothering figure whose work often goes unappreciated.

Sometimes an individual may act in a childish way that signals to the other person in a relationship that he or she wants to be dependent.[34] Because Tuxedo Kamen does not appear to make a concerted effort to stay out of harm's way, his actions could be labeled childish—his carelessness repeatedly places Sailor Moon in danger— and indicate that he wants to be dependent on Sailor Moon. Consciously or unconsciously, he seeks *amae* (a noun), which we could call indulgent love, from Sailor Moon, a mothering figure.[35] Doi says that *amaeru* (the verb form) is "the chief

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[34] Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, John Bester, trans., (Tokyo, New York: Kodansha International, 1973), 8.
[35] Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, 8.

characteristic of the Japanese parent-child relationship."[36] *Amae* exists in the relationship between Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Kamen because Tuxedo Kamen realizes that Sailor Moon will support him unconditionally. Even though he places her in danger, she never asks him to be more careful or limit his involvement in certain situations. Instead, she indulges him by allowing him to live his life freely—that is, until he is captured—with the full realization that she will always keep him safe and be the person upon whom he can depend.

It could be argued that there are implications for a female who is not dependent upon a male to be shown in the role of "mother." In this case, however, the word "mother" is used solely for its gender implications. This is because "motherhood is entwined with notions of femininity, and women's gender identity is reinforced by mothering."[37] Each of the female protagonists in the works representing this group has varying degrees of femininity, and they express their femininity through different outlets. At fourteen years old, Sailor Moon is not yet ready to be a mother, but by "mothering" Tuxedo Kamen, she expresses her femininity and shows that she is starting to grow into and identify with her future identity as a woman. Let us examine the strategies that Kurata Sana uses when assisting a male character in *Kodomo no omocha* (1994-1998).

Female protagonists in this age group do not just rescue males from villains. Sana rescues her classmate Hayama Akito from an unpleasant home life. Sana comes to befriend Akito through blackmail, and as she gets to know him, she learns that his family dynamics are a bit strange. Akito's mother died while giving birth to him and as

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[36] Ibid., *The Anatomy of Dependence*, 18.
[37] Terry Arendell, "Conceiving and investigating motherhood: The decade's scholarship," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, (November 2000), 1192.

a result his father and older sister both harbor grudges against him. Despite the fact that it does not concern her, Sana takes it upon herself to improve relations within the Hayama family.[38]

In reality, this would probably be a situation where an adult is needed to solve the problem, but as previously mentioned, the female protagonists do not turn to their parents for help. The fact that Sana has decided not to involve her female friends can be viewed as an assertion of her independence. Sana decides to help Akito because he does not want to or know how to help himself. It is likely that without Sana's help, the status quo would have continued for quite some time. Akito simply accepts his family's treatment as a part of life and goes along with it. Mr. Hayama and Akito's sister have always treated him poorly so perhaps he does not realize that he deserves better treatment. As an outsider to the situation, Sana is able to realize that despite his quirks, Akito is not a bad person, and he deserves far better treatment from his family than he receives. In the end, Sana is able to make the Hayama family realize this as well. Akito thanks Sana for her help, unlike Tuxedo Kamen, and he even offers to help her if she ever needs it.[39] While males may, in some cases, be reluctant to acknowledge that they have been helped by a female, the underlying message of females helping males seems to be that helping someone whenever possible is the right thing to do whether they appreciate it or not.

The way in which Sana handles the situation at the Hayama household shows that female protagonists in this age group are responsible not only for the physical well-being of male characters but for their emotional-well being as well. As illustrated in

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[38] Obana Miho, *Kodomo no omocha*, vol. 1, (Shūeisha, 1995).
[39] Ibid., vol. 3, 82.

this chapter, female protagonists do more emotional work than their male counterparts. It is, therefore, no surprise that real women also do more emotional work than men, with less than 6% of men reporting that they do more emotional work than their wives in a particular study.[40] Instances where females take care of emotional work are "often invisible, unacknowledged, or devalued."[41] However, Akito shows that there are exceptions to this pattern when he realizes the emotional work Sana has carried out on his behalf and offers his support should she ever need it. Although female protagonists in this age group act in an altruistic manner when they help male characters, they likely crave some degree of acknowledgement and reciprocation for their efforts. As evidenced by Tuxedo Kamen, they do not always receive acknowledgement and reciprocation. Perhaps female characters allow themselves to continually do emotional work for male characters because it places them in a position of authority over these male characters, thus asserting their independence.

2.2.2 Relationships with Males Are Secondary

Relationships, both those based on love and friendship, with males are not key elements of the plot in any of these three stories. Female protagonists circumvent the need for interactions with males in two ways. First, they create friendships with females who have internalized masculine qualities. Second, they create romantic relationships with other females. It seems that the authors singled out friendships with females who have internalized masculine qualities as well as romantic relationships with other females as a means of illustrating that it is possible to have many different

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[40] Lyndall Strazdins and Dorothy H. Broom, "Acts of love (and work): Gender imbalance in emotional work and women's psychological distress," *Journal of Family Issues* 25, no.3, (2004), 20.
[41] Strazdins and Broom, 2.

types of relationships with females, and that you can have the same type of relationship that you would have with a male with a female as well.

2.2.2.1 Reliance upon Masculine Females

As previously stated, female protagonists do not turn to males for assistance, but instead turn to their female friends for help. Among these friends, there are often females who have internalized masculine qualities upon whom female protagonists can rely. These females with masculine qualities are just as reliable as females without masculine qualities. Based on the personality of Sailor Uranus, it seems that it is possible for females with masculine qualities to assess or react to a situation differently from those who do not have masculine qualities.

It was concluded before that Sailor Moon would rather depend on her friends than Tuxedo Kamen. Each Sailor Senshi possesses various powers and personalities, but among them there is one person who possesses clearly masculine traits: Sailor Uranus. Sailor Moon does not meet Sailor Uranus until the third of five story arcs, and the two do not immediately become allies, but they nonetheless fight the same enemy. Perhaps it is because Sailor Uranus does not display either belongingness or cooperation, social values that could be associated with femininity, that they do not become allies at first.[42] Once they combine forces, Sailor Uranus dedicates herself to protecting Sailor Moon.

Sailor Uranus protects Sailor Moon in the same way that a male would protect a female. In the fifth story arc, when the Sailor Starlights, a group of comprised of three Sailor Senshi from another planet, appear and want to talk to Sailor Moon, Sailor

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[42] McVeigh, 343.

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Uranus immediately gets in their way, raises her sword, and tells them "Don't come any closer to us. If you want to get closer, you'll have to do it over my dead body!"[43] She offers not only to protect Sailor Moon but to fight for her as well. While another character might have done the same thing, Sailor Uranus has physical strength that the rest do not possess. She is also not afraid to back up her words, even if it means causing others harm. For these reasons she is more imposing than the other girls.

Sailor Uranus is willing to take more drastic measures than the other girls, and as a result she might be perceived as more masculine. In the third story arc, she tells the others that if the tenth Sailor Senshi, Sailor Saturn, awakens, the world could be destroyed. Sailor Uranus believes that the only way to save the world is to kill her before she awakens. Sailor Moon believes that there has to be another way.[44] While Sailor Neptune and Sailor Pluto both agree with Sailor Uranus, it is Sailor Uranus who does all the talking. She is the only one who uses the word "kill." It is not that Sailor Uranus is heartless; rather, she seems to listen to her head and logic instead of her heart and emotions. Most of the others find themselves wrestling with emotions at various points in time, but Sailor Uranus is always able to think clearly and logically, even if everyone does not agree with what she says.

2.2.2.2 Relationships between Two Females

In the three works under discussion, female characters who have internalized greater numbers of masculine qualities display more tendencies to enter into homoerotic

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[43] *Takeuchi*, vol. 16, 103.
[44] Ibid., vol. 9, 91-94.

relationships than those who have not. These masculine females have a tendency to pair up with females who are especially feminine in nature.

Sailor Uranus, as Ten'ō Haruka, is a race car driver in her civilian life. Her sex seems to be completely ignored by fans as they have come to think of her as a male. Once Sailor Moon realizes that Haruka, who she thought was male, is Sailor Uranus, she is confused. Sailor Neptune tells her that "Sailor Uranus is both male and female,"[45] so this seems to reinforce Haruka's incongruent sex and gender. Since Sailor Uranus does not claim to be either masculine or feminine, we can assume that she has fused qualities from both genders. Takeuchi herself says that "Uranus has the heart of a man," but she also says that "all the Sailor Scouts are girls,"[46] so in the end, perhaps one should simply liken Sailor Uranus to an *otoko-yaku* (male role) in a Takarazuka[47] play in terms of sex and gender.

The partner of Sailor Uranus, Sailor Neptune, is very feminine, prim, and proper, and as a result, she probably would not tolerate an unkempt, inconsiderate male as her romantic partner. By entering into a romantic relationship with someone like an *otoko-yaku*, such as Sailor Uranus, Sailor Neptune is not exposed to the less than desirable traits of a real male. This is because "an *otoko-yaku* is…a man [who is] superior to a real man. He is the ideal man from a woman's perspective, whose style, behavior, and gentleness far surpasses a real man."[48] Perhaps it can be said that only

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[45] Ibid, vol. 9, 20.
[46] While a better translation for the word *senshi* in "Sailor Senshi" would be "warrior(s)," this interview uses the name given in the English version of the *anime*: "Sailor Scouts." "Naoko Takeuchi," *Animerica* 6, no. 11, (1998), 10.
[47] The Takarazuka is a stage troupe comprised solely of women. An *otoko-yaku* is a female who plays male roles in the troupe's theatrical productions.
[48] Otoba Nobuko quoted in Nakano Haruyuki, *Tezuka Osamu no Takarazuka*, (Tokyo: Chikuma, 1994), 200.

another female would truly understand a female's feelings, and only another female would truly know how to properly behave around a female. Sailor Uranus does not explicitly deny or reject her femininity, so perhaps she still utilizes her femininity when dealing with other females, such as Sailor Neptune. She has an advantage over a real male due to the fact that, like an *otoko-yaku*, she is "an idealized, 'beautiful' man—a man without dirt, sweat, roughness, and a need to dominate."[49] Physiologically, she is still a female, and Sailor Neptune knows this. Moreover, there is no sense that Sailor Uranus controls the relationship, and there is no indication that Sailor Neptune plays a submissive or subservient role. The two are treated as equals in the relationship because they are both female.

2.2.3 Romance Is Minimized

Unlike the 11-15 and 15-21 age groups, romance is not the focal point of the 9-13 age groups. Moreover, romance is not even a major plot device in this age group. This is not to say that romance does not occur at all, however—it simply appears less frequently. This lack of romance is beneficial in that it enables the girls to remain pure, strong, and independent. If we apply John Treat's definition that a *shōjo* is a person whose "sexual energy [is]…directed towards stuffed animals, pink notebooks, strawberry crepes, and Hello Kitty novelties," then these characters are *shōjo* in the purest sense of the word.[50] If a *shōjo*'s sexual energy is redirected towards inanimate objects, then logically romance should not happen in the first place. In the event that a romance does blossom between the female protagonist and a male character, as in the

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[49] Lorie Brau, "The women's theatre of Takarazuka," *The Drama Review* 34, no. 4 (1990), 81.
[50] Treat, 281.

case of both Sailor Moon and Kurata Sana, then the romance should be as chaste and devoid of sexuality as possible in order for the females to remain pure and true to the definition of a *shōjo*. While female protagonists in this age group could be categorized in terms of things like school (the majority of readers and female protagonists alike would either be a *shōgakusei*, an elementary school student, or a *chūgakusei*, a middle school student), or family, neither of these categorizations are associated with sexuality either. Moreover, the one unifying category between readers and female protagonists in the 9-13 age group, no matter whether they are categorized in terms of something such as school or family, is the fact that they are all *shōjo*.

Takeuchi alludes to Usagi and Mamoru's relationship throughout the eighteen-volume run of *Sailor Moon*, but the story of *Sailor Moon* is not focused on the romance between Usagi and Mamoru. Their romance alone is not what pushes Usagi to her limits as Sailor Moon. Usagi's world does not revolve around Mamoru, and she does not sacrifice any shred of her identity or independence for the sake of a relationship. Usagi does not define herself in terms of Mamoru. The two do not even seem to be generally portrayed as lovers. Their roles as heroes seem to take priority over their roles as girlfriend and boyfriend. When they appear in the same panel, they are often merely in close proximity to one another. There are instances when they hug and kiss, but these are few in number. However, there are a number of pages that introduce chapters and cover (front, back, inside, and outside) illustrations which portray Usagi and Mamoru as lovers.

It may also be worth noting that Usagi treats their romance in a completely different manner in the *anime* version. In the second season, Mamoru has dreams of a

terrible fate befalling Usagi. He feels that in order to prevent this from becoming

reality, they should stop seeing one another. This upsets Usagi terribly. There are both

visual and verbal cues in practically every episode from the time of their "break-up" to

the rekindling of their romance to reinforce just how upset Usagi is. Her emphasis on

the romance reaches a point where it doesn't matter that the enemy of the day has been

vanquished; what matters is that Usagi and Mamoru are still not back together. The

anime version of Usagi defines herself in terms of Mamoru, and she has clearly

sacrificed a good portion of her identity and independence for the sake of their

relationship. Perhaps Usagi was stripped of her independence because the *anime* was

meant to appeal to a broader audience. While *Sailor Moon* the *manga* is targeted at

girls who are aged 9-13, the *anime* is likely to appeal to both males and females of a

wider age range.

The readers in this age group are not interested in romance, but this does not

mean that they are not interested in boys. By age thirteen, just over half of girls are

interested in the opposite sex.[51] However, only roughly ten percent of girls at age

thirteen feel the "desire of physical contact with the opposite sex."[52] In addition, just

twenty percent of girls reported an experience of sexual arousal by age thirteen.[53]

Hatano and Shimazaki do not believe that there are "anti-sexual activity policies" or

"discouragement of male-female relations in [Japan's] limited sexuality [*sic*]

education."[54] Instead, they believe that the most likely reasons for these numbers are a

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[51] Japanese Association for Sex Education, *Sexual behavior of junior high school, senior high school and university students in Japan*, (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1994).
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Yoshiro Hatano and Tsuguo Shimazaki, "Japan (Nippon)," *The international encyclopedia of sexuality*, Robert Francoeur, Raymond Noonan, eds., vol. 2, (New York: Continuum, 1999), 795-796.

result of "the traditional societal attitude toward the [*sic*] free sexual activities, particularly when they involve educated, upper class women, and the society's strong respect for education, which results in suppression of sexual behavior among the [*sic*] youths."[55] All of these factors combined can perhaps account for the lack of romantic scenes in works in this age group.

Male characters exist to satisfy the readers' blossoming interest in them, but their presence is not overwhelming. When romance does occur in a story, it is not given the spotlight. Scenes with kissing and hugging are thrown in intermittently to remind the reader that romance exists. Readers try to identify with female protagonists, so if a female protagonist with whom she wants to relate is frequently pictured kissing or hugging another male, the readers will no longer be able to relate as a result of their lack of interest in physical contact with the opposite sex. Some readers may also be too embarrassed to relate to female protagonists as a result of reoccurring romantic scenes.

Japanese women have clearly minimized romance in their lives as well. Women are choosing to remain single and continue working instead of entering into relationships with males that may or may not lead to marriage. While the average age of marriage used to be twenty-five, "the recent rise in the acceptable marriage age has many Japanese saying that Christmas cakes have become New Year's cookies."[56] Women are waiting longer to get married—or in some cases, they are just not getting married at all— and as a result, romance is no longer a major "plot device" in their lives either.

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55 Hatano and Shimazaki, 796.
56 Millie Creighton, "Marriage, motherhood, and career management in a Japanese 'counter culture,'" *Re-imagining Japanese women*, Anne E. Imamura, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 206.

2.3 The Concept of Fantasy Is Prevalent

Fantasy is so prevalent in *manga* in the 9-13 age group that it should be considered one of its defining characteristics. Before we examine fantasy in this, or any other, age group, we must first define "fantasy." A fantasy is an "imaginary (especially not realistic) story"[57] with "a large amount of imagination in it."[58] This imagination is "unrestricted by reality."[59] Fantasy is the opposite of reality, "that which exists objectively and in fact."[60] While fantasy permeates *shōjo manga* in this age group, it should be reiterated that there needs to be a connection between readers and the story. Therefore, there are things that exist "objectively and in fact." However, the number of things that exist "objectively and in fact" in this age group is the lowest of the three. As readers enter subsequent age groups, the number of these reality-based things will increase.

2.3.1 Characters Do What Society Does Not Allow

The average Japanese person likely comes in contact with the *tatemae/honne* dichotomy on a daily basis. Doi describes *tatemae* as "a certain formal principle which is palatable to everybody concerned so that the harmony of a group is guaranteed while *honne* is the feelings or opinions which they privately hold regarding the matter."[61] In

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[57] Fantasy. Dictionary.com. *Kernerman English Multilingual Dictionary*. K Dictionaries Ltd. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fantasy (accessed: April 04, 2008).
[58] Fantasy. Dictionary.com. *WordNet® 3.0*. Princeton University. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fantasy (accessed: April 04, 2008).
[59] Ibid.
[60] Reality. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fantasy (accessed: April 04, 2008).
[61] Takeo Doi, "*Omote* and *ura*: Concepts derived from the Japanese two-fold structure of consciousness," *Understanding amae: The Japanese concept of need-love*, vol. 1, (Kent, UK: Global Oriental Ltd., 2005), 85.

other words, all parties involved in an interaction should be mindful of one another in order to maintain harmony. In order to maintain harmony, however, a person often has to put aside his or her *honne*, which does not always correlate with actions expressed through *tatemae*. Characters in *shōjo* manga seem to ignore *tatemae* in favor of their *honne*, what one might call impulses. They do what real people wish they could do. It should be noted that characters become more mindful of *tatemae/honne* in works in subsequent age groups as they gradually become integrated into society.

It seems that all the characters in *Kodomo no omocha* display their *honne* on a regular basis, but both Sana and her mother seem to do so just a little more than the other characters. For example, Sana comes home one day only to find that the former girlfriend of her manager, Sagami Rei, has paid him a visit. She considers Rei her "lover," so she is upset by this and begins yelling at him, unaware that her mother is watching the situation. At this point Sana's mother has two options: first, to comfort her daughter and try to defuse the situation gently (*tatemae*), or second, to point out to her daughter that she has no right to be upset and deal with the situation in a brusque manner (*honne*). Sana's mother opts to handle the situation according to her *honne*. She expresses her *honne* through harsh words and hitting her daughter on the head with a squeaky toy hammer.[62]

In many cultures, hitting your child on the head with a squeaky toy hammer when you are angry with them, no matter how lightly it may be, is probably unacceptable behavior. It seems that the more despicable behavior, however, is the harsh words of Sana's mother. She ignores the practice of adhering to *tatemae* over

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[62] Obana Miho, *Kodomo no omocha*, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995), 107-110.

honne and proceeds to crush Sana's feelings. However, she does what the readers fantasize about: she chooses to listen to her *honne*, and she acts on it. Readers have most certainly encountered people at school who they would like to interact with based on their *honne*. Since they must maintain group harmony among their friends or classmates, they are left with no choice but to ignore their *honne*. They can, however, safely explore the fantasy of acting out their *honne* through Sana's mother without disrupting true group harmony.

Perhaps as a result of her mother's personality and childrearing techniques, Sana does not always pay close attention to *tatemae* and *honne* when she interacts with adults. In an attempt to improve relations in the Hayama family, Sana decides to go to their house and personally ask them to watch her latest television drama, a heartwarming story between a mother and child. Sana could have simply informed them that she was starring in a drama that they might enjoy and perhaps combined this with some small talk in order to leave a good impression on the Hayama family. Instead, Sana tells them that she will be starring in a drama, and then proceeds to tell Mr. Hayama and Akito's older sister, "You two are dumb. A dumb parent and child!"[63] After she berates the pair just a bit, she exits the house by saying, "Ah, please watch my drama, OK?"[64]

Children do not always view adults favorably, but they are always taught to be respectful and exercise *tatemae* towards them. However, a large number of children would probably like to tell adults, such as a teacher or another authority figure, how they really feel (*honne*). If a child disobeys an authority figure, there is almost always

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[63] Ibid, vol. 1, 155.
[64] Ibid, 157.

some sort of punishment. Sana, despite her *honne*-based actions, receives no punishment whatsoever. Not only does she get to exercise her *honne*, but there are no negative consequences.   Even though there are more "fantastic" fantasies, for many readers, just imagining themselves as Sana, a child, with the upper hand over an adult may be enough.

2.3.2 Hidden Messages in Things That Do Not Make Sense

The pages of *shōjo manga* in the 11-15 and 15-21 age groups are filled with things that make sense. There are themes, topics, and items that are firmly rooted in reality. We will see that in certain *manga*, such as *Pīchi gāru* (1998-2003), reality is so prevalent that it all but eliminates the need for the fantastic. While it cannot be said that absolutely nothing makes sense in *shōjo manga* in the works under discussion in this chapter, the number of things that do not make sense appears to be the highest in this group. These elements that do not make sense seem to convey messages for the readers to take away.

Kodomo no omocha, despite all of its unusual plot devices, has the most realistic plot out of the three works under discussion in this chapter. The story centers on celebrity sixth-grader Sana Kurata and her life as both an actress and a student. The story covers her friendships, adventures, and introduction to love and romance. It is the elements of the story themselves that are separate from reality. Because she is an actress, she has a manager, Sagami Rei, who she lovingly refers to as her "pimp," despite the fact that she does not fully understand the meaning of the word. She even goes so far as to pay him and think of him as her lover. She gets this idea from a book entitled "*Himo to watashi*" ("My Pimp and Me") written by her mother, who has been

known on occasion to drive a car inside their house and has a squirrel living in the various hats and headpieces she wears.[65]

In comparison to *Utena* and *Sailor Moon*, *Kodomo no omocha* contains the most plausible situations, but they are still far-fetched. The fact that Sana does not conform to society's ideals of *tatemae* and *honne* probably contributes to the number of things that do not make sense. The idea, however, that everyday situations can become fantastic is important. This sends an important message to the reader in two different ways. First, it is acceptable if your life is not "normal." "Normal" is a subjective term, so there truly isn't an individual with a "normal" life. Sana is content with her "abnormal" life, and she seems to take delight in making it even more abnormal whenever and however she can. Second, it is acceptable if a person does not completely conform to society. An underlying message in *Kodomo no omocha* seems to be about having fun, and fun can sometimes come outside of the norms set by society. Perhaps Obana is encouraging readers in this age group to have fun and be children because "exam hell"[66] is lurking around the corner.

Utena contains hidden messages as well, but these messages differ from those presented in *Kodomo no omocha*. Under the impression that she has found the prince she has been searching for, Tenjō Utena enters Ōtori Gakuen. At a special location on campus, she duels with fellow students underneath an upside-down castle using a sword that she pulls out of the chest of Himemiya Anshī (Anthy), a girl known as the *Bara no Hanayome* ("The Rose Bride"), who must follow the orders of the current champion

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[65] Ibid., vol. 2.
[66] "Japanese university entrance examinations have been notorious for their high stakes and high-pressure nature, and the process of preparing for and taking these exams came to be known as 'examination hell.'" Rie Mori, "Entrance examinations and remedial education in Japanese higher education," *Higher Education* 43, no.1 (2002), 29.

duelist.[67] Utena must continue to fight any and all challengers because she is the current champion duelist. A mysterious figure, simply known as Diosu (Dios), descends from the castle during her matches and provides her with guidance. These matches are fought in order to gain the power of Diosu and receive the power to change the world.

Utena is a strong individual who will face any challenge that comes her way regardless of whether or not she truly wants to. Even though she would rather not fight, Utena commits herself wholeheartedly to each duel and does her best. The first message that *Utena* conveys to its readers is that there are many things in life that we would rather not do but we do them because we have to. Utena fights so that Anshī will not be treated poorly by another duelist and simply because she does not want to lose. She also fights without hesitation or complaining. The second message reaffirms what has already been discussed: female characters do not need the support of male characters. It takes it a step further, however, by implying that males mean trouble. If Utena had not been searching for her prince, she would have never ended up at Ōtori Gakuen. If she never enrolled at Ōtori Gakuen, she would not have put herself in danger time after time in her many duels. Perhaps this is a moral of some sort as the typically independent Utena ultimately ends up perishing as a result of chasing after her prince.

2.3.3 Dream Lifestyles

In *shōjo manga*, there always needs to be a connection between the reader and the elements of a story. It is this connection that allows fantasy to occur. Since most

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[67] Saitō Chiho, *Shōjo kakumei Utena*, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1997), 52-53.

readers are unaware of what life is like as a superhero or an actress, they cannot connect with the characters in these three stories on this aspect alone. *Shōjo manga* enables readers to imagine these kinds of lifestyles by making the protagonists young schoolgirls just like their readers. The readers connect with the schoolgirls and imagine themselves in their place.

Fame is something that many people want but few people actually obtain. By imagining life as an actress through the actions of Kurata Sana, readers get a taste of fame. They can consider the possibilities of fame when they see an actress on TV or in a magazine, but they only see a carefully scripted portion of the actress lifestyle. In the case of Sana, they are able to experience the ups and downs of life as an actress. Because Sana is an elementary school student like many readers of *Ribon*, the magazine in which *Kodomo no omocha* was serialized, it is not impossible for a reader to imagine that she, too, can become an actress. When a reader sees someone from her peer group in a situation, she can identify with them through this common bond, and it thus becomes easier for the reader to see herself in that same particular situation.

Some readers do not even seek characters with a radically unique lifestyle, such as an actress or a superhero; they seek something more "normal," such as the lifestyle of a popular girl. For some readers, the idea of being popular and all the attention that comes with it may itself be a fantasy. Utena is liked so much by her female classmates that they always make a commotion when she plays sports or even just walks by. Her female classmates idolize her to the point where they dub her the "hero of the school."[68] Later in the same volume, there is a scene where two girls, presumably two of Utena's

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[68] Saitō, vol. 1, 87.

"fans," are talking at a party. One laments that she does not have a boyfriend so the party feels like it is missing something, while the other is lamenting the fact that Utena is not there.[69] In addition, many of Utena's fans refer to her as "Utena-sama" instead of "Utena-san" or even "Utena-chan" as a sign of respect and admiration.

It is worth pointing out that romance often does not coincide with dream lifestyles. While the theme of romance is not totally absent from the works representing this age group, it is not a major component of the female protagonists' lifestyle. In short, romance is not essential to a dream lifestyle. Usagi and Mamoru do have a relationship, but Usagi can be characterized as leading a "dream" lifestyle based upon the fact that she is Sailor Moon. As previously stated, Usagi and Mamoru's romance is second to their lives as heroes. Therefore, when readers fantasize about a dream lifestyle based upon Usagi's life, they will focus primarily on her activities as Sailor Moon. The fantasy/dream lifestyle in *Sailor Moon* is not that Usagi is in a relationship; it is that an ordinary schoolgirl gains magical powers and fights evil.

These dream lifestyles occur less frequently in the 11-15 age group, and they have just about disappeared by the time a reader reaches the 15-21 age group. The majority of the female protagonists represented in the works representing these two groups only know life as a student. In other words, unlike Sana or Usagi who have multiple identities, these protagonists have just one. Moreover, characters in subsequent age groups seem content with reality and do not bother to imagine life if reality were different. Readers and characters in the 9-13 age group alike realize that even though some fantasies may not come true, dreaming and fantasizing is a natural,

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[69] Ibid, 177.

healthy action. Perhaps because the readers in this age group are the youngest they are less ensnared in the constraints of society and thus able to dream big and dream more often.

2.4 Conclusion

Female protagonists in the 9-13 age group are depicted as being independent and able to function without the help of males. In some cases they first build confidence through the use of magical powers, as seen in *Sailor Moon*, but with or without powers, they eliminate the need to rely on a male by relying on female friends or internalizing masculine qualities themselves, like Utena. Because they are not essential to females, males are relegated to secondary roles. Females would simply rather rely on other females than males. While there may be males who are "main" characters, they will never play a more important role in a work than a leading female. Males, such as Tuxedo Kamen, end up having to be rescued by the female protagonists, thus breaking with the outdated idea that females must wait to be rescued. Moreover, romance with males plays a minimal role in works in this age group. Romance does exist, but it is not prominently featured in the storylines. When romance does exist, however, it is pure and non-sexual in nature. In some works, protagonists have found ways to avoid interacting with a male at all. In certain instances, a person with masculine qualities may be useful, so in these cases, they rely on other females who have internalized masculine traits instead of real males. Some even choose to enter into romances with other females, such as Sailor Uranus and Sailor Neptune, thus totally eliminating the need for males. Characters in *Kodomo no omocha*, specifically Sana and her mother, exercise their independence by ignoring the *tatemae*/*honne* dichotomy and choose to

live life as they please, ignoring what society does or does not allow. Some of their

actions, as well as the actions of other characters or the storylines in general, may not

make sense, but in these "nonsensical" points, there are hidden messages. First, readers

should enjoy and appreciate life, even if it means breaking away from society's norms,

and second, and perhaps most important, interacting with males can lead to trouble.

"Dream" lifestyles, such as an actress or a popular girl, are also prominent, but it is

important to note that romance is not a part of these dream lifestyles because female

characters are independent from male characters. As discussed, society does not

discourage male-female interactions, but readers themselves are probably too young to

fully be aware of or want to be involved in romance. We will see in the next chapter

that readers and female protagonists alike want to become involved in romance as a

result of their increasing awareness of it.

CHAPTER 3

SHŌJO MANGA FOR READERS AGED 11 TO 15

This chapter will examine *shōjo manga* targeted towards readers in the 11-15 year old age group. It is important to note that this age group is first and foremost a transitional period between the 9-13 and 15-21 age groups. The transitions in this age group take place over the course of each story. In other words, while a female protagonist in the 11-15 age group may resemble a protagonist from the 9-13 age group at the beginning of a story, she will change and mature as the story progresses. Because this age group is a transitional period, all of the themes and elements found in *Hana yori dango* (written by Kamio Yōko, published by Shūeisha), *Fushigi Yūgi* (written by Watase Yū, published by Shōgakukan), and *Pīchi gāru* (henceforth referred to as "Peach Girl"; written by Ueda Miwa, published by Kōdansha) each appear in either the 9-13 or 15-21 age group to differing degrees. Some of these themes and elements appear first in this age group and set the stage for the 15-21 age group; others are carried over from the 9-13 age group and are presented in a slightly different manner.

Both readers and female protagonists alike who belong to this age group would fall into the second stage of ethnographer Arnold van Gennep's three stages in transition rituals: *marge* (transition).[1] In this particular stage girls are "neither one thing nor another, neither here nor there, neither what [she] was nor yet what [she] will

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[1] The first and third stages are, respectively, *séparation* (separation) and *agrégation* (incorporation). Arnold van Gennep, *The Rights of Passage*, Monika V. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, trans., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), vii.

become."[2] In other words, they are no longer little girls, but yet they are not yet full fledged women. Identity is thus undefined for these girls, so it is perhaps for this reason that there is a limited amount of studies that make girls in this age group their subject. Studies specifically focusing on romance and friendship for girls of any nationality in this age group are especially few in number. As a result, the majority of statements and ideas in this chapter will be based upon and supported by the *manga* themselves.

3.1 Romance Starts to Become Important

3.1.1 Romance Becomes a Major, but Not *the* Major, Story Arc

Once a reader enters the 11-15 age group, she will notice that romance begins to play a larger role in the overall plot of a story. While romance is largely ignored in works in the 9-13 age group, it becomes an occasional focal point in the 11-15 age group. However, it is not yet the main focal point. There is a main story arc that takes precedence over parts of the storyline that focus on romance, but this main story arc does not completely overshadow the romantic segments of the story. In some cases, the main story arc and the romantic segments are heavily intertwined.

The manner in which romance is presented in works in this age group helps to gradually ease readers into the world of romance that awaits them in the 15-21 age group. Having a prominent romantic storyline suddenly thrust upon her may make a reader in this age group uncomfortable for two reasons. First, as a result of limited experience with romance, she may have trouble relating to a storyline or its characters with little or no romantic knowledge. By the time they exit this age group, only thirty

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[2] Nathan A Scott, Jr. "Ellison's Vision of 'Communitas,'" *American Writing Today*. Richard Kostelanetz, ed., (Troy, NY: Whitson, 1991), 103-113.

percent of readers will have had dating experience.[3] In addition, the ages with the

highest percentage of reported first dates among Japanese youth were fourteen and

fifteen, which means that this experience comes as the reader is just about to exit this

age group.[4] Second, since most *shōjo manga* now seem to target a broad, general

audience, the reader may come to the conclusion that since she cannot relate to the

story's characters, she is also unable to relate to her peers who can. This could cause

the reader to believe that she is "strange" because she thinks that she cannot relate to her

peers.

        As previously mentioned, one strategy for introducing romance into this age

group is to combine romantic segments of the story with the main plot. An example of

romance intertwined with the major story arc can be found in *Fushigi Yūgi* (1992-1996).

The premise of *Fushigi Yūgi* is that Yūki Miaka and her good friend, Hongō Yui, get

transported into a book at the library, *Shijin tenchisho* (The Book of the Four Gods of

Heaven and Earth). Miaka later returns to this world by herself and eventually meets

the emperor, Hotohori, who believes that she is the "Suzaku no Miko" (Priestess of the

Red Peacock) mentioned in a legend. The legend states that when the country is in

chaos, a girl from another world will appear, gain the power of the Peacock God**,** and

lead the country.[5] Miaka agrees to become the Suzaku no Miko, but she cannot do so

until she finds all seven Suzaku guardians (referred to as the "*Suzaku shichisei*,"

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[3] Japanese Association for Sex Education.
[4] Shimazaki, T. 1994-1995. Upon Completing the Fourth Youth Sexual Behavior Investigation, *Monthly Report Sex Education Today*, 1994, 12, 9-12 and 1995, 13, 1-3. Tokyo: The Japanese Association for Sex Education (in Japanese). This citation appears verbatim in the *International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*. The information cited in this thesis was taken from a graph in the *Encyclopedia* that uses information from Shimazaki's two articles. However, I am under the impression that the authors of the section on Japan in the *Encyclopedia* (Hatano and Shimazaki) created this graph themselves.
[5] Watase Yū, *Fushigi Yūgi*, vol. 1, (Tokyo: Shōgakukan bunkō, 2003), 94.

literally the seven stars of Suzaku), humans who possess unique powers.[6] The plot focuses on Miaka's quest to become the Suzaku no Miko, but along the way she falls in love with Tamahome, one of the seven *Suzaku shichisei*.

Because this relationship does not overrun Miaka's life or the story, it covertly sends the readers two messages. First, it is important to note that Miaka's relationship with Tamahome never prevents her from carrying out her duties as the future Suzaku no Miko. Miaka realizes that she has responsibilities and people are depending upon her. In other words, the story seems to send a message to the reader that romance is an extra responsibility, and she must learn to prioritize her responsibilities. Second, a positive attitude is important. While the relationship does place her quest in jeopardy on more than one occasion, no matter how bad things get, she presses on. Perhaps the story could even convey the message that because romance is an extra responsibility, the reader must deal with the consequences of entering into a romantic relationship.

In another *manga* entitled *Hana yori dango* (1992-2004), the female protagonist in Makino Tsukushi, is a high school student who comes from a poor family, but she attends the elite, expensive Eitoku Gakuen in accordance with her parents' wishes. Unlike the other students at school, Tsukushi refuses to become a sycophantic admirer of the F4, a group of four wealthy, popular boys who vow to make life miserable for anyone who gets in their way. When Tsukushi stands up to the leader of the F4, Dōmyōji Tsukasa, after he is about to threaten her friend, the F4 put a "red card" in her locker declaring their intent to wage all out war against her. Tsukushi declares her own

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[6] Watase, vol. 1, 111.

war against them by sticking "red cards" to each of their foreheads.[7] Her classmates

further ostracize her so that they do not offend the F4, but as time passes the F4,

especially Tsukasa, become impressed with her resilience and allow her to join their

inner circle despite their difference in social class.

Tsukushi is not searching for romance when she begins the story; rather, she is

simply trying to survive and graduate from Eitoku Gakuen with as few problems as

possible. She is also appears to be aware of her future and its impact on her own life as

well as the lives of her family members. Unlike her classmates, Tsukushi is not focused

on short term gratification in the form of something such as a new expensive handbag.

As a result of her family's financial situation, she realizes that there is more at stake for

her than her classmates, so she focuses on the future for both her own sake and her

family's sake. It is through her efforts to make a better future for both herself and her

family that she encounters romance. Even once she encounters romance, she continues

to think of how she can make life better for her family. Like *Fushigi Yūgi*, *Hana yori*

dango sends a message that a reader must support those around her. What is different,

however, is that Tsukushi does not want to prioritize romance, but her parents want her

to do so. They believe that she can help them by dating, and ultimately marrying,

Tsukasa. For example, when Tsukasa's mother offers Tsukushi 50 million yen (roughly

US$500,000) to "give up" Tsukasa, Tsukushi's mother dumps salt on her head and tells

her to leave. Tsukushi is proud that her mother refused the money, but her mother's

reasoning is that once Tsukushi marries Tsukasa and his mother dies, they will receive

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[7] Kamio Yōko, *Hana yori dango*, vol. 1, (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1992), 37-41.

even more money.[8] Although it may be for the wrong reasons, Tsukushi's own family

is looking towards the future as well.

The very title of this *manga*, *Hana yori dango*, literally "boys over flowers,"

appears to be a subtle critique of girls who focus their energies on boys and romance.[9]

This title implies that girls who dream of romance may ignore the world around them in

favor of boys, just as those who view flowers in spring ignore the blossoms in favor of

food. Perhaps this is a way of reminding readers that while they may feel that

newfound romance is a priority, they still have very important exams to worry about.

While readers may prefer to go on a date rather than study, high exam scores will

enable them to enter the high school, and maybe even the college, of their choice.

Female protagonists and readers alike need to understand that their ideal future will not

occur without any hard work and combat the urge to give into readily available

pleasures.

The fact that romance is presented in conjunction with the main story arc in

works in this age group presents the reader with a chance to learn about or experience it

in a non-threatening way. While a reader in the 9-13 age group may not be able to

completely ignore romance, because it is a minor detail in the overall plot, romantic

scenes require little of her attention. However, because romantic story arcs contribute

to the major story arc in works such as *Fushigi Yūgi*, it is impossible to ignore them.

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[8] Ibid., vol. 16, 106-123.

[9] The title of the *manga* under discussion is 花より男子 (*hana yori dango*), which means "boys before flowers." It is a pun on the phrase 花より団子 (*hana yori dango*), which can be translated as "(rice) cakes before flowers." This phrase means that "the practical is preferred over the aesthetic. Every spring on the day of 'flower viewing,' Japanese traditionally travel to the countryside or visit parks to appreciate the beauty of nature. Yet human nature being what it is, people seem to show considerably more interest in the food than the flowers." Michael L. and Senko K. Maynard, *101 Japanese idioms – understanding Japanese language and culture through popular phrases*, (Lincolnwood, IL: Passport Books: 1993), 7.

Perhaps this is a subtle way of telling the reader that she will soon have to acknowledge the fact that romance is all around her in society.

3.1.2 Females Do Not Understand Romance When They See It

Since the majority of readers probably enter the 11-15 age group with little to no romantic experience, they are likely unaware of the signs of romance or the emotional changes that come with it. None of the female protagonists in the works representing this group enter their respective storylines with any romantic experience, but it seems as if they do possess some basic romantic knowledge. However, this knowledge is not enough to make them aware of when they are a certain male's object of affection. Readers with little or no romantic experience can relate to these "clueless" protagonists and perhaps view *shōjo manga* as an introductory guide to romance.

In *Hana yori dango*, Tsukasa tells Tsukushi that he likes her on more than one occasion, yet in subsequent volumes, Tsukushi seems to be shocked by this declaration time and time again. At one point, she even goes so far as to tell him, "Why me? I don't have any status or honor or beauty…All I can think is that you're out of your mind."[10] This reluctance to believe that Tsukasa likes her could be viewed simply as a lack of self confidence, but it could also be seen as a "*shōjo*-esque" approach to romance. While Ogi says that *shōjo* lack libidinal energy by convention,[11] this group is really the true last stand for the *shōjo* who lack libidinal energy. This naive mindset enables female protagonists to eventually proceed with caution into the unknown world

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[10] Kamio, vol. 16, 69-70.
[11] Ogi, 182.

of romance and sexuality, which begins for girls as "fear."[12] This cautious approach in turn shows readers that one does not need to dive head first into a relationship.

While Tsukushi understands how Tsukasa feels about her, when he asks her what she thinks of him, she responds, "When you say, 'What do you think of me…' I, I really don't know."[13] It is evident from her actions throughout the story that she realizes that she thinks of him differently from other people. However, it seems that what makes it hard for her to answer is that she does not know how to classify her feelings. Even when she temporarily dates Hanazawa Rui, another member of the F4, she finds herself thinking about Tsukasa in the middle of their date much to her frustration.[14] Tsukushi knows that there is a reason why she keeps thinking about Tsukasa, but she doesn't know what that reason is.

The female protagonist in *Peach Girl* (1998-2003), Adachi Momo, has been secretly pining for Tōjigamori Kazuya, simply referred to as "Tōji," but there is another boy, Okayasu Kairi, who likes Momo. Both during and after the time Momo dates Tōji, Kairi makes it evident that he likes Momo and wants her to be happy. When Momo's own boyfriend doubts her words, he believes them. He even goes so far as to give Momo a few hugs and words of encouragement before matches at a swim meet, which makes her angry with herself because this causes her heart to beat faster.[15] Even though Kairi likes Momo, he tries to get Momo and Tōji to resume dating again because he thinks this will make her happy. His efforts to get them back together work, but when Tōji suggests that they start dating again, Momo tells him that she is unable to date him.

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[12] Fujimoto, 56.
[13] Kamio, vol. 16, 68.
[14] Kamio Yōko, *Hana yori dango*, vol. 7, (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1994), 71-76.
[15] Ueda Miwa, *Peach Girl*, vol. 3, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998), 86-100.

Even though Momo doesn't understand her feelings for Kairi, she realizes that

he is a thoughtful, trustworthy person. In other words, she seems to understand good

qualities in a person, in this case a boy, when she sees them. Since readers in this age

group are still unfamiliar with romance, they may simply act on feelings of physical

attraction for another person and not concern themselves with personality. Momo, for

example, became attracted to Tōji while watching him practice with the baseball team

in middle school.[16] This means that she became attracted to him based upon looks.

Once Momo understands that Tōji's personality is important, too, it becomes hurtful

that he believes what Sae says instead of what she says. This enables her to realize that

Kairi is not a bad person, and he respects her. If readers view *shōjo manga* as a kind of

instruction manual then learning that a person's looks are not everything is an important

lesson.

3.1.3 Romance Causes Competition and Destroys Friendships

Female protagonists in the works discussed in this chapter are just starting to

take an interest in romance and the opposite sex. Their closest female friends are as

well. By the time readers exit this age group, roughly sixty-five percent of them will be

interested in approaching the opposite sex.[17] While a female protagonist and her good

friend do not explicitly enter into a competition with one another to see who can find a

boyfriend first, neither of them wants to be the one who is still single when the other is

in a relationship. Adolescent girls often feel excluded when their other friends begin to

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[16] Ueda, Vol. 3, 38-40.
[17] Japanese Association for Sex Education.

date,[18] and as a result involvement with a romantic partner may be a source of strain in the friendships of adolescents.[19] This is, indeed, the case with adolescent females in *shōjo manga*. The female protagonists in *Fushigi Yūgi* and *Peach Girl* both enter into relationships before their close friends, and, as a result, their friendships suffer.

While the female protagonists in *Fushigi Yūgi* and *Peach Girl*, Miaka and Momo, do not ignore their close friends, Yui and Kashiwagi Sae, respectively, in favor of their new boyfriends, their close friends are upset because they perceive that they are being excluded. Not only are they excluded from time with Miaka and Momo, they are excluded from the opportunity for sexual activity. While friends can offer one another companionship and an emotional connection, boyfriends can offer what friends can plus the opportunity for sexual exploration and gratification, something friends cannot offer.[20] This causes feelings of jealousy for Yui and Sae. Not only do they get less time with Miaka and Momo, but they are also still single and, thus, excluded from sexual gratification. Yui and Sae seem to believe that the only way to get a boyfriend and, as a result, sexual gratification is by destroying Miaka and Momo's relationships and stealing their boyfriends. This jealous female who plots the destruction of her friend's relationship so that she can benefit from it would be what Kinko Ito has dubbed the "bitch type, [who] is intimidating, assertive, aggressive, cunning, and cold."[21]

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[18] M.A. Roth and J. G. Parker, "Affective and behavioral responses to friends who neglect their friends for dating partners: Influences of gender, jealousy, and perspective," *Journal of Adolescence* 24 (2001), 281-296.

[19] Susan S. Hendrick and Clyde Hendrick, "Lovers as friends," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 10 (1993).

[20] Brett Laursen, "'Closeness and conflict in adolescent peer relationships: Interdependence with friends and romantic partners," *The company they keep: Friendship in childhood and adolescence*, William M. Bukowski, Andrew F. Newcomb, and William H. Hartup, eds., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[21] Kinko Ito, "The manga culture in Japan," *Japan Studies Review* 4 (2002), 11

Yui Hongō, a female protagonist turned antagonist in *Fushigi Yūgi*, would be an example of the "bitch type." While both Yui and Miaka were transported to a foreign land inside of a book, only Miaka's experiences in this world have been pleasant; Yui's experiences have been anything but. She is led to believe that she has been raped—readers learn later that this is not the case—so she tries to commit suicide.[22] Yui does not die, but she instead lives on with a chip on her shoulder. The tipping point for her, however, is when she learns that Miaka is in a relationship with Tamahome, to whom Yui was attracted from the time she first saw him. She is furious and no longer sees Miaka as a friend but merely as a romantic rival who stands in the way of her own happiness. Wanting to crush Miaka, Yui agrees to become the Seiryū no Miko (Priestess of the Blue Dragon), the guardian of a country that rivals the one Miaka agrees to protect.[23]

This theme of rivalry completely nullifies the concept of "female friendship over romance" that can be found in works such as *Sailor Moon* in the 9-13 age group. Yui's compassionate feelings for Miaka, her best friend, turn to hatred in an instant all because of one single male. She completely forgets the good and bad times they have shared together. In the 9-13 age group, female protagonists and their female friends were able to overcome hardships together and remain friends. This concept of "togetherness" does not make the transition into the 11-15 age group. Characters like Yui reinforce the idea that emphasizing female friendship instead of romance is all but dead.

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[22] Watase Yū, *Fushigi Yūgi*, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Shōgakukan bunkō, 2003), 179-183.
[23] Watase, vol. 2, 184-185

Perhaps Sae, the close friend of *Peach Girl* progatonist Momo, exemplifies the "bitch type" even better than Yui. Unlike Yui, Sae cannot be trusted from the outset of the story. For example, when she and Momo go shopping, Momo sees a handbag she likes but does not buy. Sae comes to school not long after that day with the very same handbag.[24] She is the kind of person who takes what others want simply so they cannot have it. Naturally, when she sees that Momo is dating a handsome classmate, she decides that she wants him as well. She erodes the trust that Momo and her boyfriend, Tōji, have in one another, doing everything from twisting Momo's words around to make it seem as if she is cheating to placing herself in compromising positions with Tōji. This ultimately leads Tōji to tell Momo that they should break up.[25] Sae tries her best to stifle her excitement, but it quickly escapes in the form of a demented smile as she stands in front of a banner that says "*daishōri*" (big victory).[26]

While readers may be able to identify with the "bitch type" from time to time, sustained identification is both unlikely and undesirable. It seems that *mangaka* introduce characters of the "bitch type" such as Sae in order to try to prevent their readers from becoming such a person. In contrast to previous instances where the reader has been able to identify well with a character, this is perhaps the one time where the author hopes that the reader cannot identify with the character. Because the theme of romance will only become more prominent as readers enter into the 15 to 21 year old age group, the introduction of the "bitch type" serves not only to caution readers not to

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[24] Ueda Miwa, *Peach Girl*, vol. 1, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998), 9-11.
[25] Ibid, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998).
[26] Ibid, vol. 3, 11.

become this kind of person but also to prevent readers from befriending—even accidentally— this kind of person.

3.2 Female Protagonists Have Increased Interaction with Male Characters
3.2.1 Males Appear at the Right Time

As mentioned in the previous chapter, female protagonists in works representing the 9-13 age group dispel the idea that females should wait passively for a male to come and rescue them. While female discussed in this chapter do not wait passively for a male to come to their aid, males often appear at the most convenient times and ultimately rescue them. This is a change of pace from the idea presented in the 9-13 age group that females are the rescuers and not the rescued. While female protagonists in works under discussion in this chapter are rescued on occasion, this does not mean that they never try to help themselves.

Hana yori dango protagonist Tsukushi tries her hardest to stand up to her classmates, but her efforts are usually unsupported. While the F4 and their "declaration of war" are the initial causes of Tsukushi's problems, F4 leader Tsukasa eventually starts trying to shield Tsukushi from harm. When he spies three girls bullying her, he immediately puts an end to it by declaring, "The only one who's allowed to tease her is me! A red card is coming to all of your lockers tomorrow!"[27] In a chivalrous gesture, he tells her not to cry and offers to help her stand up. When Tsukasa asks why she has that kind of attitude with him when he came to help her, she replies "I didn't ask for your help!"[28]

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[27] Kamio Yōko, *Hana yori dango*, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1993), 25-26.
[28] Kamio, vol. 2, 31.

Tsukushi is likely somewhat grateful that Tsukasa helped her, but it is evident that she is reluctant to depend upon a male, especially one like Tsukasa. She exemplifies a dilemma that female protagonists, and perhaps even readers themselves, in this age group face. Female protagonists in the 9-13 age group depended on their female friends when they needed help. It also seems that they were able to pick and choose when they needed help. In this case, Tsukushi receives help even though she does not request it. Howver, even if she were to request it, she would have been unable to ask another female for help because, as we have seen, other female characters in this age group have proven themselves untrustworthy. Tsukushi illustrates that female protagonists reach a point where they have no choice but to consider accepting a male's help. Although this is a change from the mindset of a female protagonist in the 9-13 age group, it is a change that comes about gradually over the course of the story.

Unlike Tsukasa, in *Peach Girl* Kairi appears at the right place at the right time in secret. Momo is often only aware of a situation's outcome, not Kairi's involvement in it. For example, unbeknownst to Momo and Sae, Kairi is looking for a handbag for his sister's birthday at the same time the two of them are looking at handbags. When he realizes that the handbag Sae has at school is the same handbag he saw Momo looking at during the previous week, he does not mince words. Sae is furious and immediately gives the bag to Momo, who no longer wants it.[29] Because he was at the right place at the right time, Kairi can tell Sae that what she did was underhanded on Momo's behalf. Momo is visibly frustrated at times, but she knows that Sae will twist her words if she complains about her actions. In addition, Kairi was able to see with his own eyes just

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[29] Ueda, vol. 1, 26-30.

how sneaky Sae really is. All of their classmates have been tricked into thinking that she is a sweet, naïve person, but Kairi has seen through Sae's ruse.

While they do need help at times, female protagonists in this age group are not ready to completely rely on a male, and it seems that some male characters are aware of this. Momo is a self-reliant individual, so since she is not completely sure of her feelings for Kairi, it is perhaps for this reason that she does not choose to depend on him. If he were to openly appear at the right time to help Momo, she might not accept his help or she might be ungrateful, even if she truly needed it. Kairi avoids an awkward situation simply by not telling her that he is helping. It is likely that Kairi does not mind acting in secret because he genuinely wants to help Momo. This kind of action allows female protagonists to continue to believe that they can operate as completely independent individuals, even if it is truly not the case.

This idea that males appear at the right time may cause readers to move into the15-21 age group believing that a male will always come to the rescue of a female. Perhaps it is this way of thinking that influences storylines in that age group. It should be pointed out, however, that this knight-in-shining armor portrayal of males does not seamlessly transfer into the next age group. The notion of males appearing at the right time also highlights the increasing visibility of male's characters in a story. Male characters in works under discussion in this chapter are no longer relegated to minor character status like those found in the 9-13 age group. We will explore the increased presence of male characters in the 15-21 age group in the next chapter.

3.2.2 Females Begin to Depend on Males

When female protagonists in the 9-13 age group need help, they depend only upon their female friends. Because so many of the females surrounding female protagonists in the 11-15 age group have proven that they cannot be trusted, the female protagonists are left with little choice but to depend upon males. A female protagonist will proceed with caution in her interactions with a male until she feels that they have reached a stable level of trust. It is at this point that she will begin to depend upon him. This trust can occur as a result of a male repeatedly appearing at just the right time as illustrated in the previous section. The difference between this section and the previous one is that in the preceding section the female does not ask for the male's help; he appears at the right time and the female protagonist accepts his help. This section illustrates the fact that a female protagonist reaches a point where she explicitly asks for a male's help as a result of their newly forged bonds of trust.

Tsukushi comes home from her part time job one day to find that her father lost one million yen (roughly US$10,000) at the racetrack. She tells her family to leave everything to her and immediately goes to the Dōmyōji household to ask Tsukasa for one million yen. She explains that she will not be able to repay the entire amount for quite some time, but she intends to do so even if it takes her whole life. Tsukasa agrees to lend her the money as long as she agrees to participate in the "Miss Teen of Japan" contest. Tsukushi accepts his terms and returns home with one million yen in cash.[30]

Tsukushi has faced her problems alone in the past, but due to the urgency of this problem, she is left with no choice but to seek outside help. Even though Tsukushi attends a school full of wealthy students, the only one of those students who she finds

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[30] Kamio Yōko, *Hana yori dango*, vol. 10, (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995), 143-152.

that she can really trust is Tsukasa. The fact that she goes to Tsukasa's home with no

real hesitation whatsoever shows that she has become able to rely upon a male if it is

necessary. She only seems to feel a tinge of embarrassment just before she asks him for

the money when she thinks to herself, "I absolutely didn't want to ask him for

something like this."[31] She is very forthcoming and direct, which indicates that she

realizes she can be open with him without fear of how he will react. One million yen is

a large amount of money to owe one person, so the fact that Tsukushi chooses to

become indebted to Tsukasa and not another member of the F4 or anyone else shows

that she trusts him.

In *Fushigi Yūgi*, Miaka begins to depend on Tamahome because he comes to her

rescue at the right time. While she tries her hardest to be self-reliant in urgent

situations, Miaka depends on Tamahome for everyday things, namely human

interaction. Not long after she enters the world inside the book for a second time,

Tamahome tells her to go home, but, of course, she is unable to. Tamahome tells her

that if she stays with him, she will be a bother, but Miaka is so desperate for company

that she offers to help him with his work.[32] She also depends on him to listen to her

feelings of longing for Tokyo, her family, and Yui from time to time. Even after Miaka

befriends other individuals, when she feels that she needs to talk to someone or she

simply needs company, the person upon whom she depends is always Tamahome.

While Miaka herself tells Tamahome that "I can do anything by myself,"[33] she

obviously realizes that the one thing she absolutely cannot do on her own is fulfill the

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[31] Kamio, vol. 10, 144.
[32] Watase, vol. 1, 61-62.
[33] Watase, vol. 2, 143.

roles of both speaker and listener. *Fushigi Yūgi* seems to echo the message that *Hana yori dango* sends in that it is acceptable to depend on a male once in a while. In this case, Miaka depends on Tamahome once in a while for human interaction. However, it also seems to convey to the reader that she must understand that everyone has limitations. Tsukushi realizes that she is not able to do everything on her own; Miaka does not. This message is a stark contrast to the idea that female protagonists need little help in the 9-13 age group. It is this kind of message that readers, specifically females, have limitations, that encourages the female protagonists in the 15-21 age group to be dependent on their male counterparts. The next chapter will explore whether or not real females are limited as well.

Readers in this age group seem to be given a message that it is perfectly acceptable to depend on a male, as long as it only happens occasionally. As previously stated, sexuality begins for girls as fear, so many girls could, by extension, be fearful of interacting with boys. Because they will continue to work and study with males as they grow, it is important for girls to overcome this fear at an early age. Showing situations where female protagonists depend on male characters could help to reassure readers who are fearful. Readers can also be comforted by the fact that protagonists in works under discussion in this chapter depend upon males only when they have no other choice; in other words, they depend upon males as a last resort. In the 15-21 age group, it will be evident that female protagonists depend upon males simply because they can, and as a result they depend upon males frequently instead of occasionally.

3.3 Differing Degrees of Fantasy

The 11-15 age group can also be thought of as a transitional stage due to the variation in levels of fantasy. It seems as if some *mangaka* are reluctant to separate their readers from the fantastic elements that they became so familiar with in the 9-13 age group while other *mangaka* are eager to push their readers towards the worlds with little fantasy that readers will encounter in the 15-21 age group. As a result, there are three different patterns of fantasy available to readers in this age group: limited fantasy, fantasy in moderation, and abundant fantasy.

3.3.1 Limited Fantasy: Familiar Lifestyles and Settings

The first pattern is representative of the level of fantasy that readers will encounter in the 15-21 age group. In this pattern, reality constrains fantasy through its connections with the reader. Perhaps one could say that a plot that utilizes this level of fantasy connects with the reader in one too many places. In other words, the plot's connection to reality is so extensive that it all but removes any traces of fantasy. This kind of pattern is found in *Peach Girl*. The relationships between characters in *Peach Girl* mirror everyday situations with a very low degree of fantasy.

The female protagonist Momo has been quietly pining for the same boy, Tōji, for a few years. She cannot tell this to her friend, Sae, because she is the type of person who will take what other people want just so they cannot have it. When asked by Sae who she likes, Momo points to a random boy in the hall in order to quell Sae's suspicions. Sae then tells their entire class who she thinks Momo likes, and this boy, Kairi, begins to appear wherever Momo is. One day both Tōji and Sae overhear Momo telling Kairi that she doesn't like him, and she has never had the courage to tell Tōji how she really feels. Afterwards, Tōji talks to Momo and they begin dating. Sae seizes

the opportunity to try and prevent their relationship from going smoothly at each and every turn and ultimately causes them to break-up. While Momo realizes that Sae is not a trustworthy person, she cannot expose her as such because Sae has tricked everyone into believing that it is she who is dating Tōji. Momo no longer wants to be Sae's friend, but she has to proceed carefully so that Sae does not portray herself as the victim of Momo's jealousy towards her supposed relationship with Tōji.[34]

As evidenced by the character dynamics, there are really no elements of fantasy in *Peach Girl*. It is safe to conclude that the reader is so connected with the story that this particular instance could even be classified as "no fantasy" instead of "limited fantasy." Most, if not all, readers can relate to the school setting, the student lifestyle, the inability to tell a boy how they feel, and a backstabbing friend. All of these elements could take place on any given school day. The reader is not leaving reality; she is merely viewing someone else's perspective of it. This pattern will appear frequently in the 15-21 year-old age group. Storylines focused overwhelmingly on romance will also appear frequently in the 15-21 year old age group. In the next chapter, we will explore the relationship between romance and fantasy in more detail.

3.3.2 Fantasy in Moderation: Familiar Settings or Lifestyles with Hints of Fantasy

The second pattern walks a tightrope between fantasy and reality. The story is completely plausible, but it is unlikely that it will happen to most readers. There are no elements that cannot be found in everyday society; there are simply a number of situations with which the majority of readers have never or will never come in contact due to their infrequent nature. In other words, these situations are real and could

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[34] Ueda, vol. 1 and 2.

potentially occur, but the probability of them occurring to a single reader, let alone

multiple readers, is so low that this makes them fantastic.

The female protagonist in *Hana yori dango*, Makino Tsukushi, is realistic in

every way. She is a normal student who is not popular, famous, or beautiful. She is

also not rich, so in order to help relieve her family's financial burden, she has a part-

time job at a sweet shop. Many of the scenes in the story take place at school, at home,

or at Tsukushi's part-time job. Like readers in this age group, she likes a boy, but she is

unable to tell him how she feels.

These familiar elements are combined with "fantastic" elements. Through her

friendship with the F4 Tsukushi is able to visit new places and get a taste of a life of

luxury that she would otherwise never know. Even though Tsukushi is not popular,

famous, beautiful or rich, she is able to befriend the F4. Moreover, she "finds herself

the center of attention in a group of handsome and fabulously rich teenage boys,"[35]

something her popular, rich, famous, and beautiful classmates cannot achieve. Having a

popular, handsome boy pay attention to you is perhaps a fantasy of many readers in the

age 11-15 group. Imagine their delight when the ordinary heroine with which they can

relate has the attention of not one but four boys! While this is not true fantasy in the

sense that it cannot happen, it is fantastic because it so unlikely to occur.

Hana yori dango introduces the concept of romantic fantasy. Tsukushi is often

thrust into tricky situations where she is helped by the F4—specifically Tsukasa, as

discussed earlier— whether she appreciates it or not. While Tsukasa can be a bit

brusque at times, he means well, and his actions, although they are often misinterpreted,

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[35] Thorn, 50.

are carried out with only Tsukushi in mind. The two quarrel from time to time, but in the end Tsukasa's feelings for Tsukushi remain unchanged. Even though Tsukushi might not think of Tsukasa as a knight in shining armor, the romantic fantasy in *Hana yori dango* seems to have that kind of twist.

The synthesis of fantasy with reality in *Hana yori dango* empowers and restricts the reader at the same time. The reader is able to experience unlikely situations through Tsukushi, but the majority of these unlikely situations occur as a result of her interaction and friendship with the F4. In other words, all of the unlikely situations would not happen if Tsukushi did not befriend males. As a result females who relate to Tsukushi and take delight in her success could possibly believe that males can provide something that females cannot in any given situation.

3.3.3 Abundant Fantasy: Fantasy Is Prominent

This abundance of fantasy in the third pattern is representative of the level of fantasy that readers encounter in the 9-13 age group. Upon examination of the three works representing the 9-13 age group, it was evident that fantastic elements stem from a single source in their respective works. This single source allows the fantastic elements to exist. This is also the case for certain works in the 11-15 age group, as evidenced by the F4 in *Hana yori dango*. However, the work that mirrors the degree of fantasy found in the 9-13 age group the closest is *Fushigi Yūgi*.

The foreign setting for *Fushigi Yūgi* dictates the level of fantasy throughout the work. While situations such as falling in love and failed friendships are clearly signs of reality that are connections between the reader and the story, the very fact that they are inside a book is what has caused these things to happen. If Miaka and Yui had

remained in Tokyo, life would have continued in the same manner. Neither of them would have met Tamahome, and neither of them would have experienced love or what they believed was love.

Even though Tamahome is a character in a book, he is able to care for and protect Miaka in the same way that a real male would protect a real female. He is very much a real person in Miaka's eyes, and having him in her life constitutes reality for her. Miaka and Yui's strained friendship is due to this relationship with Tamahome. The existence of the world around Yui may be questionable, but the wounds on her wrist from her attempted suicide are very real. For better or worse, the fantasy world inside the book has become reality for Miaka and Yui. However, the reader knows that Miaka and Yui are in a fantasy world because people possess extraordinary abilities, such as super-strength, and Miaka and Yui each have the opportunity to have three of their wishes granted if they can become either the Suzaku or Seiryū no Miko.

Even though the actual content in *Fushigi Yūgi* may be more mature than that found in works in the 9-13 age group, readers are not suddenly dropped into a completely adult world. The remnants of fantasy still bind them to the 9-13 age group, yet they are learning about issues that affect both them and their peers. Issues such as romance and friendship will continue to shape the identities of female protagonists and readers alike in the 15-21 age group. However, they are learning about these issues as they take place in a completely foreign setting, thus distancing themselves from them.

3.4 Conclusion

As evidenced by *Hana yori dango*, *Fushigi Yūgi*, and *Peach Girl*, the 11-15 year old age group is a transitional period. The themes and elements that appear in these

three works have either been carried over from the 9-13 age group or introduced in preparation for the 15-21 age group. The fact that the works that were discussed in this chapter contain a number of transitional elements reflects the nature of the readers who are in a state of transition themselves.

The theme of romance is first introduced as a key story element in *manga* in this age group. While romance does exist in works in the 9-13 age group, it is not a key element or focus of those storylines. In the 11-15 age group, it becomes an important part of the story, but it does not dominate the storyline. In many cases, however, it is intertwined with the main story arc, such as in *Fushigi Yūgi*. While the readers may realize that romance is taking place, the female protagonists themselves are often unaware of this. The readers and female protagonists alike enter this age group or their respective works with little to no romantic experience. This increased emphasis on romance leads to the destruction of female friendships, often bringing out feelings of jealousy in a friend of the female protagonist. The idea of females as rivals is a complete change from the idea of females as friends in the 9-13 age group. This change in dynamics is due in part to female friends developing an interest in sexual exploration.

Males received very little attention in the 9-13 age group, but in the 11-15 age group, they are featured more prominently. These males often come to the aid of female protagonists, and they usually appear at the right time. This pattern shows that the female protagonist is beginning to get weaker as she can no longer handle a range of situations on her own. In addition, a female protagonist in the 9-13 age group was portrayed as asking for help only when she needed it; in the 11-15 age group, she receives help, whether she wants it or not. With time, female protagonists come to trust

these males as a result of their appearing at the right time, and if a dire situation arises, they will rely on these males. When female protagonists needed help in the 9-13 age group, they relied upon their female friends. However, the idea of females as rivals makes reliance upon other females in this age group very difficult, so female protagonists are left with no choice but to rely upon males when necessary.

The concept of fantasy is also in a state of transition in this age group. There are three patterns represented among works discussed in this chapter: limited fantasy, fantasy in moderation, and abundant fantasy. In works with the limited fantasy pattern, reality dominates the storyline. Romance seems to be a major theme in this pattern, which is representative of the fantasy found in the 15-21 age group. Probability plays a factor in the fantasy in moderation pattern. Nothing is impossible in a work with this pattern; the probability that it would happen to a single reader much less a large number of readers is just extremely low. Works with this pattern take everyday situations and mix them with improbable situations. In the final pattern, abundant fantasy, fantasy influences the story. This pattern is representative of the 9-13 age group. A single fantastic element sets the stage for the storyline and its situations. While the fantastic elements remain in this pattern, the content has been made slightly more mature so as to reflect the readership's growth. Once readers exit this stage, they head to the final stage of *shōjo manga* readership: the 15-21 year old age group.

CHAPTER 4

SHŌJO MANGA FOR READERS AGED 15 TO 21

This chapter will focus on *shōjo manga* aimed at readers who range in age from fifteen to twenty-one years old. The female protagonists in *manga* targeted at this group are the least independent. This chapter will detail how these females are not independent, and, where possible, it will show how these females are less independent than their real-life counterparts. The first section in this chapter will analyze the overwhelming presence of romance in works in this age group. The second section will examine the increased visibility of males in these works. The final section will explore the concept of fantasy and why it is no longer prevalent. The works that will be discussed in this chapter are *Boys esute* (written by Masaki Sōko, published by Kōdansha), *Sex=Love²* (written by Shinjō Mayu, published by Shōgakukan), and *Nana* (written by Yazawa Ai, published by Shūeisha).

4.1 Romance Becomes the Focal Point of Stories

4.1.1 *Shōjo Manga* Teaches That a Person Cannot Be Happy Alone

In all three works under discussion, each female protagonist is romantically linked with a male. While the protagonists are all single for portions of their respective stories, the plots ultimately lead them to become and remain involved with males. It should be noted, however, that *Nana* (2000-present) is still being serialized, so it is unclear as to whether or not its female protagonists will remain involved with the same males when the story concludes. However, based upon a quick examination of additional works from this age group, it is likely that this will, indeed, be the case because *shōjo manga* seems to

adhere to the outdated idea that females need to be in a relationship with a male to be happy.

    While some female protagonists openly lament being single when their stories begin, other females appear not to be outwardly frustrated by their single status. Ōsaki Nana, one of two female protagonists in *Nana*, ends up in Tokyo after she and her boyfriend, Ren, decide to pursue different goals. Nana presents herself as an unusually tough female for this age group. As an extension of this tough image, she rarely talks about her relationship with Ren. This is a probable indicator that feelings for him still exist inside Nana. Nana has a tougher image than most female protagonists in this age group, and talking about Ren or her love life in general could jeopardize this image. If she truly has no feelings for Ren, she would be able to speak candidly about him. However, because of her feelings for him, she likely avoids talking about him in order to prevent the weak, dependent facets of her personality from being discovered. If you compare Nana's personality when she is apart from Ren to her personality when she is with him, these traits are visible.

    On the surface, Nana appears content being single, and she is, until she sees Ren for the first time in two years. As soon as she sees him performing on stage as a member of the band known as Trapnest, she begins to cry.[1] When she meets him after the concert, she tells him at first that she does not intend to get back together with him, but as she spends time with him, her attitude changes. Nana ultimately breaks down and tells Ren,

> "Since now, of course, I still have willpower, I can't live with you like
> before anymore, but I think it would be good if we could meet once in a

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[1] Yazawa Ai, *Nana*, vol. 4, (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2001), 181.

while like this, hold one another, and talk about our lives. And someday, when I'm older and both my will and appearance fade, when I've even become tired of singing, is it OK to return to that house (that we shared)?"[2]

This statement is a complete reversal from Nana's tough persona. It confirms that Nana had, indeed, been trying to suppress the side of her personality that wants her to depend on a male. Once this side of her personality is revealed, she appears no different from any other female protagonist in this age group. It is true that Nana never seemed unhappy without Ren, but she is even happier with him than she was without him. Her relationship contrasts the varying degrees of happiness found in life as a single person as opposed to life as someone in a relationship. *Shōjo manga* seems to convey the idea that females can be happy when they are single, but this is not the same kind of happiness females find in relationships with males. The happiness a female encounters in a relationship is not only different, but it is also better, and without this particular kind of happiness, a female can never truly be happy. Only once Nana got back together with Ren did she move closer to true happiness.

A large percentage of Japanese females would likely disagree with the idea put forth by *manga* that they cannot truly be happy without a male in their life. In 1970, forty-five percent of women between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine were unmarried, but by 1995, this percentage had risen to sixty-five percent.[3] In 2005, the National Institution of Population and Social Security Research (*Kokuritsu Shakai Hoshō*/*Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūjo*) administered a survey on marriage and birth and found that eighty-five percent of female respondents between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four were

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[2] Yazawa, vol. 4, 61
[3] Masahiro Yamada, "The growing crop of spoiled singles," *Japan Echo*, (June 2000), 49

unmarried.[4] Clearly, everyday Japanese females are able to survive without being

dependent upon a male. This is not to say that all eighty-five percent enjoy a lifestyle

where they do not depend on a male, but conversely, all eighty-five percent probably do

not believe that they cannot be both single and happy.[5]

The refusal of real women to depend on men in the same manner as previous

generations of women has led to changes in society. The fact that women are not getting

married or entering into relationships that lead to marriage is compounding the issue of

Japan's falling birthrate, which presently stands at 1.32.[6] In addition, these unmarried

women have helped to create the phenomenon of "parasite singles."[7] The parasite single

phenomenon is so widespread that "up to eighty percent of single women between the

ages of twenty and thirty-four live with their parents."[8] If trends continue, then the

readers who presently make up this age group will likely impact or be a part of these

statistics in the near future.

While all works from this group do not end with marriage, many of them

conclude with a happy end. The happy end, in this case, usually means that the female

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[4] Kokuritsu Shakai Hoshō/Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūjo, *Dai13ka shusshō dōkō kihon chōsa – kekkon to shussan ni kansuru zenkoku chōsa dokushinsha chōsa no kekka gaiyō,* (2003), 1.

[5] It should be noted that in a survey conducted by the Meiji Yasuda Seikatsu Fukushi Kenkyūjo, 90.8% of female participants aged 20-39 gave some indication that they have a desire to get married. 28.2% said "*kanarazu kekkon shitai*" (I absolutely want to get married), 34.9% "*ii hito ga arawaretara kekkon shitai*" (I want to get married when the right person appears), and 27.2% "*itsuka wa kekkon shitai*" (I want to get married someday). However, the last two categories are conditional. One group of women will not get married without the right man, and the other will get married only when the time is right. Therefore, the majority of these respondents do not seem to label marriage as an urgency. Meiji Yasuda Seikatsu Fukushi Kenkyūjo, *Dai2ka "kekkon/shussan ankēto chōsa" kekka gaiyō honbun*, (2007), 2.

[6] Kokuritsu Shakai Hoshō/Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūjo, Shusshōsū oyobi gōkei tokushu shusshōritsu no sui'i.

[7] In Japanese, they are referred to as *parasaito shinguru*. Parasite singles are "young men and women who continue living with their parents even after they become adults, enjoying a carefree and well-to-do life as singles." Living with their parents for an extended amount of time allows parasite singles to reduce the cost of living expenditures, thus enabling them to do things such as purchase brand goods or take overseas vacations. Yamada, 49.

[8] Ibid, 49.

protagonist and her male of choice have overcome some problems together and are now

devoted to one another in a monogamous relationship. The general outlook on love in

shōjo manga is that the path to true love does not run smoothly, but in the end, romance

makes everyone happy, so if you, too, want to be happy, you must find romance.

4.1.2 Female Protagonists Play a Passive Role in a Relationship

In many works in this age group, the male initiates relationships by revealing his

true feelings first. The female almost never reveals her true feelings first, so she is at the

mercy of the male until he makes his declaration of love. Even when a male has clearly

displayed signs of affection to her, the female is often hesitant to return his affection.

The female never takes the initiative at any point in the relationship, and she causes

herself unnecessary angst by repressing her true feelings. Females seem unable to

display excessive or potentially risky emotions towards males. As a result, they appear

passive.

Saionji Kumiko, the female protagonist in *Sex=Love^2* (2006-2007), first

encounters Tachibana Ryō as a home tutor. In the beginning it seems that Ryō sees

Kumiko simply as a potential sexual conquest, but as time passes and she continually

rejects his advances, readers learn that he is truly interested in her. Kumiko eventually

comes to realize that she likes Ryō as well, but even after this realization, she still does

not give in to his advances. Once they begin their relationship, Ryō is always the one

who initiates romantic situations. She conceals her emotions and takes a passive role in

such situations. Kumiko only shows her affection first in one incident where she gives

him a hug.[9] Even when Ryō disregards her feelings she does not complain; instead, she tries her best to repress her emotions. Kumiko idolizes Takeda Tetsuya, the actor who plays the popular television character Kinpachi-sensei, so much that she brings a box of Kinpachi-sensei and Takeda goods that she has amassed to her new apartment. After she explains to Ryō, who helps her move in, what is in the box and how important it is, he throws the box out the window. In response, she simply asks "*Nani surundesu ka, Ryō-kun*!!" (What are you doing, Ryō-kun!!).[10] Perhaps Kumiko's muted response comes from the shock of having her things thrown out the window by someone close to her. However, is also possible that it was too risky to show a higher degree of emotion, such as anger. Anger has the potential to upset the status quo in any relationship, so Kumiko might have repressed her anger and appeared passive for the sake of preserving and maintaining their relationship.

The birth rate and percentage of unmarried women presented in the last section both illustrate that today's women are less dependent on men than women of previous generations. As a result, they would likely be intolerant of a relationship in which they are either made to be submissive or appear submissive, like Kumiko. Even though women have become more self-sufficient and independent, we should examine whether or not qualities associated with being passive are still valued. A potential indicator of this is whether or not passive qualities in a girlfriend are still favored by males, specifically those in the 15-21 age group.

Let us turn our attention to a multiple response survey conducted by the Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living. The survey participants were two hundred boys

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[9] Shinjō Mayu, Sex=Love[2], vol. 1, (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2006), 142.
[10] Shinjō, 176.

sixteen to nineteen years old living in Tokyo and the surrounding prefectures. When asked what types of girls they liked best, over seventy percent (72.5%) said "kind girls."[11] If a girl is kind, it does not mean that she is also passive. Like anyone else, these boys simply want someone who will treat them well. Next on the list were cute girls (69.5%), girls who are considerate (51%), and cheerful girls (49.5%) respectively.[12] Beginning with the fifth most popular answer, there is a sharp break from qualities that represent the passive type of female protagonist in this group of *shōjo manga*. Forty-seven percent of respondents liked "girls who tell [them] their opinions." "Interesting talkers" and "good talkers" were tied for ninth place (40.5%).[13] These boys expect their female cohorts to play an active role in a relationship, whether it is a romantic one or a friendly one. They like girls who can contribute to a conversation and speak their mind. While "girls who assert themselves" (25.5%) was ranked rather low at number fifteen, that the fact that it even appeared on the list at all is noteworthy. Moreover, it placed higher than "reserved girls," a characteristic of female protagonists in this age group, which finished in nineteenth place (19%).[14]

If this survey is reflective of the average male in this age group, then we can conclude that while males may not want assertive girlfriends, they clearly do not want passive girlfriends either. Boys in this age group do not want a girlfriend who is unable to display excessive or risky emotions. With all emotions, there is a risk, and it seems that these boys realize this because if they want to begin or continue a relationship, they themselves need to display emotions that could be deemed risky. Perhaps both everyday

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[11] Results of an online survey by the Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living conducted online in 2004 in Yōhei Harada, "Japanese teenagers: the communication generation," *Japan Echo*, (June, 2005), 12.
[12] Ibid, 12.
[13] Ibid, 12.
[14] Ibid, 12.

males and females alike have realized that passivity and silence are no longer desirable traits in a girlfriend. We will explore possible causes of the gap between real females and female protagonists in the conclusion of this thesis.

4.1.3 Female Protagonists Make Choices for the Sake of Romance

Unlike female protagonists in the previous two age groups, a female protagonist in the 15-21 age group makes decisions solely with romance in mind. Instead of making decisions for herself, her family, or even her friends, she will make decisions for the sake of a male in order to preserve or maintain her relationship with him. While a female protagonist appears to believe that making a decision in the name of romance is a noble idea, the end result is not always what she expects.

Komatsu Nana, the second of two female protagonists in *Nana*, is the kind of person who is dependent on everyone. Despite having no real artistic talent, she attends a two-year art school so she can be with her friend, Junko. At this art school, she meets a male named Shōji. Junko, her boyfriend, and Shōji eventually all decide to go to Tokyo but Nana stays behind in their hometown. Nana saves up enough money to go to Tokyo so that she can be with Shōji. As soon as Shōji sends an e-mail to her phone to tell her that he passed his art school exams, Nana quits her part-time job and hurries home to pack. She departs that very night, leaving her parents only a short note that she is going to Tokyo.[15]

Nana is so excited to go to Tokyo and live with Shōji that she fails to consider the long-term future because visions of a wonderful romance cloud her judgment. Instead of worrying about what may happen months or years later, she focuses on the short-term

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[15] Yazawa Ai, *Nana*, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2000), 7-14.

future and instant gratification—life with Shōji. Unlike Tsukushi from *Hana yori dango*,

who focuses on the future, Nana acts on an impulse and does not think about the

consequences. If the reader closely examines the times when Shōji sent mail to Nana's

phone—specifically, the time between Shōji's e-mail notifying Nana that he passed and

his reply to Nana's e-mail notifying him that she is leaving for Tokyo—it can be

determined that she quit her job, packed her belongings, and boarded a train for Tokyo all

within a matter of roughly five hours.[16] Nana wants to go to Tokyo as soon as possible,

but she fails to consider what could or will happen once she gets there. When she leaves

for Tokyo, she has not secured a job or given any indication that she will continue her

education. Nana also never considers what will happen if things do not go according to

her plans. When things do not turn out as she expected, she is left without a back-up

plan, something that occurs at more than one point in the story.

The female protagonist in *Boys esute* (2004-2007), Koiwai Shizuka, who is fat by

Japanese standards, also makes decisions with romance in mind. The first time her

boyfriend sees her naked, he finds that he is physically unable to become attracted to her,

but he lies and tells Shizuka that he is just nervous. Shizuka later learns that he was

disgusted by her "trifold stomach."[17] She is later offered the chance to spend two-and-a-

half months at a beauty clinic for free as a "subject" for aestheticians in training. Shizuka

is enticed by the prospect of losing weight at the clinic and accepts the offer.[18]

Shizuka is not motivated by purely personal reasons to become a subject at the

clinic. She enrolls in the program to lose weight so that she can wear cute clothes and

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[16] Yazawa, vol. 2, 15.

[17] Shizuka's stomach is referred to as a *sandanbara* (三段腹) in Japanese. Masaki Sōko, *Boys esute*, vol. 1,
(Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004), 5-7.

[18] Ibid, vol. 1, 18-21.

become more attractive to the opposite sex. She never once considers some of the other benefits of losing weight. *Boys esute* seems to imply that losing weight for the sake of a member of the opposite sex is more important than something such as lasting health benefits. In addition, the author, Masaki Sōko, has drawn the seventy-two kilogram (roughly one-hundred fifty-eight pounds) Shizuka so large and flabby that she might as well weigh one-hundred kilograms (two-hundred twenty pounds) instead. This exaggerated image coupled with an increasing pattern of women with a low BMI[19] keep sending the message to young girls that being thin is positive. Anything else is not only unacceptable to men but to society in general.

Shizuka is a rare exception to the recurring pattern in which female protagonists are drawn to look slim and beautiful. This recurring body type is a form of the "social control and gender suppression of Japanese women."[20] Shizuka strives for such a body because she thinks that males will only approve of this body type. Shizuka becomes upset whenever she regains a few kilograms because she is worried about how male characters will react. Before her boyfriend ridicules her body type, however, she does not appear to have an issue with how her body looks. Shizuka's negative body image serves to further prove that female protagonists have become conditioned to make choices for romance and males instead of themselves.

These protagonists in *shōjo manga* undermine the progress everyday Japanese women have made. Many real women make choices for themselves rather than for males

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[19] 5.6% of women aged 20-29 and 14.3% of women aged 30-39 had a BMI equal to or greater than 25 in 2005. In contrast, 22.6% of women aged 20-29 and 20% of women aged 30-39 had a BMI under 18.5. Kōseirōdōshō, *Kokumin kenkō/eiyō chōsa kekka no gaiyō*, (2007), 9.

[20] Barbara Holthus, "Sexuality, body images and social change in Japanese women's magazines in the 1970s and 1980s," *Gender, and modernity: rereading Japanese women's magazines*, Ulrike Wöhr, Barbara Hamil Sato, Sadami Suzuki, eds., (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 1998), 141.

or romance. A large number of females—and men as well—enjoy their comfortable, single lives. They do not want to trade this kind of lifestyle in for a married life of hardship.[21] On the surface it may seem selfish, but perhaps this independent lifestyle is simply a form of rebellion. Japanese women no longer want to adhere to a life pattern in which they quit work once they get married and live out the rest of their lives as mothers. This life pattern must seem irreversible to them once it begins, so it helps to explain why today's females may want to avoid it at all costs. A female employee may inadvertently end up in just such a life pattern if she quits work to get married, so this is likely one reason why more women are choosing to remain unmarried. Today's Japanese females are aware that they have more opportunities than previous generations, and they want to take advantage of them.

4.2 Male Characters Become Integral to the Storyline

Male characters have been upgraded from supporting roles to lead roles in works in this age group. Volume by volume it is evident that males receive more attention in this age group than the previous two.

4.2.1 Males Become a Critical Part of Female Identity

The more a female protagonist feels connected to a male, the more likely it is that her identity may be influenced by this male. The emotions of Nana K. can switch between sad and happy in an instant as a result of male characters. After suddenly being dumped by Shōji, she becomes depressed. Nana withdraws into her own world and becomes focused on the negative aspects of life. The thing that brings her out of her

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[21] Yamada, 51.

depression is tickets to a Trapnest concert. Nana is thrilled that she has received front row seats because this means that she can see the bassist, Takumi, live and in person.[22] The negative feelings caused by one male are transformed into positive feelings by another.

Nana does not have many things in her life with which she can identify. She is not a student, she is not always employed, and she has a very small circle of friends. As a result, her primary identity is Shōji's girlfriend. In order to maintain this identity, she decides to move to Tokyo, thus compromising, and in some cases erasing, the identity she had created before she met him. When their relationship ends, her primary identity is destroyed. Nana then turns to her secondary identity as a Trapnest fan. During her relationship with Shōji, Nana indulged her identity as a Trapnest fan in moderation. Once the relationship ends, she is free to shape this identity as she pleases. Nana's identity as a Trapnest fan is not based upon her admiration of the group as a whole or even the female vocalist, Reira; Nana identifies herself as a Trapnest fan simply because she likes the male bassist, Takumi. A positive perception of Takumi and anything related to him leads Nana to view herself positively and reaffirm her identity through him.

Kumiko in *Sex=Love²* first defines herself in terms of Kinpachi-sensei as she longs to be a teacher just like Kinpachi-sensei. However, she is unsuccessful during her employment as a home tutor, so her father gives her an ultimatum: if she is dismissed by one more family, she must give up her dream of becoming a teacher. She returns to her room, where she has shelves full of *3-nen B-gumi Kinpachi-sensei* DVDs and books, and watches an episode of *Kinpachi-sensei* in an attempt to cheer up. A single shelf is also

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[22] Yazawa, vol. 4, 44-49.

dedicated to a framed photo of Takeda Tetsuya to which she bows at one point and says, "Tetsuya, give me strength!"[23] On her first day of teaching, she even recites famous lines from the series in hopes of inspiring her students. Kinpachi-sensei is such an integral part of her identity that her boyfriend, Ryō, asks her not to talk about him or the show when they are together.[24]

Kinpachi-sensei's very existence keeps Kumiko on the path towards her dream. Kumiko is more than just a fan of the *Kinpachi-sensei* series; she seems to regard herself as a disciple and Kinpachi-sensei as a mentor. She works hard to live up to Kinpachi-sensei's ideals and make him proud (despite the fact that he is a television character). Perhaps without Kinpachi-sensei's "guidance," Kumiko would not have been able to become a teacher. Knowing that there is someone—even an imaginary character— in this world that she can look to for guidance, despite the fact that there is never a true interaction between the two, seems to give Kumiko comfort and allow her to reaffirm her identity.

As *Sex=Love²* progresses, Kumiko reshapes her identity to conform to her relationship with Ryō. When she catches him in a compromising position with the school nurse, she becomes worried. The identity that she created as his girlfriend has suddenly become jeopardized. She waits for Ryō once the school day has finished and gives him a hug—the aforementioned lone sign of affection initiated by Kumiko—as soon as she sees him. She reveals her dependency on him when she says, "I hate it! I hate that you're

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23 Shinjō, 19.
24 Ibid, 76.

friendly with another woman! Please look at only me! Please love only me! Outside of

school you're my boyfriend! You're *my* beloved!"[25]

Kumiko seems to be aware that Ryō has become critical to her identity, and as a

result she displays possessive tendencies. This relationship has transformed her identity

as a naïve "disciple"-meets-fan of Kinpachi-sensei into a woman who is subservient to

her boyfriend. She is no longer pure in the true sense of the word "*shōjo*" as a result of

her relationship with Ryō, so she cannot return to her *shōjo* self. She also cannot return

to her former primary identity as a disciple of Kinpachi-sensei because Kumiko has

realized that Kinpachi-sensei no longer fulfills all of her needs. She needs to depend

upon a real male, and that male is Ryō.

4.2.2 Female Readers Can View the Innermost Thoughts of Male Characters

In the 15-21 age group, readers get to experience the world from a male

character's perspective in a way that is not seen in the previous two age groups. In the 9-

13 and 11-15 age groups, a reader was able to get an occasional glimpse into the mind of

a male character, but she was never privy to his thoughts. A male character was simply

treated like any real person: a reader could guess from his words and actions what he was

thinking and how he felt, but she never really knew for sure because she was unable to

read his mind. Since the average reader in this age group is not adept at telepathy,

reading *shōjo manga* might be the only way for her to truly understand what a boy is

thinking. Moreover, readers get an almost voyeuristic look into the lives of male

characters as they are entitled to time with them that even the female protagonists do not

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[25] Ibid, 141-142

receive. Akagi Hibiki from *Boys estue* and Ryō both receive a considerable amount of pages[26] dedicated not only to their thoughts but also to their lives in general.

Ryō allows readers to get a male perspective on love and sex. When Ryō asks Kumiko what her favorite type of male is, she simply responds, "It's Takeda Tetsuya." On the very next page, one of Ryō's classmates notices that his hair is different. When Ryō offers an explanation, the classmate seems unconvinced and says that it "somehow looks like Kinpachi-sensei's hair." The reader learns that Ryō picked this style because he is sure that it will excite Kumiko.[27] Kumiko does not get to see Ryō's Kinpachi-sensei style hair because it rains, but if she had arrived before it rained, Ryō probably would not have admitted that he styled his hair a certain way just for her. The reader is able to read his mind and see that he wants to attract Kumiko so badly that he will change his appearance. While not all boys in this age group would go so far as to style their hair like Kinpachi-sensei, the reader learns that males can be as insecure about winning someone's heart as females.

The reader is even able to learn just when and how Ryō fantasizes about Kumiko. Ryō never tells Kumiko that he thinks about her all the time, whether or not it is in the form of a fantasy, but the reader knows that he does. Ryō provides the reader with "secret" information that boys in this age group are indeed fantasizing about the opposite sex, and if they really like a girl, they won't be able to stop thinking about her. While females in this age group might be able to glean the same information from a friend, relative, or magazine, when the information is presented as coming directly from a male,

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[26] In *Sailor Moon* volume 1, Tuxedo Kamen only appears on 38 out of 191 pages. In comparison, Hibiki appears on 110 out of 191 pages in *Boys esute* volume 1, and Ryō appears on 151 out of 189 pages in *Sex=Love²* volume 1. Moreover, Ryō appears more in a single chapter (41 times in both chapter one and chapter two) than Tuxedo Kamen does in an entire volume.
[27] Shinjō, 28-30

it seems to be more believable, regardless of the fact that the male is not real. Moreover, the thoughts inside Ryō's head may be too embarrassing for a reader to discuss with another female let alone a male. In other words, this is another example of an instance where a reader could view *shōjo manga* as a manual.

Hibiki shows readers that males are just as insecure about their bodies as females. His friends wonder why he turns down dates with girls at school, but he never tells them the truth. Only the reader and Hibiki know that he was traumatized by a previous relationship. He ended a three-year relationship with a girl named Sakura because of a medical condition, phimosis[28]. Sakura wanted to further their relationship, but as a result of his condition, Hibiki did not know how to respond. Hibiki was too embarrassed to tell her about his condition, so he simply avoided her despite how much he liked her.[29] From Sakura's point of view, Hibiki is despicable. Instead of being honest with her, he hid the truth. Moreover, instead of breaking up with her face to face, he chose to repeatedly avoid her, thus drawing out the situation. Readers understand as a result of "private time" with Hibiki that his reasons for avoiding Sakura are more complex than she realizes. In his mind, Hibiki had a valid reason for avoiding her.

Readers are also able to learn that Hibiki really does not like Shizuka's repeated fantasies[30] about other males, most of whom work at the beauty clinic. He never explicitly asks her to stop, but Shizuka infers that he is uncomfortable. She assures him

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[28] Phimosis is "an abnormal constriction of the foreskin that prevents it from being drawn back to uncover the glans penis." Phimosis. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/phimosis (accessed: April 04, 2008).

[29] Masaki, vol. 1, 10-14.

[30] The text actually refers to them as *mōsō*, which can be translated as "delusions." Rather than being truly delusional, however, Shizuka is simply exercising her imagination and daydreaming about the males at the clinic in a harmless manner. It therefore seems that what Shizuka is actually doing is having "fantasies," the word I have opted to use.

that she "only likes other people in her fantasies." However, Hibiki does not respond; he simply sits there thinking "I don't want you to have fantasies of other men if you can help it, but…"[31] For the sake of maintaining harmony in his relationship, Hibiki decides not to start a fight over something petty. The reader realizes that he really wants her to think of him and only him, but it is evident that he is unsure how to express this feeling. Hibiki shows the readers that just as female protagonists want the males they like to think only of them, males characters want the females they like to only think of them as well.

4.2.3 A Male Character Is More Knowledgeable Than His Female Counterpart

In general, the male characters in these works are more experienced than their female counterparts in three specific areas: career, education, and romance. While certain female protagonists may have more experience than male characters in one or two categories, a female will never have more experience than a male in all three.

4.2.3.1 Males Have Higher Job Positions

Both Nana O. and Ren in *Nana* are musicians. In terms of specific skills, Ren plays the guitar and Nana is a vocalist, so there is not enough information to compare musical abilities, but the two each play a vital role in their respective bands. However, when the story begins, Ren and his band, Trapnest, have a contract with a major music label whereas Nana and her band, Black Stones, do not. Nana continues to perform when the chance arises, but she is not able to make a living solely based upon performing in the beginning of the story. Even though Nana becomes famous as the story progresses, Ren will always have the distinction of being famous first and being famous longer. Because

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[31] Masaki Sōko, *Boys Esute*, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2005), 126.

Ren has had fame longer, it can be assumed that he also earns or has saved more money than Nana.

Nana K. has a part-time job at a publishing company doing odd jobs when she first meets Takumi, but she is fired just before their second meeting. Before she first met him, she was employed part-time at a furniture store. Her income is never disclosed, but it can be surmised that she does not make nearly as much as Takumi, and she probably has less money saved as well. Takumi, on the other hand, is able to make a living as a member of Trapnest. He is also famous whereas Nana is not. Moreover, Takumi's job as a bassist requires more skill than either of Nana's positions. Just about anyone can do odd jobs, but not everyone can become a bassist. While it is true that anyone can learn to play the bass if they earnestly apply themselves, a far greater number of people are able to find work doing odd jobs than compared with the number of people who are able to find work as bassists. In other words, neither of Nana's jobs gives her any advantage over anyone else. As an employee she is expendable, and she doesn't impact society. In contrast to Nana, Takumi makes more money because of his skills, he is essential to the band, and he impacts society, or at least the people who listen to his music.

4.2.3.2 Males Have More Education

There are no explicit comparisons between the levels of knowledge possessed by Shizuka and Hibiki in *Boys esute*. They are the same age and grade level, but they attend different schools. There is no specific information regarding the type of school they attend—in other words, neither of them are said to go to a school that has a reputation for exceedingly bright or unmotivated students—so the reader must assume that they have roughly the same baseline education. Neither Shizuka nor Hibiki are referred to as smart

or dumb, so readers must make their own assessments based upon the pair's words and actions. However, despite having been given very little information from the author Masaki, it seems that Hibiki has more education and knowledge about the world in general.

Hibiki has received education above and beyond what he learns in school as a result of his aesthetician training. During the day he goes to high school, and from seven to eleven 'o clock at night he has his training. In addition to any homework he may have for school or his aesthetician classes, Hibiki must study daily for an aesthetician exam that will take place at the end of two-and-a-half months of training. Between his duties as an aesthetician and his requirements as a student, it appears that Hibiki does nothing but work and study. Shizuka, on the other hand, is missing two-and-a-half months of school to be a subject in Hibiki's aesthetician training. The program tries to provide participants with a healthy, stress-free living environment, and if they continued to go to school, they may no longer have a stress-free lifestyle. However, during this time, Shizuka does not receive any help, such as tutoring, for the subject matter she is missing at school. She only receives education that pertains to her health and well being, things that Hibiki has likely learned in his training. Not only is she falling behind Hibiki in terms of a standard high school education, she is also less knowledgeable about the world around her.

4.2.3.3 Males Are More Romantically Experienced

Most of the females in the works discussed in this chapter have very little romantic or sexual experience when their respective stories begin. The males they encounter are always more experienced, which causes the female to follow his lead, thus

reinforcing her passivity. In *Sex=Love²*, Ryō has both romantic and sexual experience

whereas Kumiko has neither.

The very first time Kumiko meets Ryō, he is in bed with another female.[32] This

is not the last time she catches him in this situation. Ryō has an extensive history with

females while Kumiko has almost no experience with males. Prior to meeting Ryō,

Takeda Tetsuya/Kinpachi-sensei was the only "love" of her life, and since Takeda is an

actor and Kinpachi-sensei is simply a character on television, this can be viewed as a

fandom that mimics unrequited love. Despite the fact that Kumiko is Ryō's home tutor,

their roles become reversed when Ryō proclaims himself to be her tutor in matters of sex

and romance.[33]

Kumiko has more education and a better job than Ryō, but she lacks romantic

experience. Even though it appears that her quality of life is good as a result of her job

and education, her life lacks romance. As previously stated, *shōjo manga* seems to imply

that the happiness females get from a relationship is different from any other kind

happiness. Therefore, even though Kumiko is happy with her life, she is not truly happy

until she enters into a relationship with Ryō. Kumiko lacks romantic experience, so in

order for her to gain experience and happiness, she has to be dependent on a male, in this

case Ryō. Unlike educational or career training, "romantic training" must always come

from a male. Without the help of an experienced male, it seems Kumiko will never know

romance, and she will never truly be happy. Therefore, Kumiko's happiness and love life

are both subject to Ryō's control.

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[32] Shinjō, 8-9
[33] Ibid, 51.

4.3 The Concept of Fantasy Becomes Muted

It seems as if there is an inverse correlation between romance and fantasy in *shōjo manga*. In the 9-13 age group, fantasy is prevalent and romance is a mere footnote in the overall plot, whereas in the 15-21 age group, romance is the focal point of many stories and fantasy is relegated to the background. Perhaps we should attribute this to the fact that readers, as they age, are presented with fewer opportunities to engage in activities that will encourage active fantasizing. Once they reach high school, students are thrust in to "exam hell"[34] and find themselves with very little leisure time. In addition, students in this age group are very interested in the opposite sex, so one can conjecture that these students would be more likely to fantasize, providing they have time, about encounters with the opposite sex rather than fighting villains or traveling to a foreign land. The *manga* in this age group reflects this growing interest in the opposite sex. In short, fantasy in this age group exists as a muted, watered-down version of itself that has been overpowered by romance and reality.

4.3.1 Fantasies and Dreams Are Hindered by Males

Romance is the reason why fantasy does not play a major role in works in this age group. However, it seems that male characters in general limit a female protagonist's ability to dream and fantasize. Female protagonists in this age group do have dreams and they do fantasize, but very little attention is paid to either dreams or fantasy. When females do try to fantasize or make their dreams come true, there is usually a male who prevents this from happening.

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[34] Mori, 29.

As previously discussed, Kumiko's father gave her an ultimatum that if she is

fired by one more family as their son or daughter's home tutor, she must give up her

dream of teaching and begin "training" to become a bride. After she graduates college,

she is able to get a job teaching at an all girls' school through her father's connections, so

the reader is likely to think that her father has had a change of heart, and he has decided

to support her. However, this is not the case. When her father learns that Kumiko is in a

relationship with Ryō, who is a second year high school student, he immediately

disapproves. Ryō says, "It's true that Kumiko will become a high school teacher, and

I'm a high school student, but it's not like she's my teacher and I'm her pupil."[35]

Kumiko's father seems to realize that he can destroy both her dream of being a teacher

and her dream of a happy relationship with Ryō at the same time. Once she has finished

getting ready for her first day as a teacher, her father tells her that she is not going to

teach at an all girls' school but she is instead going to teach at Ryō's school. He says, "If

[your] relationship with Ryō gets exposed to the school, [you'll] have to leave school,

and [you'll] have to quit [your] job."[36]

The degree of control Kumiko's father has over her life illustrates the lack of

independence female protagonists such as Kumiko have. As a twenty-one year old, an

adult, she should be free to make her own decisions and pursue her dreams. Because her

dreams and decisions do not fall in line with the expectations her father has set for her, he

decides to impose his will upon her. Kumiko is always very restrained in her interactions

with her father, and as a result, her dreams suffer. Regardless of whether she is dealing

with Ryō or her father, she cannot overcome her passivity and chase her dreams freely.

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[35] Shinjō, 91.
[36] Ibid, 112.

It seems as if female protagonists don't even have control over their own minds as male characters discourage fantasizing. As previously mentioned, Hibiki does not like Shizuka's constant fantasizing as it usually involves other males who work at the beauty clinic. He is not the only male who disapproves of Shizuka's "delusions." Someone at the clinic, perhaps the owner, has noted on Shizuka's chart that she has a "habit of entering a world of fantasy (delusion)."[37] Shizuka's aesthetician for the day, Kiriya, whom she has never met before, is shocked to read this and immediately wonders if she is all right. When he looks up from the chart, he sees that Shizuka is in a fantasy world at that very moment.

While it is reasonable for Hibiki not to want Shizuka to fantasize about other characters because he is her boyfriend, it is unreasonable that the other male characters do not want her to fantasize. Shizuka's fantasies are just that: fantasy. Her fantasies take place in her own mind, and they do not cause anyone any harm. Shizuka is also able to distinguish reality from fantasy because the people and scenes in her fantasies are not what she truly desires.[38] Shizuka's fantasies appear to be a way for her to relieve stress or enter into a stress-free environment, one of the features of the program in which she was a subject. Eliminating stressful environments could help Shizuka to maintain her weight, so fantasizing could be beneficial. If fantasizing is, indeed, a key to Shizuka's continued progress, then the male employees at the clinic are hindering Shizuka's success by discouraging her fantasies.

The ones who are made to alter their lives are always the female protagonists. As we have just seen, Kumiko and Shizuka are made to give up their dreams or fantasies by

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[37] Masaki, vol. 2, 111.
[38] Ibid, vol. 2, 128.

males around them. However, there is not a single instance of a female protagonist forcing or even encouraging a male character to change an aspect of his life in any of the three age groups. These protagonists could be labeled subservient because they do not actively defend their right to dream and fantasize; instead they do the bidding of the males around them. It should also be pointed out that even if females are not pushed by a male to change, then they themselves seek change for the sake of a male. Females like Shizuka change themselves in order to make males happy while females like Kumiko are made to change to keep males happy. This is just another instance of how *shōjo manga* illustrates that happiness of a female is subject to the control of a male.

4.3.2 Female Protagonists No Longer Have the Power of "Cute" on Their Side

While it is not a "magical power" in the purest sense of the word, the concept of "cute" is portrayed as having special powers in the age 9-13 group and in the 11-15 age group to a lesser extent as well. Going into a competition, whether it is sports match, a battle, or even a competition to win the heart of a male, a cute girl is "ordinary in just about every aspect with the exception of either her athletic or artistic potential or the strength of her character. Her rival [is] always extremely beautiful, intelligent, rich, and gifted in the same field as that of the heroine."[39] In the *manga* world, beautiful characters often signify older characters. This means that a character cannot be old, relatively speaking, and cute at the same time. This dichotomy of cute can be explored through characters in *Nana*.

Nana K. moves to Tokyo to be with her boyfriend, Shōji, but finds that he is becoming increasingly unavailable. In jest, Nana says that Shōji has secretly been

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[39] Kanako Shiokawa, "Cute but Deadly: Women and violence in Japanese comics," *Themes and issues in Asian cartooning*, John A. Lent, ed., (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University, 1999), 104.

meeting another woman, a woman named Sachiko. Shōji's world changes when a real girl named Sachiko begins working at the same restaurant one day. The real Sachiko is two years younger than Shōji,[40] who is the same age as Nana. This makes Sachiko two years younger than Nana as well. Sachiko knows that Shōji is not single, but she acts on her feelings for him nonetheless.

If we apply the previous "cute" logic to *Nana* then both the cute, young heroine—despite the fact that she is a side character, in this instance the cute, young heroine would be Sachiko because of her age—and her beautiful, older opponent, Nana, both have an equal chance to win the heart of Shōji. Neither one is truly more talented than the other. But when it really counts, the heroine is able to win by sheer virtue of that one quality she possesses.[41] In this case, that one quality is cuteness. Shōji realizes that Sachiko possesses this cuteness from the first day that he meets her.[42] Throughout his relationship with Nana, he never seems to consider her as someone who possesses cuteness. In the end, Sachiko wins Shōji's heart with her cuteness. In any other age group, the true heroine of the story, Nana, would win. Nana loses simply because she is not "cute" enough, both internally and externally.

Overall, the age 15-21 group is not as "cute" as the other two age groups. While it does feature the occasional cute background or cute item, it seems as if the characters have forgotten about cute as they strive for adulthood and romance. Characters in this age group have forgotten that a *shōjo* is a person whose "sexual energy [is]…directed

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[40] Yazawa Ai, Nana, vol. 3, (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2001), 62.
[41] Shiokawa, 105.
[42] Yazawa, Nana, vol. 3, 47.

towards stuffed animals, pink notebooks, strawberry crepes, and Hello Kitty novelties."[43]

Shōjo are consumers, not seekers of sexual pleasure. Cuteness is associated with youth, with being a dreaming *shōjo*, and fantasy, whereas being beautiful is associated with being a rigid adult in a world devoid of fantasy. This beauty can in cases be sexual, a trait which is not associated with what it means to be a *shōjo*. Despite the fact that Nana and Sachiko are separated by a mere two years within the same 15-21 year old group, Sachiko is still younger and thus has more "cute power." Nana may not be overtly sexual, but she has clearly exited the "cute stage" of her life. Nana no longer possesses the power of "cute," so she must continue to live in a harsher, more realistic world than her younger counterparts.

4.3.3 The Lone Fantasy Element Seems to Be Chance Meetings

As previously mentioned, there seems to be an inverse correlation between fantasy and romance. The two do not exist simultaneously in *shōjo manga*. Because romance is prevalent in this age group, fantasy is not. Romance has such an impact on plot devices in this age group that the lone fantastic element in this age group itself, chance meetings, could be classified as a romantic element were it not for the fact that female friendships can begin from chance meetings, too. It seems that chance meetings are a fantastic element because they seem to occur more frequently in *shōjo manga* than in real life, and certain female protagonists seem to anticipate that they will occur, thus adding a fantastic twist. In theory, every meeting could be considered a chance meeting, but in *shōjo manga*, there are two different types of meetings: "regular" meetings and chance meetings. Regular meetings lead to friendships or introduce characters that will

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[43] Treat, 281.

serve a temporary purpose in a storyline. Chance meetings often lead to romance and introduce characters that will heavily impact the storyline. Female protagonists display different emotions and attitudes during "regular" meetings than they do during chance meetings.

The two female protagonists in *Nana*, Komatsu Nana and Ōsaki Nana, meet one another on a train bound for Tokyo. While searching for a place to sit, Nana K. chooses the seat next to Nana O. The train runs very slowly that night due to snow, so the two have a long period to talk and get acquainted with one another. In the course of their conversations, they realize that they have a number of things in common. They meet again when they are apartment hunting, and they decide to live in the same apartment, Apartment 707,[44] despite having only met one another just once.[45]

Even though their relationship is not a romantic one, the meeting between the two Nanas is clearly a chance meeting. Nana O. herself seems to believe that this is a chance meeting when she says, "Another female who is the same age as me is also moving to Tokyo, and she's riding the same train at the same time as me. There aren't many coincidences like this."[46] The fact that they met on a train is not unusual; however, the way in which they meet becomes unusual, if not coincidental, when they meet a second time and end up living together in apartment 707. While chance meetings in this age group are usually between a male and a female and contain romantic overtones, this particular chance meeting leads to a friendship between two females. However, Nana K. loves and respects Nana O., and this could be viewed as creating borderline homoerotic tendencies. The very first time Nana K. meets Nana O., she thinks she is "*kakkoii*"

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[44] A reading for the number seven in Japanese is "*nana*."
[45] Yazawa, vol. 2.
[46] Ibid, vol. 2, 30.

(cool).[47] After Nana O. gives her first live performance in Tokyo (as an independent band), Nana K. becomes jealous when Nana O. gives a fan from her hometown special attention.[48] At one point when Nana K. is asked by Nana O., "What am I? Your boyfriend?" she replies, "You'll always be more important than a boyfriend!"[49]

Nana K. also experiences two chance meetings with Takumi from the popular band Trapnest. One day when she comes home, to her surprise, Takumi is at her apartment with Nana O. and some of her friends. She is so overwhelmed she does not know how to act. Because he leaves while she is out buying alcohol, he calls her the next day to thank her for dinner the previous night. Nana is surprised when he calls because she did not give him her phone number, but Takumi reveals that he received Nana's number from Ren. Takumi happens to be stuck in traffic near Nana's present location, so he offers to meet her and take her somewhere for dinner. Not long after Nana is in the car, Takumi says, "I wouldn't have dreamt I would meet you suddenly like this…I thought it would be nice if I could see you again…"[50] He then leans over and kisses her.[51]

This chance meeting is clearly a romantic one, but it is fantastic in that Takumi, who is famous, takes an interest in Nana, who is not famous. It can be perceived as a kind of romantic fantasy in that the man of Nana's dreams calls her suddenly. However, the fact that it is a celebrity who is unexpectedly calling Nana is overshadowed by romantic overtones. Their meeting could be an example of one that is said to be caused

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[47] Ibid, vol. 2, 21.
[48] Ibid, vol 4.
[49] Ibid, vol. 4, 110.
[50] Yazawa, vol. 5, 140.
[51] Yazawa, vol. 5.

by the *akai ito* (red thread). The premise behind the idea of the *akai ito* is that a person is already fated from the time they are born to join with their future marriage partner, and for some reason they are drawn to this person by a strange power.[52] This idea of the *akai ito*, despite its romantic nature, could be viewed as a form of fantasy in itself as increasingly independent women are less likely to believe in it.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that unlike real Japanese females, female protagonists in works discussed in this chapter are not independent. Romance is the main cause of their lack of independence. Female protagonists may be single at certain points in their respective stories, but they ultimately enter into a romantic relationship with a male. This sends an unfortunate message to readers that a female cannot be happy alone. In addition, works in this age group seem to imply that the happiness a female gets as a single person is different from the happiness she experiences in a relationship with a male. Romance may cause female protagonists to become happy, but it can also cause them to become passive. They become reliant upon males for happiness, and they do not express themselves easily. Moreover, females make choices for the sake of males, but they often do so without considering the consequences.

Males in works in this age group become integral to the storyline. They also become critical to female identity. As illustrated by the emotions of Nana K., a male can make a happy female sad or vice versa in an instant. Females create their identities in terms of males, and as a result, males influence female emotions and reactions. Males are presented as more knowledgeable than females in three categories: employment,

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[52] Kotajima Yōsuke, "Akai ito no densetsu," *Meiji Daigaku kenkyū kiyō, Nihon bunka gakubu/gengo bunka gakka*, (03/25/1993), 73.

education, and romance. Males have higher job positions, more education, and more romantic experience than the females protagonists in these works. Also, for the first time, readers in this age group are able to read the minds of male characters. In previous works, readers were only given a glimpse into the minds of males.

Unlike previous age groups, the concept of fantasy is less prevalent. In certain cases, females may try to fantasize or pursue their dreams, but they are stopped by males, who are not always romantic interests, in their lives. It was also determined that the quality of cuteness, which is prominent in the 9-13 age group, can be thought of as a magical power, or at least something that imbues the female protagonist with a special kind of confidence. Since females in these works are more beautiful than cute, a sign of age, it can be surmised that they do not have an advantage over younger, cuter females. The lone fantasy element in this age group seems to be chance meetings. Not all chance meetings are romantic in nature, but many are. The fact that romance and fantasy have fused together shows the extent to which romance has infiltrated females' lives as their fantasies are now romantic in nature. It is this emphasis on romance that causes them to depend on males, and it is this dependence on males that separates them from everyday Japanese females.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the previous three chapters, I explored the characteristics of *shōjo manga* targeted at readers in three age brackets: a 9-13 year old group, an 11-15 year old group, and a 15-21 year old group. These characteristics, such as female friendships, were then tracked from age group to age group. While some characteristics like romance became stronger with time, others, like magical powers, for example, became weaker and ultimately disappeared. Certain trends were found in conjunction with these characteristics. Let us review these trends.

5.1 Trends in *Shōjo Manga*

5.1.1 Female Protagonists Become More Dependent on Male Characters over Time

As hypothesized in the introduction, female protagonists in *shōjo manga* do, indeed, get weaker—namely more dependent on males—as the age of the target audience rises. It was determined that female protagonists in works from the 9-13 age group, such as Sailor Moon, try to be as self-reliant as possible. However, when a protagonist in this age group needs help, she relies upon her female friends. While there are others who could help her, such as her parents or a male acquaintance, a female protagonist in the 9-13 age group will typically ask a female friend for help. Whether she asks for help or she handles a problem by herself, a female protagonist is completely in control of managing a situation as she is able to select a course of action and arrive at an outcome through her own volition.

By the time readers reach the 15-21 age group, they will find that female protagonists like Shizkua in *Boys estute* have, for the most part, stopped relying on both

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female friends and themselves. Instead, they depend mainly upon males. Female

protagonists in this age group depend on males to do everything from menial tasks to

look after their well-being. Moreover, these females seem to assume that males will

automatically come to their aid whenever problems arise. Instead of taking an active

stance and managing their own problems, they do not attempt to solve problems on their

own; rather, they simply wait for help to arrive instead of asking for it. In other words,

female protagonists have reached a point where they are no longer in control of

managing their problems or deciding how to deal with them. Problems that occur for

female protagonists in this age group are not solved through their own volition, and they

are able to overcome their problems only as a result of assistance from a male. The

more these females depend upon males, the more they compromise their own sense of

identity and independence.

The shift from depending on oneself and female friends to depending on males

begins to take place in the 11-15 age group. Female characters around the protagonists,

specifically their friends, begin to prove themselves untrustworthy, as evidenced by Yui

in *Fushigi Yūgi*. Romantic tension is usually the cause of this change in social relations.

As illustrated in chapter three, the importance placed on female friendship in the 9-13

age group starts to become deemphasized in this age group. At the same time, romance

becomes more prominent in storylines, and the characters start to become aware of this

concept of romance. Once female protagonists themselves become aware of romance,

in conjunction with their developing interest in males, they begin to depend upon them.

To say that female protagonists simply switch the gender of the person upon whom they

depend is insufficient. Female protagonists are able to maintain, perhaps even enhance,

their identities through friendships with females and the help of these friends, whereas their identities become compromised through romance and the help of male characters.

5.1.2 Strong Romantic Themes and Strong Females Do Not Exist in the Same Work

As hypothesized earlier, there appears to be a negative correlation between levels of romance and independence. The female protagonists in *Sailor Moon*, *Shōjo kakumei Utena*, and *Kodomo no omocha* in the 9-13 year old group have relatively few interactions with male characters, and as a result, these protagonists rarely encounter romantic situations. This, of course, does not mean that romance is completely non-existent in works from this age group; rather, romance plays such a small role in the overall storyline that it impacts the story and its characters minimally. These same female protagonists from the 9-13 age group are not only the least dependent on males but, as illustrated in the previous section, they are also the most self-reliant. If these females are the most independent and the least likely to come in contact with romance, then it can be concluded that there is a connection, a negative correlation, between romance and independence.

This notion of the existence of a negative correlation is further strengthened upon examination of female protagonists in the three *manga* that represent the 15-21 year old age group. These protagonists have the most amount of interaction with male characters as a result of males' increased roles in storylines. Female protagonists in this age group also encounter a greater number of romantic situations and relationships due to the increased presence of male characters. The female protagonists from *Nana*, *Boys esute*, and *Sex=Love²* place a great deal of emphasis on preserving or bettering their

romantic relationships. In order to do so, however, they neglect to preserve or better themselves. The time and effort they spend on maintaining their relationships instead of making themselves more independent, well-rounded people ultimately leads them to depend on males. This trend has its roots in the 11-15 age group.

In *manga* representing the 11-15 year-old group, it gradually becomes evident that romance and independence do not and cannot exist simultaneously in *shōjo manga*. The female protagonists in *Fushigi yūgi*, *Hana yori dango*, and *Peach girl* each enter their respective stories with little or no romantic experience. They also start out taking the initiative to solve their own problems and ask for help only when they need it. Once they meet male characters, female protagonists gradually draw these males into their lives and, by association, problems. As they become aware of their feelings for male characters, the female protagonists begin to voluntarily ask males for help, and in turn the males begin to interpret this as a sign that it is acceptable to help even when they are not explicitly asked to help. Female protagonists in this age group could decline the males' help but they do not. By continually accepting male characters' help, they allow this trend to continue and become more widespread in the 15-21 age group.

5.1.3 *Shōjo Manga* Has a Tendency to Reinforce "Dated" Gender Roles as the Target Age Rises

As we have seen, in the 9-13 age group, female protagonists are imbued with a great deal of power. However, female protagonists in the 11-15 and 15-21 age groups have progressively less of this power. In conjunction with this decline in power, *shōjo manga* seems to gradually distance itself from the idea that a girl can do anything she wants. Female protagonists in the 9-13 age group are not presented with any

boundaries. There is never a time when they are unable to do something because they are too young or female. In short, readers and female protagonists alike are led to believe that they can do anything, and anything is theoretically possible. Female protagonists in the 11-15 and 15-21 year-old groups, on the other hand, have a number of boundaries and restrictions. These boundaries cause males to take control of situations. While not a single female protagonist in any of the nine works discussed in this thesis is ever explicitly told that she cannot do something because of her attributes, biological or otherwise, it often seems to be implied.

In the past, the life of an average Japanese woman would have been to marry a man, start a family with him, and remain at home to take care of her children while her husband worked to support the family. Even if the woman found employment part-time, her real job would have been to look after the children because that is what society expected. Regardless of whether or not a woman worked, the primary breadwinner would have remained the husband. A woman would have led a life where she was dependent on her husband, a male, simply because society assigned her boundaries and restrictions: she was a female. Moreover, it was not simply implied that women could not do things merely as a result of their gender; it was explicitly stated.

As we have seen, however, the average age today for marriage is rising while the birthrate is falling. Because many women do not want to quit work once they have married, they are simply choosing not to get married. The number of women who continue to work after getting married is also higher. Women who work instead of getting married are fiscally independent while those who work after marriage are perhaps less dependent on their husbands for financial support. More and more

Japanese women today are not led to believe that they are limited by any of their attributes. They also do not see men as a necessity in the same way that prior generations did. Today's women realize that they have power, and they are not willing to surrender it because in doing so, they run the risk of entering a life full of boundaries and restrictions.

If *manga* has been and still is influenced by society and its trends then one would assume that female protagonists in *shōjo manga* would act more like real women. As evidenced in the previous two sections, this is not the case as the protagonists become less independent over time. While all nine *manga* discussed in this thesis do not include a work, marriage, or child-rearing stage in their respective female protagonists' lives, if their stories were to continue, it is very likely that the majority of them would follow a life pattern similar to that of a woman from a previous generation. This is because females in *shōjo manga* are led to believe that they are still living in a society where their opportunities are severely limited and that they cannot do anything they put their mind to.

It cannot be said that Japanese women have attained equality, but we have seen that today's women wield a considerable amount of power. This power is simply not evident as female protagonists in *shōjo manga* age. What is evident, however, is that *manga* females are even farther from equality than their real-life counterparts. If *manga* is a way to escape from the real world, then we must explore the following question: Why do readers want to repeatedly enter a world where the characters with which they relate become increasingly powerless and limited with age? In order to do so, we must

consider why female protagonists in *shōjo manga* have much less power and many more boundaries than real females, and why readers allow this gap to exist.

5.2 Why the Gap between *Shōjo Manga* and Reality Exists

There is no concrete evidence as to why female protagonists are "weaker" than real Japanese females or why readers allow the gap between *shōjo manga* and reality to exist. There is also no evidence to substantiate the claim that readers are even aware that there is a gap. We will, therefore, examine cases where we assume that readers are aware of this gap as well as those where we assume that readers are not aware of it. It seems that there are four probable causes of why female protagonists in *shōjo manga* are weaker than real women and why readers consciously or unconsciously allow this gap to exist.

5.2.1 *Shōjo Manga* Allows the Reader to Imagine Life without Responsibility or Consequences

By the time a reader becomes a member of the 15-21 year-old group, she has a great deal of responsibility. If the reader is fifteen years old, she is preparing to enter high school, and she is likely busy studying for high school entrance exams. Once the reader has entered high school, she must continue to study hard in order to pass her college entrance exams. The daily routine of a high school student may thus include a regular day at school followed by time at a *juku* (cram school) or perhaps extra studies at home. In addition to their studies, high school students may find their free time consumed by after-school clubs, sports, or a part-time job. While the pressure to study seems to lessen drastically once an individual enters college, there are still academic requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to graduate. On top of a college's

academic requirements, readers who are twenty-one years old will be searching for a job for after graduation. In other words, once readers enter this age group, they reach a point in their lives where society has expectations for them. The responsibilities that they are given may change, but their responsibilities never completely disappear.

Even though female protagonists in works representing this age group are also at this point where society should have expectations for them, they are not really burdened with large amounts of responsibility. For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, Shizuka, the female protagonist in *Boys esute*, takes two-and-a-half months off from school to participate as a subject in training for aestheticians in order to regain some self-esteem. As a high school student, Shizuka should be studying in order to get accepted into a good college, but this fact is ignored. While it is not explicitly mentioned, since the environment for subjects in this program is stress free, it can be assumed that she does not study for two months since studying is stressful. Even though Shizuka's mental well-being is obviously important to those around her, none of them ever express any concern over her time away from studying and its impact on her future.

If a high school student chooses to read *manga* in her free time, she is probably not going to want to read about a female protagonist who is saddled with responsibility or spends all of her time studying. If *manga* is a way to escape reality, then a reader will want to imagine herself as a person who has no obligations and lots of fun. She can do that through her connection to a character like Shizuka as a high school student since, as previously discussed, a connection between the reader and story is important.

The fact that female protagonists are able to escape the consequences of their actions may appeal to readers as well. In chapter two, we examined *honne* and *tatemae*. Sana acts in accordance with her *honne* in *Kodomo no omocha*, yet she never faces the consequences of her actions. If Sana was a real person, she would be reprimanded for talking back to an authority figure, Mr. Hayama, for example, because she is a child. Even though Sana does not think about the consequences, there are no consequences for her, or other female protagonists for that matter, to worry about. Readers are aware that in real life there are consequences for their actions, so perhaps they are able experience and enjoy the life of a female who listens to and acts on her *honne*, a life they would otherwise not live, through their connections with female protagonists in *shōjo manga*.

The idea of living without responsibility or consequences is something that the majority of readers in this age group just simply cannot do. As discussed last chapter, Nana K. drops everything and moves to Tokyo in the course of one evening. Nana moves to Tokyo in a matter of hours with no place of her own and no job, leaving nothing but a note for her parents. When she moves to Tokyo, she effectively cuts ties with all of her responsibilities back home regardless of whether or not they have been fulfilled. Moreover, she does not consider her future and the consequences of moving to Tokyo with no job or place to live because she believes that things will work out and she has people upon whom she can depend. Readers likely understand that they are in a period in their lives where responsibilities and consequences have to govern their actions, so if they were to act on a whim like Nana, it would not be permissible. However, Nana's actions have the potential to become fun, perhaps even permissible, because they are experienced through someone else's life.

5.2.2 Male-dominated *Manga* Industry

While the majority of *mangaka* in the *shōjo manga* genre are female, there are very few female editors[1]. As a result, the ones who can finalize content in *shōjo manga* are not women but men. Moreover, many of these men are likely middle-aged[2] and may be out of touch with what younger audiences, specifically an audience comprised of young girls, want. Because these men are from a different generation than their readers, their beliefs regarding gender roles will likely differ from those of their readers. The final product that reaches readers was written by a female, but it was subject to the supervision and changes of a male, so it is likely that some of the editor's personality and beliefs are transferred to the *manga* in some form.

If middle-aged male editors discreetly include their beliefs in a work through the editorial process, they must have a motive. One possible motive could be to influence readers with a "dated" way of thinking in order to curb the growing trend of female independence. If *manga* reflects society's trends, readers may believe that dependence is trendy. Out-of-touch editors could also think that today's young males still want to date the very same kind of girl that people in their own age group did when they were younger. Editors could direct *mangaka* to portray female protagonists in a certain way so that readers can emulate them to the assumed delight of today's young males. A third possible motive could simply be self enjoyment. An editor could potentially be

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[1] An internet search revealed a couple of sources that said there were a "few" female manga editors, yet they provided no sources to back up this statement. A search for actual statistics to back up these claims turned up nothing. This leads me to believe that the number of female manga editors is so small that it simply irrelevant to turn it into a percentage.

[2] "*Manga* editors in Kōdansha had generally worked in a range of other editorials, producing magazines or books, before being transferred to a manga editorial." Sharon Kinsella, *Adult manga – culture & power in contemporary Japanese society*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 168. It is therefore likely that these editors are middle-aged.

reluctant to approve something he does not enjoy or believe in, so he could use his editorial powers to bring a story in line with something in which he believes or enjoys.

Production notes or notes from the *mangaka* in *manga* offer readers a glimpse into the editorial process. In following with social etiquette, a *mangaka* would never openly denounce an editor's changes in these production notes, but they do inform readers of changes brought about by editors from time to time. These notes do not explicitly tell a reader that the *manga* they have in hand has a degree of male influence, but it can be inferred. For example, Takeuchi Naoko informs the reader at the end of volume two that it was her editor, "Osa-P" (Osano Fumio)*,* who suggested that the battle costumes in *Sailor Moon* be *sērāfuku* (schoolgirl uniforms that resemble sailor suits).[3] No official explanation is given as to why he suggested *sērāfuku*, but it could be posited that he suggested them simply for his own enjoyment.

5.2.3 *Shōjo Manga* Allows the Reader to Be Someone She Is Not

We have already considered the possibility that *shōjo manga* is a way to escape responsibility and consequences. If the reality from which a reader is escaping is full of responsibility, the reader is likely a self-sufficient female. A self-sufficient female may not want to allow a male into her life as this has the potential to give her limitations, so she might choose to avoid entering into a relationship with one in order to prevent this from happening. Some readers may long for a lifestyle with limitations—for some readers the very fact of being in a relationship could make them happy, regardless of any restrictions it may create—and read *shōjo manga* in order to experience such a life,

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[3] Takeuchi, vol. 2, (Kōdansha, 1992), 186.

while others may read it simply to see what the other side of life, the restricted side, is like.

A self-sufficient reader can remain as such yet safely imagine what life is like being a dependent female in a romantic relationship through *shōjo manga*. If the number of self-sufficient women is growing and the average age for marriage is rising, it could be surmised that it is not the case that women simply do not want to depend on men; perhaps they feel that they cannot depend on them. Not only are female protagonists in *shōjo manga* able and willing to depend on men, but they are able and willing to depend on men over anyone else, including themselves. If a reader has a comfortable life where she is independent, she may be unwilling to depend on a male because she feels that taking this action will cause her to be unable maintain her independent lifestyle. If males cannot create a relationship where a reader can maintain her independent lifestyle, she may view men as being unable to provide for women, and this may cause her to be unable to depend upon them.

When a reader explores the life of a less independent female through the eyes of a female protagonist in *shōjo manga* it does not simply provide her with an opportunity to view life from another perspective without changing her own lifestyle; it also provides the reader with an opportunity to evaluate or reevaluate her own lifestyle. A self-sufficient reader may not fully realize the amount of power or independence she has until she experiences life through the eyes of someone who has far less of either. It is human nature that people often enjoy stories about characters, or real people for that matter, that are not as well off as they are financially or socially. Perhaps readers

realize that their lives are better than female protagonists' lives, and they allow the gap between *manga* and reality to continue to exist in order to boost their own self-esteem.

5.2.4 Readers May Simply Be Unaware of the Decline in the Female Protagonist's Power

Female protagonists in *shōjo manga* reflected and advocated social change for a period of roughly thirty years, as discussed in chapter one. Just as readers do today, readers during this period would eventually outgrow certain titles and seek something more suited to their current tastes. As girls in the readership during this era of change grew older and stopped reading *shōjo manga*, a new readership simultaneously began reading a library of less progressive works, a cycle which has continued with every subsequent group of readers. Publications have cycled through thousands of new readers and storylines have become less progressive, resulting in the fact that *shōjo manga* once reflected and advocated social change becoming a distant memory.

Today's readers may be aware of classic works like *Ribon no kishi*, but they are not connected to these works in the same manner as their original readers. As a result, today's readers may be unaware of what these classic works represented. It is inevitable that as time passes new generations of readership will become more and more distanced from works of the past, and this distance between readers and works of the past can cause current readers to form misconceptions about *shōjo manga*. Readers could incorrectly believe that *manga* from the era of change, the 1950s-1970s, featured docile females because real women in that era had more boundaries and restrictions than today's women. If *manga* is supposed to keep up with society and its trends, a reader may assume that because females in society were docile, female protagonists

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were docile as well. It is also possible that a reader who believes that *manga* reflects

society and its trends could incorrectly believe that today's female protagonists in *shōjo*

manga are a reflection of today's society. If enough readers are under the impression

that today's women are not self-sufficient, dependent on males, and lacking in

independence, future women could potentially undermine their own path to equality.

Readers need to be aware that while it is logical to think that *manga* reflects society,

this is not always the case.

In my examination of nine works from nine different publications, I found that

there were three trends that were consistent across three different publishing companies.

First, female protagonists become more dependent on males over time. Female

protagonists were increasingly more dependent on males in each subsequent age group.

Next, strong romantic themes and strong females do not exist in the same work. The

more integral romance is to a storyline, the less self-sufficient and independent a female

protagonist is. Lastly, there is a tendency to reinforce dated roles as the target age rises.

Today's women are not groomed to lead lives where they will ultimately depend on

men, yet today's female protagonists in *shōjo manga* are. These trends do not appear to

reflect today's society in general.

There were four probable causes of this disconnect between *manga* and the real

world. First, *shōjo manga* in its present state allows the reader to imagine life without

responsibility or consequences. Responsibilities and consequences are the heaviest in

the 15-21 year-old group, so female protagonists in that age group that should logically

come in contact with both often, yet they do not. Second, even though the majority of

mangaka in the *shōjo manga* genre are female, the *manga* industry as a whole is male-dominated. It is likely that the influence of older male editors causes works to have "dated" gender roles.   Third, *shōjo manga* allows the reader to be someone she is not and appreciate who she is. Self-sufficient females can experience life as a dependent female without sacrificing their own independence. Viewing life through someone else's eyes gives the reader a chance to contemplate, and perhaps appreciate, her own lifestyle. Finally, the first three probable causes assume that the reader is aware of a gap between reality and *shōjo manga*, but it is also possible that readers may simply be unaware of the female protagonist's decline in power. This may cause readers to have preconceived notions about *shōjo manga*—for example, female protagonists in the 1950s to 1970s must have been dependent because the real women upon whom they were modeled were more dependent than today's women—that could effect how they view not only today's *manga* but today's society as well.

As the state of society changes, so does the state of *manga*. It is therefore impossible to predict the future direction of *shōjo manga*. However, observers should not avert their gaze from the world of *shōjo manga*. If the segment of today's independent women who have or will have children pass their values on to those children, there is the potential for (future) readers and future *mangaka* to usher in another era of change in *shōjo manga*. Perhaps a second era of change could help to do away with the idea of a dependent female in both *manga* and real life once and for all.

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