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Girl power: Feminine motifs in Japanese popular culture

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Department

Women's and Gender Studies

First Advisor

Dr. Gary Evans

Second Advisor

Dr. Kate Mehuron

Third Advisor

Dr. Linda Schott

GIRL POWER: FEMININE MOTIFS IN JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE

By

David Endresak

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the

Eastern Michigan University

Honors Program

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

with Honors in Women's and Gender Studies

Approved at Ypsilanti, Michigan, on this date _____

Dr. Gary Evans _____
Supervising Instructor (Print Name and have signed)

Dr. Kate Mehuron _____
Honors Advisor (Print Name and have signed)

Dr. Linda Schott _____
Department Head (Print Name and have signed)

Dennis Beagan _____
Department Head (Print Name and have signed)

Dr. Heather L. S. Holmes _____
Honors Director (Print Name and have signed)

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Chapter 1: Printed Media

Foreword

Myths, folktales, and fairy tales from around the world offer a rich source of inspiration for stories of contemporary popular culture and entertainment. A common belief is that popular entertainment stories that focus on a male protagonist offer a strong, positive image, while stories that focus on a female protagonist offer a weak, passive image. We often hear or read reports that blame this alleged injustice on the patriarchal nature of various societies. Since Japan is believed to have a strongly patriarchal society, we would expect stories from Japanese pop culture to demonstrate strong heroes and weak heroines. However, if we closely examine such stories, we discover that this is not the case. We learn that stories of Japanese pop entertainment offer extremely powerful feminine images and elements.

In order to illuminate these findings, we will explore a few examples of feminine imagery within three specific examples of storytelling in Japanese comics, or *manga*.¹ Our examples will consist of one title from each of three separate genres of Japanese pop culture storytelling: *shounen*,² *bishoujo*,³ and *shoujo*.⁴ Using examples from multiple genres allows us to see how powerful feminine elements are used in Japanese stories regardless of the intended audience and regardless of the gender of the original author(s). Although our analysis will be restricted to a discussion of a few specific feminine elements such as the dichotomous, creative versus destructive aspect of life, the audience should take notice of other feminine aspects within such works even if discussing them is beyond the scope of the analysis we are presenting here.

Before we begin our exploration, it is important to state clearly that the use of terms such as *feminine* and *masculine* is intended to be understood as reflecting a symbolic, psychological approach to scholarly analysis. The same is true for terms such as *matriarchal* and *patriarchal*. This type of terminology is not referring to an individual's physiology or biological reproductive capability but rather to an individual's psychological or spiritual mindset and philosophy of life. By extension, such terminology can be applied to groups of people within a society. Any individual can have a feminine or masculine mindset about any specific topic, just as we speak of individualistic cultures as having more masculine tendencies and collectivistic cultures as being more feminine in nature (Neuliep 192-194).

It should also be noted that our analysis will use original Japanese terms whenever possible in order to retain accuracy and authenticity. Readers who are unfamiliar with certain terms or who wish to learn about terminology they may have learned through other sources are encouraged to refer to the explanatory footnotes. One point we will compromise on is the representation of names. Like many Asian cultures, Japan normally presents names in the order of surname first, given name last. This is quite important, but Western standards reverse this convention by putting given name first, then surname. It is best to avoid reversing names to match Western conventions because (a) it destroys the original cultural presentation and, more importantly, (b) it quite often causes a loss of symbolic meaning associated with the name, a practice that is still very important in Asian cultures but that's all but forgotten in the Western world. However, for the purposes of our analysis, we will present names in Western, reversed order, and include notes about any symbolic meanings whenever necessary.

One specific naming convention we should note at the outset is the use of terms such as "Nature," "Goddess," and other terms that are related to the many incarnations of the Great Mother Goddess who is embraced by various belief systems and cultures. We will capitalize these feminine terms as a sign of respect for and deference to the Great Goddess by using the same conventions that many people use when they capitalize the term "God" or similar related terms. If the reasons for this convention are unclear to the reader at this point, our analysis of these works and some of their underlying elements should clarify the rationale for this convention.

Finally, it is important to discard Western expectations when experiencing entertainment from Japan in order to avoid misunderstandings and properly appreciate the works. We must realize the cultural and historical foundations of many modern Japanese pop culture storytelling art forms including *manga*, *anime*,⁵ and many types of electronic games. These creative art forms and their specific presentation methods are founded in *kamishibai*,⁶ the traditional Japanese storytelling profession. *Kamishibai* storytellers used placards with a scene from the story painted on one side and the script for the scene on the other. A single story consisted of many placards. *Kamishibai* might be compared to the storyboarding process that is used for scenes in animated and live action film or the oral storytelling traditions in various cultures. *Kamishibai* storytellers traveled across Japan from village to village, earning their living by telling their stories to the local populace. The physical division of stories into individual scenes allowed a *kamishibai* storyteller to exert a great deal of individual control over their stories. They could modify their presentation to suit each audience, adlibbing freely rather than being restricted to a specific script. They could combine placards from different stories to

create a completely unique work, thus adding to their personal appeal and popularity as a storyteller. *Kamishibai* elements give Japanese stories their unique appeal and presentation style.

About the Authors and Stories

We will be analyzing *Kazan* as an example of *shounen* storytelling. Gaku Miyao began publishing *Kazan* in 1997. The primary target audience is young males of about middle school age, but the story has a good cross-market age appeal. The main hero, Kazan, has a dual appeal; his apparent age is eight, but he is actually eighteen. The English market release includes a rating that suggests that the story is for readers aged thirteen years old or older.

Mr. Miyao was born in 1959 and is originally from the rural island of Shikoku. Although he began his professional career as an animator, he turned to creating his own *manga* so that he could explore the storytelling process using his own individual methods. His favorite *mangaka*⁷ are Osamu Tezuka, Kyoko Fumizumi's works from the 1970s, and Motoko Murakami. Aside from *Kazan*, Mr. Miyao's signature works include: *Cycle Shop Aoba*, *Mamono Hunter Yohko*, and *Shichimi Nadesico Unon*.⁸ According to Mr. Miyao, when he told his father that he wanted to attempt to make his living as an artist, his father, who knew nothing about such a line of work, offered him a somewhat noncommittal reply as a way of encouraging his son: "Do as you like. But watch out for things that narrow your mind" (7: Afterword). *Kazan* is a work that he dedicated to his father as a way of thanking him, but his father died while he was completing the fourth volume. Mr. Miyao placed a fresh copy from the printer in his father's coffin as a memorial.

The world of *Kazan* is a desolate, desert land where treachery lurks for the unwary and fortunes are won or lost based on the possession of water. When Kazan's entire tribe is wiped out by a mysterious "Water Demon," he sets off on a quest to avenge his people and rescue the girl who was his childhood friend.

Our example of *bishoujo* storytelling that we will analyze is CLAMP's *Chobits*. *Chobits* began to be published during the fall of 2000. The primary target audience is young male readers of high school age. Although the English market release includes a rating that recommends that readers should be aged sixteen years old or older, *Chobits* was originally published in a monthly manga anthology that can be purchased at 7-11 and other stores anywhere in Japan. This might surprise some English consumers due to some of the mature language and sexual content within the story, but this is not necessarily unusual in its native culture.

CLAMP is a world-famous, four-woman collective team of *mangaka*. The members of CLAMP are: Nanase Ohkawa, Mokona Apapa, Mick Nekoi, and Satsuki Igarashi. CLAMP's representative works include: *X*, *RG Veda*, *Tokyo Babylon*, *CLAMP School Detectives*, *Fushigi no Kuni no Miyuki-chan*, *Magic Knight Rayearth*, *Card Captor Sakura*, and *Chobits*.⁹ Like many professionally published *mangaka*, CLAMP began their career as *doujinshi*¹⁰ artists. They became very popular *shoujo mangaka* amongst hobby enthusiasts and collectors due to their extremely detailed art and excellent storytelling, but it was *Magic Knight Rayearth* that vaulted them into the mainstream consumer market and made them a household name. Many of their works have been adapted to *anime* and electronic games. With the exception of their series of *bishoujo* short stories *Fushigi no Kuni no Miyuki-chan* that were published in *Newtype* magazine, their work on *Chobits* is their first *bishoujo manga* and is their first attempt at a long-running *bishoujo* story (CLAMP 1: inner flap; Thorn, "Matt Thorn's personal site", *Shoujo Manga*).

The story of *Chobits* is set in the very near future, perhaps even sooner than many people would think. Early in the twenty-first century, an innovative design breakthrough has allowed personal computers to be created as *persocoms*, machines that are virtually indistinguishable from humans at first glance. Hideki Motosuwa is a typical nineteen-year-old country boy who comes to Tokyo to attend college after growing up in rural Japan. As a poor college student, he certainly doesn't have the money for a persocom! Bemoaning his fate one night while walking home to his grubby apartment, he's shocked to discover a very cute girl persocom tossed out in the trash. He takes her home and activates her, but the only thing she can say at first is "Chi." As someone who is largely computer illiterate, he has a classmate put him in touch with a local young technical genius. He quickly learns that "Chi", as he has named her, is unlike any known persocom in existence. As Chi begins learning human behavior at an alarming rate, Hideki is informed that she may be a type of persocom that has been nothing but a rumor until now, a "chobits," or supercomputer artificial intelligence. As strange occurrences begin happening around Chi, Hideki must try to unravel the mystery of her existence while constantly striving to avoid becoming emotionally attached to a machine, a mere mechanical doll.

Sukehiro Tomita created our example of *shoujo* storytelling, *Ai Tenshi Densetsu Wedding Peach*, in 1994. Mr. Tomita has worked for decades in the *anime* industry. He is well known and respected for his script writing for both *shoujo* and *bishoujo* works. His signature works include: *Ai Tenshi Densetsu Wedding Peach* (*anime*), *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon* (novel), *Gall Force* (*anime*), *Doukyuusei*, *Minerva no Kenshin*, and *Baby Birth* (with Haruhiko Mikimoto).¹¹ It's important to note that, like many artists, Mr.

Tomita does not restrict the content of his work with respect to elements of an adult nature. Both *Doukyuusei* and *Minerva no Kenshin* are works that are targeted for adult audiences and contain content that is sexually explicit and/or violent.

After Mr. Tomita created the original concept for *Wedding Peach*, Nao Yazawa was contacted by the publisher to create the *manga* version of the story. By the middle of the *manga*, Mr. Tomita was preoccupied with creating the scripts for the *anime* version of the story which began airing during spring of 1995, so his input on the *manga* version became much less than it had been initially (Yazawa, *Wedding Peach*, 6: 193). This explains why there are various differences between the two versions and is just one example of why such differences can occur between various media versions of any creative work.

Nao Yazawa, like CLAMP, began her career as a *doujinshi* artist. Like various other professionally published artists, but unlike CLAMP, she continues to publish her own *doujinshi* titles independently. She also shares the common trait of being discovered when she entered a contest for Best Newcomer and won the award; this type of notoriety is a typical method of gaining the attention of professional publishing companies in Japan. Her signature works are: *Ai Tenshi Densetsu Wedding Peach*, *Nozomi*, *Mizuki*, *Itadaki! Panther*, and *Shinku-Chitai*.¹² The latter three titles are all *doujinshi* publications. One noteworthy element about Nao Yazawa's work is that she seems to be very aware of the global market potential in today's world. *Wedding Peach* has been published in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Italy, Germany, and America; it has even reached consumers in Egypt, although it is not officially published there. *Nozomi* was specifically created for the English market rather than Japanese publication. Her personal web site contains

extensive information and anecdotes in both English and Japanese. According to her web site, a collection of some of her *doujinshi* publications will also be published in German in 2005 (Yazawa, "Nao Yazawa's personal site", Works).

The primary target audience for *Wedding Peach* is young girls of about middle school age or slightly younger. Note that another collection of *Wedding Peach* stories was done as a series of side story adventures published for third grade readers. That collection has nothing to do with the main story and was reworked to exclude certain content and maintain simpler language for the younger readership. The English market release includes a rating that suggests that readers should be aged thirteen years old or older.

The story of *Wedding Peach* is inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*, a literary work that is widely considered to be the greatest love story ever told. Momoko Hanasaki and her two best friends, Yuri Tanima and Hinagiku Tamano, are normal first-year middle school girls. Their lives change one day when they are contacted by the Goddess of Love & Beauty, Aphrodite, and awakened to their true selves from their former lives as Love Angels. The girls must defend love in the human world from destruction by the Devils, led by Queen Rein Devilla, and retrieve the four powerful talismans, the Sacred Something Four. These talismans are the Sacred Something Old, Sacred Something Blue, Sacred Something Borrowed, and Sacred Something New; they embody the purest and strongest love from the Angel World. If the Devils find the talismans first and destroy them, they will establish a reign of hatred over the Angel World, Devil World, and Human World.

Natural Elements and Forces

We can find female associations with the elemental forces of Nature throughout many human cultures and across historical periods of time. There are two important factors to consider when analyzing Japanese works with such elements. First of all, we should consider the general philosophy and religion shared by the majority of Japanese people. Secondly, we should remember that Japan has a long history of borrowing concepts from other cultures and adapting them to her own use. We will focus on the first element, but we can easily see the influence of the second element in various aspects of the works we are analyzing. For example, we've already observed that *Wedding Peach* is inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*. We can also observe that certain aspects of *Kazan* are quite similar to Frank Herbert's epic *Dune* saga, and that both *Wedding Peach* and *Chobits* borrow various elements from Greek mythology.

*Shinto*¹³ was made Japan's national religion during the Meiji Period or about 1867/68 ("Shinto"). As Japan's indigenous animistic religion, the beginnings of *Shinto* stretch back into very ancient times. According to the International Shinto Research Foundation, artifacts believed to have magical properties and dating back to the Jomon Period, or about 200 B.C., have been recovered from some sites ("What is Shinto?"). The primary deity of *Shinto* is *Amaterasu Ohmikami*,¹⁴ the Goddess of the Sun. Prior to World War II, the Emperor was said to be directly descended from *Amaterasu Ohmikami*.

It is important to point out various elements that make *Shinto* fairly unique among human religious philosophies. *Shinto* is not monotheistic. It was not founded by any single individual, at least according to any records that have been discovered. It does not have a prescribed set of readings or written doctrines. It is concerned with the present

life of people rather than any afterlife. In *Shinto* belief, death is considered an impurity and funeral rituals are left to Buddhist practices. *Shinto* is quite accepting of human nature as well as other philosophies; for example, a follower of *Shinto* can also follow various Buddhist doctrines. It adopts the philosophy that everyone is essentially good in nature and that any wrongdoing is the work of evil or mischievous spirits. These latter points explain why most *Shinto* rituals and practices deal with the avoidance or purging of negative spirits.

Notice that the primary deity of *Shinto* is female, not male, and that the core of *Shinto* belief is that everything in existence contains various different forms of natural spirits and energies. However, if we wonder why Japanese mythology seems to have strong patriarchal traits, we need to recall that Japan, like many other cultures, underwent patriarchal revisions to many belief systems during her long history. In addition, we always need to keep in mind that *Shinto* is not a monotheistic spiritual belief system, making it quite different from other major religions such as Christianity or Islam.

In modern *Shinto* shrines, *miko*¹⁵ are still quite recognizable and perform many of the day to day administrative tasks associated with running the shrine. Modern *miko* are often the daughters of the shrine priest, but it's quite common for local schoolgirls to dress up as *miko* and work as part-time helpers at shrines during busy periods such as annual or local *matsuri*.¹⁶

Although modern *miko* are usually average girls who primarily work to support the priest and the daily requirements of the shrine, this was not the case in ancient times. Historically, *miko* were part of the aristocracy and were the individuals through which the spirits spoke to humans. In more modern times, certain sects of *Shinto* have been

founded by women who were regarded as 'living *kami*'¹⁷ (Earhart; "Teachings"). If we accept the belief that all life forms are interconnected and we recall that it is females who conceive and give birth to life, it's only natural to consider the belief that women have an innate connection with natural life forces and that, under certain conditions, they may be able to communicate with or utilize those forces.

Professional researcher Barbara G. Walker reminds us that such symbolism is especially true for strongly feminine elements such as water (1066). In *Kazan*, when we see girls such as Fawna or Fawna's mother, Lady Regina, using the natural element of water as an inherent aspect of their own life force, we should not be terribly surprised. On the contrary, *Shinto* beliefs should lead us to expect a manifestation of such powers as an inherent aspect of being female.

Elsewhere in *Kazan*, we see similar abilities in Arbey, who has control over fire through her knowledge of alchemical processes, and Keyla, who has the ability to read the minds of other people. We see Lady Helsa manifest her telekinetic powers in both a negative and positive fashion; she has the ability to control the forces that hold things together, or what physical scientists call gravitational force and mass. We witness Fawna and her mother, Lady Regina, using their power over water in both constructive and destructive ways. Lady Helsa uses her power in negative ways due to her loneliness and jealousy, but the negative use of her power leads her to lose the very thing that she values the most.

We see the same concept repeated in *Wedding Peach*. Yuri/Angel Lily can control the forces of the electromagnetic spectrum. Hinagiku/Angel Daisy controls both water and air. Momoko/Wedding Peach's powers are specifically related to the spirit or

soul of any living creature. Various Devils have control of different elements, but it's worth noting that there seem to be more female Devils than male and that the Devils are being led by Queen Rein Devilla. Although the *manga* does not offer us much background on Rein Devilla, the *anime* version of the story clearly shows that her current form and actions are the result of having her heart broken. Like Lady Helsa in *Kazan*, Rein Devilla seeks to share her pain with all other creatures, thus causing her to lose the very thing she most values. Finally, one of the primary Devils the Love Angels must face is Potamos, a Devil who, like Hinagiku/Angel Daisy, has control over water.

In *Chobits*, we experience an extreme example of the inherent interconnection between all forms of life, including life forms that are artificially created by humans, and the intimate connection that females have within this network of living entities. Chi's special nature allows her to interconnect with every persocom ever made. Humans created persocoms for many purposes including sexual gratification and performing various physical and mental tasks. Chi and her twin sister, Freya, were created by a man in order to provide his wife with offspring that she could not naturally conceive. The one thing Chi cannot do is to sexually connect with anyone; if she does, she'll cease to exist as Chi. Her connectivity is purely spiritual in nature rather than having any type of physical, sexual component. Her connectivity with other persocoms is a nonphysical connection, just as her ability to connect with humans is, and must be, strictly an emotional connection. A physical connection is irrelevant because an inherent, natural, nonphysical connection already exists.

Many Western audiences will recognize the elements of the famous myth, *Pygmalion & Galatea*, in *Chobits*. However, few people in the modern world realize just

how many stories have been inspired by this ancient tale or some of the important elements of its origins. Let's simply consider the importance of such a tale from the perspective of Japanese philosophy and, specifically, *Shinto* beliefs.

Many Western audiences might consider the story of *Chobits* to be simple fantasy. Even worse are the people who consider it to be blatant male wish fulfillment, despite the fact that, like many *bishoujo* works, it had female input during its creative process. However, a Japanese viewpoint is generally quite different. If we recall that *Shinto* stresses a belief in natural spirits within all things, it becomes very logical to see why the concept of a machine having a soul of its own is perfectly sensible.

Some people might think that the technology is unthinkably complex, but such a viewpoint ignores the modern pace of technological innovation. As recent demonstrations illustrate, the technology is a lot closer than many people might care to admit. Japanese robots are currently being used as night watchmen, receptionists, pets, hospital workers, guides, and more. The onslaught has caused the government to draw up safety guidelines governing the use and keeping of consumer robots. Officials recently estimated that every household in Japan would own at least one robot by the year 2015. Mr. Kazuya Abe, a top official at NEDO, Japan's national institute responsible for coordinating scientific research and development efforts, states:

"People are and will be living alongside robots, which are seen here as more than just machines. This is all about AI¹⁸ ... about something that is not human, but can be a complement or companion to humans in society" (Faiola).

Norihiro Hagita, director of the ATR Robotics and Communication Laboratories in Kaihanna Science City near Kyoto, has this to add:

"In Western countries, humanoid robots are still not very accepted, but they are in Japan. One reason is religion. In Japanese (Shinto) religion, we believe that all things have gods within them. But in Western countries, most people believe in only one God. For us, however, a robot can have an energy all its own" (Faiola).

It's worth noting that although Western countries might be matching Japan in technological development, the intended uses for the technology tend to differ. Japanese government organizations, businesses, and academic institutions are spending billions of dollars on civilian, consumer uses that are intended to impact the daily lives of the average person. In contrast, Western countries such as America tend to focus application development efforts on military uses for governments or private individuals. Western culture tends to view such technology as simply a tool to be used to control Nature, but Japanese culture tends to view the technology as creating a new but equivalent aspect of Nature that will stand alongside humans and share in our mutual existence with its creator. In fact, one common theme in modern Japanese storytelling is the fear that the technology will be abused, especially by people who are lured to a Western viewpoint about the potential uses of the technology, and that Nature will correct any consequent imbalance, regardless of the toll on human existence.

When powers or abilities are used in anger or hatred, only negative results can be obtained. In *Shinto* philosophy, the concept of "the end justifies the means" is impossible to represent; the forces of life and Nature will always reflect whatever was infused into

them. This concept demonstrates Eastern views about *yin-yang* and other ideas regarding the universal balance and continuous cycle that governs all of our existence. Perhaps more importantly, the Taoist concept of the feminine *yin* life force is that it is inherently stronger than the masculine *yang* life force and that males must learn to take female fluids into themselves while refraining from wasting their own fluids in order to gain greater wisdom and health (Walker 1097).

Goddess Incarnate

Humans have honored and worshipped many different versions of the Great Mother Goddess throughout our history and across all our civilizations. Whether She was known as Mother Earth, Terra Firma, Gaea, Kali, Lilith, or some other name, it was She who created all of existence and to whom all things eventually return in death, only to be reborn once again as new forms of life are created. We will discuss some of the important incarnations and associated symbolisms of the Great Goddess in the works we are analyzing.

The Great Goddess embodies the three stages of life: the Virgin, the Mother, and the Crone. This Sacred Trinity represents the innocence of youth prior to sexual intercourse, the spawning of life as a birth-giving and nurturing mother, and the wisdom of age and experience during post-menopausal years. The Triad was known as the Norns by the Norse, the Fates in Roman times, and many other forms across various cultures and historical periods. She is the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of Life, or the Child, the Bride, and the Widow. Her sphere of control encompasses all forms of existence: the Virgin rules the Heavens, the Mother rules the Earth, and the Crone rules the Underworld. According to Walker, "Mythic virgin mothers, like that of Zoroaster, typically gave birth at the age of 15. Double that was the Mother's age, double again was the age of the Crone" (1019).

Now we can see why it's so important to consider why Chi's elder twin sister is Freya and the consequence of Chi accepting Freya into her own heart in order to preserve Freya's existence. Freya is generally simply stated as being the Goddess of Norse mythology, but she's really so much more than that. As Walker explains, Freya is

actually the Northern European incarnation of the Great Mother Goddess (324). Freya has many different incarnations: Goddess of Birth, Death, Magic, Fertility, Leader of Valkyries, Virgin, Mother, Fate, Sage, and many other forms. When Freya enters Chi, Chi takes on these multifold aspects of the Great Goddess. We should also notice that Chi's original form is simply the Virgin incarnation of the Great Goddess, so accepting Freya into herself means that Chi has undergone a personal growth and development. In essence, Chi has achieved self-actualization and become another incarnation of the Great Mother Goddess herself.

This aspect of our analysis also leads us to consider the importance of the Great Goddess in *Wedding Peach*. Aphrodite is, of course, simply a Greek incarnation of the Goddess, just as Freya is a Northern European incarnation. Aphrodite was also known as Venus in Roman times, and the city of Venice was called "Queen of the Sea" in honor of the Goddess. Many modern cultures, including America's, use the Gregorian calendar that still retains the month dedicated to Aphrodite, April, also known as the month of Venus.

Likewise, *Sakura/Ceres*¹⁹ is not only Momoko's mother but is also the incarnation of the Mother form of the Great Goddess Sacred Trinity. In Greek mythology, she was known as Demeter, Mother Earth and the Goddess of Fertility. Since she is the Earth Mother, it comes as no surprise that the story of *Wedding Peach* shows that she is part of Aphrodite's bloodline, nor is it surprising that she has fallen to Earth from the Angel World, mated with a human male, and borne a daughter whose destiny will be to unite all of existence through the power of love.

It's worthwhile to take a moment to consider the importance of the names and colors that are associated with various characters. We must be alert for such elements when experiencing these types of stories in order to fully understand the message being communicated and avoid any misunderstandings. This is particularly critical for Japanese works because Japanese communication uses many indirect, nonverbal forms of conveying the true meaning and intent of the communicator. This type of deferential communication style is perhaps more pronounced in the prescribed Japanese feminine speech and behavior patterns than in those of the male counterparts, so effeminate characters will reflect these traits regardless of whether they are physically male or female.

We've previously noted that *sakura* means 'cherry blossom' and is Japan's national flower (see *Fushigi no Kuni no Miyuki-chan*⁹). *Momoko* literally means 'little peach,' *yuri* means 'lily,' and *hinagiku* means 'daisy.'

The peach is a fruit that symbolizes femininity in general and female sexuality and genitalia, in particular. Its tree is said to be the tree of eternal life in Japanese folklore, and peach blossoms are Japanese symbols of feminine softness, matrimony, and springtime (Lehner 123). As we might expect, Momoko was born on March 3rd, the Japanese holiday of *Joumi no Sekku* or *Hina Matsuri*.²⁰ Her color is pink, the color of health, life, love, and female sexuality. In fact, a Japanese word for pink is *momoiro*.²¹

The lily is the flower of the Great Mother Goddess Lilith and symbolizes female sexuality and genitalia. In Japanese, the word *yuri* also symbolizes sisterhood between females, especially 'girl love' or lesbianism, and is used as a general term to refer to the 'world of women' which is forbidden to men. In English, the word *lily* can be used as an

adjective to describe something of graceful beauty and seeming fragility; Yuri/Angel Lily reflects these attributes in her physical looks, behavior, and speech patterns. However, lilies are far stronger than their appearance might suggest; we see this reflected in Yuri's character, as well. White lilies are symbolic of purity, virginity, and motherhood; they are the flowers dedicated to the Mother form of the Great Goddess Triad (Lehner 119). Yuri was born on July 7th, the Japanese holiday of *Tanabata*.²² Her color is blue, the same color that is symbolically associated with the Virgin Mary.

The daisy is a hardy little flower but is symbolic of purity and innocence of heart, as well as being the flower dedicated to the Great Mother Goddess Aphrodite/Venus (Lehner 114). We see that Hinagiku's character is very tomboyish, but that she has a very soft and sensitive heart for all her bravado, physical toughness, and generally mannish speech and behavior. It comes as no surprise to learn that she was born on May 5th, the holiday known as *Tango no Sekku* or *Kodomo no Hi*²³ in Japan. Her color is green, the color associated with Nature and the presence of life on Earth.

There are numerous other symbolic meanings in the names and phrases used in *Wedding Peach*. This is a standard element for heroine-focused works and is used in order to present information to the audience without explicitly stating the background details. For example, *Rein Devilla* means 'Queen Devil' in French, and *Potamos* is Greek for 'river,' 'stream,' or 'torrent.' The command phrases of the Love Angels are often partially in French, widely considered to be the language of love and romance.

There are many other incarnations of the Goddess, too. One common example is the control over weather. Momoko's heart is shattered when she realizes Yousuke's heritage as half-Devil, half-human. She must face the fact that the boy she loves is her

arch enemy, and her emotional, spiritual distress is reflected in the torrential rain that pours down from the heavens. Her heart is broken, her spirit is weeping, and the natural forces attuned to her life force automatically respond. We see this same aspect presented by Rein Devilla's jealousy, pain, and hatred in *Wedding Peach*, and likewise by Lady Helsa's in *Kazan*. Although the *manga* does not show Rein Devilla's background in *Wedding Peach*, the *anime* version of the story shows us that Rein Devilla's true form is that of a young girl whose bloody tears of heartbroken pain and jealousy sprouted thorny roots that grew throughout her body and soul, warping her into a mature woman bent on sharing her unbearable pain with all other creatures. In *Kazan*, we see Fawna using her power at one point by lashing out in hatred and anger, fully embodying the destructive vengeance of the Great Mother Goddess. We also see that Arbey embodies the Crone of the Great Goddess Triad, being far wiser and more experienced than the adolescent youths and young adults.

Yuri/Angel Lily's first power in *Wedding Peach* uses the electromagnetic spectrum to form her 'Sacred Lipliner Lily Rainbow.' In many cultures, the rainbow is viewed as the bridge between the Earthly realm and the Heavens. According to Walker, the Japanese said that the rainbow was, "the road of the gods and the bridge between sky and earth" (840). Likewise, Freya's magical necklace was equated with the great rainbow bridge of the heavens called 'Bifrost' in Norse mythology.

Chi's abilities as Freya in *Chobits* give her the power to directly or indirectly destroy all other forms of life due to her control of both persocoms and the various technological devices that humans rely on in modern life. All she is looking for is happiness, and that happiness is simply to find the one special person who will love her

for who she is. Chi can do many things, but, like any form of life, there are things she cannot do. Chi/Freya is torn by conflicting love for her mother and father, and she's searching for the one person who can resolve that conflict within herself. If she cannot find this person, the Goddess' pain and internal conflict will be reflected in all of our existence.

Summary

We have analyzed a mere handful of common feminine elements within just three examples of Japanese pop culture storytelling, but we can easily see very strong feminine imagery, symbolism, and messages that are conveyed regardless of the intended target audience. In addition, we can see that such elements are not restricted to Japanese culture but rather are shared motifs throughout a variety of human cultures and across all of human history.

We might be tempted to pose the question, "Does any of this really have any significance in practical terms?" Although a thorough analysis of such a question is beyond the intent of our analysis, we can get an inkling of the importance of such stories by considering the size and nature of the original market. It might also be a good idea to keep in mind that the foreign markets for Japanese pop culture entertainment, especially in the English-speaking world, are one of the fastest growing entertainment markets.

According to the Publishing Science Research Institute in Tokyo, the total volume of *manga* publication sales in 1992 was over \$5 billion and accounted for 23% of all magazine and book sales in Japan. However, considering the relatively inexpensive cost of *manga*, it's more helpful to look at actual unit circulation; that is, number of units shipped rather than the percentage of total publication sales. This analysis leads us to the conclusion that *manga* publications accounted for a whopping 38% of all publication circulation in 1989. As a comparison, the top *manga* publication in Japan is *Shonen Jump* with a weekly circulation of over five-six million units, while America, with roughly twice the population of Japan, has publications such as *Time* (4.3 million units) and *People* (3.4 million units). All of the top ten best-selling *manga* publications in

Japan have circulations of over one million units (qtd. in Mangajin's Basic Japanese through Comics 10).

Of course, this does not take into account other related media in pop culture entertainment such as electronic games, *anime*, novels, or even live action film productions such as TV drama series or movies. However, what is critical to keep in mind is that the inspiration for storytelling is always based on life experiences, as well as folktales and myths that are familiar to the intended audience. Our brief consideration of the practical importance of our analysis has demonstrated that it is quite important if we are to consider the nature of mainstream Japanese storytelling and the motifs used within such works. This is not simply an intellectual exercise, either, for such stories reflect the philosophies and mindsets of the people who create them, as well as the people who experience them. We must recall that the foreign markets for such products, especially the English-speaking markets, are expanding at a very rapid pace.

Not surprisingly, other scholars have come to similar conclusions. Dr. Hayao Kawai argues quite convincingly that a feminine consciousness best reflects the motifs within Japanese fairy tales and storytelling, but that this feminine consciousness is independent of physical gender. He points out that Japanese feminine consciousness is represented by the "woman of will" striving to unite herself with the masculine consciousness that is represented by the "man of nothingness" (Kawai 186). Whereas Western stories stress the search for perfection by eliminating or destroying any sort of imperfection, Japanese stories stress the completeness or wholeness accomplished by accepting everything in life including any imperfections that may exist.

If we recall the many forms of the Great Mother Goddess and how She is so often represented by various standard motifs in Japanese storytelling, we can easily agree that achieving wholeness would seem to follow logically from an accepting nature. A Japanese story may have a strong, masculine hero, but we find that the hero remains incomplete until he seeks nothingness and becomes united with the Goddess. Heroes who refuse to follow such a path often perish or suffer severe setbacks and are thus unable to achieve completeness and self-actualization. Meanwhile, heroines normally seem to have an inherent tie to the Goddess, but must become aware of it through various experiences they will endure. Eventually, they must exert their own will.

In essence, the reason why you will often see female characters portrayed as inhibiting, restraining, or defeating some form of opposition without the aid of any type of technological or mechanical assistance is because girls simply don't need such things. The greatest strength and highest power ever known is the power of life and love, and this is inherent in every female. She doesn't have to think about it or attempt to use it any more than anyone has to think about a natural act such as breathing. A man might make a machine to help him fly into the sky or plunge beneath the ocean waves, but a girl simply flies or swims wherever her spirit takes her. Her internal will is her power, but the hero seeks power through external means. While the successful hero must strive to become united with the feminine will by being accepted by the Goddess, the heroine must learn to accept her inherent power and choose to use it responsibly for all of existence. Neither path is easy. Each story is quite different with respect to the demands placed upon the participant. However, both stories are essential in order to achieve genuine completeness in our existence.

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Chapter 2: Digital Media

Foreword

In Part 1 of our analysis of feminine motifs in Japanese pop culture products, we focused on basic cultural background information and printed media, particularly Japanese comics, or *manga*. We chose three specific examples for our analysis by selecting one example from each of three major genres of Japanese entertainment: *shounen*, *bishoujo*, and *shoujo*. We discovered that strong feminine elements exist within such stories regardless of their intended consumer audience and targeted business market. We learned that there are solid cultural reasons for such motifs, and that similar elements are shared between cultures throughout human history.

In Part 2 of our analysis, we must turn our attention to digital media entertainment products. Specifically, we must consider feminine motifs that appear within Japanese electronic games and animation. However, we will approach this analysis in a slightly different fashion than the approach we took for printed media. Rather than considering a few specific products, we will focus our effort on a few specific motifs that are frequently found in Japanese digital media entertainment. This approach will allow us to discuss a broader spectrum of products. This broad coverage will enable us to observe that Japanese pop culture has a strong foundation in powerful feminine imagery and symbolism regardless of the media used to tell the stories. We will restrict ourselves to an analysis of three basic motifs: *yin/yang*, motherhood and family, and *tatemaehonno*²⁴. We must always remember that these elements are by no means an all-inclusive list, and

we must view them as a few strands of a complex, interrelated, interconnected whole rather than unique, independent, distinct themes.

The fundamental premises and caveats that we stated in the Foreword of Part 1 of our research will also hold true for our analysis of digital media formats. We can extend our previous statements to include a basic observation that many motifs within storytelling and other forms of creative art are independent of the specific media being used to present the various works. Humanity has used a wide variety of formats for creative expression throughout our history. However, the basic concepts remain the same even when the format being used allows for different methods of presentation. For example, oral storytellers may rely on aural cues, but painters may rely on visual cues, even when the motifs being presented by both artists are from the same source material and represent the same fundamental concepts. Contemporary Japanese artists have observed that modern Japanese popular entertainment has developed from the traditional Japanese *kamishibai* storytelling art form ([La Blue Girl](#)²⁵, commentary by Toshio Maeda and Rusher Ikeda). Modern media may use a variety of technical presentation methods, but the motifs being used to tell the stories are based on themes that are hundreds or thousands of years old.

Another critical element we must observe is that business endeavors for Japanese pop culture entertainment excel at multimedia marketing efforts. Our research is restricted to basic cultural background information and three modern forms of Japanese popular entertainment: *manga*, electronic games, and *anime*. However, we must keep in mind that the original Japanese market for such products, like the motifs themselves, is an

interconnected, interrelated, complex web of stories rather than each work being a distinct, separate entity or product.

This important point is frequently lost when a particular story is offered to the English market. Such a loss is especially common for digital entertainment products because of the complexity of the production process for such works. Digital media production tends to require a concerted team effort and greater financial resources than printed media production. In contrast, a single person can create a *manga*. Our prior discussion of Japan's enormous *doujinshi* market for *manga* and our observation that many professionally published *mangaka* begin their careers as *doujinshi* artists clearly confirms this point. Various other forms of multimedia marketing include, but are not limited to, CD and radio dramas, trading card games, and novel adaptations. All of the various products offer additional story, character, and plot developments. The creative process for various products tends to assume that the audience has access to all the different products because that is the case in the original Japanese consumer market. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the English-speaking world. The loss of various portions of the storyline and character development when selected media products for any specific title are offered outside of their native Japanese market frequently leads to misinterpretations and misunderstandings by non-Japanese audiences. We are restricting our research efforts to products that have been licensed for and released to the North American market. However, there are many significant titles that cover a far broader spectrum of topics produced in the original Japanese market but remain virtually unknown in the English-speaking world. It's important for us to keep in mind that

English consumers may not have access to many important parts of any specific story and that many excellent works remain unknown in the English-speaking world.

Japanese entertainment products are creative artistic works that cover any type of content we might imagine, but they are still business products. *Anime* is the most expensive media format to produce. Like Hollywood studios that license popular novels or American comics for live action movies, *anime* sponsor companies want to license the rights for an *anime* adaptation of stories that are already popular in less expensive media formats. Traditionally, *anime* sponsors have looked for popular *manga* titles to license because *manga* has been the most widespread, cheapest format, and companies can find an already established audience for the *manga* version of any specific story. However, modern advances in electronic gaming since the early 1990s have caused sponsor companies to mine this format for properties, too. One reason for this development is that the cost of producing video games is less than the cost of *anime* production, thus constituting a middle ground in media formats and business investment. However, there is a critical statistic related to the Japanese consumer marketplace for electronic games that is of even greater importance.

Unlike the English market for video games, one of the largest genres of electronic gaming in Japan is the visual novel game. According to Hirameki International Group, approximately seventy percent of all the video games produced for the Japanese market each year are visual novel games ("About Us"). Unlike *manga*, visual novel games feature full color visuals, high quality audio soundtracks, and partial or full vocal support for the characters. Unlike *anime*, they usually do not have full animation, but present their stories in a modern, digital version of the traditional *kamishibai* method. Unlike

either *manga* or *anime*, most visual novels allow the player to interact with the characters and storyline at various points and impact the many events, storyline branches, plot developments, and eventual outcomes. It's not uncommon for a visual novel to have ten or more endings, and it's necessary to solve all the different paths and events in order to understand everything that is taking place. Visual novels games fill a perfect niche for the Japanese marketplace because they are far less expensive to produce than *anime*, offer consumers a higher perceived value than *manga*, are modern digital versions of traditional Japanese *kamishibai* storytelling methods, and are an excellent source of story licensing for *anime* adaptations of successful, popular properties.

The last item is of particular importance for *anime* sponsors. One of the primary sales points for an *anime* adaptation of a popular *manga* title is that fans of the *manga* want to see their favorite characters, locations, events, and scenes from the *manga* in full color, with full audio support for voices, sound effects, and music, and moving animation. The same sales point applies to most visual novel games. The original game may have full color and audio support, but it doesn't have the animation or sophisticated audio support of an *anime* adaptation. This is the business justification for investing in an *anime* adaptation of any game title. The creative process for this type of *anime* adaptation relies on the fact that the majority of the intended audience is already familiar with the various elements of the game. If an *anime* title is adapted from a visual novel game and eventually released to a market that does not have access to the game, we can see why the *anime* might be misunderstood and misrepresented by that market.

In Part 1 of our analysis, we observed that the modern Japanese *doujinshi* market has expanded to include digital computer graphics and electronic games. This expansion

into modern media formats is particularly prevalent for the visual novel genre of gaming. Like *manga*, this storytelling format allows aspiring artists to showcase their creativity in visual and written styles, and allows companies to search for their next group of talented employees.

Yin/Yang

The interconnected relationship between feminine *yin* and masculine *yang* forces is a critical element in many Asian cultures and philosophies, including Asian folklore, legends, myths, and other forms of art and storytelling. Japan is no different from other Asian cultures in this regard. It's likely that this concept was imported from China along with many other influences. For example, Japan did not originally have her own written language, but borrowed written symbols from Chinese writing and adapted them to her own unique, spoken tongue.

Many people in Western cultures automatically associate the concepts of female *yin* and masculine *yang* with distinct, separate, polar, opposing elements within all of existence. This dichotomous view of *yin* and *yang* is often used by Western cultures to associate opposing concepts such as creation/destruction, life/death, good/evil, and many other natural elements of our existence. However, this Westernized, dichotomous approach forgets to include the most critical element of the original *yin-yang* concept. Specifically, the original, Asian philosophy of *yin-yang* symbolism is that there is no distinct, separate, dichotomous existence between any two elements. The original symbolism depicts each opposing force as having some degree of content from its polar opposite, and all opposing elements are simply one part of a complete, larger whole. It is critical that we keep this in mind when we examine such symbolism, especially for any analysis of feminine motifs.

Dr. Joseph Campbell, one of the foremost scholars of the twentieth century, was interviewed by journalist Bill Moyers during the late 1980s. According to Campbell, the commonly voiced idea of human lives having a distinct and separate identity from

anything and everything else in existence is in direct conflict with the fundamental psychological principles of matriarchal belief systems (Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth with Bill Moyers, "Love and the Goddess"). He points out that there's a critical difference between matriarchal cultures, where the Great Mother Goddess is held in supreme honor, and patriarchal cultures, where a male God is considered dominant. A basic tenet within matriarchal cultures is that everything in existence is a part of the female, including the various male gods, all of their special powers, and everything else that exists in any form whatsoever. In such a culture, it is inherently understood that everything is connected to everything else through the commonality of being one with the female. In contrast, patriarchal belief systems depict various male Gods as beings who create some form of existence outside of themselves and as a distinct, separate entity. The matriarchal approach is reflected in the original, Asian *yin-yang* concept and forms a critical basis for feminine motifs in Japanese stories.

This distinction between the matriarchal and patriarchal views is important because it impacts how we choose to live our lives. There are important psychological consequences when you feel that you are part of a shared, mutual whole versus feeling that you are a solitary, lone individual. One of the most important consequences of this fundamental belief is that we are forced to recognize the inevitable conclusion that even forces that appear to be in diametric opposition to each other must share a common, mutual existence through being an inherent part of the Goddess. We see this conclusion presented in various ways throughout Japanese storytelling, and we will revisit it during our analysis of the elements we are discussing. For now, let's consider a few common methods of presenting this central *yin-yang* motif.

One method that is frequently used to present extremes of *yin-yang* forces as being an inherent part of femininity is to have lead characters either born as twins or who appear to be twins (Blue Seed²⁶; Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly²⁷; Mamono Hunter Yohko²⁸; Silent Möbius²⁹). Such characters are often presented as being physically female but polar opposites in physical looks, behavior, skills, and personalities. This approach allows the full spectrum of feminine reality to be depicted because the heroines embody the extremes of girlish femininity and tomboyish masculinity, and the full spectrum of everything in between. The spectrum we envision should not be considered linear, but should be understood to be an endless, circular whole.

Another common approach to a twins' storyline presentation is to have the lead characters be born as female and male, sister and brother (Ayashi no Ceres³⁰). In contrast to the implied spectrum of the first method, this approach allows an explicit depiction of feminine versus masculine forces and philosophies. The incest taboo is often expressed in such stories. We can trace this type of presentation and the associated elements back in time to the earliest creation myths in Japanese folktales. Fredrick Hadland Davis offers one version of the Japanese creation myth in his book, *Myths and Legends of Japan*. According to Davis, the twin brother and sister gods, Izanagi and Izanami, created everything in existence through their incestuous coupling, including all of reality and the numerous spiritual deities in Japanese mythology (22-25).

A third, perhaps even more explicit, presentation of the fundamental *yin-yang* motif occurs when a lead heroine is shown to possess dual extremes within herself, as well as the full, endless cycle of everything between these extremes (Asagiri no Miko³¹; Ayashi no Ceres; Fatal Frame; Kiddy Grade; La Blue Girl; Shamanic Princess; Silent

Möbius; Vampire Princess Miyu³²; Xenosaga³³). The result of this type of presentation is often far more dramatic and realistic than other methods. We view other people as physical individuals in our daily lives, and we assign idealized traits to people we meet. Stereotypically feminine traits in Western societies include nurturing, motherly, supportive, protective, and other concepts that are perceived as positive. This is unrealistic. It could even be considered to be limiting and disrespectful to females as individuals, as well as disrespectful to males and various intersexed people. Japanese stories, especially works that use this type of individual *yin-yang* presentation method, tend to offer far more realistic characters and events for audiences to consider.

One additional concept that is related to this third presentation method and that we see as a common element in Japanese stories is when characters are portrayed as being intersexed in some fashion. Such a presentation can vary from effeminate male characters and tomboyish female characters to characters that are biologically intersexual (Fushigi Yuugi; I My Me! Strawberry Eggs; Koiyoubi³⁴; La Blue Girl). The latter aspect is quite common in products that are targeted for an adult audience. However, it must be stressed that adults-only works in Japan cover the entire spectrum of content, range from brief fantasy diversions to extremely complex, lengthy dramatic stories, and, perhaps most importantly, include titles targeted for either female or male audiences. This sets them apart and on a much higher level than the current English market for such products. This additional concept of the *yin-yang* motif is important to keep in mind, but we will not cover it in any further detail in our current analysis.

We must observe that the approaches we have mentioned are merely a handful of common examples out of a myriad number of possible artistic presentation methods, and

that many Japanese artists use a combination of methodology when they are creating their works. Artists do not need to restrict themselves to distinct methods in their creative efforts. Quite often, it's much more effective to blur the lines between themes and concepts because real life topics are usually not simple and distinct, but rather tend to be complex, multilevel themes.

Yuu Watase, creator of the *shoujo* story *Ayashi no Ceres*, has explained that she used the idea of the conflict between *tennyo*³⁵ and humans as a metaphor for the struggle between women and men (114). She extends this metaphor by having lead characters who are twin sister and brother, as well as depicting the conflict between feminine spiritual, magical, chaotic power and male physical, scientific, logical power. The latter type of conflict has been observed by Dr. Camille Paglia, feminist critic and professor of humanities and media studies at the University of Arts in Philadelphia, in other artistic works of popular entertainment (Basic Instinct, commentary by Camille Paglia). In addition to these themes, Watase presents us with lead heroines, Aya and Ceres, who share their souls within a single physical body, thus combining the approach of twin female-male siblings with the concept of opposing extremes within a single heroine.

In one of her portfolios, Kazuko Tadano, the character designer for the *anime* adaptations of popular *shoujo* stories such as *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon* and *Ai Tenshi Densetsu Wedding Peach*, explains how one of her creative efforts uses a spiritual approach for the depiction of twin girl characters (The New Generation of Manga Artists Vol. 6: The Kazuko Tadano Portfolio, 66). Her portfolio features a variety of heroines, but Ellémeme is the ten-year-old girl whose twin representation depicts the spiritual

nature of any of the characters at any specific point in their life development. She explicitly states that Ellémeme is a representation of *yin* and *yang* (78).

Motherhood and Family

Many human societies throughout our history have stressed the importance of family and the role of the mother for women. Modern mainstream American society seems to have forgotten the positive elements of this type of social focus, while many other cultures such as traditional Latin American and Native American societies continue to place great importance on matriarchal philosophies, including the importance of family and motherhood. Traditional Asian cultures, including Japan, have a strong sense of the importance of family, community, school, company, and other forms of group orientation, and stress the harmony and well-being of the group over the achievements of any specific individual. Likewise, the female role of motherhood and heart of the family unit has been traditionally viewed as something that is critically important for successful, civilized societies within Asian cultures. We must consider the nature of these traditional views in light of modern changes in Japanese society and examine how modern Japanese stories reflect the changes taking place within her culture. We can separate our conclusions into two broad, general trends.

The first trend that we observe is that motherhood continues to be a critical role for women, but the specific importance of that role and the various elements that constitute it take on new meaning in today's modern, global, technological society. Modern advances in genetic engineering and technological advancements in robotics have put the creation of new forms of life within the reach of human endeavors. This leads to confusion about the traditional role of motherhood. If life can be created and manipulated at will, what does this mean for the value of the Mother form of the Great

Goddess? Does a mother have any importance in such a world and, if so, what importance does she have?

These complex questions impact all societies around the world. However, the traditional Japanese *Shinto* views about the natural spirits within all of existence, as well as the role of new life forms created by the combinations of various elements and their associated spirits, make Japanese society particularly attuned to the implications within such issues. If we view technical creations, whether genetically or mechanically engineered, as a type of doll, what can we say about the Japanese philosophy regarding such creations? Davis tells us that the Japanese place an extremely high value on their dolls, and treat their dolls as a separate, important form of life with their own spirits and souls (214-216). In Part 1 of our analysis, we observed that the myth of *Pygmalion & Galatea* has inspired a seemingly endless number of creative artistic works throughout history, including modern Japanese stories such as *Chobits* by CLAMP. We noted that March 3rd is known as the 'Festival of Dolls' in Japan. Western culture views dolls as objects or tools, but traditional Japanese culture understands that such creations are actually a unique, new form of life and must be respected as such.

Modern Japanese society has continued to adopt Western methodologies at an ever-increasing pace. One consequence of Japan's continued Westernization is the devaluing of the role of motherhood and the increasing focus on the utilization of tools rather than the valuing of all forms of life. We see Japan's modern sense of unease and conflicting feelings about this issue played out in many works of Japanese popular entertainment, particularly in stories that focus on heroines and feminine motifs (Ayashi no Ceres; Blue Seed; Key The Metal Idol³⁶; Kiddy Grade³⁷; Private Nurse³⁸; Silent

Möbius; Xenosaga; Zenki³⁹). Such stories often ask the same fundamental question for audiences to consider: "What is life?"

Watase points out that she wanted audiences to consider this basic, fundamental question when she created her *shoujo* story, *Ayashi no Ceres*. In Part 1 of our research, we discussed the importance of Ceres as the Mother form of the Great Goddess Trinity, so we understand that it's not a mere coincidence that Watase chose Ceres as the name for her incarnation of the *tennyo*. Her story about Ceres explicitly shows Ceres as being the mother of both her powerful human offspring, the Mikage family line, and the idealized mothers of the future race that the Mikage have created through genetic engineering of Ceres' gene pool. Watase explains that she was not attempting to say that the Mikage approach is inherently wrong from a technical perspective or that men are inherently evil (114). However, she did intend for the audience to consider that love is critical in the creation of new life, and that such a creative process is not merely a matter of mechanical or technical motions. As she points out, women give birth to life, and thus to the future. She wants each and every girl to understand that she is a miraculous being, but that doesn't mean that she looks down upon men as being somehow inferior (118).

Kia Asamiya echoes this idea and expands upon it in his apocalyptic story, *Silent Möbius*. Astute audiences will notice that all of the members of the AMP are young women, but he provides an explicit statement about this significant fact during the telling of the story. AMP chief Rally Cheyenne explains that she specifically created the AMP as an all-female team because women have the unique ability to conceive and bear new life into the world despite the enormous devastation and destruction that accompanies war. Both Rally and Katsumi are half-breeds. Both of these women carry the blood of

humanity, as well as the blood of the demonic Lucifer Hawk that is feeding on humans as their food supply. Rally is well aware of her own heritage, but she's kept it a secret from everyone in order to work for the future of the human race. Katsumi remains ignorant of her own mixed blood. As a half-breed herself, Rally knows the conflicting emotions that will tear Katsumi apart when the truth about Katsumi's heritage, as well as her own, eventually becomes known. Katsumi needs to develop an understanding of the fact that her parents created her out of an act of love and bequeathed the future to her by giving birth to her. As a woman, Katsumi bears this same ability, responsibility, and burden. We should notice that Katsumi's ultimate acceptance of her role in life as a woman in no way diminishes her role as the primary offensive combatant of the AMP. If anything, she is even more determined, resolved, and powerful than ever before. She has realized that the future is hers to bequeath to her children and the children of other women, including her friends and sister combatants in the AMP.

Other artists and scholars have pointed out the same touchy but inescapable fact about the incredible power and importance of female sexuality. Watase points out that girls need to be far more aware of their power as women, the consequences and responsibilities of their feminine sexuality, and the fact that men are not merely simple, mechanical creatures driven by hormones and lust (118). Her views are echoed by Paglia, who states that women have an enormous power in their sexuality, but that many modern women have turned their back on the wonder, beauty, and responsibility inherent in their sexual power ("Crisis in the American Universities"). Paglia clearly states that girls and women must accept the power of their feminine sexuality, a power that belongs solely to females, and that they must learn to use their power with wisdom, understanding,

intelligence, and compassion. Men cannot bear this responsibility for women because it is simply not a male power.

We should notice that Asamiya's characters, like heroines in other stories we have listed, address the issue of the importance of motherhood and love during the creative process. The creation of life is not merely a mechanical or technical process, but rather an effort that requires love. This holds true even for characters such as Kiddy, a woman who has had over ninety percent of her biological body replaced by cyber technology. Asamiya uses his story to explain that women not only create new life, but also create time by giving birth to the future through the new life that they bear. Without new life, the future does not exist.

We have to stress Watase's view that the point being made by various artists and scholars is not about the mechanical, technical act of sex or reproduction. Their point is about the entire emotional and physical power and responsibility that women bear due to their role as the mothers of the future. Some people might prefer to ignore or downplay this aspect of femininity, but such an effort is simply an attempt to deny an important aspect of our existence and one of the most potent elements of the entire human race. It's quite possible to argue that any effort to ignore or downplay feminine sexuality is actually an attempt to undermine one of the greatest powers of girls and women, thus denying their importance within our society.

The motherhood motif is the core element of the story in *Kiddy Grade*. Éclair, Lumière, and the various other ES agents of the GOTT were created by the ruling Nobles to be tools of the galactic government. Éclair and Lumière live outside of time, constantly being reincarnated in new bodies in order to carry out new missions for the

powers that created them. Ultimately, they must accept the creative-destructive duality of their unique abilities, and forge a new future where all life is valued equally. They are aided in this task by one man's love for Éclair, his surrogate mother, and his lifelong goal to avenge Éclair's pain when the Nobles separated him from her due to his aristocratic birth. In contrast, Alv was created as a child of vengeance by Dvergr, and the climactic confrontation shows us the difference between motherhood that creates life through love and compassion versus motherhood that creates life through anger and vengeance.

The second general trend that we see from the impact of Western influences on Japanese society is a growing tendency among younger Japanese to focus on individual needs over the harmony of the family or other groups. This is occurring at a time when Japan is facing a rapidly decreasing birthrate and the fastest growing population of aged citizens in the world. These issues are further complicated by Japan's increasingly important role in international relations as the world's second largest economy.

The result of this trend is an upheaval of traditional cultural values coupled with an influx of foreign ideas and products. Seth Friedman, a former exchange student at Kansai University in Japan and currently a teacher of English in Ikeda, has lived in Japan since 1994. He offers us some insightful views about the stereotypical Western perceptions versus the actual reality of women's roles in Japanese society, including the fact that modern Japanese society has no choice but to seek out women for professional careers ("Women in Japanese Society: Their Changing Roles"). As Friedman points out, Japanese society had a largely matrilineal focus prior to the rise of Confucianism, Buddhism, and the Samurai class system. We see the critical passage of power along matrilineal lines in many modern works of Japanese entertainment (Asagiri no Miko;

Ayashi no Ceres; Blue Seed; La Blue Girl; Mamono Hunter Yohko; Vampire Princess Miyu; Zenki). Friedman's observations about various upheavals being caused by modern changes in Japan have been upheld in more recent reports (Takahashi; Noguchi).

The impact of these events on the traditional Japanese family can be seen in many modern stories (Ai Yori Aoshi⁴⁰; Asagiri no Miko; Blue Seed; Fatal Frame; I My Me! Strawberry Eggs; Mamono Hunter Yohko; Private Nurse; Zenki). Stories set in a contemporary setting often show kids in single parent families, being raised by distant relatives or adopted parents, or even being orphaned. This observation does not have an inherently negative connotation, but it's certainly a major change from the traditional, extended, two- or three-generation family home of the Japanese post World War II era. In essence, Japanese society is being forced to revisit the conceptual definition of what constitutes a family unit, as well as the role of women within any type of family unit.

One of the most popular stories to offer us a glimpse into these issues is Kou Fumizuki's touching *bishoujo* romantic comedy, *Ai Yori Aoshi*. Perhaps the biggest reason for the success of *Ai Yori Aoshi* is that it pointedly raises the very issues that we have been observing in our analysis. The story focuses on the conflict of old versus new Japanese values and does so in a very delicate, honest way. It doesn't attempt to overly romanticize older, traditional views or newer, modern values, but instead points out strengths and weaknesses in each approach so that audiences can form their own decisions about the issues. Western audiences might find the story entertaining for various reasons, including the insights into both traditional and modern Japanese culture. However, for many Japanese people, the various issues being presented in the story are

quite real and are a part of their daily adjustments to the changes taking place in contemporary Japan.

The main heroine, Aoi Sakuraba, is the epitome of a *Yamato Nadesico*, or 'traditional Japanese flower', a phrase that refers to various elements that define the epitome of the Japanese feminine aesthetic in a traditional sense. Some people might assume that elements such as Aoi's extremely deferential personality would be chaffing for a modern girl, but such assumptions usually vanish once they witness the entirety of who Aoi is as a young, traditional Japanese woman. Tina Foster, the stereotypically exuberant, blonde, American-born, Japanese-raised party girl expresses her wistful desire to learn how to acquire the graceful, elegant beauty that Aoi exudes so easily. Likewise, Aoi tells Tina that she'd like to learn how to be more open, expressive, and modern. Both girls are wonderful individuals in their own way just as both traditional and modern viewpoints have value.

Another example of the presentation of modern views versus traditional values occurs when the group takes a trip to an *onsen*⁴¹ and the guys are waiting for the girls to return from their baths. Tina is the first to return and, being American-born, tends to have physical qualities that make her stand out in Japan. Specifically, she is blonde-haired, very boisterous, and has a more curvaceous figure than most Japanese girls. The next girl to return is Taeko. Taeko is a very nice Japanese girl, but she's also extremely clumsy, very near-sighted, and adores occult phenomenon. Part of her charm is that she's completely naïve about her inherent sex appeal. Her body is even more curvaceous than Tina's, a fact that is both unusual and extremely noticeable for Japanese guys. She upstages Tina's entrance easily, but she's completely unaware of the fact of what she's

just done. The last girl to return is Aoi. However, Aoi enters the room in an extremely traditional fashion for a Japanese woman, kneeling outside of the sliding doorway, both hands gently outstretched so that the fingertips lightly brush the floor, head bowed in deference for the intrusion she is about to cause, and gently slides the panel open with one hand. Everyone is speechless. The only sound is one guy sighing in astonishment at Aoi's elegant, traditional charm. Aoi only did what was natural for her just as the other girls did, but she easily upstages both Tina and Taeko. Aoi personifies the beauty of Japanese traditions that are rapidly fading away, and that many modern Japanese people have forgotten, at least until they have an opportunity to re-experience such traditions.

In another episode, Aoi becomes ill and all of the other members of the house strive to take up the daily chores that she normally performs. Everyone quickly learns to appreciate the many tasks that Aoi accomplishes with such seeming ease. As the only male in the house, Kaoru takes it upon himself to do the cleaning, but he's amazed that Aoi is able to clean such a large home every day despite her seemingly fragile nature and petite physical body. Kaoru lived on his own for a long time before being reunited with Aoi, and he had to learn to do all of his own chores. However, even he gains a renewed appreciation for the strength and ability of Aoi, and the valuable job that she does as the keeper and heart of the home.

Aside from the fact that Taeko and Chika are cousins, none of the characters are related by blood, not even in a distant fashion. However, they have formed their own 'family' through various circumstances and events that have caused them to be together. One episode stresses this point very clearly. Chika has a summer break assignment and must write an essay about her family life⁴². Chika repeatedly puts it off. She doesn't

have any immediate family and she's unsure what to do. It isn't until Aoi inadvertently mentions to everyone that all of them are 'family' that Chika realizes that she really does have a family, after all.

Tatemae/Honne

An inherent aspect of Japanese communications, as well as communications in various other cultures, is represented by the concept of *tatemae/honne*. In general, this concept means that a publicly stated view or declaration is often quite different from the true meaning or feelings about any specific topic. This concept pervades many aspects of Japanese culture, including Japanese storytelling, art, and entertainment of various types. Our analysis is focused on how this concept applies to feminine motifs in Japanese stories.

There has been a great deal of criticism in America and elsewhere about potentially negative impacts of imagery of many kinds, especially imagery in entertainment media. However, the concept of *tatemae/honne* allows the Japanese to appreciate artistic creativity of any type with a fairly clear understanding that the image is distinct from reality. Japanese culture can appreciate the beauty and aesthetics in creative artistic endeavors without feeling a need to blame various genuine problems in daily life on works that are purely fictional. As Paglia points out, the Japanese have a strong cultural basis for the appreciation of aesthetics ("Crisis in the American Universities").

Our observation is not meant to imply that there are never problems in Japan or that Japanese people never lose sight of the difference between fantasy and reality. On the contrary, Japanese stories tend to address such problems within the creative works themselves in an effort to remind audiences that image and truth, fantasy and reality are two very different things. This motif is a very common and powerful motif in Japanese entertainment, but it is presented in a variety of different ways across many different types of stories (*Ayashi no Ceres*; *Growlanser Generations*⁴³; *Key The Metal Idol*; *Kiddy*

Grade; Koiyoubi; Super Dimension Fortress Macross⁴⁴; Perfect Blue⁴⁵; Vampire Princess Miyu; Xenosaga).

Japanese storytellers and artists deliberately use feminine images that lull audiences into a sense of false complacency about the characters. Audiences are misdirected about the true nature, ability, and destiny of characters within the stories. This heightens the dramatic impact of the presentation when the true natures of the heroines and their genuine abilities or destinies are eventually revealed. Let's look at a handful of specific examples to illustrate this point.

Narumi Kakinouchi's *shoujo* gothic horror story, *Vampire Princess Miyu*, is widely considered to be her trademark work. Originally published as a *manga*, it has been adapted to two different *anime* series and has spawned *manga* sequels to the original storyline. Her main heroine is Miyu, a girl who appears to be a typical thirteen-year-old schoolgirl but who is actually a *dhampir*, born of a vampire mother and human father. Despite her youthful appearance, Miyu is actually hundreds of years old. She may seem very sweet and innocent, but her vampire heritage forces her to live a cursed existence by consuming the blood of humans in order to survive. Miyu is the epitome of the tragic heroine, but she embodies far more wisdom, pain, sorrow, and power than her sweet, innocent, thirteen-year-old appearance might suggest.

Arieta is one of the main heroines in *Growlanser II*, the first game of the *Growlanser Generations* two-game set, and is easily the youngest-looking character in the game. As the hero of the story, Wein Cruz, you originally meet her when you are a young boy of only ten years old. When you meet Arieta again as a young man striving to become a knight, she hasn't aged at all. As the story progresses, you learn that she is a

member of a race that is an inherent part of the magical powers of the *Growlanser* world, and that her body is hundreds of years old. She is struggling to resist possession by an evil spirit that shares her physical body with her own spirit. Her true nature gives her enormous magical powers.

MOMO, short for her technical classification of 'Multiple Observative Mimetic Organicus', is one of the main heroines of the landmark science fiction epic game franchise, *Xenosaga*. She appears to be a girl of about twelve years old, but she's actually an artificial life form known as a Realian, and was modeled after the dead daughter of her creator. Her innocent appearance belies her true capabilities and very special nature, and she possesses unique secrets entrusted to her by her creator.

The main heroine of the visual novel *bishoujo* game *Koiyoubi* is a young girl named Maho. Maho seeks revenge against you, the hero of the game, because her reunion with you has resulted in the realization that you have completely forgotten about the fact that she was your childhood friend and that you had promised that you would one day be reunited with her. Maho decides to attend your school in order to exact her revenge, but poses as a young boy named Mao in order to be allowed to become your roommate in the dorms. As if this deception weren't enough, she tries to learn about your preferences in girls so that she can make herself up and pose as a girl who you will fall in love with just so that she can dump you!

Many of the characters in *Kiddy Grade* appear to be quite young, including the primary heroines, Éclair and Lumière. Éclair appears to be a young girl of sixteen while Lumière appears to be about ten. However, as we have observed previously, these girls and the other ES agents of the GOTT are actually immortal. They are continuously being

reincarnated in new bodies in order to do the dirty work of the governing powers as their old forms wear out or are killed. Éclair and Lumière are first introduced as being the lowest ranked members of all the ES forces, but the story eventually reveals the fact that their true forms and abilities far exceed those of any other ES members.

We've already discussed how Aya, the main heroine of *Ayashi no Ceres*, is also a reincarnation of the *tennyo* Ceres, thus possessing a very different inner capability and destiny than her outward appearance might suggest. One of the main supporting heroines of the story further illustrates the vast difference between image and reality. Her name is Chidori. When Chidori first appears, the other characters all assume that she is an elementary schoolgirl because of her extremely small physical size and petite build. However, they learn that Chidori is actually one of the descendents of the *tennyo*. Like Aya, she has the ability to transform herself into her *tennyo* incarnation. In that form, Chidori is a sexually alluring young woman with physical attributes similar to Ceres'. This seems a bit puzzling at first because Ceres' blood is not supposed to be awakened until a female descendent reaches her sixteenth birthday. Chidori feels obliged to inform them that she is actually a high school girl and is in the same grade as Aya, Yuuhi, and Aki. It was their mistake to make assumptions about her age or true nature based on her outward physical appearance and attributes.

Perhaps one of the greatest examples of the power of feminine imagery in Japanese culture and storytelling is the entire genre of entertainment known as idols. We will focus on female idol imagery, but we should keep in mind that there are also Japanese male idols. Idols are often considered to be aspiring singers whose looks are far more important than any musical talent, but this is not a complete view of idols from a

Japanese perspective. Essentially, an idol can exist in almost any form of human endeavor: business, sports, politics, entertainment, art, academics, modeling, acting, or anything else. However, entertainment is the primary avenue for idol recognition, and singing is the traditional route to follow. The specific image for any idol must be chosen with great care because the true ability of a top idol is to perform the image so convincingly that the image and all the elements associated with it become real, at least during the performance. A successful female idol must be able to combine singing, acting, and dancing skills in order to give life to her image.

A female idol also functions as a modern incarnation of the traditional *miko*, or 'Shinto shrine maiden priestess'. The story of *Asagiri no Miko* explicitly states that the *miko* has no power of her own, and that she is simply a conduit for various natural energies that exist all around us. Likewise, a truly great idol is merely a channel for the emotions and spiritual powers that flow to her from the audience. Idol presentation is very popular in a variety of modern Japanese stories (*Ayashi no Ceres*; *Blue Seed*; *Key The Metal Idol*; *Super Dimension Fortress Macross*; *Perfect Blue*).

One of the most dramatic, effective, and important presentations of the world of idols is Satoshi Kon's *Perfect Blue*. It would be very easy to write an entire book in an attempt to analyze the many important elements and themes presented in this film, but space constraints force us to restrict ourselves to some basic observations about the motif of idol imagery and fantasy versus true life and reality.

The overall theme of the film is the struggle between image and reality, fantasy and truth. The public, Mima's agent, Mima's manager Rumi, and even her own family refuses to accept Mima's decision to quit her career as an idol singer, leave her image

behind her, and strive to become accepted as a professional actress. In the beginning of the story, Mima explicitly states to her mother that she's freely making this choice because her career as an idol singer is stifling her. The film's opening clearly shows that her idol image and her true self in her daily life are completely different from each other. Mima's former singing trio, *Cham*, is not successful at all until after Mima leaves. The remaining duet changes their image and musical style to become much more realistic and gritty in their presentation, thus achieving an immediate Top 100 hit song.

Mima chooses to do a rape scene for the crime drama she's filming, as well as a nude photo layout for a racy magazine. These are important decisions that she makes in order to be taken seriously as a professional actress and in the hope of permanently, symbolically raping and destroying her former idol image. Her fury and frustration is with the public. She's dismayed by people such as Rumi who refuse to accept her as a mature, adult young woman and an aspiring professional actress rather than as her childish, little girl, fantasy angel idol singer image.

Ultimately, Mima learns that Rumi has completely lost touch with reality and has been totally seduced into the imaginary world of fantasy. The film's climactic battle between Mima and Rumi is a symbolic battle between the true, real Mima and Mima's former idol image brought to life by the crazed Rumi. The final scenes during the epilogue show us that Mima has become a very successful, accomplished, and popular actress, and that Rumi is institutionalized with a severe inability to grasp the real world around her. Mima's final line, spoken directly to the audience as she looks at them in the rearview mirror of her car, challenging them to doubt the truth of what she states, is, "No, this is the real me."

Girls and women often state that they want to be taken seriously and make their own decisions in their lives with complete freedom and without any judgmental retribution. *Perfect Blue* offers audiences a chance to appreciate the difference between image and truth, fantasy and reality. The ultimate message of the film for audiences, especially for girls and young women, is that they must be careful to avoid being seduced by imagery even while they appreciate the beauty within fantasy, and that they must remain true to themselves when they demand that their choices be taken seriously and without judgment.

Tadashi Ozawa, a freelance animator who has worked for top *anime* companies such as Studio Ghibli, Madhouse, and various game production companies, offers some important observations about the business and artistic facts regarding *bishoujo* game and *anime* digital entertainment products. In Part 1 of our research, we explained that *bishoujo* products are nominally targeted for a young male audience. However, business intentions do not matter once a product has been released to the consumer marketplace. For example, many *shoujo* works are enjoyed by a very broad audience, including males of all ages, despite being targeted for young girls, and many *shounen* works are enjoyed by a wide range of audiences, including females of all ages, despite being targeted for young boys. Likewise, *bishoujo* products are very often enjoyed by a wide range of people. Ozawa states that *bishoujo* games and *anime* are quite possibly the best business choice for a type of product that is guaranteed to sell, and that the consumers who buy such products encompass a very broad range of individuals, including females of various ages and interests. His investigation into the reason why *bishoujo* products consistently sell so well led him to the realization that all of the important, fundamental techniques for

character design and artistic presentation are solidly in place for the production of these products, and that many of the most popular characters and their associated stories are not designed by males but rather by their female artistic colleagues (How to Draw Anime & Game Characters Vol. 5: Bishoujo Game Characters, 2).

There have been huge misunderstandings in the English market about the reason for the numerous heroines in *bishoujo* stories. These misunderstandings and misrepresentations range from incorrectly categorizing a *bishoujo* product as some other genre to accusations of pandering to male fantasies, including claims of *bishoujo* products as being nothing but so-called 'harem' stories. These viewpoints fail to realize that the true reason for featuring a variety of heroines is that each character is inspired by one or more girls from real life in order to represent a realistic spectrum of the full range of femininity. Female *bishoujo* artists and their male counterparts strive to create characters who reflect a wide variety of feminine looks, behaviors, personalities, dreams, interests, hopes, faults, and virtues. Ozawa explains that the artists gain artistic inspiration for their heroines by modeling them after actual girls that they see or know in their daily lives, thus creating characters who reflect genuine feminine traits (3). Consumers, both male and female, seem to prefer this approach.

Carnelian exclaims that, "A girl's skin should look like a ripe peach!" (Kino) A typical Western reaction to such a statement is that she's promoting lookism, but the appreciation of artistic aesthetics in Japanese culture and the inherent *tatemaehonne* concept within Japanese society makes such a Western assumption confusing to many Japanese creative artists and consumers. The same observation applies to Carnelian's choice to create adult *bishoujo* game products that contain explicit sexual content. She

chose this genre for her artistic endeavors because she desired creative and artistic freedom to explore any type of content and storytelling without any restrictions.

We should notice that we can observe the same type of realistic presentation of a variety of heroines in many *shoujo* stories. In one of her art book projects, *How to Draw Manga: Girls' Life Illustration File*, Tadano explains how each of the girls and their associated apartments, accessories, personalities, and other individual characteristics are inspired by actual young women whom she personally knows (6).

A final example of how Western audiences can misunderstand certain images in Japanese entertainment is the concept of idols or other Japanese women who walk in a pigeon-toed manner. Western audiences tend to jump to a conclusion that such a gait is demeaning to women and a negative cultural element that strives to force girls to seem more childish. This is not an accurate view of the most likely reason for women to walk in such a manner. The *kimono* was the traditional Japanese form of clothing for hundreds of years, but Japan began adopting Western clothing after the Meiji Restoration in the mid-1800s. Most modern Japanese women wear Western clothes in their daily lives, and only don their *kimonos* for certain special events such as graduation day, weddings, or certain festivals. Dr. Liza Dalby, an anthropologist and the only Westerner to ever train and work as a *geisha* in Japan, explains how the *kimono* requires a specific type of skill. She recounts an amusing anecdote about how she was supposed to appear on a TV show. The challenge for the celebrity contestants was for them to choose the 'real Liza Dalby' out of a lineup of several women dressed in *kimono*. The director stopped the filming as soon as the women walked onto the stage because it was so obvious which woman was accustomed to wearing and walking in a *kimono*. Dalby explains how she had to coach

the other women about how to walk in a *kimono*. One aspect of this gait is that you have to slide one foot in front of the other, pigeon-toed, with your knees slightly bent (281-282). In *Ai Yori Aoshi*, we see Aoi adopt exactly this type of gait when she's out walking through town dressed in her usual, traditional *kimono*. Some idols or other women might adopt such a gait in order to appear childish, but the fact is that it is an ancient part of Japanese culture.

Summary

Our brief analysis of a mere handful of common feminine motifs in modern Japanese digital entertainment media has demonstrated that such creative, artistic works of popular culture offer many powerful, important, and beautiful feminine themes. We've seen that these themes are not distinct and separate elements, but instead form a complex, interconnected, interrelated matrix or web that constitutes a much larger whole of the various art forms, stories, characters, and media presentations.

According to Japan's Asahi Shimbun newspaper, the global market for entertainment products is expected to grow from its mark of 140 trillion yen in 2004 to 180 trillion yen by 2008⁴⁶. Asia's total market annual growth rate in various entertainment software products of all types is currently estimated to be ten percent, a figure that exceeds the worldwide average, and Japan expects to lead Asia's entertainment production. Asian countries have accomplished this without a formal, integrated, organized approach, relying almost entirely on personal, individual contacts between business acquaintances. Asian governments have become aware of the power of their popular culture in the global market and are preparing to institute a formal, organized effort to expand their offerings. Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry is requesting 300 million yen in the 2006 budget in order to establish a liaison office for the entertainment industry ("Asian Governments Get Serious about Fun and Games"). It's safe to conclude that the impact of Asian popular digital entertainment, especially Japanese products, is extremely important in today's global economy and society, and that this influence will continue to grow in the future.

Our research has allowed us to understand that Japanese stories contain strong feminine motifs that have important cultural histories and inspirations, and that these elements exist regardless of the technical media formats used to present the stories. The inspiration and understanding that such motifs offer to audiences everywhere, especially young girls and women, cannot be overstated. The study of these elements in Japanese art and storytelling leads us to a far greater ability to share intercultural understanding, acceptance, and cooperation in our modern, global human society. The importance of the business and economic facts regarding these products pales in comparison to the promise of peaceful collaboration and mutual respect in various endeavors across human cultures all around the world.

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Appendix: 'I My Me! Strawberry Eggs'

Glossary of Terms and General Cultural Notes

Baa-chan: Shortened, informal form of *Obaa-san*, or 'grandmother.' Usually used with affectionate intent.

Blood types: The Japanese developed a system where personality traits and relationship compatibilities are dependent on blood type, similar to how some people refer to astrological signs and horoscopes to determine aspects of individuals and relationships. Type O people are outgoing, social, and popular. Type A individuals appear to be calm, shy, sensitive, artistic, and trustworthy, but their extremely high standards and expectations tend to cause them to have high-strung nerves and inner turmoil. Those individuals with Type B blood are individualistic, tenacious, and goal-oriented. Type AB people are, as we might expect, split personalities, but they're also considered to be potential geniuses. They are responsible, but their conflicting natures can cause them to have problems if they attempt to shoulder too much responsibility. Most people in Japan know their blood type, and it's as common a method for personality matching as astrological signs. Some companies have even been known to use blood types to form employee work groups based on supposed compatibility traits.

Boke / Tsukkomi: This is a specific genre of Japanese comedy that utilizes a duo to represent *boke* ('clutz') and *tsukkomi* ('bully'). An analogous example from the American entertainment industry might be Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin. However, the specific comedic lines, running patter, and timing are so well-known that the recognized response to a *tsukkomi* line is instantaneous, similar to the widespread recognition of Abbot & Costello's famous "Who's On First?" skit.

Guns: Private ownership of guns is illegal in Japan. This is but one of many cultural factors that allows modern Japanese society to have one of the lowest crime rates and prison populations in the world. Unlike many other countries that expend resources on prisons and legal control of gun-related crimes, Japan can devote those freed resources to other purposes. Since actual guns are illegal in Japan, most people do not have the experience of seeing one, not even for sports events, hunting, or similar domestic pursuits. However, this creates a market where the study of guns can become a hobby, and there are various shops in Japan that specialize in selling very detailed imitation firearms for enthusiasts and collectors. Rura-san's gun would probably be unusual because it is functional and shoots plastic bullets. Various people throughout the story are quite surprised whenever Rura-san pulls out the gun, including the security guards at the school.

Hair styles and colors: Many students, especially girls, will customize and individualize their hair styles and color to suit their own personality and tastes in much the same way that they might alter their school uniforms or add accessories to their school bags. There are usually school regulations about this aspect of a student's life just as there are for various other areas. However, artists utilize a wide array of colors and styles to make characters distinct and unique from one another when

presenting a story to an audience. In addition, artists use styles and colors that would not be unlikely to be seen in real life, or that would even be possible, in some instances. Specific styles and colors allow an artist to use nonverbal, symbolic methods to convey a variety of personality traits about the character to the audience.

Honorific '-chan': Suffix for addressing people, and normally used to address people that are younger than the speaker, especially young girls, or as a term of endearment or intimacy. Less formal than '-san.' It's unlikely that students would address a teacher by using the '-chan' honorific as Aoki and other boys do with Hibiki.

Honorific '-kun': Suffix for addressing people, and normally used to address people who are the speaker's peers, especially males, or for people who are at a lower level of social status than the speaker. Less formal than '-san.'

Honorific '-sama': Suffix for addressing people, and normally used to address people in a very formal, extremely polite, deferential manner, similar to the English use of aristocratic titles such as 'Lord,' 'Lady,' 'Prince,' 'Princess,' etc.

Honorific '-san': Suffix for addressing people, and used as a general, polite form of address that is similar to the English use of 'Mr.,' 'Mrs.,' or 'Ms.'

Inu-nabe: Literally, 'dog stew.'

Kare / Boyfriend and Kanojo / Girlfriend: The usual Japanese word for the person who an American would call either 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' is *kare* or *kanojo*, respectively. However, the words can also mean the equivalent of the English pronouns 'he' and 'she.' The Japanese originally borrowed the literal English words 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' to simply mean a friend who was either male or female, respectively, rather than someone who shares a romantic relationship with the speaker. Modern Japanese youths have started to use either term for romantic partners, or at least partners you date. In Miho-*chan's* case, she obviously means a romantic interest when she refers to the guy modeling nude as her *kare*.

Kimono versus Western clothing: Most modern Japanese wear Western style clothing in their daily lives rather than the traditional kimono that is now usually worn for specific holidays or special events such as graduations or funerals. The fact that the school president always wears a kimono tells us that she is an extremely traditional Japanese woman.

Kura-ge: Japanese word for 'jellyfish.'

Kyoushi: Specific, formal title for an academic institution education instructor.

Metric system: Like the rest of the world outside of America, Japan uses the metric system. Height and other body measurements are normally taken in centimeters, and a conversion to English units would be approximately 1 inch = 2.54 cm.

Mottos: Seitoh Sannomiya Private Academy has the motto of *Ai Isshin* that was established by the current Principal. Such mottos are very standard throughout Japanese schools, institutions, and businesses. The motto is usually placed in a prominent location in each room of any organization, just as we see in this show. The faculty's morning ritual and recitation with the Principal and Vice-Principal in Episode 03 is similar to certain daily routines in various companies and institutions. The motto and daily ritual are supposed to generate a sense that everyone within the institution belongs to the same group and embraces the same general philosophies. However, it's worth noting exactly how the Principal's

policies reflect, or fail to reflect, the particular motto she has chosen. Please refer to the entry for *Ai Isshin* in the Episode 01 analysis for more information.

School life: Japanese children attend six years of elementary school and three years each of middle school and high school. High school attendance is optional but strongly encouraged. Traditionally, many companies hire new employees from specific schools. In addition, there are numerous *juku* ('cram schools') that students can attend in the evenings in order to (hopefully) increase their grades and thus their chances of being accepted at schools with the best reputations. The general daily schedule at school is a bit different from countries such as America. In Japan, the students have a specific homeroom and homeroom teacher to which they are assigned. Classes are taught by different teachers who specialize in different fields. Rather than the students changing rooms for each class, the teachers rotate through the homeroom for subjects such as math, history, and literature. The students will go to other rooms or areas for subjects such as physical education, science, and art, but they spend most of their day in the same homeroom learning the material with the same group of classmates. This is an important element of Japanese social structure, and allows children to expand their initial intimate group beyond their immediate family and neighborhood. This is also why events such as graduation from elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, or changes such as transfer students, new teachers, or teachers leaving are very significant events for Japanese children. Various school tasks are given to students on a rotating basis in order for them to feel that they are an important part of the school and their individual class groups. Students are encouraged to become members of after school clubs for similar reasons.

School uniforms / sei-fuku: Sailor style uniforms are standard attire for Japanese middle school and high school students. It's quite possible to tell which school a student attends simply by their specific school uniform. Different schools have different degrees of strictness in their various rules and policies, and the specific nature of the school uniform is one area that is addressed. The students spend a great deal of time in their *sei-fuku*, so it's not too surprising that certain schools are popular simply due to the style of their school uniforms, especially for girls who are concerned about fashion. In addition, students, especially girls, might decide to individualize their *sei-fuku* as much as possible within their school's regulations, or even push the limits of their school's rules. For example, they might adjust the length of their skirt to suit their own personal taste and personality traits, or they might choose certain accessories for their hair or school bags. There are normally two seasonal variations of the *sei-fuku* at any institution: one for winter, and one for summer. All of the students change from winter to summer styles on the same day of the school year during the warmer months, and vice versa during the colder season. One of the most important goals of requiring the uniforms for students is to achieve equality amongst the student population.

Seishun: This word refers to the Japanese concept of youth, and specifically the adolescent period of a person's life when idealism and dreams are held in great esteem and fondness. This phrase is used in the introductions to each volume, as well as within various episodes. However, note that the first two volumes offer an English translation of the phrase *seishun jyugyou* as 'life lessons,' while the last

two volumes simply use the Japanese word, *seishun*. Perhaps a more accurate, literal, and symbolic translation would be 'adolescence lessons.'

Sensei: Japanese title for a master, instructor, or teacher of a specific skill. Note that the Japanese will normally address a specific professional worker by his or her title and/or occupational work. For example, a *sensei* is normally addressed either by using the term '*sensei*' or by using the title of *sensei* as an honorific suffix to their family name, such as 'Hibiki-*sensei*,' while a taxi driver might be addressed as '*untan-san*,' or literally, 'Mr. Driver.' In Episode 11, we hear Fuuko-*chan* address the fortune teller as '*uranaishi-san*,' or 'Mr. Fortune Teller.'

Spring: Japan begins and ends the school year in the spring. This carries a great deal of symbolic meaning. Academic success is very important in Japan and many other Asian countries, so beginning a new school year is very much like beginning a new life. Spring is the season of procreation and birth of new life for both plants and animals. Likewise, graduation from school means the end of an old life, including separations from friends and teachers. Various cultures have different orientations in their views of the passage of time and history. America is extremely future-oriented. However, Japan, like various other cultures, is extremely past-oriented. The general Japanese philosophy of life is that events occur in a cyclical, continuous fashion. The annual cycle of seasons and the sequence of beginning and ending academic pursuits reflect the general Japanese philosophy. From a Japanese perspective, it makes sense to have the school year begin and end in the spring.

Tatemae / Honne and nonverbal communications: Nonverbal communications and symbolisms are a critical, essential element of the presentation of this story. More importantly, they are a general trait of Japanese communication style. This includes various specific body gestures that communicate certain meanings in a nonverbal fashion. One specific element that the audience should notice is how the various characters interact with each other on a nonverbal, indirect level. Japanese communication tends to be more extended when greater formality is required but less lengthy when greater intimacy and familiarity exists between the parties. If we take this concept to its logical conclusion, we can see that having little or no verbal communication at all would mean the highest level of intimacy and familiarity between people. In addition, it's often felt that putting something explicitly into words lessens the true value of the concept being communicated, and that attempting to state any concept distinctly and clearly is making an assumption of superiority in knowledge over the listener. Being indirect and ambiguous assumes equal understanding between both parties, and seeks to fill in any potential lack of understanding in as discrete a fashion as possible. This is why the concept of *aimai na* is so inherent in Japanese communication. Please see the entry for *Title Symbolisms* for additional information about this concept.

Title symbolisms: The title of the story is written in English as *I My Me! Strawberry Eggs*. However, the title carries a much greater symbolic meaning in the original Japanese despite being pronounced the same as the English title. The Japanese adjective *aimai na* means 'ambiguous,' and is representative of the central theme of Japanese communication style. Linguistic and cultural explanations are very complex, but a very basic explanation of this concept would be that being indirect

and ambiguous in communications is valued because it allows both parties to maintain their honor. In addition, we should note that *seishun*, or 'adolescence', is a period of ambiguity and uncertainty in many areas of a person's life, but it's also a period when idealism and dreams tend to be cherished and held very strongly. One area of adolescent ambiguity and uncertainty is the concept of one's own sexual identity and orientation. This element is represented in the story by Fuuko-*chan* and her classmates, but it's also true for Hibiki-*san*. He truly remains a youth at heart despite the fact that his physical age identifies him as an adult. Another important point is that there is a strong, symbolic meaning to the phrase, 'Strawberry Eggs.' In Japan, the color white symbolizes 'male' while red symbolizes 'female.' For example, one of the important traditional events of New Year's Eve is to watch the song battle between female and male pop singers. The common phrase for this competition is, 'the reds versus the whites.' *I My Me! Strawberry Eggs* is about the ambiguity between male and female elements, identities, sexual orientation, and personal image. The title emblem shows interlinked male and female symbols being born from a cracked eggshell to stress this point. Hibiki-*san* and Fuuko-*chan* are the primary characters who demonstrate the ambiguities of these traits, but there are other characters who exhibit this motif, too. The ultimate point being made is that all of these people are worthwhile individuals with unique virtues and flaws, regardless of their sexual orientation, choice of clothes, make-up, appearance, or self-image. The final element of the title that is worth noting is that the Japanese word *ai* carries multiple meanings within the story. The Japanese tend to love word play of many kinds as an artistic or entertaining pursuit. The word *ai* is perhaps most commonly used to mean 'true love,' but the phonetic sound of *ai* is also part of the title of the show because it is part of the adjective *aimai na*. The Japanese people study English for many years in school, so they normally understand the English meaning of the word 'I', thus implying a third meaning about the nature of the story. In addition, Hibiki-*sensei*'s homeroom class is the second year students of 'Ai-Gumi,' or 'Class Indigo.' This is a word play because the kanji character for *ai* 「愛」 ('true love') is different than the kanji character for *ai* 「藍」 ('indigo'). As an additional note, the popular romantic *bishoujo* story that we discussed at length in Chapter 2, *Ai Yori Aoshi*, uses this exact same kanji word play in its original Japanese title. The word play informs the audience that the story is about youthful romance and ambiguous elements, but these concepts are conveyed in an indirect, nonspecific way. This is a good example of the use of *aimai na* in Japanese communication. A final point that the home video release for the series is in four volumes, one for each quarter of a school term, and that each episode title is literally related to cosmetics of one type or another but symbolically carries meanings related to the lessons and issues in that episode.

Volume introductory dialogues: Each of the four volumes begins with a different character offering an introduction for that quarter's episodes and lessons. The dialogue includes a brief warning to be sure to watch the show at a proper distance from the TV and in a properly lit room. This warning and others of a similar nature began being offered on various TV *anime* shows after an episode of *Pokemon* during the late 1990s caused several hundred Japanese children to go

into epileptic seizures. Although the cause of this incident was believed to have been due to the specific sequence of flashing lights and scenes within the episode coupled with the environmental lighting and viewing distance from the TV that the children experienced, many *anime* production companies began offering the warning as an example of business concern and to create an added character interaction with the audience.

Yamato Nadesico: Seiko-*chan* is a modern example of a *yamato nadesico*, or 'traditional Japanese female beauty.' Her family is extremely wealthy, she's very pale-skinned, she has long, straight, jet-black hair, she speaks in an extremely formal, deferential, aristocratic fashion, and she seems very delicate, shy, and withdrawn. In addition, she cannot seem to interact with males despite having an inner desire to do so. This latter aspect of her personality makes her an example of *tatema*e versus *honne*. Despite all the elements that seem to define her as a young adolescent girl, her true self is not quite what her image would lead one to believe. She possesses strong, preconceived stereotypes and prejudices about males despite the fact that she has never been able to interact with boys and thus cannot possibly know much about them. She also states quite clearly and wistfully to Miho-*chan* in Episode 06 that she'd very much like to be able to meet and casually talk to guys like Miho-*chan* does, so it's very clear that her inner self has far more desire than her reserved image would suggest.

Zaibatsu: A large, family-run banking and industrial conglomerate. Seiko-*chan*'s family is from a former *zaibatsu*.

Character Profiles

Second Year, Class Indigo — Boys

Student ID:	01	Name:	Kyosuke Aoki	Comment:	"Bumbling supporting player"
Birthday:	November 22	Astrological sign:	Scorpio	Blood type:	A
Remarks:	Lacks repose. Twiddles a lot. Cannot swim. Family owns a liquor store.				

Student ID:	02	Name:	Shoichi Iwaya	Comment:	"Bumbling supporting player #2"
Birthday:	November 23	Astrological sign:	Sagittarius	Blood type:	A
Remarks:	Lacks repose (but not as bad as Aoki). Twiddles a lot (but not as bad as Aoki). Acrophobe. Family runs a sushi restaurant.				

Student ID:	03	Name:	Munemitsu Ohishi	Comment:	"Quiet batman"
Birthday:	May 15	Astrological sign:	Taurus	Blood type:	O
Remarks:	Hobby: Baseball. Special talent: Baseball. Reticent (too much so).				

Student ID:	04	Name:	Jun Ohmono	Comment:	"Precocious boy"
Birthday:	April 1	Astrological sign:	Aries	Blood type:	O
Remarks:	Likes older women (up to 10 years older than he is, anyway). Family runs a pediatric clinic.				

Student ID:	05	Name:	Konosuke Deyashiki	Comment:	"Oh Baby, Baby, Baby Prince"
Birthday:	November 11	Astrological sign:	Scorpio	Blood type:	A
Remarks:	Family teaches <i>ikebana</i> ('art of flower arranging') and tea ceremony.				

Student ID:	06	Name:	Shirou Naruo	Comment:	"Delinquent (-looking) boy"
Birthday:	August 7	Astrological sign:	Leo	Blood type:	B
Remarks:	Parents passed away; lives with his older sister who works as a long-haul truck driver. Friends with Makoto Uozaki since their childhood days.				

Student ID:	07	Name:	Yoshihiko Nishinada	Comment:	"Serious Class President"
Birthday:	July 10	Astrological sign:	Cancer	Blood type:	AB
Remarks:	Class President for 2 nd year, <i>Ai-gumi</i> ('Class Indigo'). High-achiever. Father is a former Prime Minister.				

Student ID:	08	Name:	Kiyoshi Noda	Comment:	"Fat!!!!!!?"
Birthday:	April 27	Astrological sign:	Taurus	Blood type:	B
Remarks:	Eats and sleeps too much. Father is a screenplay writer.				

Student ID:	09	Name:	Akira Fukae	Comment:	"Embodiment of <i>seishun</i> "
Birthday:	August 16	Astrological sign:	Leo	Blood type:	AB
Remarks:	Height: 157 cm. Doesn't speak much, passive about developing relationships, yet popular amongst classmates. Hobby: surfing. Hates tomatoes. Cannot drink tomato juice. Father is a private detective.				

Student ID:	10	Name:	Mario Yodogawa	Comment:	"Audio & Visual Otaku"
Birthday:	October 1	Astrological sign:	Libra	Blood type:	O
Remarks:	Hobby: movies, music. Wants to work in an animation production company in the future. Family runs a public bathhouse. (Note: The acronym for 'Audio & Visual' is 'AV,' but that's also the acronym for 'Adult Video,' so we wouldn't want to consider him an AV otaku!)				

Second year, Class Indigo — Girls

Student ID:	11	Name:	Haruko Ashiya	Comment:	"Cosplay girl"
Birthday:	June 10	Astrological sign:	Gemini	Blood type:	A
Remarks:	Likes <i>cosplay</i> ('costume play'). Close friends with Masami Fukushima. (Note: <i>Cosplay</i> is basically the same as America's Halloween or various hobby conventions where people dress up as well-known characters).				

Student ID:	12	Name:	Sumire Amagasaki	Comment:	"Bespectacled Class Vice-President"
Birthday:	January 8	Astrological sign:	Capricorn	Blood type:	A
Remarks:	Class Vice-President of 2 nd year, <i>Ai-Gumi</i> ('Class Indigo'). High-achieving student. Father is a Colonel in the Air Self-Defense Force.				

Student ID:	13	Name:	Makoto Uozaki	Comment:	"Cool beauty"
Birthday:	February 4	Astrological sign:	Aquarius	Blood type:	A
Remarks:	Childhood friends with Shirou Naruo. Father is an executive in a well-known manufacturing company.				

Student ID:	14	Name:	Miho Umeda	Comment:	"Fuuko's Kansai-born best friend"
Birthday:	July 7	Astrological sign:	Cancer	Blood type:	B
Remarks:	Height: 158 cm. Three sizes (B-W-H): 87-54-83 cm. Birthplace: Kishiwada, Osaka. Softball team member. 1 st place in last year's Seitoh Sannomiya Private Academy 'Nice Body' Contest (unofficial).				

Student ID:	15	Name:	Seiko Kasuganomichi	Comment:	"Fuuko's friend, always with Fuuko"
Birthday:	January 3	Astrological sign:	Capricorn	Blood type:	O
Remarks:	Family comes from a line of former <i>zaibatsu</i> ('plutocracy,' 'financial combine'). Wide circle of acquaintances. Naïve about men. Height: 160 cm. Three sizes (B-W-H): 80-56-80 cm. Birthplace: Kyoto.				

Student ID:	16	Name:	Fuuko Kuzuha	Comment:	"I'll send you lots of smiles"
Birthday:	March 20	Astrological sign:	Pisces	Blood type:	AB
Remarks:	In charge of class duties such as health maintenance and room decoration as well as school committee tasks such as animal care and environment (some duties were later taken over by other students). Father is an overseas businessman (mother died when she was six). Height: 148 cm. Three sizes (B-W-H): 77-52-77 cm. Birthplace: Tokyo.				

Student ID:	17	Name:	Yoshino Shinzaike	Comment:	"Godfather's shy daughter"
Birthday:	February 3	Astrological sign:	Aquarius	Blood type:	B
Remarks:	Father is the Japanese equivalent of 'The Godfather.' Shy.				

Student ID:	18	Name:	Fujio Himejima	Comment:	"Fuuko's friend, always with Fuuko"
Birthday:	December 19	Astrological sign:	Sagittarius	Blood type:	B
Remarks:	Softball team member. <i>Aikido</i> black belt. Used to live abroad in Ethiopia with her family. Height: 153 cm. Three sizes (B-W-H): 80-55-81 cm. Birthplace: Dejima, Nagasaki.				

Student ID:	19	Name:	Masami Fukushima	Comment:	"Strange, Myun?!"
Birthday:	August 10	Astrological sign:	Leo	Blood type:	B
Remarks:	Loves <i>manga</i> and <i>anime</i> . Has unique manner of speech (especially since she ends most sentences with ' <i>Myun</i> '). Close friends with Haruko Ashiya.				

Student ID:	20	Name:	Akane Manase	Comment:	"So, a <i>kogaru</i> type, are you?"
Birthday:	October 10	Astrological sign:	Sagittarius	Blood type:	O
Remarks:	Mother runs a boutique near the train station. (Note: <i>Kogaru</i> means <i>kogal</i> and is a specific type of schoolgirl, or 'ko-gal.' <i>Kogals</i> became famous, or infamous, for certain traits such as their slangy speech patterns and, in some cases, trading dates and sexual favors for expensive gifts).				

Student ID:	21	Name:	Ai Mikage	Comment:	"I could tell you your fate"
Birthday:	Unknown	Astrological sign:	Unknown	Blood type:	Unknown
Remarks:	Hobby: Psychic reading.				

Gochiso

Name:	Hibiki Amawa	Occupation:	Self-proclaimed <i>kyoushi</i>	Comment:	"Outdated <i>seishun</i> man"
Birthday:	September 5	Astrological sign:	Virgo	Blood type:	O
Remarks:	Birthplace: Hirosaki, Aomori. Height: 175 cm. Hobby: Physical fitness, playing guitar and piano, cross-dressing(?)				

Name:	Koji Mori	Occupation:	Trading company employee / 'salary man'	Comment:	"Reflector man"
Birthday:	June 16	Astrological sign:	Gemini	Blood type:	O
Remarks:	Birthplace: Chigasaki, Kanagawa. Height: 190 cm. Hobby: Collecting pictures of women's and girls' uniforms. Taking days off from work.				

Name:	Kochi 'Tofu' Tofukuji	Occupation:	? (on a pension...?)	Comment:	"Fuuko-chan!"
Birthday:	October 16	Astrological sign:	Libra	Blood type:	Unknown
Remarks:	Birthplace: can't remember. Height: 155 cm. Hobby: Peeping on Fuuko-chan, collecting dolls of Fuuko-chan.				

Name:	Kura-ge	Occupation:	Hibiki's dog, collateral for rent	Comment:	"Future <i>inu-nabe</i> (?)"
Birthday:	Unknown	Astrological sign:	Unknown	Blood type:	Unknown
Remarks:	Gender: secret. Age: 2 ½ (dog years). Height: 80 cm. Weight: 10 kg.				

Name:	Ruru Sanjou	Occupation:	Landlord and manager of Gochiso	Comment:	"Leave it to me"
Birthday:	Unknown	Astrological sign:	Unknown	Blood type:	Unknown
Remarks:	Height: 120 cm. Various skills, uncanny connections to powerful people.				

Seitoh Sannomiya Private Academy

Name:	Chieko Sannomiya	Occupation:	Principal	Comment:	"Savage men!"
Birthday:	May 5	Astrological sign:	Taurus	Blood type:	B
Remarks:	Age: 70. Height: 170 cm. Third Principal of Seitoh Sannomiya Private Academy, originally founded by her grandmother, Himemiko Sannomiya.				

Name:	Reiko Mukogawa	Occupation:	Vice-Principal	Comment:	"Stupid males!"
Birthday:	February 14	Astrological sign:	Aquarius	Blood type:	O
Remarks:	Height: 160 cm. Three sizes (B-W-H): 96-58-87 cm. Likes karaoke. Divorced mother with a daughter in first grade that she dotes on a lot. Miho- <i>chan</i> observes to her girlfriends that the Vice-Principal's well-built proportioned figure surpasses that of Hibiki- <i>sensei</i> 's and calls her a 'bra buster.' We can see that a conversion of her chest measurement to American inches results in a measurement of about 38 inches, and that Miho- <i>chan</i> 's own 87 cm measurement converts to about 34 inches. The point of these conversions is that the 'average' statistics for females (or males, for that matter) varies with location and many other individual factors, and that any large variance from such an 'average' for one individual may be considered to be 'average' for someone else.				

Yoshimi Hirabayashi: Music *sensei*.

Yuko Kitatsumi: Social Studies *sensei*.

Shinobu Shumiyoshi: Home Economics *sensei*.

Takumi Yamada: Guidance Counselor.

Director Tokugawa: Executive head of the academy and supporter of co-ed staffing and education.

Series Analysis

Volume 1 — 1st Quarter Lesson: Make-up Exam

Episode 01: Desperate First Lipstick

Ai Isshin: The school motto *Ai Isshin* is given the English translation of 'Love Is All.'

However, we can see that the original Japanese phrase is written as 「愛一心」 when we see it in various locations throughout the story. The first kanji character is the character for *ai* ('true love'). The second kanji character is the character for *ichi* ('one,' 'first') and the final character is pronounced as *kokoro* or *shin* ('spirit,' 'soul,' 'heart,' 'true self'). In other words, the motto of the school that the principle has chosen and that everyone, including herself, is supposed to live and work by really means 'true love, truest heart' or something similar. The setting of the school and the related roles of teachers, administrators, and students would mean that everyone should learn to treat, teach, and learn from each other with true, genuine love, affection, and respect in order for each person to achieve their own truest, greatest, and most genuine self-actualization and potential. The Principal's established policy of sexist discrimination against any male *kyoushi* being employed, her biased view that no male has any sort of positive value to society, and her view that males are a useless, despicable gender, demonstrates a hypocritical, radical departure from the admirable ideals expressed by her chosen motto. Each person learns as they live their life, but the question we must ask is what they will learn through their life experiences. The students are being taught sexual discrimination, prejudice, and biased viewpoints; this is in stark contrast to the ideals that the school's motto intends to teach.

Kare / Boyfriend and Kanojo / Girlfriend: The usual Japanese word for the person who an American would call either 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' is *kare* or *kanojo*, respectively. However, there are additional aspects to this concept and these words. The words can also mean the equivalent of the English pronouns 'he' and 'she.' The Japanese originally borrowed the literal English words 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' to mean simply a friend who was either male or female, respectively, rather than someone who shares a romantic relationship to the speaker. However, modern Japanese youths have started to use either term for romantic partners, or at least partners you date. In *Miho-chan's* case, she obviously means a romantic interest when she refers to the guy modeling nude as her *kare*.

Public displays of affection: In general, Japanese social customs tend to indicate that people should avoid exuberant, public displays of emotion. This includes intimate gestures such as hugging and kissing, even amongst family members, as well as openly emotional displays such as crying or boisterous laughter. This is why everyone is so shocked and embarrassed when *Hibiki* brings *Fuuko-chan* so close and whispers something in her ear during her running attempts. Of course, *Fuuko-chan* is beginning to have feelings other than embarrassment at this time.

Tatemaie / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemaie/honne* communications

and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Ai Isshin:** The school's motto is used at many points throughout the story. The first episode introduces the motto during a scene where the Principal is lecturing Hibiki as to why he, or any male, could not possibly be entrusted with the role of teaching students. This is an example of *tatemaeh/honne* communications. The scene shows the motto in the background and the Principal literally states the motto as '*Ai Isshin*,' but the sexist, discriminatory policies that the principle is verbally explaining only serve to underscore the hypocrisy of her chosen motto and the true nature of the school's environment.
- **Baa-chan:** Hibiki affectionately addresses Ruru-san as '*Baa-chan*,' but Ruru-san gets quite incensed about this method of address every time Hibiki uses it. The true reason why Ruru-san gets so annoyed with this particular form of address is finally revealed at the very end of the story. We'll return to this element, but for now, let's just point out that the audience should have their curiosity raised as to why Ruru-san would react in such a fashion.
- **Fujio and Akira:** Fujio-chan seems to be ready to fight Akira for any reason, especially if she feels that he's slighting Fuuko-chan in any way. She has a reputation amongst the guys for being far too aggressive and physically combative to be of any interest as a girlfriend. As we'll see, though, her heart is far more sensitive and stereotypically feminine than her outward behavior and reputation would suggest. The true reason why she's so combative towards Akira is because her behavior is an outward manifestation of the inner struggle she's enduring. She has a crush on him, but she's unable to muster the courage to confess her love for him.
- **Fujio:** Fujio-chan has a black belt in *aikido* and is quite aggressive in her behavior. Miho-chan chides her about her aggressiveness because it could conceivably scare off potential boyfriends. However, Fujio-chan also wears her hair tied up in twin ponytails with pretty red ribbons in a very cute, feminine style. In fact, she keeps her hair about shoulder length rather than cutting it short, even though the latter would probably be more practical for such an active, competitive girl. Her outward behavior does not reflect her inner nature, nor does it define all of who she is as a young, adolescent girl.
- **Fuuko and Akira:** We see Akira catching the improperly disposed of coffee can when Fuuko is chasing after it, but then tossing it away when the other guys tease him about her. He gruffly brushes off Fujio-chan when she chides him for teasing Fuuko, knowing full well how Fujio-chan will respond. Likewise, we see him watching Fuuko closely while she's talking with her girlfriends prior to the beginning of class, and while she's attempting to fulfill the running test with Hibiki. Akira appears to be the tough, cool guy who is never bothered by anything. He's popular, but maintains an unapproachable attitude. As we'll see during the story, his true self is quite sensitive, and he's struggling greatly to resolve his feelings for Fuuko and gather up enough courage to confess his love for her.

- **Fuuko:** Fuuko-*chan* is by far the most petite girl in the school, and even her closest girlfriends consider her to be hopelessly innocent and naïve with respect to love. This does not match who Fuuko-*chan* truly is as a young adolescent girl, though. Right from the beginning, we see her sighing over a picture of a very effeminate *bishounen* in her wallet, something that her girlfriends would never believe she would do. This very brief scene is offered as a hint to the audience about Fuuko-*chan*'s true desires in the area of romance. It would be sensible to consider what type of person Fuuko-*chan* might eventually fall in love with, and what her own sexual identity and orientation might be as she grows into adulthood.
- **Gestures — 'Come here':** Hibiki asks Fuuko-*chan* to approach him so they can talk after she repeatedly tries and fails to run 50 meters. The Japanese gesture for such a request is to hold the hand outward, palm facing downwards, and close the fingers repeatedly in brief intervals. This is a bit similar to a gesture for waving 'Good-bye' in America, so an American in Japan might be misunderstood if they used their usual gesture towards a Japanese person.
- **Hibiki and Fuuko:** Although it's not explicitly stated, the audience is offered indirect indications that Fuuko-*chan* falls in love with Hibiki-*sensei* almost at first sight. Hibiki is the first person to believe that she could accomplish something that she and everyone else thought was impossible. As Miho-*chan* told her earlier, Fuuko's body would move on its own when she falls in love. Note that all Hibiki told her during her attempts and failures to run 50 meters was that everything would be all right and that she could do it. He didn't tell her to tuck her long gym skirt up into her shorts; she decided on her own that she needed to do that in order to run. Her girlfriends are surprised that she succeeded when that's all that Hibiki-*sensei* whispered in her ear. He was instructed to teach her by adhering to the school's motto of *Ai Isshin*. He does so, but it seems that no one is prepared for the logical consequences of adhering to such a motto, least of all Hibiki himself. We should also notice that Hibiki and Fuuko are completely misunderstanding each other's thoughts when they first meet. Hibiki is thinking about how archaic and inappropriate the school's gym uniform is, but Fuuko-*chan* is thinking that Hibiki-*sensei* must think that she looks like a very slow student. This is the first of several instances where they have different internal thoughts than what they believe each other is thinking or feeling.
- **Hibiki:** Hibiki is presented as a young, adult male who has newly graduated from college with a degree in teaching physical education. However, we are shown that this is not a complete indication of his true nature. It's quite common for songs to convey additional symbolic meanings to audiences. The opening song for this show includes lyrics that describe Hibiki as a man who has retained the adolescent nature of his boyish heart. He may be an adult physically, but there are still questions of life that he is just as mystified about as his adolescent students because, in many ways, he's still an adolescent at heart despite his physical age and appearance.

- **Miho:** As *Miho-chan* is telling her girlfriends about her model *kare*, *Fuuko-chan* sighs and wonders how she'll ever be able to chase after someone if she ever does fall in love because she is by far the clumsiest and least athletic girl in the entire school. *Miho-chan* reassures her by telling her that, when the time comes, her lack of physical ability won't matter because her body will automatically move on its own. This important point will be shown at least three times during the story, most importantly during the climax.
- **Principal:** The Principal appears to be a very harsh, strict, traditional, woman who detests men of all types. However, the climax of the story reveals a bit more of her past and why she currently feels the way she does.
- **Vice-Principal:** The Vice-Principal of the school seems to be an attractive, aggressive young woman who fully embraces the Principal's negative views about males of all types. However, the character profiles reveal that she's actually a divorced mother with a daughter in first grade. It's implied that she feels the way she does due to her prior relationship, but no one knows about the underlying motivation behind her feelings and behavior.

Vending machines: Vending machines can be found all across Japan and dispense a wide variety of goods. These products include everything from hot and cold drinks such as juice, coffee, and tea to restricted items such as beer. You can even find machines that dispense condoms or collectible items such as trading cards.

Episode 02: Forbidden Narrow Eyeliner

Bakemono / Yurei: Stories of ghosts and supernatural monsters are popular in many cultures, and telling haunting stories is a popular pastime amongst many young people around the world. Traditional Japanese *Shinto* beliefs in natural spirits throughout all of existence lead to stories of spirits possessing various locations due to their energies being tied to the events that occur there. Popular locations for such stories include schools, especially older school buildings, hospitals, *onsen* or older, traditional resort areas, and various shrines, temples, and natural areas that are considered to be sacred. One traditional challenge for Japanese kids during summer trips is to spend the night telling ghost stories and then hike in pairs along a predetermined path in the dark to see if they have the courage to complete the course. Fuuko-chan believes in supernatural spirits, but her girlfriends do not. We should also notice that the girls' discussion shows Seiko-chan expressing her negative views about males despite the fact that she has never really been able to interact with guys. Obviously, Seiko-chan's views are based on things she's overheard from other people, including what she's been taught at the school by the Principal, Vice-Principal, and possibly other faculty members.

Feminine lifestyle / Make-up preparation: We have a chance to see Hibiki's first introduction to the daily routine of many women and how it differs from his prior routine as a man. His first impression is that it's a big hassle to be a woman, but we will be able to compare this to his feelings later in the story as he learns more about the female perspective on life and various female activities. In fact, we have a chance to see him hamming it up as a woman in front of a mirror when he stays overnight at the girl's dorm, but calling himself a fool for behaving in such a way. This is an early indication of how various enjoyable activities are available to him as a woman even though they are difficult or forbidden to him as a man.

Hentai / Sukebei: The original Japanese dialogue in this episode contains both of these terms. These Japanese words have become known in the English world, especially the former, but their English usage is usually inaccurate compared to the original Japanese usage, so it's probably worthwhile to clarify their meaning. The subtitles use the word 'pervert' for both terms, but that word might convey a bit different meaning to some people than the behavior being addressed in the context of this story. The word *sukebei* generally refers to a 'lecher' or someone exhibiting 'lecherous behavior,' but it can also refer to 'greed.' However, the term *hentai* is much more widely misunderstood and misused by English speakers. The usage of the term was popularized through piracy of various Japanese properties and because many people wanted to use Japanese terms to show their knowledge of the subject matter. Unfortunately, this leads to misuse of the Japanese language, misrepresentation of the art forms, and misunderstanding of the terminology. Most of the English usage of the term is inaccurate, and many instances of the use of the term in the English market would see other terms used in the original Japanese market. *Hentai* is often used as an equivalent to the English word 'adult,' meaning 'adults only material' or 'sexually explicit material.' This English usage of the term is quite common because the English market, especially the American market, tends to classify everything that has explicit

sexuality as 'adults only,' and assumes that anything with explicit sexuality cannot be story and character driven. This comes from certain Western historical, religious influences that state that sex is sinful. However, not all human cultures have, or have had, similar historical or religious influences, nor do all human cultures embrace the idea that stories with explicit sexuality cannot be story and character driven. In any event, this type of interpretation of *hentai* is not the same as the Japanese meaning of the term. Literally, *hentai* means 'abnormal,' or perhaps 'deviant.' It can refer to sexual paraphilias, or 'sexual perversion' of some type, or to some type of psychological disorder that is considered to be deviant from the norm in society. It certainly does not mean that any and all sexually explicit material is *hentai*, per se, nor does it mean that sexuality is inherently 'perverted' or 'sinful.' Of course, the contextual usage of such terminology in specific circumstances tends to be subject to individual values. That is why we see Fujio-*chan* using such terms for Koji and Kochi, but Fuuko-*chan* does not. We'll refer to this issue in Episode 06 when the students begin fighting with each other. For now, we should notice that Ruru-*san* is quite strict about Koji and Kochi harassing the schoolgirls. Such behavior is a crime, after all, and Ruru-*san* does not want any problematic events to smear Gochiso's reputation. Of course, Hibiki cannot believe that an average salary man or an elderly guy could be guilty of such behavior. We shall see that these two tenants will continually cause Ruru-*san* to chase after them to punish them for their harassing activities, but that they'll also prove helpful to the students and Hibiki in a couple of instances.

Dolls: In Japanese, small stuffed dolls are called *nuigurumi*. We see that part of Kochi's obsession with Fuuko-*chan* is a collection of *nuigurumi* made to look like Fuuko.

Opening / Ending credits: It's quite common for songs to be used to convey additional information about the story and characters to the audience. The opening song focuses on the relationship between Hibiki and Fuuko-*chan*, as well as certain aspects of their respective characters. The ending song is about the feelings of budding adolescent romance, and is sung by the four main heroines of the story, Fuuko-*chan* and her girlfriends. Except for the first and last episodes, each episode's opening credits begin with scenes of the story from that episode. This is a bit unusual for *anime* productions. Also, the English release does not subtitle the writing on the chalkboard in the final scene in the opening where Fuuko-*chan* is sitting alone in the classroom. The writing says, "*Wai! Natsuyasumi da~i!!*" which means, "Yippee! It's summer break!!"

Punishment: After Koji and Kochi are caught harassing the girls, Ruru-*san* makes them wear plaques apologizing for their behavior and promising to never do it again so that everyone can see their open proclamation of guilt and apology. This is one Japanese method to reprimand individuals who transgress against social rules. The Japanese legal system stresses reparative rather than punitive damages, and focuses on the harmony of society rather than concepts about individual rights.

School assembly / Male & Female speech: Hibiki introduces himself as a new *kyoushi* of physical education. It's quite common for the school year to begin with some type of assembly where students are encouraged to do their best, etc. It's a perfect opportunity for a new *kyoushi* to be introduced to the students and other faculty, too. We will see another example of a special assembly at the climax of the story.

However, Hibiki almost gives away his true, male identity by using the word '*ore*' to refer to himself. Japanese uses certain speech patterns for male and female speech, and '*ore*' is a very rough, informal male pronoun for referring to oneself.

Shoes / Uchi / Soto: Many Westerners know that it's important to remove your shoes when entering a building in Japan. There are indoor slippers or shoes for you to wear. You change at the entrance, and change back to your outdoor shoes when you leave. For example, we see the girls at the dorm wearing slippers while indoors. This is just one of the core elements that define Japanese cultural identity, and relates to the concepts socializing people to *uchi* and *soto*, or 'inside' and 'outside.' A basic idea of these elements is that the *uchi*, or 'inside,' is a place of cleanliness and must be maintained as such, while the *soto*, or 'outside,' is unclean in various ways. It's important to understand that these concepts are not restricted to the ideas of being physically indoors or outdoors, but are related to the Japanese socialization of being part of, or separate from, any particular group, and include concepts about cleanliness of the body and spirit. In any event, this is why Fujio-*chan* shouts to Fuuko-*chan* to bring her her shoes while Seiko-*chan* and Miho-*chan* drag her out of Gochiso in order to get to school before the second chime rings for the beginning of the school day. Fujio-*chan* and the others had removed their shoes in order to take the shortcut through Gochiso and, in Fujio-*chan*'s case, to confront the suspected pervert(s).

Sword blocking: Hibiki parries the downward slice of Rura-*san*'s *kempo* sword during his make-up preparation by catching her sword between his hands. This is supposed to be one of the most difficult moves in swordplay defense.

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- **Fuuko and Akira**: While Aoki and Iwaya are buying pencil lead and test hints from Ruru-*san*'s school supplies shop in Gochiso, we see Akira watching the approach of Fuuko-*chan* and her girlfriends. He quickly but calmly urges the guys to continue on their way to school. His unspoken reason is because he doesn't want to face Fuuko-*chan*. This is one strategy he employs in order to avoid dealing with his true feelings for her.
- **Hibiki and Fuuko**: The climax of this episode shows Fuuko-*chan*'s faith in the basically good nature of males being shaken by Kochi's obsession with her and her shock at meeting Hibiki in his pajamas while he's still wearing his bra. The latter experience leads the students, especially the girls, to always call him 'Bra-Man' ever afterwards. While Hibiki-*sensei* is walking to school with Fuuko the next morning, he tries to reassure her about the varied nature of males when she questions him as to whether or not all guys are like the Gochiso tenants. She chooses to believe that guys must really be good people at heart, after all, but that decision will eventually be tested to its limits.
- **Tenant / Kyoushi**: It's important to notice how the students differ radically in their treatment of Hibiki as their female *sensei* versus their view of him as a male tenant of Gochiso. The former is well-loved by both the boys and the

girls in class, but the latter is viewed with great suspicion and distrust by the girls, and disinterest and disgust by the guys. Despite the fact that the students view these people as two separate individuals, they're actually one and the same person. What does this say about our treatment of other people? This is one of the most important points that the story attempts to drive home.

Episode 03: Selfish Blush Magic

Dolls: Ruru-san has a *nuigurumi* of the Principal, but why would Ruru-san have such an item?

Human nature: After Hibiki's first attempt to have the students choose someone other than Fuuko as their class volunteer, we see him brooding over the issue that night while he tries to decide what to do about it. When Ruru-san questions him, he asks whether or not kids at that age are selfish by nature. Ruru-san grimly explains that it has nothing to do with age, and that all human beings are selfish. We might want to argue with this assertion, but the facts of the horrible injustices in today's world and throughout human history would make it difficult to refute Ruru-san's assertion.

School life: This episode has scenes where we see the way that different teachers rotate through the homeroom for different classes, and any materials they need are brought to the class from a storage area. Specifically, the social studies *sensei* comes to the homeroom to teach her class. The maps she needs are brought to the class, and then returned to storage once the class is over. We also see Fuuko-chan returning science tools, but a science class would probably be held in a different room than the homeroom, at least for laboratory experiments.

Sitting / Japanese versus Western styles: The Principal's daily morning meeting with the female faculty requires everyone to sit in the room in traditional Japanese style while she recites a point that she has chosen in order to offer support for her views about the superiority of women in the teaching profession and the proper roles and behaviors for women in their lives. Many younger Japanese people have become so accustomed to sitting at Western-style tables and chairs that they find it very difficult to sit in traditional Japanese style. This is why Hibiki complains about his feet falling asleep after the faculty's morning ritual. This is a common result for many younger Japanese people who sit in a traditional style for any length of time.

Tatami / Shouji / Fusuma: Traditional Japanese rooms have floors of *tatami* ('straw mats') and *shouji* or *fusuma* ('sliding doors'). We see this in the school's faculty morning meeting room where they have their morning ritual with the Principal and Vice-Principal. This would probably be a bit unusual in modern Japanese schools, and we can see that the other rooms in the school have Western-style doors and floors. It's another indication that the Principal is a conservative, traditional Japanese woman.

Tatemaie / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemaie/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Ai Isshin / Classmates group:** Hibiki-*sensei* strongly reprimands the entire class for their lack of cooperation at helping each other out in doing various school tasks and community activities that are assigned to the school. Such behavior is not conducive to the important Japanese socialization of individual members becoming part of various groups. In this case, the group

in question is the homeroom class. The hypocritical result of the Principal's policies versus the school motto, *Ai Isshin*, is clearly shown in the background as the camera pans up his height while he's severely lecturing the students about their lack of genuine caring for each other. They know the words of the motto, but their hearts do not understand its meaning and their behaviors are not governed by its principles. The students are being taught to be selfish and discriminatory by the Principal's policies regardless of any positive intentions of the motto. When Hibiki-*sensei* singles out Fuuko-*chan* to come with him to practice the vaulting horse and leaves the rest of the students to ponder their selfish behavior, Fuuko apologizes to the other students as she leaves with him. Standing out in such a way is discouraged in Japan. However, the students are forced to consider what he has told them, and learn that he is quite right about their selfishness. The girls decide to help her by wearing the bloomer gym shorts at school so that no one will feel too embarrassed, and Akira's feelings for Fuuko coupled with his popularity with his classmates, especially the other boys, allows him to encourage them to cooperate and behave while the girls wear the bloomer gym shorts for their gym class activities. Resolution of the issue occurs and everyone remains roughly equal; this is the desired outcome for issues in Japanese society.

- **Ba-Ba:** Ruru-*san* becomes more mysterious by hang gliding off the hilltop to catch Koji and Kochi before they can spy on the schoolgirls wearing bloomer gym shorts. Ruru-*san*'s hang glider shows a painted image of a sexy, busty, bikini-clad girl called 'Ba-Ba.' *Ba-Ba* is a casual, often insulting, moniker for an elderly woman. In Japanese folktales, a *Ba-Ba* is usually representative of death and evil, similar to the old woman in the Western fairy tale of *Hanzel & Gretel*. The question for the audience to consider is why Ruru-*san* would have such a label on the hang glider, and why the label would be associated with such a sexy, buxom young girl. The answer is related to the reality of Ruru-*san*, and we'll learn about that at the climax of the story.
- **Buruma / Bloomer:** Borrowed from the English term 'bloomer,' this item is the standard, modern Japanese gym shorts for girls. The Principal's policies require girls to wear long, pleated skirts that are completely inappropriate for physical activities, exercises, and sports. As Hibiki-*sensei* observes at the end of the episode, such restrictive clothes can also cause a restrictive heart and mind, and vice versa. Should girls be forced to wear restrictive clothing that is inappropriate for certain activities in order to discourage guys from becoming sexually aroused by them? We can probably agree that this is not a good policy, and that girls should be free to wear whatever they freely choose to wear for certain tasks or occasions. Of course, the same policy would apply to guys. In reality, the standards for this type of policy change across cultures and over time. Regardless of specific policy, it's important for girls (and guys) to be aware of the potential message that any type of outfit or image presents to others, whether the message is sexually alluring, unprofessional behavior, or some other unintended message. For example, many work environments have very specific restrictions on attire regardless of an individual's skills, and even interviews are considered to be very strict

with respect to appropriate attire. An additional element that we see in this episode is that Hibiki begins to appreciate how a girl might feel when she generates unwanted sexual interest from guys. Once again, he's able to understand life from a female perspective, and realize that there are both positive and negative aspects to the feminine experience.

- **Fuuko and Akira:** After Hibiki-*sensei's* first attempt at insisting that the students choose a different person than Fuuko-*chan* as the volunteer member from their class, Fujio-*chan* and Miho-*chan* are both concerned about their lack of cooperation and assistance in such school tasks. While Fuuko-*chan* is declining their help by reminding them that they are both starters on the softball team and have to practice, we see Akira glancing back and observing the exchange between the girls. Unlike Fujio-*chan* and Miho-*chan*, he didn't say anything, but the nonverbal message that he is concerned about Fuuko-*chan* and wants to help her out is being presented so that the audience understands his true feelings. We see a similar scene the following morning.
- **Hibiki and Fuuko:** Fuuko-*chan* doesn't want to associate with Hibiki as 'Bra-Man' despite her decision to view guys as being basically good at heart. She has no idea that 'Bra-Man' is the same person as the *sensei* who has helped her so much already and who will continue to teach her so much more. What would she do and how would she feel if she knew the truth? How do any of us react when we learn the truth about other people when the reality differs from our preconceived notions and prejudices?

Episode 04: Delicate Tear Concealer

Cleaning duties: This is the first episode that clearly depicts some of the school's sexist policies against the boys and what such policies are teaching the girls. In fact, we could say that these policies are just as sexist to the girls as they are to the boys by simply considering the genuine desire of girls who want to do things that go against the policies. The Principal and Vice-Principal delegate all school cleaning duties to the boys and frown on girls performing such tasks. In this episode, we see that the pool must be cleaned and prepared for use by all students during the following month. Hibiki helps the boys out with the duty, but is taken aback by the response he gets from the girls when he suggests that they should help, too, especially since they'll also be using the pool. Miho-*chan* states that only the boys should be doing such tasks, and Seiko-*chan* mutters that the Vice-Principal wouldn't like it if the girls were caught doing men's work. The students have been taught sexism, prejudice, and discrimination, and they've learned the lessons very well. This is one of many important scenes during the climax of the story when the students and their parents are reminded of what Hibiki has taught them.

Parent-Student Day and Marathon: This episode offers us our primary opportunity to meet the parents of the various students. As we can see, there's some justification for the old saying, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." The parents' participation in this event will be one of several important scenes during the climax of the story. Also, days for parents to visit their children at school and witness the education that their offspring are receiving is generally considered to be an important event during the school year. Notice that many families have both parents attend rather than leaving the task to only one parent. Active parental involvement in a child's education is important in Japan, and many businesses, institutions, and other organizations try to answer this social rule as much as possible. It's also important to note that the recent increases in the age of marriage and divorce rates, as well as the aging of the population, requires modern Japanese society to adjust to the reality that many children are not from traditional, two parent homes where the father works and the mother runs the household. For example, Fuuko-*chan*'s mother died when she was six years old and her father has raised her alone ever since. She seldom sees him because he has to work, and he can't take part in many of the school events that are intended to encourage parental participation.

Tatemae / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemae/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Fuuko and Akira:** We have a brief scene where Akira is helping his father back to his feet after his father tripped while running the marathon. As Fuuko-*chan* approaches them, running steadily to complete the marathon course, Akira blushes and rushes on ahead, leaving his father standing alone.
- **Fuuko:** Fuuko-*chan* is well-liked as the kindest, most soft-hearted student at the school, but this is the episode that reveals exactly why she always has a

smile on her face and always tries to remain happy and positive for everyone around her. We learn that Fuuko's mother died when she was only six years old, and her mother's dying wish was that Fuuko-*chan* would always wear a smile for everyone. Fuuko's smile was her mother's favorite thing in the entire world, and Fuuko-*chan* wants to always honor her mother's memory and dying wish because she loved her very much. We also see that this goal is sometimes quite difficult for Fuuko to achieve.

- **Hibiki and Fuuko:** The marathon that Hibiki runs for the parent-student day is the second example of Miho-*chan*'s prediction to Fuuko in Episode 01 that Fuuko's body would move on its own and run with no problems when Fuuko truly fell in love. Of course, a marathon is a slow-paced run, but it's highly unlikely that Fuuko-*chan* would have been able to attempt such an event prior to Hibiki giving her the self-confidence that she'd always lacked, and the emotional desire to achieve goals that she'd always thought were impossible.
- **Parent visit / Marathon:** Miho-*chan* is embarrassed by her mother's behavior right from the beginning of the parent visit, but this escalates even further once the parents change into their training outfits in order to join their kids in the marathon event. Despite Miho's embarrassment over her mother's behavior, we can easily see where Miho-*chan* gets her open attitude about her own sexuality. This observation about Miho-*chan*'s general behavior and how her parents have influenced her also applies to the other students, of course. It isn't always a carryover from parent to child, either. For example, we see Makoto-*chan* chiding her father that he smokes too much. Notice the competition between Fujio-*chan* and Akira, and that they're actually quite evenly matched in many ways. Notice that Seiko-*chan*'s mother, like the Principal, comes to the event dressed in a traditional kimono, indicating that Seiko's family adheres to many traditional Japanese values, particularly amongst the female members of the family.
- **Principal / Vice-Principal / Director:** Many of the exchanges between the Director, the Principal, and the Vice-Principal during this episode are good examples of *tatemaehonne*. Fortunately for audiences who are not used to subtlety in communications, the individuals are fairly obvious about the differences between what they state openly and what they truly feel inwardly. Specifically, it's quite apparent that the polite speech being exchanged between the Director and the Principal is only a formality, but that their true feelings for each other are extremely antagonistic.

Volume 2 — 2nd Quarter Lesson: Pop Quiz

Episode 05: Wicked Dream Foundation

Bowing: In Japan, bowing is used for many interactions. In this episode, Hibiki-sensei bows deeply and for a noticeable length of time when he apologizes for the male tendency to always look at a girl's breasts. Bows are also used for other purposes such as greetings. The depth or specific angle of inclination of the bow and the length of time it is held communicates various different levels of respect, apology, or other social factors. Generally speaking, the person who is bowing is putting themselves at a lower level of social interaction when they bow more deeply and for a longer length of time, and they should always maintain their bow until the person in a higher social position straightens from their own bow. We'll see another example of bowing during the climax of the story in Episode 12 when Hibiki's true identity is revealed by the Vice-Principal.

Female self-image / Bust size / Bowing: The climax of the physical exam scene conveys an extremely powerful, positive message. When Hibiki-sensei is summoned to the exam to deal with Fuuko-chan and discovers that she has obviously gone overboard in using breast pads to enhance her natural bust measurement, he's taken aback for a moment, but he offers all the girls understanding of how they feel. He explains that guys are naturally drawn to look at a girl's chest, and he bows deeply in apology for their behavior. However, after he apologizes for the general male behavior regarding a girl's bust size, he asks the girls if they really want to cater to this behavior or value themselves in such a fashion. This is an extremely important point that he is teaching them. Breast enhancement is one of the most popular and profitable forms of plastic surgery in America, and we've exported the practice and its accompanying negative rationale to other countries, including Japan. As Hibiki-sensei points out to Fuuko-chan and the other girls, what matters isn't the size of your breasts, but rather what lies behind them. He tells Fuuko-chan that she has a heart filled with many things, and that he's sure it will grow even bigger over time. This is a far more important element as a critical measure of her self-image and defining point of who she is as a person than her physical breast measurement. He's teaching the girls that it is far better to be true to who they are as individuals than to attempt to define their self-image by superficial measures that someone else has decided are worthwhile.

Japanese baths: Bathing in Japan is a bit different than America and various other countries. The proper method is to wash your body thoroughly, rinse off the soap, and then climb into the tub to soak in the hot water. Notice that the guys don't seem to be too upset when Ruru-san opens the door to their bath.

Kinpatsu / Patsukin: The Principal is from an older generation, and she doesn't really understand the Vice-Principal's reference to 'hacking' into computer systems. This is why she confuses 'hacking' with *patsukin*. The subtitles explain that *patsukin* means 'blonde hair'; it's usually written or said as *kinpatsu*, though. The Vice-Principal's reaction is understandable since she has dyed her hair blonde. The Principal would probably have greater understanding of proper calligraphy strokes, *ikebana* ('flower arranging'), or tea ceremony, while the Vice-Principal or

many younger Japanese might not understand many of the details of such traditional Japanese cultural elements.

Males and bloody noses: A common comedic ploy for Japanese stories is to have guys get bloody noses whenever they have an erotic experience. The comedy can be enhanced by showing larger flows of blood from the nose. Greater levels of arousal cause a greater flow of blood throughout the body, so this visual comedy is supposed to represent a guy's blood boiling and overheating. This is why Koji gets a slight bloody nose when Kochi calls him at work to suggest that they attempt to spy on the girls' physical exams. Evidently, there is no parallel comedic ploy to represent female arousal despite the fact that females experience a similar state of increased blood flow during arousal.

Physical exam: Students have regular physical exams to verify their health and growth. Notice that, at first, Hibiki doesn't understand why such a fuss is being made about the girls' statistics. However, when the Vice-Principal insists that he undergo a physical exam, he suddenly understands why the girls don't really care for their private information being generally known. This is another example of Hibiki gaining some insight into the issues of female life, albeit in a rather unusual way and for extraordinary reasons.

Tatemaie / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemaie/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Akira:** Akira appears to be indifferent to the physical exam, as well as Aoki and Iwaya attempting to gather the girls' statistics. However, we see him investigate the faculty's defensive measures and plan a way to gain the information, anyway. Aoki and Iwaya are surprised. What they don't understand is that he has his own reasons for doing this, and he's actually planning to thwart their efforts, but he's doing so by using his own methods. He wants to thwart their efforts because he doesn't want them to learn Fuuko-chan's personal information. They do get Miho-chan's data. However, if we consider how proud Miho-chan is of her physical proportions, we can conclude that they might have been able to get it just by asking her nicely. Also, notice that when Akira is talking to Fujio-chan after Fuuko-chan faints due to stress over her own petite bust size, he ridicules the fact that Fuuko-chan has developed such an extreme hang-up over something so silly, and repeatedly states that she wouldn't be in the running for a 'nice body' contest anyway. He doesn't want anyone to know his true feelings for her, so he can't very well state the truth by saying that he loves her just the way she is.
- **Fujio and Akira:** Although Fujio-chan's crush on Akira has been hinted at in earlier episodes, this episode is the first time that it is shown clearly. We see Fujio-chan confront Aoki and Iwaya about their plans, but Akira intervenes. It's interesting to note that he claims that she could never beat him because she is a girl, despite the fact that they were shown to have roughly equal physical abilities in the marathon. Fujio responds by yelling that she's the one who's pulling punches. In fact, the climax of the story

shows that she may very well be telling the truth, and that she may actually be slightly stronger than Akira. In this instance, she certainly has her own reasons for pulling her punches against him. She wasn't expecting him to intervene, and she has a crush on him that she's avoiding dealing with, just as he's avoiding dealing with his feelings for Fuuko-*chan*.

- **Fujio:** Fujio-*chan* defiantly denies that there was any guy she liked when Miho-*chan* challenges her on the topic while the girls are debating the importance of bust size in the sauna. Fujio-*chan* is obviously surprised and upset when she demands to know if Akira really thinks that a girl with a 'nice body' is preferable to one who is smaller built, and Akira defiantly states "Of course." This leads Fujio to try using pads to enhance her own bust measurement, and ruefully chide herself for doing so simply to impress the guy she likes. Miho-*chan*'s earlier prediction that Fujio-*chan* would care about her bust size once she falls in love is correct, but this time it's not a positive inspiration. Of course, what Fujio doesn't know is that Akira's answer was an effort to misdirect her and everyone else from noticing the fact that he actually has a crush on the most petite girl in the school, Fuuko-*chan*.
- **Fuuko and Akira:** Akira stops the data gathering by claiming that he has to return his father's spying equipment by the afternoon. However, he actually had the entire event planned out in order to thwart Aoki and Iwaya from gathering the girls' data, particularly Fuuko-*chan*'s.

Episode 06: Fragile Powder Puzzle

Digital mosaic: During the TV news spot at the beginning of the episode, we see the teacher being interviewed with his face obscured by a digital mosaic. This is a common editing technique that is used for various reasons in order to avoid showing something that the audience is not supposed to see for one reason or another. It has become especially common in sexually explicit products. In the latter instance, it should be pointed out that the various laws and processes that Japan has adopted for the presentation of sexually explicit material have been largely due to the Japanese concern for their image in the outside world, especially in the English market. These laws and processes did not come about through Japanese culture itself, but rather were implemented in order to convey images of Japan and the Japanese people that were defined as "civilized" to foreign people. It's ironic that the modern global marketplace is witness to English consumers complaining about the use of such techniques when such products are exported from their native Japan, but it was actually the people from other countries and their ethnocentric views about what was "appropriate" and "inappropriate" that caused the Japanese to adopt such standards in the first place.

Hanazono / Lingerie shop / Girl time: Hibiki is shopping for a swimsuit but winds up buying a bra in a lingerie shop while he's browsing through the stores. He is thinking that the shop is a *hanazono* ('flower garden'). Such a term is often used to describe extremely feminine products or elements. This is another example of Hibiki having an opportunity to honestly enjoy experiences as a woman that he cannot enjoy as a man, at least not without other people viewing him as abnormal. A similar observation applies to Hibiki's experiences with Fuuko-*chan* and her girlfriends (excluding Miho-*chan*) later in the day when they happen to meet and wind up spending the afternoon shopping together. He has a lot of fun trying out various cosmetics, perfumes, accessories, and other feminine products, as well as simply spending time with the girls. He could never do this as a guy, at least not as far as the girls accepting him as another female and communicating with him in a woman-to-woman fashion. Despite what the girls say at the end of the episode, there are guys who honestly enjoy various feminine products because of an appreciation of the aesthetics of such products or for other reasons, and there are guys who prefer interacting with girls rather than guys. Likewise, there are many girls who enjoy masculine products for various reasons, as well as interacting with guys rather than girls. Unfortunately, it's considered far more positive and appropriate for girls to show an interest in masculine products than vice versa.

Katsudon: This Japanese dish consists of a pork cutlet served with egg and vegetables over a bowl of rice. Offering *katsudon* to a suspect is a traditional police method of gaining a confession from the individual being questioned. Japanese society focuses on reparative rather than punitive resolution to crime. This means that apology and admittance of transgression is much more important a factor in the maintenance of social harmony, low crime rates, and low prison populations than in criminal systems where the focus is on punitive damages such as in America.

Kibasen competition / Communications: The specific competition that Hibiki has the students compete in at the pool is called *kibasen* ('cavalry battle') and is a

traditional competition played out by many Japanese idols in variety shows and events. It's supposed to be symbolic of ancient cavalry battles. The goal is to remove all the caps from the heads of your opponents. Also, the scenes leading up to this competition shows many of the students struggling to convey their true intentions about the arguments they're having with the other students, but being unable to communicate their true feelings. These scenes point out one of the drawbacks to Japanese communications styles. Specifically, Japanese society tends to rely on a lot of nonverbal, indirect, ambiguous communications, and the result can sometimes be misunderstandings and an inability to accurately convey the true state of events. In addition, Japanese communications rely on an understanding of the relative social statuses of the individuals involved. It's quite possible for a lack of communication to take place at an initial meeting because neither person can communicate properly without knowing their social status relative to the other person. This is why *meishi* ('business cards') are so critical in Japanese communications efforts. The cards are a device to immediately communicate the important details of an individual to someone else, including the individual's social status, so that communication can begin.

Offices in Japan: All the teachers share one common faculty office with rows of desks lined up facing each other. The Vice-Principal shares this office with them, her desk placed orthogonally to theirs at the end of the room. This is a very standard Japanese office arrangement. The immediate supervisor and the employees directly under him (or her) would have a similar floor plan in most businesses.

Public displays of affection / Kissing: We observed in Episode 01 that Japanese society tends to suppress exuberant public displays of affection, including kissing and hugging, even amongst family members or intimate acquaintances. Dates for young people in Japan are usually a matter of a couple going to a movie, going out to eat, going to the park, going to a zoo, having fun at an amusement park, or similar activities. Miho-*chan* lies to her girlfriends about kissing her *kare* on their date because she's jealous of the fun that they had with Hibiki-*sensei*, and because her girlfriends tend to look up to her as the most mature member of their group. Kissing her *kare* him would be a very big step in her relationship with him, and that's why the others are speechless when she states that she did it.

Shounan boy: Reference to a surfer bum who frequents Shounan, a coastal area in Japan.

Subjective terms: In the original Japanese dialogue, Seiko-*chan* refers to Miho-*chan* as a *sukebei-onna*, or 'nasty female'. Seiko's use of this phrase is meant to be an insult and to criticize Miho-*chan* for her openly sexual behavior because, in Seiko's view, 'good girls' don't behave in an openly sexual manner, and any girl who does must be 'nasty.' Miho-*chan* does not share that viewpoint, though. Seiko uses a similar criticism of Fujio-*chan* for being so physical in her behavior because, in Seiko's view, girls shouldn't behave in such an aggressive, violent manner. Please see the note about *hentai / sukebei* from Episode 02 for additional information about the use of the term *sukebei*.

Tatemaie / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemaie/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the

story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Ai Isshin:** While the students are being interviewed by Hibiki-sensei after their food fight, the camera clearly shows Hibiki and each student facing each other across the table with the school's motto, *Ai Isshin*, clearly seen on the wall across from them. This is a clear but indirect portrayal of the utter hypocrisy between the Principal's stated motto and the reality of events taking place at the school. If the students had learned how to live according to the intentions of the motto, class disintegration would be impossible.
- **Crows cawing:** Notice that there is a brief scene just prior to Hibiki's discussion of his shopping trip for a swimsuit with Ruru-san where two crows are shown flying over Gochiso while cawing. This scene occurs immediately after Koji is shown coaching Fukae and Iwaya at surfing, and querying them about the timing and class attendance for the opening of the school pool. Showing crows cawing in this way is often done to indicate a state of total idiocy coupled with completely blissful unawareness of being an idiot. We can see how this applies to Koji and Kochi, but it also applies to Hibiki due to his refusal to admit his genuine interest in being feminine.
- **Fujio and Akira:** When Fujio-chan sees that Fukae and Iwaya are learning to surf, she expresses an interest in trying it out, too, but Akira essentially ignores her. She's struggling to find a way to be open with her feelings for him, but he's oblivious of her feelings because of his own struggle with his feelings for Fuuko-chan.
- **Gestures — 'Me':** While shopping in the lingerie shop, Hibiki is welcomed to the store by the female clerk. At first, he doesn't realize that she's talking to him because he's still not accustomed to being addressed openly as a woman in such circumstances. He points his index finger at his nose and asks, "Me?" In Japan, the way to refer to oneself is to point the index finger at your own nose, similar to the American gesture of stabbing your thumb at your own chest.
- **Gestures — 'Being fired from your job':** While Hibiki is explaining to Ruru-san about his class disintegration problem, Ruru-san offers him the pistol to resolve the issue. He declines, explaining that if he resorted to that, he would suffer a specific consequence. He does not state the consequence, but merely makes a gesture with the edge of his hand slicing across his neck. This is implying that his head would be chopped off. This gesture is used in Japan to indicate being fired from your job.
- **Postures:** Hibiki begins questioning his own self-image and identity, and asks Ruru-san if he's changed. Ruru-san points out his sitting posture and suggests that he should be more honest with himself. He has unconsciously adopted a feminine sitting position without even thinking about it or being aware of it. He did not do this when he stayed overnight at the girl's dorm in Episode 02. He has become very accustomed to feminine behaviors and interests, or perhaps he always had them but suppressed them due to social and cultural restrictions on exhibiting his true self.

Episode 07: Longed for Complexion Toner

Beauty and Love: We have to notice that Director Tokugawa's nephew appears to be a nice, handsome, wealthy, and successful young man. However, the love of his life is not some famous idol, model, or movie star, but rather a girl named Emi who is evidently from an average family background and who appears to be quite average-looking, perhaps even a bit stout, judging by the picture he sends Hibiki-sensei and that we see at the end of the episode. This says a lot about beauty being in the eye of the beholder, but it's also true that aesthetics vary across human cultures and throughout human history. For example, the aesthetics in modern Japan are not the same as they were during the Heian Era of one thousand years ago. In this story, we see an instance of a man, the Director's nephew, who was being pushed into an *omiai* by his relatives against his true wishes, although Hibiki was coerced into it, too. Please refer to the entry for *omiai / miai* in the analysis for this episode for additional information about this cultural element. It's important to remember that changes in modern Japanese society have resulted in the younger generations of people marrying for love rather than familial duties or any type of practical concerns about continuing the *ie*. Considering the correlated statistics regarding divorce rates and other factors, it would not be a good idea to conclude that marriage for romance is better than marriage by arrangement and duty. The best we can conclude is that there are plusses and minuses to both methods.

Homosexuality: Homosexuality is often dealt with in Japanese stories. In recent years, it's become easier for homosexuals to openly state their orientation, and there are certain districts and businesses that specifically cater to them. However, there's still a general feeling in Japanese society that homosexuality is not part of the group that constitutes all of Japanese society. On the other hand, sexuality and sexual orientation are generally considered to be taboo topics of conversations in various Asian cultures, including Japan, so it's possible for young people to experiment and discover their own interests without open stigmatism from society, as long as they don't openly proclaim that their orientation and interest differs from the perceived norm. This is a bit similar to the American military's policy of "don't ask, don't tell".

Omiai / Miai: This is the formal Japanese custom of meeting a potential partner for the purpose of engagement and marriage. The arrangement is handled by a third party who is acquainted with both of the parties involved, and who is responsible for thoroughly verifying that such a match would be viewed positively by all associated individuals, including members of each person's immediate and extended families. The event tends to be viewed as being more important for the woman than for the man, at least as far as deciding to agree to marry the other person. Sabotaging an *omiai* does happen occasionally, at least in stories, so it's natural for the students to think of doing such a thing, even if it's a bit surprising that Fuuko-chan is the one who indirectly suggests the idea. Hibiki is offered a chance to experience an important event in a woman's life, including dressing up in a traditional kimono. He chides himself for getting excited, but it's quite possible that a desire to experience such things from a feminine perspective is

shared by many guys. Traditionally, there are important cultural reasons for such arrangements. The reasons deal with the all-important consideration of the continuation of the *ie*. The *ie* concept is one of the central elements of Japanese culture and society, and it's extremely complicated to explain. A basic translation might be 'house lineage,' but that really doesn't provide the detail necessary to understand the concept. Unfortunately, a genuine explanation is beyond the scope of our analysis. At any rate, Japanese youths from recent generations have embraced the Western notions of marrying for love and romance. Statistically, the same time period has seen a correlated drop in the rate of *omiai* marriages, a drop in birthrate, a rise in marriages for love, a rise in the incidence of divorce, and a rise in the businesses of matchmaking and marriage counseling.

Tatemae / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemae/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Fuuko and Akira:** Akira confronts Fuuko-*chan* about why she seems troubled, but cannot offer her any consolation about Hibiki-*sensei* possibly leaving the school. He's just concerned about Fuuko, but he can't express his concern for her properly.
- **Hibiki and Fuuko:** This episode clearly shows Fuuko-*chan*'s true feelings for Hibiki-*sensei* and the inner strength she's capable of, if necessary. She doesn't understand the pain she feels in her heart at the thought of Hibiki-*sensei* leaving the school and getting married. However, she still acts on what she feels to be the right choice even if she doesn't fully understand what she's doing or why she's doing it.
- **Student relationships:** The scenes where the students chase after the Director's nephew are filled with nonverbal communications that show the various relationships between the boys and girls. This will come up again during the school camping trip episode. Of course, the primary interaction that we should notice is between Fuuko-*chan*, Akira, and Fujio-*chan*.

Tsuchinoko: An imaginary animal that is supposed to be similar to snakes.

Vending machines: Once again, we see the ubiquitous vending machines that dispense all manner of products.

Volume 3 — 3rd Quarter Lesson: School Spirit

Episode 08: Rebellious Eyelash-Curler Boys

Sexism / Gender discrimination: Ruru-san points out to Hibiki that sexism exists no matter where you go, but Hibiki states that that's unacceptable, at least in school. As Hibiki-sensei points out to the Principal, forcing one's own values onto other people is absolutely not an education, and it's not what the goal of a *kyoushi* and *sensei* should be.

Tatemae / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemae/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Fujio and Akira:** Fujio-chan continues to try to show her feelings for Akira when he initiates the rebellion and she prepares her own food for the boys during their overnight vigil. Unfortunately, Fuuko fixes *onigiri* ('rice balls') which is much simpler and takes less time, so she meets Akira before Fujio-chan can get to the school with her own offering. Fujio-chan goes home and rouses everyone without saying anything about how she knew about the resolution of the situation.
- **Fuuko and Akira:** Fuuko-chan overhears Hibiki-sensei arguing with the Principal that the girls and boys should share the cleaning duties, and she tries to help out by taking out the waste paper to burn it in the incinerator. Akira sees her struggling with the waste basket and helps her out. He gently chides her for potentially putting herself in danger of being reprimanded for going against the policies of the Principal and Vice-Principal, and suggests that she shouldn't overdo it. She gets the impression that he doesn't like her, but of course just the opposite is the true situation. After the boys stage their protest, he chides her for bringing them food, so she continues to think that perhaps he doesn't like her much, but he shyly corrects her misimpression. He's about to confess his feelings, but Shirou's appearance at school interrupts them.
- **Hibiki and Shirou:** The rebellion by the boys is caused by Shirou's mistake, but Hibiki takes it upon himself to correct the problem in such a way that only a handful of people know the true state of affairs and the reasons for their outcome. Once again, we see that the Japanese preference is for reparative methods that reestablish harmony rather than punitive punishment. Also, we see that Koji and Kochi help resolve the situation, but wind up being arrested as a result.
- **Shirou:** Shirou has a reputation as a delinquent, but that's really only because of his general appearance and outward attitude rather than who he really is as a student and a person. He's a nice boy who has been raised alone by his older sister, but she's seldom home due to her job and efforts to support them. Makoto-chan knows his true nature, of course, which is one reason she has remained friends with him since their childhood.

Episode 09: A Midsummer's Night Sexy Gloss

Boats and Lakes: A traditional, romantic way for a boy and girl to spend some time together is to take a rowboat out on a lake. However, the boy is normally the one doing the rowing. Notice that Fujio-*chan* is the one who is actively pursuing Akira. She is the one who approaches him, and she is the one doing the rowing of the boat. She doesn't care about certain rumors that might begin circulating about her reputation or, to be more explicit than what is stated in the story, rumors that she slept with Akira and gave up her virginity to him. The fact that she's the one doing the rowing lends support to the idea that she's actually a bit physically stronger than he is, or at least knows how to apply her strength to better advantage.

Groping: During the Vice-Principal's sex education lecture with the girls, she mentions that all of them have doubtless experienced being groped at one time or another. All the girls nod their heads in agreement except for Fuuko-*chan*, who nods after she sees her classmates agree, but who obviously doesn't have a clue what the Vice-Principal is talking about. Groping and other forms of molesting is a crime in Japan, but it continues to be a problem. Aside from instances of genuine criminal abuse, it's worth keeping in mind that inadvertent contact often occurs on the trains and buses due to the sheer density of population in Japan. Japan's population is estimated at 130 million people and the estimated land mass is about the size of the American state of Montana. Unlike Montana, the land of Japan has been formed from volcanic activity, and there are relatively few areas that lend themselves to suitable living conditions. The density of population is far higher than in countries such as America. There are employees at train stations who are literally called 'tushi pushers' because of their job of packing the commuters into the train cars until no more people can be squeezed in during the rush hour commutes. Both Japan and South Korea have experimented with segregated trains, but this is not a realistic option for the entire population, nor does it address issues of same sex molestation. Awareness is the most realistic solution. There are postings in Japanese train stations that inform commuters about the criminal nature of such acts and that people who commit such crimes will be prosecuted.

Japan archipelago: Japan consists of four major islands. Honshu is the main, largest island. Kyushu and Shikoku are smaller islands lying in a roughly southerly direction from lower Honshu. Hokkaido is the northernmost island. Okinawa, where the American military base has been stationed since after WW II, is much farther to the south of the four main islands. Japanese territory includes several thousand smaller islands around the area. At her nearest point, Japan is separated from mainland Asia (South Korea) by about 120 miles.

Kansai region / Osaka / Naniwa / Kyoto: Miho-*chan* is from the Kansai area of Japan and speaks in the Kansai dialect. The Kansai area is to the west of Tokyo, and includes major cities such as Kyoto and Osaka. 'Naniwa' is an ancient name for Osaka. Japan has numerous local dialects. These dialects are not restricted to differences in accent, but include the use of different words and phrases that are not part of standard Japanese, thus occasionally making it quite difficult for people from different areas to understand each other. Of course, the schools teach standardized Japanese. This variety of dialects could be roughly compared to

America's variety such as Southern drawl, Brooklyn accent, or certain aspects of other dialects. Miho-*chan*'s dialect and accent is why the comment made by one of the guys during the school camping trip is so funny. Miho-*chan* is quite open with her sexuality and she's known as the girl with the biggest bust size in the entire school. This makes her desirable as a girlfriend on a superficial level, but the guys don't want to wind up speaking like her!

Nagoya / Kishimen noodles: Flat noodle pasta similar to fettuccini and served chilled.

This is one style of noodle pasta for which Nagoya is famous.

Okayama / Chinsukou: A local confectionary of Okinawa.

School life / School trips: Taking field trips is an eagerly anticipated event for most Japanese kids. Such trips normally take place during the second years of middle school and high school. Japan has many popular locations for such trips.

Sex education: As we mentioned previously, open discussion of sexuality and sexual issues is generally considered a taboo topic in various Asian cultures, including Japan. There are sex education classes, but these tend to focus on the basic biological facts of life. Meanwhile, there are plenty of presentations of sexuality in various forms in Japanese entertainment, plus articles in magazines and other venues that are targeted for both male and female audiences. It might be concluded that the issues surrounding this topic are another example of how the indirect, ambiguous nature of Japanese communications can be a problem in certain areas. On the other hand, we've also mentioned how young people have more freedom to experiment with their own identities and interests, as long as they do so discreetly, than people from some Western societies. It's certainly true that the Vice-Principal's version of sex education is inaccurate, and that it's intended to deliberately mislead and misinform the students about the nature of their own sexuality and romantic inclinations. On the other hand, she does point out to the girls that they have to be careful of being groped on trains, a problem that does occur on the very tightly packed trains in Japan and other Asian countries. She also points out to the boys that their mothers are always preying on their fathers because, in a traditional Japanese family, the mother has complete control of the financial income and budget of the home, and the father receives an allowance doled out by the mother based on her household budget. However, Hibiki's points about understanding the many different positive and negative elements about the person who you think you love, knowing their dreams for the future, being able to accept everything about that person, and cherishing them with your entire heart, are probably a much more mature and objective method for getting adolescents to think clearly about this issue.

Sneezing: There is a Japanese saying that says that if someone is talking about you, it will make you sneeze. This is similar to the American belief that someone talking about you will make your ears burn.

Tatemaie / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemaie/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Camping chores:** On school camping trips such as this one, the tasks are split between the boys and the girls. As we can see, the boys are usually given the more physical tasks such as putting up the tents, gathering heavy firewood, and splitting larger logs. The girls are usually responsible for tasks such as gathering kindling, preparing the food, and cooking the meals. Note that Fuuko-*chan* is terrible at food preparation and camp cooking, but Akira is quite adept at such tasks due to the time he spent in Boy Scouts. Likewise, Fujio-*chan* is the one who rows the boat when she and Akira go out on the lake at night, so it's quite possible to conclude that she is perhaps a bit stronger than he is.
- **Fujio:** There's one additional point worth noticing about Fujio-*chan* that further demonstrates a stereotypically feminine aspect of her true nature versus her reputation. She and Akira are caught in a mountain storm and take shelter in a lodge. They're both soaked to the skin. He's quite competent at starting a fire, thanks to his Boy Scout training, and he can easily see Fujio-*chan*'s lacy pink bra through her wet shirt. Most students, or at least the guys, wouldn't think that Fujio-*chan* would choose to wear such effeminate underwear, but she obviously has a far more feminine true identity than the image that most people have of her. Even her reaction of initially being unaware of what he could see and then being completely embarrassed are very feminine and unlike how most people would expect her to react.
- **Relationships:** The scenes between Fuuko-*chan* and Hibiki in this episode are really the beginning of the climax of the story. Both of them are becoming aware of their genuine feelings of love for each other. The same observation applies to the scenes between Fujio-*chan* and Akira, except that the direction of the emotions is from Fujio to Akira and from Akira to Fuuko rather than being mutually shared between Fujio and Akira. Fuuko-*chan* actually sabotages Aoki's plans to meet Hibiki-*sensei* by giving Aoki's love letter to Miho-*chan*, or at least allowing Miho-*chan* to believe it is for her. Seiko-*chan* is happy to get a love letter, but she just can't bring herself to go meet the boy who sent it. Iwaya winds up waiting alone in the rain for her to show up, but to no avail. Perhaps we can conclude that a *Yamato nadesico* ('traditional Japanese female beauty') like Seiko-*chan* might need the process of *omiai* in order to feel comfortable about meeting a boy for matchmaking purposes. Notice that Akira deliberately discourages the other boys from chasing after Fuuko-*chan*, but he won't tell them that it's because he loves her. Also, Hibiki almost reveals his secret as a male (again!) while he's talking to Miho-*chan* about Aoki's crazy behavior. Of course, we might question Miho-*chan*'s values since she claims that vacation love affairs are disposable.

Episode 10: Bemusing Love Palette

Bathrooms / Handkerchiefs: It's normal to carry a handkerchief in Japan so that you can use it after using a public or semi-public toilet. We see Akira with his handkerchief as he's leaving the restroom and meets Fujio-*chan* waiting for him outside in the hallway.

Love letters: Miho-*chan* sets up Fujio-*chan* to write a note to Akira to ask him to meet her after school. This is a standard practice, but Fujio-*chan* has no clue about how to write such a note, so Miho-*chan* has to help her out by writing almost all of it. Also, the places in stories for such a meeting are often on school rooftops, at school gates, or similar locations around the school campus.

Love symbolism / Umbrellas: Many people know of the Western use of two names within a heart symbol to represent a romantic couple. In Japan, a similar style of symbolism is used by drawing an umbrella and placing the two names under it, one on each side of the handle. The rationale behind this symbolism should become obvious upon a moment's reflection. Japan is an island archipelago that has two extra distinct seasons in addition to the usual four seasons one might think of elsewhere. The two extra seasons are for heavy rainfall and typhoon activity. Being caught in the rain without an umbrella is a perfect recipe for a romantic encounter with someone else who happens to have one. In fact, there are certain types of umbrellas that are considered to be appropriate for guys, and other types that are considered appropriate for girls, and umbrellas are a standard item at *combinis* ('convenience stores') all across Japan.

School life / Classes: This episode offers several chances to see the point we've mentioned previously about how the students have most of their classes in their homeroom, but change classrooms for certain specific classes. We see them having physical education outside, history class with the history *sensei* in their homeroom, and music in the music room after they change classrooms between history and music.

Takoyaki: A hot snack of fried octopus dumplings, usually served in boxes with small sticks to poke into the hot *tako* ('octopus'). *Takoyaki* can be coated with various sauces or flavorings to suit personal taste.

Tatemaie / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemaie/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Relationships:** Hibiki is completely unsettled by his growing realization of Fuuko-*chan*'s feelings for him, and he for her. We must notice that Hibiki and Fuuko once again mistake each other's respective thoughts while they are doing stretching routines in gym class. Despite his own distress about Fuuko-*chan*, Hibiki is just as sensitive to Fujio-*chan*'s wildly swinging moods that are being caused by her encounters with Akira. In fact, Hibiki's very much attuned to the feelings of both girls, but he's completely unaware of Akira's feelings for Fuuko. We can conclude that Hibiki's heart is much more in tune with feminine emotional states than masculine. We should notice that the

answer he offers Fujio-*chan* when she asks him why guys never think about anything is that he doesn't think that her impression is actually true, but rather that it only seems to some people that guys never think about anything. She's talking about Akira, but he's thinking of his own feelings for Fuuko. Fujio-*chan's* girlfriends are puzzled by her swinging moods, too, but Miho-*chan* and her experienced eye for romantic encounters is the one who pieces together the many nonverbal cues to figure out that Fujio-*chan* has a crush on Akira. Naturally, Miho-*chan* helps her friend set up a meeting with Akira so that Fujio-*chan* can confess her true feelings to him. In Akira's defense, he's simply too preoccupied with his own confusion about his feelings for Fuuko-*chan* and what to do about them to notice how Fujio-*chan* feels about him. In fact, he's so preoccupied that he thinks that it's Fuuko-*chan* who must have left him the note asking to meet him, and he continues to think that way until he plainly sees Fujio-*chan* at the meeting place on the school rooftop. He doesn't want to hurt Fujio-*chan*, but he has to tell her that he cannot accept her confession of love because he already loves someone else. The scene of her losing her hair ribbon in the wind as he refuses her confession and walks back into the stairway leading into the school from the roof, and how her hair is left hanging down on one side but tied up on the other by her remaining ribbon, should remind us of a bird with a broken wing or some similar type of symbolism. Meanwhile, Akira meets Fuuko-*chan* as she's searching for Fujio and, thanks to Fujio-*chan's* confession to him, finally manages to have the courage to make his own confession to Fuuko. Unfortunately, Hibiki-*sensei* happens to see their encounter, and so does Fujio-*chan* as she comes down the stairs. Fujio-*chan* is a very strong girl, though, and doesn't cry until she meets Miho-*chan* at the school gates. As Fuuko-*chan* struggles to find a way to answer Akira, the rain begins to pour down outside, a reflection of the terrible turmoil within her own heart. Hibiki is unable to watch their encounter any longer. He races headlong out of the school building and into the pouring rain, tearing off his voice modification choker. He gasps in his true voice, trying to understand what's bothering him so much about what he saw but knowing the answer all too well. The torrential rains reflect the stricken spirits of Fuuko-*chan*, Fujio-*chan*, and Hibiki's own feminine nature.

- **Weather:** It's very common for the forces of Nature to mirror the emotions within a girl's heart. In this episode, the weather almost immediately changes from a brilliant sunset when Fujio-*chan* is confessing to Akira to a torrential downpour after Fujio-*chan's* heart is broken, and when Fuuko-*chan* must struggle to answer Akira's confession without hurting him or betraying her own feelings. In addition, it might be worth noticing that Hibiki-*sensei* is in female form when he sees Fuuko and Akira, and that his own feminine heart is struggling with conflicting emotions that demand to be noticed.

Yokohama / Butaman: A Chinese meat bun that can be bought in Yokohama's Chinatown district.

Volume 4 — 4th Quarter Lesson: Absent

Episode 11: Fragrance Heart to Adulthood

Fortune telling / Religiosity: Fortune telling is taken fairly seriously by many Asian people, and many Japanese might turn to a fortune teller, priest, shaman, or other practitioner in times of hardship, sickness, or simply to take precautions during significant life events. For example, buying charms to protect against accidents is quite normal for Japanese taxi drivers, and buying charms for academic success is something that many students and their parents might do. It's quite normal for a new building in Japan to have a purification ceremony performed by the local Shinto priest in order to ensure that any evil spirits or other negative influences that might be in the area are cleared or pacified, and even new cars will have a similar type of ritual. Some people may profess not to believe in the efficacy of such things, and we see Fujio-*chan* state that she doesn't believe in such stuff. However, even many people who doubt the efficacy of such things will often take a "better safe than sorry" attitude when faced with major problems or certain life-changing events. These cultural factors explain why Miho-*chan*'s suggestion to Fujio-*chan* that she should consult a good fortune teller to find out information about her problems with romance is a serious attempt to provide support and help.

Physical strength: Akira almost runs into the burning building to try to rescue Fuuko, but Fujio-*chan* restrains him. This is another piece of supporting evidence for the observation we made earlier that she may actually be slightly stronger than he is, despite his claims that he must automatically be stronger because he is a boy and she is a girl.

Tatemaie / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemaie/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Fortune teller / Kidnapper / Stalker(s):** The identity of this person is initially introduced as being mysterious, and quite possibly guilty of being the kidnapper. In addition, stories such as this one normally have a fortune teller being female. However, when the fortune teller is literally unmasked, we learn that their true identity is that of an average-looking guy of perhaps thirty or so year old. Likewise, we're led to believe that the kidnappers are in a van that has been suspected of stalking women, but we discover that the van is just Koji and Kochi from Gochiso, not the kidnapper.
- **Relationships / Sexual identity / Sexual orientation:** Akira's confession forces Fuuko-*chan* to face her true feelings for Hibiki-*sensei*, and she agonizes over the result for several reasons. For one thing, she doesn't want to hurt Akira by rejecting his confession. We mentioned during the analysis for Episode 10 that Miho-*chan*'s experienced eye for romantic issues allowed her to have the insight to figure out why Fujio-*chan* was having mood swings. However, the same assertion doesn't apply to Miho-*chan*'s insight, or lack of it, towards Fuuko-*chan*. Notice that none of Fuuko-*chan*'s girlfriends have

noticed her quandary and the associated feelings of love that are causing it. Not even Miho-*chan* has considered the fact that Fuuko-*chan* is just as capable of the joys and heartbreaks of love and romance as any other girl (or guy, for that matter). Miho doesn't even consider this as a possible reason for Fuuko not eating, even though she knows that this is the reason that Fujio is skipping meals. Seiko-*chan* is the only one of the group who is totally out of the loop as to what has been happening, but she's also the only one who notices that Fuuko seems a bit depressed after school. We'll see that this general lack of awareness, even amongst Fuuko's closest girlfriends, will continue until the climactic revelation of Hibiki's true identity. Hibiki happens to meet Fuuko-*chan* as his true self while taking a walk in the evening, but she doesn't respond to him because she and her girlfriends view his true self as 'Bra-Man,' some type of weird cross-dressing guy. This encounter could be considered the climactic presentation of how Hibiki and Fuuko continue to misunderstand each other's true thoughts and feelings. Hibiki thinks that he has nothing to worry about because Fuuko-*chan* and her girlfriends only see him as 'Bra-Man,' but Fuuko-*chan* is thinking that she has no right to have judgmental feelings about what is 'normal' or 'abnormal' because she's finally realizing that she's fallen in love with an adult woman, and a *sensei*, at that. The glance that she and Hibiki-*sensei* exchange during homeroom when he announces the plan to safeguard the students from the rash of kidnappings is certainly worth more than a thousand words. Both of them suspect how the other feels, but Hibiki is not in his true form. Or should we say that perhaps he actually is, but that he simply doesn't know it yet? It's interesting to notice that Fuuko-*chan* thinks to herself that Akira is capable of being completely honest with his feelings for her, but she's unaware of just how long and hard he's struggled to confess his feelings, and that only Fujio-*chan*'s confession allowed him to have the courage to make his own confession to Fuuko. The audience should realize that Fuuko-*chan* is learning to avoid being judgmental about other people, particularly with respect to their sexual orientation. This is an absolutely critical lesson for her to learn in order to resolve her own feelings after she learns Hibiki's true identity. Of course, she's also forming her own sexual orientation and identity that differs from what society claims is 'normal.' Fuuko-*chan* mentions to Fujio-*chan* that she'd like to ask her advice about something after school. Fuuko-*chan* doesn't know it, of course, but Fujio-*chan* is already quite well aware of the topic that Fuuko-*chan* would like to discuss, or at least she thinks she knows what it is. Fujio is upset by Fuuko's request because she wants to be a good friend but really can't discuss Akira right now. Of course, the fact is that Fuuko-*chan* wants to ask about her feelings for Hibiki-*sensei*, and that Akira's confession to her is only indirectly related to her primary concern. Fuuko-*chan* notices Fujio-*chan*'s reaction to her request and tells Fujio to forget about it, but Fuuko's actually thinking that Fujio would despise her if she told Fujio that she thought she might be in love with Hibiki-*sensei*. We should also notice that Akira and Fujio, despite their mutual distress over Fujio's confession to him, don't hesitate to join together

in their concern over Fuuko-*chan*'s whereabouts when she's late to school. There are a couple of brief scenes of Akira earlier in the day where we can see that he's obviously worried about Fuuko's whereabouts even though he doesn't say anything. One scene is when homeroom begins and the girls explain that Fuuko-*chan* said she'd be there later, and the other is when he finds out that she's still not there after first period is over. The climactic scene at the fortune teller's forces Fuuko-*chan* to openly admit her true feelings for Hibiki-*sensei*, but he's semi-conscious and no one else is there. Their exit from the burned-out fortune teller's shop leads Akira to begin to realize, but disbelieve, who it is that Fuuko may love, although he's only basing the idea on what he's seeing of her behavior. Fujio can only wonder as to the reason why he would suddenly stop short when he sees Fuuko-*chan* helping Hibiki-*sensei* out of the burned-out building.

Transportation: This episode allows us to indirectly see the general method that the students use to get to school. Unlike certain countries such as America, Japanese students are normally shown walking to school rather than arriving by school bus or being driven to school in a car. Japan has one of the world's most sophisticated mass transit systems of trains and buses, and most people in major cities use them to get back and forth between school or work and their homes. We see the students of *Ai Gumi* ('Class Indigo') riding a bus for their school camping trip, but the bus they use is not a vehicle that is owned by the school they attend. Likewise, some of the students live in the dorm buildings near campus, some live in town with their families, and some commute to school by taking a train or bus to the nearest train station or bus stop, then walking the rest of the way to school.

Episode 12: Cleansing Shock of Deception

Bowing: We already mentioned that the Japanese bow for many social interactions. After the Vice-Principal reveals Hibiki-*sensei* true identity as a man presenting as a woman, she invites him to respond and greet the students after his stay at the hospital. The only response he makes is to bow extremely deeply and for a very long time in apology. However, notice that he only bows to the students, not to any of the faculty. He apologizes to the students because he has failed them as a *kyoushi* by misrepresenting his underlying physical identity to them. Regardless of any good intentions or positive outcomes, a *kyoushi* cannot mislead their students. This final act that Hibiki-*sensei* makes as their *kyoushi* still teaches his students, and the audience, a valuable lesson. Essentially, he is teaching them to admit when they do something wrong, no matter how painful the consequences might be on a personal level, and to take appropriate action to make things as right as you can for anyone who may have been hurt by your behavior.

Homemade meals or snacks: One romantic tradition in Japan is for girls to fix homemade lunches, or snacks such as cookies or cakes, for the boys that they like. This includes making homemade chocolate to give to the boy you like on Valentine's Day. The "special ingredient" in such handmade meals is, of course, the love of the girl who made it. This is why Miho-*chan* teases Fuuko-*chan* about her cookies being for her lover after she tells them she baked them for Hibiki-*sensei* by borrowing the recipe from the dorm's housemother. Miho-*chan* was only kidding, but she doesn't realize that she's hit the nail on the proverbial head, and that's why Fuuko-*chan* is blushing so furiously. She's about to "come out" about her true feelings of love for Hibiki-*sensei* regardless of what her friends or anyone else thinks, including Hibiki-*sensei*. Only Fujio-*chan* has a slight inkling about why Fuuko-*chan* might have taken the joke so seriously, but she brushes aside her suspicions as being preposterous.

Tatemaie / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemaie/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Flower symbolisms:** The language of flowers has been a traditional method of conveying messages nonverbally for a very long time and exists across many different cultures. The specific meanings of certain flower symbolisms can sometimes differ between cultures or over time, but they're still important, especially in romantic stories. The language of flowers is not restricted to merely the type(s) of flowers used for a scene, but also depends on factors such as the nature of the flower blossom, the combination of types of flowers in a bouquet, and other factors. Japanese stories often use such symbolisms. Of course, the traditional Japanese art of *ikebana* ('flower arranging') has important inherent aesthetic symbolisms. Fuuko-*chan* makes a bouquet of pink and white roses in full bloom for Hibiki-*sensei*'s hospital room. There could be several meanings to this scene. We'll just mention a few possible interpretations, and note that it is very unlikely that they are merely meant to

look pretty or give color to the room. Pink roses can symbolically send the message, "Our love is pure happiness" or something similar. White roses can have several meanings, but one of them is "silence and secrecy." The fact that the roses are in full bloom and are mixed in approximately equal amounts of pink and white tends to imply full and equal implications of both aspects of such symbolic messages. In essence, a good interpretation of such a scene might be that Fuuko-*chan* is offering the message, "Our love, a love that no one else knows about, that we've never spoken of, and that exists in total secrecy, offers us a pure and complete bliss of which no one else is aware." This is all the more poignant when we consider that Akira walks in on them as they are about to kiss and their secret love is no longer their private secret.

- **Kubi / Being fired / Smashed cookies:** We already mentioned the physical body gesture that indicates "being fired." The Japanese word used by Ruru-*san* when she's asking him why he didn't use the microphone and that he's now fired is '*kubi*.' As Hibiki walks away from Ruru-*san* after saying that he understands that fact and that he'll vacate his room by tomorrow, Ruru-*san* mutters after him, "That's not what I was talking about." The scene then segues to Fuuko-*chan* picking up her smashed cookies, which symbolically represents the confused jumble of the feelings in her heart after witnessing the revelation of Hibiki's true identity. As we explained before, the gesture of *kubi* and its literal meaning is "to be beheaded." Ruru-*san* was talking about Hibiki's relationship with Fuuko-*chan*, not his job. The significance of Ruru-*san*'s concern is far more evident if we recall that Ruru-*san* has always been concerned about Hibiki's ability to pay his rent since the beginning of the story. At least, that's the outward impression we have of Ruru-*san*'s behavior. At this point, we can finally conclude that Ruru-*san* was far more concerned about the students being taught life's lessons in a nondiscriminatory environment than any concern about money. After we see the next, and final, episode, we can add one additional genuine concern that Ruru-*san* has but that is not focused on during the events we have seen thus far.
- **Photographs / Memories:** The final scene of this episode shows Hibiki packing up his few belongings in order to vacate his room at Gochiso. The very final scene has him taking down some books from his shelf, and some photos sliding off the top of the books where they had lain hidden, blowing out the window in the breeze. The scene happens quickly, but one photo that is clearly shown by using 'freeze frame' is a picture of Hibiki-*sensei* and Fuuko-*chan* at the school camping trip tasting the stew that Fuuko-*chan* is cooking, smiling happily together. The other photos would be similar memories. The critical importance of memories as the definition of one's life is a recurring theme in Japanese storytelling. The fact that the photos have blown out the window indicates that Hibiki's happy memories with Fuuko-*chan*, and hers with him, have been lost to the wind.
- **Relationships:** Akira's certain that he must be an idiot for imaging that Fuuko-*chan* might be in love with Hibiki-*sensei*. After all, Hibiki-*sensei* is an adult woman, and there's no way that a young girl could be in love with another woman, and a *sensei*, right? Fujio-*chan* suggests that he visit Hibiki

at the hospital because she knows that that's where Fuuko-*chan* is and that Akira would like to see Fuuko. Akira's unexpected visit when Hibiki-*sensei* and Fuuko-*chan* are about to kiss finally makes him realize that he's even more of an idiot for thinking that two women, regardless of differences in age, social status, or occupation, could not fall in love. It doesn't help that Fuuko-*chan* thanks him for confessing because it forced her to openly face her own true feelings. Meanwhile, Fujio-*chan* is putting on a good face for her girlfriends by pretending to be back to her usual cheerful self, but her mask slips when Fuuko returns in a totally heartbroken state after hurting Akira by rejecting his confession. Of course, Fujio-*chan* thinks she understands how her friend feels, but even Fujio-*chan* does not yet know the full truth of Fuuko-*chan*'s feelings, nor does she know who it is who Fuuko-*chan*'s loves. Of course, everyone learns Fuuko-*chan*'s true feelings in this episode, but not in the way Fuuko-*chan* originally had resolved to reveal them. While the students deal with their own emotions, Hibiki is struggling with his feelings of love for Fuuko-*chan*, whether or not those feelings are from his female or male selves, and just what his true identity really is, anyway.

- **Revelations:** Koji and Kochi try to protect Hibiki from the prying eyes of the Vice-Principal, but she manages to reveal his true identity with a digital photograph that shows him removing his make-up in his hospital room. She follows this photo with the scene where he and Fuuko-*chan* almost kiss, claiming that he dressed as a woman simply to perform sexual acts with the girl students. The audience should be wondering how they would react if they had seen such a photo without having experienced the prior eleven episodes of this story and learning the truth about the personalities and values of Hibiki, Fuuko, and everyone else. How many times do we make judgments about people or events based on inaccurate or misleading information, especially information presented by those who are supposed to be knowledgeable and responsible? If we think about the characters in this story, would we like identify ourselves most closely Hibiki, Fuuko, and Rurusan, or the Principal and Vice-Principal? While pondering this question, let's remember that there's one major additional revelation yet to be made.

Physical strength: Akira completely goes berserk when a couple of the boys start teasing Fuuko-*chan* about being in love with another woman. Despite the fact that he's beating the crap out of one of the guys, Fujio-*chan* still manages to restrain him.

True wisdom: Fujio thinks that she understands how Fuuko must feel after Hibiki-*sensei*'s true identity is revealed, but she doesn't understand that Fuuko's true feelings are more confusion and uncertainty rather than feelings of deception. Despite her youth, Fuuko offers Fujio and the audience some very important words of wisdom. Fujio suggests that Fuuko-*chan* should just forget that a *sensei* like Hibiki-*sensei* ever existed. Fuuko-*chan* somewhat bemusedly replies that she isn't really sure about that because, if that were true, perhaps her feelings of love never existed, either. Her reply makes Fujio realize just how wrong her words had been. After all, Fujio isn't forgetting her own heartbreak over Akira, nor is he forgetting his heartbreak over Fuuko-*chan*.

Episode 13: Someday, Without Make-up, as Promised

Tatemaie / Honne and nonverbal communications: If the audience misses elements that are communicated through nonverbal, indirect, *tatemaie/honne* communications and presentation methods, they will also miss a great deal of the foundation of the story. Here is a summary of some of the nonverbal elements that are presented in this episode:

- **Opening scenes / Lie versus Truth / Fake versus Reality:** The opening song is not played for this episode. Instead, we have a mental exchange of the confused thoughts and feelings taking place between and within Hibiki-*sensei* and Fuuko-*chan*. Fuuko's final question is the most important and critical issue that both of them must answer. Was everything that they did and felt together a lie? In fact, this issue is stated explicitly when Ruru-*san* confronts Hibiki about his hypocritical stance regarding Fuuko-*chan*. Can he claim that he is leaving because he's a *kyoushi* but also claim that he was a fake? As Ruru-*san* points out, the latter claim would mean that everything he's been teaching the students was also a fake. Ruru-*san* offers a similar challenge to everyone at the school assembly by stating that it's true that Hibiki-*sensei* was a fake as a woman, but what is their opinion of Hibiki-*sensei* as a *kyoushi*? This question is what leads Fuuko-*chan* to finally remember everything that she's learned and experienced because of Hibiki-*sensei*, that those memories, lessons, and the feelings associated with them cannot be lies, and that she truly loves Hibiki-*sensei*, no matter what anyone else might think of her when she openly proclaims her true feelings. The audience must also acknowledge that Hibiki freely admits that there are too many questions that he, and society as a whole, still doesn't have answers to. As Hibiki says in his farewell to his students, *sensei* and students, male and female, even though we're all human beings, feelings still arise between us because we are not exactly identical to each other. The questions about how to deal with such feelings and relationships are something that he (and society as a whole) needs to try to find the answers to in order to face his students again as their *sensei*. He leaves because he needs to find the answers in order to return to his students as his true self, without any make-up. He is making a symbolic reference to simply present himself as who he truly is, regardless of if that turns out to be a guy dressed as a girl, vice versa, or something else, and he's freely admitting to them that he's unsure of his own true identity. The story is posing these issues and associated questions for the audience to consider. Wouldn't it be nice if we could treat each other equally and fairly? Wouldn't it be nice if people who fall in love could be allowed to express themselves openly with prejudice of any kind? Wouldn't it be wonderful if each person could form their own identity, whatever it might be, and openly express it for everyone to see?
- **Fuuko / Memories / Teachings:** As we might expect, it's Fuuko-*chan* and not Hibiki who manages to sort out whether or not everything that they had experienced together was a lie. Obviously, the experiences that they shared and the lessons he had taught his students was not a lie. Quite the contrary,

he taught them some very important lessons about how to treat each other and how to live life as they become adults. Fuuko-*chan* recites a litany of lessons that she and the other students have learned from Hibiki-*sensei*, including: running 50 meters for the first time in her life, clearing the vaulting horse for the first time in her life, helping the boys with the cleaning duties of the school, doing the parent-student event with them, sharing problems with them, becoming angry for them, fighting for them, defending them, believing in them, trusting them, and, most importantly for Fuuko-*chan*, helping them learn about love and believing in her as a person. Fuuko-*chan* helps her classmates and their parents to understand that Hibiki-*sensei* couldn't have been a fake, nor could he have been deceiving them. After all, aren't all these lessons what being a good *sensei* is really all about? That is the point Fuuko-*chan* is making to the assembly, and that the story is making to the audience. The final scene where Fujio-*chan* and Akira are helping Fuuko-*chan* to chase after Hibiki as he catches the next train at the station contain elements that show how perhaps Fujio-*chan* and Akira will eventually come together, after all, and how the continuity of social harmony is of primary concern in Japanese society. Just as we have seen in two earlier instances, Fuuko-*chan* runs quite a long distance along the road under the train trestle in her attempt to catch a final glimpse of Hibiki in the train as he leaves. In fact, she runs all the way from the school, albeit with help from Fujio-*chan* and Akira. Miho-*chan* was quite right in telling Fuuko-*chan* that when she truly falls in love, her body would run on its own regardless of her general clumsiness and poor athletic abilities. Also, we should probably notice that Koji and Kochi help Hibiki by setting up a speaker system so that he can address his students one final time from the roof of Gochiso before catching the next train out of town.

- **Revelations:** The Vice-Principal shows the photo of Hibiki removing his make-up in his hospital room to the parents and students at the school assembly, and follows this up with claims that he forced the girls to wear bloomer gym shorts in order to satisfy his own perverted sexual tastes. It's true that almost any type of female uniform has sexual fetishism attached to it. It's also true that bloomers are standard female gym wear for middle and high school girls, so they are a well-known sexual fetish for some people. However, the audience who has watched this story should know that the Vice-Principal is making very false claims. As it happens, her claims actually help the students of Hibiki's homeroom, especially Fuuko-*chan*, to recall the true reasons that he asked them to wear the bloomers. It was because Hibiki-*sensei* was a *kyoushi* of physical education and, as such, he wanted his students to be able to fully enjoy physical exercise and do their best in his class. Finally, after the school assembly breaks up and the Principal is watching the Director and everyone else depart while standing alongside Ruru-*san*, she says to herself that the last male *kyoushi* at the school had been a lot like Hibiki-*sensei*. Ruru-*san* asks her if she's referring to the man who left her and caused her to become a confirmed man-hater. The Principal is shocked, and quickly asks how Ruru-*san* could know such a thing. Ruru-*san* calmly replies that men are capable of love, too. Who's to

say that the guy hasn't been watching over her all these years in some type of disguise? The Principal is speechless as Ruru-san walks down the road to Gochiso, finally murmuring under her breath that it couldn't be true... but of course, it is. Ruru-san's true identity is that he was the last male *kyoushi* at the school and that he loved, and still loves, the Principal very much.

Transportation: We've already mentioned the standard methods of transport that most Japanese students use in order to travel to and from school. The same observation applies to work, of course. We see Hibiki walking to the train station in this episode while Fujio-chan, Akira, and Fuuko-chan chase after him. They just miss him as he boards the departing train, but Fujio-chan quickly asks a passerby to borrow their bike so that Akira can take Fuuko-chan and try to catch sight of Hibiki as he leaves town.

Welcoming / Farewell parties: It's a Japanese tradition to welcome new people to a neighborhood or residence by having a welcoming party, and to wish them luck when they leave by having a farewell party.

Works Cited

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Endnotes

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- ¹ *Manga*: 'Japanese comics.' Japanese animation prior to the mid-1980s was also called *manga*, so older Japanese might use the term for both printed comics and animated film media, or *anime*.
- ² *Shounen*: 'young boy.' These works are targeted for young male audiences and usually have a male hero protagonist, but often include powerful heroines within their stories.
- ³ *Bishoujo*: 'pretty young girl.' These works are targeted for a male audience and usually have a male hero who acts as a catalyst for events, but maintain a focus on a wide variety of heroines.
- ⁴ *Shoujo*: 'young girl.' These works are targeted for a young female audience and can have either male or female protagonists, but we will restrict ourselves to those with a heroine focus.
- ⁵ *Anime*: 'Japanese animation.' This term came into use during the mid-1980s. Also see *manga*.¹
- ⁶ *Kamishibai*: literally, 'picture story show.' Although *kamishibai* is no longer practiced as a formal profession in Japan, you can still see *kamishibai* storytelling presentations at cultural events and experience many *kamishibai* elements in *manga*, *anime*, and specific genres of electronic gaming such as visual novels and Japanese adventure games.
- ⁷ *Mangaka*: 'Japanese artist who creates manga.'
- ⁸ *Mamono*: 'devil,' or simply 'evil/mischievous spirit.' *Shichimi Nadesico Unon*: 'Pepper Flower Unon.' Note that the word 'nadesico' in this title refers to the specific type of flower called 'pink(s),' but it is used symbolically in Japanese to refer to a traditional Japanese female beauty.
- ⁹ *Fushigi no Kuni no Miyuki-chan*: 'Miyuki-chan in Wonderland.' *Sakura*: 'cherry blossom(s).' *Sakura* is Japan's national flower and, of course, a very popular name for girls.
- ¹⁰ *Doujinshi*: 'fan comics.' Independently created and published comics that are sold at various conventions and events. Note that the modern *doujinshi* market and gatherings include not only *manga* but also electronic games, *anime*, CG art, etc.
- ¹¹ *Ai Tenshi Densetsu Wedding Peach*: 'Legendary Love Angel Wedding Peach.' *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon*: 'Pretty Girl Soldier Sailor Moon.' *Doukyuusei*: 'classmate(s)' or 'of the same class.' The *anime* for this title is adapted from one of the most successful adult *bishoujo* dating simulation games ever created. *Minerva no Kenshin*: literally, 'Swordsman of Minerva,' but the domestic release was renamed as 'Fencer of Minerva.' This title is an *anime* presentation of John Norman's famous science fiction/fantasy epic *Gor* series of novels.
- ¹² *Itadaki! Panther*: 'Gotcha! Panther.'
- ¹³ *Shinto*: 'kami way' or 'kami path.' *Kami* means 'divinity,' 'god,' or 'spirit.' *Kami* are the natural spirits within all forms of existence, including animals, natural objects, elemental forces, weather, etc. Note that the original Japanese word is written 「神道」 and that the second of the two kanji characters is pronounced with an

elongated 'o' in Japanese. Since *Shinto* has been officially adopted into written English with only a single 'o,' we will use this form for our analysis.

¹⁴ *Amaterasu Ohmikami*: 'Great Glorious Goddess.'

¹⁵ *Miko*: '*Shinto* shrine maiden / priestess.'

¹⁶ *Matsuri*: 'festival(s).'

¹⁷ *Kami*: see *Shinto*.¹³

¹⁸ AI: 'Artificial Intelligence.'

¹⁹ Ceres: The original Japanese writing of her name is 「セレーソ」. This writing indicates a non-Japanese name and can be romanized in several ways: Sereiso, Cerehso, etc. 「セレス」 is the usual way of writing the name Ceres in Japanese. The official English release of the *manga* uses Celestia while the English *anime* release uses Cereso on the packaging but Celeste in the subtitles. 'Celeste' is derived from Latin and means 'heavenly', but neither Celeste nor Celestia are exact romanizations of the original Japanese name. Still, Celestia does carry a double meaning in Japanese. It's a variation of Celeste and is also a contraction of the phrase "Ceres' Tear". Nao Yazawa wrote the *manga* version of Wedding Peach, but the story and characters were created by Sukehiro Tomita. Since his characters' names come from many languages and often have implied meanings, it's a good idea to at least be aware of the implications of Momoko's mother's true name being very similar to Ceres. It's possible that the original Japanese writing was taken from a non-English version of the name, perhaps Italian or Spanish.

²⁰ *Joumi no Sekku*: 'Girl's Day.' *Hina Matsuri*: 'Doll Festival.'

²¹ *Momoiro*: 'Peach-colored' or 'having the nature/characteristics of a peach.'

²² *Tanabata*: 'Star Festival' or 'Lover's Day.'

²³ *Tango no Sekku*: 'Boy's Day.' *Kodomo no Hi*: 'Child's Day.'

²⁴ *Tatemaehonne*: public stance versus private thoughts, surface image versus inner reality.

²⁵ The complete original Japanese title for the *La Blue Girl* franchise is *Inju Gakuen: La Blue Girl*. *Inju Gakuen* essentially means 'Sex Demon Academy'. The story focuses on the main heroine, Miko Mido, who learns of her matrilineal heritage as the latest generation of a race of all-female ninja who have made a special pact with the strongest demons of the spirit world. The Mido clan uses their feminine sexual power to enhance their physical ninja prowess. Miko's name should remind us of *miko*, or '*Shinto* shrine maiden priestesses'. Her special heritage is that she has blue blood due to being the daughter of her human mother and her mother's husband, the lord of the strongest demon clan in the underworld. She learns of her true destiny when she turns sixteen. We see this same critical age for young girls coming of age in other heroine-focused Japanese stories such as *Mamono Hunter Yohko* and *Ayashi no Ceres*. Such stories also share the common element of a girl's true power being tied to her sexual awakening as a young woman. We must stress that this is true for many such works regardless of their target market or the gender of the original creators of the stories.

²⁶ The TV *anime* series *Blue Seed* was adapted from the *manga* by Yuzo Takada, and he was very active in creating the scripts for the *anime* episodes. The story was largely inspired by two very famous Japanese folktales: *Amaterasu* and *Susano-*

oh and *Susano-oh and the Serpent*. The latter tale focuses on the heroine, *Kushinada-hime*, or 'Princess Kushinada'. His adaptation of these stories depicts the ultimate conflict between Nature and humanity, and shows the critical, traditional role of the *miko* in determining the fate of the human race.

- ²⁷ The original Japanese title for the *Fatal Frame* game franchise is *Zero*. The title refers to the 'zero shot', or taking a picture at point-blank range. *Zero* is also the title that was chosen for the European release of the games. The first game in the franchise is inspired by a true life story of a haunted mansion in the Tokyo area.
- ²⁸ As we mentioned in Part 1 of our research, Gaku Miyao is the *mangaka* who created the story and art for *Mamono Hunter Yohko* (Part 1, "About the Authors", *Kazan*).
- ²⁹ Kia Asamiya's *Silent Möbius* was originally a *manga* story, but has been adapted to two theatrical *anime* feature films and a TV *anime* series.
- ³⁰ The English title of *Ayashi no Ceres* (written 「妖しのセレス」 in original Japanese) is 'Ceres Celestial Legend', but this is not an actual translation of the title. The first kanji in the title is the same as the kanji used for the name of the story's main heroine, Aya. The character carries two meanings: 'bewitching' and 'calamity'. The word 'ayashi' has the meaning of 'suspicious', but it is usually written with a different kanji. Finally, the left and right parts of the character for 'aya' have the meaning of 'woman' and 'young', respectively. Japanese artists often use specific methods to write names, titles, and other elements of their stories in order to subtly convey additional meanings to the audience without such meanings being explicitly stated. A rough analogy in the English language would be the use of characters such as '4 Sale' rather than 'For Sale' in order to advertise a sales event.
- ³¹ The *anime* of *Asagiri no Miko* is adapted from a *manga*, also available in English. The English title of the *anime* adaptation of *Asagiri no Miko* is 'Shrine of the Morning Mist', but this is not an actual translation of the title. As we explained in Part 1, *miko* are *Shinto* shrine maiden priestesses who traditionally acted as the 'channel' for the many spirits. The meaning of the original Japanese title is closer to 'Shinto Shrine Maiden Priestesses of the Morning Mist'. *Miko* can be singular or plural, and this particular story contains both meanings. The role of the *miko* as a 'conduit' for spiritual forces is explicitly stated within this story. The story itself is set in Miyoshi, a city in the Hiroshima area, and is inspired by a specific set of folktales from the local area, *Tales of the Inou Mononoke*. *Mononoke* are 'fallen deities' who have taken on different forms in our world. Many locations in the story are authentic and one can visit them in Miyoshi.
- ³² Narumi Kakinouchi's *Vampire Princess Miyu* is a gothic horror *shoujo* story that was originally published as a *manga* in the late 1980s. It was adapted to a four-part OVA (Original Video Animation) series in the early 1990s and a twenty-six episode TV anime series in 1998. She has collaborated with her husband, artist and director Toshiki Hirano (formerly known as Toshihiro Hirano before he changed his name), on various *anime* and *manga* projects since the mid-1980s.
- ³³ All six of the central characters of *Xenosaga Episode 1* are some type of artificially created life forms. The main heroine is a brilliant young engineer named Shion Uzuki. Shion appears to be a normal human girl. However, there are subtle hints in the story that lead us to believe that her true nature is as much of an artificial

creation as any of the others, all of whom have far more obvious and explicitly stated artificial backgrounds. The basic question that the game poses is, "What is life?"

- ³⁴ *Koiyoubi* literally means 'Day of Love'. The game was originally an adults-only *bishoujo* title created by the company Actress with character designs by Carnelian, a woman who is a very popular *bishoujo* artist, as well as being the executive of her own adults-only *bishoujo* game company, ORBIT Co., Ltd. Like many adults-only *bishoujo* game titles that prove to be at least moderately popular, especially those that feature romantic, adolescent, coming of age stories, *Koiyoubi* was adapted to a non-adult version for the Japanese Playstation 2 and released to audiences of all ages in Japan. This approach is definitely double-edged for any adults-only story, though. A broader audience can experience the story, but the original work almost always has significant character developments and events taking place during the various sexually explicit scenes, and the non-adult version will have those pieces of the story, events, and character developments removed. The English market release from Hirameki is a PC, Windows OS release of the non-adult, Japanese Playstation 2 version.
- ³⁵ *Tennyō*: 'heavenly maiden'. Various legends of celestial females descending from the heavens and interacting with humans occur throughout cultures all over the world (Watase, Yuu, 106-07).
- ³⁶ *Key The Metal Idol* was originally intended to be a *bishoujo* game, but was eventually produced as an unusually long OVA series. The story is a moving drama that shows how a modern idol is essentially a contemporary incarnation of the traditional *miko*. The series also focuses on industrial espionage and violent abuse of an idol's/*miko*'s power for selfish gains.
- ³⁷ *Kiddy Grade* may be set in the far future, but it's really a dramatic presentation of the horrible injustices, inequalities, and flaws within our modern day global economic system. It features character designs by Keiji Goto.
- ³⁸ *Private Nurse* is a romantic, moving, coming of age *bishoujo* game whose story was obviously inspired by *Mary Poppins* coupled with various *Shinto* beliefs. The primary heroine, Marie, is actually an incarnation of Mother Earth. The original game was produced in Japan as an adults-only product. The English release was one of many attempts to open the English market to the many excellent visual novel games, both adult and non-adult, that are so prevalent in Japan. Like other attempts, this game was never allowed into the general American consumer market due to censorship from distributors and retailers, as well as misunderstandings about the distinction between 'erotica' and 'pornography'. Like *Koiyoubi* and many other titles, the original game for *Private Nurse* was reproduced as a non-adult version for the Japanese Playstation 2 and released to the general market for all ages of Japanese consumers.
- ³⁹ The full, original Japanese *manga* title of the *anime* adaptation of *Zenki* is *Kishin Doji Zenki*, or 'Great Demon Lord Child Zenki'. *Zenki* is the *shikigami*, or 'guardian spirit', of the main heroine, Chiaki Enno, and the town where they live is called *Shikigami-cho*, or 'Guardian Spirit City'. The title was adapted into a platform/action game by HudsonSoft, one of the sponsors for the *anime* series. It

had a single OVA sequel story for it released in Japan, but neither the sequel OVA nor the original *manga* has been licensed for an English market release. The story shows us a combination of *Shinto* and Buddhist beliefs that exists in Japan, and contains many elements of Japanese mythology and folklore. For example, one episode offers an interpretation of the traditional Japanese folktale, *Yuki-Onna*, or 'Snow Lady', a tale we see in many Japanese works.

⁴⁰ *Ai Yori Aoshi* was originally published as a *manga* targeted for young men in 1998. It quickly became a hugely popular story with a very broad audience appeal across any division of age or gender. It has been adapted to two TV *anime* series and two visual novel game stories, all of which have been licensed and released to the English market. The *manga* continues to be published in Japan, and has also been licensed and released to the English market.

⁴¹ *Onsen*: 'hot springs'.

⁴² It's not unusual in Japan for students to have homework assigned over their summer break. The family essay is only one part of Chika's homework assignments. As we see during the episode, she has many other assignments for various other classes.

⁴³ *Growlanser Generations* is actually two games: *Growlanser II* and *Growlanser III*. The *Growlanser* game franchise was created by CareerSoft, the same company that made the earlier landmark *Langrisser* franchise. Both of these game franchises are complex hybrids of fantasy role-playing, war simulation, strategy, and visual novels. Aside from their unique combination of many game play elements, one of the biggest reasons for their success is that they feature character designs by one of Japan's most popular *bishoujo* artists, Satoshi Urushihara.

⁴⁴ *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* is usually just called *Macross*, and was the basis for the English market *anime* series, *Robotech*. The latter is actually three separate *anime* series pieced together in order to meet syndicated American TV episode requirements, but the main goal of the *Robotech* release was to offer *Macross* to the English world. The series is known for its mecha designs by Shoji Kawamori. It made Haruhiko Mikimoto an immediate star as a character designer and artist because of his creation of one of the two lead heroines, the Chinese idol singer Lynn Minmay. Mari Iijima, Minmay's singing and acting voice, has never done another role as a *seiyuu*, or 'voice actor', but her popularity as Minmay's voice allowed her to pursue her career as a professional singer. Minmay is arguably the most famous *anime* idol ever created, and for good reason. The outcome of the interstellar conflict depends on the singing of this sixteen-year-old girl and the impact that her music has on both friend and foe. As we have seen in other works, a great idol is essentially a modern incarnation of the traditional *miko*, and Minmay fulfills her duties in such a spectacular way that her role is very difficult to top.

⁴⁵ The theatrical feature film *anime* *Perfect Blue* was adapted from a novel. It was director Satoshi Kon's directorial debut, and its award-winning success made him one of the most sought after new directors in Japan.

⁴⁶ 140 trillion yen \approx \$1.4 billion; 180 trillion yen \approx \$1.8 billion; 300 million yen \approx \$3 million.