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# Anime and Identity: The Reception of Sailor Moon by Adolescent American Fans

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# ***Sailor Moon* and Its Reception**

Summer Fellows 2015

Darrah M. Hewlett

Prof. Matthew Mizenko

## *Abstract*

This project looks at the way fans think, talk, and feel about the anime they watch and the manga they read. Specifically, it looks at fans of *Sailor Moon*, a series of Japanese anime and manga made in the 1990s that have been dubbed and translated into English and have been met with an enthusiastic reception among girls and young women in the United States. *Sailor Moon* is considered one of the first mass cultural productions to present images of girl power and gender equality and has generated a large and enthusiastic online community of fans. Most of its fans admire the Sailor Scouts; however, some have criticized the series for displaying negative portrayals of teen girls, particularly in terms of their body proportions, attire, and stereotypical portrayals of teenage girls as dependent and naïve. This study examines many aspects of this dissonance, which to a significant degree can be attributed to the drastic changes made from the Japanese manga to its anime adaptation, and then again to its English anime adaptation. Utilizing general principles of feminist and gender theory, I examine the various representations of the Sailor Scouts as they have been in their reception by and impact on the interpretive community.

From late August 2014 to early December 2014, the Fall semester of my junior year at Ursinus College, I had the pleasure of taking a course given by Professor Matthew Mizenko, titled “Japanese Anime<sup>1</sup>.” The purpose of the course was to study and think about the ways in which Japanese animation affects international viewers, particularly those in the United States, and how specific aspects of anime, from their cinematic affects, to the way they are marketed, to the portrayals of their characters, reflect, reinforce, and/or defy societal attitudes. I had several reasons for taking the course: I needed to fulfill the “Global” requirement of Ursinus’ core curriculum, and I wanted to take one of Professor Mizenko’s courses since he was highly recommended by students. But the main reason why I wanted to take the Japanese anime course was because it brought to me an opportunity to do what I wanted to do for months. What I wanted to do, the very reason why I decided to do Summer Fellows research, was to see how anime and manga can be legitimate learning materials deserving of the same respect given to traditional novels. The next semester, I went on to validate manga’s potential for academic usage by giving a presentation in a Literature Theory course on *Otomen*, a manga about a teenage boy who hides his feminine personality and interests in order to sustain his mother’s approval. The presentation revealed how *Otomen* portrayed Judith Butler’s concept of gender performance by depicting characters who perform the opposite gender and the ways in which society reacts to them. It was inspired by another presentation I gave in the Japanese Anime course on the depiction of gender norms in anime, including *Sailor Moon*, the topic of this very paper, and the ways in which animators accept or reject the defiance of traditional gender roles.

The following is an eight-week-long study on the fandom of *Sailor Moon*, a popular anime that has made its mark for the last twenty-three years, and the ways in which the fans receive the series and communicate with each other about its more controversial aspects. There are two reasons why I chose to study *Sailor Moon* specifically. The first reason is simply that *Sailor Moon* is the anime and manga

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<sup>1</sup> Japanese animation

series which I know best: in the last fifteen years, I have viewed the majority of the television series and read ten of the twelve-volume manga series. Using an anime with which I am already familiar allows me to use my prior knowledge of the anime and manga series' controversies, along with what I have learned about them for the past two months. The second, and more important, reason why I chose *Sailor Moon* is because it is an ideal series for the study of gender, sexuality, and the adolescent experience, as well as a series that is well known around the world. From watching several episodes of both the Japanese and English versions of the original anime, reading the majority of the manga series, and evaluating several online forum discussions on an active fan website, I have found ways in which changes made from the manga to the Japanese anime, and then again from the Japanese anime to the English dub, have both avoided and created issues in the series, particularly through making drastic changes in its storyline and dialogue in order to either cater to the company's (and not the author's) intended audience or make it more palatable to American audiences.

*Bishoujo Senshi Seira Muun (Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon)*, more commonly known by fans as simply *Sailor Moon*, is a *shoujo*<sup>2</sup> manga and anime series created by Naoko Takeuchi in the 1990s. *Sailor Moon* revolves around the story of 14-year-old Usagi Tsukino, a clumsy, whiny girl who is always late for school, rarely does her homework, and always eats sweets. Despite these negative qualities, she is also very friendly and kind to others, cheering her friends up at even their lowest times with her optimism and smile. One day, she is greeted by Luna, a black cat with a golden crescent moon on her forehead, who tells Usagi that she is Sailor Moon, a "fighter for love and justice." Sailor Moon has four major duties to fulfill: the first is that she must fight the "Negaforce," an organization of evil aliens who destroyed the Moon Kingdom hundreds of years ago, killing everyone on it. The second is to find her fellow Sailor Scouts: Sailors Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and Venus in order to help her fight the Negaforce. By completing these two tasks, she will be able to fulfill the last two tasks: finding the "Legendary Silver

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<sup>2</sup> Genre for young and adolescent girls

Crystal” and finding the Moon Princess, the heir to the Moon Kingdom whose spirit was sent to Earth by Queen Serenity, through the power of the Silver Crystal, to be reincarnated one millennium later, along with the rest of those who died from the Negaforce’s attack on the Moon. Together with the other Sailor Scouts, Sailor Moon fights the minions and generals of the Negaforce, as well as other enemies as the series goes on, in order to keep them from obtaining the Silver Crystal and using it to bring chaos and destruction to the world. Tuxedo Kamen (Tuxedo Mask), a mysterious man named for his outfit, also helps Sailor Moon by distracting enemies during battle, but is really doing this to fulfill his own objective of using the Silver Crystal to regain memories he lost due to childhood amnesia and find out about a princess who is trying to speak to him in his dreams.

The *Sailor Moon* manga began as a serialization of acts<sup>3</sup> in the shoujo magazine *Nakayoshi* on December 28, 1991. Not even three months after the manga’s serialization in the magazine, it was made into an anime by Toei Animation, an animation company known for such anime as *One Piece*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, and *Digimon* . On July 6, 1992, *Sailor Moon* began to be sold as tankouban, or bound volumes, with the first volume consisting of the first five acts. In 1995, DIC Entertainment licensed the anime to be translated into English and televised in the United States. The original Japanese anime ended in 1997 and consisted of five seasons: *Sailor Moon*, *Sailor Moon R*, *Sailor Moon S*, *Sailor Moon SuperS*, and *Sailor Stars*, the last of which never aired in the United States. In 2003, a new edition of the manga was released in Japan, titled *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*, but was not translated and sold in the American market until 2011. In the summer of 2012, it was announced that, in celebration of the series’ 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, there would be a reboot titled *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon Crystal*, truer to Takeuchi’s manga and void of the more than 140 filler episodes<sup>4</sup> from the original anime. After the release date was

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<sup>3</sup> Chapters

<sup>4</sup> A “filler” is an episode added by the animation company that was not part of the original storyline of the manga. In other words, the events that happen in a filler episode have never happened in the manga on which the anime

pushed back several times, *Sailor Moon Crystal* aired, starting on July 5, 2014 with each of its twenty-six episodes airing on the first and third Saturday of each month until July 18, 2015. It consists of the true storylines of *Sailor Moon* and *Sailor Moon R*.

Since the 1980s, Japanese animated shows have had a fan base in America, resulting in the establishment of anime “cons,” high school and university anime clubs and, perhaps most importantly, online fan communities (Eng, 162-175). These venues were created in order for anime fans and enthusiasts—or *otaku*—to easily find and befriend others who shared their passion for anime, manga (Japanese graphic novels), costume play (“cosplay”), and related activities. Fans’ intake of anime leads to discussions of real world issues that are apparent in them. On forums such as Sailor Moon Forum, fans discuss issues which the series addresses (or fails to address): gender stereotypes, gender equality, gender performance, and sexuality to name a few, as well as what it means to be an adolescent girl.

### **Body Image**

The portrayal of body image in *Sailor Moon* has garnered a large amount of criticism. The female characters of *Sailor Moon* have very thin waists, proportionately large breasts, and inhumanly long legs. Also, body image has not only been an issue visually, but verbally: in several episodes of both the Japanese and English versions of the anime, characters bring up weight gain and not in the most positive manner, usually as criticism from other characters towards Usagi. In fact, in episode 56 of the Japanese anime, when the girls argue over who should play the lead in a production of Snow White, Makoto (Sailor Jupiter) says that she should have the lead role because she has the largest breasts, and she even prompts the other girls to compare breast sizes. In the English dub, the line is changed to her saying that she should have the role because she “has the most talent,” and the prompt to compare breast sizes is omitted.

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is based on. Filler episodes are put in anime so that the television series continue on when the manga artist is busy writing the next chapter or is otherwise idle (i.e. from illness).

There is even a filler episode, much earlier in the series, which focuses entirely on weight loss and body image. Interestingly, some of its scenes were cut when it was dubbed into English and most of the dialogue was changed dramatically. In the original Japanese version of the episode, Usagi is upset because she gained an undisclosed amount of weight. Her parents try to reassure her that it wasn't a big deal, but her younger brother is more insulting than helpful. Usagi continues to be upset. The next day at school, she talks to her friends about her "dilemma." One friend, who is noticeably larger than the other girls, talks about her unsuccessful attempts to lose weight. In response, the other girls only say, "We know." One of the other girls suggests Usagi try to "get thin" by swimming, regardless of the fact that she is already thin. Another girl, Naru, suggests she ask their teacher, Ms. Haruna, for advice because she has been losing weight recently. After the girls catch a glimpse of Ms. Haruna briefly, Umino, a male student known for being a "complete nerd," shows the girls before and after pictures of Ms. Haruna. Suspicious of how he got the pictures, Naru questions Umino, who then runs away from her and Usagi only to get caught by the latter. However, Usagi is more concerned with where Ms. Haruna is exercising than how Umino obtained those pictures. She finds out where the teacher's gym is, and goes there with the other girls.

A screen above the gym's entrance shows its ad: a very thin female celebrity exercising while saying "One kilogram in one day; five kilograms in two days; in three days you, too, will be beautiful," implying that whoever is watching the ad is not already beautiful. Five kilograms equate to about eleven pounds, an unrealistic and unhealthy amount to lose in two days. Now more motivated to lose weight and become "beautiful," the girls run into the gym and work out vigorously, with the aid and encouragement of very muscular men. Unbeknownst to them, however, the gym was made by the Negaforce in order to steal energy from humans. The general Jadeite, posing as the gym's owner, convinces Naru and the two other friends to go into "relaxation pods," which are really energy-sucking



Pods. The girls leave the pods with sunken and blue faces. Usagi is not with them because she is taking a bath in one of the spa rooms.

The next day, exhausted from exercising at the gym and completely fasting herself, Usagi faints in the arms of Motoki, the game arcade owner on whom she has a crush. She wakes up after he takes her to a nurse's office, where he expresses concern for her welfare. Usagi admits that she put herself on a diet. Motoki tells her she doesn't need to go on a diet and that he thinks that "the chubby type" of girl is cuter anyway. Realizing this, Usagi decides to get herself a bag of donuts so she can gain weight and look attractive to him. But she bumps into Mamoru, who tells her she's going to gain too much weight if she keeps eating all of those donuts and she becomes discouraged again and decides to return to the gym. Once there, she exercises at an extreme rate while Luna goes into the basement of the gym and finds Jadeite stealing energy from Ms. Haruna. Luna ends up distracting and even threatening Usagi in order to get her to transform into Sailor Moon so she can save Ms. Haruna's life. Jadeite uses the brainwashed gym assistants to fight Sailor Moon, and she soon decides to give up fighting them because she is too scared. She only decides to fight back after being convinced that by fighting them, she would lose weight. She even recites the gym's slogan to herself as she's battling them. At the end of the episode, Usagi weighs herself again and gets upset that she gained more weight, even though she looks no different than usual.

In the English dub, Serena (Usagi) is upset because she gained half a pound. Despite her parents and even her (usually very mean) younger brother reassuring her that half a pound is a very small amount and nothing to be ashamed of, Serena claims they care nothing about her feelings and cries profusely. The next day at school, she announces to her friends that she is going to start a diet. Unlike in the Japanese version, the larger friend tries to warn the other girls about the negative effects of dieting at their young age. Also unlike the sub, in the dub the friends are less concerned with trying to become

“beautiful” and more excited about going on diets in order to exert their independence as adolescents. Melvin (Umino) still shows them the pictures of Ms. Haruna, but does not describe them as before-and-after pictures. The girl in the gym’s ad only encourages the girls to work out. Andrew (Motoki) makes no mention of body type preference and only offers to take Serena out to eat so that she can regain her health. Darien (Mamoru) tells Serena to exercise because she has a weak throw, rather than to lose weight because she’s eating too much. And although Sailor Moon is scared to fight, she continues not because she wants to lose weight, but because she wants to save her teacher’s life. Serena still weighs herself on the scale and gets upset, but it’s the result of her little brother playing a prank on her by taking its batteries out.

Just from a single episode, we can see the myriad differences between the Japanese and English versions of *Sailor Moon*. DIC, the company that brought *Sailor Moon* to the United States, dubbed the episode in such a way as to lessen the negative effects the direct translation of the Japanese version would have probably had on young American children and the outrage from American parents that could have ensued. When I first watched the Japanese version of the weight loss episode, I was appalled and enraged by what I read in the subtitles. However, after further research and evaluation, I realized that there are at least two reasons why the original episode came out the way it did. First, “body image” is viewed much differently in Japan than it is in America: it is a Western term that does not have a direct translation in Japanese, its closest being “*mitame*” or “*gaiken*,” meaning “outer appearance” or “how the others see one’s body or presence” (Edison & Notkin). These terms “[are not] limited to bodies or humans and both are often used in a context of [the phrase,] ‘You should not judge another person by their *mitame* or *gaiken*’” (Edison & Notkin). Second, the message that girls have to become thin as possible in order to be beautiful was sent in the context of Jadeite’s evil scheme. Putting the message in the context of an enemy’s plot puts it in a negative light, particularly in the dub, where Sailor Moon calls the message “a dangerous notion.”

The issue of body image is the topic of a thread in the Sailor Moon Forum which started on June 11, 2009. Its most recent comment was written on June 11, 2015, giving a total of 180 comments. The thread's title is "Is Usagi slim or chubby?" The general consensus was that Usagi is slim and some of the members even say that such a question is completely silly or that Usagi is *too* thin. Others who say otherwise have said that she was chubby because it's normal, natural, and healthy for a girl her age to be chubbier ("Thereisnospoon303," "sunfire\_kisses"). One commenter, "Lunar Archivist," even looked up Usagi's height and weight, and concluded that according to BMI charts, she is "slightly underweight." The weight loss filler episode was mentioned, along with a scene from another episode in which Usagi has sides slightly poked out in a tutu. I searched for the episode, Episode 145, titled "Tutu Treachery" in English, which turned out to be another filler episode. Usagi never tried out for ballet in the manga. When the topic of other characters' criticism of Usagi came up, most commenters said that the characters were referring to Usagi's rigorous eating habits rather than her weight ("Catty Gossip").

The majority of the thread, especially in the last half, revolved around the drawing of the characters' body proportions themselves. One commenter, "MusicFeedsYourSoul," shared a link bearing Takeuchi's early "concept" drawing of Minako (Sailor Venus), which also shows a small picture of Takeuchi's description of the five inner senshi's<sup>5</sup> body types. Minako is described as "normal"; Rei (Sailor Mars) and Ami (Sailor Mercury) are described as "slender"; Makoto is described as "a little meattier [sic] than normal"; and Usagi is described as "a little chubby." Many of the commenters didn't agree that Usagi was in any way chubby, and many of them, such as "silvana94" do not think Takeuchi varied the characters' body types as much as she first intended to. However, not one of them shared any major personal dissatisfaction with the physical appearance of the Sailor Scouts. Many of the commenters explained that because the Sailor Scouts are anime characters and not real people, it does not make

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<sup>5</sup> Sailors Moon, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and Venus. "Inner senshi" is a term used by fans to describe the Sailor Scouts shown in the first season of the show.

sense to compare one's body to that of a Sailor Scout. It is very common in anime for characters to have unrealistic bodily and facial proportions, whether in their ridiculously long legs, huge breasts, narrow waists, or incredibly large eyes.

Nevertheless, just because it's impractical to compare oneself to an anime character, it does not mean viewers will not do so. Young children may be more vulnerable to what is being shown on television because they pick up cues from those who are older, or those who inspire them. When a little girl sees her mother or older sister apply make-up, she will very likely want to do the same, because she is trying to learn how to be a grown-up. Likewise, girls copy the Sailor Scouts' movements and battle cries because they want to be like their heroes. It would not be surprising if they wanted to look like them too, and even though they may not notice how long their legs are, the weight cues from filler episodes are not nearly as discreet, and these young girls, unlike the commenters, may take them seriously rather than believe they are just for laughs. In the manga, neither of these episodes took place, and the only comment on weight is made by Usagi towards Luna, saying she has gained weight. No further mentions of body image were made since. This is one of the negative results of taking a series out of its creator's hands and placing it in the hands of companies. When changes are made to a series between adaptations, they can change the entire show in ways which were not intended by the writer. Takeuchi's manga, which was made to portray female heroes, was changed through filler episodes into a contradictory television show: "Girls can do anything they want to do! They just have to look a certain way when doing it."

### **Gender Stereotypes and Equality**

Of the four issues discussed here, the issue of gender stereotypes is the most controversial in *Sailor Moon*. Despite the series' success at being an inspiration to girls all over the world, some have voiced disapproval of Tuxedo Kamen's role in the anime, specifically the frequency of his assistance to

Sailor Moon. Some of my classmates in the Japanese Anime course felt that Tuxedo Mask comes to her rescue so often that it undermines her autonomy and her ability to take care of herself.

Two threads in the Sailor Moon Forum sparked a discussion on gender stereotypes and equality. The first, titled “Anyone else like Traditional Gender Roles in Anime?” spanned eighty-seven posts over a period of five days. The thread’s creator, “Weeping Setsuna,” says in the first thread, “[W]ith all the controversy that happens in the US with portrayals [sic] of females, I enjoy seeing unironic [sic], and sincere sexism, such as ‘I’ll protect you’ or ‘Its [sic] too dangerous for you[,]’ Or Usagi finding it hard to see [g]irls ‘[n]eeding’ [g]uts, in her conversation with Mamoru... and [M]otoki about how to [a]pproach Naru-chan... Note I do NOT repeat NOT [e]njoy seeing women needlessly denigrated.” Despite how demeaning the post sounds, others, both male and female, find themselves inclined to agree:

“DarkLies212”: “You’re not alone as I really enjoy the above as well. I know a lot of women would be ashamed I’m a part of that gender for hearing me say that, but personally, I think it’s sweet.”

“Ratty Tam”: “I’m a guy, and I agree with this. Sometimes, we just need someone to protect us when things go bad.”

“Shiro Darklight”: “I like the ‘want somebody to protect me’ thing too. It’s romantic and sweet, sexist or not.”

“Moon Blossom” is more in middle ground than are the previous posters: “I don’t think there’s anything wrong with wanting to protect a loved one. However[,] saving/being protected is completely different than making a girl powerless, defenseless, and dependent. There’s nothing cute about that.”

What the thread seems to be is a discussion of whether or not chivalry is sexist. Many later on, such as “abc123youandme” and “SailorGucci,” say that the original poster doesn’t know what sexism is,

that “[w]anting to protect someone isn’t sexist” and because “[Usagi and Mamoru] see each other as equals,” *Sailor Moon* is not encouraging sexist behavior.

Another poster, “CopeDog87,” disagreed, but for another reason: “As much as I love Sailor Moon, I’ve never agreed with or liked Naoko’s whole idea that only girls can be [S]ailor [S]oldiers. To me[,] it’s like saying teachers and nurses can only be girls and construction workers and firefighters can only be men.” It is evident that *Sailor Moon* and its depiction of gender norms can be seen as sexist against either, both, or neither gender.

The second thread on gender stereotypes in Sailor Moon Forum is much shorter, but looks at some of the pros and cons of the series. Spanning for one day in early June 2011, “Claims that Sailor Moon isn’t Feminist...” starts with the thread’s creator, “Salem Saberhagen,” explaining that some people have expressed that “Sailor Moon isn’t feminist because [the Sailor Scouts] wear short skirts and Usagi is so traditionally feminine.” “Salem Saberhagen” disagrees: “I say that it’s feminist because the team presents many great role models and shows that women can be anything from a career woman to a singer to a princess.” Another poster, “Rachel,” posted a long list of positives and negatives, some of which I will list here:

- “As the [original poster] stated, the girls all have a variety of personalities... [and] don’t really follow ‘cliches’ [sic]... This is especially well-illustrated in [Sailor Jupiter]. She wants to be a bride and own a bakery or flower shop, but she also wants to be physically strong and capable of protecting those she loves.”
- “Mamoru/Tuxedo Mask needs as much rescuing from Sailor Moon as the other way around.”
- “[Sailor Mars] (in the manga) is fiercely independent and has made it clear several times that she does not need a man in her life. Of course, [Sailors Uranus and Neptune] aren’t dependent on men, either. Neither are [Sailors Saturn and Pluto].”

- “Usagi is constantly teased for being ‘chubby,’ even when she’s not chubby at all by anyone’s standards.”
- “There isn’t a lot of diversity when it comes to body types. Jupiter, Pluto, and Uranus are tall, but they’re all very thin with small waists, large breasts and hips, etc.”
- “The outfits are ‘sexy’ to the point of impracticality--particularly the high heels (although I personally LOVE Mars’ high heels).”
- “The fandom. I’ve encountered a lot of sexism. (That’s not really Takeuchi’s or Toei’s fault, though.)”

Other commenters had only positive things to say about *Sailor Moon*’s portrayal of gender norms, and even shared their views on feminism:

“Eagleheart”: “[*Sailor Moon*] shows that girls can still act & dress like girls, and portray the strengths of all humans. I find feminism to be contradictory at times, they work so hard to make females appear equal to males. But do it in a way that causes them to conform to more male-like attributes.”

“Rika-Chibi-Chibi”: “Agreed [in response to Eagleheart’s comment]- feminism shouldn’t be about turning females to look like males... It should be focused on the substance of the matter, i.e. rights, powers, & influences, entitlements, status, etc.”

“Sailor Eyestrain”: “Sailor Moon is a series where heroines act as a unit [and] are not fighting over men... Sailor Moon shows that feminin[ity] is not weak... I would add the outfits the senshi wear are ‘girly’ but fairly tame in comparison to most female superheroes and aside from the heels and high heeled boots, are not impractical (it allows for mobility without restricting movement). Wonder Woman wears even less in her iconic outfit than the main characters, and at least Sailor Moon doesn’t have cleavage hanging out or excessively emphasized.”

The aforementioned comments reveal two major points on the fandom's view on gender stereotypes and gender equality. First, the portrayal of gender roles varies greatly between different versions of *Sailor Moon*. It is true that in the manga, Sailor Mars has a strong dislike of men, likely stemming from the fact that her father left her with her grandfather at a young age, abandoning her. However, in the anime (particularly in the English dub), she is as "boy crazy" as some of the other Sailor Scouts, namely Sailors Moon, Jupiter, and Venus. Mamoru's personality also changed greatly between the different versions: from the 1992 release of the manga, to the 1995 showing of *Sailor Moon* in America, Mamoru (known as Darien in the English dub) became more insulting to Usagi, while Usagi became less insulting and more quickly attracted to him in response. By the time the English dub of the anime was released, the relationship between the two characters was reminiscent of the stereotype that women are attracted to jerks.

It is true that in all three of the versions of *Sailor Moon*, each Sailor Scout has different dreams for her future, some of which follow non-traditional gender roles. Sailor Moon dreams of simply becoming a bride; Sailor Mercury dreams of being a doctor; Sailor Mars dreams of becoming a head priestess; Sailor Jupiter dreams of becoming a pastry or flower shop owner and raising a family; Sailor Venus dreams of being an idol. All of the Sailor Scouts are strong in distinct ways and Sailors Moon and Venus even wield a sword at different points in the manga. Although Tuxedo Mask helps Sailor Moon in all three versions of the series, it is always Sailor Moon who gives the last blow to the enemy, and overall, she saves as he saves her. In the manga, not only is he depicted as being no stronger than Sailor Moon, but even *weaker* than her. He constantly worries that because he does not have nearly as much power as Sailor Moon, he is only dragging her down and feels that he is useless to her.

Second, it is not always clear what is sexism and what is not. Much more in the manga than the anime, the willingness to protect the other is equally evident in Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Mask. The



anime, in contrast, seems to show Tuxedo Mask as being protective of Sailor Moon more often than the other way around. Because seventy percent of the anime series is filler, the number of times Tuxedo Mask rescues Sailor Moon are skewed to the point of inaccuracy: more episodes in the anime mean more opportunities for him to save her from danger. However, different viewers appear to have different feelings toward being protected by another. Some feel that a man saving a woman is a sign that he thinks she is weak and cannot take care of herself. Others feel that when a man saves a woman, he is showing his affection for her and can rely on him as a partner. The example of the rescue of a woman by a man is a more extreme version of the different ways a woman may feel toward men who open doors for them. She either feels insulted that the man would think she's too weak to open a door for herself, or thankful that the man would be polite enough to open a door for her. Whether or not a viewer likes Tuxedo Mask's protection of Sailor Moon, the frequency at which he rescues her in the anime has become a concern. Tuxedo Mask was originally meant to be her partner, her equal, but because of changes to the series, his personality and role, as well as those of other characters, were immensely changed.

### **Sexuality and Gender Performance**

The depiction of sexuality is one of the most major concerns in the *Sailor Moon* franchise; so major, that DIC felt the need to change the sexual orientation of two characters: Sailors Uranus and Neptune, a lesbian couple in the manga and Japanese anime, but platonic cousins in the English version. The gender of the Negaforce General Zoisite was changed from male to female because of his behavior towards General Kunzite (Malachite in the English dub), although there does not seem to be any relationship between them in the manga. Those who are only familiar with the anime or manga version of *Sailor Moon* may become quite confused when reading a different version. The reason why Zoisite is a male in the manga is because of the original backstory of the Negaforce generals. Zoisite, Malachite,

and the two others, Jadeite and Nephrite, were brainwashed by Queen Beryl, who erased their memories of their past lives during the time of the Moon Kingdom. In their previous lives, they were the top generals of Earth, sworn to protect Prince Endymion, the heir to the planet and the lover of Princess Serenity. As the Sailor Scouts are the protectors of Princess Serenity, the Negaforce generals were originally their male counterparts, and each general fell in love with one of the Sailor Scouts. Zoisite was Sailor Mercury's lover during the Silver Millennium. However, because the generals' backstory was never mentioned or shown in the Japanese anime, and because Zoisite appeared to have feelings for Kunzite, DIC seized the opportunity, and felt the need, to change Zoisite to a female so as to avoid any depiction of homosexual love.

"Moon Star" started a thread titled "Why no same-sex kissing in the anime?" in early April 2013. The comments that followed dove straight into perceptions of Japan:

"Tuxedo Biccyy": "Despite what Japanophiles [sic] have convinced themselves, Japan is a pretty conservative country, or at least it like[s] to appear it is. Animation tends to censor things that manga would normally get away with, especially more mainstream kid-aimed things like Sailor Moon."

"Moon Star" again: "I've heard that Japan isn't actually all that progressive when it comes to LGBT rights, which I always found ironic considering I've heard so much about how much more open they were to homosexuality than the West."

"Tuxedo Biccyy": "Homosexuality isn't really actively fought against like here [in America], but is quietly ignored. I have some wonderful friends [in Japan] who easily accepted my sexuality and don't blink when I make some comments, but I think they're some rare breed... Really, they tend to say... to me, when I come out as gay[:] 'Wow, America really is much more free about that, huh?'"

Although most of the commenters agree that Japan is not as openly accepting of homosexuality as one would think from reading and watching its exports, it was not always this way. According to Gregory Pflugfelder, an Associate Professor of Japanese History at Columbia University, heterosexuality as a mandatory and absolute sexuality “held no currency in Japan” before the 1868 arrival of Western societies. “As recently as the... 1930s, girls who were in romantic relationships with other girls were not considered ‘lesbian’ and were not seen as threatening the heterosexual norm” (Shamoon 139). During the time of the *Chuutougakkou rei* (Junior High School Law) and the *Koutougakkou rei* (High School Law) of the late 1800s and early 1900s, because they prohibited girls from having the same education as boys, making it compulsory that they only focus on skills such as cooking, cleaning, and sewing, Japanese society accepted *douseiai* (same-sex relationships) between adolescent girls because it gave them the opportunity to have romantic options open to them, while still maintaining their pre-marital virginity (Takahashi 116, Shamoon 140-41). Nonetheless, not every *douseiai* was considered acceptable in Japan. In addition to preventing premarital sex, *douseiai* were expected to “encourage sameness” in both of the girls involved in one. What encouraging sameness means is that the girls in the relationship had to be as similar to each other as possible. The relationships had to come from a context where there were only girls available, such as in that of an all-girls school, and neither girl was allowed to be masculine in appearance, personality, hobbies, or in any other way (Shamoon 140-41). Even if *Sailor Moon* had been created during the early twentieth century rather than the late twentieth century, the relationship between Sailors Uranus and Neptune would not have been accepted, because in all versions of the anime, Sailor Uranus “performs” the masculine gender by wearing men’s clothing and referring to herself using the masculine pronoun *boku*. In Volume 7 of the second edition of the *Sailor Moon* manga—the one which, ironically bears her on the cover—Sailor Uranus’ androgyny goes even further. As Sailor Neptune explains to the other Sailor Scouts, “Uranus... is both male and female. She is a Guardian who possesses the strengths of both genders” (Takeuchi 72). Sailor Uranus and the more

feminine Sailor Neptune are polar opposites, which would have upset the notion of sameness that Japanese society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tried to enforce on female *douseiai*.

America was not the only country that made gender or sexuality changes to characters in *Sailor Moon*. The Sailor Starlights, three of the major characters in *Sailor Stars*, are both male and female: they were born female but become male in their “civilian form”<sup>6</sup> in order to go to Earth and lure out the missing princess of their planet by forming a popular boy band called “The Three Lights.” But when confronted by an enemy, they revert to their female Sailor Scout form and fight it. When *Sailor Stars* was shown in Italy, the Sailor Starlights were presented as females, but instead of showing the Three Lights as male versions of the Starlights, they presented the boy band as their twin brothers. The Sailor Starlights are so controversial that some fans believe their gender fluidity is the reason why the United States never aired *Sailor Stars*. Backstage Licensing, *Sailor Moon*’s Italian company, made changes similar to those DIC made to the English version; they, too, changed Zoisite’s gender from male to female and changed Sailors Uranus and Neptune from being lovers to being “friends who regarded each other as sisters.”

### **Image of the Teen Girl**

One facet of *Sailor Moon* that I have not seen notably is the varying representations of the adolescent girl throughout the three renditions of the series. I could not find a thread with the image of the teenage girl as its main topic. Nevertheless, through personal intake of the media themselves, I found differences in how the manga, Japanese anime, and English-dubbed anime presented the girls, especially Usagi.

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<sup>6</sup> Their normal, non-super-powered form. I.e. the Usagi we see who wakes up late for school and frequents the arcade daily in her school uniform is Sailor Moon in her “civilian form.”

I decided to study the manga version and both anime versions of canon<sup>7</sup> episodes of *Sailor Moon*. Using canon episodes is important in the study of anime because it allows one to see different perspectives across cultures. Some say *Sailor Moon's* target audience was changed in the United States because children's shows are more profitable than shows targeted towards older audiences. Such a line of thinking makes sense: children beg and plead for toys based on their favorite T.V. heroes, whereas teenagers likely spend more of their money on malls, movies, and dates, and adults likely spend their money on mortgages, bills, food, and other responsible expenses. We have also seen many ways in which an anime, even before it is exported to foreign countries, differs from its manga in storyline, characterization, dialogue, and content.

The canon episode I will discuss in these final paragraphs before the conclusion is the one which introduces Sailor Mars. The premise of Episode 10 of the Japanese version (Episode 7 in the English dub) begins when Naru tells Usagi and Ami about the sudden disappearances of the six o'clock buses on the "Zendaizakue" line (named the Number 66 line in the dub). While visiting a shrine nearby, they encounter Rei, the granddaughter of the shrine's head priest who is training to become a priestess. Rei mistakes her crows' caws as a warning against Usagi and mistakenly tries to exorcise her. Usagi faints and gets tended to by Rei as an apology for her attack. Shortly after Usagi wakes up, a concerned parent goes to Rei, questioning her about the Zendaizakue buses and asking her to help find her daughter. Annoyed, but trying her best to stay civil, Rei retorts that her grandfather has nothing to do with the mysterious buses and that they cannot use their spiritual powers to locate a person. The mother becomes angry, insults Rei, and leaves. Usagi tries to get on the bus once, but misses it because she is too frightened to board it. The next day, she goes to Rei's temple to ask her about the bus. Rei gets angry, thinking Usagi is accusing her grandfather of wrongdoing, and demands that she leaves. She does leave, but not before Luna has the chance to leave behind a red and gold pen.

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<sup>7</sup> An episode that is not a filler; an episode based on events which took place in the manga.

The bus comes, and Usagi is scared again until she realizes that she can use the “Disguise Pen” to turn herself into an attendant. She gets on the bus with Luna, finds that there are unconscious people all over its floor, and gets taken into a dark void before Ami arrives at the bus stop. Meanwhile, Rei uses the shrine’s sacred fire to find out that “Jed,” a shrine attendant her grandfather had just hired a few days ago, was the culprit behind the disappearing buses. She confronts Jed, who is really General Jadeite, before he uses his hand to create a dark hole into which Rei is sucked. Usagi and Luna land in a different dimension and come across one of Jadeite’s lackeys. Rei lands in the dimension right afterward and the lackey grabs hold of her. Usagi is terrified of the monster, but regains her composure after just a few seconds of whining and transforms into Sailor Moon. She tries to kill the monster with her tiara, but it’s ineffective. Rei uses the monster’s distraction to free herself and go to Sailor Moon and Luna. Luna asks Rei if she has the pen she left the other day and Rei reveals it. Luna tells her to transform into Sailor Mars. Rei transforms into Sailor Mars and burns the monster to death. The three of them panic because the hole they have to get through to return home is closing, but Ami’s power keeps it open. Tuxedo Mask appears with the missing buses rounded up with their passengers and gives them a ride back. Heartstruck, Usagi agrees to let him escort them home and the three of them make it back safely. Usagi and Rei go to the bus to thank Tuxedo Mask, only to find him missing from the driver’s seat. Usagi accuses Rei of trying to steal Tuxedo Mask from him, but Rei replies that she’s just trying to thank him for saving them and he would have stayed if he really liked Usagi. The episode ends with Usagi crying at Rei’s meanness.

The reason why I chose this episode for this paper is because it reveals different perspectives of the teenage girl in terms of one of the biggest themes of adolescent life: love. In the English dub of the anime, with which most American fans are most familiar, Serena and Molly (Naru) go to the shrine to get love charms for better luck in getting boyfriends. As expected, Amy only goes with them to get a good luck charm for help in studying and getting good grades, but like Molly and Usagi, all the other girls

who went to the shrine went specifically for love charms. In the original Japanese version of the anime, the other girls were still interested in love charms, but Usagi, Naru, and Ami wanted protection spells that would keep them safe from the cursed bus. And in the manga, only Usagi and Luna visit Rei's shrine; Naru and the other girls do not even appear in the act and Ami is on her way to "cram school<sup>8</sup>." The only reason why Usagi and Luna go to Rei's shrine is because Usagi sees her on the bus and, taken by her extreme beauty, follows her. The only customers who visit the shrine for help at any given time are parents concerned for the safety of their children who were on the six o'clock Zendaizakue bus. From these differences we can see how Takeuchi did not depict any of the girls as being obsessed with romance, how Toei depicted minor female characters as obsessed with romance but did not do so in the more prominent female characters, and how DIC depicted every girl as obsessed with romance, except Amy because she's only concerned with studying. Other differences between each version of the Sailor Mars episode/act include:

- Usagi finds Rei beautiful in the manga and Japanese anime, but in the English dub she is only interested in the fact that Rei lives in a temple.
- The shrine is called a "temple" in the English dub despite the fact that Rei and her grandfather, who practice Shintoism, live in a shrine. Temples are associated with Buddhism.
- Guys are described as "hunky" in the dubbed anime whereas in the Japanese anime they are described as "gorgeous."
- More related to the depiction of the teenage girl across the different versions, in the manga and Japanese anime, Usagi disguises herself as a bus attendant. In the English dub, Serena disguises herself as a flight attendant, giving the impression that Americans see teenage girls as silly or giddy.

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<sup>8</sup> A night school where students go for extra lessons.

From the above examples, and countless others, we can see the difference in beliefs between those of Japanese society and those of American society.

## **Conclusion**

For the last twenty and a half pages, I discussed fans' relationships with and reactions toward disputed features of their favorite show: body proportions and weight; the presentation of women as overly dependent on men; the acceptance and unacceptance of chivalry; the censorship of androgyny and of non-heterosexual relationships; the representation of women; and the representation of the adolescent female in society. All of the aforementioned matters are being presented, in very subtle ways, to girls all over the world as young as five years of age. Because they are still learning from the world around them, younger viewers take what they hear and see in *Sailor Moon* and apply it to themselves, whether it's the positive image of "a fighter for love and justice," or the negative image of a "chubby" girl or a girl who needs a man to save her.

We have seen that what a girl learns from *Sailor Moon* depends a great deal on where she lives. In comparison to fans in America, fans in Japan are more exposed to androgynous characters, non-heterosexual relationships, nudity, violence, the drinking of alcoholic beverages, and death, among other things. It was not until 2011, when the new edition of the manga was released in America, that *Sailor Moon* in its uncensored form was officially available to fans in the United States. What this shows us is that different countries have different expectations about what their young girls can and cannot watch, which can affect their experiences and personal views as they grow into adolescence and then into adulthood. Although an American fan would probably be angered by the Japanese version of the weight loss episode, a Japanese fan may see it differently because Japan does not have the same view of body image that America has.



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